TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 10

A Childhood Memory That Changed the Way

Full episode script · English

609 lines

Your English Toolbox

Hello, my friends.

I'm Martin — the voice you've been listening to for a while now.

But today, I want to do something different.

Today, I want to tell you about me — not as a teacher, not as a podcaster, but as a little boy who once believed he would never be able to speak.

I was born in a small coastal town in southern England.

It was one of those places where the sound of seagulls mixed with the smell of salt and fish from the harbour.

The streets were narrow and full of laughter, and the sea was never far away — always whispering in the background.

Our house was tiny — two floors, a blue door, and windows that always smelled of tea and toast.

It was never quiet.

There was always music, or someone talking, or the kettle boiling in the kitchen.

My parents — Edward and Caroline — were simple people with extraordinary warmth.

My father worked for the railway, and his hands always smelled of metal and oil.

He had the calm voice of a storyteller, the kind that made you believe every train had a soul and every journey had a secret.

My mother was a nurse, the kind who never needed to raise her voice to be heard.

She had soft eyes, quick hands, and the power to make everyone feel safe — even strangers.

We didn't have much money, but we had everything that really mattered: stories, music, and endless cups of tea.

From the very beginning, language was both my friend and my enemy.

I started speaking late — later than most children.

And when I finally began, my words arrived broken, trembling, stuck between breaths.

Instead of "good morning," I would say, g-g-g-g-guh-mornin', and my face would turn red like a tomato.

I remember feeling as if the words were trapped inside me — like birds hitting the walls of a cage.

That's when I learned a word that would follow me for years: stutter.

A stutter means that your voice stops or repeats sounds when you try to speak.

It's not because you don't know what to say — it's because the muscles in your mouth and throat don't move smoothly.

You know the word, but it refuses to come out.

You can hear it perfectly in your mind, but your tongue and breath fight against each other.

For a child, that's a scary thing — to have thoughts full of color and music, and not be able to let them out.

Sometimes, I felt invisible.

Other times, I felt broken.

But my family never let me feel less.

My mother would kneel beside me, touch my shoulder gently, and whisper, "It's okay, darling.

Words will come when they're ready."

She never rushed me.

She never finished my sentences.

She just waited — with patience, with love, and with a cup of tea cooling beside her.

And slowly, she was right.

The words did come — not perfectly, not quickly — but they came.

They arrived like shy little birds, stepping out into the open for the first time.

They wobbled, hesitated, and sometimes flew back into silence.

But one day, they began to sing.

Grandparents and Accents

I was lucky to grow up in a family that sounded like a small orchestra.

Every person in my family spoke in a different rhythm, a different melody, a different music.

My grandfather Arthur was from Liverpool.

His voice was deep, rough, and full of life — like an old jazz record spinning on a Sunday morning.

He spoke fast, laughed loud, and every sentence seemed to bounce up and down with the famous Scouse accent.

When he said, "Alright, lad?" it sounded like a song.

My grandmother Rose was Scottish, born near the Highlands, and her words rolled like waves breaking on stones.

She used to tell me stories of the north — castles, ghosts, and endless rain.

When she laughed, her r's danced in the air.

Sometimes I didn't understand every word, but I always understood the feeling.

That was my first lesson about languages: you don't have to understand every word to understand every heart.

Then there was Uncle George, my father's brother.

He had lived in Ireland for years, and when he came to visit, it felt like a festival.

His accent was musical — light, rising and falling like a violin.

He called everyone "my friend" and had a thousand stories that always ended in laughter.

He could imitate anyone — the postman, the baker, even the Queen.

Every Christmas, when we all sat together in my grandparents' living room, it was like sitting inside a symphony.

One voice high, another low, one quick, another slow.

I used to close my eyes and just listen.

It was better than television.

It was language as music.

And even though I was a child — quiet, shy, still fighting with my stutter — I loved those sounds.

They were proof that there were many ways to speak, and all of them were beautiful.

In our family, no one corrected your accent.

No one said, "That's wrong."

Everyone just spoke, and the room filled with melody.

Looking back, I think that's when I started to fall in love with language — not the grammar, not the rules, but the voices.

