

The Sound of Silence

I was just five years old when I discovered I had the power.

We sat silently in the dull, white hospital room. Mother had warned me prior to the visit that Grandad was not the same any more. He *couldn't* talk, he *couldn't* laugh, he *couldn't* smile. He would be different. I tried my best to convince her that Grandad could and did talk but she offered me no answers to my endless questions. I couldn't help but examine the stranger that had adopted Grandad's body.

One side of the body drooped, in such a way that seemed truly out of character for a sharp man, a hero, like my Grandad. His face also slouched at one side, and reminded me of the cartoon character 'Droopy', a wrinkled little hound dog. I watched the robot beside Grandad's bed, I wondered if anyone else had noticed it, no one seemed to be interested. It beeped rhythmically and a little red line made its way across its face at a steady rate. I listened intently to the beeps, but I couldn't understand what it was saying. It must only speak to Grandads.

Much silence followed. Grandad did not respond to any of mother's questions, however, she continued talking. I tucked my knees into myself protectively and let my heavy head rest upon them. The pattern of the robot soon became a lullaby and I allowed my eyes to close. Of course, I wasn't sleeping, I was just 'resting my eyes' as mother often did.

"I feel like that too little man" A familiar voice chortled.

I *knew* that he could talk. I giggled and opened my eyes. Grandad lay motionless.

"Is there something funny?" Mother seethed.

"Grandad," I smiled.

Her eyes widened.

"How dare you say such a thing, you silly boy."

She tried to shout, but she didn't seem to have the energy. I shuffled my glance towards the floor and nodded, confused by my thoughts.

"Hey, chin up soldier." Grandad said softly. I sneaked my eyes back up to him and he returned my stare.

"Did you have a fight? I think you should say sorry, it usually works" I whispered.

Mother stopped abruptly mid-sentence. "Have a fight? Who are you talking to?" she said angrily.

"Grandad. Well he's talking to me." I mumbled again.

Suddenly, a hard slap struck my leg and instantly, tears pricked in my eyes. I looked up at mother, who also had tears in her eyes.

"Just... Just wait outside please." she sighed.

I opened my mouth to debate, but decided against this, and made my way out of the room, ignoring the protests of Grandad spinning inside my mind.

The corridors were a blur of noise. However a desperate, unfamiliar voice rang clearer than a bell.

"Help, help me please." I looked through the window of the next room where an old woman lay.

The doctors made no advance to help her, and suddenly I realised her eyes were focusing on me.

This is when I realised I had the power.

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Age 14.