

## Speechless

As the curtain goes up, I take a deep breath. I am about to dance in front of the whole world! The music starts, and I take my first pose. Then I arabesque, and dance like I never will again. As the music slows down, I end in my last position. The crowd goes wild! People give me a standing ovation, they love me!

I hold onto the tiniest, smallest piece of that dream. I open my eyes, and let that piece go. I smile. Then I remember what today is. It's Sunday, and I have an appointment.

I cling to my father as I enter the building. I don't know where we are going, who we are going to see, or what we are going to do. We go to the elevator, and dad presses the level 3 button. As the doors open, all I see is a long, long hallway. A hospital-like hallway; white washed walls, doors on both sides, and a cold, tile floor. Immediately, I know I will not like it here. It reminds me too much of when... I stop, knowing that memory will only lead to tears. We walk down the hall, stopping at about the 12th door. Dad opens it, and pushes me in. It looks like a doctor's office. A man at the desk stands up, and asks if my name is Hannah O'Brien. Dad nods his head. Then the man comes up to me, and asks if I would like a lollypop. How old does he think I am? I accept it anyway. Then this stranger, who I have never seen before, takes my hand, and leads me into another room, behind the desk. There is a table, and two chairs. He sits down in one, and gestures for me to sit in the other. I stay standing. He tells me his name is Mr. Harrison. I say nothing. He shrugs, and starts asking me questions.

"How old are you? Where do you live? What school do you go to? Do you like it there? What are your friend's names? What is something interesting about you?"

I stand there in silence, letting him finish. Then he asks one more question...

"Why do you not speak?"

I shrug, knowing he will never find out. I haven't said one word, not one sound has come out of my mouth, since that day, four years ago.

We were in the car, driving to my dance class, doing one of our favourite things, making stories, with random objects we saw on the streets. Then we heard a car screech, and I looked behind us, only to see a truck coming towards us, and showing no signs of stopping. I shouted to my mom,

telling her to move the car, so we didn't get hit. She had no way of doing this. I was in the back seat, and wasn't on the the side of the road where the truck was. As it hit the car, I remember screaming. The car was suddenly upside down. We were stuck. What was probably minutes seemed like hours. The firemen, police, and ambulance people were all there. They cut through the car to get us out. I was mostly okay, but my mom looked a mess. There was blood all over her, and her left leg was sticking out at a strange angle. They took us into the ambulance, and performed an emergency operation on mom as soon as we got to the hospital, but they weren't able to save her. My left arm was broken, but that was the worst of the damage. Ever since, I have not spoken, have not told anyone what really happened on that day.

The strange man keeps on asking questions, bribing me with chocolate and candy, but I still do not answer him. After about an hour, he gives up, and takes me back to dad. Car rides are now in silence, unless my brother and sister are in the car. Then it is loud, and annoying. Dad takes me to get ice cream, and tells me I am going back next week. Oh well.

The next day is school. I go to the grade 1 class, with the 6 year olds. The teacher has given up on trying to make me talk, and lets me read my book at the back of the classroom, while the kids practise their reading. At break time I go outside, bracing myself for the taunts from the 3rd graders. "BABY! Why are you with the little kids? STUPID! You can't even say the alphabet! Are you going to answer me? Rude!!"

These come from the kids my age, who don't know what happened. I have been put with the little kids because I don't speak. All the kids my age tease me about this. Everyday, all year.

The week goes on the same, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. On Sunday, I go to that man again. This time, there is another girl there. She looks about the same age. Mr. Harrison introduces her as Daisy. Then he brings both of us to that room. This time, there are three chairs. We both stay standing. He asks Daisy the same questions he asked me.

"How old are you? Where do you live? What school do you go to? What grade are you in? Do you like it there? What are your friend's names? What is something interesting about you?"

The difference this time, is that she actually answers.

