



A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain

Christina Crosby

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain

Christina Crosby

A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain Christina Crosby

In the early evening on October 1, 2003, Christina Crosby was three miles into a seventeen mile bicycle ride, intent on reaching her goal of 1,000 miles for the riding season. She was a respected senior professor of English who had celebrated her fiftieth birthday a month before. As she crested a hill, she caught a branch in the spokes of her bicycle, which instantly pitched her to the pavement. Her chin took the full force of the blow, and her head snapped back. In that instant, she was paralyzed.

In *A Body, Undone*, Crosby puts into words a broken body that seems beyond the reach of language and understanding. She writes about a body shot through with neurological pain, disoriented in time and space, incapacitated by paralysis and deadened sensation. To address this foreign body, she calls upon the readerly pleasures of narrative, critical feminist and queer thinking, and the concentrated language of lyric poetry. Working with these resources, she recalls her 1950s tomboy ways in small-town, rural Pennsylvania, and records growing into the 1970s through radical feminism and the affirmations of gay liberation.

Deeply unsentimental, Crosby communicates in unflinching prose the experience of "diving into the wreck" of her body to acknowledge grief, and loss, but also to recognize the beauty, fragility, and dependencies of all human bodies. A memoir that is a meditation on disability, metaphor, gender, sex, and love, *A Body, Undone* is a compelling account of living on, as Crosby rebuilds her body and fashions a life through writing, memory, and desire.

A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain Details

Date : Published March 15th 2016 by New York University Press

ISBN : 9781479833535

Author : Christina Crosby

Format : Hardcover 208 pages

Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Disability, Nonfiction, Biography Memoir, Gender, Lgbt, Glbt, Queer

 [Download A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain Christina Crosby

From Reader Review A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain for online ebook

Kirsten says

cerebral and intimate and funny and terribly honest and real. couldn't put it down.

JCHS Library says

A Body, Undone, by Christina Crosby, is an account of Christina's life after she became paralyzed when she caught a branch in the spokes of her bicycle and was pitched forward, landing on her chin and becoming instantly paralyzed. I was interested in reading this book because I knew Crosby years ago when I was a student at Wesleyan University, where Crosby is still a professor of English, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

A Body, Undone was a difficult book to read. Christina was a woman who took great pride in her body – her athleticism, her strength, her independence, her physical and sexual relationship with her partner. She was, as she said, in the prime of her life when her life was completely and irrevocably altered. She is now totally dependent on others to keep her alive.

While I didn't think the writing was all that compelling – I never stopped to reread a particularly beautiful line – I was taken in by how open and honest Christina is about her new body. She shares intimate details (her bowel movement regiment, eg) that force the reader to confront some disturbing realities about life in a paralyzed body. She details some horrifying scenes. This book is not for the squeamish.

Review by Michelle M.

Stephanie says

A very powerful poignant memoir. Somewhat self analytic but a vivid description of paraplegia and the power of love.

Linda says

Do not like it.

Robyn says

I'm not going to rate this, because it was so painfully honest that I feel weird assigning a star quality to someone's life and suffering.

Rebekah Gordon says

Fascinating, difficult, painful, honest, very well-done. I like the way she divided this up into sections, especially the parts dealing with sexuality/gender/feminist politics and how that intersects with disability. A lot to digest here. It got repetitive on some notes (like the comparison between her and her brother, which seems very meaningful to her but maybe doesn't translate so much to readers), and was a very very tough read, but I would definitely recommend it.

Claudia Tessier says

For anyone seeking to understand the consequences of sudden quadriplegia, this book will serve well. The author, at age 50, has a bicycle accident that leaves her paralyzed. As a Professor of English and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, she is well equipped to tell her story, which is vivid in its description of her world before and after of her paralysis in relation to pain, grief, loss, gender, feminism, lesbianism, family relationships, sexuality, love, religion, friends, caregivers, and more. She is introspective and bold in her descriptions. Recommended especially for those experiencing paralysis, whether personally as a patient or as a family member, a caregiver, a health provider, etc. Her experience of what it means to live with unyielding pain is particularly compelling.

Renée says

I reviewed this beautiful memoir for Inside Higher Ed:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/...>

Rebecca says

Crosby teaches English and gender studies at Wesleyan University. Her inclusion in this “Sexual Cultures” series has to do with her lesbian feminist ideology but also the new understanding of her body an accident forced upon her at age 50. While she was cycling, a stick stuck in her spokes and she fell over onto concrete, slamming her chin and breaking vertebrae in her neck that damaged her spinal cord. In the midst of a full and physical life, she became a quadriplegic. The great irony was that in this she joined her brother Jeff, whose MS had long since reduced him to a wheelchair.

