This Is How It Always Is – Book Review

This Is How it Always Is by Laurie Frankel tells the story of a large family whose youngest boy, Claude, decides at five years old that he wants to be a girl when he grows up. It tells the story of love, secrets, growth, friendships, fear, happiness, fairytales, parenting, childhood, and societal views and cultural constructs and their impact on so many people, young and old, around the world. This beautiful family tries to find a way to support and nurture all their members in a world that is often judgemental and afraid. They fight to find a way to ensure Claude is who he wants to be.

This book is stunning. I listened to it on audiobook and I could hardly bear to take my headphones off for the three days in which I was glued to it, but at the same time, it was one of those books that you don't want to come to the end of.

The storyline, with its large focus on gender dysphoria and prejudice, is incredibly important, fascinating and eye-opening. It explores the issues that face so many when the society around them fears what they do not understand, or struggles to find a way to show acceptance while influenced by cultural constructs and beliefs. The book also explores the importance of family and the importance of the individuality of all within it. And although this sounds heavy, emotive and controversial, it is written with a beautiful innocence and beauty as it follows a child's discoveries and struggles.

The writing is powerful and flows naturally throughout. Not only is the plot incredible, the characters have been developed so well that I felt like I was reading about real life people. They were the most complex and multidimensional characters I may have ever read about, each with their own nuances and intriguing personalities.

This book absolutely absorbed me. It is both heartbreaking and heartwarming. I highly recommend everyone read this poignant and relevant novel by Laurie Frankel.

I gave it 5 out of 5 stars.