



## The Lighter Side of Life and Death

*C.K. Kelly Martin*

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Acclaimed YA author C. K. Kelly Martin offers a sexy, soulful story of one confused boy, two girls, and all the complications that ensue in this romantic feel-good love story that celebrates friendship, first love, first lust, and second chances.

Sixteen-year-old Mason Rice is having the night of his life. He's just delivered an incredible performance in the school play, basked in celebratory afterglow vibes at the party of the year, and lost his virginity to one of his best friends—the gorgeous but previously unobtainable Kat Medina. His dreams are coming true, and the future looks golden.

Unfortunately, Kat sees things very differently. Crossing the friendship line was a big mistake, and all she wants is to forget it and move on, even if that means forgetting Mason altogether. What's a guy to do? Well, if you're Mason, you hang your hopes on the first attractive twenty-three-year-old you cross paths with. At first Mason wonders if he's imagining the chemistry . . . until Colette invites him over to her apartment. Suddenly Mason's living in a whole new world.

## The Lighter Side of Life and Death Details

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## From Reader Review The Lighter Side of Life and Death for online ebook

### Steph Su says

C.K. Kelly Martin's third novel, THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE AND DEATH, is a nuanced tale of the complexities of contemporary romance. It doesn't quite have the punch and memorability I seek in contemporary realistic fiction, but it will nevertheless find fans among those who like their love stories quieter and subtler.

I adore Mason, the protagonist, in a way that is less than adulation but more than pleasant enjoyment. He is the realest boy I have read about in a long time, with typical male desires for female attention and a conflict-free lifestyle, but with the determination to get through the hardest parts of his life with as much dignity and open-mindedness as possible. As I was reading I kept thinking, YES, this is how a boy thinks! even though I clearly have no personal experience—but it felt right, the way C.K. Kelly Martin portrayed Mason's thought processes.

The two girls, Kat and Colette, were less fleshed out than I would've liked, paling in the shadows of Mason's three-dimensionality. Mason likes to say that Kat is adorable and alluring, but I never really saw her being as cool as he described her to be. Mason spends a lot more time and space in the book with Colette, and so I can understand her conflicts a bit more, and their affair works for me despite its unConventionality and taboo implications.

Overall, THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE AND DEATH didn't take me by surprise or anything, but it was still a smooth read that I was invested in while I was reading it. C.K. Kelly Martin will either strike the perfect chord with your contemporary fiction desires, or else be a nevertheless intriguing book that was obviously skillfully written.

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### Carla says

Imagine you've had a crush on one of your best friends for as long as you can remember, it's a bit of an all consuming thing. You loose your virginity to that person and it's midblowing, everything you hoped it would be and more. Then imagine that person decides it was a mistake and blatantly ignores you, acts like your nothing and what you did together was nothing. It can destroy a person, so it's no suprise that Mason jumps on the rebound train and heads straight to Older Woman town, a one way ticket to experiences that will open his eyes and make him realise just how complicated relationships can be.

The Lighter Side of Life and Death is a book that made me realise how powerful young adult novels can be when they're done right. It was full of unrestrained emotion, first experiences and growth. This was quite possibly one of the most accurate potrayals of a teenage boy I have read thus far. Martin's writing is raw and original and she doesn't shy away from the truth, none of her words are sugar coated. It's such an amazing thing to read a book that isn't full of some serious bullshit. It's like reading someone's diary, you feel let into their world and their life, and you embrace it because you just know that its real.

Sex, yes it has sex scenes, which are never once brushed over. For an author to actually write sex scenes that don't just hint at the topic, but show you the emotional intensity of it all, was just wow. There is a derth of

books that just skim over the subject, even though its as much a part of being a young adult as falling in and out of friendships. Also, losing your virginity can be a monumental occasion, its something that happens to us all at one point or another, so to read about it in a way that makes it magical and something to be cherished was just lovely. I am amazed at how poised and beautiful she made it, for both the characters and the reader.

Mason is just one of those characters that instantly relatable, its like opening the pages and finding your friend inside, and wondering how the hell he managed to make it into a book. Not that I know anyone like Mason, but that's why he's amazing, because you feel like you do. His internal thoughts and comments on the behaviour and his observations of everything surrounding him were mesmerising. He wasn't the popular boy, or the gorgeous boy, he was just a 16 year old boy, trying to get through high school in his own special way. Man, this was so refreshing because he was comfortable with his big circle of friends, who are some of the most brilliant secondary characters out there. From Jamie, who is more than a little sensitive. To Kat, who was silly and sexy, and Colette who was amazing in her own way.

