

“The Voices”

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“Arrrgghhhh!” The loud scream woke Sam from his sleep. He sat up and flipped on the light next to his bed. A quick glance at the clock on his dresser told him it was five o’clock in the morning.

It took him a frantic moment to figure out what it was that had woke him. It had been a scream. His own scream, he realized. He thought for a moment as to what had caused a scream frightening enough to wake him up.

The car crash. The fire. His family dying in the horrible blaze. The images came rushing back into his brain moments before the realization did. The realization that it had been a dream and not real. It had been a vivid dream. It had seemed eerily real, but it had been a dream. Only a dream.

He lay back in his bed and concentrated on relaxing. He still had an hour and a half before his alarm would go off for school. He had enough trouble today, what with his math test and all, so worrying about a bad dream was the last thing he wanted to do.

But man! It had seemed so real. It had really spooked him. He could almost feel the heat from the fire. Hear the screams of his family trapped in the burning wreckage. Smell the icky fumes of burning rubber from the inside of the car mixed with the other smells he couldn’t quite place and didn’t want to. A smell that reminded him of summer barbecues for some reason. And he knew he didn’t like it.

No! He shook his head and tried to clear the disturbing images from his mind. This wasn’t helping. He turned off his bedside lamp and rolled over to go to sleep.

In the quiet of his house, he could hear his own breathing, the dog, Nevada, snuffling around downstairs, and the creaks of the house in the night. But it was then, at that quiet moment in the middle of the night, he heard the voices for the first time. They were soft and foggy, but they were definitely there, and it scared him so badly that he wished he was dreaming again.

“We’re coming!”

And then another voice, louder and much clearer, “DEAD!”

His eyes hurt. He was sitting in his first period science class and couldn’t believe his bad luck. Mrs. Larks was droning on and on in the front of the room, something about cells and membranes when his eyes kept bursting into flames.

Well, not actual flames, but it sure felt pretty close. He was just sitting there trying not to get called on, trying not to think about what a horrible morning he had had, when all of a sudden his vision went completely white and he could feel an odd pressure on his eyelids.

And then it was gone. Nothing. He could see just fine without a problem. No residual stars in his vision, no need to blink to clear his eyes. The whiteness was gone as quickly as it had come.

Sam quickly looked around to see if anyone else had noticed the burst of whiteness, or if it had just been him. But nobody else seemed to be having a problem. He was looking to his left to see if Trevor had noticed it, when his left eye burst into flaming whiteness.

This time he noticed it didn’t actually hurt. It had just startled him and freaked him out, but there was no actual pain. He stopped for a moment, one eye viewing nothing but a brilliant, shining whiteness, and the other viewing his friend Trevor. He blinked to clear it, and then the whiteness switched eyes.

His left eye cleared just as his right eye burst into a vanilla star. He gasped audibly as the eye change startled him. He still felt no pain, but it was becoming incredibly frustrating.

“Mr. Tynes, are you okay?” a voice from the front of the room asked.

He spun in his seat to see Mrs. Larks looking at him with concern in her eyes. He stared at her for about three heartbeats as he tried to focus with his only good eye.

“Mr. Tynes, you’re not looking well. Would you like to go to the nurse?”

With a final burst of cream colored light, his right eye suddenly filled with a stereo image of his left. His vision had returned!

He rose to his feet, feeling surprisingly steady but scared. His vision was fine, but his mind, or his head at least, most certainly was not.

“Yes, ma’am. I think I would,” Sam replied.

“May I ask what’s wrong?”

“My head hurts is all. I should be fine if I can get some aspirin or something,” he told her.

“Well, I hope you feel better. Go ahead and grab the pass off the wall and head down. You can get the homework from a friend when you get back.”

“Thanks ma’am. I should be fine once I get something for my head.”

He walked up to the front of the room and grabbed the laminated blue pass off its hook on the wall. He didn’t have to turn to feel the eyes of the class on him as he walked out. Even though he was just going to the nurse, he could still feel all the attention being directed at him. He could actually feel the silence in the room as all the eyes behind him followed his progress from the teacher’s desk to the door.

“God!” He thought. “This is beginning to feel like a really bad dream.”

“THEY’RE ALL DEAD.”

He stopped in his tracks with his hand on the door. The voice. The one he had heard this morning. The one he had thought was just a bad dream. The deep, male voice that had haunted his thoughts since that morning.

“Who’s dead?” The thought raced through his head. “Is the class dead?”

“OVER THERE,” the voice spoke again.

