**Yet: Jack Can Hear!**

**by Douglas Bullard**

[From The Deaf Way II Anthology. Edited by Tonya M. Stremlau. Used by permission from Gallaudet University Press © 2002]

*How is a boy to learn who he really is without discarding who he is not?*   
LAURENT CLERC

On his return to the school from yet another bout with surgery during the summer, Jack had to sleep flat on his back, just as at the hospital, and stare at car headlights swinging across the ceiling, just as at the hospital, too. He'd much rather sleep on his side, his feet tucked up closer to the warmth of his torso, his arms folded around the pillow, except that his new ears were uncomfortable when rested upon the pillow, and sometimes hurt the side of his head. And he was afraid they'd break or tear off and blood would spurt out.

His mother had told him to be very careful with his new ears because they were very expensive. Gripping him by the shoulders, she'd said they were his only hope of ever becoming a normal hearing boy that nobody would ever laugh at anymore. And she emphasized they were real ears, not cheap hearing aids. Then, she'd softly stroked his hair, his cheek, his eyebrows, and the back of his neck, careful not to touch the ears for they did feel funny to the touch, kind of repulsive to the finger, cold as the waxy skin of a cadaver, somewhat like the latex membrane of surgeon's gloves. She'd touched them once, just once, when he was wheeled out of surgery in a deep coma from the anesthesia. They felt so cold she nearly cried out that he was dead.

And the color wasn't quite right. It was all one shade of beige, almost like surgical tubing, unlike the subtle shadings from pink to tanned, pale to flush, of living ears. The beige had an unnatural light to it, as if the ears had been microwaved in a tanning salon.

Yet: Jack can hear! Jack can hear! He really could hear! The ears worked! The operation was completely successful! The patient did not die!

Dr. Bangs was immensely pleased. He'd finally achieved the stratosphere of a Jesus Christ. All the years of hard work and experimenting with cadavers and mice and dogs and monkeys had finally paid off in a --- a Miracle! All those mice and dogs and monkeys had to sacrifice their ears and endure severe discomfort and intense pain in order that Jack might hear! Dr. Bangs had had to sacrifice parties, picnics with his kids, and fishing trips and Monday Night Football with his buddies in order to pick up, besides his M.D., degrees in Chemistry, Physics, Electrical and Human Engineering, Acoustics and Audiology in order that Jack might hear! Jack, say thank you! Oh, so many sacrifices had had to be made so that Jack might be given the precious gift of hearing! Jack only had to give up his natural ears (what was left of them) and his father his fortune, his mother hers, his grandparents theirs, his brothers and sisters their inheritance, the United States Government its inheritance taxes.... Jack, say thank you!

The rubber ears were truly a work of miracle. First, Dr. Bangs removed the dead natural ears of Jack and fashioned threaded holes in their stead where the new ears could be screwed in, or out as may be necessary for cleaning, new batteries, upgrading, or new technology. There was one little disadvantage: it was necessary to make the lobes stiffer than natural in order that the ears might be screwed in by hand. Every once in a while, they'd come a little loose and hang at funny angles, and Jack would have to screw them back in tighter, careful not to turn them too far or to tear them.

The ears worked on the principle of microwaves, emitting electronic impulses directly into the brain, bypassing the auditory nerves. They really worked! Jack could hear everything --- approaching traffic, passing airplanes, music, flies buzzing, footsteps, children laughing, birds singing, the whack of bat on ball, the murmuring of a creek, the wail of his motherÃ³everything that brings joy to the ears. Jack was thrilled. His mother was ecstatic. His father was pleased. The Director was delighted and eager to get to work on Jack's speech. This is what Oralism is all about, isn't it, she cracked, so thrilled was she to finally, at long last teach speech, really, truly, actually, bonafidically teach speech, the way speech is meant to be taught! After all, Jack can't very well be said to be deaf, I mean subhearing, anymore, can he? Get it, uh? Ha, ha, ha. Get it? Ha, ha, ha.

Everybody was happy, very happy in spite of one little quirk: Jack could hear all right, except he couldn't tell a jet overhead from a siren down the street, a robin from Drew chirping to his little fairy, a scratching on a blackboard from a squeaking hinge, and, worse, cat from bat, red from green, love from hate, boy from girl, mom from pop --- all sounds sounded pretty much alike to him, almost as if all he could hear with those rubber ears was white noise.

After the first day of excitement and marvelment, Jack was disappointed. White noise isn't exactly the nicest sound in the world, you know, and it has been known to be an effective weapon of torture in certain prisons. Jack would have unscrewed the ears and thrown them away except he didn't know how he could endure people laughing at the holes in his head. It was bad enough the ears were noticeably phony, but at least no one looked his way so long as he didn't draw attention to himself.

His mother cried, "How could you be so ungrateful!?"

His father demanded of Dr. Bangs, "Why can't he understand what we say?"

"You see, it's the little hairs in the cochlea that give normal ears their marvelous ability to distinguish the fine shades of speech," the doctor explained, making a rolling gesture, now understanding why the dogs chased their tails the day long and the monkeys tried to hide their heads between their legs and howled round the clock. The rats also ran at top speed in their treadmills until they died.

Mr. Hassleback butted in, "Thought it was old men got hair in their ears . ."

"Jack's new ears unfortunately don't have those fine hairs," the doctor went on earnestly while Mr. Hassleback paced in disgust that his joke had fallen on deaf ears. "But we're working on it, we're working on it. This is exactly the purpose of making those ears easy to replace without further surgery. Remember, your boy is the very first person on earth to have these ..."

"Fake ears!" bellowed Mr. Hassleback.

Mrs. Hassleback cried, "Let's don't ruin this wonderful miracle!"

"Don't worry, don't worry," the Director orajected. "Everything is going to be fine; everybody is going to be very happy. Your boy will positively learn to talk! I promise!"

"How's he going to learn to talk if he can't understand nothing!?" snorted Mr. Hassleback.

"Please! Please!" pleaded Mrs. Hassleback. "We must never lose faith!"

"Okay, Okay." Mr. Hassleback threw up his hands and took out yet another mortgage on the house so the good doctor could get to work on growing real fur on a new model.

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"Jack can hear!" Melba exulted to the class that first day of school after the summer of Jack's miracle. "Isn't it wonderful?" She applauded, encouraging with sharp nods everyone to applaud too.

All the children gathered about Jack and stared at him, or more precisely at the rubber ears. Satha reached out from behind and fingered an ear, a touch Jack never felt. "Yuck!" she yanked back her hand. He heard but did not know the source of the sound.

"Satha!" remonstrated Melba.

Tylone slipped behind Jack and ran a finger along a lobe. Wally and Casey jockeyed for their turn. Jane and Jaime got in a feel too before Melba broke them up and made them sit at their desks.

"Naughty! Naughty!" Melba scolded them. "That was not nice!" "Jesas saw you," Jonas piped up in all earnestness.

Melba grabbed Jonas's wrist and put his palm to her cheek. "Jes-uhs," she corrected him.

"Jees-uhs."

"No, Jes-uhs."

While she was thus engaged with correcting Jonas, Tylone again sneaked behind Jack to see how far the rubber ear could be made to bend. Jack turned his head away and the ear came half-unscrewed, so that it hung horizontally.

"Ha, ha, ha," went the kids in an uproar, pointing at the funny ear and slapping their thighs.

Jack began to bawl and Melba hastened to gather him in her arms. Tears ran down her cheek as she rocked him and shot glances pregnant with reproach at brat after brat gathered about the classroom. So full of disappointment and sadness was her reproach that all the children sat down abashed.

"It's not Jack's fault he has funny ears," she said by way of teaching them the ways of tolerance, compassion, understanding, empathy, and other kindnesses. "You must understand he can't help them. God made him the way he is."

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On his back in his bed Jack wanted so much to fall off to sleep, but the white noise wailed up and down in rhythm with the arching of headlights across the ceiling. The noise jumped sharply every time David coughed. It buzzed with the snores of Wally and Jaime. It hummed as Drew responded to the little fairy in his ear. It growled with Casey fighting a dream and grunted with Tylone and yelped with Jerome. Volume and sharpness was all the white noise could convey to Jack, and he could distinguish nothing. He moaned and kicked his feet. A shriek accompanied beams of red light whipping across the ceiling.

Jack hurried to the window in time to catch a fire truck disappearing around a corner a block away. He opened the window; from the fine vantage of four stories above the corner and high above the rows and rows of two-story brownstones, he could follow the flashes of red glow upon windows and walls down the next street. He closed his eyes, hoping his rubber ears could follow the siren, but all he could hear was the white noise gradually diminishing in volume, only to be confounded by other passing traffic and David's coughing.

Nights are never total in cities, what with millions of street lamps furnishing a dirty yellow, almost umber, tinge to the air so that it, the air itself, becomes quite visible, tangible, palpable. You can actually see that it is air. The heavens above are more mud than night, and only Jupiter shows as a faint, lonely sentinel up there in the muck when the moon is out visiting elsewhere in the world. Even when the moon is up, the city does not need, does not welcome its light; you have to really look to find it. Even the huge park to the left of Jack, which from his perch four stories above the ground gives the appearance of a black hole in the midst of the city, never enjoys a true night that would make a flashlight necessary.

Jack had never known there was so much noise in the world, even so late at night. Of course, before the rubber ears, he had known there was sound all about: engines, slamming doors, bells, hearing people. His mother had told him about the noises, he had observed hearing people responding to noises, and his old hearing aid had given hints of the existence of noise, but it took the rubber ears to confirm to him that he was living in a sea of sound as much as a world of sight, and that hearing people receive images of sound as vivid as images of sight.

But the rubber ears, being synthetic, not living flesh, only gave him the sound without the image so that it was only so much noise, as featureless and meaningless as a blank white page. If only he could get something, even a crude drawing! His heart broke, as had those of the mice and dogs and monkeys in Dr. Bangs' laboratory. He made preparations to jump out the window. He didn't care if he broke his mother's heart or ruined Dr. Bangs' reputation. He was going to splatter himself on that sidewalk down there and wreck those rubber ears.

Miss Racher grabbed him just in time and dragged him back into the room and enclosed him in her tender embrace. His struggles bumped awake Tylone.

"He was gonna jump!" she cried to Tylone. He dropped his jaw, touched Jack and Miss Racher, and quickly summoned Wally, Casey, and Jaime, and they gathered about Jack now sobbing at Miss Racher's breast. She was sobbing too and rocked Jack in her arms.

*He almost jump!* Tylone explained, nodding at the open window. *Miss-Racher caught-him*. He ended with a gesture of plucking a hair out of his head by way of emphasizing it was a close call. Miss Racher was too astonished to remind him to use his speech. She understood every gesture clearly! She never thought she would be able to, but it seemed the gestures fit the situation so well they made perfect sense.

Jaime closed the window and the boys comforted Jack and Miss Racher with pats, hugs, and caresses, with Casey giving Miss Racher a kiss on the cheek. He thought her the loveliest person he ever saw, her hair down so that it fell upon a shoulder bare except for the strap of her nightgown, her features soft with love as she rocked Jack in her arms on her lap. In the daytime she was austere, severe, almost harsh, but now Casey thought her beautiful. He kissed her again. Her smile said thank you.

*Noise, noise bother, bother me*, Jack wailed. *Thought new ears help me hearie, but noise, noise bother, bother.*

Miss Racher thought she understood every gesture but glanced anxiously at Jaime for help, and he explained, "Jack said the noise bothers him. Thought the new ears would make him hearing, same as hearing people, but the noise ..."

"Poor Jack!" Miss Racher wept again and rocked Jack.

*Wish can OFF!* Jack tugged at the ears. *Noise scream, scream all time!*

Jaime interpreted for Miss Racher and she agreed, "Let's see if we can turn 'em off."

They went to her room and studied the rubber ears, Jack sniffing and trying to be manly under the bright lamp and their scrutiny. *Where batteries?*

*See none,* Tylone frowned at the absence of little trap doors for batteries like on watches.

*How? How?* Jaime mused.

Jack unscrewed an ear to show how it was done, and it fell out in his hand. Even he was surprised at how easily it came off, and this made him anxious that maybe he couldn't ever get it back on again. Tiny wires connected the ear with something deep in the hole in his head, and he couldn't bring it out front far enough for a look himself.

"Let me," Jaime assured him and took the ear. The battery was now easy to see, and as tiny as a button on a dress shirt. Jaime took it out and screwed the ear back in. He did the same with the other ear and Jack beamed *Me deaf.*

*Nothing wrong deaf,* Casey agreed with an elaborate shrug that as much as said, what's the big deal.

*Me deaf!* Jack exclaimed again.

Jaime made to toss the batteries in the trashcan, but Miss Rachel said, "Let me have 'em. I'll think of a way to make 'em dead and put 'em back in. Nobody will know."

*Secret!* Exulted, the boys and Miss Racher swore to each other to keep the secret always.

Jack was very happy to be an object of a dangerous secret and to be deaf, finally. Deaf at long last! His relief was evident and Miss Racher did not require much persuasion to let him go back to bed alone. He slept well that night and every night thereafter.

# Miss Hester of Sunset Valley

### by Guie Leo Deliglio

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The deaf of Sunset Valley date all important events from the day Miss Hester Gregory became a permanent resident of the town. None of us can explain just why she has dominated us since the first day of her invasion, but it is a fact, and one which we are not ashamed to own up to. Even Bill Salstrom, the big Swedish deaf farmer, proudly admits that Miss Hester can twist him around her little finger.

One morning in early June my employer at the real estate office where I was a typist, sent for me to have a business talk with a deaf woman in search of a good boarding house to rent. He knew I understood renting a house as well as he did, and being deaf myself, I could naturally discuss all the details with her in our sign language. I was glad to do this, for I knew it meant a big commission, and money just then was scarce with me.

I was not prepared to meet the little lady in the outer office. My first impression was that what she needed to rent was a doll cottage, for she was scarcely over five feet tall, and very slender of built. I had always thought the landlady of a boarding house should be tall, strong, and loud-voiced; to say nothing of smelling of cabbage and dirt. This little lady would surely meet failure inside a week. Forgetting the big commission in wait for me, I set out at once to warn her against starting a boarding house.

"But, my dear child," she interrupted, as I started to tell her she would never succeed in her project, "I have kept a boarding house in the city for ten years. I sold it only last month to a friend of mine, and am out here to open a new one on a smaller scare just to show that it is much pleasanter for us deaf to board together than living apart in town. Ten or twelve boarders are all I expect to look after here, and after having over two dozen for ten years, I expect to have a great deal of leisure time on my hands."

Of course, there was nothing for me to do now but show her half a dozen places we had listed for rent. The first five proved either too dirty, too far from the business district, or too large to allow her the leisure time she expected to get. The sixth was a gem.

