

STORIES FROM THE MUSES

BECOME A BETTER WRITER

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Introduction by
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THE DEMONS WILL FALL

BY MER MONSON

I have to dig deep for this woman to show her face. I lay the shovel down and look in her eyes. She reeks something awful, her hair a raven's nest. I lock my stomach, a reflex I can't unstitch from my story, but something pulls me in. I know those icy blue eyes, that clenched-in-stone jaw, that belly on fire. As we sit in silence, I can hear the rushing sound of my own fury.

I hear the smack of a tennis ball gunned with every nerve and muscle. I hear journal pages inked with hate, torn out, and trashed for shame. I hear teenage teeth grinding against the edge of my female place. I hear my gut crackle and hiss, the moment I know my sister's husband has been beating her for years. I hear the energy healer's words, "I see a long line of women behind you, women who'd rather get cancer than get angry." I hear my hands muzzle my own mouth, pleading with myself not to make waves.

Cancer comes, and with it the urge to wake up all my dead parts. I ask my love to get an old car door from the junkyard. "Why?" he says. "To beat the hell out of it," I say. I shatter glass and bang up metal until the door cracks open inside, until the hungry truth pushes its way up, until all of me can breathe. Wearing my rage on the outside is a damn relief. No more

burying the blackness for safety, for belonging, for mother's milk. My body knows. Fury must be loved with arms wider than its own and let onto the dance floor, before it can weave its way to higher ground.

I smile now each time I step into her strong warm skin, into this long-cramped layer of my own. I look at her in the mirror, dazzling in the grandeur of fully grown woman flesh, wild hair flying like ravens. The earth's demons are swept up by a silent washing of their feet as I stand my ground, make space for holy eruption, and raise my arms until the vastness of the heart is cradled back to its throne. And as the demons fall, they will look and they will see — the child, the maiden, the mother, the huntress, the crone, the seductress and I — we are all the arms and breath of God.

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