

GLIMPSE

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2014

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Dedicated to:

All those who let me in for brief moments.
You made this work possible.
Thank you.

ABSTRACT
DARIA KATHERINA SCHWARTZ: Glimpse
(Under the direction of Gary Short)

This thesis is a compilation of poetry that I have written about moments that people let me in to their life. It is a work of creative non-fiction.

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introduction

People are such beautiful paradoxes. We desire so badly to be understood by all those around us because without that understanding, we feel alone. However, we don't want to be known because we like to have bits that are only ours. Something occurs because of this: beautiful moments where we accidentally remove our walls. Usually, these allow only brief glimpses, which is why they are so hard to catch unless you're looking.

This collection came to me over a series of months. It began as a very different idea and developed into this series of "glimpses" of me and those who briefly let me in. My original plan had been to have people tell me their stories, so that I could write honestly about humanity, passion, sadness and history. But I quickly learned how hesitant people were to let me in too deep. It felt very superficial to learn who someone was and is through a series of interviews. Instead, my poems slowly took on new subject matter, organically focusing in on a few people who would tell me a story in passing or react to something when they thought no one was looking. Instead of asking for stories, I began watching intently for these moments and found them everywhere.

Throughout the process of writing this compilation, I drew from several literary influences. While there are many writers and poets who influenced my work, a few stood above the rest. Sharon Olds, for example, was a massive inspiration. She writes about pain in her life in such a raw way that it gave me the courage to do the same. I found such beauty in taking sorrow and making sense of it

through poetry. I was reading Stag's Leap, her book about her divorce, when I began my thesis, and was drawn to every word on the page. I was not only inspired by the content of her work, but also her diction and use of metaphor, particularly in her poem, "The Flurry." Her use of space in that poem moved from external to internal, something that this collection began to do as it developed.

Poets, however, were not the only influences on my work. I also drew from the voice of many authors of short stories that I had read. Two in particular used a distant, disconnected voice that found its way into my work. Sherman Alexie and Lorrie Moore both wrote intimate, tragic stories narrated by voices that managed to create a distance between themselves and the reader. I was inspired by the space that was created. I began to play with how close or far away a reader and speaker could be in order for the intimacy of the underlying emotion to stay in the work. This came in line with the idea of internal and external space that Olds brought into the poetry. In this compilation, the reader is brought in and out of spaces and minds and rooms.

Each inspiration took its own control over me and asked me to use it. For example, I reference Hemingway late in the work. This is due to the word "nada" staying in my head for days and days after reading "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." After hours of playing with ideas and writing the word "nada" over pages and pages of notebooks, an idea came to me. I drew from several other works that appear in the piece.

Although literary influences were clearly very important to the work, the people in my life are the poems in this thesis. The moments they let me in made this

collection possible. After changing my topic several times, the “glimpse” took over. It was never an idea or a plan. It happened unintentionally, just as the actual “glimpses” do. They happen in walks between classes, in long conversations, in facial expressions, in muttered words. They happen in the silence of another person’s room. I sit and absorb what things make up the environment of their life and sometimes, what doesn’t. Glimpses can even happen in a photograph of a person you don’t know. These beautiful moments make up our lives and we rarely catch them. In this thesis, I attempt to capture them.

forks

Everyone should drive down country roads in Mississippi without directions.

Maps have too much information.

Decide where to go with no advice from paper.

Roads can go so many places.

I am not sure which road I'm on or where I'm driving.

I threw away the road map in my head.

tell me your story

I love people and
I love the word And
and I love the way And feels
and how it includes everyone
and I love that feeling
and knowing someone wants
to know you and they want
to know all of you and
your ugly truths and your
stories and you have stories
and so do I and I want to
know them and I want
to hear and listen and
know the things that made you.

I remember he was mowing the lawn and she was sitting on the porch scolding
the children and we passed them in a second.
Mine was not the only story.

a picture of you

On July 1, 2013, on the Belfast Peace Wall in a spot with yellow spray paint in a shape with no definite ends above a deep red triangle.

