Room in Heaven for All the Stars

by IDreamofAvalon

Summary

Tony Dinozzo will find that even when faced with life-changing choices, that the best ones are those that teach us to love and allow ourselves to be loved in return.

Notes

Thank you to the wonderful SpencnerTibbsLuvr for all of your hard work, inspiration, and feedback along the way. You made this a great experience. The art featured here is her creation.

Thank you all for taking the time to read my little work of fiction. I will preface this by saying that I do not feel that it is everything that it could be. Unfortunately I'm a a graduate student in a one year master's program, and so free time is becoming a thing of the past. That being said, I hope that you find some enjoyment in it.
Chapter 1

April 25, 1979

FBI Special Agent David Rossi was completely spent. He was tired down to his bones, but most of all, his soul was weary. The past few months had been a sickening reminder of the depths of human depravity.

They had received a call from Lieutenant Joseph Kozenczak in mid-December about a missing persons case. Fifteen-year-old Robert Piest had disappeared outside of the pharmacy where he worked near Des Plaines, IL. His mother had been waiting inside the pharmacy to pick him up while he stepped outside to speak with a contractor that had offered him a job. That was the last time anyone had seen Rob Piest.

The police conducted a search for the young man, but they were unable to find him or any clues as to his whereabouts. It wasn’t long before they began to suspect foul play. Lt. Kozenczak had contacted the fledgling BAU after beginning the initial investigation into the contractor, their primary suspect.
Upon receiving the results of the background check, he had discovered that this man, who most saw as a pillar of the community, had previously served time for committing sodomy on a teenager. They soon obtained a warrant to search his property. During the search, they confiscated numerous suspicious items and evidence that the man had not left his predilection for teenage boys behind him. However, at the time, they had no concrete evidence tying him to Rob Piest’s disappearance.

Dave and his partners, Jason Gideon and Max Ryan, arrived in Chicago on December 15th. Though they normally worked cases independently, they all had sensed that there was something different about this one, and so decided to work as a unit.

They made it to the Des Plaines Police Department as the contractor, a John Gacy, Jr., was being processed. Dave had seen a lot of evil in his life, between growing up in a mob-dominated neighborhood, and then serving in Vietnam and the FBI, but what he saw in that man’s eyes caused something in him to recoil.

Max and Jason had the first crack at him. He was good, he had to admit, but Gacy’s arrogance was his Achilles’ heel. Through the course of the investigation they also discovered that he had recently been charged with the rape of another young man and was awaiting trial. The man made his skin crawl; he knew in his gut that this man had abducted and most likely murdered Rob Piest.

They tried many different tactics in interrogating Gacy. Max was aggressive and bullying, hoping to intimidate the man.

“We know you took him, Gacy. We know about what you did to those boys in Iowa. Figures, you’d have to go after boys, you’re too damn weak to try it on with a man!”

Gacy had responded a smirk and a calm that was completely out of place in the situation.

Jason tried to appear sympathetic and cajoling, he thought that Gacy was probably bullied or abused as a child and would be more forthcoming if he thought he had someone in his corner. Gacy only responded to Jason with derision.

Dave had watched all of this in the observation room, noting every shift and turn of emotion on Gacy’s face. As he catalogued all this his plan began to form, he figured the best shot he had at breaking Gacy was to play to his ego, to make him feel powerful. It turned his stomach and for a moment he thought of his pregnant wife back home. They didn’t know if the baby was a boy or a girl, but the thought of this man anywhere near his child made him sick. He had to do this for Rob, and for his family.
The police continued to investigate Gacy and his home while the BAU were questioning him. When examination of items seized from Gacy’s home turned up connections to Piest and other missing boys, Dave knew that he had to do whatever was necessary to get a confession out of this man.

When Dave finally took his turn to interview the suspect he knew in his gut that it was too late for Rob, but he would do everything in his power to obtain justice to the young man, and likely several other young men.

“So,” Gacy started as soon as Rossi entered the interrogation room. “I’ve played with the bad cop and the good cop, what are you?”

“I’m not a cop.” Dave said calmly as he took a seat opposite Gacy. “I’m a scientist, a researcher, and an FBI agent. They have good benefits. I want to understand people, who they are, what journey they’ve been on, their accomplishments and dreams.”

Gacy looked at him with open skepticism.

“Look, I’ve read your file, I know about what you were previously accused of and also the more recent charges. I also know that most people in the community know you to be a charitable man. You constantly give of your time to the community, dressing up as a clown and visiting sick children. People have been very adamant that despite going through a rough patch when you and your wife divorced, that you are still a good neighbor, and a community leader.”

