



Holding on to Zoe

George Ella Lyon

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After sixteen-year-old Jules has her baby, Zoe, it doesn't matter anymore that her mother thinks she's a drama queen, or that her father left them years ago, or even that Zoe's father is gone, too. She and her baby make a family now; she doesn't need anyone else in the world except Zoe. Though it's tough being a new mom, balancing Zoe's needs with working at the Toyota factory and thinking about how to finish school, Jules is sure she'll figure it out. Still, she wonders, why can't anyone be happy for her and Zoe? And why does her mom refuse to believe that Zoe's real?

Holding on to Zoe Details

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Author : George Ella Lyon

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From Reader Review Holding on to Zoe for online ebook

Rebecca Payton says

I really liked this book a lot. I liked how the author, George Ella Lyon, kept his readers wondering throughout the book. This is a story about a girl who had a child at the age of 16. It doesn't matter to Jules if she doesn't have her dad around. Jules doesn't care about anything, except for her baby girl, Zoe. Zoe is Jules' life and always will be. I recommend this book to readers who enjoy mystery books and who will keep reading even if the book becomes a little confusing in some parts.

Ash †Reviews of a FearStreetZombie† says

Oh my gosh, I hated this book, it was so heart shattering. I give it 5 stars. It kept me wanting more, I **had** to finish it. Even if I knew the outcome, I just had to finish it.

Through this book, I bout cried my eyes out, my heart raced and shattered, my guts felt like they were being knotted into a million knots.

This book is so haunting, it really makes you think.

I have a love hate relationship with this book.

I will admit, I'm glad I read it, but I will **not** read it again. I highly doubt I will ever need to honestly. I'm pretty sure 20 years from now someone could bring up the book and it will still be fresh in my mind.

Lauren Watts says

So I know this book has gotten some low ratings. But I personally loved this so much. It actually made me cry my eyes out. I can't really say much about it without spoiling it. But its a recommended book from me.

Paris says

Jules becomes more than the average 16-year-old -- she becomes a mother. As hard as that may be at her age, she embraces it whole-heartedly. She is happy to have a baby and she is ready to take on the challenging task. However, the people closest to her don't want to accept the new person in her life, her baby Zoe. Jules is upset by this but nevertheless she continues to be a strong mother. She does all she knows how to do for her baby and she does her absolute best to keep Zoe safe. Still, her mother and best friend insist that she carry on with her life, the life she left behind to commit herself to her child. Jules doesn't understand why they won't see her future as she sees it, a future centered around Zoe. In the end, it's Zoe who has to see her future differently.

This book was captivating because the main character -- and therefore reader -- wasn't all-knowing. The way it's narrated, the reader receives the eye-opening reality just as Jules does, which is the icing on the cake for this book. As hard as I tried to figure out the plot twist to this book, it wasn't until the last couple chapters

that as I was able to do that. This book is much deeper than a “16 and pregnant” type of book but it’s also a quick read. With those qualities, it’s worth reading.

Danya says

Most of my Psychtember reviews will be formatted differently than my standard reviews, to reflect the mental health theme. I've structured things as though the book is the patient and I'm giving it an assessment. Each axis is an aspect of the book that I'll give my thoughts on (characters, plot, etc.), and the validity score refers to how psychologically accurate I think the book is. Then I may list some other books that this one "shares symptoms with" (i.e. novels dealing with similar topics) and provide the patient's "statement" (quote) before giving the "diagnosis" (my shooting star rating). The rating still reflects my overall view of the book, using my standard rating system.

***Note: I've hidden Axis 4 discussion entirely because of spoilers, but it's there if you wish to read it!**

Assessment:

Axis 1. Characters

There's just a small cast of characters in this book, with the focus primarily on Jules. If you like unreliable narrators, you'll probably like Jules, because she's about as unreliable as they get. We get such a skewed viewpoint from Jules that we don't know exactly what's true and what's not — although this would have been even more the case, and thus more mystifying and unsettling, if the back cover description didn't give so much away.

Jules' mom is the complete opposite of helpful, and deserves to be in the running for the Most Annoying and Neglectful Mom of the Year. She keeps pushing Jules when her daughter is obviously having trouble, and she *never* believes her, which frustrated the heck out of me. Really, it's depressing that she just doesn't seem to care that much about Jules.

Axis 2. Premise/plot

This is a short, character-driven book. It's almost like a character study of someone who develops psychosis— their reactions, behaviour, mindset — written for the YA crowd. As I mentioned above, I think the back of the book gives away too much of the plot, and it would have been more surprising if I had known less about it going in.

