

KAZIM ALI  

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PERSEPHONE AS A BOY

He never says what he feels.  
His father used to say, “Your face is like a flower.”  
He wilts when he thinks about loneliness.

At seven he wakes with the sun, imagines it burning through  
the window.  
He dreams he has cancer but has never been to a doctor.

Yesterday he imagined it even better: a spectacular New York  
end: crazy taxi,  
stray bullet, runaway train—

In the final scene he’s lying there with wide eyes,  
mouth trembling like a wilting flower, struggling to speak to his  
father,  
who is holding his hand and saying, “Don’t try to say anything. I  
love you.”

At eight he walks to the corner store for small things, just to  
remind himself he is alive:  
daisies, oatmeal, salt.

Passing the subway stairs on his way home he realizes he could  
go underground  
here and by ticket and transfer not emerge again from the earth  
for hundreds  
of miles.