He turned to look, one hand still on the doorknob. The class was staring at him. Mrs. Larks was looking at him. He could hear the first few giggles erupt in different places in the classroom.

“Where?” Sam asked out loud. “Who is dead?”

More giggles burst out from within the class. He could hear Trevor’s voice asking, “Hey, man. You okay? Who are you talking to?”

His teacher’s voice again in his ears, “No one’s dead Sam. Why would anyone be dead?” She paused for a moment and then added, “Do you need someone to go to the nurse with you?”

Sam vigorously shook his head back and forth, “No, Mrs. Larks. I don’t need that.” Then he asked, “Did you hear the voice? The guy saying people were dead. Did anyone hear the voice?” He scanned the room with his eyes looking for anyone nodding their head ‘yes’, but no one was. They all looked scared of him, even Trevor.

“We’re almost there,” he heard the original soft whispery voice say. The same voice he had first heard that morning. The voice didn’t sound scary at all. It sounded soft and friendly, but it still managed to scare him. It really made him want to know...

“Almost where?” he heard his own voice say out loud.

“Man,” Trevor said at lunch, “you really had us freaked out today in Larks’ class. I thought you were gonna go all psycho on us or something. Your eyes were all flipped out, and the way you kept talking about dead people and stuff. That was spooky. You sure you’re okay?”

Sam looked up from his sloppy joe and gave his friend a smile. “I don’t know if you would say I am ‘ok’, but I’m feeling better at least. This morning has really sucked Trev. I don’t even think I could put into words how messed up it has been.”

He took another bite of his sandwich and chewed slowly, looking at his plate.

“Are you gonna try?” the question coming from his friend.

“Try what?” Sam asked.

“Sheesh. To explain it to me,” Trevor said in an exasperated tone. “I haven’t spoken with you since Mrs. Larks took you to the nurse. You say weird stuff has been happenin’. Well, what kind of weird stuff?”

“Hmmm...,” Sam replied. “Well, voices for one thing. I have been hearing voices. Apparently from people that aren’t there. I can hear them just fine, but I seem to be the only one.”

“Wow, voices. Really? That’s kind of cool. That’s like full blown crazy person stuff. I’ve never known a real crazy person before.”

Sam looked up at his friend in time to see his smile. “It’s not funny Trevor. It’s really scaring me. And there are bright lights going off in my eyes. It’s like I’m looking at a light bulb with only one eye. It doesn’t hurt, but it’s weird, and it’s creepy. And I don’t like it. I want it to stop.”

“And you’re bleeding,” Trevor said.

“No, Trev. It’s all been in my head so far. I haven’t actually been hurt or anything.”

“No, man. You’re bleeding,” Trevor said excitedly. “Check out your arm!”

“What?” Sam asked and looked down at his right arm. Trevor was right; there was blood coming out of the crook of his elbow. It seemed to be quite a bit of blood too.

“What the...,” Sam exclaimed while swiping at his arm. The arm tingled now, and it felt funny. But, it didn’t really hurt.

He grabbed some napkins off his tray and wiped at the blood. He saw it was coming out of a small hole on the inner bend of his elbow. It was right on the vein. It was like the vein had just opened up and started shooting blood out on its own.

"What's wrong with it?" Trevor blurted, and then asked more quietly, "Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Yeah," Sam replied. "Give me your napkins and go get a large band-aid."

"What's wrong?" A soft voice asked.

Sam spun in his chair to see...nobody near him. "Who said that?" he whispered.

"STOP FIGHTING IT!" A much stronger voice resounded on his other side.

He quickly looked to the side of the new voice and saw the same sight. Nothing.

"Losing him," the soft voice again. It sounded...what was it ...anxious... worried? He wasn't sure, but it didn't sound good.

"... Falling," a new voice this time. But what was falling? Sam thought he missed the beginning of whatever it was the voice said, and it bothered him. Something important was falling and it seemed to involve him.

He didn't know any of this. Sam looked at the math test again and sighed. All that studying he had done, and it was no help. None of these questions made any sense to him. Almost like it was written in a language he couldn't understand.

He looked at the first question and rubbed at the bandage on his arm. Stupid thing still hurt, and wouldn't stop bleeding. It had been bleeding for almost two hours now. A stupid, slow trickle that didn't seem to stop.

Sam snuck a quick peak around the room to see if anyone else was having trouble with the test. No one else was looking up. They all seemed to be writing furiously.

