

Journey of Storms

by Paula Bramsen Cullen

An excerpt containing chapter two:

In the Shadow of the Sun

© Paula Bramsen Cullen, 1994

All rights reserved.

This document may be downloaded for personal viewing only.

First Edition

Published by Millstone River Press

Princeton, New Jersey

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cullen, Paula Bramsen

Journey of Storms / Paula Bramsen Cullen

ISBN 0-9637906-4-1 (paper)

ISBN 0-9637906-6-8 (cloth)

1. Psychotherapy – Poetry.

PS3553.U5545J68 1994

I. Title.

811.54

QB193-21921

II. In the Shadow of the Sun

- The Lucky Ones • 33
- Compatriots • 34
- Curiosity • 35
- Cathexis • 36
- Siren's Song • 37
- Incest • 38
- Therapeutic Relationship • 40
- My Men • 41
- To My Ethical Analyst • 42

The Lucky Ones

I count those lucky
who do not know him,
so cannot need him.

It is their fortune
to pass him on the street,
to pass a middle-aged, balding man
walking with vigor

and not see in him his kindness
nor know the strength
of his unassailable ethics.

Needing him causes me so much pain,
I sometimes think
that grasping rain to hold the structure of a drop
would be no harder
than to stop needing him.

His fingers probe in my mind
so gently,
easing me in and out of pain.

Compatriots

We all dream of him
and know the others dream.
Every grown to elderly man
we mistake for him
with a jump of hearts.
Then anticipation seeps out
leaving emptiness.

And after each episode of mistaking,
the part of us living in that anticipation
must rebuild itself
one brick by one brick
to go on.

Curiosity

I need to know
where he goes
and who he knows.
Does he ever throw
a dish in anger?

I need to know
his favorite song
and how his face looks
when he's strong
lifting his grandson
in the air.

I need to know
which suit he prefers
and to whom he refers
the patients he can't see.
And does he think of me?
What does he think of me?

But then he leans forward
to make me understand
his answers would become
a tangled snare.
My questions are an echo from long ago.

The important questions
are not the ones I ask him
but the ones he asks me.

Cathexis

If only you would love me
lock your hand in mine
bend down deep to breathe me
touch my sigh
please love me.

I am one of the others
far away from you,
apart more than together.
First Seder, Lent, Hebrew.

If you'd press me with your body
caress me with your eyes
with you I'd be familiar
then you I'd soon despise.

All it would take to decathect you
would be your first embrace
then free I'd be of longing.
And trust?
Why, not a trace.

Siren's Song

Are you exactly sure
we should not touch,
with your life being
squeezed by time
like a tube of toothpaste
passed down the line?

For I am worth loving.

Are you precisely determined
our lives not intertwine
with death's shadow pressing
held back only by fool's grin
and skeleton hand?

For I am worth loving.

Life is once lived.
Dust has no option
to taste or touch.

Some report another side
from which to say
how sweet a touch
might have been.

But there is no other side.

And I am worth loving.

Incest

The old man declaimed,
Your heartbeat is lost on me.
I am the tribe father.
You and I cannot be.
We are of the same branch
of the same tree.

The fruit of our coupling
would be preposterous,
scentless, sour;
strange to what was
meant to be.

I will not accept. I will not agree.
I cannot see a separate life.
Indeed, our ages cross.

You are young in your denial.
I am old in my desire,
sitting, tired in a train,
one of many old, old women,
shiny blouse with skirt too long,
stockings frayed and somewhat large
laced black shoes with low black heels,
old head nodding,
dreaming dreams of younger times
or yesterday
but age-dulled dreams.

The never of together
is slivers of ice
in my old, cold veins.

If I allowed the ice its melting
I could be young again.
It is my prerogative.

Therapeutic Relationship

Nearly as many years as I am
sever our experience
our aims
our understanding.

Your allotted time has bent round
early struggle
 wife
 children
 grandchildren
 acceptance of yourself,
each in its season.

As agile as I might strive
to overtake
I am running up an
escalator going down,
losing ground
even as I gain.

There is decreed
by our separate spheres of self
that untouched ground between,
over which I anguish
by which I am sustained.

My Men

One was given,
one was chosen.
Reflections dance
in harmony.

Daddy was a gift to me
yet I see him clearer
through my chosen man
than through my memory.

To My Ethical Analyst

Thank you for the gift of *never*.
The swan's white curving neck
dips and bows
to that loneliest word.

To my hungry eyes
the trees weave
branching pantomime,
syncopated song of
never.

I would forswear my gift, my own,
through the first bright rapture.

Then as rapture dimmed and
your face assumed its contours
of an old and human man,
all that forsworn
would sweep me up
to fill a void of urgency

'til I could find another yearning
to replace your countenance,
succumbing to kaleidoscope features
lost long ago in Daddy's grave.