You left your words on the wall and put part of yourself inside it.

Mississippi is trying. We'll both get there someday.

current location

I live in Oxford, MS.

I live in the coffee shop where I work.

I live in my schoolwork.

I live in my confusion.

I live in anything but the moment.

I live in last year.

I live in memories of us.

I live in your memories.

autobiography

I have lived everywhere and nowhere.

digging

*Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.*
- Seamus Heaney

I am digging a hole in this page with my pen.
I scrape, trying to make our memories into words.

*You smiled at me with your big lips and crooked teeth.
Introduced yourself with a Scotch-soaked smile.*

The hole is small at first.
A light dent between the black lines of my moleskin.

*We found each other everywhere.
We filled each night with the tension of friendship.*

It grows with each curve of my ink pen.
The cursive letters removing image by image of you.

*We walked on Queen Street.
You had me in one hand, guitar in the other.*

The line grows longer and you disappear into the page.
Wider and deeper it goes into the page.

*We kissed on kitchen counters while trying to pick a tea.
We talked about God and cancer and anxiety.*

Scratching out for other words.
The hole gets darker as more memories fall inside.

*I fell in love with you when we said goodbye.
I turned and you were still there. You couldn't walk away.*

I shovel at the page.
I am trying to put you in there.

*I ran back and you held me.
I didn't want to leave.*

I am digging a hole in this page with my pen.
I wish I could fit you inside.

the definition of fine

On Tuesday, I found out that my friend died but you know what, it's fine and it's fine because Thursday, I found out he'd used me to cheat, but you know what, it's fine and it's fine because Saturday, my childhood friend was diagnosed with stage three melanoma, but that's fine because you know what, Sunday, I thought about how I could start forgetting things, but it's fine and it's fine because I didn't cry about it for more than five minutes.

hurricane

The water was always there, but suddenly something began to cause it to turn.

At first, it seemed to catch on her throat,
but then, the water level rose
and it reached her cheeks
and became a swell that
could not be contained.

Each word, more water
Higher rising levels
Swirling tear ducts
Spinning in cheeks
Forcing up
Forcing out
Bottom lid,
no longer a lid.
Water breaking
the dams meant
to keep tears inside.

There were no small streams once it had begun.

the anatomy of an eye

Inside my eyes, I hide away.
There's storage for all the things
I want no one to see.
Behind the cornea and the iris,
there is anger in the pupil.
But lids close when it dilates
so it stays inside.

I want no one to see
the fear in the flecks of green
that swim in the large brown iris.
But lids close when it tries to speak
so it stays inside.
There's storage for all the things
I hide away inside my eyes.

In the viscous fluid are all the memories.
There's storage for all the things
that I don't want to remember.
I want no one to see,
so they stay inside.
Lids close when they try to escape.
Away I hide, inside my eyes.

Inside my eyes, I hide away.
There's storage for all the things
I want no one to see.
Inside the lens, I keep my love.
It hides with fear because they are friends.
But lids can't close for love,
so it goes outside.

small

Come in the closet and be small with me.
She cannot reach us here.
I bend my limbs and contort
my joints to move inward so that
I become even smaller.
I am only thirteen and
haven't reached my mother's height.
In the closet, I pull my feet together,
aligning the curve of each bone.
Then my calves, thighs, and knees.
I bring them into my stomach,
groaning as they poke the bruises
that haven't yet gained their color.
I wrap my arms around my legs,
push the parts of my body
together and the tangle begins
to form a shape. The different colored
bruises come together--purple, blue,
yellow, green--touching red skin.
I am a map, the multi-colored countries
folded now, fit together
like an origami globe.
and my pale face, white with fear,
leans into my knees
holding the world together.

we all hate him. she hates him too.

We don't know much about him.

But we know he drinks a lot

and he used to hit her

and he's never seen AA

and he told her not to drink

on her twenty first.

We know he cheated on her mom

and he says he's a Christian

and he's mad she don't go to church

like a good girl would.

We know he forgot seven of her birthdays

and he only went to three

and he only bought one gift.

And she told us all this once.

