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## Afterlife

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# Afterlife

EMMA BRACKEN

She is born in Elysian Fields  
between swaying flowers alongside the riverbank  
crying out because her voice is new, unmoored  
and sweet air welcomes her incivility with a sad smile.  
Days steadfast and warm  
her hair grows long  
as she is carried from arms to arms  
her body reserved for wistful sleep and adorning with flowers.  
Arms may grip her too tight  
but while the sunlight is so effervescent  
she won't notice.  
One day, she'll stumble across an old golden box  
and in it is time  
and it will devour her.  
It will wear her wrists raw with restraint  
seal her soft lips  
at every moment she cries out  
so that when the wind blows  
only silence is carried past her.  
She'll crawl through the labyrinth bruised and blue  
as time continues to mistle upon her shoulders  
drip from her eyes

until she finds herself upon the eleventh hour.  
Only then may she look up to see the asphodel  
hanging from the mouths of the death  
and know that she has always been there  
in the box which holds her down  
and plucks the awe from her calloused fingers.