Dave could see that Gacy was slowly dropping his guard.

“I also understand that your sexuality isn’t something that’s generally accepted.”

That got a reaction.

Dave was quick to raise his has in a conciliatory gesture.

“Hey, I’m not judging you, not one bit. I fight to uphold the law, and the last time I checked, in 1962 Illinois decriminalized consensual sodomy. I want to make sure that what is happening here is not a witch hunt. It wouldn’t be the first time that someone willingly engaged in homosexual acts and then
later claimed to be unwilling. If this is what has happened to you then I’m going to do everything in
my power to ensure that you aren’t used as a scapegoat for people’s bigotry.”

That finally seemed to do the trick. Dave felt sick inside. He was bisexual himself, and to associate
this predator in any way with regular people that just wanted to live their lives and love whoever they
chose to felt like a betrayal. Ultimately it was worth it though.

Gacy began to loosen up and regal Dave with his life story. He became so enamored with having
such an open and willing audience that he soon began to reveal much more than he realized. He
claimed that he had picked up Rob, that they had sex, but then he dropped him off at his home. Gacy
claimed that Rob was never at his home and that everything they had done was completely
consensual.

Rossi had enough, and thankfully his watching partners could tell. Jason and Max entered the room
and began to lay out everything that had been discovered at Gacy’s home, including evidence of
Rob’s presence. There was evidence that he had transported a body in his car.

When confronted with the evidence, Gacy confessed to killing someone and burying them in his
garage. He claimed that it was self-defense, and told the investigators exactly where to dig.

When the coroner arrived at the Gacy home to help the police with the excavation of the remains
Gacy claimed to have buried, he quickly recognized the smell that was coming from the crawlspace
under the home. So, in spite of the confession of the suspect, the medical examiner recommended
that they begin their digging there. The first day of digging turned up two bodies. After that, the
bodies began to quite literally pile up.

As more evidence was uncovered and the investigators delved deeper into the life of John Wayne
Gacy, Jr., it began to dawn upon them that this case was bigger than any of them could have
expected. The evidence alone was damning, but what they really needed was a full confession. The
BAU team and the police wanted to ensure that they would deliver an airtight case to the district
attorney. They also wanted names; the families of the victims deserved to know what happened to
their loved ones, and those young men deserved justice.

They continued to grill him for a week before Gacy finally slipped up and made a mistake.
Eventually, he confessed to killing at least thirty people. Six days later they had uncovered twenty-
seven bodies buried under the house.

The BAU team had returned to Quantico a month after they were called to Des Plaines, leaving the
local PD to continue the investigation and the search for more victims. It felt good that they had a
part in stopping Gacy, but it was a small comfort when weighed against the horrors those young men
endured before their deaths.
In the months that followed, two more bodies were found on the property, and three more were found in area rivers. They didn’t find the body of Robert Piest until nine days ago.

Two weeks ago, they had been called out to another big case in California, but Dave had elected to stay behind. His wife, Carolyn, was due any day now. Unfortunately, with Jason and Max unavailable, Dave had no choice but to head back to Chicago when the call came through. They needed to ensure that every contribution made by the FBI had been properly documented and that they had the requisite statements on record. None of them wanted Gacy to walk on a technicality, no matter how slim the chance.

Now he was finally heading home. He couldn’t wait to get there, to wash off the grime of travel and see his radiant, if grumpy wife. He only wished he could wash away the things he had seen as easily.

Dave knew that Carolyn was not at all pleased when he left for Chicago, she wasn’t really pleased with his job in general. She was very worried that he would miss the birth of their first child. He could only hope that the cheesecake he was bringing back would be a sufficient apology and serve to appease her pregnancy hormones.

As the pilot announced their final decent into Dulles, Dave couldn’t help the smile that slowly spread across his face. He was almost home, and he had no intention of leaving again before his child was born.

Upon landing, he made his way across the tarmac, carrying along his single suitcase and a carefully wrapped box of cheesecake. He quickened his pace through the airport, eager to get home to his wife.

“David Rossi, you have an urgent call on the courtesy phone. David Rossi, please make your way to the nearest courtesy phone.”

Dave almost tripped when he heard his name called over the PA system. His heart clenched in fear that something had happened to his wife and their unborn child.

He spotted a phone just past the ticketing gate and quickly made his way over to it.

“This is David Rossi.” He said once he had picked up the courtesy phone.
“Hold for a moment, Mr. Rossi, while I connect your call.”

Click.

“Hello?”

“Mr. Rossi, this is Nurse Winters at Mount Vernon Hospital -”

“Oh, God! What’s wrong with Carolyn, is my wife alright?”

