



Once...

A Lived Poem for My Sisters & Brothers with SD *by Victor E. Cheers*

Once... we laughed
Loud and proud
Maybe we were even known
By our distinctive tone and timbre

Once... we stood
In front of the crowd
Nervously, maybe, but assuredly
As we were about to
Share our remarks

Once... we read aloud
To our children
To our grandchildren
To our congregations
To our friends

Once... we anticipated
Picking up the phone and
Having the exchange
Relishing the wonderful back and forth, and
Embracing the joy of telling the joke or
Making the point

Once... we looked
Everyone in the eye with assurance
As they awaited
The wisdom of our hearts and
The insights of our experiences
To pour from our lips

But now...

Our laughs
Are smiles

Our speeches
Play out in the boundaries of our mind

Our reading
Is confined to moving, soundless lips

Our eyes
Move away
Fearing
The dread
The incomprehension

The emptiness
The frustration
In responding to another

We struggle
Wanting to be
Who we used to be
The one
Who took oral expression for granted

So we sit patiently, silently
As the banter of those around us
Ricochets through the room
Looking for the right time
A quiet moment of safety
To respond
Or not...

We have learned that sometimes our ears
Become our gift and
All we can do is listen and wait
To express
Somehow, some way

Through it all we long...

To sing
To be blend in
To shriek for joy
To not be ignored
To be understood
To feel normal
To believe we are still whole

So we offer and share
What comes from a deeper, more powerful voice
Fortified by observation and wisdom

Because, after all
Our eyes still dance
Our hearts still connect
Our minds still create

We are who we were
We are who we are
Only different and
Just maybe better

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