

## Jinda

Aunty outside the church tells me  
she once held my sister's hand while  
she wept when the plane crossed Bundjalung  
the gum tree of her story is holy of other holies

I know her the way this cold city makes  
me dress strange, demands things from a body  
that knows it's not where it's from.

Most things are  
adjacent to rivers—the reflection of root and branch,  
the failure of nation, our stuttered inflections as we  
practice the old words our grandfather was never taught.

My sister's sister tells her the names of lakes  
that are healing, has a photo of us at naidoc two  
decades ago, squinting into winter sun. Driving to  
the scar trees my phone lights up with their  
names, teasing each other for pulled faces and crude  
cut fringes. A year of lonely has filled every corner  
of the house with mattresses.

When I take that flight I  
study the pattern of river and search for spines

the window a triangle of memory  
map wordbook:

(stars/stars/stars)  
balun yuna-hla ggihl-a dugan-dah  
the river [milky way] runs  
between the mountains  
(stars/stars/stars)

My sister taught my dog to swim in the river her  
namesake kneads into the valley we know like  
each other's hands. Most things are adjacent—  
some are woven together, like the basket she made  
that sits by my bed in the cold city. I know nothing  
more holy. I have my father's feet and my mother's  
mouth. Aunty said she would have known me  
anywhere by my sister's eyes.