

The night is so vast and so young and so far, and here she is, drinking and flushed with laughter at the man whose words and whose whiskey were smooth. Drowning in the moon's lovely heaven-soaked light, she tips her glass and down her throat it goes. Ambrosia and honey could never be as sweet, and she bends for a kiss, and sweeter still is he in the garden, wild and teeming with life. The vines, tangled like morning-talk hair, and the sunflowers facing their future, and the velvet blooms, soft as a baby's skin, tender as love.

Wrought iron creaks, copper statues gain verdigris. A year passes, and she comes back to their garden, wild and untamed, just like her. She holds a child in her arms, no older than three months. She approaches, and her heart stutters and her eyes shrink and she knows what she will see here.

She climbs their tree, their special tree, and there is a man there, and he is giving her hope and love and patience, and she loves him, and this is his child. And then he is rotting, and the maggots eat his skin and the beetles chew his hair and his eyes are melting, right out of his skull, and she screams but nobody can hear her, and his muscles are molding and his brain is leaking and of course it's all a lie.

A skeleton dangles from tangled limbs. A heart that gave out. A loving husband gone. She has six more lined up. She never gets used to the bodies.

She climbs down the ropes. There was no dagger.

She exits the garden's rusty gate. There was no axe, no dart, no blood.

There will be another, though. And another. And another. These things never change. There is a man, and she loves him. The man is dead. The man is dead. The man is dead.

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The night is so vast and so young and so far, and here she is, drinking.