

"Do You Hear What I Hear?"

by
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1 INT. COVINGTON HOME - DAY

1

BEN COVINGTON, a retired senior citizen, sits in an armchair in his living room, a book open before him. The window is up, and we can hear noises from inside and outside the house. These noises start low and grow in volume. With every change, Ben winces.

We hear a clock ticking, a dog barking, a clock chiming noon, a lawn being mowed, car horns beeping, a telephone ringing, a car alarm sounding, and birds tweeting. They all build together to a cacophony.

Now we hear Ben's heart beating faster and louder, louder and faster. He tries to ignore the noise, but he cannot. Ben drops his book and jams his hands over his ears.

COVINGTON

Noooooooooooo!

FADE OUT.

2 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

2

The door to the examining room opens. DR. SAM BRADLEY, an old friend of Ben's, walks inside, closing the door behind him.

BRADLEY

Your hearing is *fine*, Ben.
Everything checks out.

COVINGTON

I know it's fine. It's *too* fine.

BRADLEY

For my patients around your age, I don't often get a complaint that someone's hearing works too well.

COVINGTON

Well, it *does*.

BRADLEY

By now, we're usually looking into hearing aides.

COVINGTON

I'm telling you, Sam, I. . . I don't know how much longer I can take this.

(CONTINUED)

BRADLEY

It *can't* be that bad.

COVINGTON

No? I hear everything like I'm sitting on top of a big speaker.

BRADLEY

Surely you're exaggerating.

COVINGTON

I'm *not* exaggerating!

(beat)

I had to put my cell phone on vibrate because any ring - even the *softest* one - went right through me. The volume on my TV is on *one*, and it's *still* too loud.

BRADLEY

Ben, I -

COVINGTON

I had to stop using my electric razor because the buzz was *deafening*! I've gone back to a blade, but the razor slicing the whiskers off my face sounds like a lumberjack cutting down trees!

BRADLEY

Have you tried earplugs?

COVINGTON

They work a *little*. Things get muted, but, when they're in, I can hear my own heart beating and the blood rushing through my veins. I don't know what's worse: Listening to the outside world or the inside world.

BRADLEY

How are your *other* senses?

COVINGTON

I know what you're getting at, and the answer is no. My other senses are A-OK. My hearing hasn't become acute because my other senses are failing.

(CONTINUED)

BRADLEY

Is this a constant thing?

COVINGTON

No. It starts and stops whenever
it feels like it - and thank God
for that!

BRADLEY

When did you first notice it?

COVINGTON

About two weeks ago.

BRADLEY

After I treated your wrist for
that fall you took in the tub?

COVINGTON

Yeah, right around then.

(beat)

Do you think there's a connection?

BRADLEY

Maybe something got jostled around
in your ear canal when you slipped
- though I've never heard of
anything like this in all my years
of practice.

COVINGTON

What's to do?

BRADLEY

An old friend of mine, Mark
Thatcher, is the top ear, nose,
and throat man over at Mercy
Hospital. I'll ask him to see you.
His auditory equipment is much
better than mine; I'm just a
general practitioner. If anyone
can find out what's wrong, Mark
can.

COVINGTON

When can I see him?

BRADLEY

(chuckles)

Easy, big fella! I haven't even
called him yet.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

It could be a couple of weeks,
even with professional courtesy.

COVINGTON

Weeks? What am I supposed to do
until then?

BRADLEY

How are you sleeping?

COVINGTON

Not well. Every tick of the clock
sounds like a bass drum.

BRADLEY

You still *try*, I hope.

COVINGTON

Oh yeah. Sometimes I fall asleep
from exhaustion, but then the
slightest squeak of a bed spring
wakes me like a gunshot.

(beat)

Sam, am I. . . going nuts?

BRADLEY

You're *not* going nuts, but you do
need some rest.

Bradley takes out a pen and starts writing Ben a
prescription. He tears off the top sheet of the pad and
hands it to Ben.

BRADLEY

I want you to have this filled
right away and start taking it
tonight just before bed.

COVINGTON

You know I don't like taking
pills.

BRADLEY

It's only some stuff to help you
sleep. You *need* it. I'll call Mark
later on today. Maybe he can get
you in early.

COVINGTON

So it might *not* take a couple of
weeks to see him?

(CONTINUED)

BRADLEY

We can only hope.

COVINGTON

(sighs)

What do I do until then?

BRADLEY

Do whatever you can to *relax*. The pills will help. Also, try to go to some quiet places.

COVINGTON

Like where?

BRADLEY

Oh. . . the park. . . the *library*. There'd be less noise there. It will be easier on you.

COVINGTON

(sighs)

I guess so.

BRADLEY

I'll get you in to see Mark as soon as possible. He'll fix you up.

FADE OUT.

Ben is talking with a very young, very beautiful MASSEUSE. Relaxing music can be heard, and the lights are dim.

