

"Lyrical, vivid, and poignant."

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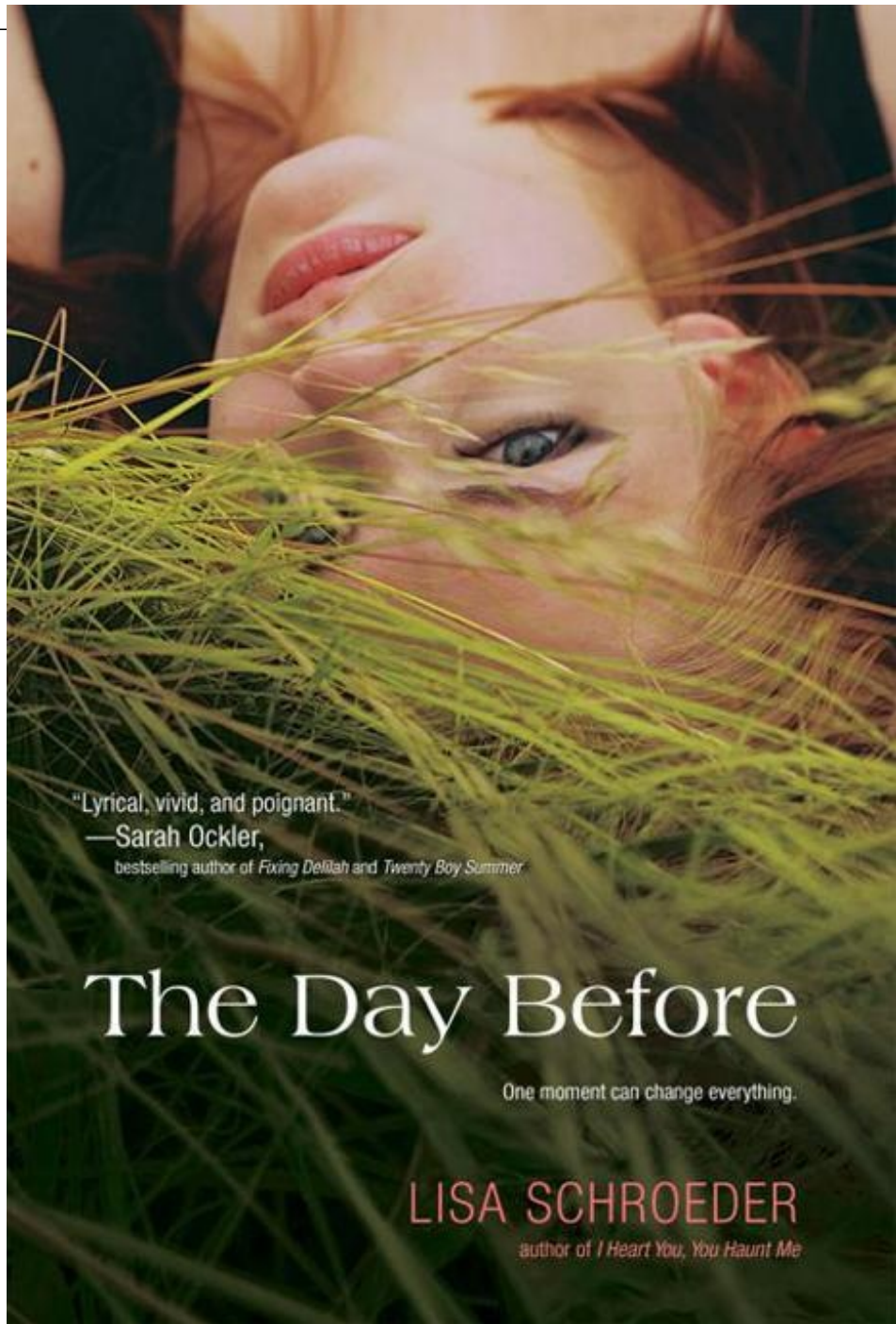
bestselling author of *Fixing Delilah* and *Twenty Boy Summer*

# The Day Before

One moment can change everything.

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**AMBER'S LIFE IS SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL.**

All she wants is to turn up the volume on her iPod until all of the demands of family and friends fade away. So she sneaks off to the beach to spend a day by herself.

Then Amber meets Cade. Their attraction is instant, and Amber can tell he's also looking for an escape. Together they decide to share a perfect day: no pasts, no fears, no regrets.

The more time that Amber spends with Cade, the more she's drawn to him. And the more she's troubled by his darkness. Because Cade's not just living in the now—he's living each moment like it's his last.

**LISA SCHROEDER** is the author of *Chasing Brooklyn*, *Far from You*, and *I Heart You, You Haunt Me*, a 2009 ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. She is also the author of two middle-grade novels. Lisa loves to write in verse because it allows her to really get at the emotional core of the story. She is grateful to all of the people who have read her books and told their friends about them, since being an author is more fun than ponies or waterslides (most of the time, anyway). Lisa lives in Oregon with her husband and two sons. You can visit her on the web at [lisaschroederbooks.com](http://lisaschroederbooks.com).

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# The Day Before

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I Heart You, You Haunt Me

Far from You

Chasing Brooklyn

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# The Day Before

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LISA SCHROEDER

Simon Pulse

New York London Toronto Sydney

This book is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real locales are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.