We were walking down Elm Avenue when we discovered this old gabled house. At one time the Flemming family had lived here for two summers, but the fashion of spending vacations at the seashore came into vogue about the second summer they passed in Sunset Valley, so they had let the house go, renting it once in a while when any one cared to be burdened with a large, three storied mansion, and it was seldom any one in the Valley desired to rent it. Although not listed on our books as a boarding house, we had permission to rent it to any responsible party, and could remodel it to suit a tenant if taken on a five-year lease.

I was lucky to have the key in the front door on my key-ring, and soon we stood in the musty hallway of the big, barn-like affair. It was amusing to watch Miss Hester poke around in the different rooms. I knew she was pleased with almost everything she saw.

"Just the place I want," she signed enthusiastically. "When the wall of the study is cut out, the dining room will be large enough for all the boarders. We will cut the partition out between the hall and the living room, and then we will have a lovely room for parties. This little room must have been built for a child's play room. What a lovely little private parlor it will make. Why, I never knew there was such a lovely house in the world. I am going to have it if I have to buy it outright!"

We hurried up the second and third floor. Six medium sized bedrooms were found on each floor. Two bathrooms and an additional toilet was on the second floor. Besides the regular sleeping rooms we found large linen closets, broom closets, and storage space. No wonder the enormous house was a white elephant on its owners hands. The present Flemmings' seaside cottage was only a little more than half as large.

down the stairs again. "The door must be on the first floor though I don't remember seeing one."

We found it at last leading from the side of the kitchen. It was so tiny that we had taken it for a broom closet in our hasty examination.

Miss Hester was fairly dancing with joy as we passed into the wing. This additional part had probably been built to the house the numerous servants such a large house required. A small dining room, living room and good sized bedroom were on the lower floor. The second floor contained three small bedrooms.

"Just what we need!" exclaimed Miss Hester. "This lower floor will be my private apartment. I am glad the stairway is near the main part of the house. I can make three dainty bedrooms up stairs, and with a doorway cut through to the second story, the whole house will be so convenient. We must hurry back to the office and sign the lease before someone else gets it!"

Seeing that no one had rented it for two years, I saw no need of rushing back to the office and work, but hurried as fast as my one hundred and seventy-five pounds could take me.

There is no need to dwell upon the renovation of Miss Hester's dream house. Everything she wanted done was finished in less than a month. When the new painting, papering, and remodeling was accomplished, no one would have recognized the old Flemming mansion. Even the name was changed, for Miss Hester insisted upon calling it REST HAVEN. Only the deaf were to board there, and Miss Hester soon found three deaf women to help her with the house-work.

No trouble was encountered by Miss Hester in filling her house with the young folks working in the shops and factory. Five young men and seven girls soon left comfortable boarding houses for REST HAVEN. Needless to say I was one of the seven, and being much older than the other six girls I was looked upon as a sort of monitor and companion to Miss Hester. I admit I was proud of this position.

Miss Hester was right when she said she could run a boarding house, though to tell the truth none of us thought of REST HAVEN as an ordinary boarding house. In the latter one has no place to entertain callers. At REST HAVEN the little private parlor could be used at any hour up to ten P.M. However it was usually empty, for whenever we had company we could not bear to take them away from the home-like atmosphere of the big living room. Every evening we gathered before the huge fireplace shelling peanuts, popping corn, roasting chestnuts, or just watching the flames as they roared up the chimney. At other times we rolled up the rugs and danced. Was it very strange that we did not care to be shut up alone in the little parlor, no matter how cosy and comfortable it was furnished. Unless the girls were engaged, or we wanted a quiet talk with some out-of town friends, we seldom made use of the less cheerful room.

You have now seen what a wonderful time we deaf girls and boys were having. Yet no less a good time was Miss Hester giving the older deaf of the town. If there were too many of us young folks using the living room, Miss Hester entertained her older friends in the large dining room. Nor was this room any inferior to the front room, for the study of the old Flemming home thrown into the dining room, another large fireplace was now at one end. Sometimes we younger girls, tiring of the lively games, came out here and entered the more quiet enjoyment of the married deaf who lived in the town.

Inside a year Miss Hester had made friends with the entire deaf population of the town. All told there was something like eighty-five deaf men and women so Miss Hester had her hands full giving advice, helping those in trouble, and kind of overseeing all that went well with the boarding house. Sarah, Jane, and Isabel, the three women who did the housework for Miss Hester, proved jewels worth their weight in gold. In spite of doing the housework we never thought of looking down on them. They donned their aprons in the morning, did all that was required of them (if not more) and after the evening dishes were finished and work done for the night, they rolled down their sleeves and took their place among the rest of us. And why not? They too, were deaf, had as much education as most of us girls who were employed in the offices and factories of the town, drew the same wages, worked about the same number of hours, and were our equal in every way. That they worked where we boarded instead of in some other place, made not a particle of difference. If a thoughtless girl came to board with us and talked insultingly to one of our working girls, Miss Hester gently took her into another room and gravely reproved her. In many cases one reproval was enough and the girl soon looked upon the house girls as her equal. There was only one girl we seemed unable to get along with. Her name was Enid Brandon.

Enid came to live with us about a year after Miss Hester started REST HAVEN. All we knew about her was that she came from a private school for exceptionally rich children in the east. Although she knew the signs fairly well, she prided herself on reading lips perfectly, and her voice seemed to be perfect, or so a hearing lady told me. Naturally she looked down on most of us who were unable to read lips and peak intelligibly. Miss Hester she treat with the usual deference paid to her, but whether she liked our little landlady, I was unable to find out.

Norma Knowlton came angrily into my room one evening a week after Enid made her appearance.

"I hate her, Ruth, I hate her!" she cried, coming over to where I stood before my dresser.

"Hate who?" I asked, but guessing instantly.

"Enid Brandon. Why did Miss Hester take such a girl to board here?"

"What has Enid done to you, Norma? You have a respectable position, so she couldn't have insulted you like I saw her insult Jane last night."

"She is trying to flirt with Arthur. I saw her signing to him this evening. She said she wondered how a deaf man could care for a girl who was not his equal. She meant me, of course."

"Surely not. You are every bit Arthurs Putman's equal. Even your salary almost equals his"

"But Arthur can talk and understand lip reading. He has only been deaf six years. He can even hear a little out of one ear when he uses an ear-phone. I can't help it if I was born deaf and never was taught lipreading and speech. I don't care! She can have him if he'd rather have her. I don't want him!"

"Yes, you do want him. You know that you are in love with him, and I am sure he loves you, too. If he is infatuated with Enid, and I don't believe he is, it won't last long."

"And if I marry him he will always be running after other girls."

I knew I couldn't reason with Norma when she was in this mood. Suddenly, I thought of Miss Hester. She would be the only one to help Norma if Arthur really found Enid interesting. Personally I couldn't imagine sensible Arthur Putman being interested seriously in a girl like Enid. In both dress and manner she was extremely immodest.

"Let's tell Miss Hester," I suggested to Norma. "She will know just what to do."

Norma brightened. It was clear that she, too, had unfaltering faith in our little house-mother, for we seldom thought of Miss Hester as a regular landlady. She was too closet o us to be called by such an undignified name.

Miss Hester comforted Norma as well as she could and soon sent her off to bed more quiet.

"I really don't know what to do in this case," she confessed to me, as we sat alone together in the dining room. "I have seen Enid and Arthur together, and I am afraid he is deeply infatuated with our new boarder. And I am afraid she isn't the girl for him."

"You know she isn't! Why, she isn't for any decent man. She is horribly immodest and crude. I often wondered why you invited her to board here when she first came to town. She had a nice room over at the hotel."

Miss Hester shook her head and smiled gently at me.

"I see you do not like Enid," she said. I knew she was going to reprove me for making such a speech about her, but I didn't care, for every word I said was true.

"You and Enid may not be able to live well together. Her ideas may not be as refined as yours are, but I am sure our dear Lord sent her here for some special purpose, and we should not question her worth. We may look even as unworthy in her eyes. Yet you should not say she is unfit for a good man. If she married one who could rule her gently and firmly, but with great kindness and understanding, I am she would be happy all her life with him."

"I never met a man like you described," I am afraid my face looked a little cross. I know my signs were sharp and imperative.

"Are you sure, my dear?" Miss Hester smiled. "Have you ever met Fred Jordan?"

Fred Jordan was a young man who roomed across from me. I liked him, and had tried to couple him off with Elsie Reese, a quiet little girl I liked very much.

"What has he to do with Enid?" I asked. For the life of me I couldn't see any connection between the two.

"He is madly in love with her, but she does not know it. He was here to see me the other night, and I found out he came mostly to inquire about Enid. Last night he saw her insult Jane, and I know it hurt him deeply. This more he apologized for her."

"How funny!" I laughed when I mentally saw a picture of him trying to excuse Enid's rudeness to another girl.

"Men in love do queer things. If we found some way to open Enid's eyes to Fred, and show Arthur the true worth of Norma, all would end well."

"And how do you suppose we are going to show them?"

"I don't know yet, but time will come if God wishes them to find each other. If we have faith in Him, we will at least find a way to do His will."

I went away, ashamed of my unbelief. But I felt it would be wrong for a good man like Fred Jordan to marry such a scatter-brained little vixen as Enid. Surely there were many better girls for him. Elsie Reese would make an ideal wife. For one thing she was a fine cook, and I could not image Enid keeping house and cooking for any man.

A week passed, and I saw no way of reuniting Arthur and Norma. Fred Jordan still looked after Enid wistfully whenever she passed him, but Enid, I am sure never knew he was anywhere near her.

Miss Hester looked worried as she saw Norma's empty seat that evening as we were sitting down to dinner. This was the first time Norma had been absent, and as it was Saturday, and a half holiday, we wondered what could have kept her out so long after business hours.

"Have you seen Norma, Arthur?" she asked.

Arthur, who was busy signing with Enid, shook his head.

"Would you mind running down to the store where she works and see if she has been kept overtime."

Of course, he did seem to mind but no one thought of refusing Miss Hester's requests, so he put on his hat and left the house.

All that evening we worried about Norma and Arthur, for he had not returned two hours after he had started out. Enid, who had become tired of waiting for an absent suitor, was talking to Fred, and though he kept glancing out the window every few minutes, I could see he was making the most of his opportunity to talk with the girl he loved so much.

As Miss Hester had just decided to take the matter up with the authorities, the door opened and Arthur, carrying Norma in his arms, entered. As he placed her on the sofa, we saw she was conscious but very pale. Arthur told us the tale.

"The manager of the firm sent Norma out to deposit the money in the bank after the store closed this noon. He had sprained his ankle and couldn't go himself, and as the bank officials knew Norma, she was the only one he could trust to go. Of course, some crooks had to find it out, we think now they are responsible for the managers accident. Anyway they knew Norma couldn't hear, so one of them went up and stopped her as she was starting out. She didn't understand him, so when he motioned toward the auto they had, she stepped forward to see what they wanted with her. She said she thought the manager might be in it, and had decided not to send her on alone. It was easy then to force her in the car and run away with her. Two men saw it all, but not knowing Norma, they just gave chase without notifying any one. They found about a dozen ruffians hanging around a shack about five miles from town, so one kept watch while the other came for help. They were just starting out with the police when I got there, and went along too. Gee Norma's a plucky girl. Can you guess what she did?"

Of course, we couldn't.

"She didn't hand over the money when they asked for it. She is sure a quick thinker. When they started to grab her, she threw out her hand and thrust the money into one of the trash cans. Most of her fears, so she says, was that she wouldn't get back in time to save it before the garbage man made his round. When the crooks couldn't find the money, even after they had one of the women search her, they tried to beat her. Bus," he drew a long breath, "We got there just before they harmed her."

None of us could fail to see the look of love glowing in his eyes, and Miss Hester glanced at me and smiled. "It's all right," I knew what she meant.

Enid saw too, and for once I was surprised. Instead of the look of defeated hate I expected to see in her face, she smiled at Arthur and Norma. Suddenly she bent down and kissed the girl on the couch.

"I am glad you were there to save her, Arthur," she signed to him, and Norma saw the signs. "She is such a wonderful girl for you!"

She would have quietly left the room then, but Fred Jordan, a light in his eyes that I had never seen there before, put his arm masterfully through hers, and led her into the private parlor. Though it was nearly midnight, neither Miss Hester nor I thought of upholding the rules that unmarried couples should not use this room alone after ten o'clock. Instead we turned back to hear more of Norma's exciting adventure.

I can never doubt Miss Hester again when she says God always finds a way to bring real lovers together. Yesterday I received an engraved invitation to a double wedding, Norma and Enid to be the two blushing brides. Miss Hester goes around as blithe as a lark. She has what Riley calls, "The simple, soul-reposing, glad belief in everything." Some day, if I continue to live with her, I feel sure I, too, shall find some of her faith in my fellow-men.

THE END

# The Test of the Heart

### by Guie Leo Deliglio

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As Mrs. Ramsey came out of her daughter's room she was met by her son-in-law, Keith Kendell. "How is Gloria?" he asked in signs, and pointed to his wife's room. "She is doing finely," signed back Mrs. Ramsey, with the slowness of a hearing person unaccustomed to conversing with the deaf. "The doctor thinks she will soon be able to hear perfectly."

"For her sake I will be glad."

"It is wonderful to think she will have her chance in life again! I hope you understand what her hearing will mean to her."

The young man nodded. "I understand. She will, of course, desire to be with hearing people more. I will not keep her from them."

"I knew you would be sensible. If possible, I shall try to cut her entirely off from her former associates. She will have nothing in common with them now, and her social duties among the hearing will leave her no time to tolerate deaf companions."

A look of dismay passed over Keith's face. "I don't believe Gloria will want to give up all of her old friends."

Mrs. Ramsey's usually calm features became stern. She knew it would be hard to tell the young man what she had decided days ago to say to him. But now that her daughter's whole future was at stake, she would make it plain to Keith Kendell that was impossible for him to remain Gloria's husband.

"I have something very serious to talk over with you, and if you are sensible and really love my daughter, you will do as I desire.

You know Gloria's early history. When she was about thirteen she lost her hearing through sickness. This blow nearly killed me. I loved her dearly, and she was my sole comfort after my husband died. When I found there was very little hope of her recovering her hearing, I immediately had her taught lip-reading so she could understand me without the use of signs. I do now know when she first started to learn the signs, but I found out that she was an expert signer at sixteen. Although it grieved me deeply, I let her associate with the deaf. You also know I looked upon her marriage to you with disfavor, for I wanted her to marry a man who could support her in luxury. But she would not hear of giving you up, and as I thought she would always be deaf, I finally consented to let her marry a deaf man. I believe up to this time you have made her a good husband."

"I have tried to be good to her, for I love her." Keith wondered what Mrs. Ramsey had on her mind. Surely she wasn't trying to part Gloria from him. Why, Gloria was his wife!

"Gloria has her hearing back now," went on Mrs. Ramsey quickly. "We both know what a difference it will make to her. It has always been my wish for her to take her proper place in society, and now there is only one thing to interfere."

"What will interfere?" but Keith guessed without asking the question.

"To put it plainly, I think if Gloria is handicapped with a deaf husband her whole glorious future will be spoiled."

