

“Words have always swirled around me like snowflakes—each one delicate and different, each one melting untouched in my hands.”

“I have never  
spoken one  
single word.”

“Thoughts  
need words.  
Words need a  
voice.”

“But I’ve never  
been able to  
tell them.”

“Sometimes I  
wish I had a  
delete button in  
my head.”

“I don’t think  
Mom ever figured  
out what I was  
trying to say that  
day.”

“I could identify  
hundreds of words  
on sight. But all  
that was stuck  
inside.”

“I’m always  
amazed at how  
adults assume I  
can’t hear.”



“Kids who, for  
the most part,  
ignore kids like  
me.”

“I had a million thoughts in my head, but I couldn’t share them with anybody.”

“I may not be able to make clear sounds, but I can make a lot of noise.”

“Spoon.  
Slurp.  
Swallow.”

“We were  
going to be  
in a regular  
classroom!”

“...I guess about thirty of them—turned to stare. Some of them laughed. Others looked away.”

“It must have looked like just another one of those random movements that kids like me seem to make.”

“...I can tell the difference between people making fun of us and people being nice to us.”



“And not because of something embarrassing I did, like throwing up or spilling my food, but for something really cool instead.”

“...But it was no accident. I knew them all. Every single one.”

“They think my  
brain is messed  
up, like the rest  
of me.”

“We all have  
disabilities.  
What’s yours?”

“Us normal  
people aren’t  
allowed to use  
computers.”

“By law, she  
cannot be  
excluded. You  
know that, sir.”

“In my fifteen years of running this competition, I have never had a student make a perfect score on the practice test.”

“Don’t you want some pizza? Elena asked me. “I’ll go get a slice for you.””



“Their words made me feel like one of the helium balloons that some families had brought.”

“I’ll make them  
stand out, and not  
in a good way.”

“I feel crazy  
excited, crazy  
nervous.”

“It seems like hours, but in minutes we’re at the check-in gate.”

“...Words float out of lips that say nice things to me, but eyes tell the truth.”

“...There is so much  
Claire doesn't know  
about stuff not  
being fair.”

“The entire airport  
feels like a vacuum  
to me. No sound.  
No voices. No air.”

“I was going  
out of my  
mind.”



“I can’t even  
get mad like a  
normal kid.”

“Never had I  
wanted words  
more.”

“And the mad me  
decided that I was  
not going to sit at  
home like a kicked-  
around puppy.”

“That’s when I saw a small bundle of yellow, dragging a red umbrella, dart out of the house.”

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