MASSEUSE

Mr. Covington, if you'll undress to your comfort level, I'll be right back.

COVINGTON

I beg your pardon?

MASSEUSE

I said I'll be right back.

COVINGTON

Why do I need to undress?

(CONTINUED)

MASSEUSE

The massage will be more effective
without your clothes on.

COVINGTON

How much do you want me to remove?

MASSEUSE

Whatever you feel comfortable
with. The less, the better.

COVINGTON

I'm surprised at you, young lady!

MASSEUSE

What?

COVINGTON

I'm old enough to be your
grandfather. What you're asking is
most disrespectful.

MASSEUSE

Sir, I'm not trying to be
disrespectful at all. I have many
clients, and all of them remove at
least some of their clothing
before a massage. It helps with
the relaxation.

COVINGTON

Well, I'm glad you have many
clients because I am leaving. The
very idea!

FADE OUT.

A few people are about as Ben, newspaper in hand, sits
down at an empty table. As he starts reading, the noises
begin to grow again. We hear beeps as books are checked
out by the LIBRARIAN, a clock ticking, typing on a
computer keyboard, the turning of pages. As in the first
scene, they build to a cacophony.

LIBRARIAN

These books are due back on the
27th, Mrs. Wallace.

The telephone rings, and the librarian answers it.

(CONTINUED)

LIBRARIAN
Milford Public Library. May I help
you?

The ringing telephone and the librarian's voice are added
to the cacophony.

Ben's heart begins beating loudly and quickly, as before.
Disgusted, he pushes out his chair, stands, and walks to
the door.

COVINGTON
(sotto voce)
So much for the *relaxing* library!

FADE OUT.

A flabbergasted Ben is talking with a white-coated,
Asian, female ACUPUNCTURIST over her examining table. A
wheeled cart loaded with needles is beside the table.

COVINGTON
You want to stick these needles in
me?

ACUPUNCTURIST
Acupuncture is an ancient art,
sir. It can help with many
troubles, including tension.

COVINGTON
I don't like the idea of getting
jabbed with these things - even if
it's only for a second.

ACUPUNCTURIST
You don't fully understand the
procedure, Mr. Covington.
Acupuncture is not like receiving
an injection. I will leave the
needles *in* your body.

COVINGTON
You will?

ACUPUNCTURIST
Yes.

COVINGTON
For. . . For how long?

(CONTINUED)

ACUPUNCTURIST

About twenty minutes should suffice.

COVINGTON

Twenty. . . You want to stick me with a needle for twenty minutes?

ACUPUNCTURIST

Not a needle. The procedure you are requesting will require a dozen or so needles.

COVINGTON

A dozen?

(beat)

Sorry, but this isn't for me.

FADE OUT.

INT. COVINGTON HOME - DAY

Ben is sitting on the couch, his cell phone on the coffee table in front of him. The phone begins to vibrate. Roscoe, his golden retriever, growls at it.

COVINGTON

(chuckles)

It's OK, Roscoe.

Ben answers the call, and Roscoe stops growling. We see Sam Bradley in a split screen.

COVINGTON

Ben Covington.

BRADLEY

Ben, it's Sam Bradley. I have some good news: Mark had a cancellation. I can get you in to see him tomorrow morning at eleven. How's that for you?

COVINGTON

That's *great*! I'll be there. Thanks, Sam. Thanks *so* much.

BRADLEY

You're welcome.

(beat)

Now, you know where Mercy Hospital is?

(CONTINUED)

COVINGTON

Sure. I've been there before.

BRADLEY

The ear, nose, and throat
department is on the fifth floor.
The receptionist is named Katie.
Lovely girl. Tell her you're a
referral from me.

COVINGTON

Will do.

BRADLEY

How have things been going these
past few days?

COVINGTON

So so.

BRADLEY

Have you been taking your
prescription?

COVINGTON

(with some sarcasm)
Yes, Doctor.

BRADLEY

Did you go to the library?

COVINGTON

Yes, and it *didn't* work.

BRADLEY

How about the park?

COVINGTON

(beat)
No. I haven't gone there yet.
Maybe I will.

BRADLEY

It's worth a try.

(beat)
Don't you worry, pal. Mark
Thatcher will get to the bottom of
this.

FADE OUT.

7

EXT. PARK - LATER

7

A beautiful day. The birds are tweeting, and several people are enjoying the park. Ben sees a neighbor, MRS. DENTON, sitting on a bench with her beagle, Spike. He joins her.

COVINGTON

Mrs. Denton! I haven't seen you in some time.

DENTON

Yes, it has been a while.

COVINGTON

And how has Spike been?

He reaches out and pats Spike on the head.

COVINGTON

There's a *good* boy.

DENTON

He's fine. He has to go to the vet in a couple of days, so he's not going to be happy about *that*.

COVINGTON

(chuckles)

I would think not.

(beat)

I had a beagle growing up. Butch his name was. God, I loved that dog!

