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Sound of Silence

R. J. Davies



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Contact through <https://rjdavies.ca>

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Day 423, we have grown accustomed to the silence, at least some of us have. In the first month there were so many deaths, accidents, murders, suicides, the numbers were staggering. Not everyone was built for silence. For the rest of us, we adapt and carry on with everyday life. It wasn't easy and many still suffered with mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, but we've managed to keep going.

The sun is shining poking its nose through the slit of curtains casting its mark across the room as if screaming a cheery hello. My mind screams, 'fuck off sun!'

I don't want to move the bed is soft and warm. I was having an amazing dream where I was sitting in a movie theater watching a car chase, no there was no sound even in my dreams. I remember the sound of screeching tires, I remember the theater's noises of a good chase and gun fight, the soft music that played when the guy kissed the girl, happy endings. I just don't want to move. The ceiling light flashes three times. I know I must get up and go to work.

Stretching and groaning I don't want to move. I can't hear myself moaning but I can feel the vibrations in my body, which is as good as it gets these days. Stretching a couple more times I must join the real world and get my ass to work. Ahhh that feels good. Closing my eyes and rolling over to the edge of the bed I open them to have the alarm clock stare back at me 07:01 AM. Throwing the blankets back I swing my legs off the bed. The shocking feeling of the cold wooden floors sends shivers up my legs to my spine as my feet press against the uninviting floorboards.

Seconds later I'm standing in front of the bathroom mirror and the water splashes into the sink, I turn the pressure down a bit and proceed to brush my teeth. No one still knows why all the sound has been sucked out of air, some scientists theorized this and that, but no solid leads. Between an alien attack and government experiments there was just no conclusive answers to it. Just everyone, including animals, have lost their hearing or the ability to hear. If a tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound? I laugh and spit my toothpaste in the sink. Rinse and pat dry my mouth after spitting again. Quickly I brushed my hair and head downstairs to find breakfast waiting for me. Vera had made me breakfast before she disappeared upstairs to find solace in our warm bed. She works the night shift at the hospital as a nurse; she's head emergency nurse and sees a lot of things that she doesn't talk about. She thinks she's shielding me, but I can see it in her eyes. I also understand I work for the city tracking glitches in our system, I work in cybersecurity. It pays the bills, and I don't have to deal with too many people, which is my reward for being good at what I do.

Twenty minutes later I've eaten and dressed, grabbing my packed lunch that is sitting in a brown paper bag on the counter I head off to work. With no sense of hearing, it has made me more alert of my surroundings. As I step outside, I scan the area. My neighbours are up and seeing their children off on the school bus, another neighbour is out running. The street is pretty quiet and after I am sure it's clear I go to my car and get in. I seatbelt myself in and turn the car on, by pressing the start button. I see the lights turn on and I know I have power. Looking in all my mirrors and over my shoulder several times, I pull out slowly and proceed driving myself to work.

People have become more cautious; there are less speeders and less road rage at least. That saying you don't know what you've got until it's gone, yeah, I think the whole world can

collectively agree on that note. You don't realize how much you miss noise, but when you have only silence, it's like swimming in a sea of quicksand. Screaming for help and no one can hear you because no one can hear you. Can't hear music, traffic, noise at construction sites, crying, laughing, singing, nothing. Drowning in a sea of nothing. It's a short uneventful drive to work, I miss the radio on my way to work, Molly and Mitch in the morning with their quirky stories and upbeat music to get you ready for the workday. It made the drive seem faster, parking in my parking space I lock my car and head over to my office. Security nods and waves to me, I nod and wave back.

Sitting at my desk, the TV is on, we have become accustomed to closed captions. Sipping my coffee, I start running my compilations, checking my emails and the news online. Sitting back and looking up I see "BREAKING NEWS! ... CHINA is reporting that they can hear again! Other parts of the world in that hemisphere are reporting that they have sound back! Could we be next?"

"What the hell?" I ask the empty quiet room; my words make no noise.

Tom, a good friend and coworker, bursts into the room and points excitedly at the TV screen with tears in his eyes. I stand up and nod vigorously to acknowledge I have seen the news too. He comes running over to me and hugs me. Talking a mile, a minute with tears streaming down his cheeks. I felt my cheeks get wet too as I stare blurry eyes at the TV screen. Before we knew it, there were twenty other co-workers piled into my little office space, and we are speculating when we will be next.

Unfortunately, three weeks passed and only one side of the world got sound back. The Northern and Southern American side of the planet didn't. The best part was if you traveled overseas on the Eastern side of the planet you could hear again. Sound was in abundance and

spilling over like waterfall. This just completely baffled the western side of the world; scientist began to theorize that it was intentional and that it was a government coverup that China or Russia had been doing experiments and something went wrong but they were able to correct it on their side of the world. Chaos ensued on our side of the world, people couldn't take it, acts of violence went on the rise, murders and suicides went up again. Vera was working overtime, double shifts here and there and when she came home, she was exhausted and went straight to bed. Just as we had got a handle on our lives, we went plunging into another spiral of despair. Why was that side of the world so blessed?

