

COLLECTION TITLE: *Love in My Hands*

1. *Final Hour*

I imagine my death bed  
and my wishes to be covered in flowers  
and family who hold my hand  
to that final hour.

I know I may not get that vision  
as death moves to its own cadence  
Delivering us to the door  
we all must pass alone  
with spirit stripped from bone.

But

If I breathe with my heart furnace  
burning bright  
I may just be carried there with love,  
no fight.

I want to live with this remembrance  
always tucked under my sleeve.

Guiding my risks and what I choose to believe.

I want to taste death at the back of my throat  
so I never walk away with words unspoken.

I want to feel death press against my skin  
so I never cower when reaching for kin.

For keeping death close  
doesn't make us morbid

just keenly awake,

able to perceive what's truly at stake.

## 2. *Artist*

The act of touching the ink  
In the well of love  
But not smearing it about casually  
Like I want to.  
My walls, doors, and every square inch  
Of my floor  
With the stain and markings of what I feel  
In my heart's core  
But  
This is a delicate matter  
The type of medium  
We must touch slowly and not falter.  
So,  
I dip my fingers in,  
Let it soak and lubricate my skin  
I plunge the tips in  
And paint a scene  
Of two lovers reading a book -  
Invested in each written word,  
Enchanted,  
But not concerned with the plot.

### 3. *Handyman*

I find no wretched poetry written on the walls  
Of my heart.  
Even the tension, pain, and fights  
That inevitably came up like weeds  
In our relational cracks  
Didn't leave a trace  
Only more wide open space.  
Only the marks that tell you  
A handyman visited your home.  
Small patches and piles of sawdust.  
No punctures or broken windows  
That can't be fixed.  
Just the subtle details you notice  
That repair happened  
That love happened  
That something was made more whole.

#### 4. *Reframe*

What happens  
When we're no longer scared of the dark?  
When we extend a hand out to winter?  
When we cease railing against the constraints?  
If we hold true that it will pass,  
Simply not designed to everlast?  
Then, darling -  
It's velvet not black.  
It's compost not dirt.  
It's solace not severance.  
Darkness begs us to befriend her.  
For when the lights dim  
There really is quite a bit to explore.

## 5. *Sweet as Pie*

Be polite and utmost pretty  
Present in a pleasing way  
Bite your tongue  
And keep your opinions at bay  
Slowly the message trickled in  
That my worth is my appearance  
My value my sweetness  
And the goal -  
The approving gaze  
Of men and their holy reassurance  
How brittle and fractured  
My sense of self developed  
I am nothing much if I am not  
Desired and adored  
The patriarchy woven into  
The landscape of my mind with  
Continued loops and closed doors.  
But what of my burning rage?  
What of my ugly, funny, and frayed?  
It's taken years of washing, sorting  
And disregarding  
To taste the spice of not being nice  
And savor my worth  
Sourced not from men's eyes.