

## Chapter Three: Silence Speaks

It has been a few months since Benson buried his mother and getting all her affairs in order had been an ordeal. The time had come that he needed to go through his parent's things, it was something that he never had done before and in a way was dreading on doing. Who knows what he would find in all the paperwork and clothing of many years together? Benson enters into his parent's room that he had not entered since his mother passed, he had never been in there room alone before and really didn't know what to expect. It almost felt like he was a little boy sneaking into there room to snoop in there stuff, and he just couldn't get himself to do it. So he turns around and leaves the room the way that it has been all this time, untouched. It seemed that time had not been kind to Benson, in one year's time he lost father and mother, left his life behind, and now was utterly alone. And just like his mother his grief turned into sadness, his sadness has turned into utter loneliness, and the sound of silence was become a friend. There was no one and nothing left in the world for him! Every one he knew had passed, family and friends, and little by little he found himself sitting for hours in the living staring at nothing, thinking nothing, and nothing could help him out of this. Suddenly the phone rang; it was Doctor Kramer calling just to check in on Benson.

"Hello Benson? This is Dr. Kramer." "Yes, hello Dr. Kramer, how can I help you?" "Well, just a few things, first, I have an envelope sitting on my desk that you have not picked up since the last time I saw you, it is your mothers personal effects that the paramedics removed from her when they worked on her, and second I just wanted to see how you were doing." "Well, Doctor, I am fine and I will come to your office tomorrow to pick up that envelope." There was an awkward silence then Dr. Kramer speaks; "well good then, I will see you in the morning around ten?" "Ten is fine, I will see you then." And with that Benson hangs up the phone and returns to the chair to stare into nothingness.

The morning sun was shining when Benson made his way to Mercy Hospital to see Dr. Kramer. As he walked the streets he watched as parents where taking there children to school, hand in hand. Benson remembered the days when his mother used to do the same for him before he got to old to be holding her hand anymore. He passed them by and continued on his way to the hospital. When he entered in he passed the familiar emergency room doors, his last memory of being there, he never went to the hospital since then and found no reason until now. He took the elevator to the forth floor where Dr. Kramer's office was located, he walked down the hall and stood before his door not wanting to knock. Then with a slight sigh, he knocked on the door. Knock; knock; knock. "Yes, come in" answered a voice from the other side. Benson opened the door to find Dr. Kramer surrounded by files and with his head buried in another. "Dr. Kramer?" As Dr. Kramer looked up, "Yes Benson, come in, good to see you again!" he rises from his chair to reach over his desk to give Benson a hand shake. "Benson, here the envelope I told you about, it has your mother's necklace and her wedding band that the coroner removed during her autopsy." And as Dr. Kramer looked at Benson he could see that in a short few months it was as if Benson had aged ten years. "Benson, are you alright? What have you been doing since your parents passing?" Benson looked at Dr. Kramer and as he stood up ha shook his hand, "Thank you for your concern Dr. Kramer, but I am fine, and thank you for my mother's belongings." Benson starts to turn to leave when Dr. Kramer speaks; "You know Benson, to loose your mother and father in one year has been hard on me also! I had known your parents for almost my entire career as a Doctor; they were not only patients, but they were my friends." Benson stops and turns to listen. "Just to let you know, they spoke highly of you!" Benson stares at Dr. Kramer; "I can see that their passing is taking a toll on you also, and if I may, I want you to see someone." Dr. Kramer reaches into his pocket and pulls out a business card for a Doctor Frank Zent; Grief Therapist. "Benson, if you just want someone to talk to, he can help." Benson takes the card and shakes Dr. Kramer's hand then turns and leaves with the door closing behind him.

Benson returns home and tosses his house keys and Dr. Zent's card on the kitchen table as he starts a pot of hot water to make a cup of tea. Benson sits down and starts to remember the nights that he and his mother spent in the last few months of her life; they just sat together in silence, it was almost as if they were strangers who didn't want to interact, but it was Benson who just didn't know how to cope with his mother's slip into depression. He is shaken out of his trance by the whistling of the tea pot, he pours himself a cup and sits back down. He starts to look around; it is the first time he notices that the wall paper in the kitchen has never been changed, he looks at the tea cup that he is holding and sees that it is from the same tea set used by his parent all his life, nothing had changed from the time that he left, he realized that nothing changed in him also! The desire to be away from all of this was more prominent in him more than ever! He wanted to be gone so that he would never have to see, never have to deal, never have to remember how he failed again; and never having to realize that nothing has changed in him! He starts to cry.

