



God Loves Hair

By Vivek Shraya

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"A touching poetic exploration of budding sexuality, the mysticism of religion, and family dynamics. Shraya's text and Neufeld's illustrations capture the confusion, innocence, and de3lusions of adolescence bang on."?Brian Francis, author of *Fruit*

I am often mistaken for a girl. Not just because I like to wear dresses or makeup. I don't mind. My parents are from India and here is not quite home. School isn't always safe and neither is my body. But I feel safe in my love for God. And God loves hair.

First self-published to acclaim in 2011, Vivek Shraya's first book, now published by Arsenal Pulp Press for the first time, is a collection of twenty-one short stories following a tender, intellectual, and curious child of Indian origin as he navigates the complex realms of sexuality, gender, racial politics, religion, and belonging. Told with the poignant insight and honesty that only the voice of a young mind can convey, *God Loves Hair* is a moving and ultimately joyous portrait of youth that celebrates diversity in all shapes, sizes, and colors. A Lambda Literary Award finalist in the category of children's books. The stories are accompanied by the award-winning full-color illustrations of Juliana Neufeld.

Vivek Shraya is a multimedia artist, working in the mediums of music, performance, literature, and film. He is also author of *She of the Mountains*.

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God Loves Hair By Vivek Shraya Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 10 Up—Through 21 short stories, Shraya takes readers on an emotional journey with a boy who is discovering and developing a gender identity in a heteronormative environment. The tales recount the narrator's life growing up in a Hindu family in Canada, and how his religion, ethnicity, brown skin, hair, and family's expectations intersect. Each story is accompanied by mixed-media illustrations with comic-book appeal, that along with the work's Indian and American pop-culture references and its intersection of race and gender, bring a fresh and vibrant addition to YA LGBT literature. Whether it is through his hair "problems," relation to his family, or experiences in school, teens, as well as the older My So-Called Life generation, will find this book appealing and self-reflecting. The 2011 self-published edition garnered several accolades, including Lambda Literary Award finalist. Librarians should be on the lookout for this queer coming-of-age story that offers an endearing and honest voice, as well as a heartbreaking account of adolescence.—Sujei Lugo, Simmons College, MA

Review

God Loves Hair is a DIY masterpiece. ?*Rabble.ca* (*Rabble.ca*)

A touching poetic exploration of budding sexuality, the mysticism of religion, and family dynamics. Shraya's text and Neufeld's illustrations capture the confusion, innocence, and delusions of adolescence bang on. ?Brian Francis, author of *Fruit* (*Brian Francis*)

This impressive collection of stories made me think about the senseless shearing of my own lovely locks when I was four years old. Of course, in my case, it was not to please God, just an expression of gender confusion. Shraya's endearing descriptions of childhood and adolescence are both humorous and heartbreaking. I wish we had know one another during those unforgiving and difficult times, I think we could have taken comfort in growing our hair and ourselves out together. ?Sara Quin (of Tegan and Sara) (*Sara Quin*)

Shraya's book is a welcome peek into the complexities, richness, hardship, and even 'juicy' moments that make up a life lived not part of the majority. In our supposed melting pot but definitely heterosexist culture, growing up brown, soft and sissy isn't easy. In clear form and simple language, Shraya doesn't shy away from telling us how hard it was, but he doesn't keep the good stuff from us either. God loves a good storyteller, God must love Vivek.

?Ted Kerr (*Xtra* and *Vue Weekly* columnist) (*Ted Kerr*)

Vivek's book describes growing up queer in a Hindu family in Alberta and his own struggle to reconcile his family's expectations, his own coming-of-queerness, and navigating spaces that don't wholly accept you for yourself-or your tween unibrow. ?Toronto Public Library (*Toronto Public Library*)

A lovely collection of short stories ... Shraya's stories navigate the complexities of sexuality, gender, racial difference, religious belief, and ways of belonging. ?*CM Magazine* (*CM Magazine*)

The thread of Hindu spirituality throughout the funny, heart-wrenching and beautiful prose makes it a soulful read without being the least dogmatic. ?*Xtra* (*Xtra* 2014-03-27)

The strength of this collection lies not in asking you to feel pity, sympathy, love, anger, revulsion, sadness,

or a familiar nostalgia, but rather it lies in an easy trust that readers will be able to return to a place of childhood learning, a place of disappointment and loss, discovery and revelation—a place filled with the minute details of growing up painfully, little by little, and then suddenly, all at once. *?Lemonhound (Lemonhound 2014-03-28)*

