

Right-Handed

There were so many noises in the beginning, sharp and loud. The background sounds overwhelmed her: the ceiling fan, footsteps, her own chewing, and especially the rustling of paper. Even the slow start of a fire engine startled her. But her brain had quickly adapted to the new hearing aid, which she wore in one ear. She had chosen a blue one, not those skin tone models, because she thought she might as well treat it as an accessory.

It was raining the day she lost hearing in that ear. She felt a pang of disappointment that she couldn't hear the full sound of rain. She had always found the rhythm of fat little raindrops hitting pavement so soothing. The doctor referred her to a specialist, an audiologist, after she complained of muffled hearing and ringing in her ear. She remembers the look on his face, one of concern and pity. She knew then that she was partially deaf. Her first thought was that now she would have a good reason to learn sign language. She always wanted to anyway. Besides, she still had one good ear to work with.

She received many compliments on her blue hearing aid and those compliments would often come with questions: *Were you born deaf? Did you have an infection? An accident?* She didn't mind the questions at first. She discovered that she enjoyed making up stories about it. She told one person she'd been in a scuba diving accident. Another that she was born that way. One person got the swimmer's ear version. She told her coworkers that she had one too many ear infections as a child. She told a stranger that she'd been stung by wasps and had an allergic reaction resulting in permanent ear damage. She told a postal worker it was a jellyfish sting to the face. She told a customer that she'd flown to Connecticut with a cold.

But over time, she began running out of stories to tell and grew frustrated by people's prying questions. They were so shameless. She thought of telling the truth but wondered if that would only invite more

questions. Questions that she definitely did not want to answer. Questions that people should not be asking in this day and age.

It was a sunny day when she blurted out the truth. She simply could not think of another story for how one could suddenly lose hearing in only one ear. She was surprised at the exhilaration she felt watching their stunned faces. She enjoyed the discomfort it caused, maybe next time they wouldn't pry so much when curiosity coiled around them.

She smiled and answered: *He was right-handed.*