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Found Voices

Jennifer Hindes

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FOUND VOICES

(TITLE)

BY

JENNIFER HINDES

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF

UNDERGRADUATE DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH , ALONG WITH
THE HONORS COLLEGE,
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS UNDERGRADUATE THESIS BE ACCEPTED
AS FULFILLING THE THESIS REQUIREMENT FOR
UNDERGRADUATE DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

12/07/2012

DATE

THESIS ADVISOR

12/07/12

DATE

HONORS COORDINATOR

12/10/12

DATE

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Found Voices

Undergraduate Thesis

Jennifer Hinder

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Olga Abella

Dear Interviewee,

This book is for you. Hell this book is you. It's the way you told me your inner stories. It's the way you laughed at a confidentiality form and then later made sure, "please don't tell anyone this." It's my oath to keep your secrets and let them go.

I have to thank you. Thank all of you. You have given me a small piece of your stories and trusted me to take care of it. I have cried over these stories, these moments of life that take a person and make her alive. I felt your fight within myself as I closed my eyes at a coffee shop and tried to let myself fall into your pains, joys, and emotions.

You are strong. You are powerful. You are amazing women. You add to this community of women by just living.

This book is a collection of your interviews, but you are connected in more ways than you know. You are never alone. Your stories are woven together by strength, trauma, and survival and it's that web that will always keep you in good company of other strong women.

Forever in your debt,
Jennifer Hinde

I prepare for each interview the best I can, with questions about the performance of gender and any trauma that may have occurred specific to women. Then after meeting with each woman in a public space, I have a pen ready to record the narrative their voices wish to reveal.

Every woman needs to tell her story, and, more importantly, needs to be heard. My job is to find a way to ask personal questions that do not feel too intrusive, that make each woman feel she can tell her story without judgment.

I listen to the words she wants to release, the language that shapes her experience with pain: emotional, psychological or physical. The courage to speak conveys the strength of these women. Sharing their pain is not easy.

My task is relatively easy in comparison. All I need to do is listen and write down the details of their lives, to record their individual experiences, and then to announce in poetry what they have held in silence. I simply provide an avenue for their own words.

I ended each interview with the same question: "If you stood in front of a mirror and looked at yourself naked how would you *feel*?" Part of me wanted to collect data on women and body image, but what I discovered was that for these women their bodies were instruments that recorded their experiences, positive or negative.

These women all housed strong, beautiful, and powerful voices.

Body

human papillomaviruses

sounds as bad
as it is.

It eats away at your
cervix

taking
with it
your hope
of a
family.

It eats

your vaginal walls
your clitoris
your sex drive
your female
identifier,

leaves you
feeling
ugly
empty.

Breast Cancer is Sexy

An army of people
standing for the
missing
breasts.

A march of women
bouncing for
the benefit
of breasts.

Save the

tities
ta-tas
boobies
and
breasts.

Sexy cervix
doesn't get funding.

Not even a donut

can
excite a
donation.

This slutty cancer

Isn't something
you can put
on a T-shirt

"I picked up my
cancer having
sex"

Sweet Lady Parts

in front of a mirror

can't look
below
my hips.

fingers
reach

but that –
down there

my body is

deformed
defiled

scar tissue
brutality

somewhere
I use to know
stolen.

Broken Heart Syndrome

My heart pounds pain
up my arm
across my chest.

I have a cough that won't
go away.

My stomach
churns heavy

I loved him.
He thought he could love me.
For nine years.

I worked hard each year
in between the
yelling, the insults,
the hurt.

Lost.

My Period

I sit
knees pulled up
breathing shallow
through the pain.

My sins drip
oozing out
of
down there,

the cigarette.
the Curse words.
the times I skipped school,

the roaring pain
ripping through
my back, around
my sides.

dark and my fingers
reaching deep below the
covers.

My sins leak
the sins of Eve.

Father Tom knows.

Father Tom says

he says cause

it was

Porn Periods

Aren't sexy.
The red blood
isn't perceived
as delicious
or lip licking.

There's nothing
to do, but an
old fashion
dirty trick.

A sponge.

Sitting on a counter
legs spread wide
looking for help.

Reach in just past
my g-spot
and with your finger tips
grab the circle sponge

soaking up the sin
of the woman
who wanted on top.

Denying
nature.
physics.

Sex

An Explosion of the Leaf

Nerve endings bubble
little spasms
throughout my body.

Each cell begs
for air.

Muscles clench
roll and clench and
reach for release.

Breath changes
from long pulls to
quick
sprints.
Settling
the
storm
of need
and
body.

Canvas

My lover paints when we have sex.

He glides slowly
painting the edges
warm orange,
sweet yellow.

He can feel the colors seep
into my vision
and out of my body.

They move with me
pinks echo my breath
short and quick
strokes until I
breathe deep
oranges.

When muscles clench
I can feel myself
on the edge
of the river of
cerulean.

With kisses
massaging
my clitoris
I drown in the
fuchsia.

