

flash

back _____

re-mem.....bering.

dis
mem b e r

They were very democratic that way.

For them experience leads to know ledge,

or else it is wasted.

memory
memory
memory
memory
memory
m e m o r y

re- mem

For me, experience must be forgotten,

or else it will

memory
memory
memory
kill
— Mukherjee

If you're lucky you don't remember

If you are unlucky,

one day you have a

flash

back

And you realize why your life had been so

fucked up.

You thought *alcoholism* (your father's) *Bulimia*
and *Anorexia*, and *being Beaten up* by people
you loved and were supposed to love you, were
to be expected. But now you realize that you
have one more

unhealthy attribute to add to
your list of dysfunctions.

incest?

You think you're just making it up.

*Doesn't every woman fantasize about
being raped by her father repeatedly?*

Freud said so.

So you have a powerful desire to die.

That would solve the problem.

Better than to go on living as a product of the
family and the man that raped you. But you live
it all over again in flashbacks and night terrors
and decide to

L I V E.

does anyone go
through life the way
i do? stopping to

pick up a scrap of

paper on the
street, to read a note
dropped by a
stranger as if it
might have a
message for me.
does

anyone else look so
hard, everywhere
for clues? (harrison, 101)

I bought Judith Herman's book, *Father Daughter Incest* in 1989 —it sat on the shelf until 1991. I just couldn't touch it. I strategically placed it on the bookshelf so only certain people would be able to read the title. When I finally sat down with it, it was a chilling account of what had happened in my home, my psyche and my life.

In short, incest kills. Not all at once, not totally, but one way or another, sooner or later, piece by piece. The whole child, or just a piece of her. Just her body or just her soul. She is a child without a childhood, forced to choose between violation, violence and abandonment. She is a victim in every sense of the word; yet, as an adult, even as she endures the impairments of Post-Incest Syndrome, she is not a victim, but a "survivor" (?)

Why do we call her a survivor?

When she was a captive child, her immersion in the inevitability of the abuse made her a victim. As a true description of her experience, the term serves as a reminder that she was NOT the wrongdoer. But now it is over, and she has endured; she is a survivor. On one level, that term can be applied simply because she is still here: after a childhood of horror, she had kept on going. On a deeper level, she is a 'survivor' because a 'victim' is characterized by passive helplessness and is seen with pity. But survivors of the Holocaust, POW camps, or natural disasters, as well as incest, there is strength, dignity, resilience, and entitlement of respect. To continue to call her a 'victim' is to insult her by overlooking the victory of her survival. (Blume)

I DISAGREE! I agree with everything Herman states except that INCEST IS NEVER OVER. It will NEVER be OVER. I am and always will be shaped and affected by incest. I don't know when the next FLASHBACK will hit, when I will wake up in the middle of the night frightened for my life. A death, a birth of a child, joyful moment, painful experience, or medical problem, the results and trauma of incest are always there and ready to surface. In a perfect world or utopia, maybe survivor would be an appropriate label, but not in this culture. People do not treat incest victims/survivors with respect and dignity, they treat them with pity, shame, blame and voyeuristic curiosity. It is imperative for my survival to know that it was not my fault and yes *I survived*,

but do not rob me of the reality that I was *VICTIMIZED*.



ugly little fat bitch whore

i love you more than your mother

who loves you baby?

who loves you more than anyone in the world?

**he would tell me over and over again incest is a universal taboo.
who teaches their child this?**

Frequently, they will be unable to recall large portions of their childhood or of later periods in which abuse occurred.

(schapiro, 65)

My head died just then. It was an impossible thing for me to handle. So I just didnt handle it. It's like it never happened. Everytime I try to talk about it, my mind goes blank. It's like everything explodes in my head.

I CAN FEEL GODDAMN IT MAKE IT STOP I
WANT TO BE NUMB I DONT WANT TO FEEL
THE TERROR THE PAIN STOPIT STOPIT STOPIT

I forgot about the fainting, a skill I perfected after realizing the incest. When anything got to be too painful, too overwhelming—I would simply check out, lose consciousness, just give up. My not eating, my living on diet coke and cigarettes helped. The comfort and the safety of knowing I could just give up. All I had to do was let go—just like having an orgasm. That's why I could never understand why women couldn't come, all you had to do was let go. That was probably the most important lesson of my life—freeze and let go. Go limp and passive, wishing that someone would come and rescue me, instead I waited till I was restored enough to pick myself up. Simple answer to any assortment of complex problems — let go —

disassociate

She looks at herself now,
tries to see herself. It's
almost impossible: her
defection has its price.
All the reflections she
seeks in the course of a
day are not so much to
ascertain how she looks,
but that she is there.