I began to notice that the same word could sound completely different depending on who said it.

"Tea," for example.

My grandmother said "tay."

My uncle said "tee."

My mother, softly, said "tea, love?" like a small kindness in a cup.

That’s when I realized something magical: language wasn’t fixed — it was alive.

It could sing, dance, and change shape depending on who you were.

Maybe that’s why, even though I struggled to speak fluently, I was never afraid of sound.

I was surrounded by people who treated speech not as a competition, but as a kind of art.

My grandfather used to say, “Don’t worry about how it sounds, lad — just make sure it’s true.”

I didn’t understand it then, but I do now.

He meant: it’s better to speak with heart than to speak perfectly.

That sentence, I think, became one of the invisible rules of my life.

Even now, when I teach English, I still tell my students the same thing: “Don’t aim to sound perfect — aim to sound real.”

The Piano and the Stutter

One afternoon, when I was five years old, everything changed.

It happened quietly, like most important things in life do.

My aunt Nora arrived at our house with a big surprise.

She was wearing her red scarf — the one that always smelled of lavender — and behind her, two men carried something covered with an old blanket.

When they placed it in the living room and pulled the blanket away, I saw a piano.

A real piano.

It was old and scratched, with two keys missing, but to me it looked like a treasure chest.

Aunt Nora smiled and said, “It’s missing a few teeth, but it still sings.”

I remember touching the keys with my small hands.

They felt cold, smooth, and mysterious.

Then I pressed one.

Middle C.

A single note filled the room — soft, clear, and perfect.

It vibrated in the air, and for a moment, it felt like the whole house was listening.

That sound didn’t hesitate.

It didn’t break or stutter.

It just was.

Pure.

Simple.

Free.

And I remember thinking, “If only I could speak the way the piano speaks.”

From that day, the piano became my secret friend.

When I couldn’t say the words, I played.

When I felt embarrassed, I played.

When the words got stuck in my throat, I let my fingers say what my mouth couldn’t.

I didn’t know it then, but music was teaching me rhythm — the same rhythm I would one day use to speak fluently.

Every key became a word.

Every melody, a sentence.

Sometimes I played the same note again and again, until it felt like breathing.

My mother used to peek into the room and smile quietly.

She never asked me to stop.

She said later that she loved the sound because it reminded her that I was trying.

And she was right — I was trying to make the world listen to me in the only language I had.

My father noticed, too.

On weekends, he started bringing home old vinyl records.

The Beatles.

Nat King Cole.

Simon & Garfunkel.

He’d put one on the record player, sit down with his cup of tea, close his eyes, and say, “Listen carefully, Martin.

This is what words want to sound like.”

I didn’t understand what he meant, but I listened anyway.

I listened to the rhythm, the pauses, the emotion behind the voices.

Sometimes I repeated the words in a whisper — slow, careful, almost singing.

And when I whispered them to the rhythm of the song, the stutter disappeared.

No breaks.

No fear.

Just sound and meaning moving together.

That was the moment I realized that speech and music are not so different.

They both need breath.

They both need feeling.

They both need rhythm.

And I began to wonder if maybe — just maybe — music could teach me how to talk.

So every evening, after dinner, while the adults talked in the kitchen, I sat at the piano.

The lights were low, and I played until my fingers hurt a little.

Sometimes, I invented melodies that sounded like questions.

Other times, like answers.

It didn't matter if they were good or bad.

What mattered was that I was finally expressing myself — fluently, even if it wasn't with words.

Music became my first real teacher.

It taught me that communication isn't only about what you say — it's about how you feel when you say it.

It taught me patience, rhythm, and courage.

And above all, it gave me something I had never felt before: confidence.

Because when I played, no one laughed.

No one corrected me.

No one waited for me to finish a sentence.

The piano didn't care if I hesitated.

It just listened.

And for a boy who couldn't always find his voice, that was everything

The Day of the Poem

School, for me, was never easy.

I liked learning — I really did — but words scared me.

Every day began with the same silent prayer: "Please don't make me read aloud today."

Because reading aloud meant stuttering aloud.

It meant hearing my voice break in front of everyone.

