

Mr. Kleinman:

All Adem wants is for the killing to stop. But he's a golem, and that means he's magically bound to protect the mysterious small box he carries—no matter what the cost. Hunters find him wherever he goes to take it from him, prepared to fight to the death. And so they die, every one of them.

When an angel comes to Adem with a deal that could set him free and give him his greatest desire—a soul—Adem jumps at the chance. But in trade, he must first do the impossible: retrieve the angel's long lost love from the Underworld, who died ages earlier.

What the angel doesn't tell Adem is that breaking into the Underworld will weaken the barriers between the realms, which are the only thing containing demigod rebels who twice have wreaked havoc across the realms in their attempts to overthrow the gods. Adem's quest threatens to finally unleash the foretold Third War between the realms, and could bring the entire middle realm of Terath to its end.

At 75,000 words, *Mud* is the first in a series of four epic fantasy novels that detail Adem's quest and its consequences. *Mud* features a gritty antihero inspired by the style of Frank Miller; an emotive narrative similar to Tahereh Mafi's *Shatter Me* series; and a complex world inspired by Greek and Judeo-Christian mythology. I believe it may be of particular interest to you because of your interest in unique voices and strong characters.

I am a marketing and public relations professional living in Washington, D.C., and in my free time I am a regular contributor to _____ and _____. I also write my own blog, _____, and am editor of aaaaaaaaaa, a digital, weekly short story publication.

Per your submission guidelines, please see the first page of *Mud* below. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A stair creaks.

With the rain pounding down on the temple's rattling roof, the human may not have even heard the sound he made. But I do. It is too close, just outside the door of my tower. I put down my worn book of the Texts on the windowsill and listen. There it is again. My stomach sinks.

A stair creaks, and I know I'm about to kill again. The boiling thrill for blood rises within me and I know better than to bother suppressing it. It will happen anyway, no matter how much I fight to bury the monster I was made to be.

Over the centuries, I've at least gotten efficient about it. My hand has already dug the box from the front pocket of my cloak, is already clasping it tight in my palm. I stride across my small room, my bare feet collecting dust. Lean on the mantle to lure the Hunter in, my back to the door. Then I stare at the blank dusty wall and wait. The air stirs as he enters, the soft tap of each step.

I want this over with.

I hold the box high in my hand for him to see, as if I am inspecting it. So small, so delicate. It nestles easily against my palm, comfortable and sure. It knows I must serve it.

Padded steps lift from the wood and onto the aged rug. My spine prickles with anticipation. Dread, heavy and thick like a storm cloud, wells up inside me. Have they learned nothing from their many losses? So many I cannot count them anymore.

I lay the box on the mantle for him to reach. My fingers itch for the fight, but I will not destroy the human of my own will. He must bring it on himself. I step away from it, leave it there for the Hunter to set his fate.

A rustle of rushed steps, a grunt, a cool blade slices through my back.

I feel no pain as the humans do, whatever that is. I remove the blade from my back and the skin immediately begins to pull back together.

I turn to him. Rain beats at the window, lightning flashes over his face. Wild dilated eyes peer up at me from under a deep red hood. Young. The cloak slips at his neck, too large for his growing body. The same deep red cloak all the others wore, rich and dark and velvety, the same gold braided trim. Fine and proud. My own worn and ripped brown cloak seems even worse next to it. I don't need to see the Hunter's back to know what's embroidered into the threads: an elegant golden shield. The boy is trembling inside it. Waiting.

Another Hunter's blade to add to my pile. Just like the one already in my hilt. Like the Hunters' cloaks, the knives are very fine, the same elaborate shield intricately carved into the hilt. It seems out of place in my hand even after so many times. But I run my fingers over its familiar ridges and wait for the gash in my back to finish healing.

My ears are hot with anticipation, with dread of what I know comes next.

"It's not too late. Leave." My voice is rough with disuse.

He gapes up at me, my monstrosity. I fight the urge to drop my gaze to the ground, keep my eyes locked on his, try to will him to turn away. To go back to wherever he came from.

But he won't.