“Sir, your wife is perfectly fine. She is in labor and arrived at the hospital about an hour ago.”

Dave closed his eyes and leaned heavily against the pillar that held the phone. He tried to calm himself and stop his hands from shaking.

“Mrs. Rossi should be ready to deliver within the hour, but she is insistent that you be here before she is taken to the delivery room. She was really quite vocal about it, so if you could make your way to us as soon as possible it would be appreciated.”

Dave chuckled, he was sure that his Cary had been more than “quite vocal.”

“I will be there as soon as possible, I’m leaving the airport now.”

“You should make your way to the third floor upon arrival.”

“Thank you.” Dave said as he hung up and took a moment to breathe.

He allowed the lingering feeling of dread to slip away, then he shook himself and took off at a sprint. His life wouldn’t be worth living if he didn’t make it to that hospital before they took Carolyn into delivery.
Dave was so distracted that he failed to notice the two men that had been watching him, and who followed him to the hospital.

Chapter 2

Mount Vernon Hospital, Alexandria, Virginia

James David Rossi made his eagerly awaited appearance at 12:37 a.m. on Thursday, April 26, 1979. He had light brown hair like his mother, his Nona’s green eyes, all ten fingers and ten toes, and a very healthy set of lungs.

Dave and Carolyn were ecstatic and very eager to inform all their family and friends of their son’s arrival. While Carolyn slept, Dave finally managed to pry himself away from the nursery viewing window to make the calls. He smiled at his son before walking down the hallway to the nurses’ station to use the phone. He spent several minutes informing his equally ecstatic parents and in-laws of the birth of little James. They all planned to make their way to the hospital as quickly as possible, his own mother hung up on him mid-sentence.

He laughed and took a moment to bask in the joy that his son’s arrival had brought to them all. James was only a few hours old, and already he had them all wrapped around his tiny fingers.

Next Dave called his boss at the FBI, and then left a message at Jason and Max’s hotel. He knew he should probably call a dozen other people, but right now he wanted to get back to his family. Dave tried to ignore it, but every moment he spent away from Carolyn and James made him increasingly anxious. Apparently even he wasn’t immune to new parent anxiety.

He was so caught up in his thoughts that he wasn’t paying attention to his surroundings as he turned to head back down the hall. Running straight into another man coming from the opposite direction quickly brought him back to reality.
“I am so sorry, sir! I apologize, I should have been paying better attention.” Dave said to the suit-clad man.

“That’s quite alright, accidents happen. You seem to be in a hurry.” The man replied.

Dave smiled, “Yes. I, well that is to say my wife, just had a baby. He’s our first.”

The gentleman smiled and offered his hand, “Congratulations! I wish you the very best.”

“Thank you.” Dave replied. “Well, I should get back now. Sorry again.”

“It was no inconvenience, I assure you.” The man tipped his head and then turned to go, pulling out a pack of Morley cigarettes as he went.

On his way back to Carolyn’s room, Dave decided to have another peek at his son; he couldn’t get enough of his beautiful face. He stopped at the viewing window, but didn’t see James in the cot he had been in earlier. The nurse wasn’t holding any of the babies at the moment, so Carolyn must have woken and had them bring James to her.

Dave grinned happily as he entered the room, fully expecting to see his wife cradling their infant son. What he saw instead was his wife, just beginning to stir from her well-deserved rest.

“Cary, did they not bring James to you?”

“What?” She asked groggily. “I just woke up, no one has come in since I feel asleep as far as I know.”

She smiled at Dave; she was so happy that he was there for the birth of their son. A son! James was a perfect combination of the two of them, and she didn’t think that it was possible to be happier than she was at that moment.

Carolyn looked closely husband when he didn’t reply and frowned at the expression on his face.
“Dave, what’s wrong?”

“I - just wait here. I’ll be right back, I promise.”

“Okay, sure. Where else would I be?” Carolyn rolled her eyes at her husband, he had been a little overexcited since arriving.

Not paying any attention to his wife’s sarcastic reply, Dave quickly left the room and returned to the nurses’ station, feeling his pulse begin to race.

“Excuse me,” he said to the head nurse. “My son is not with my wife and he is not in his cradle in the nursery. Is there anywhere else he would have been taken?”

“No Mr. Rossi, your son should still be in the nursery. I’m sure that everything is fine. Why don’t I go and check on him for you?”

“Please, he wasn’t in the cot when I walked by not five minutes ago.”

Dave followed the nurse to the nursery impatiently. His heart was pounding again, and that earlier feeling of dread was rapidly returning.

