

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.