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This one is for all of you  
who feel the fear and do it anyway,  
in writing and in life.  
You inspire me!

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# The Day Before

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# a different kind of day

---

Some mornings,  
it's hard to get  
out of bed.

Sleep lures you  
like a stranger  
with a piece of candy.

Follow me.  
It will be okay.  
I promise.

You know better,  
but still you follow,  
because you really do  
love candy.

When you finally  
open your eyes,  
late for everything  
and your whole day  
screwed,  
you curse that bastard,  
Mr. Sandman.

It's happened to me  
a hundred times.  
But not today.

Today was different.

Anticipation is the best  
alarm there is, and it shook  
me awake before  
my phone even had  
the chance.

As I move around my room

with my iPod on and earbuds in,  
my girl P!nk sings strong,  
and I feel like I have  
superpowers.

---

The power to  
let myself go,  
let myself be,  
let myself live  
the next  
twenty-four hours  
in a way  
I have never lived  
before.



# ready, set, go

---

In the bathroom  
I get myself ready,  
quiet as a sunrise.

I grab my backpack  
containing  
the essentials—  
extra clothes,  
just in case;  
my drumsticks,  
just because;  
my camera,  
just for fun;  
and a box of jelly beans,  
just like always.

I s l i n k  
into the dark kitchen,  
clutching the note  
I wrote last night.

I thought of everything.

The note goes in front  
of the food-splattered  
Betty Crocker Cookbook  
that sits on a stand  
in the middle of the counter,  
like a revered queen on her throne.

The hardest part  
is unlocking the door,  
walking out,  
and leaving it all behind me.

There's a moment  
when the dead bolt clicks  
and I

freeze,

---

waiting to hear  
if footsteps  
will follow.

The footsteps don't come,

so I go.

# practice makes perfect, I hope

---

So long.  
Good-bye.  
See ya later.

Every day  
for the past month,  
when I've left the house,  
I've tried to pretend  
it was the day.

So long, Mom.  
I'll think of you  
when I watch movies,  
see birds in the sky,  
and read all your motherly notes  
that I've saved over the years.

Good-bye, Kelly.  
I'll think of you  
when I hear a violin's song,  
see a pile of library books,  
and remember all the secrets we've whispered  
since we were small.

And even though  
he doesn't live here anymore,  
I still say to him,  
See ya later, Dad.  
I'll think of you  
when I hear about the latest techie gadget,  
watch a Mariners' game,  
and bravely confront the spiders  
you used to battle for me.

Today I think the words.

Tomorrow they'll expect me to say them.  
I hope I can say them.

# good morning

---

The chilly air  
slides its arms around  
my warm, anxious body,  
and as I breathe in  
its faint floral scent,  
I feel myself begin  
to relax.

While Mom watched  
the news last night,  
I stayed and watched too,  
instead of retreating  
to my drum set.  
The weatherman said  
it's supposed to be nice today.  
A sunny day in March,  
a rare treat for Oregon.  
Next week is spring break.

It'll be raining by then.

Sure as Mom will be  
curled up on the sofa  
with her afghan,  
drinking tea by the gallon,  
watching movie after movie,  
and hoping,  
wishing,  
praying for an escape  
from the heartbreak,  
it will  
r  
a  
i  
n

I walk down the sidewalk  
of Englewood Avenue.  
Ten years of memories  
line the street  
and wave.

Images  
of riding bikes,  
jumping rope,  
playing hide-and-seek  
swarm my brain  
like bees.

---

I shake my head and walk faster.

When I turn the corner,  
the limousine is waiting.

The driver says, "Good morning."  
My response to him  
is quick and awkward,  
the way it is  
when I have to say  
those words to someone  
I don't know.

And then I tell myself,  
You better get used to it.

# Three years ago

---

*Dear Amber,*

*It breaks our hearts that you don't want to meet us. We are hurt, but we also understand that it is a big shock. Perhaps you just need more time to get used to the idea.*

*We think about you every day, and have so many questions for you. What do you look like? What activities do you enjoy? What foods are your favorite?*

*I will tell you a little bit about us, and maybe as we move toward meeting one another, it will help you to not be so afraid.*

*The most important thing to know about me is that I love children. I have been a child-care provider for over twenty years. I get notes from parents telling me those first children I cared for years ago are now doing well in college!*

*Allen also loves children, and has spent his life working in the educational system as a teacher, a vice principal, and now, for the past few years, a principal. He is the kindest man you'll ever meet. He has a big heart with a huge capacity to love.*

*We'd love to hear from you. Please write back? I've enclosed our contact information along with our picture. I thought you might be curious about us the way we are curious about you.*

*We really hope to hear from you.*

*Love,*

*Jeanie and Allen*

# only good things

---

I don't have to tell the driver  
where we're going.  
He knows.  
I arranged this weeks ago.

Since there's no bus  
that goes to the beach,  
my choices were  
a taxi or a limo.  
I chose the limo  
because the next  
twenty-four hours  
are not about  
holding back,  
being cheap,  
thinking hard,  
taking crap,  
feeling bad.

They're about  
being me,  
loving life,  
finding joy,  
playing hard,  
taking risks,  
and who knows what else.

To plan it all  
would take away from  
the fun and excitement  
of what's to come.

Let the day  
reveal itself to me  
in its own time,  
in its own way.

I am yours, Today.

I am yours.

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