He watched as the head nurse entered and spoke to the other nurse on duty. They both checked James’ cradle, and then began checking the four other babies in the room. As the seconds ticked by both nurses became increasingly agitated. The head nurse picked up a phone and began rapidly speaking to the person on the other end.

A minute later the attending physician rapidly made his way down the hall and into the nursery. David watched as the three had a very frantic conversation. Soon the whole floor was buzzing with staff, going from room to room, searching, he assumed, for his son.

Dave just stood there, frozen in front of the viewing window. His heart felt as if it would pound out of his chest, all he could hear was the sound of a violent wind, and his vision began to grey. When he once again became aware of his surroundings he was on the floor with his head between his knees. The head nurse knelt beside him with her hand on his back. He glanced up at her and saw the look of pity on her face, and in that moment, he knew.
James David Rossi was missing.

Chapter 3

Minutes turned into hours, hours to days, days to weeks, until it had been two months since their sweet Jamie was abducted from the hospital nursery. Carolyn was inconsolable. Their families and friends had rallied around them, doing everything they could think of to help with the search, and to keep Dave and Cary going.

The FBI was handling the investigation. All the agents involved seemed to take it as a personal affront that one of their own had been targeted. They worked around the clock, looking for any clues that would lead them to baby James.

Two months in people were beginning to return to their lives, and the investigation was at a dead end. Their parents stayed the longest, doing their very best to be a support for them both. But now even they had to return home. All that remained now was quiet; quiet heartache and simmering anger.

Cary blamed him, she said she didn’t, but Dave knew. Hell, he blamed himself. He knew that it was irrational, as Jason had pointed out to him repeatedly; but Dave couldn’t help thinking of all the should haves and what ifs. He shouldn’t have spent so long on the phone. What if he had stayed with Jamie instead of leaving him all alone? All Dave knew was that he had failed his son, failed his wife.

Dave swore to himself that day, as Carolyn sat in the rocking chair in Jamie’s nursery crying for what seemed the thousandth time, that he would not give up searching. He didn’t care how long it took or what lengths he had to go to, Dave was going to find his son; and God help the people that took him once Dave found them, because he certainly wouldn’t.

Little did Dave know that there were other people looking for baby James, people who had made the same vows to themselves. They didn’t know who had targeted the Rossis or for what purpose, but
they were going to commit all their not inconsiderable resources to bringing their son home.

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October 26, 1979

Six months after Jamie’s birth, Carolyn decided to go back to work. She had been given a leave of absence from the Smithsonian where she worked as a film curator, but she felt that it was time for her to return.

“I need to do something, Dave. I - I can’t just sit at home hoping for someone to bring him back.”

Dave understood, he had returned to the Bureau three months after Jamie’s disappearance. He only stayed away that long because he was forced to by his boss. It wasn’t that Dave didn’t want to be there for his wife, in fact she had told him repeatedly that he was smothering her with his constant worry and need to keep her in his sights at all times. He knew that he was driving them both crazy. Ultimately, he went back because he needed the resources of the FBI to find his son.

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April 26, 1980

Jamie’s first birthday was hard on them both. They decided to have a small celebration for him, buying presents and placing them in his untouched nursery, that sat ready for him once he came home. Carolyn sat in his room most of the day. Dave went back and forth from the nursery to the phone which seemed to never stop ringing. He knew they meant well, all of the family and friends that insisted on calling, but he really wished they would just leave them alone. There was only one call he wanted that day, the one he prayed for the past 365 days.

It didn’t come, and so they continued to search.

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April 26, 1981
They spent the day much as they had the previous year; only this time, Dave got part of his wish, and the phone seldom rang.

That was alright with them, it freed up the phone line; so, they continued to search.

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April 26, 1982

On Jamie’s third birthday, Carolyn refused to celebrate it.

“I can’t do this anymore, Dave. It’s too much. I think it’s time that we accept the truth - Jamie’s not coming home.” She sat on the couch facing her husband as he sat in the adjacent armchair.

Dave shook his head, he wouldn’t, couldn’t accept that. His son was out there, and he told her so.

“I will not stop looking Carolyn, or hoping.” He tried very hard not to yell. “One day Jamie is going to come home, and until that day comes, I will continue to search for him!”

Carolyn leaned forward to lay her hand on his thigh.

Sorrow laced her voice, “Dave, honey, you’re running yourself into the ground. Max and Jason have mentioned it numerous times. You need to accept reality, you can’t keep going like this.”

He sighed deeply and dropped his head into his hands.

With tears in his eyes he replied, “I don’t know what else I can do.”

And so, Dave continued to search.
April 26, 1983

Dave bought him a baseball glove. He knew that he was only four today, but that was old enough to start teaching Jamie the great American pastime. He sat in Jamie’s room alone.

