

Esmé Beaumont

[time rolls up like a woodlouse]

*“see that young man who dwells inside his body like an uninvited guest”
(the mountain goats, ‘birth of serpents’)*

time rolls up like a woodlouse and the skies
go white, and nothing hurts the way it should.
resent the years of careful compromise,
the hours spent washing bathroom tiles of blood.
you pray for rain, but no relief. dry-heave
over the sink. sing miserere, doubt
the notes, your voice too much your own. believe
the news. can’t starve the much-too-muchness out
and in the hollows gnaw at something worse.
the waiting lists are long, and you are drained.
the billows settle low, cold as a curse,
but though the thunder roars, it will not rain.
your ribs are kindling; breathe in, strike a match:
the matter’s so compacted it won’t catch.