

CHAPTER 1: NIGHTMARE

It was the 2:00am call that every parent dreaded, and we had more reason to fear it than others.

Tony answered his phone, and I heard a female voice on the other end. “I’m calling from Providence Hospital in Centralia, Washington. Is this Tony Cloud, Shae Lynn Cloud’s father?”

He answered, “Yes,” and my head tingled in fear as I waited for the news I knew would follow, that my precious daughter, now only nineteen years old, was dead. Instead, I heard Shae Lynn screaming and speaking erratically. Between sobs I made out the words, “Anthony...police...accident...hospital...come now!”

We later discovered the nurse had broken protocol in hopes calling us would have a calming effect on our daughter. It did not. The nurse took the phone back and informed us that she’d been in a major car accident and was being treated at the hospital.

“Your daughter needs you to come here as soon as possible,” the nurse stated.

“But Anthony, her twin brother. What about Anthony? Where is he? Is he okay?” Tony desperately questioned.

“I’m sorry, but I cannot share any more information,” she said and hung up.

With adrenaline surging, we quickly dressed and began the one-hour drive. Stunned silence filled the car, my mind racing, heart pounding and fear rising in my chest. As Tony signaled to exit the freeway in Centralia, I saw seven or eight cop cars, lights flashing, strewn around the grassy median. In the middle, leaning precariously on its side, sat a car that looked vaguely familiar. The dread that had filled us for the last hour suddenly became very sharp.

Could this be the beginning to an awful end?

Police cars filled the hospital parking lot. Fear gripped my heart, something was very, very wrong. Neither of us could utter a word.

Walking inside we found the emergency waiting room eerily empty. An imposing police officer curtly greeted us and challenged our presence. Confirming our identification in an

irritated manner, he inquired how it was that we knew our children were present at the hospital. Tony told him that we had been contacted by hospital staff, not knowing that they had broken protocol in an act of compassion by allowing our daughter to call us in an attempt to console her.

“Mr. and Mrs. Cloud, your children are in police custody at this time, you will not be allowed to see them. They were involved in a high-speed chase down I-5 through three counties at speeds exceeding 120 miles per hour. State Patrol had to set up spike strips to bring their car to a stop. Amazingly no one was ejected from the car as it rolled over multiple times. People don’t walk away from incidents like this. Your children are fortunate to be alive.” the cop curtly reported.

In an attempt to make sense of this sudden situation, Tony tried to ask several questions. Our questions were left unanswered. The officer repeated that although the twins were being medically examined and treated at the hospital, they were in police custody as part of an active crime scene that was being investigated.

I pled with the officer to allow us to see our children. He absolutely would not allow it. He told us to go home as our children would be taken directly to Pierce County Jail after their immediate medical needs were addressed by the hospital staff.

In shock, we turned around and walked out of the hospital. I felt sick to my stomach. I wanted to crawl back in my bed and make this all go away. Surely, I would wake up and discover that this was simply a mother’s worst nightmare.

Perhaps you can relate to a life that’s not as you had dreamed. The tide has shifted and the waters of life have pulled you into a sea of difficulty and despair. You may be experiencing the fog of confusion that clouds perspective creating uncertainty and dissatisfaction.

We invite you to read on and discover hope amid the heartache.

One more thing. Perhaps you find yourself longing for someone who will listen deeply and ask thought provoking questions. We’d love the opportunity to walk with you as you seek to move forward from deep disappointments, difficult relationships or devastating losses. With our life coaching and consulting services you can begin your journey from surviving to thriving by

using strengths you didn't know you had. Learn more about our services or sign up for our free introduction session at www.tonycloudcommunications.com.