Things with Carolyn weren’t good recently. She wanted to try and move on, even brought up trying to have another baby. Dave just couldn’t bring himself to even consider it. How could he have another child when he had lost his baby boy? Somehow it felt like a betrayal of Jamie to even consider it. He knew she grieved for their son, and he understood her desire to try to move forward. But Dave couldn’t even consider moving on when all he saw every time he closed his eyes was the last glimpse he had taken of his sweet boy’s sleeping face.

Nightmares plagued him every night. They never changed, they were always the same. Jamie cried out for his Papa, he screamed and cried because he was alone and afraid in the dark, and Dave couldn’t reach him. He’d run, and scream and cry himself, trying to get to him. He never made it though, he always failed. And then he would find himself in the crawlspace under a suburban home, dark, damp, and rancid; that’s where he’d find his boy, lifeless and broken. He always woke up screaming.

They didn’t sleep in the same bed anymore, Dave’s nightmares always woke Cary, so he moved to the guest room downstairs.

Cary insisted that they hold a memorial service for Jamie, that they erect a headstone for him in the Rossi family plot on Long Island. The family all thought it was a good idea. Inside, Dave raged at them all; his son was not dead, he was out there somewhere, and Dave would find him.

He poured himself into his work. The Bureau had been extremely helpful initially, but now there were fewer people who seemed to have the time or resources to spare in his continued efforts to find James. Max and Jason were no help, they agreed with Cary that he needed to let go. They thought he needed to just accept what the statistics claimed, that Jamie was dead, and had been for some time. The only person that seemed at all willing to even humor him anymore was another agent whose fifteen-month-old son, Alexander, had gone missing three months ago from his crib at home.

There was some renewed interest in Jamie’s case then. Some members of the Bureau feared that maybe someone was targeting agents’ children. After the investigation turned up no evidence to suggest a connection between the two cases, Jamie’s case file was returned once more to gather dust with the other unsolved cases that had no active leads.
Walter, the other agent and a fellow Marine, understood Dave’s need to keep looking. He was going through all the same emotions that Dave had in the months following James’ disappearance. He blamed himself, for working late that night, not being there to kiss his son goodnight, and most of all, for not protecting his son. Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, they had no leads on the whereabouts of either one of their sons.

Though at times it seemed hopeless, Dave couldn’t help but think that just maybe, if he kept working, kept fighting for justice and for the victims, that maybe, maybe God would give his son back.

And so, Dave continued to work and to search; and though he was unaware, he was not alone his perseverance.

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July 26, 1983

It was their anniversary today. He had forgotten, again.

He should have remembered. It was three months to the day after Jamie’s birthday. That was how time passed now days, a marker of how many moments it had been since he last saw his son.

Cary had left him. Her bags were packed and she was waiting for him when he came home from work.

She couldn’t take his obsession, as she called it, his all-consuming need to find their baby boy. It wasn’t healthy. She was tired of being forgotten. She loved him, and probably always would, but she just couldn’t keep existing like this; existing, because this wasn’t living, she said.

Of course, it wasn’t living; he was pretty sure that the biggest part of him died the day his son was ripped from their lives. What else did he continue to exist for but to find him and bring him home?

And so now he was alone.
He had failed again.

He had nothing now, and no one, so he continued to search.

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The years passed.

Jason had a son, he even gave him Dave’s middle name, Stephen. It was a nice gesture; but Dave wasn’t sure if it was done out of love or pity.

The BAU grew in experience and acclaim. They continued to hunt down the worst of America’s criminals, and they more often than not succeeded. It felt good, getting something right.

Max retired from the Bureau and moved to Florida.

Jason’s marriage fell apart, as did his relationship with Stephen eventually.

Carolyn moved to Los Angeles. Some major film preservation society wanted her to head up their film noir department. She kept in touch initially, and seemed content, if not happy, in her new life.

Walter was promoted to Assistant Director. He and his wife stayed together until her untimely death in the summer of 1992, it had happened so suddenly that Walter was left reeling. Sarah started feeling unwell and went to the doctor after not being able to shake her illness after a couple of weeks. It was stage 4 pancreatic cancer; she was diagnosed in May and by the end of July she was gone. Dave’s heart bled for his friend, they had been able to whether the storm of their son’s abduction better than Dave and Cary had. He had always enjoyed Sarah and Walter’s friendship, and did his best to support the grieving widower.

