



LATER

By Raymond Luczak

for Richard Chenault 1957 – 1995



Your voice translated me,
a lucid memory.

You videotaped my hands, words.
Now that's all gone to the birds.

What led you to sign, to grasp?
Your fluency made me gasp.

You turned deaf to others sneering.
Your ears were so used to hearing.

Translate me one more time.
I loved how we could rhyme.

Death's a cruel interpreter.

About the Poet

Poet Raymond Luczak was raised in Ironwood, Michigan. At the age of eighth months, Luczak lost much of his hearing due to double pneumonia. Luczak is the author of a dozen poetry collections, including *Far from Atlantis* (Gallaudet University Press, 2023); *Chlorophyll* (Modern History Press, 2022); *Lunafly* (Gnashing Teeth, 2022); *once-upon-a-twin* (Gallaudet University Press, 2021); and *How to Kill Poetry* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013). His prose works are also highly reviewed, such as *Flannelwood: A Novel* (Red Hen Press, 2019), which discusses the intricacies of living with disabilities and discovering one's true self within repressive masculine spaces.

This Gallaudet University alum's work has been known to reveal the sustaining power of verse, all while having playing tones and imagination. Luczak currently lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he continues to write, edit, and publish works.

Citations

"Flannelwood." *Publishers Weekly*, vol. 266, no. 16, 22 Apr. 2019, p. 86.
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ink.gale.com/apps/doc/A58575585/BIC?i-cuny_monack&id=bookmark-BIC&vid=0155e7. Accessed 26 Mar. 2025.
Academy of American Poets. (2025a, July 24) Raymond Luczak.
Poets.org. <https://poets.org/poet/raymond-luczak>.

DISCUSSION

I enjoyed reading *Later* by Raymond Luczak. I love reading queer stories and seeing records of queer identities throughout time. This poem resonates with me because it reminds me of one of my first queer experiences in New York. I was on my first date with a guy. We were walking down the block near Central Park. Some random person stared at us scornfully because we were holding hands. He instinctively bucked up at the other person, which honestly shocked me because of how passive his demeanor usually is.

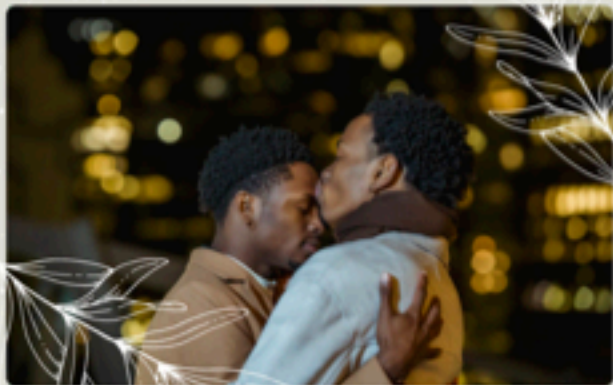
I wondered what his experiences were like growing up, curious because of how "accustomed" he was to 'aggression' simply because of his queer identity. Though short, my experience dating him was sweet. I felt seen, heard and cherished. We complimented each other's strengths and weaknesses.

"Translate me one more
time.
I loved how we could
rhyme."

CNTD.

After researching Raymond Luczak and giving "Later" a second read, I discovered that he was a deaf poet. It shifted my understanding of the poem entirely. I now understood that "Later" speaks on the intricacies of queerness and disabilities.

We see the speaker navigate the bridging the language barrier, feeling truly understood and then inevitably facing the reality that comes with heartbreak, loss and grief.



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