



Passionate Encounters

Shireen Jabry

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Despite the disappointment and disillusionment that follow a bad romance, most lovers cannot resist the uplifting exhilaration and pure joy of passionate, sexual attraction. Like the effects of a potent drug, the natural high some feel while in a gratifying liaison can make even the most mundane life a thrilling experience. Such youthful sensations are often associated with fleeting infatuation rather than mature love, but the majority realize that without enthusiastic response to physical contact, the interaction is really based on friendship, not ardor.

An experimental collection of articulate perceptions, *Passionate Encounters* delves into the moving process of tumbling in and out of love. Though this catapulting analogy may be trite, during the early stages of dating this may be an accurate way of describing the series of interludes that lead to a long-term arrangement or a broken affair. Jabry compares these encounters to scenes in a film and presents them as fifty varying *takes*, each with a different setting, atmosphere, and mood. The outlook varies, but she intersperses these creative visions with a dozen “Sleeping with the Enemy” scenarios that give the book a downbeat slant.

Though somewhat desultory, *Passionate Encounters* may enable baffled lovers to see what’s going on inside the ego-driven self during an evolving relationship, which is not always a linear progression from first date to marriage certificate. In reality, lovers may choose not to bond in a legal transaction, and the author does not seem to perceive the concept of soul mates as an artificial contrivance.

The book’s flaw is a tendency toward haphazard stream-of-consciousness that may be interesting, but the focus of a *take* is often lost in a self-conscious accumulation of written sketches. At other points, a realistic approach, such as this reference to an oppressive first love, delivers the desired message: “It purified love in my eyes, placed heaven on earth, and leapt out of its past to hug me with its smothering warmth.”

A resident of Dubai, Shireen Jabry is a British author and journalist. She has held editorial positions for numerous magazines. *Passionate Encounters* is her first book.

Like poetry in prose, Jabry explores every facet of the psychological churning that accompanies the typical push-pull within the mind as a person adapts to negative and positive feelings for another. She captures the reader with well-crafted phrases and subtle play on words, offering a new literary take on the commercial romance novel.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (March 24, 2011)

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