It took time, but Walter slowly learned how to make it from day to day. Dave had been a constant pillar of support for him, even if a good portion of their time together outside the office was spent with Walt bemoaning his fate in being the unfortunate soul to be placed in change of some of the Bureau’s lesser known and problematic divisions.
Eventually the horrors of the job caught up with Dave, and he decided that it was time to retire. He had been approached to write about his time with the FBI, as a hostage negotiator and as a founding member of the BAU, numerous times. It seemed that the time had finally arrived to see if anyone would ever want to read about the things he had seen and experienced. He held no hope that they would, but outside of his continued searching, he had little else in his life.

Surprisingly, the book did well, and so he wrote another, and then another. Before he knew it, Dave had garnered a significant following and his books were regulars on the New York Times bestseller list. He tried not to think about what it said about the American public that his books on the inner workings of the minds of serial killers were best sellers.

He was rich now, more so than he could have ever dreamt of becoming. There was little joy in his wealth though, especially with no one to share it with. He was able to fix up his parents’ house, they refused to let him buy them a new one. Dave gave to charity and the church, and he lived very comfortably.

The best thing about the money was that it enabled him to keep looking for his son. He would find him one day, he had to. His life was empty but for his continued quest. Dave had a few lovers over the years, mostly male, but there was never anyone serious. He didn’t have the desire or the energy to devote to building a relationship; he couldn’t afford the distraction.

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Almost a decade after leaving the FBI, Dave received a call from Agent Aaron Hotchner. Hotch, as he preferred to be called, had joined the BAU a few years before Dave had retired. When they had first met, Aaron was a bright and driven young man in the Seattle field office. He had been on the Hostage Rescue Team like Dave, then moved into investigations, eventually heading up the Seattle office before he landed a coveted spot in the BAU.

Some people referred to him as Dave’s protegee; Dave wasn’t sure if that was really the case, but he was honored to think that he might have had some influence on the young man who many believed would one day become the Director of the FBI. At present though, he was the Unit Chief of the BAU.

Jason was A.W.O.L. and Hotch needed his help. Dave thought long and hard before accepting and being reinstated to the Bureau.
Life was a little fuller after rejoining the BAU. The team was different now, they worked as a unit instead of individuals as they had once done. It took Dave a while to find his bearings and begin to get a feel for the people in the new BAU. They were certainly a bright bunch, and rather unique at that. For the first time in a long time, Dave felt a little less alone.

But still, after almost thirty years, what drove Dave was the search.

Chapter 4

The story now picks up after NCIS season 3 episode 12 “Boxed In”, and Criminal Minds season 4 episode 7 “Memoriam”. The timelines for both shows have been synced to align at this point. Some events from subsequent episodes may be included, but this story is AU.

December 31, 2008

Arlington, VA

As a rule, Tony avoided pity parties at all costs. They achieved nothing, and only left him feeling even more miserable when they were over with. Tonight though, he was willing to make an exception, mostly because life really sucked.

So here he was, on New Year's Eve, alone in his apartment, watching Dick Clark and licking his wounds.

Despite Wendy leaving him at the altar, he had really thought that things were turning around for him since he joined NCIS. Sure, he thought things were better when it was just him and Gibbs working together, but he adjusted. He learned how to deflect Kate’s barbs and tease McProbie out of his insecurities, mostly.

Anyway, he was dealing with the changed dynamics of being a team instead of a partnership. Then,
since this was his life, everything inevitably went to shit.

Contracting the plague definitely ranked up there as one of the worst experiences of his life, sadly, it wasn’t the worst though. He was barely back on his feet when the current banes of his existence first darkened the door of NCIS.

He wished to God that he had never heard the name David. That entire family had to be cursed or something. First that psychopath Ari entered their lives, shot Gerald, caused Gibbs to turn into a pod person, and then murdered Kate right in front of him.

The sound of the bullet impacting her head, and the feel of her blood spraying across his face were burned into Tony’s mind. He shook his head, trying to clear away the image, but her fixed and vacant gaze is always there when he closes his eyes.

There were times when she had annoyed the hell out of him with her constant put downs and sexist comments (yes, she was always accusing others of being sexist, but was by far the biggest sexist of them all), but she was part of his team, and hey, he wasn’t perfect either. She was the irritating sister that you never wanted, but who grew on you in spite of your best efforts to keep her at arm’s length. Ultimately, as Senior Field Agent she was his responsibility, and now she was dead.

Then before he could even begin to deal with Kate’s death, Morrow left for Homeland Security and one of Gibbs’ string of redheads became Director of NCIS.

Her first action as Director, other than putting Gibbs’ balls in a vise with a flirty smile and some cleavage, was to replace Kate with her murderer’s sister. Not just his sister even, his Mossad handler, the same person that profiled his team and set her rabid dog of a brother on them.