"I am sorry, but what can I do? I love Gloria and believe she loves me."

"Then if you love Gloria, why don't you prove it? Go away to some place for a year and let her get a divorce."

"A divorce! Gloria would not consent. It would be impossible."

"Gloria will consent. Do you think her love will last if she continues to live with you, a deaf-mute? Will she like to slave her life away in a little cottage when she can get far better things if she leaves you. Surely you cannot expect the utterly impossible. If Gloria went back to you it would be only from a sense of duty, not because she desires to live with you. If you love her, as you profess, you will let her get a divorce as soon as possible."

Keith bowed his head in his hands. Was she right? Would he be a handicap to Gloria's future? Would Gloria's love die if she continued to live with him, a deaf-mute?

Mrs. Ramsey looked on triumphantly. She knew she had won Keith with her plea. If she could win Gloria as easily, she knew she would be able to separate the young couple with each believing the other had grown tired of the matrimonial bond.

She was somewhat shocked at the careworn look that had come into Keith's face in the last few minutes. Still he was scarcely twenty-five, and boys of his age seldom carry a load of sorrow for long. Soon he would meet some nice deaf-mute girl, and all thoughts of Gloria would vanish. Gloria, too, would soon find another mate more fitted to her station in life. Mrs. Ramsey felt almost proud of the work she was accomplishing. She could even afford to be a little kind to the young man beside her.

"I know how you feel now, Keith," she patted him tenderly on the arm. "I am sorry I had to use such hard words to make you understand, but you know I am doing it for the best. You will not lose money by leaving your business for a year. I will provide sufficient funds for you to travel a year, and of course, Gloria will not ask for alimony."

The young man drew himself up sharply. "Thank you, no," he signed quickly. "I have all the money I need. You have already paid for Gloria's operation. I cannot ask more from you, and if possible I will repay you for it as soon as I can."

"No, no. It is right that I should pay for the operation. I refuse to allow you to refund that money. If you ever find yourself in need of funds, do not hesitate to let me know."

"I cannot take your money, Mrs. Ramsey." He glanced at the door of his wife's room. "Could I see her before I go?"

"I think it would be best for you not to disturb her. But if you must---"

"Perhaps you are right. It might make it harder." Keith picked up his had and overcoat. "Good-bye. I will leave town as soon as I can arrange things at the office. I will leave my address with the company, and you can call me if anything happens and I am needed."

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Gloria Kendell sat in her invalid chair gazing out on the street. After two months she could hear almost perfectly, and the doctor had said her ear drums were almost entirely healed and she could soon dispense with her ear pieces she was now required to wear to modify the sound around her. In another week she would be able to go out and around, and her mother was often talking about the joys of attending the theatre and church, pleasures her deafness had caused her to miss so many years.

But Gloria was not in a happy frame of mind. Her hearing brought none of the joys she had anticipated. When deaf she had found a great deal of pleasure in the motion pictures, the deaf church service, and the frequent informal socials given by her deaf friends. Then, too, she had her husband and cozy little bungalow. She smiled wistfully as tender little memories flitted across her mind. It had been such fun to watch the vegetable garden grow. And how she loved to pour over the cook books trying to find a new way to use up the left over scraps and surprise Keith.

Keith? What was he doing now, she wondered. Why had he left her in such an abrupt fashion without a word? Was he angry because she let her mother persuade her into an operation that had succeeded. Of course, she had wanted it, for she could hear and could do more to influence hearing people to give the deaf a fair chance. But she had talked this over with Keith many times, and he always seemed pleased at the idea. Her mother had said something about a divorce, but there would be no divorce if she could help it. Why, she loved Keith with all her body and soul. She belonged to him!

For many days she had wondered why Keith had left her. Mrs. Ramsey had been very vague in her explanation. She subtly hinted that Keith had not wanted a hearing wife who would outshine him and make his defect conspicuous. Besides he had sensibly realized he would handicap her future and left her rather than find himself in the way.

Gloria could scarcely believe this of Keith. It was not like him to go off without explanation to her. He had either misunderstood her, or had been influenced by her mother to leave her so she could obtain a divorce. But her mother would not have done such an underhanded thing. She knew how much they thought of each other, and what mother would wish to wreck such a perfect marriage as theirs had been?

"What is my little daughter thinking about now?" asked Mrs. Ramsey, coming over to her daughter's side. "I hope you are looking forward to the future good times I have planned for you, my dear."

Gloria sighed. What good would theatres and concerts do her without Keith to sit beside her and hold her hand as he did in the old days at the movies. "I was not thinking of the things you planned, mother. I was trying to think of the reason Keith left me."

"My dear child, don't trouble your head over Keith. No one knows why a man leaves his wife. Probably a fairer maiden."

"Probably you told him I should be better off without him," interrupted Gloria, angered at her mother's levity.

"Who told you? Has he--?" Mrs. Ramsey stopped short, realizing she was betraying herself.

"Then that was it Mother!" The anger in Gloria's voice startled Mrs. Ramsey. She had never seen her daughter in such a mood before. "You sent Keith away by making him believe I would not love him if I could hear. You lied to him, you know it! You thought my hearing would make a difference. You are mistaken. I love Keith all the more, now that I know what a sacrifice he would make for me. What a test for my poor Keith. But I am not going to hear, Mother. I am going to take out these ear pieces and let the noise come it. The doctor said it would break the ear drums, and if it does I won't be too good for Keith, and you won't care to keep me if I can't hear."

"Gloria! Gloria! You mustn't do that. Think of what it will mean. Think of the years ahead of you. For my sake, Gloria, you mustn't take them out. Keith would say the same. I'll let you go back to him if you will only leave the ear pieces in and try to keep your hearing!" But her words were too late. Gloria had already plucked out the small rubber ear pieces the doctor had placed in her ears after the operation. Suddenly the world seemed to have broken loose. The cool air rushed into her delicate ears, and her mother's voice resounded in shrill blasts. Mercifully the world seemed to grow dark, and she fell forward in her chair unconscious.

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Some weeks later a pale-faced girl descended from the train at the small village of Sheridianville. Inquiring her way of the villagers, she soon found herself in front of a large factory.

"Does Mr. Keith Kendell, a deaf-mute, work here?" She inquired of the doorman.

"Yes, ma'am. He's one of the new book-keepers in the office. Shall I tell him you want to see him?"

"Yes, please. Tell him his wife, Gloria Kendell, wishes to see him on important matters. It's so near six o'clock, don't you think he could leave now?"

"I guess so, ma'am. Stay here until I see."

"Mr. Kendell said to ask you to go in. He's all alone there and isn't quite finished," said the man on his return.

Gloria was surprised at the change in Keith as she entered the small office room. He was much thinner than when she had last seen him, and his face was haggard and aged. Impulsively she ran to him and threw her arms around his neck. It needed no signs to show how glad she was to see him.

"How thin you are!" she signed. "Have you been ill?"

"No; only working, and anxious, about you."

"Now I shall make you fat again. You will starve yourself if I am not around to look after you."

"Your mother? Did she not tell you I left you so you could get your divorce?"

"Silly! Why should I want a divorce from the nicest man in the world. I will not let you off that easy. I am going to live with you from now on. Do you think I could be happy without you?"

"But you do not realize what a handicap I will be to you. You must take your rightful place in the world now."

"I am sorry, but I can't."

"Because I should hinder you."

Gloria laughed. "No. Only because I can't hear any more!"

"What! The operation failed?" a look of happiness flashed over Keith's face a moment, but almost at once it gave place to a look of deep concern.

"The operation succeeded, but when I heard what my mother had said to you about me, I was so angry I tore out the ear pieces and let my ear drums break." And she told Keith what had occurred between her mother and herself a few weeks before.

"I couldn't help it, Keith," she finished. "I never could have enjoyed my hearing without you, and you would always have thought yourself in my way if I had come back to you as I was. Now there is no barrier between us, and we can begin again where we left off before that horrid operation spoiled it all. You do love me just as well now, don't you?"

Keith looked down at her, realizing all at once what a wonderful girl his wife was to sacrifice her hearing to keep on though live with him.

"What courage you had to do this!" his signs were reverent. "May my love be big enough to justify it all."

She smiled and shook her head. Putting her arms around his neck, she looked up into his face and spoke.

Though a poor lip-reader, Keith knew what she said. It was:

"Not courage, dear, just love."

THE END

# The Whiplash of Audism

### by Donald Grushkin (2011)

[Accessed 25 August 2011 from Deaf Echo,   
<http://deafecho.com/2011/08/the-whiplash-of-audism/>   
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1. Two by two, they filed into the Temple of Audism, these hopeful Supplicants to the God Locutus.
2. Within, they met the Oracles of Locutus, with their full beards and smarmy smiles.
3. "Your Child shall be healed," the Oracles cried. "But first, thee and he must drink from the River Lethe."
4. "Its waters shall help you and him to forget."
5. "For forget, he and thee both must, that he cannot hear."
6. "Forsooth, ye shall forthwith refer to him only in words pleasing to Locutus: 'Hearing Impaired,' 'Auditorily Handicapped,' 'Communicatively Disordered,' 'Hard of hearing,' 'Severe-profound hearing loss,' 'Amplificatorily Challenged."
7. "But eschew ye the blasphemous word 'Deaf,' for it has the power to mitigate the effects of the River Lethe."
8. Eagerly they drank, and spooned it into the mouth of their trusting, unknowing Child.
9. "Very well, now thee may begin to honor the God Locutus by offering your Child up to Him."
10. "Never allow thy Child to use his hands, except to work and for personal grooming, for this shall make him unclean in Locutus' sight."
11. "Never allow thy Child to see anyone use their hands in improper ways, for this shall make his mind unclean and unfit to live in eternity with Locutus."
12. The Supplicants pledged their fealty to the Creed of Locutus, and instantly they were transformed into True Believers.
13. The years passed, and the Supplicants remained true to the Audist's creed.
14. Daily, nay, thrice daily they raised their orisons unto Locutus.
15. "Ball," "Ball," "Ball," they intoned.
16. And lo! Their Child began to speak, and forthwith the Supplicants transformed into Acolytes of Locutus.
17. "Can I have a popicle?" the Child asked.
18. "Ssssss. Popsssssicle."
19. "Popicle."
20. "Popsicle."
21. The hours passed, until at length, the Child asked, "Can I have a popsicle?"
22. "No, thou may not, Child, for it is now bedtime."
23. And the Child felt a strange stirring in his soul.
24. The months passed, and the Holiday season came around.
25. The Acolytes' brothers and sisters and their children all came to revel in the Holiday cheer.
26. They gathered in the Large Room to eat, drink, and be merry.
27. Eagerly, the Child joined them, for he wanted to be part of his family.
28. One Acolyte covered her mouth, another mumbled. An Acolyte's brother turned his head in mid-sentence, while the other Acolyte responded to some random comment from across the room.
29. The Child gazed in bewilderment. Suddenly, the room erupted in laughter.
30. "What's so funny?" the Child asked.
31. "It wasn't that funny," came the response.
32. And the stirrings in the Child's soul grew stronger.
33. Still, the Child attempted to catch snippets of the conversation. Tendrils of words and phrases floated in front of the Child's eyes. Yet, the Child could not catch most of it.
34. "What did thee say?" the Child asked the female Acolyte.
35. "It's not important," the Acolyte answered.
36. The stirrings started turning into a rumble.
37. "What did he say?"
38. "I'll tell thee later," the Child was told.
39. Patiently, the Child waited. A few hours later, the Child asked again: "What did he say?"
40. Came the reply: "I forgot."
41. The rumble grew louder.
42. Still, the Child persevered. A word here. A tantalizingly nearly complete sentence there. The Child's brain worked feverishly to complete the sentence. Meanwhile, the conversation had moved on to new tracks, and the Child was once again lost.
43. "I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON!" the Child wailed.
44. "Thou art not trying hard enough," the Acolytes admonished. "Thee must try harder."
45. The Child blinked. Had he not already been trying his hardest to follow?
46. The rumble became a roar.
47. The months and years passed, and the same scene repeated itself in umpteen permutations.
48. "I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT ANYONE'S SAYING!" the Child exclaimed.
49. "Don't make a scene!" the Acolytes chided. "Thou art making us uncomfortable."
50. Suddenly, the Child realized what had been happening while he felt the stirrings and the rumblings: the River Lethe's effects had been slowly eroded and washed away.
51. "They tried to make me forget," the Child thought. "But I remember! I remember! I AM Deaf!"
52. The next year, the clan gathered for the annual Holiday revels. This time, the Child listened to his soul. After making the mandatory greetings, the Child took refuge with a book.
53. "You're being antisocial," the Supplicants scolded. "Thee must be one of us and with us!"
54. In vain, the Child tried once again, and met with the same results.
55. Several more years passed, and the Child's Deaf soul asserted itself more strongly. He approached the Acolytes.
56. I wish to learn the Language of the Hands. I want to be with my own kind," he said.
57. "Nonsense," the Acolytes replied. "We are your kind, and verily, to use the Language of the Hands will render thee unclean unto Locutus!"
58. As the Child had no choice, he grudgingly acquiesced. Yet, in his heart of hearts, he knew this desire was what he truly needed.
59. As the Child reached the age of majority, he began to venture forth, seeking others of his kind. At long last, he met one, and was introduced to others. He began to learn the Language of the Hands.
60. As he grew stronger in the Ways of the Deaf, he returned to the Acolytes. This time, he was not alone, for other Deaf were with him. Joyfully, they conversed in the Language of the Hands, while the Acolytes helplessly looked on.
61. "Rude!" one Acolyte scolded. "Thou art not including us in your conversation!"
62. The Child stared expectantly.
63. The conversation between the Child and his newfound peers continued. After a particularly witty jest, the small group burst out in laughter.
64. "What was so funny?" an Acolyte asked.
65. "I'll tell thee later," the Child replied.
66. "Impossible!" the Acolyte snapped. "Later never comes, for Later always becomes Now!"
67. At that, the Child just nodded knowingly.
68. Another burst of laughter. The question came again.
69. "It wasn't that important" came the response this time.
70. "If it wasn't important or good, then why was it good enough to laugh at?"
71. Again, the Child nodded.
72. The years passed, and the Child became more secure in his identity. One day he returned to see the Acolytes, adorned with symbols of his clan.
73. "Thou art now becoming a militant!" the Acolytes warned.
74. "Other Peoples wear symbols of their ethnic pride," the Child replied. "Why then, should it be wrong for me to wear mine?"
75. More years passed, and the Child decided to cast his story out into the world, so that others might not share his fate.
76. "Thou art embarrassing us and all those of us who worship Locutus!" the Acolytes scolded.
77. "Why does Locutus deserve respect?" came the rhetorical comeback. "Locutus has proven to be a false God, and thou hast been led down a false path by your unswerving obeisance to His tenets."
78. "We did right by thee, and Locutus did right by us," the Acolytes answered.
79. The Child and the Acolytes stared at each other, their worlds and planes of existence having diverged into a vast, unbridgeable chasm, and never would the twain meet again.