I can't finish my review without touching on the subject of Colette, the 23 year old woman. I think it must have been exceptionally hard to portray this particular aspect of the story to readers, without thinking that it may be construed the wrong way. I know some people may be uncomfortable with the plotline after reading the synopsis, but this would be cutting your nose off to spite your face. This could've easily turned into a serious jailbait scenario, but the fact is, it didn't. Mason was so mature about the whole situation. He goes into it with his eyes wide open, knowing what the consequences of his actions may be, and fully prepared to take responsibility for it should it crumble around him.

This took my breathaway for the simple fact that it was just truth in the pages of book. It shows you that real life isn't perfect. Sometimes your going to have to deal with a cat that has terrorist tendencies, sometimes your basement is going to get took over by two strange kids, one of whom may or may not hate your guts and one that acts like they took a serious dose of crack. Sometimes loosing your virginity to a friend is not the best idea in the world, and maybe just maybe, having sex with someone your 8 years younger than may not be as hot as it sounds. This was just amazing. I am in love with this book.

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### **Trisha says**

Intense, vivid and a little bit unsettling. The voice of the narrator is an authentic teenage male, with all his flaws and adolescent idealism on display equally.

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### **Ari says**

I saw the cover of this book and for some odd reason I thought it was about two poc. I now realize Mason is white and the brown-skin belongs to Kat. Who knows what I was thinking. I also didn't know the story took place in Canada. I was completely confused when Mason said he only had a year and a half till he left home since y'know, in the U.S. it would be two years. Not that this bothered me, the story was a great one. I do wish that Kat had been better developed. I guess since Kat was trying to stay away from Mason, it's harder to show her personality. I wanted to understand why Mason was so enamored with her but since his contact with her was limited in this book, I never got a grasp as to why he thought she was so special. She didn't handle the situation well, but that made the book more realistic. I could understand why she felt so flustered

after she lost her virginity to Mason. That's a bit awkward, especially since they weren't dating. I didn't understand Brianna's deal either. Brianna is Mason's new stepsister and I wasn't sure if she just hated life in general or if she was mad that her mom married Mason's dad? I needed some more glimpses into her life. I also would have liked more about Mason's friends. He seemed to keep them all at a distance which was interesting.

I love that it's about a guy who's living a fantasy, getting involved with a sexy older woman. I love that Colette knows Mason's 'living the dream' and she doesn't mind. well I don't love it per se, I love that it's being addressed. I like that the author is so unflinching in writing about it. There's no moral undertone to this story, everything is just reported. This is how Mason feels, this is what Colette says, etc. There's no grand explosion in the end and I appreciated that. The consequences of the relationship aren't ignored, there are consequences but nothing drastic happens. I was worried that this book would be very high-drama but it was low-key, much like Mason and Colette's relationship. There are no graphic sex scenes but they are portrayed. After all, would anyone really expect Mason and Colette not to have sex? Their relationship starts off as being focused on the good times, but it does get complex. There are significant others in both their lives and what they are doing, while not illegal, is frowned upon. I like the added situation of Mason having to adjust his home situation. Mason's parents are divorced and for years it's been just him and his dad. Now he has to accept that his father is getting re-married to a woman with a pre-teen and a young kid. It's a big adjustment and on the surface Mason seems to take it in stride. On the surface only.

The Lighter Side of Life and Death is indeed about situations that are a lot easier to deal with than life and death (drugs, death of family members, etc). The author doesn't mock the issues teenagers face or try to show that there are simple solutions to our problems. it's complicated, but in this story at least, teens can handle it. There's a great distinction between love and lust and the author makes that clear. Mason has to find that out for himself though. The 'i-love-yous' aren't traded until the very end, as it should be. The book could use further secondary character development but the book mostly focuses on Mason and Colette, and those two are at their fullest potential. Their relationship is one of fun and doubt. The reader (like Mason) knows it won't work out, but that doesn't make this any less of a notable tale and I got caught up in it all. Plus there's an added bonus of the story being set in Canada, a country that was quite foreign to me.

