

Small Feats

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“Uh-oh, you have to be forty-eight inches to go on this ride, Alexis. I’m afraid you don’t make the cut.”

With strong, deliberate steps I march over to the ride sign, determined to prove my friend wrong. The demeaning red line glares at me tauntingly, but my head clears it by a good twelve inches. A surge of pride and relief floods through me.

“Yes! Ha! I’m tall enough!” I cheer jubilantly as I grab my friend’s hand and run up to the end of the line.

It’s not every day that I get to say those words; in fact, its rare. At barely five feet tall, each day poses challenges for me, challenges seventeen years of short jokes and unintentionally cruel comments have steeled me for. In high school, questions such as, “Think you can reach that, Lex?” and “Wow, how tall are you *really*?” became the norm in my everyday conversations. Snide remarks comparing me to kindergarteners and midgets were hurled at me from all sides, cutting like daggers. I started to notice it wasn’t just strangers who would discriminate; friends would unintentionally shun me from group circles, not knowing I was even present. I began to wonder if life would be like this forever, constantly ignored and teased because I was not a “normal” height.

The check-up for my sixteenth birthday was when I finally received the news I had feared for so long.

“Looks like you’re not going to be growing anymore, Alexis,” the doctor stated. The world came crashing down around me, bridges burned and meteors hit, like a scene in a disaster

movie. Hot, angry tears prickled in my eyes. It wasn't fair. Why did I have to suffer with this?
Why me?

A couple of days after my physical, a brilliant, hopeful revelation popped into my head: why *not* me? Maybe my being short wasn't a curse after all, but a blessing. It was what made me *me*, defined who I was. I began to notice the imperfection of others and realized that it is those imperfections that make us who we are, stand us apart from the rest. It is these imperfections that make the human race so wonderfully diverse. Normal does not exist, for there is nothing normal about any of us. We are our own individuals.

Now, I embrace short jokes, finding witty answers to throw back. Challenges hurl themselves at me every day in the form of high objects and rude people, but this time around, I'm prepared. It's taken seventeen years, but I've finally realized that stepstools and tall people make great companions, and the best response to any degrading remark is a smile and a laugh.