We Never Left

by Nonnie Augustine

Above our bellies we are beautiful women with luscious breasts. Where there is skin, believe me, it is flawless, irresistible. Most of us have long hair, but there are some among us who keep their heads close cropped for aerodynamic considerations. Although I admire the clean strong skulls they present to the universe, I let my hair grow long—I enjoy the feeling of silk against my back when I crouch and in the air it waves behind me in a seductive banner, an inexplicable radiance your scientists cannot explain. We all have red hair.

Below we are feathered beings except, that is, for our claws. These are all bared now, sharpened and ready to do violence. Never before have we had such an army. For one thousand one hundred and sixteen years we have been gathering in caves hidden from human understanding. None of you believe in us, but we do not need your faith to manifest again. We only need our anger and it has reached full force. I confess to you that we have needed to rest. The first five thousand years or so of what you call civilization had utterly depleted our will to engage with you, but that will is this day replenished. For those of you who do not oppress, manipulate, humiliate, lie, steal, or murder, life will continue in much the same way. Even if you stand by silently and sadly, accepting abhorrent conditions as normal, (as humans in overwhelming numbers have always come to do) doing nothing useful, we will not attack you. You are not our priority.

We will rake the guilty as they sleep, night after night for as long as it takes until, finally, fear of these nightmare punishments will bend evildoers toward respect for the wisdom of the most ancient laws, known and repeatedly defied by humankind. We Harpies will torment the power-mad and the violent until they yowl in terror and

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give up their catastrophic hold over civilization. Once again epic poems will be written and sagas will be proclaimed by storytellers around tribal bonfires. Earth will return to glory and sated, we will return to our peaceful caves to rest, claws retracted, spirits ever watchful.