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Laughing at My Nightmare

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Book Review

Laughing at My Nightmare

Shane Burcaw has lived with spinal muscular atrophy, a neuromuscular disease, since birth. It is a disease that affects approximately .0001 percent of the population and individuals who have been diagnosed with it lack one of the vital proteins that help create and maintain muscle tissue. Shane recounts, in humorous detail, his disease, how he lives his life, and more importantly, how he finds humor in what could potentially be a very dark situation and existence. Without sustained muscle tissue, Shane is not able to do the most mundane things on his own: roll over in bed, use the toilet, drink from a cup, walk, stand, or talk for long periods of times (his jaw muscles get too weak). Instead of giving into sorrow and depression, Shane has decided to live a humor filled life and started a blog to let other people know that people with disabilities can have a very fulfilling, interesting, and yes, humorous life. His posts, detailing experiences in his life, became so popular that he wrote this book and has embarked upon a speaking tour.

Laughing at my Nightmare is an extremely humorous portrayal of someone living with a very debilitating disease. Burcaw writes about his disease with humor, interest, and a very unique candor. He does not shy away from the nitty gritty of having SMA and writes about how he goes to the bathroom, rolls over in the middle of the night, has a girlfriend, and gets dressed. It is a very candid window into a life that most people do not have. Burcaw, because of his total honesty, allows readers to get a true sense of what life must be like with a multiple of constraints that most people take for granted. His writing style is approachable and succinct. Most chapters are only a few pages long and focus on different experiences he's had and how his disease has affected every aspect of his life. Young adults would find this memoir interesting and enjoyable and hopefully, by reading it, increase their empathy towards people with disability.

*Contains severe language and moderate sexual content.

Author

Shane Burcaw

Illustrator

Reviewer

Katie Irion

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

248

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2014

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Roaring Book Press

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