

## Jamie

**L. D. Lapinski**

Little Bee Books (May 28, 2024)

Hardcover \$18.99 (240pp)

978-1-4998-1681-5

In L. D. Lapinski's affirming novel *Jamie*, a fight for gender equality leads to greater community understanding.

In Jamie's hometown, there are two middle schools to choose from: one for boys and one for girls. But Jamie is nonbinary and thus navigates the limitations of the school system almost alone. Society expresses doubts about Jamie's existence; others say that asking for an equal place is "attention-seeking." While their friends Ash and Daisy are supportive, their parents and their community remain more ignorant.

Jamie's struggle to be heard at home and in school is harrowing, but the book's overall tone is lighthearted thanks to their naive whimsy; they make note of "a damp finger of supermarket pizza," for example. And Jamie is sometimes not conscious of how their actions might impact their friends, who want Jamie to attend school with them. Still, Jamie, Ash, and Daisy are together for heartfelt dramas, enlightening conversations, and acts of radical self-affirmation. They love and support each other through each attempt to make the adults listen: they put up posters at schools and fly the nonbinary flag on the main council building.

Topics related to gender equality are discussed with care as Jamie is pushed to choose a school—and with it, a gender. They learn that genderqueer people can be wait-listed for years to get a gender diagnosis, and they define terms including transgender, gender euphoria, and pride for the wider audience. And despite the tug-of-war Jamie goes through to be recognized by either school, their pride in their identity remains strong.

In the warm novel *Jamie*, a student who's marginalized at school remains unapologetic about their gender identity, fighting to gain recognition.

ALI ORTIZ (May / June 2024)

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