



Litlinks 2019



YEARS 11 & 12 CATEGORY: JUDGES' CHOICE

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Can I get a flat white please? by Alissa Yuen, Lake Ginninderra College



"I'm so sorry, sir, do you mind pointing it out again?"

From the corner of my eye I saw an index finger extended in the direction of the drinks menu hung behind the cash register.

"Was it a cappuccino?" I heard Mandy ask the customer. A cappuccino was evidently not what they were after, as the hand moved even closer to the board. I finished up the coffee I was working on and palmed it off to another worker to serve, so I could turn around to see if Mandy needed help. The customer was bent over the counter, and Mandy's head was practically resting on his arm, using it like a telescopic sight.

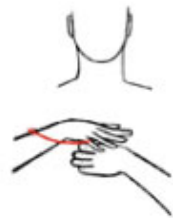
"A... piccolo latte?" She was still facing the board when she said this, and he mustn't have heard her because he didn't answer. Confused by the lack of response, she turned around to face him and repeated herself. Having read her lips, the man suddenly retracted his arm, massaging his temples as he gently shook his head.

“Wait here, and I’ll go grab something to write on,” she said, and we watched as she disappeared into the storeroom. The man clicked his tongue in exasperation. Feeling my gaze, the man gave me a curt nod, and I was suddenly aware that I’d been staring at their exchange.



HELP?

The man’s eyes widened slightly, a small smile gracing his previously sour face. Hurriedly, as if he was scared I’d suddenly lose my ability to sign, he signed back.



FLAT



WHITE



PLEASE

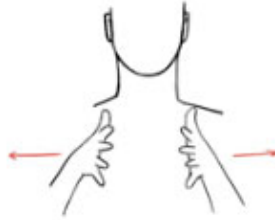
Moving over to the register, I put his order through.



SIZE



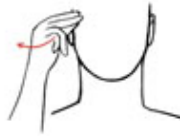
WHAT?



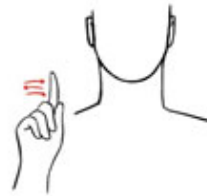
LARGE



YOUR



NAME



WHAT?



B



E



N

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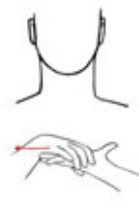
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COST



FOUR



DOLLARS



NINETY



CENTS

Ben handed me a 5 dollar note, and when I handed back his change, he dropped the 10 cents in the tip jar.



As I began packing the coffee grounds, Mandy burst through the storeroom door triumphantly clutching a biro and the back of what looked to be an old stock delivery receipt.

“Can you believe how hard it is just to find a pen in this place?” she blurted as she strode past me towards the register. She slowed down as she realised Ben was no longer there.

“Oh no, did he leave?” Mandy whined as she was visibly deflated.

“Nope, he’s over there.” Using the portafilter, I pointed to where Ben sat in the corner of the store, his attention directed down at his phone.

“... is he okay? Did he order?”

“Yeah, just a large flat white.”

“Oh! How’d you know what he was after?”

“I just signed with him.”

“Signed? What, like sign language?”

“Yeah, like sign language.” The shrieking of the milk steamer drowned out her response.

“What did you say?”

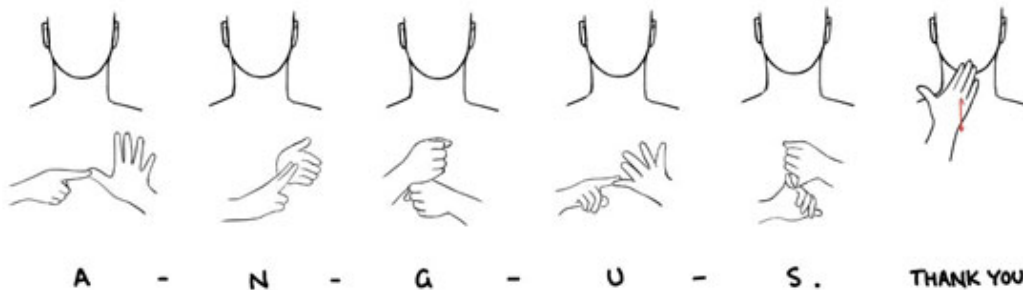
“I said that’s super cool! I’ve never met someone who knows sign language who, you know, can actually hear.”

