

The Sounds of Peace

By Azlynn Harker

“Get out and get a job! You're just a thorn on my side!” Mama hollered, ripping my earbuds out of my ears. “You're lazy! Rowdy! Selfish-” she listed.

I always knew I was lazy. But selfish!? Yeah. No. I would not allow that. I'm an 18 year old girl, living in my mom's city apartment basement, doing work, wondering why I'm here, why this woman is yelling at me, and on another note, where I *would* go if I left mama and this crummy house.

“Are you listening to me?!” Mama hollered once more. I looked at her red, tired eyes thinking to myself, *What is this woman talking about?*

“No, why would I?” I admitted angrily. “I did nothing wrong and yet you're yelling at me!”

This got her angry. She took a long hard stare before she rushed to my closet throwing out clothes, my old backpack, and almost everything else. Then stared at me again while pointing to the things she threw on the floor. “Pack your things up and leave!” she yelled for the last time. A single tear falling from my eyes as I got up and started packing my books, clothes, and all the things she threw. The heavy backpack hurt me, but I didn't care at the time. All I wanted to do was leave. Never to look at her again.

“Oh and since I'm leaving, I might as well tell you this,” I started “I was the one who trashed your car, not the neighbor's kids.” I smirked then walked out slamming my bedroom door behind me.

I would never have thought that it would come to this. But I guess it did. Oh well. Off to wherever my brain takes me. But when I leave I realize how loud the city really is now that I'm out of the basement. Cars honking, tourist and city citizens shouting, and smells I wish I knew and smells I wish I never knew.

Wanting the loudness of the city to leave my ears, I pull out and put on headphones from my old bag, take a deep breath, and leave this city. I walk, and walk, and walk...wanting to just flop on the floor because of how badly my feet hurt. But I can't. The city's floors are disgusting, and I don't have the money for a doctor; so no

more getting sick. Not until I find a place to stay. And for me. I'm in the worst possible, single pringle, no-friend, deal.

4 Hours Later

Six playlists gone through already, stomach growling, and honestly scared. I am almost at the city's end, and I still have no place to go.

DING! The sound almost kills my eardrums through the headphones. *Who is texting me? No one texts me.* I thought to myself. It's Dad!

My dad was such a nice man. Dashing, loving, and so caring; he could be a male version of Mother Teresa. He loved Mama and me. But Mama changed. She started becoming cold and bitter. Only reason was because Daddy took me to a dance for just the two of us. She felt left out. And that bitterness got the best of her, so badly, she kicked Daddy out. No in or out contact.

With one push of a button, I'm requesting a Face-time call with him. "Hello? Hello? Lizzie? Are you there?" Daddy asked.

"Yeah Daddy, I'm here." I sigh. "I am so glad to hear your voice. It's really rough for me right now."

"Yeah, I know Lizzie. I heard," Daddy told me. We shared a sigh. "And since I heard, I wanted to help. Come to my place. You'll love it here."

I sighed, and gave him a slight nod yes. He smiled when I got a notification saying he sent me the address. When we hung up I went to Maps and put the location in. It was on the far side of the city's end. Meaning, I need to call a taxi and go down the dirt road into a forest that looks like mother nature put way too much thought into making beauty.

Looking down the road I see a taxi finally coming my way, so I wave my hand for him to come pick me up. "How much for a quick trip?" I asked. The man pointed to the back of the seat where a sign lay saying, *I cannot speak, the top question is how much. I say \$4.00 for one trip.* I felt bad and said *thank you and sorry for that* in ASL. I guess those lessons Aunt Lilly taught me won't go to waste after all. Then I told him where I needed to go. And that was that. We drove, and drove, and drove until we got to a mini cul de sac with a couple of houses. I told him thank you again and got out.

When I tell you this was like a fairy village. I mean it is so peaceful and cute. There are cottages rather than tall city buildings and natural floral decor where a deer would be seen nibbling gently on a berry from the bushes.

