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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ BIOGRAPHY

Love Letters and Expired Condoms: The Journal

Emma-Louise Byfield
Lulu (November 2006)
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For some teens and young women life is about raging hormones sex relationships and misunderstandings. For protagonist Kaysha it is all that plus a little bit of attitude gossiping and mistakes. In Emma-Louise Byfield's novel *Love Letters and Expired Condoms* Kaysha tells all journal style confessing to her lusts rejections and emotions.

The book is formatted as if the reader were glimpsing the pages of Kaysha's journal. The topics are raw infatuated sometimes crude discussions of sexual encounters and sneak-outs to see guys. Kaysha's obsession with men and her hormones prove to be damaging to her body and soul at times with problems such as Chlamydia and a pregnancy resulting in abortion. She finds herself moving away from her home in London losing her relationship with parents and old friends. She longs to be loved by men sexually but emotionally as well.

Sometimes Kaysha's sexual desire causes her to face difficult emotional issues such as when she gets pregnant. "'You're pregnant' the doctor said. 'Eight weeks.' I felt numb. What the fuck why me! Moreover for a boy I never had any feelings or love for." But many of the chapters or journal entries are as abbreviated as personal ads. Kaysha always describes the men of her desires with descriptions like "Q was his name 24 DARK chocolate skin five foot six hmmmm long eye lashes shaved head with the side burns and goatee like DMX and gold teeth…"

Open upfront obscene Byfield's language is raw with urban flavor. Kaysha likes to live the party life dress glamorously bat her eyes at men but also live independently from them. "I wanted to start living my luxury lifestyle again and I wanted to do it by myself no help from any man." While the story feels real enough it is so focused on sex and sex alone that it often seems trivial. Poor grammar and spelling make the story hard to follow at times as well. For those who enjoy a juicy sexy type of story though Byfield's book definitely fills that niche and it offers a little bit to the feminist when Kaysha wonders the roles of men and women when it comes to sexuality and the double standards that exist. In the end though it's hard to decipher if Kaysha ever really understands what love is or if she is simply just an extreme example of a horny woman.

Love Letters and Expired Condoms offers readers a very sexual story. Along with the personal journal style the book also includes some poetry. Readers should be prepared for some tumultuous love and lust when reading these "love letters" meant for all the boys Kaysha's loved before.

CHRISTINA CLAASSEN (January 5, 2007)

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