# Cords

### by Raymond Luczak

[From Men with Their Hands: A Novel by Raymond Luczak. Hulls Cove, ME: Rebel Satori. Used by permission from the author © 2009]

Every time Michael visits the Lansel Speech Clinic, he feels like a big-eyed woman with lips distorted decisively like the woman in a Picasso painting he'd seen in one of the art books he borrowed from the library; yet his speech enunciation and reception are acclaimed as works of art for his hearing loss. Even though the clinic is affiliated with the Lansel School of the Deaf, which is situated outside the city, it is based in downtown, a few blocks away from Lansel High School.

The building is designed to hide the corners they cut to build it more quickly. No one can see into these brown-tinted windows, and this always makes Michael feel uncomfortable: What if each window has an audiologist sitting behind it, turning dials this way or that, testing to see whether Michael can hear this or that sound outside the clinic? He always keeps his hearing aids off when he comes here for his annual audiological exam.

Down a short hallway and through a door on the right, the audiologist usually a woman who always changed every year; they were usually graduate students of audiology studying nearby at Lansel State University would carry Michael's thick file containing every audiogram he's ever taken starting from the time of his diagnosis at the age of three, and set Michael up in his chair in an airless room padded from any noises outside.

In that numb world of tricky mysteriousness, he would raise his hand if he heard a faint beep, or a loud whisper while staring at himself in that double-paned window through which he could barely see the audiologist taking notes after turning the dial. Then he would repeat back words like "airplane," "root beer," and "ice cream." This was to see how well he could discriminate the words he heard from the audiologist's lips, which was covered by her hand. He usually did well.

But this year Michael feels different when he returns a month after his last exam. Feeling ready to turn sixteen, he had asked to have his body aids replaced with a pair of behind-the-ear models when the audiologist said his aids were getting too old. The look of mild shock on his audiologist's face upon hearing his request made him feel deliciously good in ways he couldn't articulate, but it would be years later when he realized what it meant: "A deaf person is telling me what he wants, not asking what I think is best for him." Nevertheless, she tries a series of behind-the-ear models and runs tests to see which ones are best. Two different models were chosen.

Today is the day to cut off those cords from his body aids hidden inside his shirt. Until he tried on his first behind-the-ear hearing aid, he'd never realized how badly he wanted one. These new aids made his deafness, his differentness, a lot less conspicuous.

The audiologist gives a perky smile as she uses a tiny screwdriver to readjust the mechanical settings of his new hearing aids, doublechecks the notes she'd made the month before, and hands them back to Michael.

It takes Michael a few seconds to figure out which bumps on his new aids are the on/off switches and the volume wheels, but he soon turns them on.

The world sounds a little crisper, except that he himself is feeling different. He is different for the first time, in knowing that he now looked like everyone else. He holds his chin up a little as he walks down the hallway away from the audiologist's office and out the front doors. The old body aids are in his jacket pockets.

It is spring.

Suddenly he feels a wind sweep past his neck, and he stops in front of a slushy puddle. The cords that usually irritated his neck whenever it got windy are no longer there. He rubs his neck to reassure himself that the cords that held him steadfastly to the world of otherness were indeed cut off, that he was floating a little higher than ever before, simply because he did not have clunky body aids for a bra or because he didn't have to put on his hearing aid harness over his undershirt before putting on his shirt every morning.

He takes out his new hearing aids and slips them beside his old hearing aids; this was not easily possible when he wore his body aids for these cords and his huge earmolds could entangle so. The tender feel of a young wind darting into his exposed ear canals is so thrilling, that he stands still for a moment, floating in that freedom of feeling with his eyes closed. The world around him is blooming with melting snow and the promise of daffodils.

He leaps across the slushy puddle and walks slowly back home, constantly holding his breath amidst that joyful rush of wind into his naked ears. He cannot stop touching his beautiful ears, starting to listen to the wind all over again.

# Why it was W-on-the-Eyes

### by Margaret Prescott Montague

[From the Atlantic Monthly, Volume 11 (4), pgs. 462-267. April 1913].

'I wonder why the children's sign for little old Webster should be W-on-the-eyes,' Miss Evans speculated. 'There's nothing peculiar about his eyes, except perhaps that they're the brightest pair in school.'

Miss Evans was the new oral teacher in the Lomax Schools for deaf and blind children, and she was speaking about Charlie Webster, one of the small deaf mutes in her class.

That was his sign, W, made in the manual alphabet, with the hand placed against the eyes. Everybody in the deaf department at Lomax had his or her special sign, thus saving the time and trouble of spelling out the whole name on the fingers.

Clarence Chester, the big deaf boy who had finished school, but still stayed on working in the shoe-shop, was the one who made up the signs for the new pupils and teachers. He was rather proud of his talents in this direction, and took the pains of an artist over every sign. They were usually composed of the initial letter of the person's last name placed somewhere on the body, to indicate either some physical peculiarity, or else the position held by that person in the school. Mr. Lincoln, for instance, who was the superintendent, had L-on-the-forehead, to show that he was the head of the whole school, and no one else, of course, could have L as high up as that - not even Mrs. Lincoln. She had to be contented with L-on-the-cheek. So, in the same way, Miss Thompson, who was the trained nurse, had T-on-the-wrist, because it was her business to feel the children's pulses.

When Miss Stedman, the new matron for the deaf boys, came, she should have had S-on-the-chest, as Clarence made a habit of placing all the matrons' initials on their chests; but unfortunately, S in the manual alphabet is made by doubling up the fist, and Clarence explained to her that if a boy hits himself on the chest with his fist he is sure to hit that middle button of his shirt, and make a bruise. He had to make this rather complicated explanation in writing because Miss Stedman was new to the sign-language and finger-spelling, and he had received his education at Lomax before articulation was taken up there, and was therefore, of course, a mute. So, on account of the button, S-on-the-chest had to be abandoned. But Clarence looked at Miss Stedman, and, for all that they called her a matron, she was very young and small, and had delicately rosy cheeks, so he smiled a little, and then made the letter S and the sign for pretty. And Miss Stedman went away quite satisfied, and showed every one her sign, being innocently unaware that every time she did so she was saying that she was pretty. When her education in the sign-language had progressed sufficiently for her to discover the real meaning of her sign she was overcome with confusion, and begged Clarence to change it. But he said he never --- (never! NEVER! made vehemently with his hand) --- changed a sign after it was once given; besides, by that time all Miss Stedman's little deaf boys had got hold of it and no power on earth could have detached it from their fingers.

But, to go back to Charlie Webster, as Miss Evans remarked, there was nothing peculiar about his eyes, and therefore why his sign should be W-on-the-eyes, caused some small curiosity, but not enough to make any of the teachers or matrons take the trouble to look into the matter. Among themselves, of course, they did not speak of him as W-on-the-eyes: they called him Webster, or Charlie Webster, or most of all, perhaps, little old Webster,' because he was only nine, and everybody on the place adored him.

They may have adored him for that enchanting smile of his, a smile which curved his ridiculously eager little mouth, flooded from his dancing eyes, and generally radiated from the whole expressive little face of him. Or, perhaps, it was because he was so affectionate; or again it might have been because he was so handsome, so alert and gay, and always, moreover, appeared to be having such a good time. Whatever came little old Webster's way seemed always to be the most exciting and delightful thing that had ever happened to him, and whether it was a game to be played, a lesson to be learned, or a person to be loved, he did it with all his might, and with all his heart. Perhaps, after all, the real reason for the world's adoring him was that old classical one for the lamb's devotion to Mary, - he loved the world.

Another thing which sorted him out somewhat from among the other sixty or seventy deaf boys of the school was his fondness for the blind children. It is impossible to imagine any two sets of persons so absolutely shut off from one another as blind people and deaf mutes. It is only through the sense of feeling that they can meet; and for the most part at Lomax, sixty blind children, and more than a hundred deaf ones, move about through the same buildings, eat in the same dining-room, and, to some extent, play in the same grounds, with almost no intercourse or knowledge of one another. They move upon different planes. The deaf child's plane is made up of things seen, the blind child's of things heard. It is only in things touched that their paths ever cross, and surely only the economy and lack of imagination of the past could have crowded two such alien classes into one establishment. But little old Webster had built a bridge of his own over these almost insurmountable barriers, and through the medium of touch had carried his adventures in friendship even into the country of the blind.

Some of the blind boys knew the manual alphabet and could talk to him on their fingers, and by feeling of his hands could understand what he said to them; but with most he had to be satisfied with merely putting his arm about their shoulders and grunting a soft little inarticulate 'Ough, ough!' which was no word at all, of course, merely an engaging little expression of his friendship and general good feeling. The blind children recognized him by these little grunts, and accepted things from him which they would never have tolerated from any of the other dummies,' as they called the deaf mutes. Webster was their passionate champion on all occasions. Once, when a deaf boy threw a stone which by accident hit one of the blind boys on the forehead, inflicting a bad cut, Webster flew into a wild fury of rage, and attacked the deaf boy with all the passion of his nine years. Afterwards, he tore up to the hospital where his blind friend was having the cut dressed, and snuggling his face against him grunted many soft 'oughs, oughs,' of sympathy. But the little deaf boy he had thrashed had to come to the hospital to be tied up as well, for little old Webster was no saint, and once he set out to fight, he did it, as he did everything else, with all his heart.

'I declare,' Miss Stedman announced wearily one evening in the officers' dining-room, if Charlie Webster keeps on I shall just have to report him to Mr. Lincoln. He's been fighting this whole blessed afternoon --- just one boy right after another.'

'Oh,' cried Miss Thompson, the trained nurse, 'then that was the reason there were so many of the little deaf boys up in the hospital this afternoon with sprained thumbs, and black eyes, and so on!'

'Exactly,' Miss Stedman confirmed her, 'that was Webster's doing, --- the little scamp! It's because of his shirts. Whenever his mother sends him a new shirt, and he puts it on, he has to fight almost every boy in his dormitory.'

'But why? What's the matter with his shirts?' Miss Evans, the oral teacher, demanded.

'Oh, they're the funniest looking things! I don't see what his mother can be thinking of. They look as though they'd been made up hind-side before, and the sleeves are never put in right, and are always too tight for him. Of course, the other children laugh at every fresh one, and that just sends him almost crazy, and he flies at one boy after another. He knows, himself, that the shirts aren't right, but he just will wear them in spite of everything. I tried once to get him to put on one from the school supply, and, goodness! I thought he was going to fight me!'

It was at this time that Miss Evans asked why Webster's sign was W-on-the-eyes. Miss Stedman said she thought Chester must have given him that because he was so good to the blind children. That explanation satisfied Miss Evans, but was not, as it happened, the right one.

Little old Webster came to Lomax when he was only seven, two years before they began to teach articulation and lip-reading to the children there. His education began therefore with the manual method, and by the time he was nine there was hardly a sign that he did not know, or a word that he could not spell with his flying fingers. But he was a little person who craved many forms of self-expression, and he often looked very curiously, and very wistfully, at hearing people when they talked together with their lips. The year he was nine, which was the year of this story, they began the oral instruction at Lomax, Miss Evans being engaged for this purpose, and being given by Clarence Chester the sign of E-on-the-lips, to show that she was the person who taught the children to speak. She had to face some opposition in getting the new method established. The older children found it harder than the familiar signs, and, for the most part, shut their minds persistently against any attempt to make them speak.

Many of the teachers, also, were opposed to the oral form of instruction. There was Miss Flyn, for instance. She had taught deaf children for ten years with the sign-language, and did not see any reason for abandoning it now. And, for all her plumpness, and soft sweetness of face, Miss Eliza Flyn was a firm lady, once her mind was thoroughly made up. Her argument was that though articulation and lip-reading might be a wonderful thing for a few brilliant children, the average deaf child trained in a state school could never get much benefit from it. 'Lip-readers are born and not made,' she maintained stoutly. It's as much a gift as an ear for music, or being able to write poetry.'

'Any deaf child with the proper amount of brains, and normal sight, can be taught to articulate and read the lips,' Miss Evans returned, with equal stoutness, for she was 'pure oral,' and could almost have found it in her heart to wish that the sign-language might be wiped off the face of the earth. There she and Miss Flyn came to a polite deadlock of opinion in the matter.

But whatever others might think, little old Webster apparently had no doubts of the advantage of the oral method. As soon as he found out what it was all about, he flung himself into the new study with even more than his usual zest and enthusiasm. Watching Miss Evans's lips with a passionate attention, his brown eyes as eager and as dumb and wistful as a little dog's, he attempted the sounds over and over, his unaccustomed lips twisting themselves into all sorts of grotesque positions, in his effort to gain control over them. He always shook his head sharply at his failures, fiercely rebuking himself, and immediately making a fresh attack upon the word or element, working persistently until Miss Evans's nod and smile at length rewarded him, upon which his whole little face would light up, and he would heave a weary but triumphant sigh. His zeal almost frightened Miss Evans, and while she constantly spurred all the other children on to using their lips instead of their eager little fingers, Webster she tried to check, fearing that his enthusiasm might even make him ill.

Early in the school term, when he had not been in Miss Evans's class much above a month, little old Webster received a postcard from his father saying that his parents expected to come to Lomax to see him in a week or so. Webster almost burst with delighted expectancy. He showed the card to every deaf child who could read, and interpreted it in signs and finger-spelling to those who could not; he permitted his blind friends to feel it all over with their delicate inquiring fingers, and gave every teacher and officer the high privilege of reading, ---

DEAR LITTLE CHARLIE: ---  
    Your mother and I expect to come to   
Lomax to see you Friday of next week.  
             Your loving father,  
                        CHARLES WEBSTER,

while he stood by with those dancing eyes of his, which frequently said more than speaking people's lips. He carried the card in triumph to Miss Evans, and when she had read it he made the sign for mother, and she nodded and said that was nice, taking care of course to speak rather than sign. But his little eager face clouded over, and there appeared on it that shut-in and baffled expression which it sometimes wore when he failed to make himself understood. He repeated the sign and put his hand to his lips pleadingly. Then she realized what he wanted.

'Why, bless his heart, he wants me to teach him to say mother!' she exclaimed delightedly, and sitting down on the veranda steps, for it was out of school hours, she then and there set to work drilling him in the desired word, saying it repeatedly, and placing his hand against her throat that he might feel the vibrations of sound. At last, watching her lips intently, making repeated efforts doomed to failure, shaking his head angrily at himself each time, and renewing the attempt manfully, he did achieve the coveted word. To be sure it was not very distinctly said at first, and was broken into two soft little syllables, thus, 'mo-ther'; but his little face shone with the triumph of it. And then in gratitude he said, 'Thank you' very politely to Miss Evans, having learned those two words before in his articulation. He said them in his best voice, carefully placing one small conscientious finger on the side of his nose, which gave him a most comically serious expression, but was done to be sure that he had succeeded in putting the proper vibration into his 'Thank you.'

