

## MENIERE'S

When I am eight I open my lungs in a school music room and I do not close them again. I do trills and scales and *Lean on Me* at school speech night and *Quando m'en vo* beside a grand piano and Puccini in a concert hall. I break my neck with an E6 and shake hands with Michael Crawford and am invited to a masterclass on banks of the Tiber. I am addicted to the sounds my body makes: the heartbeat of vibrato, the great gold waves of my spirit being tuned, the applause.

And then I am thirty.

On a cold morning everything is muffled.

I can't get enough sound in. I start to say *pardon?* like an old lady.

I feel like I'm inside a bucket.

I feel like I need to open a window.

I tell the doctor: *Help. I think something's stuck in my ears.*

He has a lamp on a stick. He uses it to look for the music.

Instead he finds the ends of my vestibular nerves. He says *ah.*

The damage is permanent. It is degenerative.

It is a suffocation. I choke on my impenetrable plasticine ears.

The stillness is deafening.