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### **Alyssa says**

Martin does diversity - with her characters and plot lines - extremely well, a reason why I enjoyed this book as much as I did. I was pleasantly surprised that Martin supported and represented minorities, as well as addressed "taboo" (and often clichéd) situations. Although this book wasn't without its faults, I'm very glad that there is an author out there that *gets* the idea of diversity, and that she took that aspect of reality to her story. This is definitely my favourite of Martin's books.

Mason, the sixteen year old easy-going actor, has got himself in a heap of trouble. Not only can't he stop fighting with his future step-sister who's just moved in, but he slept with his best friend (who's now ignoring him) and is now starting up a relationship – if you could call it that – with a confused twenty-three year old woman. As he battles with his feelings for two totally different women and his father's upcoming marriage, readers get to ride it all out in the head of a very mature and well-developed confused teenage boy.

I absolutely love reading from the perspective of a teen guy; I find it one of the most enjoyable reading

experiences, probably because I'm an adolescent female and it's interesting to experience the things I do everyday through the eyes of someone totally different. Mason was totally realistic and refreshing to read about. I appreciated the optimism and the lighter personality he had, especially amongst all the drama he was going through, because it provided a very hopeful and refreshing feel for the book. One of my less-favourable comments about *The Lighter Side of Life and Death* would be that we never really got to see character-building in Mason, and that he pretty much got away with everything, even when he "didn't." In the family Martin creates for him, and the school setting, and everything that goes on with Colette (the twenty-three year old), I found it quite unbelievable that Mason never got into trouble, and was never reprimanded for his actions. Also, while I've admired Martin for writing "not-nice" characters and while I still admire that of her for making them realistic, it bothered me a lot that Mason was such a terrible friend to a group of wonderful people that helped him through so much. And again, that he got away with it.

I mentioned before that I really enjoyed the diverse cast in this book, but I think I should elaborate. YA Fiction generally focuses on straight Caucasian characters of the Christian faith. It's disappointing to me – even being a straight Caucasian teen myself – because such is an inaccurate portrayal of reality, and also incredibly boring after the hundredth read. I very much commend Martin not only for including such a diverse, *realistic* cast – one that included characters of a variety of ethnicities, sexual orientations and ages – but also for giving the side characters plot, dialogue and *lives*. That the two lesbians in the book discussed their issues deriving of their sexual orientation pleased and surprised me, even if ~~Mason~~ nobody listened to them. That one of the DLIs was Filipino and that the other was twenty-three delighted me, but I'm not lying when I say that I was worried – unnecessarily – about Martin's choice in female leads, as both of the women could have been grossly misrepresented as they both play on misogynist sexual clichés.

As per usual, I really enjoyed Martin's stepping out of the box, with her plotting, writing and characterization. I thought she accurately depicted all the relationships in the book, specifically the one between Colette and Mason, which was delicate and cautious as it should have been. Mason's voice and the writing style itself was extremely teen-friendly, thus relatable, and I additionally thought that Martin found the perfect balance in the usage of alcohol/drugs, language and the lack of such. Still, for a book that addressed important teen issues and brought in many key things we should see in YA, it was really just an average read all on its own. It's not that I expected more from it, exactly, but there just could have been some more emotion brought into a story that was otherwise very well written.

*The Lighter Side of Life and Death* is absolutely recommended, especially to those who are looking for a little variety in their readings.

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### **Arlene says**

To say I'm slightly conflicted about this book is a huge understatement. I finished it yesterday, and I've been thinking how I feel about the content and the characters since then, so I'll warn you now, my comments below are unorganized and might be borderline ranting... just so you know... Okay, who am I kidding... it's a rant... full blown rant.

First of all, I'm giving it three stars because I liked the narrator of this story. Mason is a sixteen year old junior in high school, who I feel is likeable, down-to-earth, and unabashedly honest. Well that's about all I liked about the book. No really, everything else pretty much sucked. Let me prove it to you...

Mason's two best friends are total \*insert bad word\*. I couldn't stand Jamie and how quickly he abandoned

Mason after a decision that was really none of his business. It pissed be off that Jamie guilt tripped Mason over something he would have done **IN.A.Heartbeat**. What happened between Mason and Kat is something that Jamie should have just let go and be there for his friend when he needed him. Period, end of story.

Now Kat... Ugh! I hate to stereo-type because I'm sooo not like that at all, but come on! She acted like a typical guy. After what went down between her and Mason, you'd think she'd return his calls or be half-way decent towards him. I couldn't stand her for the rest of the story and seeing him give her a second chance at the end was pretty disappointing. Mason you deserve better than Kat, you really do! One more thing... first time??? One word.. \*whispers\* liar. That experience for you was pulled out of a typical bodice ripper romance novel and we all know... so not true how it really goes. Boo to that.

