

## Conch Shell Confessionals: A Millennial's Memoir about Sex, Love, and Self-Discovery

**Dax Marie**

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*Salacious and silly, Conch Shell Confessionals is a look at the hilarious failures one millennial experienced in her quest to grow all the way up.*

Is there anything more painful than self-discovery? Dax Marie's new memoir, *Conch Shell Confessionals*, manages to be both sexy and skin-crawlingly awkward.

Marie writes in a light, deliberately self-effacing voice, her tone as casual as a hair flip. She wades through embarrassing, explicit recollections of sex gone wrong, relationships turned sour, and hopes turned to dust. Although her younger self yearns to be an adult, or at least someone who is good at adulting, she undergoes many humiliating rites of passage. Her willingness to share the dirty details while making light of her problems is refreshing. Every escapade has its punchline: describing a horrendous one-night stand with a guy she calls "John," in quotation marks, Marie declares, "Please note that I do not actually remember his name."

The nicknames Marie gives her characters, like El Tramposo and Unicorn, are screamingly funny. Her adventures as a younger millennial and aspiring actress with Godzilla-sized daddy issues are sharply rendered. Marie, as she portrays herself, just can't seem to catch a lucky break. In each short chapter, the doorway to adulthood she envisions fails to open for her. Her only recourse is to snag another guy and try again.

Along the way, she develops friendships and rivalries with other women (such as her gold-digging former bestie, Gold Digger). They are Los Angeles caricatures: rich, dumb, and addicted to cleanses. They're good foils for Marie, who may be self-centered but has no illusions about what she's working with.

Marie's observations of the selfish, deluded culture she's supposed to be part of are gut-splitting. Rather than be discouraged, she jumps right in. Her asides and eye rolls are fantastic. Through it all, Marie maintains a funny, snide running commentary that feels like gossip over cocktails with girlfriends. She never sets a boundary or goes looking for morally greener pastures.

However, Marie's primary relationship is with herself. *Conch Shell Confessionals* is, at its core, an inventory of the pains of growing up. As she learns to navigate life as a single lady, from dating to hooking up to job hunting to travel, she makes all kinds of mistakes. Her willingness to share her misadventures is notable, but *Confessionals* leans heavily on Marie's experiences. There are few moments of introspection or social commentary to enlarge the memoir or give it depth, and the book does not end up revealing whether or not she finally attained the maturity she covets throughout.

Salacious and silly, *Conch Shell Confessionals* is a look at the hilarious failures one millennial experienced in her quest to grow all the way up.

CLAIRE FOSTER (May 23, 2018)

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