



A novel by
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Lulu.com
U.S.A.

THE EMPEROR IS NAKED: THE TESTAMENT OF GUY MACADAM

ISBN: 978-1-4357-2205-7

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2008 First Lulu.com Hardcover Edition

Published in the United States

For Jennifer, Zachary, Gretchen, Jonathan,
and especially my faithful readers

—Introduction—

The Way It Is

“That’s just the way it is, Guy,”
to me, she said;
to her, I said,
“Does God want it this way, Mommy?”

Mommy was silent;
the bedroom went dark, and down the hall,
footsteps faded.
I was alone;
the absence of light held me, and within the embrace,
darkness loomed.

—**The Irretrievable Years**—

The Answer Eludes Me

I truly try to focus on the
positive
aspects of life, but the
negative
aspects are so unrelenting and
powerful;
I endlessly get bombarded in mind and soul.

At night, I pray in
Jesus'
Holy name;
at dawn, I ponder
to be
or not
to be?
Always, the answer eludes me.

Born With A Dream

Born with a dream, with a desire
Burns one's heart in a merciless fire.

Dream never touched, just torn away
Becoming a prisoner of another lost day

Chained to a life, engulfed in fear
An immense emptiness feeds on tears.

Never given the reason why,
Only left alone to die.

One chance only left to take,
Sleep to dream again, never to awake.

The Emperor is Naked: The Absurd Years

Observations

When comedians make
 observations
 of American society and culture,
 they are humorously received by the masses.

When writers make
 observations
 of the same nature,
 they are ill-received by the masses (even considered
 treasonous).

Comedians share a laugh;
Writers share a mind, a soul.
Which in America is valued more?

Why do the masses laugh with the comedians?
Why do the masses loathe the writers?

The observations are all the same,
 regardless if they come
 from a questionably talented comedian
 or an insightful writer.

When?

When is there actually time to
LIVE,
When the actual time to do so slips
AWAY?

How can we actually capture enough time to
LIVE?
How is it that our actual life is stripped
AWAY?

Childhood Horror Tale

Book of Job—
Most
Horrorifying
Tale I have ever
Read—
Book of Job

Dreamscape

Last night, I had many dreams.
Dreams normally fade rapidly from my mind, my memory.
Memory held fast to one particular dream though.
Though I did not understand it,
It centered around me and God.
God held me in his palm and said, “You look troubled, why?”
“Why do bad things happen to good people?” I desperately needed to know.
“Know this; there are no good people,” God said to me at last.

Earliest of My Memories

My earliest memories do not consist of images,
still
or
moving.

Memories of my earliest awareness are sounds,
clear
and
disheartening.

Earliest of my memories, strongest are feelings,
fear
and
anger.

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Saving Us

Our Savior... saving us from what?

Sin...?

Damnation...?

Foremost, we need saving from each other

and this world;

Then, we need saving from ourselves,

individually.

Growing Up

Growing up amid chaos

in the Midwest.

Existing with my siblings,

three to the left of me,

three to the right of me,

one above us all.

Existing alone among my siblings,

one insignificant me.

Boyhood Friends

My boyhood friends and I
Shared a sacred bond
More out of common misery
Than from
Love and loyalty,
Yet love and loyalty did play a major role
In shaping our friendships.

We cried together in physical and emotional pain;
We shared together in thin and thin;
We even managed to laugh together
Though rarely deep within our hearts.

We were good to one another since no one else was kind;
We looked after one another because no one else was there;
We watched one another's back since evil lurked everywhere.

Funny what hits one's mind
When reflecting on boyhood.
I can't help but wonder why—
Whenever we played together—
I got stuck being
Larry Fine or Dr. McCoy.
It would've been great to be
Moe or Curly
Or
Kirk or Spock
Just once.

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My Middle School Principal

One morning during my sixth grade language arts class,
the principal took charge of the students until the substitute arrived.
“Your teacher went into labor during first period,” he explained.

Since the principal was above the lowly station of teacher,
he chose to entertain the class with his marvelous wit.
When I failed to identify the big dumb animal
who was the sports star in the punchline of his joke
the principal humiliated me in front of my peers.

“He’s a foo’-baw quarterback....

There’s something different... very different...

about a boy who doesn’t know much about foo’-baw.

Maybe when Guy grows up and gets a boyfriend,
he’ll explain the finer points of the game to Guy,”

the principal told the class.

From that point on and until I graduated high school,
other boys and girls, even my longtime friends, attacked me physically
and emotionally.

My middle school principal was a fine man, indeed;
he should be proud of his contributions to education
and the significant impact he had on my life as a student in his care.

Dictates of TV

TV Dictates

The way we...

Wear our hair,

Wear our clothes,

Wear our smile.

TV Dictates

How we...

Act in relationships,

Act in public,

Act at home.

TV Dictates

Who the...

Winners are,

Losers are,

Condemned are.

Family Portrait

Dad drank and smoked himself toward oblivion.

Dad lived like a ghost, haunting the local pubs
and terrorizing the kids at home.

