

The Lonesome Era

Jon Allen

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Camden is an anthropomorphized cat attending high school. He grapples with his sexuality and how to reveal it to his best friend in Jon Allen's graphic novel *The Lonesome Era*.

Camden inhabits a late-1990s American Rust Belt town that has seen its best days. He and his best buddy Jeremiah skateboard, attend rock concerts at the local VFW, play video games, deal with bullies, and engage in other typical teenage activities. Complicating matters is the fact that Camden has realized that he's gay and that he has feelings for Jeremiah.

The characters and situations of *The Lonesome Era* originated in Allen's ongoing comic *Ohio For Sale*. *The Lonesome Era* reprints those issues, but also adds over two hundred pages of original material to provide the complete story in one volume. Allen's cartoon-animal style is deceptively simple; it conveys a number of subtle feelings and reactions with pinpoint accuracy and creates a fully lived-in feeling to Camden's world with its attention to telling details.

Allen strikes a funny, breezy tone that makes the book quick and enjoyable, but doesn't gloss over the emotional hazards of Camden's situation. Crude as he is at times, Jeremiah proves accepting of his friend's sexuality, though making it clear that he's interested in friendship and nothing more. It's a happy ending that, even if it is somewhat idealized, is an inspiring model of how friendship can overcome apparent obstacles.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2019)

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