



Short Stuff: A Young Adult LGBTQ+ Anthology

Alysia Constantine, Editor

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Lighthearted romances kick off in *Short Stuff*, a young adult LGBTQ+ anthology that raises the stakes with each story. In one entry, a girl comes out, but reels from her mother's rejection of her; elsewhere, a character finds romance during their final family trip before they enter college and secure independence.

Meet-cutes are followed by relationships that first involve animosity or a sizable dose of trepidation. In one tale, an egotistical Olympic hopeful, Basil, lambastes an eager concession worker for adding basil to all of his daily specials. But time and proximity ease the characters' apprehension, and heady attraction blooms. An exception arises with "Life in the Time of Coffee," in which best friends Gemma and Anya first met when they were children; a decade later, their friendship has deepened. The rejection that Gemma suffers after coming out ushers in the collection's more serious tones, though even as Gemma deals with her pain, the struggle is peripheral to her goal of finding love.

Though most of its entries are contemporary, the anthology includes "Gilded Scales," a satisfying tale featuring maidens and vengeful gods. In it, Fenn defies local customs, joining her village's male warriors to subdue a terrorizing dragon and rescue a young woman. In limited space, Fenn's world's customs, backstory, and traditions are established, and she faces the serious complications represented by gender norms and oppression. In Fenn's fight against the establishment, she takes great pains to prove her bravery and win her right to marry a person of her own choosing.

The entries of *Short Stuff* are diverse, complex, and packed with the butterflies of young love.

TANISHA RULE (May / June 2020)

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