My vision
a flood
of dark reds
and flowering
purples

heaving onto the
sheet
stained with the
intensity
of my orgasmic vision.

Finding an Orgasm

Afraid to move
or sound
wrong
I wait to be stirred

Feed
his body

give my own
nothing.

Suddenly he
takes
my hands
off
his body

giving me access
to
myself.

My hands wander
to familiar
spots

He bends my shoulders
arching my back
lifting my ass

and watches.

I touch my clitoris
feel his bend in my body
breathe in deep
quick
bursts.

Lifting my ass higher
fucks me faster
deeper

My back burning
my hands feverishly
closer and closer

to a gasp
reaching for

but
before I fall
before I can
breathe
before

He pulls me closer
a final thrust of
pleasure and
I collapse.

Porn: Starting Solo

I can get off in 45 seconds
close my eyes
toggle my clitoris
hold my breath
and wait for my body to

shudder.

But
a contract
a set
and a
script

make the familiar toggle
feel anything but
freeing.

My mind instead
wonders

Does this make my vagina look fat?

Did I remember to shave?

Miss a spot shaving?

Hours pass

You're going to have to fake.

I slip into the act
getting off
arching my back for the
camera.

Scripted

I wrap my legs around him,
pulse my hips with his,
sigh, roll my shoulder
bare and bitten.

Curve your back

I arch
a moan
escapes.

More.

I roll my tongue
wet lips
my eyes widen with
ecstasy

Cut.
Your husband left
fuck like you are
free

My eyes open
my body on fire
for
each
teasing touch.

I breathe in
a quick
shock of

He
turns and grabs
my body.

Beats my ass
with
a firm hand.

Arched
I look over my shoulder
careful breath

My hand
my body
close to

Cut.

*No touching yourself.
Think innocent.*

Hands firm on the floor

ass high in the air
my body rocks each
thrust.

My hips twist to look
in the camera
misty eyed

one more thrust
a cock
and cum
on my back.

Cut.

Justin

We met on set

contracts brought us together

a west coast hippie and a yuppie
at a gallery opening.

Article 1: Actress agrees to:
vaginal penetration
three orgasm scenes
and one with
oral sex.

Leaning into my shoulder
staring at a portrait
We should get coffee later

My ankles hooked
around his head
I mouthed
black two sugars

Later
fully clothed
I heard his
southern accent
and learned of his hometown.

Jittery and uncertain his hand
reached for mine
he two held quiet.

Article 2: Actress agrees to:
vaginal penetration
use of the following sex toys:
dildo – 5 inches
vibrator – 5 inches

Hair pulled and head twisted
a thrust from behind
a whisper
You never returned my call.

Reaching in the drawer of toys

I balanced myself on his chest
Coffee. same place.

Across the table our fingers
dance and teasingly touch
balancing the rhythm of L.A.

I live here.
He kissed me gently
and walked away.

Article 3: Actress agrees to:
vaginal penetration

He said nothing as she quickly
stripped herself of a nurse's outfit.

Still more silence when her
neck bent outward for biting.

A knock in her dressing room.

I want to take you on a real date.

Pick me up at eight

Later His white shirt stained with
pasta sauce
her feet aching

Do you want to come up?

He leans her toward the door
kissing gently
sweet smells

She unbuttons his shirt
slowly

her finger tips
trailing

He cups her face
pulls hair back and
whispers
nothing.

Clear Up and Come Back

My test came back positive

ghondoria

A seven day prescription and
vacation

was just what I needed.

I soaked my lady parts in
hot baths
spent time wearing
large white fully covering
panties.

I loved myself in ways
camera crews would have
laughed at.

Seven days without being
thrustled or licked.

Inhibited

Let's talk about sex

because I love it

talking about it.

I love
well

his
...penis.

No it's like

two thumbs up.

Am I sharing too much?

Do you think they heard?

Oh, *how is it?*

I swoon.

He requests
and I get into it.

Well really it's like
he wakes something up
inside me.

Grounding

He lays on the bed
in front of me
like an offering.
His penis
glistening with my spit.

I know
his smell
the touch of his familiar hand
the flick of his tongue.

Except suddenly I'm lost.

struggling with
what's real
with
the dark spots.

His smell changes
his touch becomes

hurtful.

I am no longer here.
It's not him.

It's then.
not now.
How do I

push the
memories back?
This heavy curtain.

I watch myself float away.

I'm doing this wrong.

I'm suppose to be here
safe,

not be the offering.

Suddenly
He knows I'm elsewhere
reaches in my thoughts
pulls me out,
"You are here. With me.

Safe."

Trauma

Porn Always Has a Contract

In the bushes.
He hid in the bushes
grabbed me.

This only happens
on T.V.

not to me

He held me down
told me
he would
cut me.

In porn
contracts were specific
on who could
grab,
what would happen

my body safe,
always a written contract

but on a walk home
suddenly

violated.

Circle of Abuse

My friend
just—I needed
a friend.

She just needed
to—I wanted

what

would

make her
my friend.

