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Proud

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Not a Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The authors and illustrators in this new collection of stories were each given the theme of pride, and asked to respond to it. Contributors range from the very well-known ? David Levithan, Tanya Byrne, David Roberts, Steve Antony, Caroline Bird ? to young authors and illustrators being published for the first time. Whatever the setting for their stories or poems, there?s an overarching sense of energy and excitement, almost certainly arising from that invitation to give voice to the LGBTQ+ experience and a shared sense of celebration that the stories will do more than entertain readers: after all, as one of the characters says, ?We take stories to heart, even when they are our own.?

Coming out is a recurring theme, from Caroline Bird?s witty opening poem *Dive Bar*, to Dean Atta?s *How To Come Out as Gay*, which concludes the book. For many of the characters it isn?t easy, and help comes from, among other things, gay penguins in a zoo, a phoenix, the owner of a record shop, a somewhat eccentric driving instructor, even Lady Gaga via the Philadelphia Queer Youth Choir ? a list that gives a good indication of the sheer variety of the stories included. Communities play a major role in stories of those choosing new identities too, be that the gay football team or the Dungeons and Dragons players eager to subvert the school?s binary rules for one of their friends. Offered these affecting, honest, sensitively written stories, all readers will close the book with a sense of optimism, hope and yes, pride, in young people and the world they are making for themselves.

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