“I am eight years old. I live two blocks away. I go to Pegasus Elementary School. I am in grade three. I do like it there. I have two best friends. Their names are Ellie and Sophie. My dad is dead. Why are you asking me these questions?”

I look at her. She said her dad is dead. My mom is dead. Maybe we could be friends. As soon as that thought enters my mind, it flutters away again. What am I thinking? Of course we can't be friends. I don't talk. Then Daisy turns to me, and says, “What's your name?”

I have to think quickly. I decide to try something. I sign my name out in sign language. The look of surprise on her face makes me feel bad. But then, she signs back, ‘Nice to meet you Hannah! I hope we can become friends.’

Wait. What? Did she just used sign language!? Have I actually found someone I can speak to? I smile at her, and she returns it. Then we turn to Mr. Harrison. His surprise is written all over his face. We both start laughing, even though mine is silent.

Dear Diary,

This is the first time I have used you! My name is Daisy Wilson, and I am 8 years old. Today Mom made me go to the Speech Therapist. URGH! There is nothing wrong with my speech, I just prefer to use sign language.

When we got to the building, Mom lead me to the elevator. She pressed the level 3 button. It took us to a level with only a long, long, long, white, hallway, that reminded me of the hospital Dad was in. He died 4 years ago, of cancer. Mom will not talk about him, no matter why I am asking, or what I want to know. Anyway, she took me to the door that said ‘Mr. David Harrison, Therapist of Speech’. Fancy. I sat down, and Mom left for work. The man behind the desk, who I'm guessing was Mr. Harrison, asked my name. I told him it was Daisy Katherine Wilson. He mumbled something that I didn't catch. I waited for a bit longer, maybe 15 minutes, before another girl came in with her dad. He dropped her off and left. I guess parents didn't want to be there. Mr. Harrison took us to a little room. There was a small, round table, and three chairs. He told us to sit down. I stayed standing. So did the other girl. I looked at her. She seemed to be about my age. Then Mr. Harrison started asking me questions.

“How old are you? Where do you live? What school do you go to? What grade are you in? Do you like it there? What are your friend's names? What is something interesting about you?”

I thought about it a bit and then answered,

“I am eight years old. I live two blocks away. I go to Pegasus Elementary School. I am in grade three. I do like it there. I have two best friends. Their names are Ellie and Sophie. My dad is dead. Why are you asking me these questions?”

Then I turned to the girl and asked her what her name is. She looked at me hesitantly, and then, out of all the things she could have done, SHE SIGNED TO ME. SHE USED SIGN LANGUAGE TO SPELL OUT HER NAME, which I learned was Hannah. I signed back to her, ‘Nice to meet you Hannah! I hope we can become friends.’ Then we both smiled, and turned back to Mr. Harrison, who was staring at us like we came from planet Mars. We both laughed. Hannah’s laugh was silent. Maybe she couldn’t speak, or make sound. I asked her why she was there. She told me her Mom died in a car crash 4 years ago, and hasn’t said a word since. I felt so sad. I told her my dad also died 4 years ago. She asked me why I was so happy, so I told her that my dad wouldn’t have wanted me to live my life sad, he would have told me to be happy, and live life to the fullest, not to dwell on his death. After that she looked at me in a new way.

xoxo Daisy

Dear Diary,

It had been a week since the last Speech Therapy appointment. I had another one today. I hoped Hannah would be there.

When I opened the door, I saw that she was! I went up to her, and gave her a hug. She looked surprised about that. Then, guess what she did!? She said

“Hi, Daisy!”

WHOA! Her first words in 4 years were ‘Hi Daisy’!!! That’s so cool.

I asked her if she wants to come over to my house after the appointment. She said okay! So, after Mr. Harrison talked to us, and told Hannah how proud he was of her, Hannah came back to my house. We went swimming, and I had the most fun I had had in a long time. We decided to use sign language, because it was more comfortable for both of us. I was so proud of her.

I have made a new friend, and she lives one block away.

Next time I write I will have more news about this!

xoxo Daisy