

## When Walking Is a Challenge, But Thinking Is Not

**J. A. Wall**

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*This interesting premise could help others look past disabilities and feel more comfortable interacting with those who have them.*

Born a quadriplegic, Lynn has spent the last fourteen years slowly and painstakingly working to gain control over her limbs and get out of her wheelchair. Now on the cusp of her high school years, and with the love and support of her mother, doctors, and friends, her goals are almost within reach. *When Walking Is a Challenge, But Thinking Is Not*, by J. A. Wall, is a unique coming-of-age story that, with some revisions, could help people better empathize with the human being behind the disability.

Lynn has faced a lot of challenges in her life. Her father left soon after her birth because he couldn't deal with her disability, and all she wants is to fit in with the other kids at school. Now life is changing fast as boys begin to take notice of her, a ridiculously wealthy business man falls in love with her mother, and a half-sister about whom she never knew tracks her down.

Wall has created a likable character in Lynn; she is humble, hardworking, and does her best to keep a positive attitude no matter what is thrown at her. She makes others feel at ease with her disability, and never comes across as whiny or sullen. Wall's talent at creating characters is also evident in the supporting cast, each with a distinct personality and place in Lynn's life, from the caretaker's son in Maine who makes her physical therapy fun to the quietly protective chauffeur assigned by her mother's boyfriend to drive Lynn around.

While the foundational idea of this story is intriguing, there are some aspects of the writing that keep it from reaching its full potential. Details seem to come from different eras in time, with Donna Reed-esque dialogue from the 1950s (teenagers addressing each other as "miss" and "pal" and saying they are "fond" of each other), clothing from the 1980s (Lynn wears a brightly colored leotard and black tights to work out at the local gym), and technology from the 2000s (cell phones and e-mail). It is hard to settle in to the story when details don't seem to belong together.

Also, while Lynn worries about fitting in and being "normal," she never actually experiences any difficulties. She works hard to progress in her physical therapy, but her progress is steady and positive. At one point she learns to do the backstroke, and not long after, she beats her swim instructor in a race. In addition, though she worries about what people think of her, within minutes every person she meets starts gushing about how much they admire her. It would be much more interesting and effective if she met people who didn't immediately become fans, and if she faced more hurdles and setbacks in her physical progress.

This novel is based on an interesting premise, and could help others look past disabilities and feel more comfortable interacting with those who have them.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (March 24, 2015)

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