

Silent
Night's
of
Firefly
Light
Eric Benson

Part of the Intriguing Interp Series

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Silent Night's of Firefly Light

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"Have yourself a merry little Christmas, let your heart be light, from now on our troubles will be out of sight-"

Oh. I'm sorry about my voice, sometimes, my family says I get a little carried away when I sing. I think maybe it's because I don't wanna forget the... Tunes of my favorite songs. Sometimes I think every time I sing one it's a little worse. I don't know how much time I have, so I think I'll introduce myself now. Ok ? Ok. I'm Darren Alexander Dennon. Yes, my initials spell dad. I like, potato salad, playing Frisbee and the colour orange. My mom says that when I was really little, I would come out of my bedroom in the morning wearing orange from head to toe. I guess she'd make me change most days because she said I looked like a caution sign or something. What do mom's know? I don't like artichokes because they're hard to say and eat, alligators and my kindergarten teacher. Oh. This is Snoopy. He likes strawberry cupcakes. I love Christmas and.. My sister Holly. I hate. Myself.

I haven't always been like this. My ears have gotten a lot worse, which makes a lot of stuff really really hard. Mom and Dad took me out of school after fourth grade because my teachers thought I was "too difficult" I think maybe they just got tired of having to make sure I wasn't crying because all the other kids were mean to me. But Mom says it was for the best and now a lady who smells like Windex comes and reads to me and stuff on Tuesday's and Thursdays. I didn't mind so much, because it meant I got to spend more time with Holly. She's almost six. When Mom and dad told me they were going to have a baby I was really really mad. Snoopy remembers, even though I'm like this. I'm smart enough to feel like it was because they wanted another kid. Another kid who was smart and could hear. One they could talk to everybody at work or the grocery store about. But, as mom's stomach got bigger and bigger, and people started to put Christmas tree's up in there living rooms, I got more and more excited to meet my little sister. My parents thought that Holly would be born on the day after, or maybe even the day after, after Christmas, but Santa must have really been listening to me or something, because Holly was born at 1:25 in the morning on Christmas. I waited in the waiting room with Grandma and sung "*Grandma got run over by a reindeer, coming home from our house Christmas eve-*" Until she told me to be quiet because the family across from us was staring. I thought it was funny.

Holly was the tiniest person I've ever seen, and I know I sound like a total cheese ball with extra cheese, but my entire heart moved up to my throat and made hot sticky tears run down my face the first time mom let me hold her. She was so light, like a tree ornament or maybe even a snowflake. I sang to her whenever she cried, which meant I had to check a lot to see if she was. "*deck the halls with boughs of Holly, fa la la la, la la la, tis the season to be jolly la la-*"

What snoopy? No I won't forget, just calm down. I'm trying to tell this, ok ? Sorry about him. He gets jealous sometimes. Holly's first word was Dar Dar. Dad likes to tell

people it was Da Da and blames me confusing it on " My condition" , but I saw her mouth move.. Dar Dar. When she turned two, I put her in the biggest box I could find and put her under the Christmas tree with a gigantic red bow. I made sure Snoopy sat in the box with her, so she wouldn't get lonely. I thought it was going to be the funniest, best Christmas ever, but Mom and dad didn't. Sometimes, I think they wish I disappeared when Holly was born and I maybe I should've. That's how great she is. It's kind of like all the stuff I'm... Missing, Holly has a hundred times better. She's rhe brain's and ears for both of us. I think " I lost all of my comprehensive hearing " when Holly was four. It was about Three weeks after the fourth of July and I was sitting outside with Holly counting the fireflies on our porch. It wasn't sudden.. I just kinda realized I'd stopped hearing the crickets chirping, and that Holly wasn't singing that song, have you heard it ? "*Jeremiah was a bullfrog da na nuh*" but when I looked at her, her mouth was still moving, so I told her I couldn't hear her, so I guess she started singing really, really loudly, her eyes so so wide, with her little hands fluttering around like the fireflies only not glowy and white lighty. Mom and dad came outside, probably to tell us to quiet down, but when they saw Holly's face, and me holding my hands to my head, to see if the big quiet was living in my brain, right? Their faces got really funny looking and they started mouthing angry, scared words at me, which made Holly start crying, and the worst thing about was that I couldn't hear.. Anything. Just. White. Firefly. Light. My parents took me the doctor the next day, this old man who had always talked to me like I was a dog or cat, or maybe even a fish and had cold clammy hands and breath that always smelled like clam chowder. He wrote in gigantic letters on a white board. "Darren. You are now completely deaf. Do you understand" I nodded. " Do you know what this means?" After you really can't hear anymore, you have to pay a lot of attention to people's mouths and hands. Most people talk more with their hands then anything else. When my mom gets upset, she throws her hands around like hacky sacks. When my grandma's talking about how " challenged" I am, she points her fingers into little steeples like tiny churches and pretends that she's not looking at me the way people look at.. Dirty fingernails.

