

That is Not Me by L.J. Nelson

This is the story of a Little Person, and her challenges and life as she grows up among ordinary sized people. The story is bookended by two poems. The first which she wrote at the age of twenty-three in 1983, shows her anguish and frustration at the difficulties which she was facing. The second, at the end of the book shows how her positive attitude and life's struggles has left her feeling much more optimistic.

She details her early years: how she did not really feel different from her peers at first; her family was large and supportive ; her friends mostly accepted her as she was and she joined in with all the children's games. However, the medical problems caused by her condition were not widely recognized at that time and she suffered quite a lot from an early misdiagnosis of arthritis. From the age of twelve or so she became more aware of her limitations and less likely to try activities that challenged her. Being told to reduce her activity due to arthritis did not help. She found that she was uncomfortable among other Little People, but was not sure why. She was also told that her life expectancy was only to about forty. This was wrong, but caused her much mental distress.

She is very open about her relationships: her family whom she obviously loves and are her first line of support; her friends from school and college; her colleagues in teaching ; relationships with men and lately, her relationship with other Little People through their international organization . This last has also enabled her to get correct diagnosis and treatment for the ancillary problems caused by her condition, and made her life easier.

She also lists the ways that people have been cruel to her. This has ranged from deliberate put downs, refusal to be allowed to join groups , through to less obvious difficulties which she must face in everyday life in a world designed for and by average sized people.

Comments

I must say that it took a lot of courage to write this book. I have not come across many Little People in my life , but it is good to read an account like this. I was not aware of the multiple problems that are the cause of , and the result of this disadvantage. Some of their problems , like public access can be addressed with a little care. Others will take more trouble but the increase in medical awareness should help to lead the way.

Colin Venables