It meant seeing the teacher's kind smile turn into quiet pity.

And it meant hearing the giggles that children can't always hide.

One morning, when I was seven, our teacher, Mrs.

Collins, said we were going to have a poetry recital.

Each of us would stand in front of the class and read a short poem.

The word recital sounded beautiful — but also terrifying.

It meant standing up.

It meant speaking.

It meant no piano to hide behind.

I remember holding my paper so tightly that it started to shake in my hands.

The poem was short — just four lines.

It began:

“There once was a boy who dreamed of the sea.”

I had practiced it at home.

I knew it by heart.

But when Mrs.

Collins called my name — “Martin Brooks, please” — my heart started beating so loudly I could hardly hear her voice.

My legs felt heavy, like they were made of stone.

The classroom suddenly seemed too bright, too quiet.

I walked slowly to the front, my shoes squeaking on the floor.

All eyes were on me.

I opened my mouth.

Nothing came out.

The silence grew.

Then, finally, I tried to speak.

“Th-th-th-there w-w-w-was a b-b-b-boy…”

The words tumbled out like broken glass.

Some of the children giggled.

One whispered to another.

I wanted to disappear.

My face was burning, and my throat felt like it was closing.

But then — something unexpected happened.

From the second row, my best friend, Danny, began to whisper.

Quietly.

Softly.

He whispered the lines with me, one word behind, like an echo.

“There once was a boy who dreamed of the sea…”

His voice was calm.

Steady.

Kind.

And for some reason, hearing his whisper made me breathe differently.

My lungs slowed down.

My rhythm changed.

I followed his voice like a melody, and the stutter began to fade.

I took a deep breath and tried again.

“There once was a boy who dreamed of the sea.”

This time, it came out whole.

No breaks.

No fear.

Just words — simple, clean, alive.

I couldn’t believe it.

When I finished, Mrs.

Collins smiled.

Not a teacher’s smile — a real, proud, human smile.

The class clapped, softly at first, then louder.

Even the children who had laughed before were now smiling too.

Danny grinned and gave me a small thumbs up.

That moment — that tiny act of friendship — changed everything for me.

It taught me something I’ve never forgotten: communication isn’t about being perfect.

It’s about being understood.

Danny didn’t correct me.

He didn’t rescue me.

He joined me.

He made my fear smaller by sharing it.

That was the first time I realized that language is not just something you say — it's something you share.

After class, Mrs.

Collins stopped me by the door.

She said, "Martin, you have a beautiful voice.

You just need to trust it."

I remember those words more clearly than the poem itself.

A beautiful voice.

I had never thought of my voice as beautiful before.

That sentence stayed in my mind for years — maybe forever.

Because it wasn't about how I sounded.

It was about how I felt when I finally let the words go.

That night, I couldn't sleep.

I kept thinking about the poem.

About Danny's whisper.

About the strange, magical way words had finally decided to leave my mouth.

I realized that maybe — just maybe — my voice wasn't broken after all.

It was just waiting for the right rhythm, the right breath, the right moment.

And maybe that's true for all of us.

Sometimes, we just need someone to believe in our voice before we can believe in it ourselves.

The next day, I did something new.

I stood in front of the mirror and read the poem again.

Alone this time.

And as I said the words, I imagined Danny's voice beside mine — calm, gentle, supportive.

I didn't stutter.

Not even once.

It felt like magic.

But it wasn't magic.

It was rhythm.

It was connection.

It was the discovery that speaking isn't only about the tongue or the mouth — it's about the heart.

That day, something small but powerful changed inside me.

For the first time, I didn't see myself as "the boy who stutters."

I saw myself as "the boy who speaks — slowly, carefully, but truthfully."

And that, in a way, was the beginning of everything that came later — my love for music, for words, for teaching, and for helping others find their own rhythm.

Because that's what Danny gave me.

Not just confidence — but rhythm.

A way to move through fear.

A way to speak through silence

Summers at the Seaside

After that year, something changed in me.

I started to notice the sounds of the world around me — not just words, but everything.

The waves.

The wind.

The laughter of people walking home from the beach.

My childhood summers were made of those sounds.