Sitting at my desk, staring at the screen with the live news coverage running. I wondered if it was a government experiment? It made sense they were always dinking around in things they shouldn't be, playing God and such. It didn't make sense that it was an alien invasion, over a year of silence and no aliens sightings, there were no demands, no aliens standing on the grass outside of parliament with demands or threats. One scientist thought it could have been related to a meteor shower? If so, how did only half of the planet get sound back and not the other half?

“BREAKING NEWS! Power outage in all of China ... reports are coming in from India, and Russia as well. Complete power outage in the northern parts ...”

Grinning, take that! Get sound back and then no power! The lights flickered. My eyes went wide.

“The power outage is spreading...”

The lights flickered again and then everything went dark. Getting up, I groaned on the inside and headed out into the hallway. Even the backup power generator wasn't working. Nothing but darkness. Feeling my way along, I found other people doing the same thing. We stumbled along the dark hallway, taking it slow, coming to the stairwell, we cautiously found the

stairs and filed down. It wasn't long before I found myself with my coworkers all standing outside on the sidewalk. Checking my phone that I found in my pocket along with my keys and wallet, there was no power on that as well. Others were reporting their phones were dead as well. The streets were full of confused people, all coming out of their offices into the city streets. The buildings, streets lights, cell phones, anything with power, including cars, were all dead. Then the clouds started rolling in. Thunder rumbled in the distance; I held my breath as I looked up at the skies. Did I just hear thunder? Looking around at my coworkers, their eyes wide as they looked up at the darkened skies.

A loud pop, and then there was noise! When we realized we could hear again, we were all dancing and laughing and shouting. My co-worker Charlie, with tears streaming down his cheeks hugged me lifting me off the ground.

“Tony!”

“Charlie!”

We laughed and cried. The rain came down and everyone in the streets were too busy celebrating that we could hear the rain coming down, splashing against the hot dry pavement, against the buildings and the steps. People were cheering and talking just to be heard. Why and how? We didn't care! We just didn't care! We could hear ourselves, the people around us again it was a miracle!

I walked home since the car wouldn't run. It was a 15-minute drive but took me forty-five minutes to walk home, in the rain. It didn't let up even as I walked up the street to my home. Everything was dark, I found Vera in the kitchen. She looked at me and smiled.

“Got caught in the rain?” she asked.

I nodded and grin, “Yes, I did. Aren't you a sight for sore ears.”

Tears slid down her cheeks as she came rushing over to me and hugged me, kissing me she laughed. “I never thought I would hear your voice again. Or mine,” she giggled.

“I know,” I hugged and kissed her back. “It seems we traded one thing in for another.”

“Yeah, no power. It’s out everywhere. It’s strange but even the things that run on battery are not working too.” She pulled away as her eyes narrowed and frown creased her forehead.

“It’s not normal, that’s for sure. But let’s face it we have survived not normal already,” I smiled at her reassuringly.

“I’m so happy my ears work again.” She went over and poured a large steaming cup of tea. We have a gas stove, and it works in every condition. Sitting down in the kitchen she prattles on about the neighbours and how she should go into work. They were probably swamped. I told her not today. I wanted her to stay home for the next twenty-four hours. It would take her too long to get there anyways; she worked an hour’s drive away. It just wasn’t feasible. She began to protest but finally agreed. We took our tea and snuggled up on the sofa. It was a weird power outage, but power outages normally didn’t last long. Whatever caused it, the city would be on top of it and working to get things back up and running in no time.

The rain stopped, and the sun came back out. It was later in the day, hours passed. I got my shoes on and stepped outside. The air smelled like lilacs, and it wasn’t that time of year, the air felt sticky and charged with energy. The little hairs on the back of my neck were standing on end. Something was amiss, something bad was about to happen, I could feel it deep in my bones. Swallowing hard, Vera came up behind me. Hugging me around the waist. God, she felt so good.

“What do you think it is?” she asked.

“What?”

“That?” She took one hand and pointed up to the clouds behind me.

Looking up, the clouds were drifting off and a few seconds later revealing a weird shiny object in the sky. It wasn't small, whatever it is. It was huge, we're talking about the size of a small city huge. My mouth fell open. It wasn't like anything I had ever seen in my life. I had to blink a few times, rubbed my eyes, and gape again. What the hell was it?

My neighbour Boris saw it too. "ALIENS!" Boris screamed, running back into his house. A few other neighbours had the same idea as Boris.

"What the hell? No noise, a power outage and maybe aliens?" Vera stared at the object in the sky. I turned around and hugged her close to me.

"We will get through this. Let's pack all essentials and head up to the cabin."

"The cabin? It'll take us days walking there," she looked deflated.

"Hey," I looked down at her and kissed her nose then her forehead. "As long as I have you by my side, I am up for any adventure. But I have a feeling, things aren't going to be safe for us here in the city."

Frowning she looked back up to the sky and then to me, nodding. "It can't get any worse, right?"

I laughed, "Famous last words."

"I go start packing." She stretched up on her tippy toes and kissed my cheek. Turning, she headed back into the house as I slapped her butt.

Alien invasion the whole time? Well, they were patient fuckers I'll give them that. Nope, we weren't going to be easy for the taking.