



freedom  
**to be  
ugly**  
(in a different house)

**chapbook**  
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**freedom & strength press**

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strength

# freedom

## to be different

Everyone was mulling around, making small talk, laughing, having fun, doing all the things that people are supposed to do at a well-executed party. It was his birthday, and there was a ring of people around him. He was glowing with delight. She looked at him from across the room and realized that he might have loved her, but he knew nothing about her. She looked down at her dress. It was a strapless red satin dress, with sequins bordering the top and bottom. She suddenly wanted to be wearing her flannel and long underwear, sitting by herself with a book, or a newspaper, or her thoughts. She just wanted things to be different.

# too much light

too much light makes the baby go blind  
and too much light makes the moth  
rush into the flame  
and die in a final  
glorious blaze of glory

and I have seen the light  
and I have seen it

what is my choice:

burn in the flame  
to burst quickly  
to die young  
or to slowly slip away  
to die slowly  
day by day  
to let people in darkness  
pull me in  
inch by inch  
until the light  
kills me

# train tracks

I walk up to the train tracks.  
It is daylight, but the sun is behind the clouds.  
The whole sky is a blue-grey. The grass in the field  
is brown. It feels like straw. It scrapes my  
ankles when I walk through it.

I walk on to the rocks that surround the tracks.  
It is hard to walk on them. My feet keep slipping.

I look up. There are trees on the horizon.  
They don't look real. They look too small to be real.  
They look like toys.

I look at the train tracks. The wooden rails are wet,  
even though it hasn't rained for days. I step over  
onto one of the rails. I start to walk down the tracks  
on the rail, like it is a balance beam. I quickly lose balance and fall.

I look at the condition of the wooden rail. The edges  
are no longer sharp and sturdy: they are worn and soft.  
I see a pill bug crawling out from a crevasse in one of the  
rails. I choose not to get back up on the rail and try to  
balance. I walk along the side.

The wind picks up. I don't feel like buttoning up my coat,  
so I overlap the edges around my waist and hold them  
down. I feel the wind and hear it hiss as it hits my ear and  
curls around. I realize that this is the only sound I have heard there.

I look at the slats between the rails. They look like they  
are about to fall apart. I can't fathom that these tracks  
would be able to support a train. But then again, I don't  
remember the last time I saw a train on these tracks.---

## Two Minutes With Ayn Rand

don't believe in things that aren't proven,  
that we have no evidence of, but sometimes,  
sometimes, I still think about what I would do  
if I had two minutes to talk to you

when someone asked me what I'd say  
I said I'd rather hear you speak  
I'm sure the words you would part unto me  
would mean infinitely more  
than what I could say to you

and if I could talk to you  
I wouldn't know what to say

But I know I'd have to tell you  
like so many of your fans in the past  
that I thank you  
for showing me  
that there are logical people in the world  
that man can live by reason  
that reason is a virtue  
that selfishness is a virtue  
that I have a right to what I earn  
to what I create  
to what I know to be true

I would have been still searching blindly  
for philosophical answers  
to the meaning of life  
if you never told me  
that I am worth something  
that I am my own end

and it's nice to know

that even when I'm surrounded by these  
unthinking masses  
that there are people who hold their minds  
as the highest value  
out there somewhere in the world

and the fact that they exist  
helps me through my days

but you knew that  
you wrote about these heroes  
over the years  
and how could you manage to write  
gripping, thousand-page novels  
about heroes that a rational mind

can't help but love

and did you really find that hero in real life?

because I'm still looking.

You've created these heroes  
but are they just created  
does anyone else understand  
these values as I do?

Yes, thank you  
for giving me the answers  
I've been looking for,  
but tell me that someone else out there  
found the answers too

so maybe, if those who posed  
this unreasonable illogical ethical question  
in the first place, if they could give me  
another two minutes

so you could do some talking  
maybe then you could explain to me  
how to get through the days  
when no one understands you  
how to accept less than perfection  
when you've seen the purity and the clarity  
of the thinking mind

strength

# ugly house or how a place holds a feeling

This is an ugly house. I hate the wallpaper in the spare room. Those stupid miniature rooms on the shelves in the spare room, stupid ugly miniature rooms she made, why would anyone want a box of a miniature room anyway? She takes up all the space in there, gets mad at me when I put a flower arrangement in there. I'm sleeping in the room, let me at least put something in there so I don't feel like I'm sleeping in a hotel that chose a decorator with no taste. Why does she have so much stuff anyway?? She's got a third of her jewelry and half of her clothes there, and I'm the one who sleeps in the room. I hate the multi-colored carpet in the living room, the barrel chairs with turquoise and melon vinyl coverings. The ugly statues mom is drawn to. A statue has to be inherently ugly for her to like it, I think. The lights hanging from above the bar, the lamp shades are Harvery's Bristol Cream canisters. That mural of the 5 kids above the couch. I'm at the bottom. I look ugly. It was when I was subordinate and meek and stupid and helpless. Like now.

I hate the stained glass hangings in the kitchen windowsill. And you can see the black paint chipping off the refrigerator door so you know mom tried to cover up the turquoise. Silk flowers that look really crappy. The kitchen flowers are the worst. I hate the wood-branch-tree she decorates for any pagan season she thinks of, even if it's not pagan, let's decorate the tree anyway, no one will know the wiser. Or the fact that there are nice things in the house, like two Dali prints, but they look ugly here. Art even looks like trash in this place.

#000200000B98000019ABB92,I hate the lamps hanging in front of those ugly melon colored front doors. And that wind chime hanging from the lamp in the front hallway. That rock garden in the front



hallway, it used to have a working fountain in it, but I was too little when it worked, but that's okay, because I think it would be even more frightening with water running down it.

And I hate the playroom, the room i'm sitting in now, look at how cluttered it is, all the jewelry she'll never get around to selling, all the fabric for clothes she'll never make, all the exercise equipment that collects dust because she feels she can WALK her way to a perfect body. You know, she doesn't like me using the treadmill because she thinks I'll wear out the motor. What difference does it make? Books she's collected because I collect books. She wants this of mine, I owe her this, I adopted this from her... She's so petty, and no subtle hint I make makes a difference. She slams on any idea I ever have. She makes me feel I can never be creative, because it won't work out.

And she wonders why I'm insecure. Don't you get it? You made me this way, I hate what you've done to me, I hate what you've become, and now I have to sit here and live with you, in this ugly house. And when I move out I'm going to still have to live with myself, with all this insecurity, with all this anger. And I'll still have the memory of this house in my mind.



# freedom & strength

**you can't be free and strong until you can speak up**

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