Here, in a memoir written 11 years after the accident, she reflects on chronic pain and her new limitations – even including bowel habits – with blunt honesty as well as literary allusions. Along the way she remembers some physical pleasures now mostly denied to her: alcohol, sex with her partner Janet, and playing with the dog. Her attitude to her diminished body may seem pessimistic, but it's as realistic as it is sad: “I no longer have a gender. Rather, I have a wheelchair. ... The future of my body can only be worse than it is now.” Nonetheless, she never comes across as feeling sorry for herself. I found this to be highly absorbing.

Madeleine says

lovely chapters on shit and sex, unabashed vulnerability and sorrow

Annabella says

I was assigned this book as a part of my Freshman seminar at Wesleyan University. At first I was skeptical of the book, overwhelmed by the heat of summer work and excitement of a first summer away from high school, that I pushed my readings to late nights without sleep and quick skims of the general content in search of something meaningful to reflect on in my early August paper. It was only after I took a break from work and began to read at a steadier, more relaxed pace that I discovered the wonderful memoir I held in my hands.

Crosby wrote a book that speaks to parts of me that I am only now ready to explore. Over the last few years I have suffered great changes, combined with the losses of growing up, getting sick and needing to reframe my entire life in order to keep living. Although never as intense as Crosby's experience, I connected to the words she said. The difficulty of moving on, the paradox of letting go while also remembering what got you there. I had always been interested in how other people dealt with great change, in my opinion Crosby did one of the most impressive jobs at it. She used her outlet of language as a means to move on, as I often times do with my voice. Her analysis of gender, family, social norms and the absurdity (at times) of her situation are truly a oxymoron of heartbreaking and heartwarming.

"I am no longer what I once was- yet come to think of it, neither are you. All of us who live on are not what we were, but are becoming, always becoming."

I am very excited to be meeting Crosby in a few weeks, where an open seminar of discussion about the novel is encouraged. I do hope to see much of her on my path towards a Feminism, Gender and Sexuality studies minor and am given the opportunity to praise her book around my peers, as any good teachers pet would.

Lesbianfunworld Online says

Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. Recommended on the library website, "A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain," never promised to be an uplifting, inspirational book. And it isn't, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Most books written after tragedy (in this case, Crosby became paralyzed in a bike riding accident) are about life before the accident, the accident that leads to paralysis, the struggle (presented with either extraordinary insight or humour) and then a contented and perhaps even "better" life after the struggle.

Not here. No way.

Crosby, a professor of English and Gender, Feminist, and Sexuality studies, writes in great detail and with professorial flourish, about agonizing pain, betrayal of the bowels, and frustration with an atrophying body. Crosby, a soft butch lesbian, writes of how she is unused to being incorrectly misgendered by so many

(welcome to the world of the not-so-soft butch lesbian), it's worse as she is now very visible (as a person with a disability) and thus subject to patronizing misgendering and the inherently uncomfortable apology. "I no longer have a gender. Rather, I have a wheelchair."

Crosby writes extensively of alienation – of body, of sexuality, of sensation – and that alienation can be overwhelming. Her intelligence is evidenced as she breaks down the intersectionality of race, wealth and personal care, for example, but the body... the body is the alien.

Which frankly I am glad to read. I can't tell you the number of times I have rolled my eyes or huffed under my breath when people throw out those pithy quotes, almost always out of context, simplified and misunderstood. Like Nietzsche's quote, "That which does not destroy me makes me stronger" and Eleanor Roosevelt's "I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along."

I think Crosby would call bullshit on these kinds of tropes.

I knew going in that this was not going to be a fun, light read. I rarely enjoy those kinds of books anyway. But even now, a few days after finishing the book, I can't say I enjoyed this. It's well-written, intelligent, insightful but... enjoyable? Nah. I don't think it was ever intended to be.

Zora says

Lots to admire in this, including the author's refusal to offer a triumphal narrative about living with severe pain, in her case from a spinal chord injury. Instead she reflects on and mourns her earlier pleasures of embodiment, from sex to booze to playing with her dog. I even liked the chapter about her bowel movements (hey you either like a good chat about this, or you don't, in my experience).

Karen says

This felt like a useful story to tell, but the writing style was odd. It was often overly poetic, so sentences could end up wordy or unclear. She'd sometimes refer to her mother as Mother, other times by her name, in a way that felt clunky, and she'd refer to "Jake" without explaining that this was her nickname for her partner Janet (it took the whole book for me to figure this out). Structurally it was kind of choppy, too, like a bunch of essays with tangents. The story was interesting, as she told about details of quadriplegia that are rarely shared. (the bowel movements, a bit about sex)

M. says

A thoughtful and candid reflection on Crosby's severely disabled life after a bicycle accident paralyzed her neck, this memoir is a much-needed meditation on grief in the wake of acquired disability, and will likely be valuable to those in similar situations, though possibly not so much to those coming from a more pro-disability or further post-disability standpoint. I appreciated her reflections on interdependency and vulnerability the most; and her chapter on bowel movements.
