

What a “Disability” Makes

By: Hazel Myles

Dedicated to an accommodating and innovative high school language arts teacher.

What does a disability make?

A disability:

A cane,
A hearing aid,
A wheelchair,
A parking space restricted by diagonal lines of blue.

These are the symbols of the disabled.
But could this possibly clue
That maybe society is wrong?
Maybe there is a connotation that is unacknowledged.

Maybe a “disability” is simply a unique ability...

How unaddressed,
Untouched,
Uncharted,
Uncelebrated,
This idea is

That the disabled are persistent.
The disabled are powerful.
The disabled are pacesetters.
The disabled are proving that limitations are merely suggestions.

Yet, we view
The deaf as unaware,
The blind as lost,
The crippled as unable,
The old as senile

All while we refuse to accept that

Disabilities make an individual immune

To complacency.

Disabilities make an individual

Who overcomes challenges through raw tenacity.

Disabilities make an individual unwilling

To sacrifice their desires for the concept of improbability.

The disabled make

Their mothers cry

At their first words spoken with a hearing aid,

Their fathers smile

At their first trembling steps without a cane,

Their friends elated

At the notion that they will no longer have to describe

The sensation of sun-scorched sand sticking to the soles of their bare feet

Then the refreshing cool of the foaming ocean tide as it rinses away

Because after twelve months of physical therapy

Their friend is able to move his toes for the first time

Since the car wreck that left him paralyzed.

You see,

The disabled are not their disability.

The disabled are not propelled by your sympathy.

The disabled are enabled by inherent resolve.

Still apprehensive?

Grant me a few more lines,

And I will prove

This point that contradicts the majority view.

Thomas Edison was deaf.

Temple Grandin is autistic.

Geerat Vermeu was blind.

Leonardo da Vinci was dyslexic.