Who in the hell thinks that an investigative team that deals with highly sensitive, and sometimes classified, cases is the place for a foreign spy?

*Liaison my ass!*

Tony huffed as he took another swig of beer. No, he shouldn’t be drinking with the meds he was on, but oh well.

Anyway, Tony missed the days when Gibbs seemed to give a shit about what he thought. It was
becoming increasingly clear that they lost more than a teammate and friend with Kate’s death; they had also apparently lost their respect for each other.

Tony knew that Ziva played a bigger part in Kate’s death than she let on to them. But she had done her prep-work well, she knew exactly how to play Gibbs. All she had to do was play the vulnerable and mistreated daughter of big, bad, Eli David and Gibbs hero/father complex reared its ugly head.

Now she was neatly installed in Kate’s desk, weaving her web throughout the agency. She “saved” Gibbs by killing her brother; of course, they didn’t realize that Tony knew that, but he had been in police work long enough to work out little things like bullet trajectory. Also, he knew Gibbs, and he knew when the man was lying. Little Miss Mossad wasn’t as great at controlling her facial expressions as she should be, especially when up against someone like himself that relied on his ability to read people to stay alive. Tony would bet his entire pension that orders had come down from Daddy dearest to take out Ari as a means of tying up loose ends and securing her place on Gibbs’ team.

Now Gibbs and the Director were firmly in her pocket (though he was highly suspicious of Madame Director’s close ties to Mossad, and he definitely wanted to know how she played into all of this). Then she moved on to phase two where she began to flirt with him one moment, and slap him down the next, trying to keep him off-balance. All the while she was drawing Tim in with compliments and shared jokes, flattering his already sizeable ego.

Tony had held high hopes that Abby wouldn’t be drawn in, she was as angry as he was that Ziva had been brought in to replace Kate. He should have known better; now Abby was firmly in Ziva’s corner, even more so it seemed, than his own.

Ducky was an easy sell for her, all it took was an offer of tea and a willing ear. So now it was only Tony and Jimmy Palmer that had not fallen for Mata Hari’s charms. Well, to be fair, there were several others in the agency that were none too happy that a foreign operative was appointed to the premier team of NCIS, an appointment many of them had been working toward for years. Few of them, other than he and Balboa, however, were willing to speak up about their misgivings. Not that it had done either Tony or Rick any good. All they received in return was a lecture on the chain of command, and in Tony’s case, a head slap.

That was something he was more than tired of already. He really wished that he hadn’t been such a loyal idiot when he was called to HR and asked if he wanted to file a complaint against Gibbs for assault. Apparently numerous people complained about Gibbs’ treatment of him; but Tony, being conditioned to be the eternal punching bag, refused.

He sighed and slowly levered himself off the couch to grab another drink, electing to switch to water instead of having another beer. Tony might be an idiot, but he wasn’t stupid!
Returning to his nest on the couch, Tony tried to pay attention to the program, but inevitably his thoughts turned again to the mess that is his life.

Ziva had switched tactics with him recently. She finally caught on that he wasn’t responding to her advances as she thought he would, and as a result was becoming increasingly aggressive towards him. More than once he noticed her sharpening her knives while trying, and failing, to surreptitiously glare at him. He felt a little smug that his masks were good enough to fool a Mossad assassin. Unfortunately, it was becoming increasingly clear that if she couldn’t control Tony, she was going to try to eliminate him.

He had recently received an anonymous message in one of his private email inboxes warning him to, “never show one’s underbelly to a hoopoe.” The message was clearly from his cousin Chauncey who worked with SIS, though he knew nothing about that, nothing at all. However, it was clear to him that if his cousin had made the effort to warn him through back-channels, that not only were his suspicions correct, but that he was in immediate danger.

He had to carefully consider the best way to handle this. Tony knew he couldn’t count on any help from Gibbs, and didn’t that feel like a kick in the balls. The last few months had been horrible, from having to pretend to be married to that viper for an op, to being accused of murder by the FBI, to quietly gathering information on the Davids, he was run ragged. Every time Tony tried to approach Gibbs he was rebuffed; he was so caught up in playing daddy to Abby and Ziva, and following after Madame Director’s skirts, that he had no time to listen to anything Tony said.

Well Tony was sick of it; he was exhausted, sore, and downright pissed. He had taken an oath to serve and protect his country, its Navy and Marine Corps, and it was a duty he took seriously. Information was still coming in from his various sources, and the evidence confirmed what his gut already knew, the Davids posed a direct threat to those entities he swore to protect.

