



What
Makes
You
Beautiful

BRIDGET LIANG

Once you find out
who you really are,
then you can find love

Logan likes boys and trying on girls' clothes — secrets Logan's family doesn't know.

After being bullied for being too “effeminate and weird,” Logan transfers to an arts school, which has a more inclusive community — where everyone seems comfortable just being themselves. Slowly, Logan starts to accept being a gender other than male and expresses it as Veronica. But will Logan find love as Veronica?

BRIDGET LIANG is a mixed-race, queer, transfeminine, autistic, disabled, fat fangirl. A budding academic, community researcher, workshop and group facilitator, performance artist, and writer, Bridget has been published in the anthologies *Meanwhile, Elsewhere* and *Resilience*. This is their first novel for teens. Bridget lives in Toronto, Ontario.



Real Love

Diverse romances for today's teens

RL 3.8 | Teen fiction

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JAMES LORIMER & COMPANY LTD., PUBLISHERS
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01

Let's Just Pretend

I GAZE AT MY FACE IN THE MIRROR. The eyeliner gives me raccoon eyes. My skills at putting on eyeshadow, rouge, and lipstick make me look like a sad clown. My shoulders are too wide and my nose too big. My dark brown hair screams “fifteen-year-old Justin Bieber.” Why did I inherit this straight Chinese hair from my mom?

My *dàjiě* Dani, my big sister, wore this dress to prom a few months ago. She looked beautiful. But I

just look like a boy in a dress. At my old school, a group of boys bullied me for being small and girly. What would they do if they saw me now? I'll just get beat up if I ever look this girly again. Maybe I'm just sick and confused. I don't know why I even wanted to try on Dani's dress and makeup in the first place.

I'll never look right. There must be something wrong with me. I don't know why I wanted to wear something pretty. It didn't work out and I'm never doing it again. I'm going to turn over a new leaf this year. I'm starting grade eleven in a new school tomorrow. I'm hoping that Rosedale will be more accepting. It's an arts school and I heard from other kids that people call it "the gay school."

"Loooogan! We're home!" The voice of my younger sister Wendy comes up the stairs. It is followed by the sounds of my littlest sister Sophie pestering Mom for cookies.

Oh no, they're going to catch me! I frantically look for my clothes. Somehow they've ended up scattered all over Dani's room. I'm still wearing her prom dress!

I squirm my way out of the lace and sequins and throw it into her closet. I don't have time for this! I manage to grab all my stuff and make it to the bathroom.

"I'm in the bathroom, I'll be right out!" I call out to my family. I'm pulling on my Captain America T-shirt and cargo shorts when I remember . . . makeup!

"Don't take too long like you men often do!" hollers Mom. "You need to help your sisters put away the groceries."

"Okay!" I holler back. I make a face in the mirror as I search through the cupboards. What can I use to take off the makeup? What did Dani use again? Soap and water? Girl stuff is complicated. I manage to clean off my face (mostly). I check to make sure that I don't look like I tried putting on my big sister's makeup. Like I hadn't just thrown on my clothes. Then I stumble my way downstairs.

"Took you long enough," Mom says. "I was about to ask Wendy to check that you weren't doing anything inappropriate in there." Then she turns to get a good look at me. Oh no. "Logan, you've got

dark spots around your eyes. Have you been getting enough sleep?”

“I’m sorry,” I say. “I’ll try and remember to sleep more.” I try to hide how relieved I am. My cover is still safe.

“You better! I didn’t come to Canada to raise a failure for a son! And you’re taking a big risk going to an arts school. Why can’t you become a nice accountant or an engineer like your *dàjiě*? She received that \$10,000 scholarship to study engineering at McMaster University!” Mom scolds me.

I cringe and look to my dad. He is sitting on the couch, pretending to listen to Sophie while reading a mystery novel. He isn’t going to defend me.

I really want to say that my old school was killing me. But then Mom would only tell me to just *endure it, you’re a man*. So instead, I say, “I got into a good school and received early acceptance.”

“And if your grades slip, I’m pulling you from that school.” Mom won’t let it go. “You need to keep your math grades up so you can get into a good university!”

As the only one carrying on the Osborne family name, you need to succeed and provide for your own children someday.”

I resist the urge to roll my eyes or to run away to my room like Sophie does. I manage to say, “Yes, Mom.”

Her dark eyes narrow to slits as she looks at me. That used to scare me when I was little. But I’ve learned how to hide my frustration from her, thanks to drama class. I agreed to take accounting just so she would let me switch schools. I figured out on my own I needed to change schools. I learned how to do it from a helpline for queer kids called Youth Line.

“You shouldn’t worry so much about him,” Dad says, pulling the attention away from me. “He’s Chinese. He can survive whatever math tests are thrown his way. Or singing tests. He’s a bright boy.” I’m grateful. But he forgets that I barely passed Math last year. I had to get my exams signed and I don’t like recalling how much they *both* yelled at me. And another thing I don’t get — Dad is an English teacher and Mom is a secretary for

a doctor. Neither of them are good at math. Yet they expect me to be? Dani is the only one who was ever good at the stuff.

“Hey, I need to practise for the choir audition,” I say. “At this school there’s even more competition for good choir parts. May I go to my room?” Maybe I can change the topic and show that I’m “responsible” at the same time.

They give me permission to leave. But I swear Mom is trying to find an excuse to keep me there . . . to do extra math homework or something.