Ben glances to his right as a white cat jumps onto the bench and rubs against him.

COVINGTON

You have a cat now too?

DENTON

What?

(beat)

Oh no. That's a stray. She hangs around the park. I call her Minerva.

COVINGTON

Well, hello, Minerva.

He scratches Minerva between the ears. She meows.

(CONTINUED)

COVINGTON

Her coat is pretty white for being
a stray. You'd think -

Minerva meows again. For the rest of this scene, when we
hear her speak, we also hear her softly meow.

MINERVA

How's the plan coming along,
Spike?

Spike likewise whimpers and speaks.

SPIKE

Very well. It shouldn't be more
than a couple of days before we're
ready to put it into action. The
humans -

Ben looks very confused.

COVINGTON

Did you say something, Mrs.
Denton?

DENTON

No. Nothing at all.
(beat)
What did you hear?

COVINGTON

Something about a. . . a *plan*?

DENTON

Not me.

MINERVA

The *human*. He can hear us!

SPIKE

How's that possible?

MINERVA

I don't know, but he can't be
allowed to spoil our plan for
world domination.

SPIKE

I'll see to it that he's. . .
taken care of.

MINERVA

Good.

(CONTINUED)

Ben suddenly realizes what he's hearing. He looks incredulously at Minerva.

COVINGTON

You. That voice came from you!

DENTON

Minerva?

Ben quickly stands.

COVINGTON

If you'll excuse me, I'll. . .
I'll be heading home now.

DENTON

Are you alright?

COVINGTON

I'm fine. Thanks.

DENTON

Would you like me to see you home?

COVINGTON

No. That's OK.

(beat)

My doctor put me on some new medication. I think I'm having a reaction to it.

DENTON

It's no trouble. Really.

COVINGTON

Thanks, but I'm only a couple of blocks away. I think I'll just go home and take a rest.

(beat)

Good day, Mrs. Denton.

DENTON

Good day. I hope you feel better.

Ben hurriedly walks away.

MINERVA

It won't be long now.

FADE OUT.

8

INT. COVINGTON HOME - LATER

8

Ben quickly walks inside, shutting the door behind him. Agitated, he begins pacing.

COVINGTON

This is getting worse! I'm starting to *imagine* things now. Animals talking?

(beat)

I'd better call Sam.

He stops pacing and picks up the telephone receiver.

COVINGTON

No. No, that's *not* what I should do.

He hangs up the receiver.

COVINGTON

I've bothered him enough. Besides, I'm going to see Dr. Thatcher in less than 24 hours. I can make it until then.

(beat)

Animals talking. Who am I - Dr. Dolittle? It must have been the sun playing tricks on me.

(beat)

I know: I'll make myself a drink. A little early in the day, but too bad. That'll calm my nerves.

He walks to the bar. He starts taking ice cubes from the ice bucket and putting them in a glass. Roscoe approaches him and barks.

COVINGTON

Roscoe! How are ya?

Roscoe slowly walks behind the bar, growling louder with every second. Ben puts down the glass.

COVINGTON

What's. . . What's wrong, boy?

The growling reaches its peak. Roscoe lunges at Ben, his teeth bared. He knocks Ben to the floor. The glass falls and shatters. The ice cubes scatter all over. Ben tries to fight back.

(CONTINUED)

COVINGTON

No, boy! No!

Ben screams as Roscoe viciously attacks him, finally ripping out his throat. Before too long, Ben is still.

FADE OUT.

INT. BRADLEY HOME - LATER

Sam walks into his home. His wife, MICHELLE, greets him with a peck on the cheek.

MICHELLE

Welcome home, dear.

(beat)

Dinner will be ready in about five minutes.

BRADLEY

Great. I'm *starving*.

MICHELLE

How was your day?

BRADLEY

About the same as any other.

Sam sniffs at the air.

BRADLEY

What smells so good?

MICHELLE

(chuckles)

It's only spaghetti and meatballs.

BRADLEY

Yum!

MICHELLE

I'll be in the kitchen.

She walks away.

As Sam stretches, we hear a cat meow. It is Bonnie, their Siamese. Sam approaches her, his hand out to pet her.

BRADLEY

Well, hello there, Bonnie. How's my favorite feline doing today?

(CONTINUED)

The cat hisses at him and swipes at his hand, drawing blood. Sam pulls his hand back quickly.

BRADLEY

Ouch! That son of a -

Michelle quickly approaches.

MICHELLE

What happened?

BRADLEY

Bonnie swiped at me.

MICHELLE

Did you scare her?

BRADLEY

I didn't do a thing!

MICHELLE

Oh my, she broke the skin. It doesn't look too bad though. Let's go to the kitchen and wash it off.

They start walking away.

BRADLEY

Why would she have done that?

MICHELLE

I don't know. It's very unlike her.

We focus on Bonnie. She begins to purr louder, and louder, and louder.

FADE TO BLACK.