

ERIN KIRSH

## I THINK OF THE LAKE BACK HOME

made neon by fork lightning, burrowing  
in the fissures of the great Canadian Shield  
like snowshoe hares, the canoe bucking

on angry waters like an unbroken stud,  
the dock spiders racing like my mother's heart  
into narrows too small

for their engorged bodies. The perfume  
of DEET and optimistic lemongrass,  
the flicker of porch torches meant to keep

away horseflies, drunk and hungry  
for a bite of you. The hiss of orange soup  
dumped from a superstore can, the radio

skipping like the flat stones outside, the  
silence that can't get a minute's peace, the  
solid noise of mug on wood table, lifted

and lowered absentmindedly by my father  
as he reads something he has read before.  
The Jehovah's Witness knock of woodpeckers,

the cat sighing boredom, the landscape puzzle  
incomplete on the living room floor, pieces lost.  
The year they razed the birches for the resort,

built the marina big enough for rich men,  
for a convoy of motor boats, shiny as sunset.  
The year the radio station started coming in clear

as the changing times. The year we packed our  
dishes in brown paper and stacked them into boxes.  
The way home will always belong to me even once

it belongs to someone else also, once it ceases to  
exist as I remember it and I can't go back, the way  
I still smell it sometimes in unexpected places,

cedar and loam and clove and I don't know what,  
the way my heart flutters like ecstatic moth wings  
while my brain clumsily plays catch up.