'Such foolishness!' Miss Eliza Flyn snorted, passing along the veranda at this moment. 'What's the good of one word? And he'll forget it anyway by tomorrow!'

But little old Webster held manfully to that hard-won word which his love had bought. Every morning when he entered the classroom he said, 'Mo-ther' to Miss Evans with his enchanting smile, so that she began to be afraid that he had confused the meaning of the word, and was calling her mother. On the day, however, that she permitted him to tear the leaf from the school calendar, --- a daily much-desired privilege, --- she was reassured on this point, for having torn off the proper date he turned up the other leaves swiftly until he came to the day on which his parents were expected, and putting his finger on the number he said, 'Mo-ther, mo-ther,' and then in quaint fashion he pointed to the calendar leaf, and then to himself, and locking his forefingers together, first in one direction and then in the other, he made the little sign for friend, meaning that he was friends with that day because it would bring him his mother.

He said the word repeatedly, in school and out. He even said it in his sleep. The night before his mother was to come, when Miss Stedman paid her regular visit to the dormitory where all the little deaf boys were asleep, Webster sat suddenly bolt upright in his bed, his eyes wide-open, but unseeing with sleep, and cried out, 'Mother!'

'Goodness!' Miss Stedman commented to herself. 'I'll be glad when his mother does come! He'll go crazy if he doesn't get that word off his tongue soon.'

The next day, --- 'the great, the miraculous day, --- little old Webster was in a veritable humming-bird quiver of excitement. He jumped in his seat each time the door opened, and when, at length, Miss Flyn actually came to announce that his father and mother had really arrived he leaped up with a face of such transcendent joy, that his departure left Miss Evans's class-room almost as dark as if the sun had passed under a cloud. So much of pure happiness went with him that, with a smile on her lips, Miss Evans let her fancy follow him on his triumphant way, and for fully three minutes, while she pictured the surprise in store for the waiting mother, she permitted her 'pure oral' class to tell each other over and over on their fingers that 'E. F.' (Miss Flyn's sign) had come to take W-on-the-eyes to see his father and mother, before she awoke to the fact and sternly recalled their runaway language from their fingers to their lips.

In the meantime, gripping Miss Flyn's hand tight, little old Webster went on tiptoe down the passageway leading to the reception-room. Miss Flyn could feel the vibration of excitement in his fingers as they rested in hers, and her own sympathetic heart went a beat or two faster in consequence. But almost at the reception-room door he dropped her hand suddenly and stopped dead, his face gone a despairing white, and a lost, agonized look in his eyes. For a moment, he stared about him in passionate bewilderment, then, bursting into a storm of tears, he turned to run back to Miss Evans's room. But Miss Flyn caught him firmly and, forcing him to look at her, signed, 'What is it?' He made the sign for mother, and then passed his open hand despairingly across his forehead in the sign for forgotten, and Miss Flyn realized that through over-excitement or some trick of a tired brain, his precious word had all at once slipped from him. He looked up at her, and old 'signer' though she was, she could not resist the appeal of his tragic little face. Stooping down, she pronounced the lost word, placing his hand against her throat. Remembrance rushed into his eyes, and his face lit like a flame. 'Mo-ther! Mo-ther!' he cried, and putting both hands tight against his mouth as if to hold the word in place, he fled down the hall and into the reception-room and flung himself upon a woman who sat very still, her waiting, listening face turned toward the door.

'Mo-ther! Mo-ther!' he cried, his arms tight about her neck.

She gave a sharp, an almost hysterical cry.

'Charlie!' she screamed. 'Is that Charlie? Is that my deaf baby talking?'

She tore his arms from about her neck, and held him away from her, while her eager, trembling fingers went to his lips and felt them move once more, framing the wonderful word.

'It is Charlie! It is my little deaf and dumb baby talking!' she cried. And then she went into a wild babble of mother words, --- 'My baby! My lamb! My darling, precious baby!' --- crying and kissing him, while the tears ran down from her eyes. And little old Webster, his word now safely delivered to the one person in all the world to whom it belonged, relapsed once more into his old soft, inarticulate grunting of Ough, ough!' nuzzling his face close against hers, and laughing gleefully over the splendid surprise he had prepared for her.

And after one astounded, comprehending look, Miss Flyn turned, and, racing down the hallway, burst into Miss Evans's class-room and caught that teacher by the arm.

'Little old Webster's mother is blind!' she cried. 'She's stone blind! She's never seen Webster in all her life. --- She's never heard him speak until this minute! They've never been able to say one word to each other. --- She's blind, I tell you! And that's why Webster's sign is W-on-the-eyes, --- Clarence Chester must have known, --- and that's why he's always so good to the blind children, and why he fought every boy who laughed at the funny way his shirts were made - he knew his mother couldn't see to make them right! And --- and ---' Miss Flyn choked, --- 'and that's why he's nearly killed himself trying to learn to speak. There's never been any way they could talk to each other except by feeling! She's had to wait nine years to hear him say Mother! And --- and,' Miss Flyn wound up unsteadily, 'you needn't preach to me any more about articulation for --- I'm converted!'

And with that she went out and banged the door behind her, and all the children's fingers flew up, to ask Miss Evans in excited signs what E. F. was crying about.

# See! See! See! See!

### by Lawrence Newman

[from: I Fill This Small Space: Writings of a Deaf Activist  
Edited by David Kurs  
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In medical terms John had what was called ophthalmia neonatorum, an eye infection which left him with ten percent vision, mostly in the right eye. The first time John went to school, he was amazed to learn that the use of Braille was not only frowned upon but strictly forbidden. "You see," the school people told him "Braille becomes a crutch and will prevent you from using what residual seeing you have. By learning on Braille you will be following the line of least resistance."

Words were a blur even when a magazine was held close to his eyes but John did not complain. He had faith in his school officials. Did they have a lot of experience? And the years they spent in college...What's more, their statements sounded so logical, such as the following: "This is a seeing world, the kind in which you will have to live. Do seeing people use Braille?" There was even a motto in the principal's office: "SEE! SEE! SEE! SEE!"

John's parents were firmly behind the school. Yes they were 100 percent behind the school because they wanted John to be as normal as possible. Constant exposure to the world of sight, they learned, was important. They even had special eyeglasses fitted for their son to help increase the acuity of his remnant sight and to make his drooping eyelids less conspicuous. The school taught him how to lift his drooping eyelids so that he could appear as normal as possible.

No one could say that John did not try. He eventually could make out large letters in the newspaper headlines. His parents were excited and pleased when he showed them what he could do. The school officials were in a dither with John's achievement. They called in the newspapers, and soon John's story was carried by the wire services throughout the nation. The school took John on many trips to demonstrate his ability. He performed before the Daughters of ---, the Charity of ---, the Auxiliary Sisters of\_\_\_, to mention but three. Many were moved to tears, and some even hugged and kissed john.

Soon something was troubling John. Some of his schoolmates were smuggling in magazines and books in Braille although these were not permitted even outside the classroom. Hi school mates surreptitiously urged John to learn Braille. He refused to be contaminated even though some of the arguments of his classmates carried a more logical right than those of the school people. One congenitally blind boy told him he had no vision so what was he supposed to do? John was flabbergasted because he had been told that every blind person had some residual vision, no matter how little, that could be utilized. The same boy said that if a flashlight was tucked to his eye, he could sense some light but what good would that do?

Another girl, an acquired blindness case, said that she had some vision left, a very small percent, but that after ten years she still could not tell the letters m and n apart; sometimes the tail of the j appeared faded and therefore looked like an i; and the o sometimes became a p. With a sigh she mentioned that time was when she could tell a boy and a girl apart in the distance, but not any more.

What shocked John more than anything else was the news via the grapevine to the effect that almost all blind persons use Braille. Braille? Almost all? He began to waver when he learned that there were some schools where Braille was permitted outside of the classroom. He was staggered even further to know that there were schools that even permitted Braille in the classroom!

John slowly began to realize how surface appearances could be deceptive. There is a form of eye trouble called conjunctivitis, and those who have this are not really blind but only hard-of-seeing. This type student-along with those who acquired blindness late in life and could therefore remember many sights and objects and their shape texture, and color-was often used to demonstrate the success of a school's method. The school's policy and methodology were geared for the benefit of these types. They were often portrayed on television and featured in the press-and the public was misled. Those not in the know or who were fed the one-and-only method looked askance at those who used Braille or could not use their seeing skills; such unfortunates were considered primitive or backward or just plain dumb!

John began to ask himself what good it was to be able to read large headlines if he could not read without facility and understanding whole columns which were the "meat" of what the headlines were screaming. He began to ask himself what it really meant to live in a seeing world.

Which is more important, John kept asking himself: to assume an appearance of normalcy with ten percent vision that stumbles and staggers, OR to admit having a sight impairment, letting the world know it, and using Braille to advance and ensure his place in that world. Which? Which?

"Hey Bill!" he called out to one of his classmates. "Take my hand and show me what these dots mean." John felt a sense of elation as Bill guided him. "Yes, yes, this is A----and what?"

"A stands for 'Alice'...."\*

\* Alice Cogswell, the first deaf girl to be taught the manual alphabet by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet.

# The Fable of the Ass Who Was Taught To Whinny

### by Warren Milton Smaltz

[From The Silent Worker, vol. 33, no. 5, February 1921]

There was once a farmer whom everybody called Uncle Sam. He was unusually successful in raising and training horses.  His horses were the best trained, most intelligent, and altogether the most desirable horses to be found anywhere.  Naturally he came to have more than local fame on this account.  And as is to be expected, his horses were by no means unconscious of their own excellence.  On the contrary, they grew quite vain and egotistical, and imagined every horse who was not born or bred under Uncle Sam to be more or less inferior and gauche.

As time passed, these horses developed among themselves a lot of faddists, reformers, uplifters, and philanthropists. For were they not the salt of the earth?  And being so, was it not their heaven set duty to teach them all to be unto them?

Wherefore it came to pass that one day Uncle Sam became possessor of an excellent ass who was most diligent in his work, very modest in demeanor, and quite unassuming in his ways.  "He looks lifeless and uninteresting and his bray is certainly very unpleasant, " said Uncle Sam to his neighbor.  "But he can do more hard work than any two horses I have ever seen."

As soon as the horses had had time to recover from their surprise and disgust over the advent of the ass in their refined community, they took counsel among themselves as to the best course to pursue.  They unanimously agreed among themselves that the poor ass, although very well able to work and ear his livelihood, was deficient in culture and the refinements of society.  Accordingly, a number of more charitably inclined faddists among them volunteered to undertake the task of educating the ass.  Forthwith they acquired a new eminence as philanthropic educators.  The other horses were also exalted at the thought of subscribing to charity.

Under the enthusiastic instruction of the horses the modest ass learned quite rapidly.  First of all they taught him that to bray was a mark of inferior training.  They declared that to whiney was natural and proper because-well, just because.  And to buttress this unassailable argument they reasoned that, in order to make his way in a world of horses, he most needs whinny as all good horses do.  The ass modestly agreed that he was a perversion of nature, and that his bray was merely a "weed language" acquired probably from subsisting too much upon weeds instead of upon hay, the refined food of the horses.

As time passed he forgot entirely how to bray. But although he strove with might and main to whinny, his efforts sounded amazingly like a sneeze.  In vain he contorted his face strained his neck, and dilated his eyes and nostrils.  The result was always a sneeze.

It was not a very great while before the horses became very properly disgusted.  "See that miserable ass," said they.  "We have donated large sums of money to charity in his behalf, and our most worthy educators have striven to improve him.  Now see how the ungrateful wretch repays our kindness."

Uncle Sam also noted changes in his ass.  Said he to his neighbor:  "I cannot for the life of me understand what has come over that ass.  He was formerly very docile and hard working, but now nothing seems good enough for him.  And it is passing strange that he never brays anymore.  Yesterday, while I was out in the fields ploughing with him, he turned around and gazed at me very queerly a number of times.  Then he acted as if a blue-bottle fly was on his neck, and sneezed all the while.  I sent for a veterinarian but he left without doing anything, saying it was clearly a case for an abenist."

Thus it came about that the horses in whom he had once awakened the divine sense of pity, now regarded him with ill-concealed disgust.  His master, whose respect he had once held, now thought of him only with mystified worry.  And his fellow asses, whom he occasionally encountered, treated him as a parish, for was it not a known fact that he could not bray?

The moral of this fable may not be very clear, but it seems to some concerned with oralism, and the education of the deaf.

# The Deaf School

### by Louise Stern

[From Chattering: Stories, London: Granta Books. Used by permission from Granta Books, © 2010]

The deaf school had originally been in beautiful old buildings up in the mountains with dark green tiles lining the marbled archways and courtyards, and fountains in the centre of each of the three squares. But the hearing students at the nearby university needed more buildings, more room, more of everything. The beautiful old school tempted them, so they found a way to take it over for themselves.

The deaf school had to move a few hours away, to a town bordered by dry brown hills. Fast-food restaurants were everywhere. There wasn't much else there. The new school was made up of near-identical buildings that looked like the houses in a Monopoly game.

The buildings were painted a sludgy brown, with orange carpet inside and squat dormitories for the children to sleep in.

Many deaf adults moved to the town, too. As children they'd gone to the old school in the mountains, and they went where the school went. They worked at the school, mostly in the dormitories as house parents, and their children went to classes there. The school was where the sporting events with other deaf schools or deaf clubs were held, and where the graduates who hadn't found jobs and were living off government handouts would gather in the parking lot by the gymnasium, to deal drugs, flirt, gossip, or tell stories. The deaf children often had birthday parties in the student activity centre, and their weddings, wedding-anniversary parties, and baby showers would be there too. It was one of the only places for miles around where they could be sure of communication with the people around them.

Ally was one of the children in the first class at the new school. She had already been living in the town with her hearing parents when they found out she couldn't hear. Both of them had grown up in the town Ã³ it was just a strange kind of good luck that their daughter had turned out to be deaf. They were nice people. The mother always wore bright pink lipstick, heavy mascara on the lashes around her small eyes, and purple, pink or mauve flowered dresses. Her lips were pointy and narrow. She ordinarily pressed them fixedly together, but when she saw some of the children who Ally went to school with, she would bend over, open her bright pink mouth wide, and say a very big 'HELLO! HOW ARE YOU?' whilst fluttering her eyelashes. Then she would smile tightly and nod abruptly, before doing a small sashay and walking off again. She learned a bit of sign language, but her signs were stiff, awkward, and small, her face never altering its hard expression as she signed, so the children found her difficult to understand. They never really had long conversations with her and it appeared she preferred it that way. She never asked them why they seemed not to understand her. She would adjust the black knob in her ear that was almost always there. It connected her to her music. Then she would smile tightly.

She behaved the same way with the deaf adults. She would say a brief hello to them when she came to one of Ally's school things. Ally's father was warmer and more relaxed, but he also was not very inclined towards conversation and was always busy with work or whatever else he was involved with.