"Alright then," Sam said quietly to himself. "I studied. This should be easy. Let's try the first problem again, and see how to get the square root of..."

"NOT GONNA MAKE IT," said a loud voice just above his left ear.

"Not again," Sam moaned out loud. "Make the voices stop. Tell me who you're talking about. You're driving me crazy!" Sam finished his rant in a voice loud enough to nearly qualify as a shout.

"Well Mr. Tynes, talking during a test will drive me crazy," his algebra teacher, Mr. Finns told him. "I've heard you've had a rough day, Samuel, but please keep quiet during the test."

"SHOCK HIM!" The voice was louder now and almost seemed angry.

"I'm shocked, I'm shocked," Sam shouted back at the voice. "This whole freakin' day has been shocking. I don't want any more surprises. If you want to really shock me, then try leaving me alone. Yeah! That would shock me."

"Mr. Tynes! I am shocked, also. I am shocked a good student such as yourself would behave like this. That is quite enough. I will not have an outburst like that in class, especially during a test."

"CLEAR!" The voice drowned out Mr. Finns' last few words. The voice was insistent this time. Almost yelling, but not sounding like it was directed at him.

Sam stood and looked around the room. "Is what clear? Nothing is clear. I don't understand any of this."

The pain that suddenly shot through his chest knocked him off his feet and dropped him onto his butt. His heart and lungs and chest had just simply exploded. His eyes swam with the pain. His buzzing finger tips reminded him of the time he electrocuted himself screwing in the light bulb up in his attic. He slowly looked down at his chest to see how big the gunshot wound was. It had to have been a bullet. Nothing else could hurt this much.

Nothing. No blood. No hole. No bullet. Just intense pain. It hurt so much that he could do little more than sit there with his mouth open and gawk at his own uninjured chest.

"NO RESPONSE," the voice yelled at him.

"What the bejeezus?" Sam thought. "What do you mean 'no response'? What kind of response did you want?" It had knocked him off his feet. It made his chest explode. He felt like he was dying.

"CLEAR," the voice bellowed at him.

"No, its not," squeaked Sam in a whisper. "I don't know what you want. How can it be clear? Who are you? Why are you doing this?"

Another explosion of pain blasted his chest. He could actually feel his body jerk and jump as something like electricity shot through his entire body. His vision blurred and he could see the classroom and the stunned expressions of his classmates and teacher as they melted into the whiteness that was surrounding his vision. His hearing seemed to fade as the classroom sounds dissolved.

"I'm dying," he thought. "So this is what it's like. But why? Why did they have to kill me? What did I do to them?"

"Stable." He heard the soft voice tell him as his consciousness blinked out.

Sam awoke and saw a white room he didn't recognize. He could smell disinfectant. He heard the voices of people far away. Maybe in a hallway.

He tried to sit up but was stopped by the pain that shot through his body. Ow, man. He hurt. That last shock hadn't killed him, but his body sure ached like it had tried.

"Thought we lost you," a voice said from off to his left. The soft voice he had heard before. So the voices weren't done with him yet.

"Not again," Sam told the voice. "Why can't you all just leave me alone?"

"Because you probably would have died if we had done that," the voice replied.

The voice had just answered him. The voices never answered. They just spoke. He slowly turned his head to that side.

"So how are you feeling, kiddo?" The nurse standing next to his bed asked using the voice he had come to recognize...and dread.

"Who are you? Where am I? What's going on? How did you manage to..." he trailed off looking at this lady who was staring at him and adjusting a clear plastic bag hanging on a pole next to his bed. His eyes followed the thin tube connected to the bottom of the bag. Followed it down until it connected with his arm. Connected with a needle inserted into the bend of his right elbow. Exactly where he had been bleeding before.

"You were incredibly lucky to survive that car wreck. If you hadn't been wearing your seat belt, then you'd have been thrown through that windshield like your..." she stopped short and looked at him again. It was a concerned, motherly look. "Well, you're lucky to be alive, anyway."

"Car wreck?" Sam asked her. "What car wreck? You mean the one in my dream?"

The nurse wrinkled her nose and gave him an odd look.

"It was no dream, sweetie. More like a nightmare. And from what I understand you almost died last night in the emergency room, too. Your heart just stopped. The doctors had to shock you to get your heart started."

"Shock me?" Sam asked. An eerie thought was beginning to creep up Sam's spine and nudge its way into his brain.

"Yes, Sam. They had to use the defibrillators to get your heart beating again. If they hadn't, then you would be dead right now."