Axis 3. Writing Style

The writing is simple and minimalist, bringing to mind the bare-boned structure of a play. It flips back and forth between the present and the past (doing so without warning, which is a little confusing).

Axis 4. Psychological Accuracy

(view spoiler)

(hide spoiler)]

Validity Score:

How psychologically accurate was *Holding on to Zoe*?

Patient shares symptoms with: *Without Tess* by Marcella Pixley

Patient's statement:

"I will never let anything bad happen to Zoe. No one will hurt or scare her; she'll never be hungry, afraid, or alone. Not while I'm alive. I sat in that day care one whole day watching everything Mrs. Jamieson did before I agreed to leave Zoe there. I know what she's fed, how often she's changed, what they do at nap time. I know Allie and Mary Jane and Glenda, who also work there, and they know I'm paying attention. There's a lot in this world that would gobble little girls up. Dark places in every neighborhood. Most parents don't see, but I see. That's my job."

Diagnosis: 3.5 shooting stars.

For more information about schizophrenia, see [here](#).

Disclaimer: I received this book as an ARC for review from the publisher.

Rylie Clark says

Plot Summary

Jules is a 16 year old who got pregnant, and had a baby girl named Zoe, except she didn't, and it was all in her head. Jules was molested as a child and taken advantage of by her boyfriend, causing an ectopic pregnancy, but she still believed Zoe was real, until she realizes she's been in a mental hospital, taking care of a bundle of blankets.

Personal Response

I liked the majority of the book, I just didn't like how the ending was so rushed in when the rest of the book was pretty slow moving. The story itself was good, but pretty predictable. I felt bad for Jules because it was obvious she had mental issues and had been through a lot.

Characterisation

In the beginning of the book, Jules was a regular 16 year old girl, until she found out she was pregnant and had an ectopic pregnancy. She refused to believe it, and was convinced she'd have her kid, and she did, in her mind. She started to go through therapy and realized that Zoe, her daughter, was her.

Recommendations

I recommend this book to high schoolers or teens, it wasn't a hard read but I think it's a good book to teach you about what teen pregnancy can do to you. I'd mainly recommend it to females since they would see what Jules went through before and after she was pregnant and how it affected her life.

Jane FitzGibbon says

Overall, after finishing my book *Holding Onto Zoe* I was very pleased with the book. The book starts off the a girl named Jules who is a 16 year old high school dropout who is now a teen mom. She just has her newborn child, Zoe. Zoe is 3 months old and is brought with her mother to work everyday at a toyota factory. Zoe struggles with parental advice and support since both her father and mother have left her on her own after her brave decision of having Zoe. The book goes on and on with Jules trying to find a new job and support her and Zoe. Within the last 30 pages of the book George Ella Lyon explains to us the Jules has a mental disease which makes her imagine real life situations, Jules wakes up in a mental hospital strapped down to bed screaming, "Where is my baby!" The book finally concludes with Jules stuck in the mental hospital with no baby and her parents in the waiting room. It's one of the biggest plot twists I have ever seen in a book.

Amanda (Good Choice Reading) says

This is one of those books that are difficult for me to review without giving too much away.

Holding on to Zoe is a compelling read. I couldn't stop reading, wondering what pushed Jules into her current situation. It left me thinking about a lot of things. It was fascinating, but also very sad and I couldn't help but feel sorry for her, despite her naivety. It is an understatement to say that her mother isn't the warmest person, and you can see the affect that this has on Jules on top of everything else she has gone through. She is left with no one, and it is no wonder she held onto Zoe so tightly.

Part of me wishes it had been a bit longer, and we had gotten to know everyone a little better. I would have liked to have seen more of Damon, the boy who impregnates Jules, as well as Reba, Jules' best friend. The "Toyota factory" could have played a larger role. I think everything moves so quickly that the only thing that had an impact on me was Jules' state of mind, which is probably the point, but it doesn't stop me from

wanting more out of it.

I'm not sure what else to say without spoiling everything, but I definitely think this book is worth a read!

2.5/5 Stars

Victoria says

I have mixed feelings about this one. The premise is intriguing and some of the therapy scenes seem real, some not so much.

