

muscle memory

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The weather changed & my heart changed with it; I am one of those people who is glad for fall, glad always, glad as my whole life opens up again & I remember what is possible & all the things I want to do.

It was, for the most part, a hard summer. I am running forty miles a week, a thing I would not have thought doable very long ago, before a few weeks ago, before I did it & realized I could. I was trying to explain to someone how this happened, how my body became a body that is capable of this doing, & I said I think it is mostly a matter of scale. Of how your perspective changes when the undone thing becomes done.

I am tired of trauma & of writing about trauma & of the idea that trauma is the only experience women have to offer the world, the only piece of our lives that matters, the only story we have to tell (over & over & over & over), tired even as these stories repeat themselves ad nauseam in the public eye, even as trauma is reproduced endlessly & in a thousand novel ways, trauma against all bodies othered and queered, all bodies brown & black & female & trans, that even as trauma metastasizes & our naming of it is met with refusal, our demand that it be recognized is turned aside, trauma is still the only story that is given to us to tell.

We do other things besides bleed. We fight and set fires, we build communities, we love in the face of all that does not love us. We knit bright clothes out of shrapnel. We drink on railroad bridges under the broad white moon & name all our dreams in order, one by one, the train cars passing behind us so close they'd shear us clean through if we leaned back too far. We tattoo one another's names with needles & India ink; we make our memories into our skins. We make lives. We make living.

I am working on a book about monsters & I have been afraid of it for a while. I look at the notes, the blank document, put them away, do it again. Do we want to go back to those places? Is it worthwhile? I don't know. But the story keeps calling my name. A friend of mine who used to be a distance swimmer told me that she had fallen once from a great distance & when she went to the hospital they told her she had shattered her spine but her muscles were so massive they held the splinters of bone in place, that that was what saved her, her own strength born of practice. We spend all our days making muscle for this. We run and run and run until distance is only a matter of time.