Warm days that seemed to last forever.

The sky so bright that it almost hurt your eyes.

The taste of salt on your lips after running too close to the sea.

The sticky feeling of ice cream melting faster than you could eat it.

Those were the days that built the rhythm of my life.

Every summer, my grandparents came to stay with us for two weeks.

They always brought stories — and too many suitcases.

My grandfather Arthur carried his fishing rods and an old tin box full of shiny hooks.

He said, "You can learn a lot from the sea, lad — if you know how to listen."

I didn't understand him at first.

To me, the sea was just noise — loud and wild.

But one morning, while we sat quietly on the pier, I started to hear it differently.

There were patterns in the sound — long waves, short waves, moments of silence.

It was like breathing.

And I realized: everything in life has its own rhythm.

Even the ocean pauses between words.

My grandmother Rose was the opposite of quiet.

She talked from sunrise to sunset.

While my grandfather fished, she set up picnics on the cliffs.

She always packed too much food — sandwiches, apples, cakes — and somehow everything tasted better in the wind.

She told me stories of her childhood in Scotland: hills covered in fog, long winters, and ceilidh dances that lasted all night.

Her voice was like a movie in my head.

When she spoke, I could see what she was saying.

And sometimes, when the wind was strong, her words almost floated away before they reached me.

That’s when I learned to listen carefully — not just with my ears, but with my heart.

Aunt Nora came every summer too — the one who gave me the piano.

She always wore colorful scarves and sang while she cooked.

Even the most ordinary afternoon became music when she was around.

She taught me that art wasn’t just something you made — it was something you lived.

When she played guitar, everyone stopped talking.

We just listened.

The sound carried over the cliffs and disappeared into the sea.

I used to think the fish could hear her.

Maybe they could.

Sometimes, in the late afternoons, my cousins and I built sandcastles so big they looked like real cities.

We gave them names — “Martintown” or “Seagull City.”

The waves always destroyed them by morning, but we never cared.

That was another lesson from the sea: nothing beautiful lasts forever, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t worth building.

At night, when everyone else went inside, I liked to stay a little longer on the beach.

The air was cooler then.

The world quieter.

I could hear the sea breathing in the dark — calm, endless, patient.

Sometimes I sang softly to it, songs I had made up, half-words and half-notes.

It was my secret language.

No stutter, no fear, just sound and peace.

Those nights made me dream of other coasts, other voices, other words waiting out there in the world.

My father would join me sometimes, sitting quietly beside me with his cup of tea.

He didn't talk much — he never needed to.

He was one of those people whose silence felt full, not empty.

He would point to the horizon and say, "Somewhere out there, someone is watching this same sea, right now."

I remember thinking that was the most magical idea I had ever heard — that I was connected to someone I didn't even know, just by looking at the same ocean.

Maybe that's why, even today, when I teach languages, I feel that same connection.

Every new word is like a wave — it travels, it reaches, it connects.

Those seaside summers were my classroom long before I ever stepped into a real one.

They taught me everything a teacher couldn't.

Patience.

Curiosity.

The art of listening.

And the quiet truth that everything in life — from a sentence to a song to a friendship — moves in rhythm.

If you listen carefully, you can hear it.

The sound of life itself — speaking to you.

A Boy with a Tape Recorder

When I turned nine, my father gave me a birthday present that I still remember more clearly than any toy or game I ever had.

It wasn't wrapped in shiny paper.

It wasn't new.

In fact, it looked like something rescued from another century.

It was a tape recorder — big, brown, and heavy, with two plastic reels and a long black cable that looked a bit dangerous.

He placed it on the kitchen table and said, “It doesn’t look like much, son, but it can do magic.”

I didn’t understand what he meant until I pressed the red button.

A small click.

A gentle hum.

And then my own breathing filled the air.

I froze.

It was the first time I had ever heard myself.

My voice sounded strange — higher, thinner, almost like someone else’s.

I said, “Hello?”

The tape said back, “H-h-h-h-hello.”

I laughed.

It was the sound of my stutter — captured, real, but somehow less frightening when it came from the speaker.

For the first time, I wasn’t running away from my voice.

I was listening to it.