Ally was one of the lucky ones, though, because she could ask her parents for whatever she needed or wanted --- food, water, help with her homework, toys, or anything else, and she could read and write much better than most of the other children at the school. Her classmate Ray had joined the class at the same time she had, but he couldn't say anything to anyone other than `Food' and 'Pee'. He would cup his groin with a small hand and jerk upwards to show the teacher that he had to go to the bathroom, or he would open his mouth with its perpetual cold sores around the lower left corner and stuff his fingers into it to tell the teacher that he was hungry. Other than that he would sit on his chair by his plastic desk with its fake-wood veneer and open and close his mouth, over and over again. His lower jaw was a bit wider and longer than his upper, so his face always looked muscular and wide. He was good at sports and had a mysterious way of understanding the rules of basic games like Four Square, where you tossed a ball around and around, allowing only one bounce per person. When break time came he would be the first to run out to the playground and join in one of the games.

Later, in a few years' time, when he had picked up some more words and language, he would reveal a sweet and strong personality, always asking everyone how they were when they came back from weekends with their families, never missing one person. But for the first few years, he just sat opening and closing his mouth. His eyes wandered over everything and everyone, never remaining anywhere specific for long.

The teachers had tried to talk to Ray's parents to find out more about him, but Ray's parents said they didn't have the time to talk to anyone. They were hearing and didn't know any sign language. They said they just didn't want to have to support Ray his entire life and that was all. Other than that, they were already busy enough, they said. Nobody had ever gone with Ray to his house on the weekends, although, much later on, Ray was always looking around to go over to someone else's house, somewhere where they knew a bit more sign language and could talk to him.

He would ask question after question of the friend's parents. How had they met? Where --- in which town? How long ago? What did they do to earn money? How did they decide on that job? How long did they have to go to school? Did they like it? What did they tend to do on the weekends? Did they do it together or separately? How did they decide what to do? What were they having for dinner? How were they going to cook it? Why? He would open and shut his mouth in that definite flat way of his in between the questions, a habit from those first few years that would stay with him for the rest of his life.

He was always very helpful and sweet, but sometimes he would erupt, flailing around with his arms and legs and then huddling into a corner with his lower jaw sticking out, shaking his head and refusing to talk to anyone for hours and hours. Eventually he would come out of it and apologize and be back to normal.

The teachers talked amongst themselves about whether Ray would be one of the graduates who sold drugs and flirted in the parking lot and lived on government handouts. It was very possible, but maybe he had come to the school early enough to be able to go on to vocational school at least.

Joey and Sophie would watch the teachers talking about Ray. They were the only two in the class who had deaf parents. Sophie's parents had gone to the deaf university and worked at the school, too; Joey's hadn't gone to college, but they knew Sophie's parents from the deaf sports circuit --- Sophie's father and Joey's father had played on the same basketball team a few times.

Sophie was very shy, but Joey loved to tell stories. He could sign beautifully. He was tall and thin, with long arms and wide, long fingers, and when he told the rest of the class stories, his arms would become whatever he was telling the story about. One of his favourite stories, learned from one of his many older brothers, was about a racing car speeding around tight curves, flames shooting out from below the car as it flew over gulfs and canyons. His arms would become the car itself, speeding up so fast that it defied gravity, flying, and then braking sharply to a stop. He would show the rest of them how the driver's hair was plastered against his skull by air pressure as the car flew over abysses, and how his eyes squinted shut against the bits of gravel coming at them. Joey telling a story was almost better than a movie, because you could see and feel the emotion and the physical sensations on his face and body, as you couldn't really see and feel in movies. Sophie loved to read but she never saw anything in any book to equal one of Joey's stories.

They would all ask him again and again for more stories, especially Ray. Ray could always follow Joey's stories, even at the very beginning. His favourite was the one where Joey told them about doing a slam dunk, the basketball player leaping up high, the muscles in his legs pulsing, to grab the rim of the basket firmly, eyes bulging, mind rejoicing, legs and whole body dangling until finally he let go and came back down to earth.

Sophie loved Joey's stories too, but she didn't like the way the teachers talked about Ray. The teachers were mostly hearing, and some of them signed even worse than Ally's bright-pink-lipped mother, sloppily and choppily. They were difficult to watch or follow and the children would get very tired from seeing them sign. Many times Sophie and Joey had to tell them the same thing again and again and sign very slowly for the teachers to understand them, and even then they would just smile tightly back and nod. Often Sophie didn't say anything in class just because she didn't want to have to go through it again with the teachers. It was an awkward, heavy feeling for her.

Ally, who signed to the teachers the same way she signed to her mother, was the teachers' favourite.

Sometimes, when Ray was watching Joey tell a story during class, the teachers would stride over and sign impatiently to Joey to stop that nonsense and jerk Ray around to face them again. Sophie could see that Ray couldn't understand anything the teachers were saying, but that he loved Joey's stories so much and understood them. She got angry when the teachers did that to him, but of course they didn't care what she thought. They would keep writing words on the blackboard and spelling them out to Ray, who just sat there opening and shutting his mouth with its protruding lower jaw, occasionally looking over to Joey in the hope that another story might have begun.

Once a week they went for speech lessons. Joey and Ally were partners for the lessons, and Ray and Sophie went together. The speech teacher was an old lady who always smelled slightly too sweet. She had a small toy monkey that would climb up a tower if you could keep your voice at the same level for long enough, and she would hold up a thin layer of Kleenex tissue and ask you to say 'b' and 'p'. With the 'p', the Kleenex was supposed to blow out and with the `1)', it wasn't supposed to. She held one hand up to Sophie's throat to feel her saying 'bat' and 'pat'. Sophie tried her best at the speech lessons but she just couldn't get the hang of it. Her younger sister had more hearing than she did and she was very good at speech. Sophie was a bit jealous because it meant her younger sister had a way to get their parents to buy her more things --- music tapes, or a cassette player.

Ray was also better than she was at speech, though --- maybe it was because he had hearing parents. He always made the monkey go up the tower and stay there for quite some time, and at the end of the lessons he would have a bigger stack than Sophie did of the scratch-and-sniff stickers that the speech teacher gave out as rewards. The speech teacher would tell Sophie how it was very sad that she wasn't good at speech, because it meant she wouldn't be able to communicate with hearing people who didn't understand sign language, or get a job with hearing people in the future. She would have to work at the deaf school like her parents.

She really did wish she could be good at speech.

On Open House Day, when all the children's parents were invited to visit the school, Ally was always the one to dress up in a sparkly leotard and dance around on stage with a big fake lollipop and sing 'On the Good Ship Lollipop' both with her voice and also using her mother's stiff sign language. All the teachers and parents crowded around her afterwards, and her picture was up in the hall for weeks and weeks.

Ray's parents never came to the Open House Day. Sophie would watch Ray look around anxiously for a familiar face in the audience, never finding one. Often he would find Joey instead and go and stand by him; he usually had the best place in the middle of the crowd around his older brothers, all of whom could tell stories even better than he could. There was one particularly great one about breaking through the layers of the world one by one, the membrane splitting open around your face, your face hitting the thick cold air, flying, flying, flying to the next layer, breaking through, floating around the stars, until finally you were outside the whole universe, looking down at the small round ball that was the planet Earth, rotating far away down below you, a tiny ocean rising and falling on the small Earth. Then a big rubber band would pull you fast back down, down, down, so fast through all the layers, until with a big physical bang on your belly you were back where you started.

Then their teacher would come up to the group and tell Ray and Joey to go and line up now for lunch.

Once, one of the worst teachers, an old, square woman with thick glasses who could hardly sign at all, came up in the middle of one of Joey's brothers' stories and yanked Ray away. It was at the exciting part and Ray was just at the stage where he had stopped only being able to open and close his mouth during class and was starting to say more, starting to be able to ask questions and explain what he liked and didn't like.

He was still hesitant though, unsure of words and of actually making anything about himself understood to anyone else. When he lingered beside Joey in the middle of the crowd around Joey's brothers telling their stories, there was a new quality in his stare, a new hunger. He knew the taste of what it was he wanted so badly now, and where it was, but he just didn't know how to get it for himself. He was like an alcoholic watching a punter drink the first froth off a strong and hearty Guinness, or a person with a sweet tooth looking into the bakery window at the richest and darkest chocolate tart.

Sophie saw Ray hold up a finger to the teacher. Just one moment, he was saying. Just one more moment till the story ends and then I'll go in to lunch. His eyes were dark brown and intense on Joey's brother, wanting, wanting just for the last bit of the story. His lower jaw was slightly open.

But the teacher kept shaking Ray's shoulder.

--- You must come now to lunch. Look at me! Pay attention when you're told to! she said in her few words of ugly sign language, not understanding what Joey's brother was saying. She was mostly speaking, signing only the key words. Must. Come. Look. Me.

Again she shook Ray, hard.

Sophie saw Ray turn around, his eyes still on Joey's brother, and use one arm to nudge himself roughly out of the teacher's grasp.

The next day when she came to school, Joey told her that Ray had been sent home for a week because the teacher had said he shoved her.

They both knew that when he came back he would be even worse off, after a week at home not being able to communicate with anyone at all, a week not understanding how he had come so close to the chocolate tart in the window and then by some strange fate had ended up so far away from it again.

And it was like that --- he was even worse off when he got back to school.

When she was an adult, Sophie always remembered the look in Ray's eyes that day as he watched Joey's brother and told the teacher to wait Ã± that intense, complete hunger she knew now was something you saw so rarely in people outside of sex, or that they admitted to.

Sometimes, once in a very long while, she would go back to visit the town and the school. The town was still full of fast-food restaurants and the hills felt even more brown and ugly now that she'd seen more of the world outside. She would go to watch a basketball game and say hello to everyone she had known as a child who was still there and meet their children and grandchildren.

Ray was still there. He would often hang out in the parking lot with Joey, telling stories.

# Reconstructing Cleider Rodman

### by Alice Terry

[from The Silent Worker  
vol. 33, no. 8, May, 1921]

It was a beautiful April morning. The night's rain which had been gentle and abundant added new life and vigor to everything that now exulted in the glowing sunshine of the new day. Many times before the high spirits of Iren Swinburne had gone forh to meet, to revel in the compelling influence of a day like this. This time the very air seemed filled with a newer freedom---as if mankind and nature had just escaped a tyrannical bondage and were having their initial thanksgiving. Irene walked along, her air of content being heightened by the girlish straw hat on her head, by he blue bird shade of her freshly starched dress, the immaculate white shoes on her feet, and by gay pink and buff checkered market basket on her arm. "lettuce, apples, oranges, nuts-for salad; rib bone, carrots, rice, celery---." These items and others she turned over in her mind as she approached Wall and Wallen's, the corner grocery. Suddenly she stopped. An unusual site met her eyes. In front of the store, just outside the door, a khaki clad figure, an ex-solider of Uncle Sam, made a pathetic site sitting on an empty bread box, his bowed head resting heavily between his hands. No one seemed to notice him, people and traffic rushed by, apparently he was alone in his misery. "His palms cover up his ears," observed Irene, in no hurry to move on, "he is shutting out the sounds-or perhaps, who knows, he may be like me-what if he is--." The khaki figure looked up, and Irene did not finish her surmising. Ladylike she moved on.

The nest morning on her way to market she came again upon the forlorn-looking figure, seated as before on the empty bread box in front of Wall and Wallen's. This time his head dropped even lower than before. "He may be some friend of the firm," thought Irene hesitating whether she should step into the store and inquire, for she did not like Max Wall, who in defiance of profiteering accusations had developed an acute snobbishness toward discriminating buyers, among whom was Irene, and she had sore off dealing there. Being as yet a comparative stranger in the neighborhood of Normandie Junction she did not feel at liberty to inquire at random, nor did she feel it feasible to address the ex-soldier herself, fearing that it might result unduly in embarrassment, due to a physical handicap of her own, of which she became conscious only when meeting strangers. Again, unsatisfied like on the previous day, she passed him. A block further up the street, at Crystal Market, she asked about him. But the clerks did not know, evidently they had not noticed him. Her basket was quite heavy. She walked on for some minutes before looking up-to see just ahead the dejected figure still there on the bread box. A floating cloud momentarily obscured the sun, which seemed to Irene to deepen the shadow and mystery about him. An idea occurred to her. She crossed the street over in the drug store to purchase a magazine whose bright cover heralded a feast of good things within. Then she walked up to the ex-soldier, gently nudged him, and proffered the periodical. Cleider Rodman-such was his name-slowly disengaged his hands and looked up, first at the magazine, then at her. His smile reassured her, she smiled in return. His lips moved in speech, Irene said nothing. He persisted in talking. Irene placed her finger on her head and shook her head negatively. "Oh, you are that way too?" he peered at her, while the curious expression came over his face. He was pleased; above all, he was surprised, greatly surprised. He was that she was happy, which impressed him, nothing else mattered. To him she seemed secretly amused at her physical failing. His surprise and curiosity grew accordingly. "Do not speak to me, for I cannot understand," he said to her when her lips moved as if she too, would talk that way to him.

This was no less a discovery for Irene than for the solider. She was equal to the situation; psychologically, they were in the same sphere---in that world where sound plays no part; she felt at home with him, as if she had always known him. She made a sign, pointing to him, to herself, then to her home down the thoroughfare, a little way off to the left. Opening her purse, she drew forth a snap shot of two children at play, she made him understand that she was their mother and that he must go with her and see them. She had not the least misgiving, she knew that her husband would welcome him---this hero, this fellow-sufferer.

"Our hero!" Irene exclaimed to Owen, her husband, "the brother we have heard of, talked of, dreamed of; I found him at the corner and brought him home--to make him glad, O Owen, as you and I are glad!" Cleider watched them, he did not know what they said, but they were good to look at, for they were happy, very happy. To him that suffered, nothing else mattered. "Hang it!" he muttered under his breath, "and folks told me that their method, the manual method of talking is impossible, obsolete, undesirable. He watched them, to become conscious of a gladness, a new hope dawning upon him.

Irene was right. The ex-soldier was, indeed, unhappy. For sometime he had wandered about aimlessly from place to place. He suffered a sense of helplessness, a woeful incompetency; often he was afraid of himself. If he looked ahead at all, it hurt still more for it presented visions of bleak and barren future. Nothing suited him. The strange new world of silence---his deafness-into which an accident of war had forced him mystified, terrified him. It had been the wish of his family and friends that he rely upon lip-reading in communication with others. For a year he had tried it, only to find that in his case (ah, how individuals must differ) it did not work. The familiar sound of the encouraging voice was not there ; to watch the hushed motions of the lips to be in doubt and always guessing, guessing was too much for his sensitive organism. He grew nervous and impatient. Somehow, he had a vague idea of something easier. He got a dictionary and found the manual alphabet. He showed that to his friends and said, "I think this will suit me, let's learn it." They were not inclined to sympathize, they would not listen to him. For they said, "Lip-reading is the only way-you must never give up." This was not the first time that they had thus cruelly spoken, denying him his innate wish. He felt more and more that they, his friends, were assuming toward him the role of supermen, with him, a deaf man, a mere dependent, to dictated to at will. Finally, he could stand it no longer, he chose the last initiative of the free man-he fled.

