Anchorage Epithalamium

Love punched my brains out like
Artie in the post office parking lot—
"A big Samoan hit me and now it feels
like there's computers in my eye."
Everything big and distorted with
the 19-hour days and the 19-hour nights,
mountains balding into summer now
as tourist traffic materializes onto streets
we first learned empty and white. All
I want: to explore the wilderness of Costco
with you in the Dimond District,
buy a new set of Tupperware with red
lids and smooth sides. To be tamed
with you and tell you every night
which are satellites, planes, and stars.

Moose are over-running the park and
this makes me think of love

In autumn, everyone weds—the moose find one another
to mate and calve, tolerating gasps and photos until
an "incident" occurs. Too many dogs off leash.

Too many runners distracted by iPods. Too many reasons
not to trust, not to say about the beautiful thing: That is beautiful.
Like the frosty October morning when the man, whose face
bones were crushed last year by a charging bull, reaches for
his handgun at the sight of a cow with twins. Haven't we all been
-crushed? Haven't we all closed our eyes once? To love—

just to speak of it—requires a courage that only love itself provides.
In this line, the cow and her twins slip back into the trees.
In this one, I hold your hand and we marry in the trees.

The trees marry the moose. The moose marry the runners.
But weren't we the runners all along? Running toward each other—
toward the call we heard before we even recognized it.

an epithalamium for Larissa and Brian
The Object Towards Which the Action of the Sea Is Directed

is the Aleut word for Alaska, a passive voice construction that would mean docked points, were this a sentence in one of my freshmen essays about a belief they hold or a problem they see in the world around them. One problem is passive voice, I say. Cultivate your own unique voice, I say. One girl writes of her reign as a native beauty pageant queen. Another, of the smell of whale blubber frying in a city so far north, haloes of ice arc above the sky. Slowly, Ovid's Io turns to Isis turns to Raven and takes off. Their textbooks lie open on the desks. The days are growing colder.

The Sleeping Lady

Susitna slumbers high above Anchorage, dreaming of her beloved, who took a javelin to the gut the day before their wedding. And you, biking home from work tonight, are 20 minutes late. If you die, who will cover me in snow and trees? Who will keep me sleeping, with you not there to weight the room?

At the Crow Creek Gold Mine, I found three flakes of gold, you, four, all seven included in our plastic baggie practice packets. We walked a trail of rusted shovels to a cold river, singing "sluicebox, sluicebox" because we liked the sound. We returned to a wedding reception with a DJ and cake.

If I could marry you, I would marry you in a river full of gold. Inside one ghost cabin, a tiny balance scale weighed a nugget and two pennies. On the wall, a black and white photo of someone's mother. Your face mirrored the glass and the music kept playing. Trail maps, table of lanterns, bear pelt bed and foggy moonshine bottles. And we wed and wed and wed.
Conservation & Rehabilitation

Because we want to take pictures of bears and moose without actually coming near them—though already I have called to you, unloading groceries from the car, when a cow and her calf clopped down our street, taller than I thought, and faster, too—because we want to look like real Alaskans to those East Coast city slickers, those smog-breathers, those subway-riders, our friends back home, we drive down the only highway to the Center where, every five minutes for the duration of our visit, we hear the eerie shrieks of the elk, calling for one another in urgent lust, which at first I decide is the angry scream of a small girl throwing a tantrum in five-minute intervals but which Wikipedia informs me is “one of the most distinctive sounds in nature, akin to the howl of the gray wolf.” And later, when we learn from a colorful sign that females are attracted to the elk that bugle the loudest and most often, I sympathize more with the elk and with the caribou, too, locking their antlers into one another because everyone in this Center is in love, including me, because when I stare at you staring at a muddy bison sleeping pressed flush against the wire of her fence, and when I see your mouth move, and then later, before I put my mouth on you, when I ask what you talked with the bison about, you say We understood each other, which I take to mean:

Bison: There is nowhere for me to be safe
Woman I love: I have been your kind
[an elk shrieks]

Love, let’s be the black bears that refuse our sirloin steaks, turning our noses up to the Lead Naturalist, or the intern—whoever is feeding us that day—waiting patiently for a handful of frozen berries flung into our yard. Let’s be those bears who come when called, eat our fill of this land, then pad back together into the thick brush, trying to be as wild as we still can.