**Sixteen Months**

*sixteen*

In this version of the world there is no oxygen. We sprout gills along our abdominal walls and wade through soupy air. In this version of the world there is no mercury. When sick we stretch our hands towards the sun and read the temperature in the shadow cast beneath our veins. In this version of the world there is no blood. What surges from artery to capillary keeping our skeletons alive is liquid starlight distilled each night while the earth turns on. I would love you in the world with no oxygen. I would love you in the absence of mercury. I would love the you that leaks out silver shimmer when you slice your finger turning the page.

\*

*fifteen*

I have two hands so I can scruff both sides of your beard at the same time. I have two hands so I can stop on the sidewalk, turn to face you, take your two hands in mine and spin within the ghosts of all the love that has walked through these streets. I have two hands so I can hold the balance of grief and joy across my shoulders. To lie down next to an open window crawling with ladybirds on the other side of the glass. In the dissolving atmosphere, I close my fist and squeeze and squeeze and roll a marble across the crease where your left heart line meets the right.

\*

*fourteen*

My world is an open air courtyard built on red brick from an older century. My world is so full of air pockets that when compressed down into a sphere it fits snug in your sleeve. There is no measure of time from the moment your world touched mine to the moment my heart touched yours to the moment I rolled myself small into the guardian that is you. Tonight I tried to hold the raging river in my sphere. Tonight though there may be a chasm of distance fast-filling with water I will scramble to reach you, you will scoop bucket by bucket until the riverbed touches my soles. All we lay bare the stream will carry away. All that we are, whittled down to our spheres held within the guardian of each other. All that is left, the listening sun in the courtyard, the brick where all breath resides.