

# Muse No. 19

## How I Found Her

BY BRYON CAHILL

There I was, alone with my doubt and my story. Countless scattered thoughts churned in my head as I sat gazing at the blinking cursor.

I had a story to tell. It was in me. I could feel it. If only I could get started. If only I could find my muse.

Whenever I think of invoking my muse, I recall the first line of Homer's *The Odyssey*: "TELL ME, O MUSE, of that ingenious hero

### The Greek Muses

Who?	Muse of ...
Polyhymnia	Sacred Poetry
Calliope	Epic Poetry
Clio	History
Erato	Love
Euterpe	Music
Melpomene	Tragedy
Terpsichore	Dancing
Thalia	Comedy
Urania	Astronomy

who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy." One sentence was all it took and she was there with him, whispering in his ear and guiding his hand. If only it were that easy for me.

I forced myself to stand and headed outside for some fresh air. Three hours was too long to be blocked.

I was immediately dumbstruck by the nine ethereal beauties hanging about on my front porch in the dim, orange glow of the evening.

"Who are you?" I demanded—a little too roughly, perhaps, for these were the most gorgeous women I had ever seen.

"We are the daughters of mighty Zeus, the king of all Greek gods, and of Mnemosyne," said the tallest of the bunch, a brown-haired vixen with a booming voice.

"Nem-o-who?" I vaguely remembered hearing the name in school.

"Our mother is Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory."

Well, that makes sense, I thought.

"We are the nine Muses, and we are here to help you write. I am Clio, the Muse of history. These are my sisters: Calliope, Polyhymnia, Erato, Euterpe, Terpsichore, Melpomene, Thalia, and Urania."

"Who, who, who, who, who, who, who, and who?"

"Together, we inspire great works

of art, love, history, and astronomy."

I blinked. "Astronomy, huh?"

"Yes. Urania has stars in her eyes," Clio said, pointing to her sister. Enveloped in a shroud of innocence, Urania held a vacant stare full of vast galaxies and meteors, cloudbursts and stars—all contained neatly within the swirling cosmos of her dark pupils.

Urania smiled simply and laughed. "Wheeeeeeeee!"

"We love her dearly, but I'm afraid she's a little spacey," Clio admitted.

"What do you all want from me?" I asked. I was beginning to feel a nagging concern. Was I dreaming or hallucinating or—gulp—dead?

"We want nothing of you," Clio said. "We only want to help."

I cast my eyes downward in shame. My unwritten story was about the world's most intriguing woman. A phantom of my imagination, she was proving impossible to pinpoint.

There was nothing Clio or her sisters could do. It was a nice gesture, coming down from Mount Olympus and all, just for little ol' me; but I was beyond help. I broke the news gently.

"I am a lost cause, my dears," I told them sadly. "I do appreciate your efforts, yet I remain uninspired."

The Muses openly wept and began to fade before my eyes.

Just as the last Muse vanished, a book fell from the sky and landed on my bare big toe.

"Ow!" I exclaimed.

Hopping on my one good foot, I heard Clio whisper a single word: "Badonskyyyyyy."

"What?" I winced in pain and looked down at the book. It was *The Nine Modern Day Muses*, by Jill Badonsky. I picked it up and went inside. Deep within the folds of my secondhand sofa, I read a vivid description of nine new

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muses. They celebrated laughter, play, courage, gratitude, practice, pause, and even uninhibited uniqueness.

I was hopeful and doubtful at the same time. Marveling at dear Clio's selflessness in the face of my rude denial, I thought I might find something useful in this book after all. But when I got to the section describing Shadow, the muse of the dark side, I recoiled. Classic horror writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King have constructed creepy prose by exploring the darkest corners of their souls, but, sure as soot, I didn't want to delve into mine!

Enough reading! I shut the book

defiantly and turned back to my laptop, where I typed these poignant, lonesome words: *I am undone*.

What could I do? I had invoked the Muses of old only to turn them away. Then I had researched the modern-day muses, but when they tried to materialize in my world, I ran away from my own shadows.

I took stock. My elusive story was about the perfect girl. It was unfair to be inspired by anyone but her.

That's when it happened. That's when inspiration hit me. I heard a

woman's voice whisper in my ear. It was she. Muse No. 19.

"I am your muse. I am your character. I am your story. Here I am."

There, in all her glory, she hovered right in front of me. Her hair was a dazzling shade of fiery red that no mortal had ever known; yet her savage locks were as calm as a serene zephyr passing through a mountain's springtime shade.

"I've been looking for you everywhere!" I said. "Where've you been?"

"There was a bit of a backup on the Inspiration Expressway. Sorry." Her smooth, angelic voice flooded me. Enraptured by her celestial eyes and her pudgy, adorable toes,

I submitted to her hypnotic trance.

She spoke again, snapping me back into the fairy-tale moment. "Inspiration cannot be found but merely tripped over," she said. "It comes on a whim or a passing fancy. You have to grab it while it's hot. Now write me, lucky writer! Godspeed and good luck!"

With her words resonating in my ears, I was overwhelmed by the happy, familiar spark that precedes my writing frenzies. The creative neurons were firing on all cylinders. My story spilled out onto the page.

I wrote in a daze till morning while my muse drifted around me, smelling of luscious licorice, rosewood, and immortal dreams. ✍️



—Kamil Vojnar/Photofestica. Background images: Milissa Hayden/Photofestica