

Deaf Voice in a Covid World

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Actual Events

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Special Note Any time < or > is shown that denotes signing in the film. Grammar is in english for the script but should be changed to grammar befitting target Deaf/HoH audiences. English subtitles should also be used.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

BUSY BAR WITH DART BOARDS AND POOL TABLES.

Sound of the bar are muffled. MAX (50s) walks in. BRENT (60s) looks up from a pool table and meets Max.

BRENT

Hey Max. You here for the tourney?

Max approaches and fist bumps Brent.

MAX

Hey Brent. What did you say?

BRENT

The pool tournament. Are you signing up?

MAX

Nope I play pool on Mondays. I am here for my dart group tonight.

BRENT

Your here for the deafies? I didn't know you sign.

MAX

I am learning. They're an awesome group and help me practice.

BRENT

Well good on you. You'll have to teach me some day.

MAX

I don't know when I would find the time. Between work, darts, pool and part time acting. My wife never sees me any more.

BRENT

May be that's a good thing. I wouldn't want to look at that ugly mug every

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)
day either.

MAX
(Chuckles)
Ha don't you know it. Good luck on the
tourney.

They fist bump again. Max heads for the dart boards and greets his friends in ASL (American Sign Language).

MAX (V.O)
I had sudden hearing loss a few years earlier. Severe to profound. Only my close friends and family knew. It was easier not to say anything unless I had an hour to kill explaining it. The hearing loss also came with the joy of vestibular dysfunction and tinnitus. Impossible to explain to anyone that has not experienced it. As long as speaking people face me I can usually get the gist of a conversation.

I met my dart group a year earlier at a fundraiser. They were raising money for their next dart trip. Since then we have formed a tight bond. I am even improving my dart game.

Of course this was all before Covid. I had no idea that night would be the last time I saw any of them in person for a half a year.

CAMERA FADE

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

LONE TRUCK ON FREEWAY. SHOT FROM HOOD OF TRUCK WITH CITY GETTING SMALLER IN THE BACKGROUND.

Soft music in the background. Music fades and a news starts.

REPORTER (O.S)
Alberta instituted it's first day of the closure of non essential services today. The premier says this is just a temporary measure to ensure the safety of all Albertans. Numbers of infected are on the rise. Spain and New York
(MORE)

REPORTER (O.S) (CONT'D)
continue to be overwhelmed with the
dead and dying.

Max changes the radio to a music station. He taps his hands
to the beat.

MAX
Ah, that's better.

MAX (V.O)
Anyone that watched TV or listened to
the radio has heard an abundance of
news about the virus.

By day I was an essential service
worker. So my work schedule didn't
change much. I still went to work.
Still went to customers offices. Still
happy to be working.

Overall it was nice to take a break
from my extra curricular activities.

For a while.

CAMERA FADE

INT. MAN CAVE - NIGHT

NO WINDOWS. ROOM IS UNFINISHED WITH BARE DRYWALL SHOWING.
POOL TABLE AND DART BOARD. SHELVES WITH AWARDS. SOUNDS ARE
MUFFLED.

Max alone in his pool room. Only light is from three domes
above the pool table and a projected TV image on a wall.

Max slumberly taps balls around the table.

Max pauses to look at his award shelf and pictures of his
pool team. A tablet on a table faintly chimes and flashes.
Max eagerly taps the screen. PETER (20s) is displayed on the
screen. He starts signing.

PETER
<Hi buddy. What's up? Are you ready to
play some darts?>

MAX
(Excitedly)
You bet. <Yes.>

PETER

<The others should be on shortly>

MAX

Been a long time. <Long time.>

Max turns the tablet slightly. Then walks to a cabinet and opens it. It reveals a dart board. He cleans the chalk off the scoreboard.

MAX (V.O)

A month has gone by since non essential services were shut down and people were banned from meeting in groups.

Max walks back to the tablet.

MAX

I got a new board for the occasion.
<New Board.>

PETER

<Your man cave is great.>

MAX

Someday you will see it in person.
<Some day you here>

More people start to populate the screen of the tablet. Max puts in his ear buds and turns the volume to max. Each have a dart board in the background. Max swipes the screen and the screen image transfers to the projection on the unfinished wall. The group sign to each other. Max pours himself a drink. He shows the bottle to the others.

MAX

I love this stuff! <Tastes awesome!>

SHARRIE (20s) looks closer into her camera.

SHARRIE

What is it? <What's that?>

MAX

A coworker got me hooked. Like drinking honey. <Friend showed me. Sweet like honey.>

Peter and SHAWN (20s) look closer.

SHAWN
<I see before. From Spain. Good.>

MAX
<Where?>

SHAWN
(Finger spells)
<S.P.A.I.N.>

MAX
<Cool>

Max looks at the label on the bottle.

MAX
(Smiles)
<I didn't know that.>

Others show what they are drinking and chat.

PETER
<Ok we are playing tactics tonight.
Dittle for the middle.>

Each of the players pick up a dart and toss it at there boards. Sounds fade a bit as they sign and play darts.

MAX (V.O)
I loved playing darts with my dart team. Before Covid hit I was getting a weekly ASL practice session as a special bonus.

