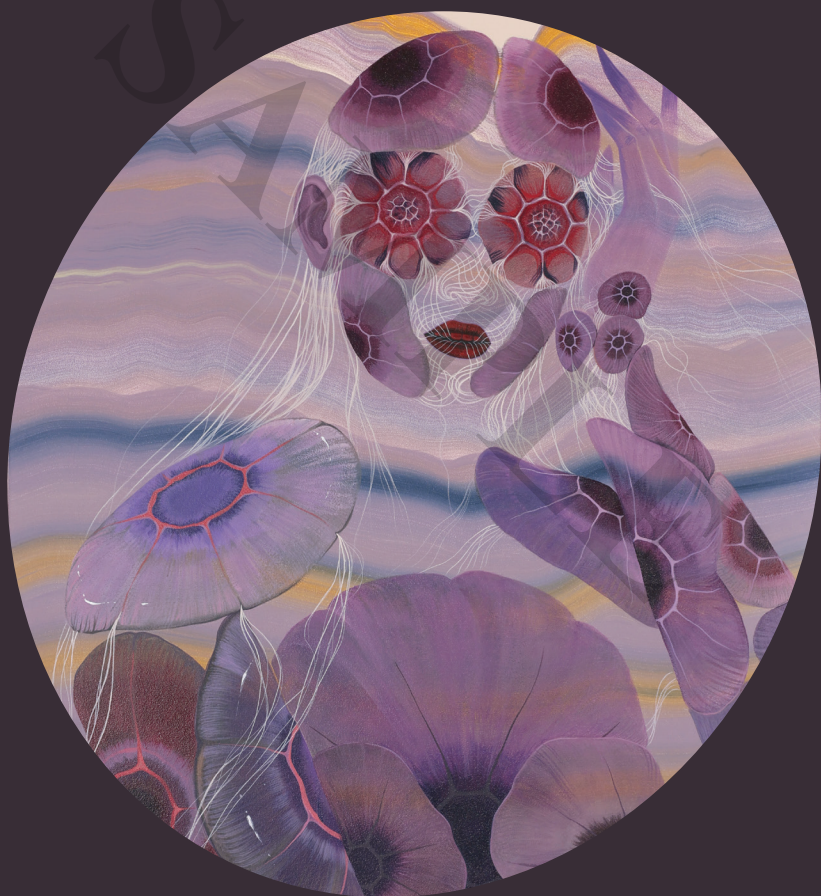


# JELLY, BABY

Essays on Disability and Vulnerability



THERESE ESTACION

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**Essays on Disability  
and Vulnerability**

**Therese Estacion**

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**Book\*hug Press**

To all my crippled kin

SAMPLE

# Inspiration Porn

Pause. Replay. The amputee walks up the hill in slow motion. Pause. Replay. She does a somersault into the water. Pause, repeat. Pause, repeat again. They snowboard down a mountain.

While I was in the hospital, I scanned the internet for inspiration. Hoping to find photos of amputees living the way everyone lives on the internet, displaying their lives for public consumption freely. Warm smiles, wide-eyed. Wet and shiny. Opened, like a can filled with cream.

Zooming in on their prosthesis, zoom in drowsily envisioning what I would look like with their prosthetic legs on. Feel their freedom and excitement. Their flesh on my flesh.

This was my porn.

My favourite amputee was a Paralympian. I needed her. She told me I could look just as juicy as her with carbon fibre legs and steel ankles.

That my ass would one day become tight and bouncy.

*Look at you. Warm smile, wide eyes. Tight ass. Smells like fuzzy peaches.*

She was my inspiration.

One day, I thought, when I get out of here, I will be just like her.

\*

When I first went out in public wearing my prostheses,  
I felt cool and embodied a sense of entitlement to  
public adoration.

I loved it when I was invited to speak to others about  
resiliency or to in-patients about the power of gratitude.  
I had been through it all. I was the poster child of  
strength and endurance.

I wanted people to love me, to bask in my resurrective  
powers.

I came back to life and beat death. I touched the light.

*Take some of it, my light. Take more.*

*Take as much as you can. Come close and touch me, my  
legs. Put me in your mouth.*

*Eat me so I can be real.*

\*

I only felt real when I was on the move, doing something, anything in motion.

Bumping into everything and anything in space.  
Touched by everything and anything in space. My need for consumption and recognition was on overdrive.  
Stasis was deadening.

So, I opted to stack my calendar with an endless number of activities, stretching my capacity to its limits, and said yes to every opportunity offered, despite my fatigue.

In order to avoid feeling lost, devoured by my disability, I fell into a whirl of constant doing. Constantly doing to avoid my undoing. Manically asking to be told I was real. Never feeling real.

Whirling feverishly on the surface to avoid touching the core of my existence.

The core of my existence, where all I would find was my frailty, too terrifying to hold.

**Once,**

Once, I saw a “HELP WANTED” sign posted on the front door of a bookstore in a small town. The owner was someone I knew, so I decided to apply for the job. I didn’t really need the money but thought I could help. I told her things like handling cash would be hard, but customer service would be good. The owner could not stop staring at my hands. So, I asked abruptly:

*Are you uncomfortable with me applying for the job?*

She replied, Yes.

I left the store, got into my cold car. It was -35, whiteness surrounded me. I was not prepared for the rejection. I thought I was more than qualified. Later,

I called a friend who worked part-time at the store and told her what had happened.

*That's so fucked up, T.* Apparently, the owner was worried I wouldn't be able to stand for long periods of time. In her mind, I was too disabled to work at her store.

Two days later she had hired someone young, a sixteen-year-old, who didn't like to read.

This was the beginning of my hardening.

My understanding that none of my merits mattered as long as I lived in this body. As long as I lived in this body, I would have to harden all my insides.

Once, during an entrance interview for therapy school, the interviewer asked: *Can you type?*

Yes. She held a copy of my entrance essay, typed.

*I did not read your essay because I wanted to get to know you first-hand.*

I wasn't so sure how to respond. I had spent hours writing the essay. She asked me more questions and took notes as I answered, her eyes intent on her pen and notepad. She stopped.

*You will have to do a lot of notetaking as a psychotherapist. Do you drive? It's a very demanding program. Have you ever thought about how a potential client might react to your body?*

I left her office feeling shut out. What kept her from imagining my untapped potential to provide care or attunement? Why couldn't she believe that I had something to give? There's nothing wrong with questions, but it seemed unfair that a close encounter with my disability seemed to pain her. To her I was a question of *have not*, not of *have*.