

# Shortcut to Emptiness



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Excerpts from *Emptiness Surrounded with Rage*,  
soon to be published by *Booksurge Publishers*

Down in the Dirt chapbook  
2005 **Scars Publications**

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# Dedication

To my daughter, Ashton  
Born June 4, 1969  
Reunited July 1, 1998

# Introduction

For all those people who know me, particularly my relations, if you happen upon this anthology, please know that the dirty parts are all in my imagination.

As for the rest of you, the feelings set in these poems come from the experiences of being an unwed mother in the 1960's, a drunk as well as bulimic, having Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depression), along with a wild array of obsessive/compulsive and addictive behaviors thrown in there for good measure. My expressions come also from an ability, surely a God given gift, to look back from some level of repair and find healing through recognition and acceptance, even some black humor.

I remain grateful for it all.

# I. Pushy Little Child

## Me

Brought down from the clouds  
by a paranoia so palpable  
it became my eyes.  
Entwining my sickness  
with the shaft of others.  
Me, just a snapshot map  
of my family.

## Social Skills

Sex became my relationships.  
Never got past puberty.

Don't know what to do with yourself?  
Take off your clothes.

Trouble holding up your end of the conversation?  
Hike up your skirt.

No prayer in hell with such a limited vocabulary.

## Daddy's Girl, Part one

He had straight black hair,  
and a broad back,  
arms that could hold me against the world.  
When I was particularly clever  
his face would light up.  
But his eyes were disguised;  
they only had room  
to reflect himself.

## Daddy's girl, Part Two

My Dad, the biggest, bravest, smartest man I knew,  
could do anything,  
solve everything,  
lift it all up,  
and fix it besides.  
Except me.  
I was his biggest heartbreak, failure.  
Mine was his distance.  
Always engineering,  
he often went around me without a sign.

# Mommy?

Once,  
after I got sent away pregnant,  
I called my mother  
and cried out my complete, unmitigated terror  
and pain,  
a loneliness that, Dear God, was eroding me;  
there were no landmarks left.  
I asked her for help,  
and she said no.

## Step Back, Jack

Being part of but not in it:  
the special haziness of *Love*  
that covers the hard, cold work of  
just gittin' along  
day after day.  
I can romance that.  
It's the people I can't stand.

## Pushy Little Girl

I liked to get on top and throw myself down,  
rush boys past the journey,  
shove them to thrill as quick as I could.  
The act was out-of-control passion;  
the fact was a calculated distance.

## Strip Mine

criticism  
blasts out  
from his side of the room.  
So I won't  
infect him  
the way that I planned.  
The next day,  
or maybe the day after,  
he will remind me.

## Prey

So you see,  
I find these sick fucks,  
and I get hurt.  
In time,  
one way or another,  
I get 'em back--  
banishment from the magic kingdom.  
And they almost always beg for more.  
Then, said the spider to the fly,  
"Bye Bye."

## I Love You

But they all, sometimes one at a time,  
sometimes the threat of all at once,  
are a prophylactic,  
a rubber,  
bouncing me off.

## **Self Help**

I love to crack my back;  
I can do it by myself.

## **End Notes**

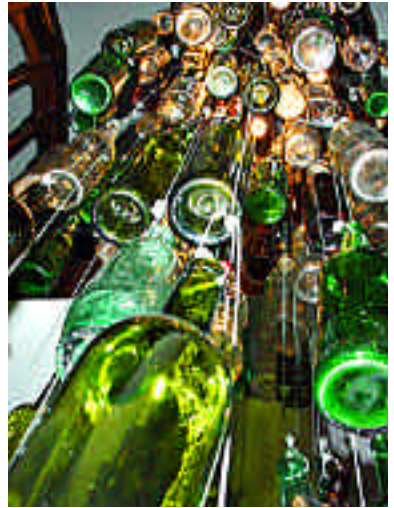
I am plum wore out of philosophic jargon,  
and I can't come up with any sex.

# II. Bad, Bad Slut Girl

## What Has Happened To Your Style?

And then, of course, that fall  
I forgot the scare,  
still played with booze and the boys.  
That time I knew I had done it,  
drunk or not,  
I did it,  
did it in the dirt,  
did it for love, I guessed,  
or maybe just to get the boy back.  
But then the test read "yes".

My English Prof wrote me a note,  
"What has happened to your style?"



## Name This

They took her  
in the name of moral behavior  
and higher authority;  
    they took a child  
    from her Mother  
in the name of social sanctions,  
for the sake of a name.  
    Name this, Mother Fucker...

## Escape Hatch

Life goes on, return to your normal, old life, get over it. Just don't think about it anymore--it's done. In fact, my old life was done; there would be no return to a life not dominated by the loss.

It took various turns. Taunting itself up into unrecognizable cause, it required nerve bound dancing to the dictates of denial. I practiced, I thought perfected, avenues to escape, living in unending madness to cloud over the reality of what had happened, what I had done, and, my God, what will I do next?

# Not Pretty Enough

They took her.  
I know that, now.  
Maybe they thought it was best,  
but she was mine, my baby,  
not theirs to take  
and give away to the first pretty face  
that social services could find.  
Pretty as in adequate income  
and promising future,  
the right stats.  
That's nice enough,  
except she was mine, and nobody  
ever even let me figure that out.  
They never let me in on the secret  
that *she was MYBABYMOTHERFUCKERMINE*.  
I could have taken care of her;  
    I could have loved her  
        so much more than that pretty farce.  
They did, I know they did;  
she was a treasure.  
    But she was mine.  
She looks like me, she acts like me:  
haughty, impulsive, scared,  
with a furious love in her that is,  
I'm so sorry, Ashton,  
me.