And we hate him.

And so does she.

Or at least she tries.

trees

I believed she was my Grandmother Willow but she was a magnolia so she spoke in a southern accent. When I was seven, I told her about how I'd lied about being blind and I was in big trouble but I didn't care because I wanted to pretend like I couldn't see. When I was eleven, I told her about the first boy I saw as a crush. When I was twelve, I told her all about seeing Spy Kids and how I wanted to be a spy kid, but I kinda was because I watched people all around me. When I was fourteen, I cried as I said goodbye to her before we moved for the second time, kneeling beneath the huge white flowers, and I said I hoped she found someone new to tell her things.

I went back last year and found that she was gone.

How strange it is that trees
become boards and boards becomes walls—
what we use to keep people
from our secrets, our whispers.

Now we speak to the walls.

Our eyes linger on them,
avoiding who we are speaking to.
Words spoken through stares and glances.
They are our parents.
Our new solace.

straight hair, small feet, head leaned to the left

I was walking once and I saw my shadow
and it was tall and it kept growing
but then a car passed and another shadow
grew out of me and it was small
and it walked away from me and the other
shadow and then disappeared in a
moment and as cars passed, more shadows
formed and they walked away.

love

We were at a reading and
they were in the back row,
holding hands, but not holding each other.
When they met, it was like
they were dancing with no steps.
They learned each movement slowly.
How he smiled with one corner of his mouth,
how she sat Indian style at every meal,
how he wrote about his obsession with her eyebrows,
how she spoke in a child's voice to their cat.
Each day a new step learned.
Then they began to know too much.
They learned to follow a pattern.
He stopped touching her with words in April.
So she'd stopped touching him in May.
They waltzed around each other
instead of with each other.
By August, what once was love
had become choreographed hand holding.

the night we met

I was drunk on gin and sin and St. Germaine's.
And inside I felt a glimpse of hope
But then my inner cynic spoke.
It won't work. It never will.

once upon a time

We were snug chairs on balconies and endless coffee refills.
We were walks around the downtown square.
We were bus rides to the grocery store.
We were dinners every night.
We were conversations that lasted until 3am.
We were shared music and books and quotes.
We were funny faces and real smiles.

But you became missed phone calls.
And empty bottles of vodka on the bed.
And late nights that turned into mornings.
And a bag over the smoke detector.

And I became anxiety attacks and panicked messages.
And tears at work during fifteen-minute breaks.
And sleepless nights.
And meetings with therapists.

We tried to be movie nights and daily check ins.
But then you became two days with no answer.
And I became a breakdown in the library.

I haven't seen you in years.
But I am a real smile again.

You are still a bag over the smoke detector.

room

Candles that can't be burned
Makeup that's run out.
Stale chips.
Empty water bottles.
Broken picture frames with broken people.

Leggings from daily runs
pilled on the inside thigh.

On the chair, a series of dresses I tried on
for that show last night.
Some are the same I tried
back then.
But they aren't the same now.
They fit differently.
They remind me of who I was,
how I've changed since two winters have passed.

A sweater from that wintry day that you told me
You told me you'd stop
You told me you'd try

The book I was reading the day you *stopped trying*
The day you disappeared for hours
away from the real world into your hazy escape.
You were done trying for me.
I was done trying with you.

saturday

Saturday is the day that doesn't worry about tomorrow, you said, as you slurred out your day to me while my eyes listened to your room.

They started listening to your dresser drawers.
Two drawers were open and inside were neatly folded shirts and jeans.
A brown one told me all about its life.
It belonged to a married man once
whose wife was damn tired of seeing that shirt,
so she gave it away.
You'd found it on one of your first days back
on a scouting trip for real clothes.
Since then, you'd worn it more than that married man
and a girl with a boyfriend had worn it once.
It started detailing what that was like,
but my eyes moved on.