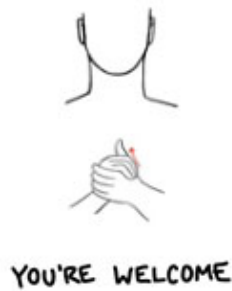
“Interesting,” I quipped, uninterested.

I finished his coffee and with the cup in hand, I skirted around the counter and headed towards his table. I slowed as I got closer, and calmly placed the flat white in front of him. Quickly, he looked up from his phone, shoving it in his pocket.



THANK YOU



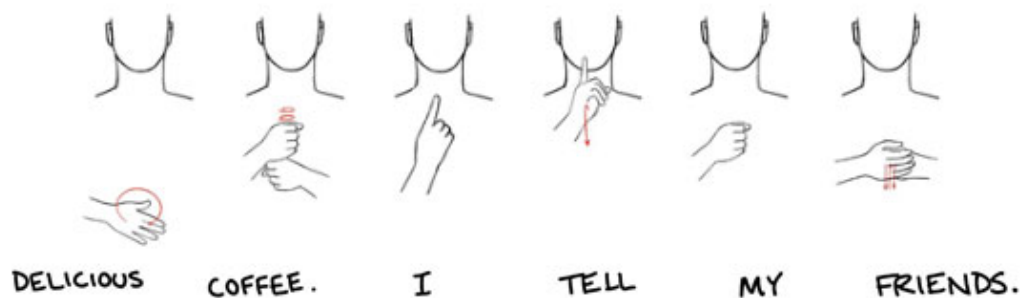


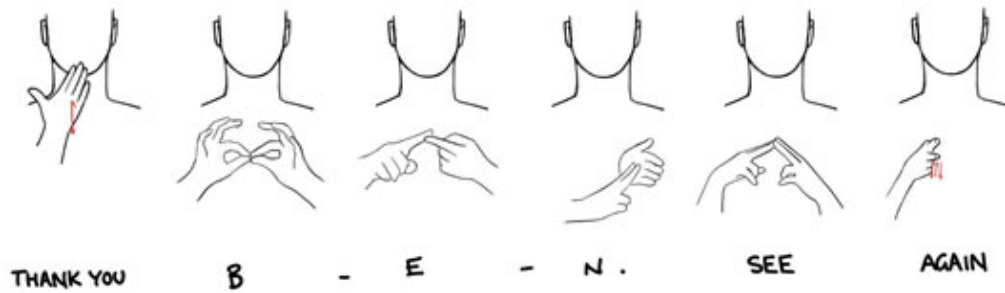
Mandy and I were polishing glasses, both of us ready to close the shop and head home. There were only a few customers sitting around by then.

"Hey Angus, how do you know sign language?" Mandy asked. Her questioning had gone all shift; she was absolutely amazed at the prospect of someone who knew how to sign when they were not deaf.

"It's just something I picked up," I replied not caring to go into details. I doubted she was even interested enough to listen to the story. I kept my focus on the glass that was in my hands.

"Oh okay, that's pretty..... see you later!" She cut herself off, waving emphatically at a departing customer. I looked up, just as Ben was about to leave. We met eyes and he stopped, propping the door open with his foot.





We give a quick wave to each other, and Ben disappeared out the door.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

With a focus on diversity, the author shines a light on a need for a more inclusive society through the mundane act of ordering coffee. This narrative provides insight into the world and experiences of another. There are many words to describe this piece – quirky, unique, pertinent, poignant, and simple but effective.

YEARS 11 & 12 CATEGORY WINNERS

The Chankiri Tree by Poppy Volk-Loone
 The Last of Diego Hernandez by Monique Eaton
 Can I get a flat white please? by Alissa Yuen
 Escape from Eternity by Amy Theakston

READ THE WINNING STORIES

Years 7 & 8, 2019
 Years 9 & 10, 2019
 Years 11 & 12, 2019



Canberra
Writers
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