

blood flower

You are twenty, going on two hundred, when the sun explodes.

It fractures bright and feathers up behind your eyelids in fluttering lines like lightning, then blackens at the corners of your vision and streaks through your temples. Then the sun is running towards you, tears streaming down his lovely face and terribly mortal bellows bursting forth from his lovely throat, and *oh*, isn't that sweet.

He cries your name. Over and over like a prayer, like you're the god and he's the mortal. It hurts, and you say as much, and he weeps, cradling you to his chest, forehead pressed against yours, beautiful as anything and bloody and broken besides.

He says *I'm sorry*, again and again and again. It is strange to hear it from a god's mouth, immortal voice and all. You forgive him, though, and you tell him so. You tell him to let the strings lie. His tears come faster.

You are twenty, going on two hundred, when you die in the sun's arms.

He lies there and weeps. You love him so much you don't know what to do with it, and yet you cannot tell him. Too many words in your mouth, fattened by his grief and ripe for the slaughter. He presses his godly hand against your forehead, but you cannot move. He conjures a flask of ambrosia and tips it to your lips, spills a little across your chin. Still, you cannot move.

He will be angry, later, at his own carelessness. Then at his uselessness, because what god of medicine cannot heal? And you will have no answer for him, for you will be naught but ashes and air and a sprawling flower, bloomed from your own blood. Perhaps he will even bring you back.

For now, though, he will weep until his throat is raw and his eyes are red and rasping. He will touch you tender, because tender is sweet and gentle, but sore around the edges. He will burn, and the world will burn with him.

He tucks his fingers under your hair, smooths it away from your sticky forehead. The blood crawls under his nails, probably, clinging there with all his grief and his regret and your life. His tears are warm on your face. But that does not matter, because you are dead and unfeeling, halfway to Hades already.

You are twenty, going on two hundred, when the sun sets early, curls into the clouds all dull and tired, and lies there until the sky starts to bleed.