

How Beautiful the Ordinary

Edited by Michael Cart

HarperTEEN Books

This unusual book is an assembly of 12 stories of identity written by twelve authors of note in the GLBT community. It is unique, in that the stories vary from spiritually philosophical to personal histories to comic strips – all dealing with teen GLBT experiences.

The book starts with a tale of young romance narrated by an unknown spirit of gays past now observing gays present and projecting their future. There are a number of brief views into the hesitancy of young romance with all the mental anguish so many teenagers suffer over their affection for another and that person's response. A young transwoman relates her first venture outside her home dressed as the girl she knows she is. In *First Time*, Julie Anne Peters expresses all their joys and fears as two girls stumble their way through their first full loving experience.

Two adult perspectives complete the picture. A woman writes (again) to the daughter she lost when she lost her partner, who refuses to allow contact with the child they shared for several years; she doesn't know if this daughter ever receives her letters. A young Muslim father remembers as he travels with his two sons back to his Alma Mater to hear his former lover perform in concert. He has chosen to suppress his true feelings to live as his Iranian parents desire.

Every reader will react differently to these stories, probably preferring one over another for their own reasons. The main point, I think, is that there are joys and sorrows in all relationships, no matter our orientation or identity.

David Levithan's quote on the back jacket is one to treasure: "Freedom isn't just about voting and marrying and kissing on the street, although all of these things are important. Freedom is also about what you will allow yourself to do."