

Sound of Silence
By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

Elizabeth: (Sitting at Kitchen Table, Singing softly as Richard speaks)

Hello darkness, my old friend

I've come to talk with you again

Because a vision softly creeping

Left its seeds while I was sleeping

And the vision that was planted in my brain

Still remains (Hold Note)

Richard: I like coffee. (Mumbles echo) Coffee. It's so warm. So comforting on a cold morning. It gives me....hope. (mumbles echo) Hope.

Sorry. I'm not crazy. (Mumbles echo) Crazy. (Mumbles Echo) Crazy. Crazy. (whispers) Crazy.

(Gaining control. Reaffirming to self and Audience) I AM NOT CRAZY.

(Beat)

(Holds up coffee cup to Elizabeth)

(Holds coffee cup higher and closer to Elizabeth)

(Shakes head suddenly angry)

(Deep calming sigh. Tries to speak but nothing comes out.)

(Tries again to speak. No words, but a small grunt of sorts)

(Tries a third time, nothing comes out. He gets angry and slams the coffee cup down. Grabs his head in anguish. Let's out a small indistinguishable frustrated grunt).

Within the sound of silence

You want some more coffee honey?

Use your words.

Come on, I believe in you. (stepping a bit closer)

Oh! It is ok. You will remember. Someday, you will remember and your voice...well...your voice....(long pause). I will go get you another cup of coffee. (Grabs broken coffee cup and turn to get another cup of coffee for Richard)

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Elizabeth: (Throwing away old mug. Grabbing a rag and wiping up mess at the table. Making a new cup of coffee)

He wasn't always like this you know. The no talking.

I mean there was time, early in our marriage, when frankly the man would not shut up. (She laughs to herself). He talked all the time.

He could talk to a stranger. He could talk to the mailman. Heck, I use to joke \that he could even talk to a wall...but one day...he just...stopped talking all together...

(long pause).

Now. Well now (bringing him his coffee), I would give just about anything to hear his beautiful voice again.

(beat).

I would give anything....

The doctors said...there could have been any number of things that put Richard in his current...um...(weak smile) state.

Stress maybe.

The doctors said there had to be a reason, something traumatic. Something tragic that happened

You see, we had a daughter once...

Julianna. (Shakes her head again. Sits at chair at kitchen table. Holds Richard's hand). My beautiful Julianna.

Richard: (singing with head down and between his hands):

'Neath the halo of a street lamp

I turned my collar to the cold and damp

When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light

That split the night

And touched the sound (hold note)

of silence

I know why (mumbles echo) I know (mumbles echo) why.

It wasn't stress

(Changing mood) Child. Children....Our child

No, don't. Elizabeth, please...

Please, please, Oh my gosh, please don't bring this up...

NOOOO!!!

People talking without speaking

People hearing without listening

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Elizabeth:

Richard:

(Long pause)

I know it is pretty typical for a mother to say that a father loved his daughter. Of course he did, But with Richard, it was so much more than that. He did not just love Julianna, PJ (laugh outloud)...he called her PJ, short for (Princess Julianna)...

He thought of her as his princess...his fairy tale daughter...the way he loved her and smothered her all the time with hugs and kisses and hugs and kisses and...

And no one dared

Disturb the sound (hold note or pause)

of silence

Princess, she was my princess, but the dragons came! (Starting to softy cry). Why wasn't my sword sharp enough Julianna, why!? WHY!?

People writing songs that voices never shared

PJ I am so, so sorry.

My sword wasn't sharp enough and the dragons came. (more tears).

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Elizabeth: I try not to remember...you know..the day I
lost her...

It was just something that happened.. Not his fault...

Nothing that could have been done...It just....

Happened....

Richard:

"Fools" said I, "You do not know

She blames me you know? Oh she will never say it, but
she does. And SHE SHOULD.

Silence like a cancer grows

My sword wasn't sharp enough, and the dragons came..

Hear my words that I might teach you

Can't... Can't... Can't... move. (Whispers) Can't do
anything, but watch, as the dragons come...and your
princess is in DANGER... she needs me... SHE NEEDS
ME.(long pause)... needed... me..

