

A REAL REACTION ANYWAY

I see you trudging to class each day, and it takes patience
to watch you. Each day is farther away
from birth,
that wilted leg
and the rest
of your flabby body. Your body—you have decided your body
can never be your body. That is why

You take our time with the impudence one expects
of intelligent cripples. Actually you are not humble,
and since sex
is denied forever
you appeal to me
with your eyes. Your body is not your body at all, you say,
can never be your body. That is why you stutter

To make us make it out, and are soft forcing us
to listen to you. Each day I'm farther away
from you, the "true
you", because you
disgust me
with your mind. Your body—what would your body matter if only
your fine points were finer. There is more in life

Than physical well-being. I am quite unhappy
often. Yet I can walk home faster
than you can
buy a wheelchair.
Depressed by love,
the nature of it, especially when successful, I walk
freely, but my heart is crippled.

There is a joke. It goes like this.
A man was a gimp in one arm, gnarled like a Mongol tree,
and said, Oh God
make my bad arm
be like my good
arm, and then the grotesque teller of the tale gimps
both his perfect arms to show what God hath wrought.

Birth defects of the spirit are not to be expected,
and, as I see you, a solitary miss, breaking up the ground
by breaking up
the hill,
I do not credit
you with spiritual agony. There is less to hurt you
in your life. Your leg is not seductive.

You will not be seduced.
The human things you miss should make you very happy.
I can't believe
you want to love.
I can't believe
you'd want to trade a measly inconvenience for all
the pain I have. I had a dream

You could never have. I dreamt you were more crippled
than your wildest shameful flourish, depressed
by every step you took,
not reconciled at all,
whereas you are
reconciled, and you, reduced to a ball of hair with props,
were rolling up the stairs, quite feminine

In your bitching. On an inclined plane I stood
leaning out above you. I said to my friend,
After all,
there is
worse suffering
than physical suffering. You grumbled like the dog you were,
and you and your friend leading you went on

Upstairs complaining about me. Later I was told
I was your only pleasure, that it had been decided
I was to be
your only pleasure
for the evening
to reconcile you, a mercy mission of the flesh.
And then it dawned upon me, and I started

Screaming. Perhaps there is no worse suffering than physical suffering, perhaps being crippled is the worst thing in the world that can happen to anybody!
My body—I have decided that my body can never be your body. I refuse you without waiting for I will have no withered girl,

And I will have no withered leg, and not a broken arm, no war shall make me unattractive, no God shall make us one and cripple me for you. For all your chance in Chaucer I wouldn't yield a wisdom tooth, and I can't even like you.