A week before Holly's birthday last year we were shopping with mom at the market for groceries and wrapping paper, when I noticed that Holly's big blue eyes were starring at someone. Not in the nice starring way. I turned around from pushing the cart and saw some kids from school with one of their mom's. I guess they were making fun of me, because one was walking funny with one hand cupped to his ear and the other hand hitting his chest. Like this (hits hand to chest in the classic " retarded" gesture.) I just put my head down because I don't like feeling like that, and I didn't want to cry and have mom get upset at me, but Holly marched up over to them like nothing I've ever seen and started moving her mouth really fast. The next thing I knew, mom was walking us out of the store really fast and shaking her hand at Holly who was smiling the biggest smile I'd ever seen. She held my hand in the car all the way home with her bottom lip jutted out and all I could think about was how Santa was probably the best guy in the world for giving me the best Christmas gift in the world.

My parents say that sometimes, I get really really focused on things, and that sometimes they worry I forget about important stuff. I guess like brushing my teeth, feeding the fish, and other things. I wanted to make Holly the best present this year. Usually, I make sure to give her two separate things. One birthday. One Christmas. But

this year, my plans were so great that I knew that just one would be ok. The only thing was that I needed to make sure my parents would leave the house for just a couple hours because I knew it might be really loud and I didn't want to annoy them. It took almost six days to convince them it would be ok. They could see some stupid grown up movie and pretend they liked being around each other and I would make sure Holly ate dinner and took a bath, and then they'd come home. No sweat, right? The big night arrived and I had spent weeks, and weeks preparing. Bought the blank cassette tape. Dug the dusty old tape recorder out of the basement. Sound proofed my room the best I could with my old comforter duct taped to the windows. I made Holly spaghetti O's for dinner, well, she mostly made them and I sort of. Watched her, we ate together and had some milk and went upstairs to start her bath. Extra Mr. Bubbles, not too hot water. I was good at this big brother thing, right? I made sure she was ok, and said I was going into my room to do something. She wrote "ok poop face" in the steamed up mirror. So I went to my room and sat down on my bed with my eyes closed. My big surprise was to sing every single one of Holly's favorite Christmas songs and record them. They probably sounded pretty crappy because of.. Me. But I knew that she would love them. I'm a good big brother. So, "Jingle bells", "Rocking around the Christmas tree", "Here comes Santa Claus", even "Do you hear what I hear". I must've gotten really excited because when I looked at the clock it was eight forty five and I had started singing at seven. I thought, Holly must be a big prune by now, the water must be freezing. So, I opened my door, walked down the hallway. Turned into the bathroom doorway. But, something wasn't right. The bathroom felt like an icebox, like when you reach into one of those freezers at the market and your whole arm goes numb? Holly was. Holly was. She was. This was not right. Why does she look like that? I may be slow and deaf and stupid but this was definitely not how little sisters who hold your hand and write poop face in steamed up mirrors, and make everything ok in this very, very crappy world are supposed to look when you leave them, like a good big brother, like the best big brother in the entire world to take a bubble bath. And I did hear something then, for the first time in two years. My heart. I heard it beating in my throat, not like the time I held Holly. It was hurting now. Pounding through my throat like an anvil on looney tunes. I found the phone and dialed mom's number and just started screaming and screaming as loud as I could because you can't watch hands and lips over telephones and I didn't know what else to do.

Today was Holly's Birthday. Merry Christmas. I am the worst big brother in the entire world. I can't change how stupid I am. And I know that. Dad left three or four days ago, he took a really big suitcase with him and I probably would've heard him and mom screaming at each other, but you know the story behind that one. I tried to go into Holly's room yesterday, because I just needed to be around her stuff you know? But mom or dad.. Or maybe grandma put a lock on the door. I don't really know why they did that. I tried to give my mom a hug today, just to remind her that I am here, but she just looked at me, her eyes watery and strange, like there wasn't anything behind them and walked away. Snoopy? Do you mind if I play this tape? It's not finished.. But it's better than silence... I guess you could listen too...

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright, round yon virgin, mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace-"