

Blueink Review, USA

I Have Two Dads

Lorraine Wilson; illustrated by Chantal Stewart

Xlibris, 14 pages (paperback)

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Lorraine Wilson presents a fictional story about a young girl's blended family in her excellent children's picture book, **I Have Two Dads**.

Wilson uses simple, direct language to narrate in the voice of her young protagonist, while keeping the details vague enough that kids will focus on the similarities, rather than the differences between the book's story and their own. The first four pages read: 'I have two Dads. /My Mum and Dad split up. It's confusing because they won't tell me why they split up./ Mum is now married to my second Dad. I call him Ron.'

Wilson's text perfectly captures the complex feelings of a child of divorce, while Stewart's vibrant illustrations present the story in expressive ways: for example, the 'Mum and Dad split up' line is accompanied by the image of a photo, torn in two, of the child's parents. The book's brilliance is that while acknowledging difficulties and negative feelings – 'My brother was upset because he was not in the wedding party,' the unnamed girl notes as her mother remarries – it also gives kids a larger perspective. We see the girl's gloomy brother in the foreground at the wedding, but we also see that behind him, everyone is enjoying themselves. There are glimpses of sweet moments, such as special weekends with Dad, or playing with the new stepdad, as well as tender moments such as a visit with the girl's paternal grandmother.

It requires a delicate balancing act to honor the emotions of children while still making them aware that life continues after divorce, and that the marital status of a child's parents does not have to determine their happiness. **I Have Two Dads** is the kind of children's book that can offer an unsettled child the positivity, hope and understanding to thrive, no matter what his or her family composition might be.