For the first time now since the day he had returned from overseas disabled for further military service -since he had met Irene and Owen-he lost his sense of void, of oppression. He was free. After all, the boundaries of his terrible new world were not so small; he was going to expand, now that he had room to expand in. How could he feel otherwise? In that congenial company of others like himself who were happy, busy and independent. How pleasant and substantial their home, he thought, how tempting and appetizing their first meal together; above all, what dear children they had. "No, you shall rest first," they told him when he showed too great a hurry to tell them everything. Communication by writing was slow. In his haste and sheer delight Cleider turned to the children to pour out his heart to them. "Come now brother," they said, drawing him away, and showing him his bath and clean clothes and the bright sunny room where he was to take his prescribed rest.

"Do you thin we are making a mistake taking this stranger into our home?" Irene's husband asked her.

"No!" said Irene, sure of her course, "we are going to reconstruct him, it is our duty to do so, if we don't, who will? He prefers us, didn't he say so?"

Nothing daunted Irene. People who did not know her might have pitied her because she was deaf, but had they known of innate happiness, her ready adaptability to make others happy, their pity must have turned into admiration or possibly envy.

One by one Cleider's fear, real or imaginary fell away. Each morning he awoke in better health and spirits. The closer he observed his host and hostess and their simple efficient way of doing things, the more he could appreciate them and the silent road that he too must travel. After a week he felt so far restored bodily and mentally that he insisted on going to work with Owen. "No, not yet brother, you stay here and rest longer, presently I shall ask the boss to find a place for you." "Rest-oh, you mean my lessons!" Cledier laughed jovially. He had already learned the manual alphabet. Now he was learning a quicker way of expressing his thoughts and feelings by the conventional sign language. He was surprised by how graphically one could express himself in this matter. English interpreted nicely into signs, and signs interpreted nicely into English. Each had its idioms, its peculiarities, always an infinite source of gain and pleasure, as he was to find out later.

"This would do nicely for the universal language," he said to Irene.

"Yes," she agreed, "but people are prejudiced and will not listen." The ex-solider frowned, he said thoughtfully, ""This is what the dough boys needed in France it would have saved us time and vexation of spirit, it would have spared us ludicrous situations."

"For instance, in ordering eggs, had we known signs like these, we would have been spared the humiliating process of crowing like roosters."

"What is coffee?"

"That is capital," he said, as he imitated her act of placing the right fist over the left and making the motion of grinding.

"And what is milk?" Holding her fists upright in front of her she made the motion of milking a cow. Cleider laughed, and there was tonic in the laughter.

"These simple signs we needed badly," he said again.

"How do you sign fish and cheese?"

"That is so realistic," he said, after she had shown him, and he blushed as he recalled the stupidity of the boys when they needed only such simple gestures as these.

"The French were more clever-they were more adept at signs," he told her.

"Yes," assented Irene, "our sign language originated there, in France many, many years ago."

"The great-hearted French, bless them," he said reverently, "they know art, art in all her forms-and they are not ashamed of it."

In this way, time passed, the lessons proceeding with ever recurring pleasure and interest for the ex-soldier. In a social way he had all he desired. When he spoke orally the children and the neighbors were his eager listeners, always finding him thoroughly entertaining. But sound was out of his life forever, and to be psychologically true to himself he preferred the companionship, the spontaneous sympathy, and the congeniality of those who likewise lived in the same still world. When they came to the sign for love, Irene crossed her open palms over her heart, she looked at him reproachfully, to say, "Cleider, you have not yet told us about your mother, where is she?"

"She is in Philadelphia," he spelled on his fingers, while his face was grave.

"You must write to her," Irene insisted, "think how she must worry over your long absence and silence."

"Not yet," he said, "she would not understand." Four months had passed since he had wandered away, in which time he had neither sent nor received word from home. He had not, however, intended to keep his mother waiting indefinitely.

"Tonight we are going to our club," they told him one evening," and we shall take you." Then they told him about it and of the many friends who awaited him there. Cleider received this information thoughtfully, he did not appear anxious to go. "Oh, you are not ready for them yet," his host remarked, noting his embarrassment. "By and by you shall know them and feel at home with them." Sufficient unto his starved soul was the company of Irene and Owen; he had grown jealous of their very comradeship, and was loathe that others should share their joys.

The way to club life finally opened, after many of its interesting people had met him at the Swinburne's. "Our hero," they called him, which he promptly resented. One year in the army, then a year's struggle against the odds, without success was not guarantee of a hero, he told them. "Rather are you---you who all your lives have fought and won against terrible handicaps---rather are you the heroes." Nevertheless, in their hearts he remained then and always, their hero.

To Cleider, nothing lessened the inconvenience of deafness, nothing gave him more courage to face the world again than some of the aids in the form of signaling devices in the Swinburne household, devices which answered for closed ears. For instance, a ring on the door bell was announced by the simultaneous lighting of an electric bulb over a door somewhere else in plain view of the occupants of the house. At five-thirty each morning Owen awaked by the fall of a stick upon his pillow --- the first sound of the alarm clock. To no other parents were children such a reliance and aid. Even the pets about the place, the dog and cat, had nearly become aware of the circumstances, to develop into creatures of service to their master and mistress. Everything else about the place seemed peculiarly tuned to their needs; the position of the trees, shrubs, and flowers in the yard; to them the windows were more than mere look outs, for an unusual sight or movement outside led often to an investigation which proved timely, preventing loss or trouble. It was something which other people depending sorely on their ears missed entirely.

"The brightness of leaf and flower-it is eloquent music to us," Irene told Cleider. She held up a crimson rose, and said, "Whose cheek does this match?" He blushed for he thought instantly of Rebecca Hiles whom he had lately met and fallen in love with. From the first she had proven his chief attraction at the club. She was so much like Irene in womanly qualities; she was young, trusting, and entirely unsophisticated. During the war she had worked unceasingly for the Red Cross; she could not remember how many pairs of socks she had knit, she had worked too fast to count. She had watched the boys muster out for service; she had gazed silently on, admiring them, and envying other girls who had sweethearts, or brothers, or husbands to give, while she had no one to give. "As long as I live, the sight of those brave boys shall be my source of worship," she vowed to herself. It was in lien of one to claim for her own that she had thrown herself whole-heartedly into the task of ministering to their comfort. Never did she dream that one of those brave boys-Cleider Rodman--would come back to her, to love her and make her happy to the end of her days.

The ex-solider soon proved his fitness to work. Each morning he went with Owen to the composing rooms of The Daily Herald. He had always had a liking for printing; years ago he dreamed of a time when he could venture into a publishing business of his own. His father, however, had different plans for him, early persuading him to take up the study of law. Now, that he was back to his first love, printing, with promise of promotion, he felt free, indeed; his reconstruction, hi complete restoration to usefulness was assured. He watched Owen's skill on the linotype, and determined he would learn that too.

Several months passed. Life looked good to Cleider Rodman; he was thankful to be alive, thankful again for the privilege of citizenship, above all he was thankful for winsome Rebecca Hiles. He thought again of his mother, he thought no longer in terms of misunderstanding, but in loving desire to see her again. "Rebecca, I shall leave you for a little while," he said one evening. "I am going to see my mother."

As he expected, his mother pleaded with him that he remain with her. "No, no, no," he said, "I must go back to the place where I have been happy and useful, I must go back to her."

"To her-who?" gasped his mother.

He told her of Rebecca, of Owen and Irene, of their club and his many friends. But it was hard for her to comprehend; she still loved her boy, she felt that through his silent associates she was losing him. She felt that way ---she could not feel otherwise, for she did not understand. Feeling dutifully bound, Cleider stayed with her longer than he had intended which filled Rebecca with apprehension. "He is not coming back," she said to Irene, tearfully.

"Yes, he is coming back, don't worry, he will be here presently."

Irene was older, she knew men, she knew that nothing could dissuade a good man from the object of his devotion.

Not until two years later Cleider's mother visited him and Rebecca in their comfortable home did she finally see and appreciate the circumstances which led up to her son's complete restoration and happiness.

# Dinnertime Rage

### by Alison L. Aubrecht

tonight  
sitting at the kitchen table  
another ordinary dinner

whispers pass over  
along with food  
watching you  
talk to him  
never understanding more  
than a lip-read word  
or two

confusion  
resides within me  
a dangerous potion  
when mixed with anger and frustration  
only so long  
before the trigger is pulled within

the expressions on your face  
everything from   
sorrow to laughter  
am I am left out  
still and forever

looking away  
tears threaten   
and you wonder why  
and you minimize my pain  
stuff it all down  
another day

# Unsteady Hands1

### By Alison L. Aubrecht

I have long wanted to write of the beauty of my hands  
Flowing through the air but it feels somehow insincere  
And I instead write of the anger that is always present just beneath the surface  
The occasional iceberg tip playing peek a boo2

I don't write of the beauty of my hands  
Because they are not beautiful to me  
In the way that fingers-in-motion are  
When others execute such artful tales  
With seemingly effortless precision

Bienvenu's bold strokes  
Swooping through the air  
Sharply plunging, like hawks hunting,  
Vigorous talons seizing prey3

Bahan's stubby fingers  
Flirting with twinkling eyes  
Fat furry caterpillar brows  
Bobbing and weaving4

Lentz's flower garden  
Where bloom tender buds  
Fragrant fumes raining down gently,  
Like dust, on sturdy shoulders5

Commerson's stormy clouds  
Lashing down, a steady squall  
Lightning flashing across land  
Touching down where sand becomes glass6

I am not a natural           I am a fraud7

Body my land, ravaged   
Soul my language, pillaged  
Mind my power, ripped out8

Dirt-Bloody patches of peeling skin  
Hanging in limp shreds,  
Teasing the blank slate that is my face9

My identity forcefully manipulated  
Like thrashing limbs nailed to a cross10

There was never a safe haven  
Nowhere to rest, to heal  
In the ever helpful line of healers  
Who violated us in uninterrupted cycles,  
In wasteful excess.11

Now when I try to write of the beauty of my hands  
That little girl her placid arms  
Raised raw red welts  
Her head bows, shuddering  
No, no, no12

No, there has been no beauty  
No curing and no cleansing

Only criticism and control  
Demands and consequences  
Shoulds and woulds  
And shame, always shame

# What My Teacher Taught Me

### by Alison L. Aubrecht

when i was just starting out  
a child surrounded by  
those who bow to sound  
you put me in front of the class  
and mandated that i speak  
your excitement plausible  
and the faces in front of me  
smirking or puzzled or pitying  
you gave me a super sticker  
a pat on the head and beamed at me  
all afternoon

you taught me that  
i was as good as my willingness  
to use my voice  
even when others didn't understand me  
even when i couldn't express myself  
you taught me that communication   
is one sided

when i was plodding through  
struggling with puberty  
you forced me to sit in the front  
and spoke to my interpreter, facing her  
you said, "Tell her she can stop anytime  
if this assignment becomes too hard"  
you watched the signs pass through the air  
and when motion became stillness  
glanced at my forehead then walked away

you taught me that  
leaving someone alone in humiliation  
is acceptable  
you taught me that i was  
somebody you couldn't connect with  
a thrift-store underwear kid  
and you taught me that  
it's okay to give up

when i was a young adult  
starting to understand the intricacies  
of perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors  
you told me i couldn't succeed without your help  
that if i didn't let you revise my paper  
i'd fail and when i aced anyway  
you told me i cheated  
and then you spoke in front of me  
but when i asked you what you said  
i was brushed off, "Oh, it's not important"

you taught me that i could never  
live up to the potential that i felt  
burning inside me  
that someone else controls  
whether or not i have a chance  
you taught me that i didn't  
have the right to decide for myself  
what was interesting or important

when i was almost done  
creeping close to the day i'd  
endeavor out into "the real world"  
i reported the abuse i saw  
and you told them i was mentally ill  
that i was out of control and crazy  
(forgetting i could filter  
the poison that falls from your lips)

you taught me to cover up  
to lie and cheat to stay in the game  
you taught me that it was wrong  
to fight for those weaker than me  
and right to squash them along the way

those are just some of the smaller lessons,  
dear teacher  
just some of the lighter bruises  
the slighter scars  
that i write of today

you put them there  
hidden deep where no one could see  
believe

you taught me, teacher  
to bruise back

# I AM WAITING1

### Karen Christie

I am waiting  
   
Yes, I am waiting  
for the finalist to be announced  
for the speeches to be given  
for the inauguration to end  
   
Yes, I am waiting  
for the next leader of this community  
of teachers and scholars  
and those of us beyond Washington, D.C.  
to get to work  
   
Also,  
I am waiting  
for Deaf people  
to be ready  
to dysfunction  
in a Hearing World2  
   
I am waiting  
for someone  
to be just Deaf  
enough3  
   
And I am waiting  
for a new order  
of Hearing people4  
   
I am waiting  
for D-E-A-F to be redefined5  
and published  
along with audism  
in Webster's Dictionary6  
   
I am waiting  
for White Deaf folks  
to be given the privilege  
of learning about  
white privilege7  
   
And I am perpetually waiting  
for the noble hunger8  
of Deaf Women  
to finally be satisfied  
   
I am waiting  
for the communication methodology war  
to be declared unjust  
and unconstitutional9  
   
I am waiting  
for the REAL weapons  
of mass destruction10  
of oralism  
to be eliminated  
or at least  
annihilated  
in a  really violent videogame  
   
I am waiting  
for all the genetic engineers  
to be placed in concentration camps  
where they are forced  
to concentrate  
really hard  
on the meaning  
of the word, "human"11  
   
And I am waiting  
for all cochlear implants  
to be secretly programmed  
to broadcast ongoing messages  
of radical Deaf Nationalism  
   
I am waiting  
for those twittering in the Volta Bureau  
to invite Audism Free America folks  
in for tea, Scottish shortbread,  
and appropriate signed conversation12  
   
And I am impatiently waiting  
for the A.G. Bell Association13  
to expand its goals  
and become a chapter of  
the Deaf Bilingual Coalition14  
   
I am waiting  
anxiously awaiting  
the Deaf-Blind Panthers  
to IED15  
that stupid well pump16  
at Helen Keller's Alabama home  
   
I am waiting  
for Martha's Vineyard  
to become a blossoming  
bilingual community again17  
   
I am waiting  
for the next president of Gallaudet University  
to get to work.

# Long Goodbyes1

### by John Lee Clark

I miss all of the long goodbyes  
of my parents' guests  
taking their leave by not leaving2

when it was time to go.  Someone would sign  
Better go home we3  but hours would pass  
around our round table---4

the bowls of our hands5 offering   
confession after confession  
assuring us that we are we---6

before anyone stands up.  
Then others, sighing, will stand up  
slowly and slowly walk

through our house, pausing  
where the walls offer stories,  
reasons to stay longer

and touch more things with our hands.  
I remember how long,  
how wonderfully they stood

unwilling to open the front door,  
signing away with warm faces  
and hugging goodbye again

before going gently into the night.7  
My family would huddle to watch  
their cars' headlights roll away

but pause to flash in the Deaf way,8  
waving goodbye to our house.  
How we children dashed inside

to light switches for our house  
to wave back goodbye,  
light to light bright in the night!9

Now that I am grown  
and have my own family, do come  
for a visit but do not leave  
when it is time to go.  Sign, do sign  
Better go home we and our hands  
will make time go suddenly slow.