Kelly says

[Except it's all in Jules's head. I knew from page 7 that this was going to be the case. S

Jordan says

Holding On to Zoe
George Ella Lyon

"Holding on to Zoe" is about a sixteen-year-old girl named Jules. Jules and her mother did not get along. Her mother thought she was a drama queen and didn't care for her all that much. Her dad left them years ago and they don't know why. Jules goes to high school and was dating this guy until Jules got pregnant. She had the baby and named her Zoe. Her mother told her that she needed to put it up for adoption and get rid of it. Jules did not want to get rid of it, because it was her baby and she was going to keep it. Jules and Zoe are their own little family. Jules had to protect Zoe from Mother, because she did not trust her with Zoe. Jules started working at Toyota Factory, because she had no money or support for Zoe. Toyota offered to watch Zoe while Jules was working, therefore she did not have to leave Zoe with her Mother. Jules had a good friend from school that would keep in contact with her about what is happening in school. Jules called her and asked if she could come over and just talk. She did not believe that Jules had a child either.

Jules is the main character in this book. She is a sixteen-year-old girl, that goes to high school and then gets pregnant with the guy. She thought she would spend the rest of her life with him, but he ends up leaving. Zoe is Jules's child. Zoe gets shunned by mother and is unwanted in the house they live in. Jules mother is not caring one bit about anything.

This book was written in 2012. The book doesn't say what specific town it is in but says it is in a little town. Jules and Mother live in a house together in a nice neighborhood. Also, some of the story takes place at the high school there in town and some at the hospital. The scenes when Jules goes to school is very slim, because she ends up having a child and has to stay home with her. She had a lot of doctor appointments, therefore she was at the hospital.

"Holding on to Zoe" is an excellent book. It starts off really awkward, but once you keep reading you understand why it started like how it did. I would recommend this book to high school students, because some of the language is not the best. Also, some of the content of her having a child was a little over the top.

Vibiana Cruz says

I really enjoyed this book even though there was some confusion in the beginning. There is a lot of emotion throughout the book. I really like how the the author, George Ella Lyon, kept the book in suspense until the end. I recommend this book more to girls because it shows the problems they face once getting pregnant and then having to lose their baby.

Nicole says

Review Pending!

So not fair to make me cry first thing in the morning!

Daia says

A poor attempt to deliver a psychological prose intruding the psyche of a mentally-deviated pregnant teen whose sudden infirmity roots to a really confusing (and not well-explained) reason. Lot of times I had this sudden urge to ram Jules' head on a wall to make her see sense.

Aeicha says

THREE WORDS: Intriguing but Fragmented

MY REVIEW: Holding On to Zoe by George Ella Lyon has a really intriguing premise, which is, of course, what drew me to the book. I went into the book expecting a powerful, raw glimpse into the life of a troubled teenage mother, but what I got was something disappointing.

At sixteen years old, Jules finds herself pregnant. Even when the baby's father takes off and her mother refuses to accept what's happening, Jules wants her baby more than anything else. But being a single, teenage mother is hard and she must balance taking care of baby Zoe with working at the Toyota factory. And Jules' mother and best friend don't make anything any easier and even refuse to believe that Zoe is real. As Jules struggles as a mom, she also struggles to distinguish between reality and fantasy and must find the strength to deal with a long buried secret.

This is a hard review to write because I walked away from Holding On to Zoe so conflicted. I wanted to like this book because it has so much potential and almost does so much right, but in the end I found it to be uninspiring and disjointed.

The book begins with such a potentially profound premise, but lacks captivating execution and storytelling. The story is told from Jules's perspective and as the story unfolds you realize that she is not a reliable narrator, which makes the story confusing and fragmented. There's also a really unbalanced flow and, at times, the tense switches in a jarring way. These things were so distracting that I had a hard time staying "in"

the story.

Based on the synopsis, especially the part that says “And why does her mom refuse to believe that Zoe's real?”, readers can easily assume that not all is as it seems with Jules and her baby Zoe and the “twist” of Zoe not really existing is introduced early on in the story. So, with this twist the story goes from being about a troubled teenage mother to being about a troubled teenager suffering from mental illness. Like I said above, this storyline has the potential to be powerful and thought-provoking, but falls very short. There’s no real exploration of Jules’ psychotic break and her “breakthrough” feels contrived and anticlimactic. Everything for a great story is present in the basic premise, but the execution and storytelling prove to be lackluster.

The characters are not really likable or relatable and feel one-dimensional. I had a hard time connecting with Jules and even though I was sympathetic to her situation, I never felt invested in her story. Jules’s mother is downright horrible! She’s bitter, judgmental and selfish; there’s nothing redeemable about her at all. This is a short book, at under 200 pages, but I honestly don’t think I could have handled reading about these characters if the book was any longer.

MY FINAL THOUGHTS: Holding On to Zoe was a disappointing and dull read, mostly because it has so much potential and little follow through. The emotional and profound elements just aren’t there, making this a less than enjoyable read.
