

Book Review

Parrotfish

by Ellen Wittlinger

Parrotfish is a peek into the life of one high-school he struggles with the pressures of bullying, isolation and the unknown.

Grady. Angela chose her new name carefully, deciding on Grady because of its gender neutrality as well as its containing the word “gray” symbolizing that things aren’t usually black or white. It is too bad that his family didn’t understand that.

Grady was born a girl. When he announced that he was actually a boy, his mother was devastated, his sister was horrified, and his father was.... well, at least his father was trying to be understanding. Grady’s best friend since childhood, Eve, refuses to even look at him in school. She becomes part of the gang of girls whose primary reason for living is to torture Grady. Grady feels totally alienated and alone.

Eventually, Grady becomes friends with a geeky science wiz named Sebastian. Sebastian proves to be quite accepting and one of Grady’s hugest supports. Throughout the story, Sebastian is Grady’s pillar of strength at times when he can’t seem to be strong himself. Additionally, Sebastian helps Grady form another friendship, one with a beautiful and popular girl on whom Grady has a tremendous crush.

Trying to gain acceptance and tolerance is a constant struggle for Grady, both at home and at school, which Grady just can not understand. Why does anyone care if I am a boy or a girl? Why do people have to label others as one or the other? Can’t I just be me? When a new baby is born, everyone wants to know if it’s a boy or a girl, but they claim that the only real concern is that the baby is healthy. Well, I am healthy! Why can’t that make everyone happy?

Parrotfish is the heartfelt journey of one courageous teenager’s search to find himself even if it means losing everything else he has ever known. This is a must-read for any teenager who has ever felt different or lonely – no matter what their age now.

Reviewed by Leann