

RUMOR IN TOWN

Chapter One - The Promise

I had time to think on the drive. I guess it was closure for me. I just needed to go there alone and take some time to reflect. The large house was so empty, lacking the robust life that used to permeate throughout. Standing outside the front door before entering, I heard my Grandpa on the other side telling Holly, his rambunctious Golden Retriever, to settle down before opening the door—of course this was just my imagination. There would be no more stories. The final out had been called—my Grandpa had died two weeks previously on a September afternoon, alone with his clouded thoughts in his chair.

Entering the house and realizing that this would quite possibly be my last time there, I took everything in: the smells, the furniture, the pictures on the wall, and, most importantly, the silence. It was the silence that really got to me, because for my entire life this house was the antithesis of silence. It was always the epicenter of large family gatherings with a surplus of love and affection from my grandparents.

I noticed a stack of mail that had accumulated over the week that Babe had passed away, left on the dining room table by his caregiver. There was an envelope that caught my eye; the return address sticker was from Frank Crosetti. The card was unopened. I opened it and it read like this: *Mrs. Dahlgren, A friend of mine was telling me about Babe. You have my sincere sympathy in your great loss. We really got along great, both on and off the field. He truly was a wonderful person. He will be missed. Best of health . . . Frank Crosetti.* Unbeknownst to Crosetti, my

loving Grandmother had passed away almost a year ago to the day. It didn't take Babe long after her death to go downhill, spending the better part of his last year confined to a chair, trapped in body and mind.

Without any sense of reason, I began to walk through the house. Next to the family room was a little wet bar that serviced Babe's nightly bourbon and Seven, with pictures from his playing days adorning the walls. With the exception of his office, this was my favorite part of the house. I could stare at those photos and never get tired of looking at them. And on this day, I did just that, losing track of time. Around the corner from the family room down a small hallway was my grandparents' bedroom. It was dark, with rays of sunlight begging to break through the cracks of the vertical blinds. I left it that way.

I must admit, I felt a sense of trepidation come over me before entering the room. It was where Babe took his last breath. Next to his bed was a chair that had been brought in from the family room in an attempt to make him as comfortable as possible. The last year of his life was spent almost entirely in that room—alone. He died in that chair, and now it sat vacant, almost calling me in some celestial way to sit in it.

I took a seat in his chair and began remembering.

I sat with my eyes closed, replaying hours of stories in mere seconds. I sat there missing my

Grandpa. I sat there thinking of how badly he wanted his story heard. I sat there and made a promise to tell his story—and this is it, from his soul to mine.