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Tamara's Opus

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Tamara has never listened
to hip-hop
Never danced
to the rhythm of raindrops
or fallen asleep to a chorus of chirping crickets
she has been Deaf
for as long as I have been alive
and ever since the day that I turned five
My father has said:
"Joshua. Nothing is wrong with Tamara.
*God just makes
some people different*."
And at that moment
those nine letters felt like hammers
swung gracefully by unholy hands
to shatter my stained-glass innocence
into shards that could never be pieced back together
or do anything more
than sever the ties between my sister and I.

I waited
was patient numberless years
anticipating the second
her ears would open like lotuses
and allow my sunlight sentences to seep
into her insides
make her remember all those conversations
we must have had in Heaven
back when God hand-picked us
to be sibling souls centuries ago

I still remember her 20th birthday
readily recall my awestruck eleven-year old eyes
as I watched Deaf men and women of all ages
dance in unison to the vibrations
of speakers booming so loud
that I imagined angels chastising us
for disturbing their worship
with such beautiful blasphemy
until you have seen
a Deaf girl dance
you know nothing of passion.
There was a barricade between us
that I never took the time to destroy
never for even a moment
thought to pick up a book and look up
the signs for *sister*
for*family*
for*goodbye, I will see you again some day*
*remember the face of your little brother*.
It is only now I see
that I was never willing
to put in the extra effort to love her properly
So as the only person in my family
who is not fluent in sign language
I have decided to take this time
to apologize
Tamara, *I am sorry*
*for my silence*.

But true love knows no frequency
So I will use these hands
to speak volumes
that could never be contained
within the boundaries of sound waves
I will shout at the top of my fingertips
until digits dance and relay these messages
directly to your soul
I know
that there is no poem
that can make up for all the time that we have lost
but please, if you can
*just listen*
as I play you a symphony
on the strings of my heart
made for no other ears on this Earth
but yours.

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