He hugged his ass with a barstool;

He hugged my ass with a boot.

Mom was an emotional mess, always on edge.

Mom lived inside herself, emerging only
to relieve her life's pressures on those whom she bore.

She delivered wrathful slaps and venomous words;

She delivered blissful neglect.

One brother stole my dreams;

One brother ignored me when bored with abusing me;

Four sisters thrived on my torment;

One sister pulled me into shadows.

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Don't Exactly Know

When I started,
I don't exactly know.
Why I started,
I somewhat understand.

At a tender age,
I imagine about the time I started public school,
I developed the habit of insulting myself
Whenever I was among my peers.

I'd simply select a feature
Or pick a character trait,
And then I'd belittle and abuse myself
For the entertainment of all.

I used to think
That if I attacked myself first,
The pain wouldn't be so terrible;
Naturally, I was severely wrong.

Nobody ever laughed with me;
Everybody laughed at me, including me.
This laughter didn't heal me;
It deeply wounded me.

Mom, Dad, Us

As children, we were power slaves,
serving in a domestic capacity:
Job done well.... We were ignored;
Job done poorly.... We were sorry.

Dad embodied no true aspirations
or at least any that were apparent:
He drank much.... He didn't give a damn;
He smoked always.... He didn't have a worry.

Mom was usually hysterical from pressures
both visible and unseen:
She cracked leather quickly.... She never flinched;
She cussed cruelly.... She never suffered from remorse.

We children had to fend for ourselves—
survival of the cruelest:
If you snoozed... you would lose;
If you turned your back... you were attacked.

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Didn't Know, Understand, or Care

When I was a kid, I didn't know, understand, or really care that
My clothes were rags that didn't quite fit;
My vision was blurred;
My teeth were crooked;
My body was filthy;
My fear was unnatural;
Love was synonymous with pain;
I went a day here or there without food;
I went without hugs and goodnight kisses;
The expressions of those who beheld me were of disgust.

Now that I'm an adult, I know, I understand, and I really care that
My adult eyes see the reality;
My adult mind cries for justice;
My adult heart weeps for the kid I once was.

What is to be said of these people—my parents—
who did this to their child?

Heartache and Disappointment

Growing up, I was
constantly criticized about my aspirations;
always told what I *didn't want to do* in life;
never told what I *could do* in life;
forever encouraged to settle for survival;
frequently reminded that I was a *beggar*, not a *chooser*;
perpetually subjected to shame and guilt;
ever discouraged from talk of bettering myself;
belittled into submission and into the dirt;
stripped of my confidence and self respect.
All of which actions were lovingly executed in hopes of saving me
from a life of heartache and disappointment.

Insignificant Object

Drifting back with my memories—
 both of heart and of mind—
Fleeting images
Lasting emotions
Embrace me as a prisoner of my past.

Ducking all—
 both numerous and larger—
Constant anguish
Lingering anger
Cover me as an insignificant object of neglect.

I remember everything
Even those times in shadow;
I remember everything,
Especially those times of sorrow.

I acknowledge nothing
Even those times of sorrow;
I acknowledge nothing,
Especially those times in shadow.

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The Difference

The difference between growing up
under one's parents' roof
and being raised by one's parents—

Growing Up

v.

Being Raised—

is unmistakably clear to me now.

With

every picture,
every memory,
every face,

I encounter,

I want to scream...

If you were so selfishly caught up in your own lives,
why did you have children?

Why did you have children when you never intended to love and care
for them before satisfying your own selfish desires?

Why did you have children only to abuse and neglect them
in hope of easing your own misery?

But... I never do.

Institution of Public Education

Through the levels of hell within the public school system,
I was an abnormally normal kid
Desperate to be unnoticed in order to survive.

I followed five siblings through school
After they had each made a lasting mark
Upon the institution of public education.

They made the teachers fear;
They made the teachers hide;
They made the teachers cry;
They made the teachers hate;
They made the teachers vengeful.

Each new year was a new adventure in despair
As I paid for the sins
Of my fore-siblings.

The teachers made me fear;
The teachers made me hide;
The teachers made me cry;
The teachers made me hate;
The teachers made me vengeful.

The Emperor is Naked: The Absurd Years

Friendships

I've known many who have called themselves my friends,
and some actually were true friends.

In and out of my life, these people came and went,
but the best of friends stayed with me in heart.

The friends I related to the best,
my parents hated the most.

The friends who shared a similar childhood,
my parents hated the most.

The friends who shared and understood my tears,
my parents hated the most.

The friends who held me when I was weakest,
my parents hated the most.

I can only imagine why
my parents hated these particular friends the most.

Running From the Howl of Wolves

My parents never prepared any of us kids for *Real Life*.
In retrospect, it wouldn't have done us very well,
Seeing how my parents never tried
To excel in life themselves.

My parents landed within a comfortable rut,
Living the life of those who survive.
When the proper time came for each of us to leave (save one),
We were thrown to the wolves.

Little did I know then
That I would be running
From the howl of wolves
For the rest of my life.