A rich and powerful exploration of gender, sexuality, religion, race, and the desire to fit in ... Teens will relate to this honest and creative chronicle of one young man's journey toward self-acceptance, and the book will undoubtedly help those struggling with similar issues. Readers will come back to it again and again, finding new meaning and drawing new connections each time. *?Quill and Quire (STARRED REVIEW) (Quill and Quire 2014-06-05)*

A book for all ages, *God Loves Hair* will be especially welcomed by contemporary genderqueer youth and twentysomethings who will see themselves in these vividly realized pages. *?Booklist (STARRED REVIEW) (Booklist 2014-07-11)*

Neufeld's mixed-media illustrations pair well with the scenes they depict, capturing the essence of being young with their multilayered texture and comic book-like immediacy. Running the emotional spectrum from shame to pleasure to acceptance, Shraya offers a refreshing window into the intimate struggles of youth. *?Kirkus Reviews (Kirkus Reviews 2014-07-11)*

Here's a book you just have to hold and feel and breathe in. Although the snapshot of the cover offers a hint of its unique size, not until you're gently flipping through the pages can you appreciate that you're clasping Toronto-based music/performance/literature/film artist Vivek Shraya's precious little gem. Poignantly dedicated to "the boy who was almost lost," the 21 spare, elliptical stories connect seamlessly - splendidly enhanced by mixed media artist Juliana Neufeld's layered, expressive illustrations - to create an indelible portrait of a searching little boy in motion toward adolescence and adulthood. *?BookDragon (Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center) (BookDragon 2014-08-11)*

God Loves Hair will resonate with any reader who has felt that they don't quite fit in to the world in a way that is expected. Painful, tender and visually arresting, this is a book that like its hero defies easy categorization. *?About.com (About.com 2014-09-01)*

An alternately humorous and heart wrenching collection of short stories. *?Out (Out 2014-09-09)*

Shraya's stripped-down prose has documentary force, and Neufeld's illustrations, with their intersecting planes of translucent color and their linoleum block-style images, add humor and bite. It's an important addition to the library of coming-out literature. *?Publishers Weekly (STARRED REVIEW) (Publishers Weekly 2014-09-30)*

An important addition to the field of LGBTQ YA books. It's far too infrequently that we see diverse characters in these stories, so Shraya's Indian and Hindu narrator is especially refreshing. Told with raw honesty, these bits and pieces of one boy's life make for an affecting look at sexuality, families, culture, shame, and acceptance. *?Cite Something! (Cite Something! 2014-11-03)*

A poignant YA story collection of 21 short stories following a tender, intellectual and curious Indo-Canadian boy as he navigates the realms of sexuality, gender, racial politics, religion and belonging. Told with the poignant insight and honesty that only a the voice of a young mind can convey, this short story collection is a moving and ultimately joyous portrait of growing up and the resiliency of youth. *?Canadian Children's Book Centre ("Best Books for Kids & Teens 2014") (Canadian Children's Book Centre 2014-11-20)*

Vivek Shraya delights us with a moving collection of coming-of-age stories ... brought to life by Juliana Neufeld's boldly expressive and colourful illustrations. *?Broken Pencil (Broken Pencil 2015-02-15)*

With captivating illustrations by Juliana Neufeld and twenty-one impeccably-crafted stories by Shraya, *God Loves Hair* conveys a myriad of ways in which gender and sexual identities are read, misread, discovered, and claimed. *Canadian Literature (Canadian Literature 2015-11-15)*

About the Author

Vivek Shraya: Vivek Shraya is a multimedia artist, working in the mediums of music, performance, literature, and film. Vivek has released albums ranging from acoustic folk-rock to electro synth-pop. His most recent film, *What I LOVE about being QUEER*, includes a book and online component.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jackie Sneller:

The book *God Loves Hair* give you a sense of feeling enjoy for your spare time. You can use to make your capable far more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting stress or having big problem with your subject. If you can make reading a book *God Loves Hair* to become your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your current capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. You can know everything if you like open up and read a book *God Loves Hair*. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science reserve or encyclopedia or others. So , how do you think about this publication?

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Linda Thomas:

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Clara Duke:

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