

Echo the Sounds of Silence

By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

Elizabeth: (Back to audience and upstage of Richard.)

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)

Within the sound of silence

You want more coffee honey?

Use your words.

Honey, use your words

Use your words, you can do it. (stepping a bit closer)

Come on, I have faith in you!

Oh dear! Oh my. (moving to him). You have broken your favorite coffee cup my darling. (Grabs his head and lifts his face to look at her). It is ok. You will remember. Someday, you will remember and your voice...well...your voice....(long pause). I will get you another cup of coffee. (Grabs broken coffee cup and turn to get another cup of coffee for Richard)

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

I like coffee. (Mumbles echo) I like coffee. (Mumble echo) Coffee. It is so warm. So comforting. On a cold morning, is give me....hope (mumbles echo) Hope

Sorry. I am not crazy. (Mumbles echo) Not crazy. (Mumbles Echo) Crazy. Crazy. (whispers) Crazy.

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

(Beat)

Select Mutism. (Chuckles to Self) That is what the doctor told me (looks over shoulder at Elizabeth), us...told us.

According to ASHA: "Selective mutism is a complex anxiety disorder that affects pragmatic language. Despite the term "selective," individuals with selective mutism do not elect where to speak but are more comfortable speaking in select situations."

Doctors? What a laugh. They have no real clue. Just read something in a journal. (Shaking his) Or sometimes the (sarcastically) SELECT not to be able to speak at all.

That's me (takes a final drink of coffee). I simply can not speak out loud anymore.

(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).

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By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

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). Would or couldn't shut up. He talked all the time. Dear me...all the time. I use to say:

(Getting sharper as she speaks) "Richard, my dear god, will you please shut up for a moment darling? Please. For heaven's sake I just need get a word in edge wise sometimes. For the love of that is holy, could you please stop talking, you are making my head hurt!!!

(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...

The doctors said...

(Overly polite to Richard) Yes dear. (Then to audience again) The doctors said...

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

Stress maybe.

Maybe, well maybe...oh I do know. I mean, we don't know what caused it.

Usually, this is a condition found mostly in children..

But Richard could always talk. No problem. He could talk to a stranger. He could talk to the mailman. Heck, I use to joke with him that he could even talk to a wall...but one day...he just...stopped talking all together...

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

In restless dreams, I walked alone

Narrow streets of cobblestone

'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

Honey, you don't have to tell

Honey, you don't have to tell them about...(Loud Grunt)...damn...I hear the words in my head....YOU CAN HEAR THEM RIGHT?...but when I try to say something to hear... all that comes out is...(Loud inaudible grunts).

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

It wasn't stress

I know why. Please don't make me say it aloud..

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

There was a reason... there is a reason...I just can't....

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By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

Elizabeth: The doctor says there had to be a reason, something traumatic. Something traumatic? (Laughs softly but sadly). Something tragic that happened.

(Shake head) Hm. Well that is the easy part to figure out. The tragedy that is..

That part

is

sadly very easy to pinpoint.

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.

(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)...

Well, I guess that sums up pretty well how he felt about her. Richard didn't not just love PJ, 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...

Well, let's just say there has never been a father who loved his child, his Princess Julianna, more than Richard.

(Chucks to self) I use to joke, well kinda, that if push come to shove, though I never doubted the Richard loved me, he really did love, well, loves, me. I have every confidence that he loves me, but if push come to shove

Richard would use me as a shield to protect his baby girl.

Oh, I know, that sounds horrible, right?

It isn't. Not at all. He just loves, sorry..loved, her that much

You see, that is what I mean...I have no doubt what the traumatic event was that changed my dear husband, I just don't know how to help him...speak!

Richard: (Turning away when "Speaking" turning toward Elizabeth with muffled mute grunts when trying to make here hear): No, don't. Elizabeth, please...

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

And in the naked light, I saw

Ten thousand people, maybe more

NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

People talking without speaking

Princess, she was my princess, but the dragons came! The dragons came. (Starting to softly cry). Why was my sword now sharp enough Julianna, why! WHY!

PJ I am so, so sorry.

People hearing without listening

The dragons came. (more tears). Why was my sword now sharp enough Julianna, why! WHY!

People writing songs that voices never shared

And no one dared

Disturb the sound (hold note or pause)

of silence

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Elizabeth: (Getting up, crossing behind Richard):
Well love, you have not even toughed this coffee. Now it
is cold. Want me to freshen it up?

No? That's ok. It is getting a bit late in the day for coffee.
(Takes the cup to the sink. Slowly pours it out as she
thinks back. LONG PAUSE Raising the coffee cup and
staring at it).

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

But that's the funny thing about grief. (Laughs out loud)
Grief? What a stupid word that does not even begin to
cover the pain a mother feels for losing her child and

Maybe even her husband...

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

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

Happened....

And now, I think I am losing him too.

I can not bear the thought of being alone....even more
alone than I am now...

I keep replaying the events of that day

Funny enough

Richard: Stares straight ahead. No emotions on his face.

(Looking at Elizabeth): This is the part I hate. Look at
here. She is so lost.

So

Lost.

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

My sword was not sharp enough, and the dragons came..

