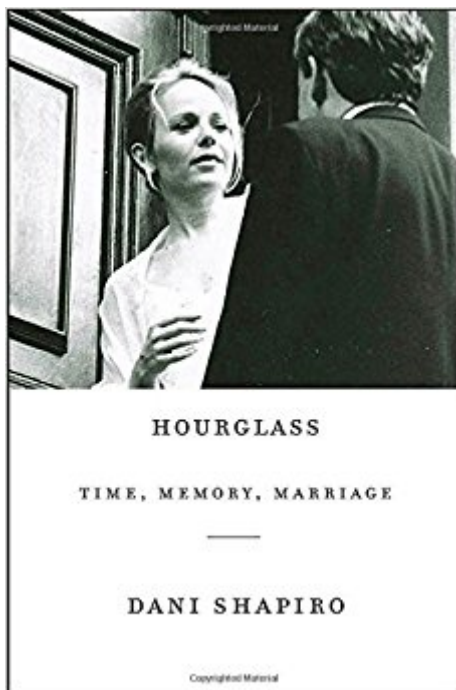


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# Hourglass: Time, Memory, Marriage



## Synopsis

The best-selling novelist and memoirist delivers her most intimate and powerful work: a piercing, life-affirming memoir about marriage and memory, about the frailty and elasticity of our most essential bonds, and about the accretion, over time, of both sorrow and love. *Hourglass* is an inquiry into how marriage is transformed by time--abraded, strengthened, shaped in miraculous and sometimes terrifying ways by accident and experience. With courage and relentless honesty, Dani Shapiro opens the door to her house, her marriage, and her heart, and invites us to witness her own marital reckoning--a reckoning in which she confronts both the life she dreamed of and the life she made, and struggles to reconcile the girl she was with the woman she has become.

What are the forces that shape our most elemental bonds? How do we make lifelong commitments in the face of identities that are continuously shifting, and commit ourselves for all time when the self is so often in flux? What happens to love in the face of the unexpected, in the face of disappointment and compromise--how do we wrest beauty from imperfection, find grace in the ordinary, desire what we have rather than what we lack? Drawing on literature, poetry, philosophy, and theology, Shapiro writes gloriously of the joys and challenges of matrimonial life, in a luminous narrative that unfurls with urgent immediacy and sharp intelligence. Artful, intensely emotional work from one of our finest writers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for *Hourglass* – “Compassionate, insightful, and powerfully honest, in *Hourglass* Dani Shapiro illuminates the deepest mysteries, contradictions, and consolations of so very

much love, memory, the people we used to be and the people we've become. In other words: life. I was absorbed by Hourglass and consoled by it, too. It's a beautiful book by a writer of rare talent. Cheryl Strayed "Gorgeous, stunning, extraordinary life-changing. Will Schwalbe "Rilke reminds us that "There are multitudes of people, but there are many more faces, because each person has several of them. And how do we, moment after elusive moment, marry then continue to change and grow yet still accommodate these multitudes in one another? This is just one of the piercingly compelling questions Dani Shapiro explores in her masterfully rendered new memoir. Written with erudition, hard-earned wisdom, and sensual grace, Hourglass is a fearless and lovely mosaic of those very fragments that make life worth living, the only one we get. I adore this book. Andre Dubus III "Dani Shapiro's prose is elegant and crystal clear, the perfect vehicle for her fierce intelligence and curiosity about things that lurk just out of view. Hourglass is such a lovely book. Richard Russo "Reading this book was like skating across a perfect piece of ice and then slowly noticing the cracks. Dark, cold water shows through. We can't see the depths. Be careful, Shapiro warns, be careful, but still she skates on in the fading light with remarkable beauty and grace. Jenny Offill "Poignant... Timeless... Brutal honesty is the bread and butter of the marriage memoir, yet Shapiro still manages to make her husband sound quirky and tenacious in the manner of the best romantic comedy leads. And her prose has a way of making even mundane disappointments feel portentous and universal...by the end of her short book, we want to know what will happen next." The New York Times Book Review "In this touching and intimate memoir | Shapiro beautifully weaves together her own moving language and a commonplace book's worth of perfect quotes from others. Publishers Weekly (starred review) "To write openly about an enduring intimate relationship requires courage and tact | In this compelling account of her 18-year marriage, Shapiro carefully exposes the vulnerabilities that have subtly begun to surface within the relationship | The narrative demonstrates Shapiro's finely tuned, poetic skills as a writer | A sharply observed and frequently moving memoir of marriage. Kirkus Reviews (starred review) "These memories form a reality that is as diaphanous, fragile and as surprisingly resilient as a spider web. Hourglass is not only a profound and moving reflection on Shapiro's marriage, but on all marriages." Bookpage "[Shapiro] has never written anything as raw, dark, or brave as Hourglass... a penetrating meditation... Hourglass is a stalwart witness to the erosions of