That little machine became my best friend.

I carried it everywhere — to my room, the garden, even the beach.

I recorded everything I could find.

Birdsong in the morning.

My mother’s voice calling from the kitchen, “Martin, tea’s ready!”

The sound of the rain hitting the window on long Sunday afternoons.

I even recorded silence — just to hear what silence sounded like.

It wasn’t empty.

It had its own hum, its own secret rhythm.

Soon, I started recording myself.

Not just my voice — my stories.

I read poems, fairy tales, even newspaper headlines, pretending to be a radio announcer.

Sometimes I sang quietly.

Other times, I tried to copy the rhythm of my favorite singers.

And the strangest thing happened: when I spoke to the tape recorder, I didn't stutter.

Not once.

It was as if the microphone understood me better than people did.

Maybe because it didn't interrupt.

Maybe because it didn't laugh.

Maybe because it just listened.

Every night, after finishing my homework, I would sit cross-legged on the floor with my little brown recorder.

I'd press the red button and begin: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

This is Martin Brooks, speaking from his bedroom in Southbridge, near the sea."

It made me feel powerful — not in a loud or proud way, but in a peaceful way.

Like I had finally found a door between my thoughts and the world.

And I could open it whenever I wanted.

I discovered that recording my voice was a form of freedom.

It was a conversation between me and me.

No judgment.

No pressure.

Just curiosity.

One evening, my father came into my room while I was recording.

He didn't say a word.

He just listened.

When I finished, he said, "You know, Martin, when you speak slowly like that, it's beautiful."

And that sentence — that one small comment — stayed with me for life.

He didn't say "good" or "perfect."

He said "beautiful."

Because slow, careful speech has its own beauty.

It's real.

It's human.

It's honest.

The tape recorder became my first teacher, my first audience, and my first stage.

It taught me to hear rhythm not just in music, but in speech.

To feel pauses as part of the melody.

To understand that silence isn’t failure — it’s space.

That idea would one day become the heart of everything I teach now: that slow isn’t wrong.

It’s powerful.

Sometimes, I would leave the recorder running when I went to bed.

It captured the quiet sounds of the night — the ticking clock, the wind, the faraway sound of a train passing through town.

In the morning, I would listen to it, fascinated.

Every sound told a story.

Every silence had a feeling.

It was like discovering a secret world inside the ordinary one.

I didn’t know it then, but those nights were the beginning of my life as a storyteller.

Not just someone who speaks, but someone who listens deeply.

Because that’s what recording does: it teaches you to pay attention.

To every breath.

Every sound.

Every emotion hidden between the words.

Looking back now, I realize that tape recorder was more than a machine.

It was the bridge between the boy who couldn’t speak — and the man who would one day make his living with his voice.

It was the first microphone of Your English Toolbox.

The beginning of everything that came after.

And in a way, I think I’ve been pressing that red button ever since

The Aunt Who Believed

Aunt Nora wasn’t like anyone else in my family.

Where my father was quiet and steady, she was wild and bright — like sunlight through stained glass.

She never entered a room quietly.

You always knew she had arrived because laughter followed her like a shadow.

She wore scarves that looked like rainbows, bangles that sang when she moved her hands, and lipstick the color of ripe cherries.

Everywhere she went, she carried the smell of coffee, paint, and sea air — her own perfume of life.

When I was little, she was the person who saw me — truly saw me — even when I couldn't find my words.

Other adults would say, "Poor boy, he struggles to talk."

But Nora would smile and say, "He doesn't struggle.

He's just composing his sentences."

That sentence changed the way I felt about myself.

Composing.

Not failing.

Creating.

She made my silence sound like art instead of absence.

Nora loved to visit our house on weekends.

She'd sit by the piano — the same one she had given us — and play without sheet music, her fingers dancing like they were telling secrets to the keys.

Sometimes she'd call me to sit beside her.

She'd say, "Play what you feel, not what you know."

And I would press the keys softly, awkwardly, until a small tune appeared — broken but honest.

She'd close her eyes and nod as if I'd played a masterpiece.

That was her gift: she didn't just hear notes.

She heard effort.