Little did I know then
That I was raised to be the wolves' prey
When I really needed to be trained
As a hunter.

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People Like Me

“People like you, Guy, don’t go to college,”
my high school counselor Mrs. Fitzander chortled,
not trying to hide her contempt in the least.

“What kind of person am I?”

“Apparently, you are oblivious to what you are and where you come from;
It wouldn’t be proper or professional of me to enlighten you,”
Mrs. Fitzander replied,
not trying to hide her smile.

“Whatever you’re thinking, you’re wrong!”

“Time will prove me right, Guy,”
she countered after she came to grips with her laughter.

“I just wish I could be around to say, I told you so,”
she said, shoving me out of her office.

“Good thing you look good in stripes,”
she snickered, plucking at my shirtsleeve.

Willy's Golden Tickets

As a child,
I was thrilled to learn of Willy's Golden Tickets.
As a child,
I understood that Golden Tickets were not a given.
As a child,
I was always discouraged in my search.
As a child,
I believed Willy had saved the last Golden Ticket for me.

As an adult,
I have been searching half my life in vain.
As an adult,
I am encouraged to abandon my futile search.
As an adult,
Many tickets have glistened in mine eyes.
As an adult,
I realize I need Willy's Golden Ticket more than ever.

Who Shared My Dream

My dream was shared with John Mallory, a dear friend.
Throughout our friendship, we vowed if one of us would make it,
both of us would make it.

John had abandoned his wife and four children and moved overseas.
Soon he became successful in foreign films;
soon he didn't seem to know me anymore.

The lost opportunity hurt considerably
since opportunities seldom present themselves.
But this loss didn't come close to the loss of a dear friend.

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So Great

They are not so great
(Millions possess equal or better talent).
The “chosen ones” are merely products of the “Industry,”
 nothing more,
 nothing special.

The “Industry”
 manufactures them,
 fabricates them
Into genuine human beings.

The “Industry” then
 markets them,
 sells them
To the American masses
The same way any other consumer product is forced
Upon the masses who blindly
 purchase them,
 celebrate them.

The rest of us
(Who truly work diligently to realize our dreams)
Are treated like lesser or inferior
 people,
 products,
Yet the only difference between us and them is clear
But seldom taken into mind.

They were given an opportunity by
 knowing,
 blowing,
But the rest of us are
 overlooked,
 denied.

Pressman by Chance

In the mid of night when even the graveyard spirits lie asleep,
The rumbling of the presses invade the sanctity of the hour.
I became a pressman by chance though I know of no one
Who has become a pressman by his or her own design.

After a miserable day's rest—sleep rarely comes—I leave home.
Arriving at the print shop, I am greeted by unforgiving heat, polluted air,
and perpetual grief.
Looking into the faces of my crew is like staring into the faces of the dead
though not death of flesh but of spirit.

Nothing is ever printed fast enough, well enough, or efficiently enough.
We pressmen are never good enough; more care goes into the well-being
of the machines.

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Birth of my Aspirations

When I was the age of nine,
I experienced something
extraordinary,
magical,
and inspiring
that has plagued my existence ever since.

A friend's mother treated her son and me to a movie,
but not just any ordinary movie;
this cinematic masterpiece eventually became the grandfather
of all science fiction films,
even though its grandchildren were not so grand.
Before the movie's end,
I knew I wanted to spend my life creating such masterpieces,
both in print and on screen.

On the drive home,
as I felt the magic of the movie
surrounding me,
penetrating me,
I couldn't wait to get home
to share with my parents
the joy of my experience
and the birth of my aspirations.

Within a cloud of blue-gray smoke,
Dad, sporting nothing but his skivvies, sat at the kitchen table
while he leafed through the newspaper sales ads.
Mom, sporting a look on the brink of madness, was at the stove,
making my father's dinner and packing his lunch
before sending him off to work the graveyard shift.
Feeling better than I had ever felt in my life,
I told my parents about the film,
and then I dared to share my aspirations.

* * *

With a cigarette dangling from his lips as he chewed,
Dad grumbled, “Bullshit.”
Mom, who laughed like I had just told her the funniest joke she had ever heard,
declared, “That was the most ridiculous, asinine thing I ever heard you say, Guy.”
Dad crushed out his cigarette,
and then just as easily, he crushed out my dreams
with his classic “you think you’re better than me” lecture.
Mom didn’t let me off so easily;
she spent the next few days belittling me
for having such foolish aspirations.
Even when the belittling remarks dried up,
for the following three weeks,
Mom couldn’t look at me or speak to me
without laughing hysterically.

I couldn’t understand the feelings I felt at that time.
I wasn’t sad;
I wasn’t angry;
I wasn’t frustrated;
I wasn’t frightened.
The best I can say to describe how I felt would be to say
I felt dead inside at age nine.

CONTINUED...



At the time of this publication, Allan A. Zarbock, his wife, and their three children reside in a small town fifty miles south of Chicago, Illinois. To learn more about Allan and his writing, visit his website at www.aazarbock.com.