Take my arms that I might reach you"

But it's too late now. What is done, is done. And I am
done, because...she is DONE.

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Elizabeth: (Crossing Down Center) I was always a bit jealous of the connection they had...laughing, playing, simply being them.

(Wrings hands) So...I “decided we needed to go shopping.” We really didn’t need anything, it certainly could’ve waited...it should have waited.

No one wanted to go, why would they. They were having a great time...without me...BUT, I insisted

I insisted.

So we went.

Then, the unthinkable happened.. It really had nothing to do with us, just bad timing. Wrong place, wrong time.

You see, when someone is angry enough to try to kill another person, he does not care who gets in the way. But, we were in the way.

LONG PAUSE

PJ was in the way.

Richard:

But my words, like silent raindrops fell

And echoed in the wells of silence

It wasn’t your fault; it was mine

(Echoes) Unthinkable

(Echoes) Wrong place, wrong time.

NO!

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Elizabeth: Neither of us could move.

We both just froze.

We simply froze in fear. And

She paid the price.

The bullet sent from the gun of a stranger, meant for
another stranger, for reasons I do not even care about

found our poor daughter instead. And I did....and I s
NOTHING!

And since that day, I lost more than just my daughter

Slowly, I lost him too.

He eats and breathes, sleeps, but he says nothing

Does he blame me? He can not blame me more than I
blame myself!

Does he blame himself and only himself. Like it was all
his fault? Alone?

Richard:

Why couldn't I move? I had to move. She needed me!

I know my wife would freeze, but not me.

It was my job, my duty, my responsibility as a husband
and a father to move! To save them. MOVE DAMN IT!

But when it mattered most. When the people that mattered
the most to me needed me, I mean, really needed me....

I couldn't. I didn't. I simply said...

NOTHING!

I said nothing.

I said nothing.

I will say nothing.

It's my fault

My Fault (echoes) MY fault (echoes) MY FAULT!

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Elizabeth: (To Richard, moving toward him) Richard, do you somehow think her death, Julianna's death is somehow all on you?

You know that is crazy right? You know that is not true.

(Following Richard) I am the one who wanted to go to the store remember? Me!

(Cross behind Richard) I was jealous of you two, of you and Julianna.

(Holding Richard) I was jealous of my husband and daughter and the love they had for each other. And my stupidity made us leave and I...

I...

I Killed Julianna!

(Disbelief) What?

You talked!

Oh honey, you were not weak. You were never weak!

Richard:

(Richard stands and tries to speak but nothing will come out.)

(Tries to speak but cannot).

(Tries to speak but cannot).

(Cross down left, frustrated)

(More frustrated, cross down right)

(Turns to Elizabeth, tries to speak, but only a small sound escapes)

(Weakly finally say) PJ

PJ. I called her PJ. Princess Julianna

Her name was PJ and I couldn't do anything. Weak. So Weak!

I was! I was, don't you see that? She's dead, she's gone forever and IT'S MY! FAULT!

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Elizabeth:

No, no sometimes the world is just cruel and unfair.
Richard (making him look at her) how can you say that?
How can you say it is all your fault, when I was the one
who wanted to go to the store, simply to break you to up!
Because I was jealous. How sad and stupid is that? How
sad and stupid am I!

Me either.

Were silent, so...I ..

Right.

Are to blame?

And we will simply have to learn to live with that, but we
will need to learn how to do so....together

And echo the sound of silence

Richard: It is though. Don't you see that. I was my job.
My responsibility to protect her and what did I do?

What did I do when it mattered the most?

Nothing!

That is right! I did absolutely NOTHING!

I could not move. I could not EVEN SPEAK!

And she died.

Because of me, she is dead and I will never ever see her
again and it is my fault. MINE!

All this time..I had no idea.

All this time, you needed me and I...

Blamed yourself and only yourself.

In the end, I guess...I guess...we both..

Right!

...together

And echo the sound of silence