Nora had been a painter before she became a music teacher.

Her house was full of unfinished canvases — blue skies without clouds, faces without mouths.

When I asked her why, she said, "Because art doesn't have to be finished to be true."

I think that's why she understood me so well.

To her, I wasn't incomplete — I was in progress.

Every time I stuttered, she refused to correct me.

Instead, she matched her breathing to mine.

She'd wait.

Sometimes she'd finish my sentence in a whisper, not to rescue me, but to keep the rhythm alive.

She taught me that communication was like music: if one instrument stops, the song doesn't end — it just waits for the next note.

One rainy afternoon, I remember sitting by her side while she tuned her guitar.

I asked her, "Aunt Nora, why do I speak like this?"

She smiled, adjusted a string, and said, "Because your thoughts run faster than your words.

You're trying to catch them, that's all."

Then she added something I'll never forget: "You're not slow, Martin.

You're careful with words.

And careful people make beautiful speakers."

I didn't completely understand it then, but it planted something inside me — the idea that care could be strength.

That precision and emotion could live in the same sentence.

Nora believed in celebrating small victories.

If I read one paragraph without stuttering, she'd clap like I had won an Olympic medal.

If I learned a new song on the piano, she'd make hot chocolate and say, "To rhythm — our best teacher!"

She made every little progress feel like a miracle.

And when people believe in you like that, you start to believe in yourself too.

But life, as we know, doesn't always stay light forever.

One winter, when I was ten, Nora fell ill.

She stopped visiting as often, and her laughter — that big, generous laughter — grew quieter.

I didn't really understand what was happening.

Adults tried to explain, but their voices always broke halfway.

All I knew was that my favorite person in the world was fading, like a song that's almost over.

A few weeks later, she was gone.

Her funeral was on a cold morning.

I remember the church full of flowers, the air thick with silence.

Someone asked if I would play the piano — her piano — one last time.

My hands were shaking.

I thought, “I can’t.”

But then I heard her voice in my head: “Play what you feel, not what you know.”

So I did.

I played the softest tune I could remember — a melody we had made up together one summer afternoon.

Each note felt like a goodbye.

But it also felt like she was there, listening, proud, smiling that big cherry-lipstick smile.

When the last note faded, the church was completely still.

And for the first time in my life, I wasn’t afraid of silence.

It didn’t mean emptiness.

It meant presence.

It meant her.

That day, I learned the most important lesson Nora ever taught me — a lesson that shaped everything I would later become:

That real communication is not about the number of words you speak, but the honesty behind them.

That when you speak with your heart, even a whisper can be powerful.

And that sometimes, music can say what words never could.

After her death, I played the piano every day for weeks.

Not because I wanted to become a musician — but because I wanted to keep her voice alive.

Every note I played was like saying, “I’m still here.

You taught me how to listen.”

And in a quiet way, she became part of every story I’ve ever told, every sentence I’ve ever spoken, and every word I’ve ever helped a student find.

Because before I ever had a microphone, I had Aunt Nora.

She was the first person who believed my voice was worth hearing

Finding His Own Voice

By the time I turned ten, something inside me had shifted.

It didn’t happen suddenly — there was no miracle, no overnight transformation.

It was quieter than that.

It was like the sea at low tide, slowly revealing what had always been there, hidden beneath the waves.

I started speaking more often.

At first, in small bursts — a sentence here, a question there.

Then one day, I realized I could read an entire paragraph without stuttering.

It felt strange.

Almost suspicious.

Like walking for the first time after being told you never could.

The words didn’t trip anymore.

They walked beside me, calmly, like friends who had finally learned my pace.

And when I spoke, people listened differently — not because I was louder, but because I was present.

There was rhythm in my voice now — the rhythm I had learned from the piano, from the sea, from Aunt Nora’s laughter.

Speaking was no longer a battle.

It was a dance.

My parents noticed it before I did.

One evening at dinner, my mother put down her fork, looked at me, and said softly, “You don’t hesitate anymore, love.”

My father smiled, that quiet proud smile of his, and said, “Told you.

He just needed time to find his rhythm.”

And I remember feeling taller — not in height, but inside.

