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## DEAR HEARING WORLD

By **Raymond Antrobus**

I have left Earth in search of sounder orbits,  
 a solar system where the space between  
 a star and a planet isn't empty. I have left  
 a white beard of noise in my place and many  
 of you won't know the difference. We are  
 indeed the same volume, all of us eventually fade.  
 I have left Earth in search of an audible God.  
 I do not trust the sound of yours.  
 You wouldn't recognise my grandmother's *Hallelujah*  
 if she had to sign it, you would have made her sit  
 on her hands and put a ruler in her mouth  
 as if measuring her distance from holy.  
 Take your God back, though his songs  
 are beautiful, they are not loud enough.

I want the fate of Lazarus for every deaf school  
 you've closed, every deaf child whose confidence  
 has gone to a silent grave, every BSL user  
 who has seen the annihilation of their language,  
 I want these ghosts to haunt your tongue-tied hands.  
 I have left Earth, I am equal parts sick of your  
*oh, I'm hard of hearing too*, just because  
 you've been on an airplane or suffered head colds.  
 Your voice has always been the loudest sound in a room.

I call you out for refusing to acknowledge  
 sign language in classrooms, for assessing  
 deaf students on what they can't say  
 instead of what they can, we did not ask to be a part  
 of the hearing world, I can't hear my joints crack  
 but I can feel them. I am sick of sounding out your rules —

you tell me I breathe too loud, and it's rude to make noise  
when I eat, sent me to speech therapists, said I was speaking

a language of holes, I was pronouncing what I heard  
but your judgment made my syllables disappear,  
your magic master trick hearing world — drowning out the quiet,  
bursting all speech bubbles in my graphic childhood,  
you are glad to benefit from audio supremacy,  
I tried, hearing people, I tried to love you, but you laughed  
at my deaf grammar, I used commas not full stops  
because everything I said kept running away,  
I mulled over long paragraphs because I didn't know  
what a *natural break* sounded like, ~~you erased~~  
~~what could have always been poetry~~

You erased what could have always been poetry.  
You taught me I was inferior to standard English expression —  
I was a broken speaker, you were never a broken interpreter —  
taught me my speech was dry for someone who should sound  
like they're underwater. It took years to talk with a straight spine  
and mute red marks on the coursework you assigned.

Deaf voices go missing like sound in space  
and I have left earth to find them.