Peter and Shawn were the big D. Deaf by birth. Sharrie is hearing and training to be an audiologist. She is learning ASL to help her clients. She took some ASL at college and had a few more years of practice than I have. She would help me communicate with the others when I didn't know the signs.

Sounds become louder again. There is some cheers as they throw darts and count scores. Shawn moves his camera closer to his board. Three darts in the triple twenty.

SHAWN
<One eighty baby. That's how you do it.>

Images start to freeze on the screen. Max sits down at the tablet. Then the images disappear. Words on the screen connection lost. Max lights up a smoke and watches the spinning dots.

MAX

Fuck! Not now!

The tablet re-establishes the connection.

MAX

Sorry about that. Crappy internet in the country. <Sorry bad internet here>

The connection fails again. It tries and fails a few times.

Max picks up his phone and taps rapidly. Text shows on screen.

Max - Internet gone. I will text you my throws.

Peter - Don't worry. Try again next week.

Max closes the app on the tablet and the wall screen shows the news again. He changes it to a music video channel and turns the volume to max. Liquid in his glass ripple to the music.

He shoots pool for a bit. The music turns off and words appear on the screen. Satellite signal lost.

Max picks up the cue ball and chucks it so hard into the drywall. It sticks half imbedded. Max looks stunned that he did that.

MAX

Awe fuck!

The cue ball falls out of the wall and crashes onto his bottle of liquor. Max looks up and holds out his arms.

MAX

What next Lord.

A large crash of lightning is heard and the lights go out. Pitch black Max lights his lighter close to his face and looks up.

MAX

Not funny.

FADE OUT

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

A LARGE 4 LANE FREEWAY WITH ONE TRUCK TRAVELING ON IT.

MAX (V.O)

I was lucky living on the prairies in Canada. Covid-19 didn't hit us as hard as other areas of the world. The first shut down was to any company that was deemed non-essential. People that could work from home did.

I was a copier technician and deemed an essential service.

My biggest change at the start was my commute. I could get to work in half the time with no one on the roads.

TRANSITION TO CAB OF TRUCK

INT. TRUCK - DAY

WINDOW OPEN. CRUISE SET AT 115 KM/H. EMPTY FREEWAY. A DISTANT CITY IN BACKGROUND.

Max taps the steering wheel to the beat of the music. He rolls down the window and puts his arm on the ledge. A sports car approaches fast in his rear view mirror. Then passes him like he was standing still and disappears in the distance.

MAX (V.O)

I wasn't the only one that loved the open road.

A police car with its cherries lit enters the freeway from an on-ramp in front of Max. Max slows down to 110 km/h. The police car disappears in the distance at a high rate of speed. A couple of km's down the road the police car has the sports car pulled over. Max slows to 60 km/h and passes them on the far lane.

MAX (V.O)

Believe it or not the police are also handing out three hundred percent more speeding tickets.

TRANSITION TO OUTSIDE THE TRUCK

The truck continues down the road towards a city.

FADE

EXT. OFFICE - DAY

EXTERNAL OFFICE BUILDING. DOORS LOCKED. POSTER ON DOOR. "CALL FOR ENTRY"

Max looks at the signage. He tries the door but it is locked. He looks in a window and sees someone at his desk. He knocks on the window. The woman looks over her shoulder at Max. Max lifts his tool box and points to the door. The woman gets up.

CAMERA FADE

INT. OFFICE - DAY

LARGE OFFICE WITH PLENTY OF EMPTY DESKS.

Max is escorted through the empty office by BRENDA (19).

Brenda is walking in front of him talking.

MAX (V.O)

Offices were also empty. Places that had fifty plus workers in it were reduced to only one or two.

BRENDA

The copier is at the back. It has a red light on it and won't copy.

MAX

Sorry, I didn't hear you I am hard of hearing.

BRENDA

Hrumph!

Brenda stops and pauses for a moment. Then continues to walk briskly to the copier. Max falls behind a bit but catches up when they arrive. Max opens his clipboard and places it on the copier. It has a hard of hearing sticker on the cover. Brenda points to the red light.

MAX

Ah. I see what is wrong. I will have it fixed for you in a jiffy.

BRENDA
And the squeak.

MAX
There's a squeak?

BRENDA
Yes, can't you hear it?

MAX
(sighs)
Nope. I will clean some common areas
and if it still squeaks we will send
another tech.

BRENDA
Hrumph.

Brenda walks away shaking her head. Max works on the copier.

FADE

EXT. FAST FOOD - DAY

OUTSIDE. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT. EMPTY PARKING LOT. LONG LINE
AT DRIVE THROUGH.

Max drives in and parks. As he exits the vehicle he looks at
a long line through the drive through. Then walks up and
pulls on the door. It rattles but locked. He reads the signs.

"Eating area closed. First responders and truckers please
call (xxx)xxx-xxxx for delivery. Pickup window and delivery
services available. Download our new app today."

Max pulls out his cell phone and calls the number. He puts it
on speaker and holds it up to his hearing aids. The dial tone
is very faint. The dial tone ends and MAY (40's), foreign is
on the other end. Her voice is very faint and understandable.