Slam I hear a door open and close quickly. "Lizzie? Is that you? Oh my god, it is!" A figure said from the porch. It was my dad. He came rushing down the steps and picked me up off the floor giving me the hug I have been dying to have for the longest of time. I looked up and smiled. Because my dad is the man who needs that type of thing. He set me down and put his hands out towards one of the houses like a gentleman. "After you," he gestured as I walked beside him, going up the stained wood stairs.

Although his house looked cute and tiny from the outside, it was humongous on the inside. Pictures, paintings, and flowers galore. I felt like I could die of the beauty inside this house. "I'm guessing you like it?" Daddy asked. "Don't worry, it has that effect on people. How about instead of staring, you go get some of the fruits and vegetables from the neighbor. Tell them I sent you. They live a couple minutes away so they're usually isolated."

All I could get out was an "Okay, I can go do that." But luckily he smiled and went into the kitchen as I went outside in the opposite direction, opening and closing the door real quick like a murderer was after me. But I was just eager to go out to this beautiful space of land. What was it like? Like to live here? All alone? If I stayed would I be lonely? Questions ranged in all sorts of ways as I was walking down the dirt path to this anonymous person's house.

When I looked up I saw this young boy, about my age, getting ready to speak. "I would turn around if I were you! My Grandparents don't like visitors." I just stared back.

"Uh- Um- M-my dad sent me! You know. Martin? Martin Lee, your neighbor? I'm his daughter, he sent me here to-." Then I was cut off. *Rude*. I thought to myself. As I was turning to go back something hit me. Literally. Turning around and looking down at my feet all I saw was an orange.

"Come get your basket! Daily vegetables for Mr. Lee," the boy yelled to me. Stomping angrily, I went up to him and snatched the basket. "No need to be rude, Mrs. Lee."

"It's Elizabeth." I quietly told him.

“Arron, Arron Smith,” he replied. “ I guess you just moved in with him? You know that you're gonna see me often now that you are. So I wouldn't be a grump if I were you.” I scoffed, and turned my back to him. “Oh come on, one apple hurt nobody! I heard it keeps the doctors away! How about I show you something as an apology?” I turned back around and followed ‘Arron’ as he smiled. Knowing I will regret letting my curious nature get the best of me.

I was quiet the whole time he was talking to me. To be honest it was nice to hear someone else's problems in my head instead of yelling. And then he put his hand out to stop me from walking. “We’re here,” he told me quietly.

I was speechless. There was a beautiful flowing river surrounded by trees, flowers, bushes, and a patch of fenced greenery, probably where Arron and his family grew the vegetables. It was so beautiful it didn't feel real. Like everything was artificial. But it wasn't, i could tell it wasn't. Because Arron pointed out all the beautiful creatures which were well-cared for and definitely **Not** artificial. It was so peaceful. I could **Hear** the peace in this place Arron showed me. I looked at him in awe, and he smirked. He smirked as if he was proud of making me stop talking, as if he was now the nicest person ever, and looked like he wanted to venture farther out into the woods but knew I wouldn't survive alone.

“So you own this piece of property?” I asked. “You seem to know it well enough.”

“Own it? Oh No, no, no,” he said wearily. “I don't own it. But I have been coming here for almost my whole life. My parents hadn't been there for me, so my grandparents took me in.” I looked at him as he stared down playing in the dirt with his feet.

“Hey, I understand,” I admitted. “My mom wasn't the best. At first she just kicked out my dad, but then she decided to kick me out too. Just today actually.” I thought this would be hard to say, but it felt good to get it off my chest. And even though he knew nothing about me, he got up and took my hand to pull me up on my feet.

“Come on,” almost asking me to follow him. “I may not know you very well, but I can help with what you're going through.” Then all of a sudden he darted, my hand in his, over the river to the other side. I ran with him, not wanting to lose him while in this forest. But he did the craziest thing possible. He let me go and motioned for me to follow

his lead. He was one of the craziest people I've ever met, but also the funniest, as he danced into a clearing up ahead.

That's when I knew. I wasn't at war anymore. I was caught at last and I was so at peace. I felt it. I saw it. But most of all. I heard it. This is. The sound of peace.