

Love for Her

JOHN JOHNSON

ISBN 978-0-9990780-0-6
All poems copyright © John Johnson

Cover art copyright © Goiteseone Moerane
Book design by Carly Thaw
Love for Her © Day Eight, 2018

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This book is special to me because it is an ode to all of the amazing women in my life. It celebrates lust and love, short-term flings, and everlasting marriage. It celebrates the ways that women have shaped me. I truly believe, “God is a woman.” Thanks to all of the amazing women in my life, and I would like to specifically thank Kendra, Jada, Tedra, Marley, and Leah, for being the consistent reminders of the love that exists in the everyday. Loving an artist is not easy. In addition to all of the other challenges, you have to endure my incompetence in my attempts at being brilliant. Every day you all continue to guide and teach me to become not only a better man, but a better human being. To all the men that have encouraged me, including Jason, Scott, LaVan, Carl, Larin, and Jose: we still got a lot of work to do. Thanks also to Robert, and Day Eight, for all your efforts in getting these works published. PEACE.

John Johnson

August, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DCPS (District of Columbia Public School System)	1
Coffee Shop	3
America	5
My Ancestors	7
My Man DC	9
Definition of a Woman	12
First Love	15
Third Grade Love	18
Letter to Jill	21
Junior High School Love	23
Telephone Tag	26
First Heart Break	28
High School	31
College	36
Freak	37
I Love Women	39
One Man's Garbage Is Another Man's Treasure	41

DCPS (DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC
SCHOOL SYSTEM)

I HAD A history teacher that kept it real when I was in
high school

He said life is a big chess board

They going to treat you like pawns and peons

Colonized by Europeans

Your black life matters

You are a human beyond

This world has strange customs

And most people wear masks and costumes

Outfits like Halloween

For example: the other day I was dressed up as a black man

And got pulled over by a man dressed as a cop

I knew immediately that I should have worn my white man in
khaki outfit

Because the interaction would have ended in him giving me
candy corn instead of tension

So I said, "Officer I know it's night and I am traveling home
diagonally like a bishop to my castle.

I am trying to do this without hassle I would like to make it to
the eight rank to my Queen

I live 64 squares away right off of Martin Luther King."

But the officer was like many of you...

He didn't know how to play chess

Nor did he know how to turn the body camera on that was on
his chest.

He didn't have the same history teacher either

The same history teach that said,

Life is a big chess board

They going to treat you like pawns and peons

Colonized by Europeans

Your black life matters

You are human beyond.

COFFEE SHOP

EXCUSE ME

May I have a Macchiato?

Minus the racism and gentrification

And hold the dairy

Because I am lactose intolerant

I am no longer tolerant

I want my teachers strapped with the truth and tank tops

Because then they can bare arms

America still drops booms

War

So much beefing

Can't be swallowed by vegetarians

So many bitches can't

Be vaccinated by veterinarians

You are probably judging for my content but not my character

This poem has a dream too

It dreams a little different than MLK's

This poem had a dream it was in the car

And Jesus was in the back

We nickname Jesus 'Black'

Cause Jesus Black!

And riding shotgun was Harriet

And Marcus Garvey was driving the Cadillac Chariot

This poem had a dream that Tamir Rice never met Tupac

But maybe there is too much caffeine in my Macchiato

Or maybe it's just too melanated.

AMERICA

WHAT IS THE difference between Chicago and Vietnam?

Niggas don't get killed in Vietnam no more

They get killed in Iraq and Afghanistan

Fighting a rich man's war

Allen Stanford and Bernie Madoff with the Lehman Brothers

The Stock Market plummeted

And for a second the rich almost knew what it was like to
be poor

Poor like on the Southside of D.C., Philly, and Baltimore

But not really

No banker traded

In cufflinks for handcuffs

But if you look at the prison system you would think African Americans

Invented mortgage fraud and stock derivatives

So that's just one reason I don't stand for your anthem

Because the 14th amendment came with a prenup

I can no longer be immune

I am allergic to racism like a bag full of peanuts

So as white privilege is challenged

I understand why so much money goes to defense
I understand why you want to build a wall and a fence
In Arizona ice tea don't taste that sweet anymore
It's actually bitter
Bitter like the strange fruit that hung from poplars
Everybody's on social media got a hashtag and want to be
popular
And in the end I agree that "All lives do matter"
All Lives Do Matter
Just not in America.

