



Hello Readers!

It's hard to believe that the picture book *Love, Violet*, illustrated by Charlene Chua, *finally* exists! But then, for a long time, I didn't know that I could exist either. When I realized in my thirties that I was gay, my first question was: *How could I not know?* All the evidence was there, back to my first crush in preschool. Yet I had never seen myself in a story or in life. So, I wrote the story I had needed, *Love, Violet*.

Shortly after beginning *Love, Violet* in 2011, my four-year-old niece asked me, "How come sometimes girls marry girls?" I answered, "Some girls, like Auntie and me, are born liking girls." Then she said firmly, "But they're not a *prince* and a *princess*." Unlike me, she *had* seen this kind of love her whole life. Yet her fairy tales were more real than her family. The need for this book ran deep. I resolved to see *Love, Violet* to the end.

But for a long time publishers weren't ready. What kept me going were LGBTQIAP2+ friends, students, and the young people seeking shelter at Thrive Youth Center. I was haunted by their stories of being kicked out, harassed, beaten, sent to "conversion therapy," subjected to medical abuse, and too many – driven to suicide attempts. I wrote this story also for them, and a world in which they can be safe and affirmed.

So, I'm thrilled (*relieved*) by the new wave of rainbow picture books! Even so, almost none portray rainbow kids with crushes. Yet, when I talked with my friends and family who had crushes young, three-fourths did so by age eight or younger. *Love, Violet* fills an important gap and may be the first picture book to celebrate young love between girls!

Watching Violet fall head over heels and find warm acceptance from someone special will speak to every kid who loves or knows those who do. It's easy to tease kids of any orientation about their crushes, but this only demeans them and trains them to hide or be cruel themselves. Instead, *Love, Violet* affirms children and gives them a way to talk about love at *their level*. Caring adults can also use it to teach kindness and respect in relationships (long before the fireworks of adolescence!). That's good for *everyone*.

While not every kid (or adult) has crushes, many do. And some have not yet been celebrated. At long last, *this* fairy tale exists. Now that's a happy ending! So here's to young love! And the courage it takes to share your heart – at every age.

Love,



Charlotte Sullivan Wild



The Author, Age 7, 1981



Farrar Straus Giroux



Feiwel and Friends



First Second



Henry Holt



Imprint



Odd Dot



Priddy Books



Roaring Brook Press



Square Fish



Swoon Reads