

STORIES FROM THE MUSES

BECOME A BETTER WRITER

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Introduction by
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I WANTED TO GIVE WHAT I HAD NOT GOTTEN

BY JENNIE LINTHORST

Our neighbor's Peruvian Pepper Tree drapes her ribbons behind my bedroom window. I like to pretend that it's a Weeping Willow of my Tennessee roots, remembering how they called to me in my youth, planted next to ponds, riverbanks, and lush green grass. Those sweeping leaves dripped like tears during a rainfall. Somehow, nature understood the depth of our human condition, created a majestic crown to pause and see the rise and fall of our days. I knew at a young age that I had an old soul. After the slow death of my mother, I honed a keen sense, a light behind my eyes that could peer into darkness. I was not afraid to hold a hand of the dying, to ask more questions of love abandoned, to pick up my friend at the end of her driveway while her alcoholic father lay passed out on the floor. I wanted to give what I had not gotten — the gentle hand stroking my back, stroking my hair at the end of a long day, stroking the embers of good enough and it will be okay. That's all we really want — a kind place to heal. Nothing felt better to me than filling that void for my friends. I learned to listen for the hollow places that needed sustenance. I learned to cook their favorite meals, build a house to invite them in with warm colors, warm beds, warm fireplaces to sit out their tempests. I learned how to read them

the right poem, how to play the perfect song, how to pause their pain for hours with a pallet of paint, an empty canvas, and play. When I was pregnant with my son, I rested a hand under the curve of my belly, ready to hold him, ready to lift the weight of him, ready to understand the voyage of this bloodline. I can see glimpses of my eyes in his grown face. As he moves into manhood, I need someone to sit with me under the Weeping Willow, someone to witness the tears of this passage, someone to tell me I have done enough, and that he will be okay.

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