Colette was a piece of work. OMG woman!! You hooked up with a sixteen year old boy. Yes, a boy! I don't care what state or country this is set in, that just feels, looks and smells criminal. You knew he was just coming off of a huge let down and just needed to carve a little space to feel cared about. The answer is not to take advantage of that. Boo to you! Boo! Boo! I'm so glad Mason deleted her final voice mail and decided to move on because that woman deserved to be ignored and shunned for what she did.

Mason's family... one word... WORTHLESS. The poor guy confesses to his father what he did and all his dad could focus on is Mason apologizing to Brianna for calling her out on being a beeyotch. Umm \*taps dad on the shoulder\* your SIXTEEN year old son just told you he hooked up with an older woman and he obviously wants to talk about it, putting it off till tomorrow because that would be a "better time" is a load of crap! Oh and stepmom... \*taps stepmom on the shoulder\* your older friend just took advantage of your stepson and the best you can do is give him the stink eye? Ugh! You guys suck. Boo to all of you, except for Burke.

Well, you can read the overview to see what this book is about and I blame myself for still reading this because I knew the theme sounded a bit too controversial for my taste but as always my morbid curiosity took over and landed me in fictional hell. Don't think I can recommend this book, but I don't regret reading it because it got me one book closer to my reading challenge for 2011. That is all...

PS. I actually went back and deleted about 20 of these !!!!!!!!

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### **Jenny / Wondrous Reads says**

If there's one thing C. K. Kelly Martin can do better than almost anyone, it's write from the perspective of a normal teenage boy. She somehow manages to get inside their heads and portray them with realism and honesty, leaving no stone unturned and nothing to the imagination. Her debut novel, *I Know It's Over*, also used male narration, leaving me to think that that was as good as it got. Thanks to *The Lighter Side of Life and Death*, it got better.

From reading the summary, you're probably thinking this book is about a teenage boy's sordid affair with an older woman. You'd be right, of course, though there's nothing wrong or sleazy about their sudden exploration of each other. They truly do have feelings for one another, and mutually choose to embark on an adult relationship. There's an age gap, yes, but it's not an issue - it's not illegal, they're both responsible, and there's just something right about them being together.

Mason is the teenage boy in question. He's at that point in his life where sex is on the cards, and he has a thing for his best friend, Kat. After a night of drunken antics, they go further than ever before, leaving their friendship in tatters the day after. This alone would be a nightmare for any teenager, not to mention confusing and completely devastating. Crossing the line with a friend is like walking a tightrope: either it all goes to plan, or you fall. Hard.

Mason, in true realistic fashion, has no idea what's going on with Kat. She's hot and cold, throwing mixed signals his way and making his head swim. Sounds familiar? I'm sure there isn't a teenage boy in the world who hasn't had trouble figuring out girls - it's just a high school given. I've never read a more honest account of male thoughts and emotions, not to mention physical descriptions of sex itself. Martin will never pull the wool over your eyes - she tells it as it is. Sex is awkward, chaotic, and intimate, and that's exactly how it's portrayed in *The Lighter Side of Life and Death*. Young adults are treated like adults within the pages of this book, and it really shows a sense of understanding between author and reader.

Colette, the older object of Mason's affections, is also very well written. You get to see her side of things through Mason's eyes, though she's an enigma that is never fully explained. Her actions and attraction to Mason could be construed as simple lust or longing, but I think it goes deeper than that. Maybe she's looking for that connection to tether her to reality, or someone who will just appreciate her for who she is and what she stands for. Whatever her reasoning, she opens her eyes to a whole new experience, taking Mason along for the ride with her.

*The Lighter Side of Life and Death* is about maturing, making choices and taking life as it comes. It's an honest depiction of one boy's brush with the seemingly interchangeable love and lust, and a realistic look at the decisions made by people of all ages. I admire its raw honesty, and I think you will too.

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### **JustJay says**

This book has one saving grace: diversity. Love how diverse the characters are. Especially Kat. I'm Filipino, so I always love when I see that there's a Filipino character in a book. And the author mentioned pancit and furniture covered in plastic? All for it.

