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# Imaginary Ancestors: The Woman with Fabled Hair

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## Imaginary Ancestors: The Woman with Fabled Hair · Madeline DeFrees

In the life to come I unravel and let down  
the extravagant bolt of hair,  
the braids of a saint caught in silk  
all the days I remember. Cut free of the tin box  
the future crown is always mine. Repeated  
shocks of auburn, shades of my mother's  
upswept hair when she ran away  
with the man who would fade to my father.

I am waiting for him to come again, the simple  
man in elaborate disguise, wearing his  
bones like a prophet. When enough time has been  
lost, her hair will fall to my shoulder.  
Dense folds released from the veil, this past  
woman's glory recovered  
brings back the forgotten blend, lilac and  
amber, cypress and plum.

The man will look into my eyes when I come  
for the girl in the glass, the one to be  
lifted down from the wall where she hangs  
in the white dress, the too-short curls. "We have  
plenty of time," taking the girl's right hand.  
"We have from now on," stroking the nails  
she tried to press down, kissing them. He won't mind  
that her teeth are set far apart,

believing that passionate sign. *Don't be afraid,*  
and the brain in its time carries her  
over the doorstep, engraved words to a bride.  
These forevers that keep  
disappearing, bureau drawers of a life  
that threatens to move us out. The body  
meets the animal it ran from: dark bush  
parted in the night, wet fur, the cave lighted  
by the eyes of lynx, my own  
dense longing.