

### *Narrow Lives*

Tyler R. Tichelaar

Marquette Fiction (2008)

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (4/08)

Tyler R. Tichelaar's novel "Narrow Lives" is a collection of short stories, all of them connected by one character – Lysander Blackmore. While Lysander might not appear much in some of them – and in others he's already dead, he has greatly influenced the lives of all characters who tell us their stories. Their lives – for various reasons – have not been lived fully; hindered by various character flaws or simply by lack of confidence.

All of the stories, seven in total, are written as first-person narratives. They are united by the central figure of Lysander Blackmore, but they are also connected and very much defined by their locale, the town of Marquette. Marquette provides the perfect backdrop for the everyday humanity and the struggles we all face daily.

It would be difficult to decide which of the stories touched me most deeply, since I connected with every single one of them. It did not matter whether the narrator was young or old, male or female, rich or poor – all of their stories resonated with me. They also all made me vow that I will not be stopped in my endeavors and that I will try to live my life as fully as possible – each and every day. Reading about other people's regrets, misgivings and misfortunes made me all the more determined not to falter.

Tyler R. Tichelaar's writing is rich and powerful. Even the shorter stories pack a powerful punch. The longest of them, Scofield's story, which takes up nearly half of the book, is a novel in itself. Well-rounded, believable characters and life situations which sound familiar, yet fresh, guarantee reader's enjoyment of this charming collection of stories. The very helpful "Principal Characters" section helps the reader keep all of the numerous individuals straight, something that would probably be impossible without that handy section.

"Narrow Lives" is a great book about human nature and the influence some people have over others, this book would probably be even more enjoyable for the readers who are familiar with the U.P. of Michigan. If you aren't one of those, it might make you want to go there and explore. And if you just decide to do some armchair travelling, this is a good book to do just that.