That's pretty much all I liked about this book. The main thing that I disliked--and the most important thing--is the protagonist, Mason. And when the main character is the problem, it just makes the whole reading experience unpleasant. There's one word that describes Mason for me. Bland. Just bland. There was nothing that jumped out at me about his character, and the whole time, he felt like a very passive character. Things just happened to him, and I always felt like he did little to nothing.

Next, his friends. Ugh. Frankly, I felt he needed better friends. Most were frustrating and some felt unnecessary. There were so many juggled around that I didn't really feel like I got to know any of them. His friends seemed to pass by in the book and didn't really serve any major importance to moving the story along. They were just there.

Last thing, which is just me being nitpicky. I was not a fan of how the book started. I felt like I was thrown into this chaos with so many things around me and so many characters that I couldn't keep track of. It immediately starts with Mason just talking and talking about his life, his family, and his friends. A lot of telling. I just didn't feel like I had a chance to catch my breath or even remember everyone that he's talking about.

### **Joelie says**

Wasn't a fan, the relationship between Colette and mason was a little interesting and Brianna was an interesting character to read but it all just seemed bitchy and surface level of character complexities. I skimmed, not a good sign.

I'm disappointed because I thought I would really enjoy it but I just never really cared about the characters.

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### **laaaaames says**

I wish C.K. Kelly Martin wrote ten books a year so I would have more of them to read. I mean, good god. They are so awesome. And they are so awesome because they are not super high concept or paranormal or trend-jumpy, they are just books about people living, and sometimes they do good things and sometimes they do bad things, but mostly they just do THINGS because life is rarely very black and white, so why should books about people be either?

I like Martin's boy protags a lot. They are boys for sure, but unlike other women I could mention but I won't because I'm in a good mood, Martin isn't desperate for you to believe Mason's a dude that she feels the need to crude it up beyond reality. Look, I get that the mind of a teenage boy is a dirty place (remember: so is the mind of a teenage girl), but I don't know men who write YA lit who take this weirdo path of gratuitousness. This is a good segue into agreeing with Courtney that Martin really nails (no pun intended, really) writing about sex. It's so real without veering into creepytown.

The Colette storyline was handled with such sensitivity and honesty. It wasn't a Lesson or a Message or a The More You Know. It was something that happened. It was something you understood exactly how it happened. And Martin's really smart about letting her female characters sometimes airlift in some thoughts on girlhood or womanhood or feminism or gender or whatever else her boy protags need to hear without it ever seeming preachy or Women's Studies 101.

One of my favorite moments in *I Know it's Over* is when Sasha is furious with Nick for how he speaks of another girl derogatorily. And Nick's all, holy crap, that was pretty effing shitty of me. And I felt like, YES YES YES, good boy, Nick. I don't expect boys (or men) to understand what it's like going through life as a girl (or woman) but the good ones do want to be on the side of understanding and egalitarianism.

And there are little moments of that here too; Colette calls Mason out on a couple of gender-related issues. Also even the Maxim-cover-type girl is a three-dimensional character in this book. Maybe you're thinking, well, of course, a woman wrote this, of course she's playing fair with the ladies. AND GOD I WISH THAT WAS ALWAYS TRUE. With Martin it is always true.

Lastly - and this is a little spoilery, so the pure should look away now - I really appreciate that while the relationship between Mason and Colette was about as bad an idea as one could have, no one had to suffer any consequences besides feeling embarrassed or Bad Idea Jeans about it. I mean, really. Isn't much of life often about making Dumb Relationship Decisions without the earth imploding or anyone getting a disease?

Wow, I think this is the most I've written about a book I liked! Way to go, me.

(read: 77)

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### **Kerri (Book Hoarder) says**

2.5 stars.

This book was a bit strange, for me. I couldn't decide if I liked the main character or not, in spite of my usual reminders to myself when reading YA that I am reading about teenagers.

In that sense, the author has teenagers down pat. Hormones running wild, awkward drama, tensions over the smallest things? All of that is to be found in this book about a sixteen year old boy who finds the course of his life getting a bit bumpy when he sleeps with his best friend only to have things fall apart afterwards.

There are two romantic entanglements in the book, both filled with awkwardness. I will say that the author does a very good job of putting us into the head of a self-absorbed, hormonal teenaged boy - the trouble is, self-absorbed, hormonal teenaged boys aren't necessarily compelling or likeable.

