41st Forum for Behavioral Science in Family Medicine

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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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