

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**

e. l. konigsburg

**silent** to the bone

BY THE  
TWO-TIME  
NEWBERY  
MEDAL-WINNING  
AUTHOR



# 1

It is easy to pinpoint the minute when my friend Branwell began his silence. It was Wednesday, November 25, 2:43 P.M., Eastern Standard Time. It was there—or, I guess you could say not there—on the tape of the 911 call.

Operator: *Epiphany 911. Hobson speaking.*

SILENCE.

Operator: *Epiphany 911. Hobson. May I help you?*

SILENCE. [Voices are heard in the background.]

Operator: *Anyone there?*

A woman's voice [screaming in the background]: *Tell them. Tell them.*

Operator: *Ma'am, I can't hear you. [then louder] Please come to the phone.*

A woman's voice [still in the background, but louder now]: *Tell them.* [then, screaming as the voice approaches] *For God's sake, Branwell.* [the voice gets louder] *TELL THEM.*

SILENCE.

Operator: *Please speak into the phone.*

A woman's voice [heard more clearly]: *TELL THEM. NOW, BRAN. TELL THEM NOW.*

SILENCE.

A woman's voice with a British accent [heard clearly]: *Here! Take her! For God's sake, at least take her!* [then, speaking directly into the phone] *It's the baby. She won't wake up.*

Operator: *Stay on the phone.*

British Accent [frightened]: *The baby won't wake up.*

Operator: *Stay on the line. We're transferring you to Fire and Rescue.*

Male Voice: *Epiphany Fire and Rescue. Davidson. What is the nature of your emergency?*

British Accent: *The baby won't wake up.*

Male Voice: *What is your exact location?*

British Accent: *198 Tower Hill Road. Help, please. It's the baby.*

Male Voice: *Help is on the way, ma'am. What happened?*

British Accent: *He dropped her. She won't wake up.*

Male Voice: *Is she having difficulty breathing?*



British Accent [panicky now]: *Yes. Her breathing is all strange.*

Male Voice: *How old is the baby, ma'am?*

British Accent: *Almost six months.*

Male Voice: *Is there a history of asthma or heart trouble?*

British Accent: *No, no. He dropped her, I tell you.*

LOUD BANGING IS HEARD.

British Accent [into the phone]: *They're here. Thank God. They're here.* [then just before the connection is broken] *For God's sake, Branwell, MOVE. Open the door.*

The SILENCES were Branwell's. He is my friend.

The baby was Nicole—called Nikki—Branwell's half sister.

The British accent was Vivian Shawcort, the baby-sitter.

In the ambulance en route to the hospital, Vivian sat up front with the driver, who was also a paramedic. He asked her what had happened. She told him that she had put the baby down for her afternoon nap and had gone to her room. After talking to a friend on the phone, she had started to read and must have dozed off. When the paramedic asked her what time that was, she had to confess that she did not know. The next thing she remembered being awakened by



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—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW

### **SPEECHLESS**

Connor is sure his best friend, Branwell, couldn't have hurt Branwell's baby half sister, Nikki. But Nikki lies in a coma, and Branwell is in a juvenile behavioral center, suspected of a horrible crime and unable to utter the words to tell what really happened.

Connor is the only one who might be able to break through Branwell's wall of silence. But how can he prove Branwell didn't commit the unspeakable act of which he's accused—when Branwell can't speak for himself?

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