Like the space around my heart had grown a little bigger.

A week later, my teacher, Mrs.

Collins, asked our class the big question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

The room filled with answers.

“A firefighter!” someone shouted.

“An astronaut!” another said.

“Football player!”

When it was my turn, I hesitated for just a moment — not from fear this time, but from excitement.

Then I said, “I want to help people speak.”

The class went quiet for a second, then a few students smiled.

Mrs.

Collins said, “That’s a wonderful dream, Martin.”

And it was.

Because for me, speaking wasn’t just a skill — it was freedom.

And I wanted to give that freedom to others.

After school that day, I walked home alone, repeating my words out loud.

“I want to help people speak.”

It sounded powerful, almost like a promise.

I didn’t know how I would do it — I was just a boy with a tape recorder and a head full of sounds.

But deep down, I knew that words would always be my companions.

I didn’t fear them anymore.

They were no longer wild horses.

They were friends I had finally learned to ride.

That night, before bed, I played the piano one last time.

The same piano Aunt Nora had given us.

The same one I had played at her funeral.

I played slowly, softly, letting every note breathe.

Then, halfway through, I began to speak over the music — just small sentences, almost whispers.

“I am not afraid of words anymore.”

“I can speak.”

“I can listen.”

“I can understand.”

It felt like a conversation between my voice and the music — between who I had been, and who I was becoming.

And for the first time in my life, I liked the sound of my own voice.

Not because it was perfect, but because it was mine.

From that day on, I spoke everywhere — to my family, to my friends, to the sea, to my old tape recorder.

Sometimes I read poems.

Sometimes I told stories.

Sometimes I just talked nonsense for the joy of hearing myself talk.

Each word was like a step further away from fear.

Each sentence was a small victory.

And every time I finished speaking, I smiled — because I could still hear Aunt Nora's words echoing somewhere in my mind: "You're not slow, Martin.

You're careful with words.

And careful people make beautiful speakers."

I didn't know it then, but those years had already written the first chapter of my life as a teacher.

Because the boy who once stuttered now understood something that no textbook could ever teach:

That the most beautiful part of language isn't grammar or vocabulary — it's courage.

The courage to say something when your voice shakes.

The courage to keep speaking when you want to hide.

The courage to believe that what you have to say matters.

Looking back now, I can see how everything was connected.

The laughter of my grandparents.

The rhythm of the waves.

The hum of the old tape recorder.

The music from Aunt Nora's piano.

They all became part of my voice — a voice made not of perfection, but of patience.

And maybe that's what makes it mine.

Because I didn't learn to speak by practicing words.

I learned to speak by learning to listen.

To others.

To the world.

And to myself.

If you had told that shy, stuttering little boy that one day he would speak to thousands of people all over the world, he wouldn't have believed you.

He probably would have blushed, looked down, and whispered, "Not me."

But now, here I am — speaking to you, sharing my story, one slow sentence at a time.

And if my story can remind you of one thing, let it be this:

Your voice matters.

Even if it trembles.

Even if it takes time.

Even if it starts with silence.

Because silence, too, is part of the song.

(Soft piano fades in — the same melody from earlier episodes.)

That’s where my story begins.

A small boy, a stutter, a piano, a sea.

And the slow discovery that sometimes, the quietest voices are the ones that carry the furthest.

(Pause — music lingers.)

Thank you for listening to my childhood.

Next time, I’ll tell you about what happened when I left that small coastal town — and how the world began to teach me new languages, new rhythms, and new ways to listen.

Closing Reflections

Looking back now, I see that my childhood wasn’t about learning English.

It was about learning connection.

Every accent around me, every record, every hesitation — they built the foundation of who I am today.

I still remember my mother’s voice whispering when I couldn’t find mine:

“Words will come when they’re ready.”

She was right.

They did.

And now, here I am — speaking to you, thousands of miles away, hoping my words find their way to your heart.

(Soft piano music fades in.)

If you’ve ever struggled to express yourself — in English or in any language — remember this:

You don’t need to be perfect.

You just need to keep listening, breathing, and trying.

That’s how I began.

And maybe that’s how you’ll begin too.

(Music fades out.)