

CHAPTER FIVE

BECAUSE HIS NEED DOES NOT ERADICATE ME

Threats are mind fucks, mind rapes, intrusions into the psyche, so let the psyche be flexible, trampoline like. Don't absorb. Integrate, respond and send. Create a quick release mechanism for the crap people throw at you.

We put ourselves through torments needlessly. There is available, through a glass darkly, outside the cave, on the other side of the sky, in a secret garden, paradise. Why insist on living in a wasteland? Because it's familiar, we know where the grocery store is, what the tax percentages are. Familiarity is a cousin to ownership. We think ownership is power, we forget that familiarity breeds contempt, ownership, neglect and worse. Remember how they used to talk about how we only use one third of our brain? You don't hear about that anymore. Do you think that's because we're using more now or less? Anyway, what does the unused two thirds do, what's it here for? Nature isn't wasteful, if we have it, it must be for something. Is paradise lost? I doubt it. Is the forgotten name of God locked away in the dormant rivers, the Sahara in our brains? The desert mind, the reportedly atrophied two thirds?

His loins are powerful. He thrills her with his touch, which unlike Midas, produces the alchemy which releases the life within her, encourages it to flourish beyond her preconceived limitations. She wants to be with him now, embraced. And yet apart she feels she gains perspective.

If you will forgive me the arrogance of this, I feel as though I have scaled the steep, treacherous mountain wall and been graced with the view not only of where I've been, how hard and high I have climbed, but also the infinite magnificence that awaits my further descents and ascents, my further adventures in a world I have begun to comprehend, love and appreciate far more than I ever imagined or if I imagined this I can not remember. What is it about distance that grants perspective? Is that how he feels out on the ocean, apart from the land, the surface altered, his motility restricted, working in tandem with the wind, urging the powers to merge with his wishes, dependent on the natural to get where he will, as in his sexual ease and creativity, when he finds himself in a world of wonder, he is not tempted to think of baseball or movie stars, consult charts of the stars, he dives right in.

Oh my, my. Oh hell, yes, she's gonna put on her party dress!

So you think it's easy to get well, do you? Take a pill and it's all over, Charlie? Good riddance to pain? Well it's not that easy.

It was months of agony.

I feel worse than I did before we started.

The therapists grew calmer as our anxiety levels rose. Every step hurt.

The sky reached down to suckle me to silence. Softly, slowly, stillness permeated the membranes of my panic, wove into the torn tendons of my soul. All the while my meridians were channeling the hot lava of rage and hopelessness, I soaked in the misery of my memories of terror and degradation.

Those days were long dog days.

Why didn't we give up? I don't know. None of us who started quit. That wasn't unusual. Once a woman decided to try, she rarely changed her mind. So there we were. On a raft trip, down a dangerous river, rapids tempting us to disaster. We were negotiating our paths through numberless Scyllae and Charybdis with no clear idea of our destinations.

We were never told what to expect. All we had was where we were, how we felt. Cold. Wet. Scared. All we were was what we had. Each other. Six women in a basement room raft, on a journey to somewhere.

I was in so much pain before we began, I didn't worry that it would be worse. It might be better. Our individual therapists had told us that it would get better. We were grateful to be in a group, to come to, once a week, to say things that would be accepted without horror or dismissiveness. We were grateful to have a leader who had been on the river longer. We trusted her when she assured us that the ride would get easier the closer we got to the mouth, to the place of pouring into the sea. Everyone began their journey at the source, the high thin trickle descending.

The sea sounded nice but who knew? Death might be ok too, but who knows for sure? Maybe after struggling your whole life, the end is darkness, purgatory, or hell, pulled into a million pieces, pulled apart, the worms of eternity eating your soul. Suppose we got battered by those Scylla rocks, There's one! looks particularly frightening, a humanoid animal shape, carnivorous jaws hanging, open, wet, anticipatory sea spray saliva ready to devour us, dismember us, tear us apart, merge us further into something other than what we wish to become.

To begin with we arrived, on this journey, with pieces missing, with our laughter vanquished, our hate congealed, our anger fractured, food no longer satisfying or providing the only satisfaction. What if the river consisted of deeper self loathing, dismemberment in perpetuity? What if we arrived at the mouth devoured? Could we enter the sea dissolved?

Or we might make it. The river might give us the time we needed to put ourselves back together. If these six intrepid travelers managed to renew and

discipline themselves, if we arrived at the delta of our dreams, would the sea betoken freedom? Would the sea be a churning assault? Would we face a tidal wave of indifference? Rejection? What did this sea consist of, and why did we want to go there?

I'm thirsty.

Can't we go somewhere else?

When do I get to hold the rudder?

Swim upstream, spawn a few times and die.

Yup, life's a bitch.