

FINGERSPELL

Lindsay Illich



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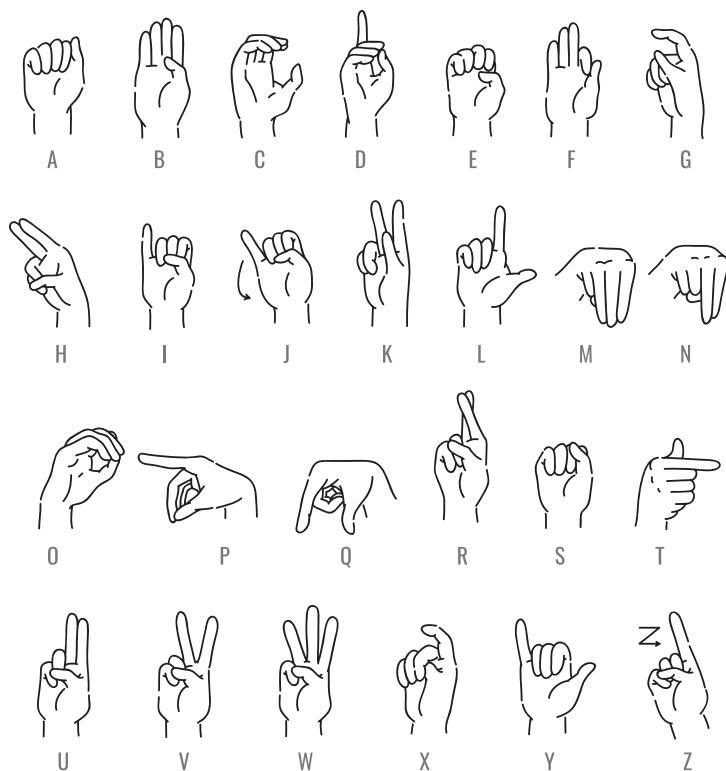
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In *Go Ahead In the Rain: Notes To A Tribe Called Quest*, Hanif Abdurraqib wrote, “There is plenty out there worth doing alone, but for everything else, there is a need for your people. It would behoove you to have a crew.”

I dedicate this book to my crew—Hazel, Dobie, and Craig.
I love you, always.



finger-spell - to spell out a word using the alphabet signs, used when a word doesn't have a sign, for names, for emphasis, or when the signer doesn't know the sign for a word.

CONTENTS

ARIEL	1
ARBORIST	2
AUBADE	3
A BIRD CLAIMS TO LIVE ONLY FOR THE SIMORGH	4
BOILERPLATE	6
THE BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SABBATH ELEVATOR	7
THE BRUTAL SCIENTIFIC	8
CROSSING THE POTOMAC IN A SUPERSHUTTLE VAN	9
DESCRIPTION OF AN ABANDONED SILVER MINE	13
EARLY JULY AND THE FAINT WHITE BUTTERFLIES	15
ECLIPSE	16
EMPIRE	17
FACES PASS BY, THEN	18
FAULT LINES	19
FEVER	21
FINGERSPELL	22
FLIGHT TRACKER	24
GENIUS	26
GIRL (ACT I)	27
GLASS SELF, OR DRIVING HOME FROM BASEBALL PRACTICE	28
GOLDLIGHT	30
HATCHLING	31
HUNGER	32
I ELABORATE MY STATUS AS A COLONIZER	33
I EXPLAIN THE DARK CENTER	34
INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURVIVAL	35
JAW	36

KANSAS	38
LAJITAS	40
LARKSPUR	41
THE LIE	42
MAMA EXPLAINS THE EXTERIORITY OF INVENTION (THE TALK)	44
MILK CAVE	46
MORNING WHITE LIKE FORGIVENESS	47
MOTHER	48
THE NOURISHMENT OF MY BODY	49
ON ADDRESSIVITY (WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT'S WRONG?)	50
PITTSBURGH OR BUDAPEST	51
PLAY	52
PLINIAN	54
A PROBLEM OF TRANSCRIPTION FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	55
PROOF	56
PUSH PLAY AND RECORD	57
A QUESTION I WANT TO ANSWER YES	58
RAPTURE AS EPIPHANY	60
RATIOS GOLDEN OR OTHERWISE	61
THE SHAPE OF GOD	63
SNOW	65
SPECTRUM	66
TAMPA MIDWINTER	68
THESIS STATEMENT	69
THIS IS LATE CAPITALISM	70
TUESDAY	71
UNCOVERED	72
UNPERCHED	73
VIEW FROM THE SHOWER WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE BACKYARD	74
WAITING TO BOARD MY SPIRIT "HOME OF THE BARE FARE" FLIGHT	75

WAKING WHEN WEATHER IS HAPPENING	77
WHAT SHE WAS LOOKING FOR	78
THE WOMAN WHO RODE THROUGH A TORNADO IN A BATHTUB AND LIVED	80
WORK EMAILS	82
X-RAY	83
YOUR HAPPENING	84
ZENITH	85

ARIEL

In the dream, instead of lady parts
down there, I had a Bundt cake—

slightly burned, dusted with confectioner's
sugar, but more obviously, its hole.

When I was young I was stupid.
I thought I was good for what I didn't

do. I've made a life of appearances.
You were *here*. I have the cave

left where we hollowed
out the pumpkin flesh,

our spoons clicking. And that was
some light. It, too, is a kind of

throat. The reason why people
make Bundt cakes is about increasing

surface area so that everybody
gets some crust. Design being the first

accommodation. Why does *obvious*
have to be a bad thing? The thing

is defined by absence. And you
aren't here.

ARBORIST

Soon we were talking
thundercloud plums, blood-

good maples. In a copse
off the main road where they

kept mulch, a birch.
I showed you my plans,

the A2 of my daughter's atria,
asked if it was possible

to make the hydrangeas
blue. You said it's easy,

that I should bury
rusty nails or a sternal saw

near her, that the roots
would draw out the alkaline.

That it takes time but eventually
the acidity will change her.

AUBADE

O morning earthsmell like small
bent basil, a child blinking open

wet with thanksgiving a
sky we lay under talking over

birdchatter we spoke the bee
tumble gradually an understanding our

lungs became pockets
handing out the days

saying here take it just take it
in your hand who knew you would

be so good at ax throwing what
aim I love the arc of arm

the fog of morning with my teeth
on your ear, the morning come

through the windows like children
awake now it's Christmas

all the lights your hand couldn't
we be opening each other