to name a creature

love
bloody and baby-shaped
 screamed for the first time in a strangers arms

and was suddenly disconnected

*i heard it made mum sick
for nine months*

sick from carrying so much love

a balloon of happiness
they almost had to pop her
they almost had to pull it out -
 then it appeared

and mum was empty
deflating like a circus tent at the end of winter

*nine months was enough love for a lifetime*

it can be carried
 is carried
 was carried
until fingertips and elbows become graveyards where love
 once touched

 \* \* \*

 there is a blankness
 or void
 where love forgot to be -
 present -

 *and it is so dark*
 there is a humming
 behind my forehead and my ears in the nighttime

 \* \* \*

 love wakes up to //
 broken plates dad sat in a //
 haunted blue room // pipes burst

 \* \* \*

*there is a photo of bob marley in the bathroom
sometimes he looks like he is crying*

 \* \* \*

love had hollow bones
and feathers that fell out in my hair
a few times it made dad bleed
caught and caged by stained glass windows
we teased it with freedom in the mornings
and were told to cover up all the mirrors
to stop it falling for its own reflection

love gave the illusion of flight
petrolled wings that promised an uptake on the wind
 and preferred to walk

 \* \* \*

*held by a woman
with love knotted above her knuckles
and pain eased
by valleys that parted from her lips
molten silver words made love*oh - *so precious*
*before ripping it from our hands*

\* \* \*

i left with a fist sized lump between my ribs and spine and cried to see my own reflection in mirrors that we no longer covered and all the doors in the house were open and I could see through the windows and when the light fell there were no slanted bars and i was alone

 \* \* \*

love got smaller and smaller
and when mum and dad divorced
it bundled itself between my eyebrows
under my skin
and couldn't take flight anymore

at first i was just keeping it safe
waiting for someone to come and collect it
this little bit of love
i had a little too much of

ten years later
mum and dad don't even notice it anymore
*i think i'm going to get it cut out
i think i'm going to cut it out myself*love grew out of its body
 fast
left parts of itself in phantom tollbooths

and sun bleached book covers

and ipod shuffles that played the same songs on repeat

love painted over its walls
and took the family photos down
when it felt forgotten

then split itself down the middle -
love did -
and was carsick on the way to manchester
 disguised as a one-man travelling band
with two broken guitar strings and calloused hands
telling its friends it didn't need saving because

*this is just how things are now*
 \* \* \*

at christmas time
dad got a toy car
and skidded down the M25
in the snow

 the bureau for lost children called
 to make sure love hadn't hurt itself
 or been hurt by someone else

*love rolled its eyes when it saw mum crying*
 reported and filed

left in a dusty cupboard
 told to stay

*exactly*
where it was

 \* \* \*

i found that love had my name
my height
and weight *(fluctuating)*
and shut itself down under too much stress

love bruised on laminate floors
and radiators // dads hands caught it
 sometimes

love fell into routines like

smashing bottles on the way to the bus stop // plucking

hairs from its lash line // knees // making itself

as small as possible //

*love still couldn't remember six years of its life*

 \* \* \*

mum gave birth to a baby called sadness and pretended to call her love

 \* \* \*

again

bloody foetal
 being held for the last time //
 a strangers arms