THIRD GRADE LOVE

YOU REMEMBER THAT third grade love?

That never, ever, ever, die love

Because she checked the yes box

And you got the paper proof.

That third grade love

When everybody knew each other's whole name like

Eric McFadden

Lakesha Johnson

April Williams

Damion Madukaego

(He was the international student)

That third grade love

Kimberly Ware

My third grade love

I just loved her for her

She ain't have no ass or no titties

And I wasn't lookin' for none

That third grade love

I just liked her cause she was pretty and I liked the way she
wrote her name

She spelled it Kimberly, capital K-I-M-B-E-R-L-Y,

Ware, capital W-A-R-E.

She even knew how to write her name in cursive —

She was real smart, you know.

That third grade love

— When lunchtime vitamin A and D enhanced milk

Became a chocolate milk day

Because you got to see her face.

That third grade love,

When 6:00 PTA meetings were the only time you got to see
her at night.

That third grade love,

When y'all would secretly share each other's report cards—

Knowing you both got the same grades

Because y'all both copied off each other's paper.

That third grade love,

When the teacher asked you what you wanted to do when you
got older

And you said: I want to be the ice cream man and marry
Kimberly Ware.

Because the ice cream man was cool as shit in the third grade,

And so was Kimberly Ware

My third grade love

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LOVE

NO MORE NURSERY rhyme book bags and lunch boxes

`Cause you're a big boy

`Cause you got you a ninja turtle backpack

And a trapper-keeper notebook —

The expensive one that came with a pencil and a protractor

That you used as a boomerang in the hallway.

Junior high school love,

When you can finally get a girl's phone number

Although y'all ain't talk about nothin' on the phone —

Except sometimes when y'all watched Bill Cosby together

And you would say: "Ooh did you see that?"

And she would chuckle and say: "Yeah."

Remember that junior high school love?

When you talked about how stupid you were when you
were younger

Because you wanted to be the ice cream man —

But now you got big plans

Because now you want to be a policeman, fireman, and the
President of the USA —

All at the same time.

Junior high school love

The first time you got a nickname:

She called me June bug because my birthday is in June

And I called her Ladybug cause she was my lady.

She thought I was cool because I knew how to use curse words

And because I told her I was going to pull the fire alarm one day

To prove how much I loved her.

That junior high love,

When you wrote each other love letters using your

Vocabulary word list —

When a date consisted of walking her to the bus stop,

When a kiss was equivalent to sex.

I got my kiss, too.

It was a Tuesday and I just gave Ladybug a pretty flower —

I think it was a dandelion.

I said: “Here, Ladybug — I profess my love to you!”

(Profess was one of our vocabulary words.)

And she looked at me,

She looked at me like I had answered some type of question
in her life

And then our lips attached like refrigerator magnets

And we were stuck together forever with that kiss —

And I didn’t even have to pull the fire alarm.

That junior high love —

My Ladybug and me.

ABOUT DAY EIGHT

This book was produced by Day Eight. The mission of Day Eight is to empower individuals and communities to participate in the arts through the production, publication, and promotion of creative projects.

Example 2018 projects:

The DC Arts Writing Fellowship was created to support early career arts writers. Fellows are served by a committee of professional critic mentors, and Fellowship Directors. The Fellowship was initially funded by a grant to Day Eight from the National Endowment for the Arts, and recently received a multi-year funder commitment.

The DC Poet Project is a reading series and open-to-all poetry competition that supports DC area poets. The project is designed around partnerships with the DC Public Library, Anacostia Coordinating Council, and Brink Media. Related to the DC Poet Project, Day Eight recently conducted a poetry practicum in partnership with three of D.C.'s Senior Villages, supported by a grant from ride-sharing company Lyft.

Since 2017, Day Eight's local art history projects have included work on The Jefferson Place Gallery Archive, which documents D.C.'s first artist cooperative gallery, online at www.JeffersonPlaceGallery.com. An Advisory Board of community members and arts and museum professionals oversee and support the archive's development.

All of Day Eight's projects are overseen by committees of volunteers. To learn more about our programming, or to join a committee, please visit www.DayEight.org or [Facebook.com/DayEightOrg](https://www.facebook.com/DayEightOrg).