

Everything Together: A Second Dad Wedding

Benjamin Klas

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Feeling like a third wheel during the summer, a teenager becomes a volunteer in Benjamin Klas's *Everything Together*, a largehearted novel set within an LGBTQ+ family and in Minneapolis's diverse neighborhoods.

In this sequel, thirteen-year-old Jeremiah visits his dad, whose partner, Michael, is preoccupied with wedding crafts. Jeremiah's companion from the previous summer, Sage, is busy with her friend Asha, which makes Jeremiah question whether he's still appreciated. When he learns to embrace the changing patterns of relationships, his joys multiply through making new friends, too.

As Jeremiah begins working with refugees through Sage's mother's connections, he starts to mature. Helping in a community garden inspires fresh ideas about how people are better together. A brief glimpse at the prejudice that refugees face is recounted from an empathetic vantage. Biking with Asha's brother further enlarges Jeremiah's sometimes naïve ideas, such as about Muslim views. The result is both educational and too familiar; often, the book's characters of color are burdened with needing to explain details to Jeremiah. Still, the overall tone among the friends is light.

Skillful at exploring Jeremiah's emotions, which color his perspective, the plot unfolds at an easygoing pace, threading a Pride festival, Minneapolis parks, and a Somali coffee shop into its warm backdrops. The impending wedding also sets a natural framework for wider discussions about problems with family members who can't accept Jeremiah's father's bisexuality.

Jeremiah—who is placid at first, sometimes even appearing younger than his age—gains satisfying self-confidence by the summer's end. *Everything Together* is a sweet depiction of knitting modern, chosen families together, and a timeless story about the emotional rewards found in helping others.

KAREN RIGBY (July / August 2021)

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