The night had passed and Benson is awakened by a knock on the door. He finds himself sitting in the recliner that he sat in last night and never made it to his bed. He gets up to answer the door; "Mr. Benson Pruitt? This is for you." Speaking the delivery man as he hands him a small box addressed to him. Benson takes the box and goes into the kitchen to get a scissors to open the box, as he looks at the address he sees that it is from a co-worker back at his last job. He opens the package to find a letter stuffed inside, he starts to read;

Dear Benson,

This is Clara; I hope you haven't forgotten me yet! Anyway, I got your old desk and as I was cleaning it out I found this picture and ball stuffed way in the back. I thought with all that you have been going through that this would be something that would make you smile. Well, don't be a stranger! Make sure when you're in our neck of the woods you stop in! Take care, Clara

Benson looks into the small box and empties out the small packing popcorn to reveal two items; the first is a little boy's toy, a small yellow rubber ball with a smiley face painted on it; the second was an old photograph, it was a picture of Benson sitting on a bench with his mother and his father standing behind them as someone else took the picture. Benson looked like he was about seven year old at the time and they were enjoying a day at the boardwalk carnival. As Benson stared at the photo the tears started to whelp up in his eyes as the memory of that day, as if a forgotten dream starts to flood his mind. He sits down at the kitchen table and cries. What ever happened to those days? He thought as he stared intently at the photo, he then turns his attention to that small rubber ball, he just can't seem to place where he got it from or from who did he get it, and why would he keep it? But something about that ball gave him a warm feeling, almost a tender feeling that is too hard to place. He puts the items down and walks away and back to the chair that has become a familiar friend. The night passes again and another day has come and Benson has not left his chair. He sits with shade drawn, no television and radio is on, and only the silence fills the room. Benson finally gets up to relieve himself then into the kitchen for a cup of tea. He places the pot on the stove and turns to sit at the kitchen table where he finds the photo and that ball staring right at him. He picks them up and looks at them carefully; it's almost as if those days never happened, if they did they were so few that he could not remember. He is shaken out of his stare at the whistling of the tea pot. Benson pours himself a cup and sits back down, silence; he thinks; as he looks around the kitchen, silence. He looks at the table to find the card of Dr. Frank Zent, picks it up and starts to read to himself what it says; "Dr. Frank Zent, PhD., ABPP., Counselor/Therapist. Benson stares at the card debating if maybe he may need help, but puts it down and walks back to the living room where he stares blindly at the drawn curtains and remembers nothing but the pain and loss of his parents.

Hours had passed before Benson realized that he was still sitting in the chair, he couldn't seem to remember when the last time he took a shower, so he gets up and takes a warm bath where he finds himself standing under the running water until it runs cold. "What is happening to me?" He thinks as he looks to see that he never put soap to body, "time is slipping away from me and I don't know what or why. I just can't get myself to move anymore, I don't want to get out, or even get up out of bed." He turns off the water and towels himself off as he stares at his image in the mirror. As he looks it seems that he has aged quit a bit over the past year, he has lost a lot of weight and hasn't shaved in a while, his hair has grown long and his eyes have become hallow. He looks like half the man he used to be and he feels like it to! "What has happened to you? What's wrong with you?" he whispers to himself as he stares into the mirror and wipes himself dry. And almost as if someone else was talking to him he hears a voice, "you need help" startled by what he hears he turns quickly and looks around to find that it is only him standing in the bathroom. Was this his imagination; his mind playing tricks on him? Was he going mad? Nervous and shaken he dresses and heads back down stairs where he goes to the kitchen to stare, once again at the photo of him and his parents. "I need help" he speaks to the photo as he starts to cry, "I need help" he repeats over and over again. And when he finally put the photo down he sees the card of Dr. Frank Zent sitting next to the ball; he picks it up, reads it again, and walks to the phone to make an appointment.