Oh, do the dragons have such sharp teeth

Strong wings that beat the air

And fire for breath....(echos) FIRE FOR BREATH that
sucks the very air out of your lungs so that you can not
breath

Can not Move...Can not...(echo) Can not...Can
not....Can not.. Can Not..

(Whispers)

Do anything, but watch (echo) watch....Watch your
princess....(echo) watch your princess...as the dragons
come...and your princess is in DANGER...(echo) in
DANGER..she needs me....(echo) needs me....needs
me.....(long pause).....NEEDED ME.

It is too late now. What is done, is done. I am done,
because...she is

DONE.

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By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

Elizabeth: (Crossing Down Center) The funny thing is, it was my idea to store. We really didn't need anything. It certainly could have waited.

Looking back, it should have waited. But it didn't. I didn't

He didn't want to go. He and PJ were happily playing dress up.

Dear God, she loved to play dress up and my loving, goofy, always talking husband was always happy to play along with his...his PJ.

So there they were, all dressed up like a knight and a damsel in dress.. (Laugh to herself)...she even talked Richard into wearing makeup.. They were both such a sight...so cute.

Could I leave that alone...no...apparently, I could not...I could not.

(Shaking head). If I am being honest, and I guess there is no reason not to, If I am being honest, as was always a bit jealous of the closeness my husband had with my daughter.

I guess, looking back, I was actually a lot jealous at the time they spent so closely together playing, laughing, signing, dancing, simply being them...

(Wrings hands) So...I "decided we needed to go shopping." 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. Well, we were in the way. More specifically

LONG PAUSE

PJ was in the way.

Richard:

"Fools" said I, "You do not know

Silence like a cancer grows

Hear my words that I might teach you

Take my arms that I might reach you"

But my words, like silent raindrops fell

And echoed in the wells of silence

It wasn't you fault; it was mine

(Echoes) Unthinkable

(Echoes) Wrong place, wrong time.

My sword was not sharp enough, and the dragons came..

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By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

Elizabeth: Neither of us could move.

We both just froze.

Froze. I can not, even today, even after months of therapy,
months of talking, talking, talking to anyone who would
listen

Even after all of that, I can still not understand why I
couldn't, why neither of us, could not move.

We simply froze in fear. And

She

Paid the price.

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

The loan bullet meant for that other man, a man who sadly
was standing behind up,

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 dad to
move! To save them. MOVE DAMN IT!

In that brief moment, I prayed. I actually prayed to move
to do something. Maybe yell..

(Almost as a prayer)

And the people bowed and prayed

To the neon god they made

And the sign flashed out its warning

In the words that it was forming

*Then the sign said, "The words on the prophets are written
on the subway walls*

In tenement halls"

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

I could not. I did not. I simply said...

NOTHING!

I said nothing.

I said nothing.

I will say nothing.

It is my fault

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

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By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

Elizabeth: To Richard, moving toward him). You know, it's not your fault.

It was my idea to go to the store. Not yours. We didn't even need anything.

I was just...I don't know... I just wanted to get out of the house for a bit.

Richard, it is not your fault! I mean it!

(Crossing to Richard) Is that why you will not talk to me...to anyone?

(Follows 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 leave remember? Me!

If anything, it's my fault. MY FAULT.

I was bored...I was...ok. Fine. That's a lie. It has always been a lie.

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

(Holding Richard) Is that what you need to hear. I was jealous of my husband and daughter and the love they had for each other. And my stupidity make us leave and

And

And

Killed Julianna!

(Disbelief) What?

Oh my God. Oh my God. 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)

(Growing more frustrated cross up of Table)

(Tries to talk, can't, angrily flips table)

(Cross below table and falls to knew)

(Can't say anything, getting weaker)

(Can't say anything, getting weaker)

(Can't say anything, getting weaker)

(Weakly finally say) PJ

PJ. I called her PJ. Princess Julianna

Her name was PJ and I could do anything. The dragons got her and I was not strong enough to stop them .

Weak. So Weak!

I was, I was. And she die. I lost her. I lost her forever!

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By: Dr. M. Shane Heard

Elizabeth: No it is not your fault. It just happens.
Sometimes life is just cruel and unfair.

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!

That's me! Crazy! Insane.

Richard that is crazy that is insane!

That is not what I meant and you know it!
You froze yes, but we both froze and it happened so fast.

Besides, if anyone is to blame for her dying...it is me!

You? How the hell could it be your fault? It was my job to
protect her, and I failed. I failed you and I failed her! And
she is dead. Don't you get it? She is dead and that is on me
alone!

Richard (making him look at her) how can you say that?
How can you say it is all your fault, when we would not
have even been there if it was not for me being stupid and
selfish and wanting to go to the story simply to break you
two up? Because I was jealous of how much she loved you
and how much you loved. Her. I did it all out of jealousy!

No. It is not your fault.

How sad and stupid is that? How sad and stupid am I, was
I? If anyone is to blame dear, that falls on me. Not you!

Oh. Wow. All this time..I had no idea.

Me either.

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

Were silent. You would never speak to me, so...I ..

Blamed yourself and only yourself.

Right.

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

Are to blame?

Right!

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

...together

And echo the sound of silence

And echo the sound of silence