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A harrowing, beautifully written first-person account of bipolar disorder; **MANIC** is *Girl, Interrupted* all grown-up, rendered in heartbreaking prose that probes the depths of depression and the terrible, shaky heights of mania

MANIC

A Memoir

By Terri Cheney

“[A] turbulent account of bipolar disorder. With evocative imagery...Cheney conjures life at the mercy of a brain chemistry that yanks her from ‘soul-starving’ despair to raucous exuberance, impetuous pursuits to paralyzing lethargy...More than a train-wreck tearjerker, the memoir draws strength from salient observations...startlingly lucid descriptions.”
— Publishers Weekly

“**MANIC** is filled with gorgeous writing, and we have never heard mania or depression described in such a visceral way. Terri Cheney’s ability to find humor in what should be terrifying situations makes this difficult illness never off-putting, and in fact, fascinating. Echoes of William Styron abound.”

— Demitri F. Papolos, M.D. and Janice Papolos, authors of *The Bipolar Child*

They tell me my exterminator found me. I love the irony of that...he found me, sprawled on the living room carpet, with blood and foam coming from my mouth. I don't know what the foam was all about, maybe from the plastic capsules dissolving in the tequila. But the blood I understood: I bit halfway through my tongue...Who knows what went wrong during that last [electroshock therapy] session? I personally think it was some strange gift from the gods. I emerged from that chaos a different person, with a different identity. No longer depressed but bipolar. The label mattered. It made sense of my erratic life. I had never understood how, for several months at a time I could function with such a high level of competence, only to be followed by equally long periods of hiding under my desk, under the covers, in the dark.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, manic depression, also known as bipolar disorder, affects more than 5.7 million adult Americans every year. **MANIC: A Memoir by Terri Cheney (William Morrow/An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers; On Sale: February 5, 2008; ISBN: 0061430234; \$24.95 US/\$28.95 Can.)** is the poetically-crafted, raw, and intimate story of one woman’s harrowing battle with this often misunderstood disease.

On the outside Terri Cheney was an attractive and successful Hollywood entertainment attorney. She was always immaculately groomed, utterly competent and on the career fast track. But her carefully constructed outward appearance hid a dangerous secret—for the better part of her life Cheney had been battling manic depression. As she worked at some of the most well-respected law firms in Los Angeles she suffered through debilitating bouts of depression; raced dangerously through life during periods of mania; and concealed a pharmacy’s worth of prescriptions meant to stabilize her moods and make her “normal.”

With **MANIC** Cheney gives a voice to the unarticulated madness she and the patients she met during treatment endured. The clinical words used to describe it were lacking so she chose to focus on her own experiences, in her words, “on what bipolar disorder felt like inside my own body.” The result is a painfully vivid portrait of the many years Cheney has spent battling her illness. Here the events unfold episodically, from mood to mood, the way she experienced and

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remembers life. In this way Cheney miraculously allows the reader to viscerally experience the incredible speeding highs of mania and the crushing blows of depression as she did; and to get a glimpse of what it is truly like to be manic depressive. **MANIC** does not simply explain bipolar disorder but rather takes the reader in its grasp and does not let go.

What if? I slipped my dress up over my head and threw it onto the rocks. I slipped off my bra and panties, too, and flung them up there, as well. Naked, I stepped into the surf...It never occurred to me to just lie back and let the water have its way with me. That would have been suicide, and I didn't necessarily want to be dead, just dormant for a while. I had to escape. Manic feelings are sometimes so brutally strong it seems like there is no way to endure them. To me, there was nothing crazy about immersing myself in a freezing riptide at a quarter till midnight. Crazy would have been continuing to feel the way I did.

Cheney writes that though she had experienced noticeable mood swings throughout her early childhood, her first suicidal depression occurred when she was sixteen. It came upon her as an insatiable hunger that she attempted to quiet with relentless eating. Nothing filled the void and finally all that was left to consume was an entire box of baking soda. When her father discovered her lying on the sofa in pain she admitted she had lost control and feared for her sanity. Thus began her long road of therapy, hospitalizations, medication, suicide attempts, and eventually, electroshock therapy. In heartbreaking, eye-opening detail Cheney recounts key points in her arduous journey to sanity. She explains how her illness flung her recklessly into the arms of dangerous men she barely knew; took her to the edge of a cliff to fly kites in a raging thunderstorm; and forced her to hide under her desk unable to answer the telephone. Among her more painful recollections is of the night she spent in jail, bruised and sick lying on a cold, concrete floor. Unable to take her medication, call for help, or to explain the myriad pills found in her handbag, Cheney hit rock bottom, her spirit broken.

Unlike memoirs such as Jane Pauley's *Skywriting* and Carrie Fisher's *Postcards From the Edge*, **MANIC** is not the story of a celebrity who also suffers from manic depression. Though her work may have brought her close to the rich and famous, Terri Cheney is a regular, everyday person who attempted to battle her illness while maintaining a job and keeping some semblance of a normal life. This makes **MANIC** intensely real and even more poignant. It is astonishing to think that a neighbor, friend or relative may be similarly suffering behind a relatively normal façade.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Terri Cheney specialized in intellectual property and entertainment law at several prominent Los Angeles firms, where, over the course of her 16-year career, she represented such celebrity clients as Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones, as well as major motion picture studios, including Universal Studios and Columbia Pictures. She now devotes her talents to the cause of mental illness. She was named a member of the Community Advisory Board of the UCLA Mood Disorders Research Program, and founded a weekly community support group at UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute. She lives in Los Angeles, California.

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Facts about Bipolar Disorder*

- Bipolar disorder is the sixth leading cause of disability in the world. (World Health Organization)
- Many individuals with bipolar disorder face up to ten years of coping with symptoms before getting an accurate diagnosis. Only one in four patients receive an accurate diagnosis in less than three years. (Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance)
- Bipolar disorder affects men and women equally and is found in all ages, races, ethnic groups and social classes. (DBSA)
- Evidence shows that the disease has a hereditary component. Some two-thirds of people with bipolar disorder have at least one close relative with the illness or with unipolar major depression. (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Bipolar disorder results in 9.2 years reduction in life expectancy, and as many as one in five patients complete suicide. (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Up to one-third of the 3.4 million children and adolescents with depression in the United States may actually be experiencing the early onset of bipolar disorder. (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 1997)

*Provided by Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance www.dbsalliance.org