ALICE’S CHILDHOOD

Alyse Knorr

But there was the winter carnival
Rose thought was in honor of her
turning six, and none of them told her
any differently. Giant tiered floats like
white-frosted cakes, gauzy pink butterflies
teetering on stilts, and a ten-foot tree
raining lights down its sides. Rose stared
at the strong chestnut Clydesdales clopping
down Main Street, and the North Forsyth
Raiders in their red and black marching
uniforms, feathers in their caps trembling
with each step. When the nativity rolled past,
the crowd surged forward to see the plastic
savior. And Owen shoved his way to the edge
of the human path and grabbed a chocolate
Santa Claus, handed it to Rose without a word.
And Alice’s mother folded a crane out of
a receipt from her purse and tucked it into
Rose’s hair. And Alice held Rose up to see
above the crowd and said, Look at all of this—
All of this for you.

ALICE RIDES THE GRAVITY TRAIN

Alyse Knorr

Not in the not-thereafter but wholly present:
the feeling in Alice’s chest of both plummeting
descent and suspension. She arrives at the center
of the earth and says to Jenny:

“When two people make love for the first
time, each is wondering how it will feel
for the other. When I say forever, I don’t
mean tomorrow. I mean the way the smoke
from your mouth rises and disappears
at the same time. The way the trees are black.”

Jenny reaches for Alice’s hand but Alice’s
hand is a bird. The iron around them hums
and tremors, and Alice closes her eyes
to hear these sounds more accurately.
What she will carry back to the surface
is a permanent light swaddled in old leaves.