# The Only Way Signing Can Kill Us

### by John Lee Clark

would be if the world took  
a fancy to the way  
certain signs made images  
and the world would try  
to have things be more  
like pictures in the air.

To begin with, there would   
be only one season, winter,  
because the signs  
for the other seasons  
do not give the idea   
the way winter does,  
our arms bent and shivering.

And that endless winter would  
freeze us to death,  
mainly because our house  
would only have two walls.

It might as well be,   
since all trees would   
have five leafless branches  
that would never bear fruit,  
which we would not need  
anyway, since food would  
only kiss our lips coyly,  
knowing that swallowing   
occurs on, not in, our throats.

Naturally, we would try   
to live in spite of all this  
by making fire, for us to drink  
life, life from its light,  
but it would be hopeless:  
our flames would not   
be fierce enough and would,  
as our arms stiffen,  
be too much like the sign   
for waiting, which we would  
be, waiting for death.

Still, still we are happy:  
There is only one way  
signing can kill us,  
and everything else it can  
ever hope to make is life.

# Our World

### by Guie Deliglio Cooke

Our world is such a little world. It lies  
Hidden from scorn of hearing people's eyes  
Afraid to make a move lest some condemn,  
Mingling with fellow-men...yet not of them.

How can these two worlds meet and understand?  
How can we walk peacefully, hand in hand?  
So close together....and so far apart...  
God, put the answer in my heart!

# The Poetry of Motion

### By J. Schuyler Long

In the poetry of motion there is music if one sees,  
In the soaring birds above us there are moving symphonies.  
There is music in the movement of a ship upon the wave  
And the sunbeams dancing o'er it, that the minstrels never gave.

There is music in the rhythm of the waving field of wheat  
In the swaying leaves on tree-tops, and the skip of dancing feet.  
There are songs of gladness for us in the opening buds of spring.  
And we understand the message that their fuller blossoms bring.

There is music in the motion of the yearly changing scene  
As the seasons move before us, changing brown and white to green.  
There are songs of rapture for us in the colors of the sky,  
In the rainbow and the sunset and in cloud-ships floating by.

There is music in the mountains---in their grandeur as they rise  
With their snow-capped summits keeping vigil in the hidden skies  
There is music in the rainfall, and the snowflakes coming down  
Giving earth a white-robed mantle and trees a silver crown.

To the deaf there is no music in the touch of vibrant strings,  
In the harmony of motion there are songs that Nature sings.  
And there's music all around us if we have the eyes to see,  
And although we can not hear it we can feel its melody.

**Orphans1**

**by Raymond Luczak**  
   
A swirl in the air like snowflakes,   
family stories melt before they reach   
our ears.2 We lipread what we can   
around the dinner table and in cars,   
connecting the dots3 of laughs and looks  
to an imaginary sky of constellations   
waiting to be explained and pointed out,   
filling the missing gaps in plot twists4  
unfolding before our eyes. Their lives   
braid and unbraid like a knitted scarf   
flapping in fierce gusts of wind   
while we hang on to our scarves5  
and stare deep into the darkening sky.   
   
Each decibel of their laughs adds slowly   
to our tinderbox that no one notices   
by the fireplace.6 When we burst   
at last into flames,7 they act shocked,   
disbelieving that we'd count the years   
of "I'll explain later" against "I'm busy   
right now, can this wait till later?"   
against "That's nonsense" of course,   
you're family!" against "Oh, please"   
against "Hearing people don't hear   
everything" against "Not everything   
we say is important."  They never explain   
when we demand, "Why say anything at all?"8  
   
When we finally stumble and find each other,9  
usually in the dark of night becoming   
day spilling onto our shivering palms,    
we gather around tables in well-lit places   
and tell each other the same old stories   
of how they never took time to explain   
to us the spaghetti messes of their lives   
all night long until we become family   
deeper than blood throbbing in our hands.10  
Our hugs of understanding grow tighter.   
Later does come, and when it does,   
our laughter is a tender scrapbook11  
that not even they can torch.

# I Sat Beside An Oralist

### by James Frederick Meagher

I used to loathe an oralist and look at him askance,  
As one who fostered bats within his belfry residence---  
A sort of Simon Legree, or an old schoolmaster Squeers  
Who kept the poor and puny things in everlasting tears,  
Compelling them by punishment---and scolding like creation---  
To jabber Russian battle yells with faultless modulation,  
To read the lips of humming birds, to yodel, squeak and grunt,  
To warble like Caruso---or some other crazy stunt.

I sat beside an oralist at Staunton if you please,  
(Relief indeed from poets fate of crackers and of cheese)  
I watched in sheer amazement as he sat him down to eat---  
With actions almost human-like---of buttered bread and meat;  
He gulped his cream and coffee down, nor grabbed a table knife  
To ferry peas and porridge up at risk of limb and life  
But used both fork and spoon *au fait,* and, bless my sinful soul,  
He even knew the wherefor of a cutglass finger bowl.

I sat beside an oralist at Staunton, I confess.  
We both broke bread together in most perfect friendliness.  
I learned he, too, was human with a humans' honest aim,  
And spending life's short span among the blind, the deaf, the lame;  
I learned he, too, was oft downcast, and oft misunderstood  
While toiling for the silent, striving for the common good;  
And views for which I'd branded him a crazy imbecile  
Came not from pure cussedness---though, truth, a bit futile.

Hereafter---when an oralist I vent sulphuric speech  
And wave the flag of freedom high and make the eagle screech  
Or rip him up and down the back and jab him in the vest  
With forceful facts and figures aimed to knock him galley-west---  
I hope he understands, at least, it's nothing personal,  
It's principle we're fighting for, the good of one and all;  
I hope he sasses back at me with fierce but friendly heat---  
And he will if he can argue half as well as he can ea

# Be Tellin' Me1

### by Kristi B. Merriweather

People tell me  
what they think  
a black deaf female is  
People tell me   
what they think  
they know   
what a black deaf female is  
People tell me  
they know the deal  
behind all the deals2   
just a simple solution3   
mix in the deaf culture,  
add equal amount of   
black culture,  
stir well and smoothly,  
pronto4, the black deaf culture,   
I say5   
excuse my standard English, but   
/cursing/6  
I don’t take no7   
second-handed,8   
mulatto, prescribed,9   
whittled-down,10   
semi-that,  
half-here,  
part-this  
culture,  
uh-huh11   
I be cookin' up my own recipe,  
spicy, like my mama taught me,  
no, don’t need your bowl,12   
thank you very much,  
only I be  
tellin’ me   
what a blakdeafemale is.

# Remember

### by Kristi B. Merriweather

Out of Motherland Africa1,   
ripped from my people  
into the iron-heavy chains,  
stifling my motions,   
I look at the sea, the dark threatening waters  
awaiting  
to carry us on an endless, wicked journey,  
       I heard my weeping mother yell to me,  
                       "Remember."  
  
Out of slavery,  
Lord knows the scars and horrors of my hands,  
body, mind, & soul been through  
I've forgotten my language, my home,  
my hopes, my culture or even where  
my family are.  
Yet, as I watch my people heading for the  
cities of the North or the farms of the South, no  
money, no food, no clear guidance.  
               Somewhere I heard my mother  
               whisper to me,  
                             "Remember."  
  
Out of Jim Crow2,  
with all its burning crosses and  
burnt promises,  
facing the stony faces of those that wear the  
badge of law and order,  
holding the nightsticks that have  
senselessly beat   
thousands of my people while we sang  
"We shall overcome"3 and  
trying to keep believing that.  
Raise your Black Power fist   
Say Right on, Black is beautiful.4  
Don't know why my head is hurting, some  
kind of image is trying  
to fight its way into it,  
               It's screaming my mother's voice  
              and eyes saying,  
                             "Remember."  
  
Out of the burning riots of LA,5  
Through the red smoke of anger finally  
unleashed,  
I stand motionless to see the images finally  
flashing before my eyes,  
The drug dealers gaining control, the bullets  
flying toward our people by  
our own brothers,  
the punch of the rap lyrics attacking the  
dignity of sisters,6  
poverty, unwanted pregnancies, AIDS,7  
clarence and anita8  
               Suddenly, I saw the image of my mother  
               Signing to me,  
                             "Remember."  
  
  
Out of the cosmos,9  
Out of Africa,  
Stationed here in America,  
The Black Deaf Woman,  
challenging and transforming systems  
shattering restricting definitions  
until she becomes in-defin-able,  
timeless, progressive, creative,  
and unstoppable.  
  
     Don't you remember?

**The Gallaudet Protest from My Eyes**

**by Kristi B. Merriweather**

What!

*Uh---*

That does it- We have *had* enough!

*Let it go, world not always fair*

This underqualified one over this one, oh no

We **dig** him, his vision

Will you stand with us against this injustice?

*Um, no*

The process is flawed

*You have no proof*

We need the numbers, are you our comrade:

*No, we must remain neutral  
Degrees are passé anyway  
Maybe he's too old  
Maybe he bombed the interview  
Maybe he has health problems  
Maybe the world is not ready for him  
Maybe he can't handle this work  
Maybe blah, blah, blah*

White privilege rearin' its ugly head

*Maybe blah, blah, blah*

Knee-deep in hypocrisy

*Maybe blah, blah, blah*

Sex, lies, and vlogs

*Maybe blah, blah, blah*

Audism & Deafhood rallies

*Maybe blah, blah, blah*

Facing a high-stakes gamble they had lost

*May---OPPS!  
Help us  
Stand with us  
We've had enough!  
The process is flawed!  
Will you stand with us?  
Are you our comrade?*

Well...maybe blah, blah blah...

# Defiance1

### by Dorothy Miles

If I were I2    
I would not say those pleasant things I say;--   
I would not smile and nod my head--   
When you say--   
No!3    
I would not bear, restrain, repress my disagreement,--   
But argue every point to puncturing--4   
Then smile--5   
If I were I.--

If I were I, --   
I would not stand chained to co-operation;-   
Give my hand humbly to your lead--   
In your way --   
No!6   
I would unlink the ring7 that binds my neck and gags me--8   
And let my great hate vomit in your face9   
Then laugh10!

If I were I.

# To A Deaf Child

### by Dorothy Miles

You hold the word in hand;  
and though your voice may speak, never  
(though you might tutor it for ever)  
can it achieve the hand-wrought eloquence  
of this sign. Who in the word alone can say  
that day is sunlight, night is dark!  
Oh, remark  
the signs for living, for being  
inspired, excited --how similar they.

Your lightest word in hand  
lifts like a butterfly, or folds  
in liquid motion: each gesture holds  
echoes of action or shape or reasoning.  
Within your hands perhaps you form a clear  
new vision -- Man's design for living;  
so giving  
sign-ificance to Babel's tongues  
that henceforth he who sees aright may hear.

You hold the word in hand  
and offer the palm of friendship;  
of frontiers where men of speech lend lip-  
service to brotherhood, you pass, unhampered  
by sounds that drown the meaning, or by fear  
of the foreign-word-locked fetter;  
oh, better  
the word in hand than a thousand  
spilled from the mouth upon the hearless ear.

# Language for the Eye

### by Dorothy Miles

Hold a tree in the palm of your hand,  
or topple it with a crash.  
Sail a boat on finger waves,  
or sink it with a splash.  
From you finger tips see a frog leap,  
at a passing butterfly.  
The word becomes the picture in the language for the eye.

Follow the sun from rise to set,  
or bounce it like a ball.  
Catch a fish in a fishing net,  
or swallow it bones and all.  
Make traffic scurry, or airplanes fly,  
and people meet and part.  
The word becomes the action in this language of the heart.

# ASL Tree

### by Julie Rems-Smario

**a deaf village   
without ASL   
is like a tree   
without roots**

long ago in america   
reverend thomas gallaudet   
met alice cogswell   
a deaf child without language   
a child alone in her family   
her soul was hallow   
like a seedling without water

the thirsty seedling   
touched his heart   
saddened his soul   
a child without language   
of her birthright   
is a seedling without   
mother earth

inspired by a deaf child   
gallaudet searched for ways   
for the seedling to thrive   
to nurture her soul   
he sailed miles away   
across atlantic ocean   
time was running out

gallaudet looked everywhere   
places such as england   
met other seedlings like alice   
but found their roots   
weak, not thriving   
in their eyes were souls   
crying for their mother earth

pained for the seedlings   
determined to find answers   
gallaudet continued his quest   
with alice in his heart   
there from city of paris   
he met laurent clerc   
a strong, vibrant deaf man

gallaudet was mesmerized   
laurent's eyes reflected   
a very warm soul   
connected to mother earth   
radiated with french sign language   
he was a strong, beautiful tree   
a deeply rooted tree

sunrays peeked through the clouds   
touching laurent's moving hands   
and his expressive scarred face   
light of god's message   
enveloped laurent   
gallaudet saw the answer   
for alice cogswell

the divine power gave   
gallaudet and laurent   
a shared vision   
a vision of a deaf village   
blossoming in america   
with laurent's gift of language   
pouring life into mother earth

together laurent and gallaudet   
sailed to the land of america   
to wake up the hallow souls   
with language of their birthright   
nourishing their thirsty mind   
many deaf children like alice   
will soon find mother earth

alice stood by the door   
hiding behind her father   
saw Laurent for first time   
he stepped into her home   
kneeled to meet her eyes   
their eyes locked   
she was bewildered

laurent's two fingers   
placed on his scarred cheek   
signed his name Laurent   
alice's eyes lightened   
she lifted her hands   
signed laurent's name   
a beautiful friendship

the seedling found her root   
planted in mother earth   
absorbing new words daily   
her roots grew deeper   
her chin lifted higher   
the budding roots thrived   
American Sign Language, ASL, was born

word about laurent and alice   
spread like wild fire   
american school for the deaf opened   
deaf children traveled from afar   
gathered around laurent   
in hartford, connecticut   
a deaf village was born

a miraculous moment   
American Sign Language, ASL   
watered thirsty seedlings   
minds blossomed thousand folds   
eyes gleamed with warm souls   
seedlings' roots grew strong   
embraced by mother earth

deaf children grew up   
enriched with stories to share   
in American Sign Language, ASL   
became teachers, editors, and more   
married and raised children   
founded more deaf schools   
new deaf villages mushroomed

tree grew stronger   
roots thrived deeply   
thick branches reaching out   
everywhere deaf villages found   
virginia ohio oregon and more   
alice died too young   
but not without her roots

**a deaf village   
without ASL   
is like a tree   
without roots** 12