ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

Chocolate Kisses: Soundtracks of Love and Romance
Thomas Rhodes
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978-1-4415-7385-8

Love has confounded humans through the ages. Since the second millennium B.C., men and women have attempted to express their feelings by writing poems to the muse of love. Relatively few of these poems have endured through time, but all poetic efforts find meaning, first and foremost, by touching the heart of the loved one for whom they are written.

This slim book of poetry is one such personal tribute. A Canadian native and father of four, Thomas Rhodes wrote these poems to put into words his feelings for Franca, his partner, soul mate, and lover. He writes of the progression of their love and how it has affected him. Written in free verse and prose form, the poems are divided into sections and begin with those that tell of their first kiss. Ensuing poems describe the sensations of falling in love, cherished moments the couple has shared, and the transformative changes he has experienced. The last section, "First Poem," describes how the couple might preserve their love for eternity.

In the section called "Moments," the author explores not only exquisite moments shared between lovers, but also those that are best left behind and forgotten. He writes:

> *There are those moments one should set free*
> *Those of grief, of guilt, of hurt, of sadness…*
> *You gave me the courage to release these moments…*
> *The wisdom to understand that eacah*
> *Moment validates the next…*

A later section, "I Wish," begins with three poems in which the author rues his inadequate ability to express the love he feels. He speculates that, if he were a great artist, composer, or writer, he could surely achieve the poetic perfection his beloved merits. He writes, "Although this would imply, / My life would have to be, / Someone who is not me."

Toward the end of the book, Rhodes ponders love's eternal qualities. In the section called "Gifted with a Miracle," he writes, "For they can take away the body / They can send my spirit to a new place / But our memories are yours forever / Our love will never be replaced."

As a reflective art form, poetry remains open to individual interpretation, a quality that

puzzles some and opens others to the thrill of discovery. As he attempts to define his feelings, Rhodes tends towards wordiness. This verbosity, particularly in the longer poems, is an amateurish way of expressing deep thoughts and muddles the meaning. The poet's shorter works demonstrate that fewer words provide clearer insight.

While readers will find some of these poems more noteworthy than others, this book should interest those who believe that the experience and expression of idealized love is possible in this world.

Margaret Cullison