

Somewhere in Mexico City

You, Tlazolteotl, will spend hours in a distant future retracing the day your rage finally bares its teeth.

You, seventeen, are in the passenger's seat of your best friend— Quetzalcoatl's — car. People give their sons the names of gods. Those sons grow up to burn holes in car seats and say stupid things. Your knees are tucked in, careful not to leave sweat on the nice leather. Mexico City sways around you— red lights blurring, the low thrum of a city fighting to live. Quetzalcoatl drives with one hand. With the other, he flicks his lighter open. A cigarette hangs from bruised lips. You learned to not ask where the bruises come from.

You pass the memorial before he notices it. Flowers spill across the sidewalk like an open wound, candle wax pooling on the edge. The same memorial posters haunt the telephone post— a boy with sun-kissed skin as dark as yours, his skinny face framed by dark curls. You swear to Quetzalcoatl he was your neighbor, and Quetzalcoatl tells you all *indios* look the same. The boy's name has been scribbled and rewritten several times.

“Fuck,” Quetzalcoatl huffs, glaring out the window. “They’re still on about this?”

You feel it then— the unspoken tension lurks between you two boys born into different classes. Something ugly stirs in your gut. You straighten on instinct.

“They need to stop,” Quetzalcoatl goes unprompted. “My dad’s been pissed all week. Every time this shit is brought up, he takes it out on me.” A laugh slips out chapped lips. “Like, sorry a guy died, but he was *just* a maid’s son. What do you want us to do about it?”

Of course Mixcoatl’s son, the Milky Way’s heir, finds this story isn’t worth telling.

“That boy,” Quetzalcoatl continues, eyes back to the road, “He knew what he was doing. Protests get people killed. We live in Mexico, for fuck’s sake—”

You think of the boy that could have been your neighbor, either by blood or proximity. The boy looks like you. Or you look like him. You think of his body rammed by a car— the same counterprotestors the Milky Way hires to end the protests against his latest construction project. You think of blood seeping into pavement, how quickly money shushes the news stations.

Quetzalcoatl keeps talking. He always does. He says he doesn’t want to major in business— he aspires to be a writer. His art is rebellion.

“Neta,” he puffs. “I just need a good story to tell.”

“¿Neta?” You speak for the first time. “You want a good story to tell?”

Quetzalcoatl looks surprised. You don’t need to raise your voice. The truth is dealt in absolutes, after all. You look at the curve of his neck that’s had you seeing stars for ages. He knows you two don’t play by the same rules. You love Quetzalcoatl, so you took the only part of him you could afford to touch.

“I fucked your girlfriend.”