They traveled the floor covered in laundry to the closet
with the button ups hung neatly next to the army uniform
that peaked out from the back right corner of the sliding door.
It told me stories that you never would.
Collar told me about the time you spilled beer on it when you were supposed to be
at your post.
Pants told me about the time that you put weed in their pocket when you were back
in America because you could and because fuck the army.
Then, Top Right Button told me about the time it popped off when you got mad after
hearing about a training buddy losing his leg
and Sleeve added that you shed tears on him that day.

I stopped listening,
and my eyes circled the room.
They found only one picture on the bedside table.
You and the elderly woman who gave you your chin.
She told me all about how she'd raised you
and how worried she was when you were over there.

Then, something caught my eye.
It was this big check
like those ones on tacky daytime TV shows.
It had this big number on it.
\$28,074.
The number was circled
and an arrow extended from it pointing to some words.
All spent on dope, the words said.
The check told me this was true.

Saturday is the day that doesn't worry about tomorrow.
Every day is Saturday since you got back.

hat

“War is hell,” said his hat.
It’s a black and white photograph
from a war that wasn’t black and white.
It’s in black pen. All caps.
He has no name on record.
No stories to be told.
Just a hat in a photograph.

the definition of fine ii

Fine: depressed, suicidal, panicked, hungry, scared, lonely.

I don't want your concern.

let's make this conversation short and socially appropriate.

I don't wanna stop and talk.

my sister died yesterday.

my parents are getting a divorce.

This week, I swallowed a bottle of pills.

(adj.)

very well.

of a satisfying or pleasing manner.

Fine is bullshit.

anxiety

You step outside and it's thirteen degrees and you breathe it in and it happens.

Immediately.

Cold. Freezing.

In your nose, in your throat, in your lungs.

In all your organs.

Even in your blood.

Scuttling through like ants.

And it wants out.

Can I go through your skin?

it asks.

Skin feels like ice.

Like jagged nails scratching.

Like road burn.

Like hamsters biting.

Everywhere.

And you're shaking.

And that cold wants out.

Maybe back through your teeth,

it says.

It beats at them

And they start to rattle.

And only a little can get out.

It rushes everywhere.

Eyes, nose, cheeks,

Shoulders, elbows, hands,

Chest, hips, thighs, knees, feet.

Everything is beaten.

You feel defeated.

Shaking, you can't stop shaking.

Fight, you say.

But nothing is working.

So you stop trying.

shaking

I used to think there was a god, someone there, so I never felt Alone because I wasn't Alone.

You did not look at me while you spoke.
Shaking. You were shaking.

I thought someone was talking back, but it was all manifestations of my mind, so I realized I was Alone.

I said, Look at me.
You did.
You looked away.

I realized that there was only this world, this life, no next. I live to make a difference now.

Your eyes had begun to swell.
I did not know what to say, so I pulled you closer to me.
I gave you a soft kiss on the neck and stretched away.
I said, Look at me.
You looked in my eyes again.
You closed your eyes.

I am Alone.

I wanted to give you God.

I don't know how it started but it did and you started talking and I couldn't stop shaking and neither could you.

dear God

Hubble focused light on a dark spot for fifteen years
and it found a thousand galaxies of a trillion stars each.

Light, focus, dark, large.

I feel small.

Telescopes search more persistently than I do.

Scientists have more faith than me.

It's easy to believe in science.

Results come in and matter is easy to grasp,

Data, so easy to note –

Violence

Hate crimes

Slavery

Sexual abuse

A noose

You are hard to find sometimes.

There is no physical evidence,

But data cannot disprove you.

Hemingway's old man said Nada nada nada.

Our Nada who art in Nada

I am scared he is right.

I want there to be something Hubble cannot find.

Presence without matter.

Nada nada nada.

Nothing nothing nothing.

I want to find you in the nothingness.

glimpse

Beauty happens by accident.

The glimmer of streetlight on a frosty windshield.

Beauty for passenger and passerby.

We see ourselves only in reflections in mirrors and people.

Sometimes we let someone see from inside.

Conversations almost never become real out of intention.

Frost melts and these are just moments.

These are just glimpses.

just glimpses

eight years, five moves, too many people to count.
your beautiful faces, my loneliness.
we are all moments.