

## How Lovely To Be 16, And Disbelieving (in Your Mother's Mercurial Disease)

What a luxury to be sixteen; when  
you get a pass, however brief  
on your refusal to believe  
the inconvenient,  
because your brain hasn't grown enough  
to know that your death-proof vest  
is only a mirage,  
or to really grasp  
that my irritating  
neurological disease,  
is not.

What a luxury to be sixteen;  
to announce that you disbelieve  
in the sudden muscle freeze  
of my mercurial  
disease,  
to offer yourself the choice  
to stride on your own willing legs  
into the kitchen  
with your own cache of food,  
(and with your quickly manufactured disbelief)  
thus able to refuse  
the help I need  
to carry bags of mine  
into my room,  
although (as anyone can see),  
I've stumbled through the door  
on legs that are, for now, at least,  
not as willing as your own.  
So you call out, "Pick them up yourself!  
You made it to the bed!"  
"And to tell the honest truth,"  
(you add), "I think you've made this up."

Believe you me – I'd love the choice  
to disbelieve  
in my disease,  
especially when my balance,  
at a moment's notice, ethereal  
and slick as you, slips  
from my reach, taunting,

"Now you see me,  
Now you don't!"  
Yes, just like you, impossible  
sixteen-year old boy!

And to tell the truth,  
I don't really begrudge you  
your disrespect and sullen tone  
with the very-same disease  
who elbowed through  
your beloved Papa's door,  
stole away his legs and voice,  
and then, when you were only six,  
spirited him  
away. It isn't fair  
to you, who  
in a perfect world,  
ought to have me back  
intact, baseball glove in hand  
and on my bike alongside yours,  
the way I was  
before the villain  
came to Brooklyn, too,  
breaking down  
another  
unsuspecting door.  
And I'm sure it seems to you  
on days like these,  
that like your Papa,  
I might as well  
have been  
spirited away.  
(I feel the same way, too.)

In fact, I'd love to be sixteen  
or even my own fifty-three,  
and like you, shrug away  
this most  
infuriating,  
uninvited  
daily thief  
of my dignity  
and grace  
so that I, like you,  
could seize the day  
and stalk away

for good, disbelieving  
in the permanence  
of this disease, who  
sleeps just like a leech  
all snug and cozied up  
deep inside my own  
imperfect brain.

Leonore Gordon, 9/09