She looks at herself now,
tries to see herself. It's
almost impossible: her
defection has its price.
All the reflections she
seeks in the course of a
day are not so much to
ascertain how she looks,
but that she is there.

(Harrison, 171)

Children do have sexual feelings, and children do seek affection and attention from adults. Out of these undeniable realities, the male fantasy of the Seductive Daughter is created. But as the testimony of these women makes clear, it is THE ADULT, NOT THE CHILD, who determines the sexual nature of the encounter, and who bears responsibility for it. (herman, 42)

I was never a virgin. NEVER. NEVER. NEVER. And I didn't even know I wasn't, although I guess I did because giving it away meant so little. Giving it away was a relief, because it finally killed the MYTH OF VIRGINITY.

I didn't seem to be easily discouraged. I seemed to be sure there was somebody out there who could turn into a serviceable daddy.

Was there?

No.

Flashbacks?

Oh yes. I'd wake up feeling I was being gagged. A funny pressure on my jaws. But I didn't make the connection at the time. Not for years. For a long time I could say, "My father chased me around a hotel room." But without remembering exactly how he caught me. It was too blinding to look at. I was in my twenties and married before one night I got up and wrote it all out, all of it — tersely though. To conceal, rather than reveal. Then I filed it away. Forgot I'd done it. Like I planted a second land mine for myself. It was a real jolt when I found it later.

And?

Kept moving. Kept working. Tried crying. Didn't suit me. Tried laughing. Liked it better. Grew up a little. Lucked out a little. Got married. Had kids. Kept working. Chose the cheerful.

How do you feel about it now?

Talking about it? Sad. Very sad.

So it doesn't go away?

It recedes.

I don't like that.



You don't have to like it. You just have to live with it.

Like a small, nasty pet you've had for years.

(adult survivor)

MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL
JUST RAN AWAY AND LEFT ME THERE
WONDERING WHY THESE THINGS KEPT
HAPPENING TO ME...IM SORRY

| *As the abuse continued, a complex system of ego defenses
| emerge in an attempt to master the intolerable levels of psychic
| pain, anxiety, and intrapsychic conflicts related to specific
| episodes of traumatic experiences. These same defenses that
| may initially prove adaptive can culminate in psychopathology
| upon maturity. (dominiak, 35)*

IM SORRY IM SORRY I DIDNT MEAN TO
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL
JUST RAN AWAY AND LEFT ME THERE
WONDERING WHY THESE THINGS KEPT
HAPPENING TO ME...IM SORRY
IM SORRY IM SORRY I DIDNT MEAN TO
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL

JUST F I couldn't fight him. I couldn't battle the feelings in my own body.
WOND

HA When I heard the doorknob turn, I'd close my eyes and try to
IM SOR pretend nothing was happening. I couldn't move even before he
MY STR

JUST F climbed on top of me.
WOND

HAPPENING TO ME...IM SORRY
IM SORRY IM SORRY I DIDNT MEAN TO
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL

MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL
JUST RAN AWAY AND LEFT ME THERE
WONDERING WHY THESE THINGS KEPT
HAPPENING TO ME...IM SORRY

*The orgasm was a part of us he stole,
just like he
and our right
our own room.
the feeling of
important.
was the adults
their sexuality
We were just
alive around
That Bastard.*

*took our body
to feel safe in
No one thought
teenagers were
But the danger
who denied
while raping us.
trying to stay
that looney bin.
(Wisecild, 162)*