She wanted,

she—well
we both were

young.

She had
another friend

who

did
to her—and
she did
it to me.

I needed

a friend.

Dear Readers

I write this final time because I have to be let go.
I have to pack up in cardboard boxes.
Leave because I am with child and without ring.
I have been told this is a negative space for a
pregnant woman
without a ring.

Had I quietly rid myself of the baby and
nodded as we crossed paths at a local
abortion clinic
you would still see my face
day after day
in this newspaper
Catholic Times.

Family Secret

Ashamed
disgraced
and disappointed
at my
struggle
with
cancer

because
I picked
it up
during sex.

I recovered
cut and
cauterized

never feeling
anything but
shame
disgrace
and

alone.

Subject: You're Fat

I had to tell you because it's breaking me.
I look at you without feeling
a fucking thing.

I know we've talked about this before but
you take it personal.
You're fat and it's killing me.

I can't stand to touch you.

It's time you stopped being so lazy
eating so much.

I've gone through the fridge
thrown away all your shit.

I'm taking control of what you
clearly can't.

Don't even try to turn this around and make me feel bad.
You disgust me.
The inches of fat around your
waist.

This is not my problem. It is your problem.
I can't believe I've stayed with you this long.

If you love me
you'll change.

Better Than

At forty-two
it's better to hear

he will love me
if I worked harder
at losing weight.

It's all my fault
because I'm just
lazy.
Fat.

I don't want him
to feel bad for
feeling disgust
for my
fat rolls.

I need to be faster
work harder
That's easier

than to be asked
"A table for
one?"

Fucking Gladware

Stealing from
my mother
of all people.
Lazy bitch.
Don't I give you enough?
Can't you
just get your own
container?
I make enough money.
Stop. Stealing. Shit.
You crazy bitch.
You know what you do.
This is just like you.
Not giving a shit about
others. You selfish
bitch.

Fucking Gladware.

Melts in the dishwasher
scratches
bends
cracks.

Guest Bedroom

I live down the hall and to the left
from my master bedroom.

I've decorated with
small paintings and
neutral colors.

I couldn't sleep
next to
his
energy.

I can lie for a while

stroke his hairline
and whisper
gently

but the distance
between safety and
him

is down the hall
and to the
left.

I'm a Good Person

The nurses were kind
when they told me
my child was dead.

They let me hold him
blue and small
in the crook of my arm.

Through my tears I
cooed to him and
wished he would
gasp for life.

I was married
I had faith
did everything right.

But then this.

So I left.
Everything.
Including myself.

Twelve Hail Mary's

For having my eyes stuck open
while someone pried my legs apart,
forgive me father for I have sinned.

For my voice not loud enough
My body weak and frail
as a woman's body is
after being drugged.

For not fighting with the fear of god
but for consciousness,
bleeding my crime on my hands
my legs,
unclean.

For not having the right words
because *stop* was not
enough.
Forgive me father for I have sinned.

For your daughter being taken to bed
by a man with intentions to hurt.
For not being born stronger, louder.
For this,

Hail Mary full of Grace...

Healing

**Porn: Empowerment or
Objectification**

My first orgasm
I learned to squirt
I learned to come.

I wasn't pretty
but was getting letters
became
someone's fantasy.

I was powerful
making someone come.
I looked
hot.

I wanted to leave.
to run

It paid for college
doing shoots between classes
no time for beer pong or coffee dates.

I lost myself.
No sense of who
I was.

The Colors

We talked about our colors.
Sisters linked together by
our deep blue to black
pains
our laughter
yellow and sporadic.

My mother
let it slip
that her Colors flow
like music from her fingertips.

I can see her follow the Colors
head swaying with
her deep cerulean river
of a high C.

Nanna called them The Colors
they stained her vision brown
starting from the bottom,
stained, tainted colors of fear.

She tried to describe The Colors
but Colors are secrets.

The Colors led her to corners
to calm
to quiet that voice.
She lost her colors.

The Colors
seep up through
the bottom of my eyelids
much like a water stained photograph.

A Single Mother with a Ring

I married myself in the kitchen

surrounded by friends
and empty wine glasses.

My vows
scribbled on napkins

pledged myself to no one
but
the sleeping child next door.

I didn't want a partner
I wanted the appearance

of normal on my finger.

I twisted my rings on
masking my solitude
and vowed.

Disheveled Socks

I have purchased everything for my daughter
in twos.

Blue shirts to match the
blue flowers on her
white shorts and her pink pants.
Each top matches a different bottom.

I purchase in two because I am only one.

A single mom who pairs and matches
everything

In hopes of stopping the
judgment of
being
without a match.

Darkness

I sit in front of the nightlight
a little 4 watt security blanket
for a 35 year old woman
afraid of haunting past images
of the dark that brought rape and
nightmares.

I run my hand over the light
casting shadows
to make sure
I'm ready for the dark
again.

I breathe heavy let go
of memories, of the
years of healing, and feel
the power to shut the light
to fill with absolute
strength.