time—its tides that, in being stalwart, it also wishes to stand against. "The Boston Globe" "A meditation that's intimate, wide-ranging, funny and smart." "Portland Press Herald" Dani Shapiro presents a sharp look at the realities of marriage. She does so in delicate strokes, never seeming self-conscious. With a combination of engaged storytelling and what remains carefully unsaid, Shapiro creates an abstract intimacy that allows the reader into her experience... It is the very book that should be given to a young couple at the beginning of their relationship. "Interview Magazine" "That delicate, ferocious act of unsweeping ourselves from the river of time and unplundering its instants is what Dani Shapiro explores with uncommon elegance in *Hourglass*—at once a memoir and a quiet manifesto for how, despite the cavalcade of losses and the exponential narrowing of possibility marking the passage of the years, it remains possible to have an expansive and creatively invigorating existence. In Shapiro's virtuosic hands, time compresses and expands—an accordion playing the sorrowful yet redemptive melody that is life." "Brain Pickings" "Shapiro's honesty and devotion to her craft are impossible to detangle from her love of family.... This potent memoir is a graceful meditation on the fragile balance of time, love, and loss. It's an excellent entry point for Shapiro's poignant and personal oeuvre. So start with this latest, and take it from there." "Signature Reads

DANI SHAPIRO is the author of the memoirs *Still Writing*, *Devotion*, and *Slow Motion* and five novels including *Black & White* and *Family History*. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, *Tin House*, *One Story*, *Elle*, *Vogue*, *The New York Times Book Review*, the op-ed pages of *The New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times* and has been broadcast on *This American Life*. Shapiro was recently Oprah Winfrey's guest on *Super Soul Sunday*. She has taught in the writing programs at Columbia, NYU, the New School, and Wesleyan University; she is cofounder of the Sirenland Writers Conference in Positano, Italy. Shapiro lives with her family in Litchfield County, Connecticut.

"Change even one moment, the whole thing unravels. The narrative thread doesn't stretch in a line from end to end, but rather, spools and unspools, loops around and returns again and again to the same spot. There is no other life than this. You would not have stumbled into the vastly imperfect, beautiful, impossible present." "Never before have I finished a book, then immediately returned to page one to read it through again...and still looked forward to the third read."

This spare, exquisite memoir moved me to laughter and tears, and its lyrical prose still rings in my ears. Five stars isn't enough for this gorgeous book.

The author weaves back and forth in time effortlessly, interspersing quotes from other authors all while being present in her story. This book is a gem.

I really loved this jewel of a meditation on love and trust. Thoughts, images, flashbacks, provided in a kaleidoscopic fashion rather than linearly, but the mixing of these snippets is masterful. Yes, there are portions I don't fully understand, and parts that felt a little too narcissistic and self-centered and privileged, but I never once wanted to put the book down. In fact, I think I'll go back and read all her earlier work.

A simple thank you to Dani Shapiro for sharing her reflections and processing and memories and lessons. All of that guides the reader in doing the same, I believe, about each of our own lives. It was wise and peaceful and a book I will now share with my daughters and daughters in law for them to savor and reflect upon. I read it first at age 76. That was wonderful! I envy them reading it in their 40's and 50's.....and returning to it throughout their journeys. I really value this treasure of a memoir.

Loosely plotted snippets from a long marriage of two writers Beautifully written. Struggles, success, family and doubts about a course committed many moons ago.

So few books in my life have touched me as profoundly as Dani Shapiro's Hourglass. I've been a longtime fan of her work --- much of which I have read over and over --- but Hourglass is a remarkable, Woolfian memoir of time and marriage, and written with a certain economy of style, a certain grace and elegance that compelled me to re-read it several times in one week. Hourglass is a landmark work, a book that will change so much for so many. I applaud the author for her artistry and magnificent restraint- This is a classic for the ages and I urge everyone I know to read it.

I savored each word of Dani's writing - not wanting the book to end. Only someone with wisdom borne from both joy and pain could write this book so beautifully. I found myself appreciating the threads Dani wove in and out through all the years - and breathing in deeply the teachings she shared so generously and honestly. Thank you dear Dani for such a lovely work of art.

Thank you, Dani, for this beautiful and honest account of your life and marriage. I can't believe I just learned about you but I'm so happy I have! This is the first book of yours I have read. I could not put it down. Now on to "Devotion" and am sure I'll read others. The eloquence of your writing is simply stunning. Not one wasted letter or space. Thank you!

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