Mason is horny. He's awkward. He's full of himself. He's dramatic. He's self involved. It's all very realistic but it made the book hard for me to read, and I felt as though secondary characterization suffered a bit. His best friend Jamie seems relegated to the background - not something I really expect from a teenaged boy - and I found this to be a situation where the author tells us about how the main character is such good friends with other characters, but doesn't show us. I really hate that, because I need to be invested in friendships to care about it.

This lack of depth haunted the main relationship in the book, that of Mason and the ethereal Kat. At the end of the book I still wasn't quite sure why he was so obsessed, or why they were such good friends. I think I would have enjoyed the book quite a bit more if I'd been able to see more of that. A book that is primarily about conflict is fine, but for that to work the reader needs to care about the people involved in the conflict, and that was what was missing, here.

So overall, a midling effort, really. I do like the fact that it takes on the male p.o.v. for once, though - we need more books that do that.

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### **Amy says**

Ick.

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### **Diane Ferbrache says**

Mason is a 16 year old boy who loses his virginity in the first chapter. He and his best friend, Kat, have too much to drink at a party, she sees her boyfriend with another girl, and things get out of hand (she was a virgin too). The next week he can't understand why she's avoiding him and his friends are treating him

differently. When he meets Colette, a friend of his new stepmom, everything changes. She's 23 and he can't get her out of his mind.

Apparently, a 16 year old is "of age" in Canada, and the 7 year age difference isn't a criminal offense. But even if you disregard this aspect, this book is problematic. The sex scenes (several of them) are explicit enough they would almost qualify for Playboy. There is no real solution/resolution to any of the problems here, but the implication is that everything works itself out. The published reviews (and those on Amazon) praised the honesty & realism, but I think the explicitness puts it outside the realm of a school library collection. Plus...I just don't GET the title – I don't see the connection to the storyline.

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### **Lala says**

LOVED IT! This was my fave Martin book to date. I just recently discovered her books and i've been devouring them so quickly. Great writing, great story and I love that she's canadian :P There isn't much I can say except that this was an easy read, Martin gets your attention quickly and the story just flows from there. Mason was adorable and I loved being in his head. At times he felt older than his sixteen years but the story still worked. And the ending, perfect!

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### **Nomes says**

I automatically wanted to read this book regardless of the premise because I really love the way C K Kelly Martin writes. (Not that the premise was so bad, just that I plan on reading her books regardless of the blurb)

C K Kelly Martin captures the teen voice so authentically and without any sentimentality ~ it really is refreshing to read. Her books just feel honest.

Likewise ~ I adore her prose. It is neither overly literary or simply commercial. I love the way she tells her stories ~ her sentences often have a perfect rhythm and her dialogue flows so effortlessly.

I loved Mason's voice in this story. He's charming and aching and 100% teen man-child. I find it easy to crush on a male POV done well and this ranks up at the top for me among YA fiction.

As for the actual story. Gosh ~ I was so into it (really, I read it in one day) but at the same time, it didn't entirely sit well with me. I found myself wondering a couple of times just what the book was really about, what Martin's intentions with the story were, what that first original nugget of idea was that sparked the whole thing. I am concluding it really is just about one guys first experiences with sex/lust and how messed up it can make everything. It is tastefully done, gorgeous and genuinely heart-breaking (as I expected it would be having read her previous two books) but... sigh, I don't know. I think I would have handled it better if Mason had been bumped up to 18 years. Which, I guess, would undermine the premise...

I was left wondering at Collette's motives (her being 23 and getting it on with a 16 year old boy). I wish it had been made clearer (apart from her finding him "beguiling" and being unable to resist). Baffled :/

I loved all the high school theatre stuff. Adored the conflict in Mason's family ~ it was such a great backdrop for the sexual/relationship dramas ~ and it never felt melodramatic or cliche.

I have enjoyed all C K Kelly Martin's books and this one is no different. I am finding it hard to balance my immense enjoyment of Mason and appreciation of the gorgeously-flowing story against my distaste for some of the events in the book :/

In the end, I'm going all four stars. I was hooked and I just admire her so much as an author... (and I have a crush on Mason ~ not a perverted one, LOL ~ just on him as a person, in all his confidence and insecurities and hopes and dreams and failures...)

Shame about that cover. Ugh. Who are they marketing this to?> It's intelligent lit and absolutely would appeal to teen guys to read. I don't think they would get past the cover though (I even felt embarrassed reading it near my 9 year old son, haha)

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