

You have to be brave to get old. He told me that once. As I watched the delicate lines etched into the fabric of my skin, thinning and fraying with age, like soft paper, I knew he was right.

I think of him, of the unmistakable cadence of his voice, chuckling at my realization that my face had changed, as we lay together in the old brass bed and I, rolling over, had caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror that hung on the far left wall, tarnished with age, as I was. He ran a finger over each deep line that Time's scythe had torn through the plane of my forehead, against the crescent edges of my eyelids. He told me I could not be more beautiful.

I cried, wondering how it could be that I had woken up to find that I had spent more of my life than not staring into his face, tasting his mouth, bathing my ears in his voice.

*How had I not yet been taken?*

I told him this, and he kissed me the way that he always did, with his fingers in my hair and his body pressed against me, like every kiss might be our last.

"I'll never wake," he whispered. "I'll keep you here 'til I die. 'Til my last living thought is a dream of you."

The sun draped like honey through the corner window, its wooden pane creaking in the early morning breeze. The leaves of the sugar maple rustled restless and full like a maiden's skirts, and the murmuring of the cows echoed through the green pastures that lay beyond our white picket fence.

Our bones ached, and we moved slowly now when we rose from the bed. I watched as he fumbled with the buttons on his flannel shirt, his skin too softening with age, the indentations like a fine mesh of web over his back and shoulders. I marveled at the mirage of his years that faded in and out of focus and interposed with the young, firm body that had first pressed me down onto this bed- his eyes searching, so careful not to hurt me, so oblivious to his own beauty, which was piercing and my heart broke with it- devastated at his perfection, as I was still.

I understood that he saw me in the same shifting facets of light, and I loved him for it.

He caught me staring at him and smiled. "The kids will be coming soon."

"I know," I replied. I remember staring out the window at the quiet hopefulness of the morning, thinking of my children, or their existence-*our children*. It was as if our souls had been split off into these separate beings, and we walked outside of ourselves as new creations; beautiful, harsh, and wild.

I smiled at him, stretching and arching my body like a nymph. The rays of light banded against the bare skin that peeked out beneath the fold of unbuttoned satin stretched across my abdomen. I rolled over onto the bed and peeked at him through the crook in my elbow, where my eyes rested. I let my mind clear and my gaze fell over him until all that was left of my being could be read in the supine flicker of my lashes.

He hesitated, only for a moment, before ripping off his clothes and tumbling back into bed. He rolled me over in his arms and growled into my neck-both of us laughing-and then covered my face with kisses, and the laughter was misplaced, and our desperate consumption of the other blocked out all light or time. I was only his and he only mine...