

FOR ALL OUR VOICES

Issue No. 9

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Happy Summer Solstice!

On the longest day of the year, as we stand in the deep green of summer's beginning, I'm sending you this newsletter to celebrate the publication of *Holding on to Zoe* , a YA novel due out in July (Margaret Ferguson Books, FSG).

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HOLDING ON TO ZOE

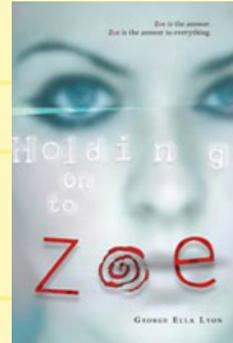
Holding on to Zoe

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

9780374332648

Publication date: 7/17/2012

Ages 14 & up



Jules is a high-school student who discovers she's pregnant and is determined to have her baby, even though her mother - and her doctor - say she will never come to term. Before too long we realize that something is not quite right with Jules - and with the baby she clings to. As days and weeks pass, Jules's world grows smaller and smaller. Her mother won't give her the support she needs. Her friends shy away from her. Don't they know how much this baby means to Jules? Can't they see Zoe and she together make a whole?

Through the intervention of a caring doctor and her best friend Reba, we grow to understand why Jules so fiercely cares for, loves, and depends on Zoe. This compelling and haunting story takes us into the damaged heart of a girl and the baby she can't give up.

Watch the Book Trailer:



Advance Reviews:

"Sensitively weaving the past and present together, Lyon adroitly describes the texture of the troubled teen's world in the girl's voice, which switches tenses appropriately. Particularly masterful is her depiction of Jules's social-worker mother, an icy, furious woman who is so emotionally tone-deaf that she's surprised when a potential client with cancer is offended when she asks if the woman will be around long enough to collect benefits...an intriguing window into the life of a damaged teen."-*Kirkus Reviews*

"...Lyon offers a haunting portrayal of a girl's psychological trauma and the defenses she builds in order to feel less alone in the world."-*Publishers Weekly*

Buy the Book:

[From an independent bookstore](#)

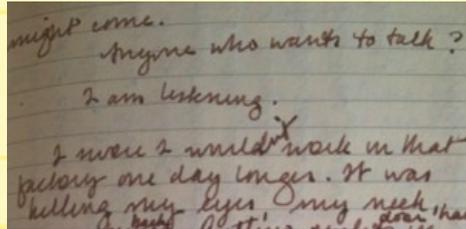
[From Amazon.com](#)

THE PROCESS OF WRITING ZOE

From a question-and-answer session with George Ella Lyon about writing *Zoe*:

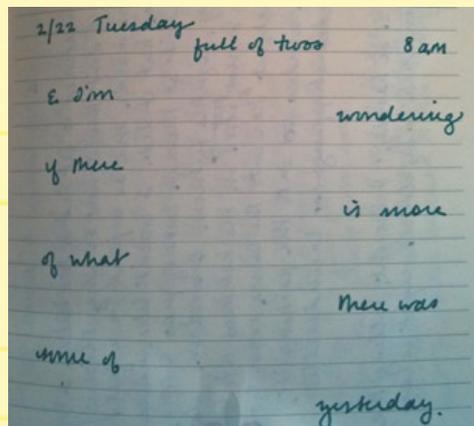
Readers often want to know where writers' ideas come from. Tell us about the genesis of your novel *Holding On to Zoe*. Is the story imagined, based in reality, or some of both?

Like so much of my writing, *Zoe* began in my journal. My practice, when I don't have an ongoing project, is to come to the page and ask who wants to speak. Then I wait. Sometimes nobody shows up. Sometimes it's somebody I don't connect with. Maybe a guy who wants to tell me how the St. Lawrence Seaway was built. I try to be open to whoever comes, but if I really don't connect with the voice, I don't return to it the next day.



might come.
Anyone who wants to talk?
I am listening.
I wish I would work in that
factory one day longer. It was
killing my eyes. My neck, the
back, the feet...

With Jules, I was captivated from the first page. Who was this narrator? Where did she come from? What was her story? Would she come back? Would I have the courage and stamina to go on her story?



2/22 Tuesday full of trees 8 am
E. sim wondering
if there is more
of what there was
some of yesterday.

If you compare this beginning with the final novel, you'll see that *Zoe* started out as Lily and the factory was different, too, but Jules and her situation were the same.

As for the story's basis in reality, I do live fourteen miles from a big Toyota plant-and I drive a little Toyota-but that's about it. Of course, Jules shares some characteristics and experiences of people I have known, but her story is her own.

What do you hope readers will take away from their reading of *Holding On to Zoe*?

First, I hope they are held by the story and that, at the end, they're glad they made the journey. I hope they feel less alone. Then I hope they feel larger inside when it's over, that they'll have more understanding and compassion for themselves and others.

As a reader, I always hope for an ah ha! moment when something that mystified or alluded me in my own life comes into focus through someone else's words. I search for something that will light up my inner world and then shine out in my life. I hope that for my readers, too.

[Read the full interview](#)

Always when a book is about to be published, I have to remind myself to *breathe*, to let it go because I've done all I can to bring my vision to the page. Now, in print or on screen, it's in readers' hands. Bon voyage, Jules and *Zoe*! May you find a home in many hearts!

George Ella Lyon