MAY (O.S)
(Heavy accent barely audible)
Hello

MAX
Hi I am hard of hearing can you speak
up.

MAY (O.S)
(Inaudible) Restaurant (Inaudible)

MAX

I would like to order some food. Can you let me in.

MAY (O.S)

(Inaudible) Closed! (Inaudible) Drive Through!

Max's stomach grumbles again.

MAX

I can't use the drive through. I need to talk in person. Can you come to the door?

MAY

(Inaudible) App!

MAX

I tried the app. I can't get delivery to your parking lot.

The May hangs up on Max and approaches the door. She looks at max through the window then points to the lineup for the drive through.

MAY

(Shouts through glass door)
You go through drive through.

MAX

I can't hear the drive through.

Max holds up one finger, pulls out his phone and taps rapidly. Text on screen shows "Can't hear. Want burger and drink." May points to the drive through again.

MAY

(Shouts through glass door.)
Go through drive through!

May raises her hands and walks away from the door. Max's stomach grumbles again as he looks at the drive through line up.

Max gets in his car and lines up in the drive through. After a long wait in line. Max gets to the speaker/menu board a barely audible voice is heard.

MAY (O.S)
 (Scratchy and inaudible.)
 ???

MAX
 I want a burger and milkshake.

MAY (O.S)
 (Scratchy and inaudible.)
 ???

MAX
 Make that a cheese burger and vanilla
 shake.

MAY (O.S)
 (Scratchy and inaudible.)
 ???

The speaker goes silent. Max pulls up to the window.

May waves him past the window. Max does not leave. May points
 to the exit.

MAY
 (Shouting)
 We not serve you! Go now!

MAX
 I am hungry. I just want a burger and
 a shake.

MAY
 (Shouting)
 No! We not serve you. Go now or we
 call police!

MAX
 (Angry)
 Go ahead call them!

Cars in line start to honk their horns.

MAX (V.O)
 Sugar levels and nutrition are
 important to keep someone with
 vestibular dysfunction from being
 dizzy. I knew I had to find food soon.
 Even if I could get them to serve me
 now. I'd hate to think what they did
 to it.

Max gives May the finger as he pulls away from the window.

CAMERA FADE

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

NEARLY EMPTY PARKING LOT. PEOPLE LINED UP TO ENTER. SOCIAL DISTANCE SIGNAGE.

Max puts on gloves as he walks towards the store.

MAX (V.O)

For the first couple of months of the pandemic our government was not recommending masks but insisted on frequent hand washing, gloves and social distancing should be observed. News stories showed a run on grocery markets as people hoarded toilet paper and sanitizer.

Max looks at the social distance signage and stands in the line up behind a piece of tape on the sidewalk. BECKY (30) in front of Max turns and addresses Max.

BECKY

Can you believe this. They are only letting in thirty people at a time. I hope your not here for toilet paper! I hear they have many bare shelves.

MAX

I am just hangry. Tried to get some fast food and they refused me service.

BECKY

Refused? Why?

MAX

<Deaf> I can't hear well and they locked the doors.

BECKY

(Confused look)

Ohh I am so sorry. You don't sound deaf!

MAX

(Smiles)

Forty six years of speech therapy.

BECKY

You hear me ok.

MAX

I hear some of what you say and reading lips helps.

BECKY

Oh, I am so sorry.

MAX

It's not that bad. When I take out my hearing aids my world really goes silent. I sleep like a log.

BECKY

(Giggles)

I bet.

The line moves ahead and Max enters the first set of doors. There is a woman with a clipboard wearing a mask and gloves. She points to a communal hand sanitizing station. Max pulls a bottle of hand sanitizer from his pocket shows it to the woman and squirts some on his hand. The woman smiles and gestures Max through the next set of doors.

The store looks like it was raided. Many of the shelves are bare. He enters the munchie isle. Nearly empty shelves. All the chips and munchies were gone. He finds a box of meal bars. After reading the label he heads for the till.

The CASHIER (18) is wearing a mask. Max pulls his hand sanitiser from his pocket he shows it to the cashier.

MAX

Do you have any hand sanitizer?

CASHIER

(Inaudible)

MAX

Sorry <Read lips> I can't read your lips.

Cashier shakes her head no. Max places his meal bars and a jug of milk on the counter and pulls out his wallet. She rings up the sale. Max hands her a twenty. Cashier puts up her hands and points to a sign. "Interact Only"

CASHIER
(Louder voice.)
Sorry, bank cards only.

Max looks a little puzzled then pulls out a bank card. He looks at the price then taps his card and smiles. After the transaction Max looks at the cashier.

MAX
<Thank you great day> Thank you. Have
a great day.

The clerk smiles, pauses then turns to the next person in line. Max leaves.

MAX (V.O)
Shopping was a whole new experience.
Something I avoided when I could.

CAMERA FADE

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

TRUCK ON AN EMPTY HIGHWAY HEADING AWAY FROM A CITY.

MAX (V.O)
Over all the first two months were
rather lonely but relaxing and I
wasn't stuck at home filming a covid
isolation film in my basement.

To be continued...

