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聴覚に障がいのあるダンサーとの出会いを契機に、言葉を超えた心のつながりを学んだ経験を綴りました。違いを受け入れ、互いを理解し合うことで得られる新たな気づきを、読者の皆さまにも共に感じ取っていただければ幸いです。

Flight

If I could choose any superpower, I would choose to fly. The idea of weightlessness, of defying gravity and moving untethered through the air, had followed me since childhood. That's how I found my wings not in the sky, but in the dance studio. There, surrendering to the onset of music, I discovered how to dissolve weight and time. With adrenaline coursing through me, each movement felt like an ascent, each beat like a gust of wind carrying me higher.

It was during one of our breakdance ciphers, those spontaneous circles where we each displayed our creativity to whatever song the speakers demanded, that I first noticed him. The smallest in the room, barely eight years old, and the only one dancing just slightly off-beat. At first, it barely registered. Every beginner stumbles. But over time, I noticed a few things. There was his silence, the way he never responded when the instructor called across the room. There were the hushed, frequent meetings between his mother and the teacher. And then there was the hand signal.

It happened during a water break, when I offered him a snack. He lifted one hand to his chest and moved the other in a sharp line from his forehead to his arm. The motion was deliberate, practiced, too precise to be meaningless. I returned his gesture with a smile, though inside questions began to gnaw at me.

What was that? Why had he done that? What did it mean?

By the time class ended, my mind buzzed with restless curiosity. On the train ride home, a flood of questions began to overtake my search bar until, at last, the screen revealed the answer. It was JSL, Japanese Sign Language, for "thank you."

The revelation unraveled the puzzle. The teacher's careful enunciation. The boy's delayed responses

unless tapped on the shoulder. His uncanny habit of moving with the bass instead of the lyrics. He was deaf. What I had mistaken for “off beat” was simply a different rhythm altogether. Yet this clarity left me unsettled. One question remained, lodged stubbornly in my mind.

What was he doing in breakdance?

The thought embarrassed me even as it formed, but it was genuine. Breakdance is a style defined by headspins, freezes, and footwork intertwined with musical nuance. Even with my hearing intact, keeping time was a challenge. How could someone who could not hear the music possibly hope to master it?

Hoping for an answer, I resolved to watch him, to look closer. As the music thundered from the speakers, I noticed his ritual. Before stepping into the cipher, he crouched low, palms pressed flat against the wooden floor. The bass reverberated through the studio, vibrating the ground, and he seemed to absorb it through his hands, letting the vibrations overtake his body. He wasn't following the same beat I heard; he was translating vibration into rhythm, silence into motion. He wasn't off beat, he was attuned to something deeper. Then, he stretched his wings and took flight.

For the first time, I saw him not as the youngest student in the class, or as a mystery to decode, but as a dancer. Watching him ride the invisible currents of music that only he could feel, I understood him. In his dance, I recognized my own longing. This boy who, like me, had come here to fly.

I never knew his name, but he showed me that communication can transcend language, culture, and even silence. In a world where differences are shunned and discriminated upon, he taught me that our differences are not obstacles, they are wings, carrying us toward new ways of expression, new ways of connection.

To the boy who gave me this lesson, and reminded me of the power our wings hold: thank you.