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From *Dancing with Monsters*:

*During my third exacerbation, I was moving with great difficulty. I determined to do one thing each day: wash the dishes. I remember leaning, exhausted, against the kitchen counter, standing on the brown indoor-outdoor carpet. I was washing a cup, but my attention was on the fear of disability I felt crowding close around me like the oppressive heat before a summer thunderstorm on the prairie. With a sort of internal gesture, I brought my attention back to washing the cup. Rippled stoneware texture. Tan cup with blue stripe near the rim. Warm sudsy water. Laminate counter biting slightly into my hips as it helped me stay standing. Suddenly the fear lifted. I had a sense that everything was all right. Everything would be all right. Not that I would get well, or even live, but that there was nothing to fear. No matter what happened, I would not be harmed. It is the nearest I have come to seeing God.*

*"Humor shines through ...courageous and honest ...a gift that inspires appreciation for life."  
--Barbara Brooks*

Dancing with Monsters

# Dancing with Monsters

Chronic Illness as Creative Transformation



Kate Wolfe-Jenson

This is a book about monsters. Not the cute, laughably incompetent ones you see in animated movies, but the ones you meet in your own life: ugly thoughts, unexpected losses, inexcusable evils.

At age twenty, Kate Wolfe-Jenson had already discovered her monster-mind. She was an expert at negative thinking and expecting disaster. Then she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Together, the monsters whipped her into a wild dance. The degenerative disease tapped out fear and sadness, and her monster-mind twirled into depression, rage, and grief. It seemed as if the monsters might just win.

A decade after being diagnosed, Kate discovered that what she knew about creativity and transformation could help her deal with the frustrations of living with chronic illness and of life in general. Through that understanding, she entered into a dance with MS and began healing rather than run from the monsters she faced daily.

Through memoir, essay, and fanciful stories, this book explores the landscape of chronic illness, describes its contours, and invites you to choreograph a dance with your own monsters, whatever they may be.

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Front cover image by Kate Wolfe-Jenson. Photo by Ralph D. Jenson. Monster stunt double: Alexis C. Jenson.

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Kate Wolfe-Jenson



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