

“Cold”

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[30 Days of Writing](#) – One Word Prompts
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Day 9: “Cold”

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It wasn't the first snowfall of the year, and judging by the chill in the air, it certainly wouldn't be the last. Charlie couldn't remember a year when everything felt so... cold. It was an odd thing, how he noticed it. As a demigod, he ran warm—downright hot, most days. Cold barely affected him. So why was it the wind left him with a bitter chill, causing him to shiver even in his coat?

“Grief causes us to act and react in ways we don't always expect. Oh, sadness and anger—those are to be expected—but it's other things that hit you. Suddenly. All at once.” His mother fixed her brown eyes on him, and even Charlie noticed the warmth in them had fled, replaced with the glisten of tears. He had little reason to doubt her words. After all, if anyone knew about death and grief, it would be Eleanor Slater. She'd experienced plenty of it in her three hundred some years.

Her smile was sad when she gave her youngest son a pat on the shoulder. “The cold comes with it.”

“Does it?” he asked, bitter tone seeping in. “I didn't feel it when Dad died. Not this... kind of cold.” He'd been sixteen at the time, there was talk of war and he'd been more angry than sad. There hadn't been the chill of despair, only the heat of anger and youthful pride.

But with Ethan...

Charlie sucked in a breath and turned his head away. His older brother was dead and it was all his fault. If he'd only gotten there in time, warned him not to attempt the trip, that the water was rushing, rushing over the bridges and roadways.

He understood it then, where the cold came from. It wasn't grief, not as his mother understood it, but it was something else. Something worse.

Guilt.

Tears stung his eyes but he blinked them back quickly, before they could fall. It came again, that

chill, and Charlie tried his best to fight it off again. He drew his coat closer around him and in doing so, shrugged off his mother's hand.

It went so deep, a knot of it formed just beneath his heart, somewhere beneath his rib cage. He could imagine it as a block of ice, settling in.

He might never get warm again.