WONDERING WHY THESE THINGS KEPT
HAPPENING TO ME...IM SORRY
IM SORRY IM SORRY I DIDNT MEAN TO
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL
JUST RAN AWAY AND LEFT ME THERE
WONDERING WHY THESE THINGS KEPT
HAPPENING TO ME...IM SORRY
IM SORRY IM SORRY I DIDNT MEAN TO
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL
JUST RAN AWAY AND LEFT ME THERE
WONDERING WHY THESE THINGS KEPT
HAPPENING TO ME...IM SORRY
IM SORRY IM SORRY I DIDNT MEAN TO
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL
JUST RAN AWAY AND LEFT ME THERE
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL
JUST RAN AWAY AND LEFT ME THERE
WONDERING WHY THESE THINGS KEPT
MY STRENGTH, MY WILL AND MY SOUL

(wisecild, 162)



oneyearoldtwoyearoldtthreeyeardone



andonandon



andonandon



andonandon



andonandon



andonandon

andonandon





MICKEY MOUSE WAS A SCORPIO

the night was light,
black.
he came in
light cracking the doorway
of dark
deep hard.
my father,
lean in blue & white pajamas,
wild ignorant farm boy
throws my pajama bottoms
to the pigs,
grabs me by my littleskinny knees
& drives his dick in.

I scream

I scream

no one hears except my sister who
becomes no one cause she didn't
hear

years later I become no one be-
cause it didn't happen

but it's night now & it's happening
a train with razorblades for wheels
is riding thru my ass hole
iron hands saw at my knees

i'm gonna die

i'm gonna die

blood, semen & shit gush from my
cracked ass

my mother comes in when it's over
to wash me



glad not to be the one,
she is glad glad
satanic glad.

she brings her hand up from be-
tween my legs & smears shit, se-
men & blood over my mouth,
"Now she'll know what it's like to
have a baby," she says,
drugged night so black

you could paint with it,
no moon no stars no god
that night stick smashed my spinal cord
my legs,
bleeding bandages of light,
fall off,
let me go
let me go
don't tell me about god & good little girls
i want to live
i want to live
my cells crack open like glass
my bells are tolling for me
my name disintegrates in the night
God's a lie
this can't be true
M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E
mother is house (we have a nice house,
California ranch style)
brother is the nail we drive thru your heart
do it
do it to her brother
M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E
running thru
my vagina
& out of my nose.
saucer eyed buck tooth child
Betsey Wetsey
brown bones
electrocuted.
Tiny Tears
that never dry
hop scotch
hickory dock
the mouse fell off the clock,
the farmer takes Jill down the well
& all the king's horses
& all the king's men
can't put that little girl together again.
crooked man
crooked man
pump kin eater childhood stealer.

(sapphire, 171)



If a little girl screams while her father is raping her,
and no one hears, did a rape really occur?

**WHAT INCIDENT TOOK PLACE AT THAT TIME:
3:00 A.M.?**

How spontaneously is the mind capable of
blocking out pain?

When I shut my eyes alone in that bed was
someone really there?

Was there ever a time of innocence?

When did all this start?

Was sleeping dust a manipulative tool from its
inception or was there some kind of perverse
concern that produced this tool, to allow you to
rape your daughter, me, while numb.

Or perhaps it was a reaction to an uncomfortably
terrified child who might talk.

All the answers--violations exist within my body's
memory.

So much has changed

but then nothing has--

that little girl still lives inside of me

vulnerable, unprotected.

All the therapy, age, education, support and love
do not keep her from surfacing in the night
looking desperately for safety. . .

that man under the bed, the BOOGYMAN.

Only problem was he wasn't under the bed, he
was on it and

I called him DADDY

Like so many other silent/silenced little girls.

DIDN'T YOU EVER WONDER MUMMY?



I am reminded now of how recently I keep coming up against the past and how little I remember of it. I REALLY DON'T REMEMBER. Until someone tells me or reminds me there is simply nothing there. People think that I am ignoring them, or being uppity, but I don't remember them.



Even if I recognize their faces, they seem removed, I can't access any memory beyond recognition that once I knew them, but I don't really remember how or where.

... she'll talk later, but for now, whatever she remembers threatens to recede, evaporate, when she contemplates articulating it for someone else. Even as she tried just now to tell Carl about posing for her father's camera, it was as if she were trying to recount a dream: what she remembered seemed absurd, and parts of what she had thought was a coherent story were suddenly missing. Her mouth open to speak,

**she was left with
nothing more than the
idea of herself.**

(harrison, 41)

