

Veil of Silence - Excerpt Two

By

Paola Perez

INT. BENNY'S DORM - NIGHT

BENNY, a disheveled college student in his early twenties, enters his room. His room is cluttered with biology textbooks, empty coffee cups, and laundry piled in the corner.

He unloads his winnings onto his bed, now covered completely in varying melodic garb that he got from the annual town record fair. Benny marvels at the vinyls of Dylan and the Dead, The Very Best of Anita Baker, some late-stage Pearl Jam (although that's more of a guilty pleasure for him.)

In the midst of the pile, poking out from underneath Stevie Wonder's Innervisions lies the unnamed, unmarked cassette that Benny got for free. Its bare appearance, coupled with its lack of a home—something Benny could relate to—made it all the more appealing.

Benny digs underneath his bed and pulls out his late father's vintage cassette player that doubled as a record player, the thing was older than he was. He cautiously puts the cassette in, presses play, and lays down on his bed as the tape starts to crackle. Static hisses in and out of the tape, followed by white noise.

Benny sits up, a little disappointed but nothing The Beatles Sgt. Peppers can't fix it. Right before he ejects the cassette, a loud saxophone starts to play. He lets out a light laugh, relieved to not have been given a dud tape.

He pulls out one of the many dusty biology books from underneath his desk and sits down. As he reads along the passages, highlighting every couple sentences, a woman's voice appears on the cassette. She scats along to the sound of the saxophone solo.

This continues on as Benny delves more into the passages in his textbook. An electric guitar reverberates suddenly, snapping Benny's nose out of the book. He looks back to the cassette player and sees that the record player has also turned on.

He stands up and turns it off, returning the needle to its rightful position. He turns back around, his ears pierced with the sound of the needle scratching against nothing.

The noise grows louder as Benny holds his ears and unplugs the player. It doesn't stop. The woman's voice on the cassette grows deeper as the saxophone grows louder.

Benny's eyes bug out of his head. All of a sudden, it all stops.

Benny stands up slowly, confirming that he had unplugged the player. He slowly grabs his jacket and his walkman and leaves his room, his head twitching a little as he leaves.

HALLWAY

As Benny puts his jacket on, he hurries his pace down the hallway of his dorms. He had never noticed how long they felt during the day. He looks over his shoulder a couple of times.

He slips the headphones of his walkman over his ears, filling them with the sound of David Crosby's "Cowboy Movie", finally reaching the exit.

OUTSIDE

Benny finds the first bench outside his dorm and sits down, his breath creating a small cloud in the chilly December air. He looks around him, noticing all the Christmas lights and decorations his school had put up, it was nice.

He sinks into his seat, letting Crosby cool his nerves and shake off the weird experience he had. Right before the chorus, the woman's voice from before starts scarring. His eyes shoot open and he sits up straight.

His breathing grows heavier, headphones still on his head. Shakily, he goes up to take them off, and right as he does the saxophone comes in. He yanks out the headphone cord connected to the walkman, but the music doesn't cease. He opens up the player and sees that the Crosby CD is not spinning, yet all he hears faintly from around his neck is the saxophone and the woman riffing.

Just like before, the woman's voice grows deep as the saxophone starts screeching. Benny stands up, throws his headphones on the ground, and smashes them with his foot.

The music doesn't stop, it's louder now. Benny looks around, it's coming from every direction and he doesn't know how to silence it. His breathing grows harder and his eyes roll into the back of his head. He passes out on the brick-paved floor, walkman still in hand.

END.