

"TŌKU/TŌNA ANŌ TAKIWĀ"
("IN MY/HIS/HER OWN TIME AND SPACE")

A POEM BY
HANNAH BEE



"TŌKU/TŌNA ANŌ TAKIWĀ"

(*"IN MY/HIS/HER OWN TIME AND SPACE"*)

Slow, they said to my mother,
As I sat silent, like luggage,
tapping a calmness into my chest

I would be told later,
not to tap.
It would make the other children uncomfortable,
So I leant to sit still as my mind screamed,

The best thing about being luggage,
Is that it feels very little.
You can pack it will all kinds of secrets and shame and rage.

It will not complain because it can not.
Complaining is like tapping.
Luggage does not tap.

You can not be trusted,
To know the rules,
So you are obedient.

You make other people uncomfortable,
They are right and can do as they please,
Because they trust you to keep a secret.

They chose you, deliberate.

You are a good girl.
Patient.

You see, I have always been a slow learner.
It took me years to say no and longer to re-learn the word.

You would be surprised what people pack into luggage.
Into you, when you can not choose it.
Shame, anger, disgust, fear, loneliness.

It is your job, to take it and try very hard not to tap.
You can not make others unforgettable.

I am a slow learner but I learned, eventually, that I will always
be misunderstood.
Knowing a great deal more and a great deal less than others
assume.

At first, I was angry,
At those who had insisted they were experts on me,
The people who had taught me not to tap and saw my
puppetry and stillness as a success.
An improvement.
Just 'mild' autism.
Then I wondered if they too may be slow learners,
Who needed time.
They are lucky that I will treat them a little more kindly,
Than their rushing,
Because I understand what it is like to be slow.

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