Alyse Knorr

FLOATING EPITHALAMIIUM

In the forests I have known –
Boreal, pine, kudzu, new and mint,
glinting, fallen, dry, or torn to ground,
dirt-caked ancient roots pointing up
to sky and space. Black bear, ptarmigan,
jackrabbit, and once, a coiled copperhead

your foot landed inches from crushing.
Forest of poisonous leaves and ticks,
red clay creek and its sweet muddy water,
tadpoles sprouting miraculous back legs

in the hot wet earth. Childhood forest
of patio table forts, where boards nailed to bark

make lookout towers and the neighbor’s
hounds snuffle below, circling in wait.

Forest where airplanes land. Forest where
moose birth their calves in the sunny night.

Forest my father made with his bare hands.
Toccoa forest where slow rain once woke me

in a flatbed and I knew your precise location
on Earth. You when I was young and nameless.
You when the hounds howl and the trees fall.
You in the before. You in all the years to come.