## Disenfranchised

Terror:

knees crawling over fate  
spiked with gun metal shards  
spit through blazed magenta blue.



## Swept Under the Rug

The superintendents of my world,  
the clean up men,  
who take me down with their brooms,  
wrenches,  
hammers,  
misinformation,  
bastardization,  
they want to sweep me under their rug.  
I almost let them.

## III. Make Mine a Double

### Pearls, Tank Top, and Jeans

Pearls, tank top, and jeans  
bought after the bright light  
gold and diamond frenzy.  
Muted gems to calm  
the curly tight perm,  
sharp wedge of my mouth,  
fit of clasping hands  
fueled by grasping need.

### Will the Real Linda Please Stand up?

I wrote it off the gut,  
uncut, unfinished...  
it is too much me that maybe I don't want to show.  
The thought begins to strangle me.

## Phone Lines

Nasty talk and lonely action,  
whoops and hollers, he rubs  
    and, oh God,  
against my screams I wonder  
if his moans  
    are  
as phony  
as mine.

## Make Mine a Double

If I came in only twice a month,  
did I think they would not remember  
that pitiful child who looked down at the floor,  
    pretending indifference  
    while screaming shame  
as she took her pleasure over the counter?

## Feeding Frenzy

Stomach wretched ache,  
disgust rises up,  
splits over the edge,  
and it curls you down--  
your cage  
in the field of starvation.

## I Thought I Looked Good

So what if I had no friends,  
and nobody was ever around me;  
I was skinny.  
I thought I looked good.  
The real shame  
was that I was a pasty,  
haggard,  
bony,  
little girl  
with an unpleasant odor about her.

## What a Shame

I thought about shame  
while at the grocery store  
today...  
go figure,  
for a bulimic to feel that way.

# Drunk Trip to the Kentucky Derby with the Sleaze Men

Shall I tell the story?

How I came to with the stagnant fumes pooled around me,  
what with one of them humping away on me  
like tomorrow might never come.

(God, I hoped he hadn't).

I thought I might puke  
from the fat soaked ooze that seeped  
through the balding heads in that room.

## Sex Appeal

The ceiling man left his dust and a headache,  
and a feeling that certainly  
any man would do,  
as long as he didn't look like a troll  
and could still swing that rod.  
Nasty talk.  
You got a problem with that?

## TG Queer

He was the Transgendered Queer.  
He sucked me up his ass,  
and I slid into the murk,  
a world where people hated,  
a stench of torrid filth, fists and flogging,  
naked capture and probing,  
prodding in its ugliest forms.  
I felt,  
I knew,  
the final desecration of my own spirit  
as I watched  
and I learned  
of screaming humiliation.

## Nice Girls Do It

I have been there, to places nice girls shouldn't go,  
places where horror is the name of the game, terror  
is self propelled, and self becomes synonymous with  
slime. I have gone there again and again-- leapt  
into the mire without even a breath. But each  
desperate gasp for air and gulp of truth bought me a healing  
purge. Only when I sense evil can I reveal my own.

*Take it on down past the burn to heal.*

## Dirty Girl

Throw in the trowel.  
This dirt is enough  
to fill  
wheelbarrows of shame  
while the mud slides  
choke back my blooms.

# IV. Crazy Lady

## Wipe the Snot off Your Face, Girl

Struggle, stay on the ground,  
first safe and warm,  
then on my toes,  
lost in the chaos of abandonment.  
These are the words of a child  
who whimpers for sympathy  
and the warm shade of forgiveness.

## **Once Again, With Feeling**

I fled through my childhood,  
leaving it to come at me  
again  
and again.

## **Emptiness Surrounded with Rage**

An impenetrable hole in my senses,  
surrounded with rage,  
commands my spine,  
keeps me twisted and pale.

# Thoughtless

I lose them  
as they ping and whirl,  
chase through my eyes.  
Like pin balls,  
they light up,  
and the dinddingding  
sets my watch.  
Lost in fear  
of rage and love,  
I cover the glare  
with shocking blue  
and  
piss yellow prayer.

# My Damn

Desolation shrieks,  
brings on the  
flash, white hot crash  
down under where I sleep.

Degradation sears the soul,  
and, oh my damn,  
holy despair  
snaps through my veins.

Heartless desperation  
sets up the senses;  
cursing memos  
crawl out from the flesh.

# Rampage of Madness

Seizure of time,  
hell flames into view  
and becomes exact,  
distinct,  
through the misfired shrieks of Dopamine,  
Serotonin,  
all those names for the magic in my brain.



# Picture Perfect

Only, I can't draw God.  
He stands apart from pencil and paper,  
being in and of Himself.  
In other words, model be damned.  
And in and of Himself,  
God don't break for snack  
or nap;  
He will always be there  
for me.  
That settled,  
I notice that I am hungry.  
Cool.



# Whatever

You believe in God  
or any sort of higher power  
that might intervene  
in God forsaken,  
or so it seems,  
situations?  
Then God was there.  
It may have been spirits  
come from another plane  
to save my ass,  
or angels trying to earn wing points,  
maybe cub scouts wishing to turn the bear badge  
right side up  
by doing a good deed.  
I like to think of it as shape shifting.  
There I was,  
wallowing in the sinkhole  
making mud pies  
of opportunity, gifts, and soul saving passions,  
when some life force  
re-sized, shaped, and divinely delivered  
me.



# Shortcut to Emptiness

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Scars photos are images from Illinois, Pennsylvania,  
Bad Gastein (Austria), Shanghai (China) & Venice (Italy).

*Freedom & Strength* Press



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