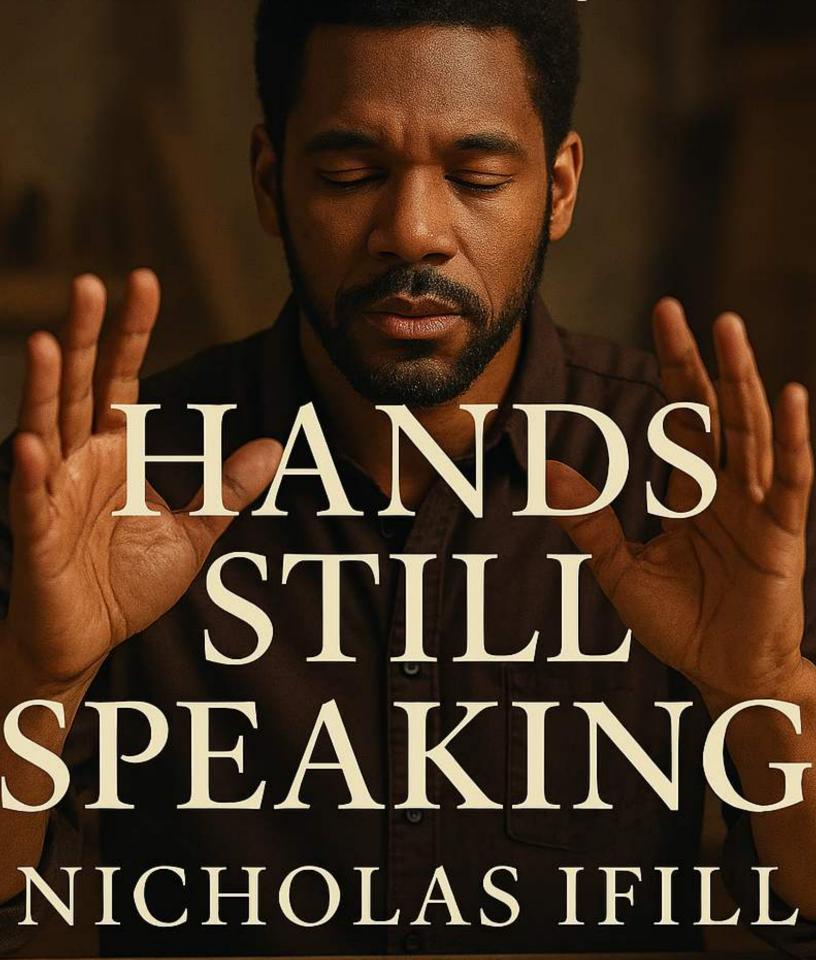
Book Two of the Hands That Speak Series



## Disclaimer

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and events are the product of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or two actual events is purely coincidental.

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This book was written to uplift and humanize the experiences of deaf individuals, disabled persons, and those often overlooked or silenced by society. Malik's journey is one of resilience, expression, and the power of love that transcends barriers. The author hopes this story will inspire conversation, empathy, and a deeper appreciation for the many ways people speak—even when unheard.

## Introduction

They tried to silence him. The world tried to ignore him. But his hands never stopped speaking. In Hands Still Speaking, the powerful sequel to If Only My Hands Could Speak, we return to the story of Malik Marshall—a deaf woodworker whose carvings tell stories deeper than words ever could. Now rising into the public eye, Malik must navigate the pressures of recognition, the scars of the past, and the responsibility of helping others find their voices.

But the louder his legacy becomes, the more it draws those who wish to twist it. New enemies emerge. Secrets resurface. And as Malik, Joy, and their adopted daughter Tessa fight to protect what they've built, they discover that healing is not a straight path—it curves through pain, identity, and purpose

This is a story of family found, of scars worn like art, and of what happens when love and truth are carved into the very grain of life. The silence is no longer empty. The hands are still speaking. And this time... the world is listening.

Chapter 1: A Home of Their Own

Their first morning as an engaged couple felt like the quietest moment on Earth.

Joy stood barefoot in the kitchen of the little house they now called home, sunlight pouring through the windows, her curls tucked into a scarf. The smell of coffee lingered in the air. Malik watched her from the hallway, still half-wrapped in sleep and disbelief.

He had proposed. She had said yes. And now... here they were. Together.

The house wasn't fancy. But it was theirs.

Exposed beams lined the ceiling. Wooden floorboards creaked with every step. One wall in the living room held nothing but windows, casting golden light across the space. Malik had already begun sketching where he'd hung their first custom piece—a carved family tree, each branch representing a chapter of their future.

Joy caught him staring and smiled. "You look like you still don't believe I'm real."

Malik smiled back, signed playfully: "You're too good to be real."

She leaned in, kissed his cheek, and whispered, "So are you."

Later that day, Malik worked in the back shed—his new shop, just a few steps from their kitchen door. It wasn't quite finished, but the bones were there. He brought in his grandfather's carving knife, setting it gently on the bench like a blessing.

He ran his hand over the worn handle, whispering a silent promise: I'll keep building. I'll keep loving. I'll keep speaking through these hands.

Outside, Joy unpacked boxes and hummed a song he didn't know but could feel in his chest.

They didn't need a big city. They didn't need noise.

They had this. And that was enough. That night, they are dinner on the floor of the living room—no table yet, just a picnic of soup, bread, and laughter. Millie rested with her head on Malik's knee, tail occasionally thumping as if to remind them she, too, was living her best life. Joy looked around at the walls. "You know what I see?" she asked. Malik raised a brow She pointed. "That corner? That's where the bookshelf's going. And over there? A little reading nook for rainy days. We can build it together." He signed: "You design. I carve." She grinned. "Deal." Then, softer, "It's funny. All those years I dreamed of love, I thought it had to come with fireworks and grand speeches. Turns out... the best kind doesn't shout. It just shows up. And stays." Malik gently pulled her hand into his and signed over her fingers,

"Genuine love is built. Not found."

She blinked fast, brushing away the emotion rising behind her smile.

A few days later, they officially reopened The Hands That Speak Foundation from its new home— a repurposed community center just five blocks away. The space buzzed with life: kids laughing, power tools humming, sawdust dancing in the air like confetti.

Jonah had his own little station now, helping younger kids with basic sanding and painting. Angela joined as a volunteer coordinator, making sure nothing fell through the cracks—except, of course, the wood shavings she always tracked into the office. Malik and Joy stood in the center of it all, watching their dream move and breathe. "Do you realize what we're doing?" she whispered. Malik signed: "We're changing the ending." She tilted her head. "Ending?" He smiled. "To the story we were told as kids. That we'd never be enough. That we'd always be alone." She kissed his hand. That evening, as the sky painted itself with soft oranges and purples, Joy sat on the porch swing while Malik worked inside. She ran her hands over her stomach—not because of anything urgent, but because she could feel something in her spirit growing. A calm certainty. A future. Then she felt it. Not in her soul—but in her body. A slight bump. Near her breast. Not painful. Not obvious. But... new. Her breath caught. Just for a second. She said nothing. Not yet.

Inside, Malik was sketching a new piece: a sculpture of hands passing a flame from one to the other—Legacy. He thought of Malek Mason. He thought of Jonah. He thought of the boy he used to be, who once carved only to survive.

Now, he carved to give back.

And he would keep carving—no matter what came next.