Apparently being the head of Mossad was not enough for Eli David. He was intent upon building an empire of his own, and had no qualms about using his country to do it. Through his connections, Tony had found out that individuals within the Israeli government were also quietly investigating the Davids. He didn’t have all the answers yet, but one thing was clear, whatever they hoped to accomplish by embedding Ziva at NCIS, Tony was a threat to it.

Tony could no longer afford to sit back and observe, it was time to act. Two days ago, they had caught a lead in the weapons smuggling case they were working, and Gibbs sent him and Ziva to the shipyard to investigate. Anyone who expected him to believe that a highly trained operative would become so overwhelmed with claustrophobia in an 8’ x 40’ shipping container that she would resort to shooting her way out, is a complete imbecile. And wasn’t it convenient that she shot at such an angle that Tony ended up being hit? Not that any of the others actually believed that he had been
shot; they simply believed Ziva when she said that he scratched his arm on a crate and was just looking for attention. There was no order to see Ducky to get it checked out, no thought for even a moment that Tony was telling the truth.

If it hadn’t been for Jimmy coming across him in the parking garage when he was about 10 seconds from passing out from blood loss and pain, Tony wasn’t sure where he would be. Thankfully, Jimmy immediately took him to Bethesda where he underwent surgery to remove the bullet. Luckily for him it missed the brachial artery by a centimeter and didn’t damage any nerves. He did get to have a nice catch-up with his Pulmonologist, Dr. Brad Pitt, who appeared in his hospital room with two nurses and a bunch of machines as soon as he woke up from surgery.

Brad was none too happy to learn that he had been trapped inside a metal box with burning currency. Apparently smoke inhalation is a pretty serious thing when you’ve had the pneumonic plague. After a day and a half of breathing out, and breathing in, getting poked and prodded, and pumped full of what seemed like half of the hospital’s pharmacy, Tony was eventually able to talk the doctors into letting him go a little after lunchtime today. Not that he wasn’t willing to sign himself out A.M.A., which they all knew, but it worked better if the docs felt like they were still in charge.

Jimmy had been with him the whole time, thankfully, since there was no one else at NCIS to depend on. He had wanted to call the others, but Tony had asked him not to. None of them cared enough to make sure he was alright, even though he had clearly been in pain, so there was no point in giving them an opportunity to pretend they gave a shit.

He had been pleasantly surprised by Jimmy Palmer; Tony had always figured that due to Jimmy’s outward reaction to his teasing, which not everyone got, he couldn’t stand him. It seemed to be a recurring theme with his co-workers lately. However, Jimmy had one hell of a poker face and was much better at disguising his true feelings than anyone gave him credit for. He had been observing the changing of the NCIS tides as well, and saw that things were getting progressively worse. He had proved himself a true friend over the past several months, and Tony was more thankful for that than he could express. Tony could count the number of people in his life that he trusted on one hand, and that list was getting smaller by the day.

Jimmy was a true pal, and Tony couldn’t bear to think of possibly leaving him behind in the widow’s web. He had made up his mind, he was getting out before the she-devil killed him, and he was taking Jimmy with him. He knew some things about Mr. Palmer that the others didn’t, things that would give them both more options as they moved forward. Now, all that remained was to decide where to go next, oh, and he should probably tell Jimmy.

If only he would hurry up with the food! Tony needs dim sum STAT!

As if summoned by his thoughts, or maybe his grumbling stomach, Jimmy came through the door
juggling several bags which thankfully included dinner.

“Tony, have you been drinking beer?” Jimmy asked as soon as he relieved himself of the bags.

Tony glanced at the empty bottle on the side table.

_Damn, I knew I forgot something!_

“No mom, of course not.” He replied with a winning grin.

Jimmy rolled his eyes and turned back to the counter to unpack their dinner. He spread everything out on the coffee table and then returned with plates and utensils.

“So, you looked a little broody when I came in, what’s up?”

“Broody, Autopsy Gremlin?”

Jimmy laughed and tossed a fortune cookie at Tony’s head.

“Yes, broody. Do you need more pain meds?” He asked, turning back to the kitchen to grab the bottle.

“No, I’m good for now. You know what those things do to me. I want to be conscious when this craptastic year ends.”

Jimmy nodded and set the bottle on the table near the food before joining Tony on the couch.

“So, what’s really bothering you then?”

He grabbed some of the General Tsao’s chicken before Tony could inhale it all, along with some dumplings and lo mein before making himself comfortable.
Tony sighed, taking a moment to consider the best way to explain his suspicions to Jimmy, and hopefully persuade him to jump ship alongside him.

“Well Doc, I’ve got something to run past you, and I’m really hoping once I’ve finished that you’ll still be sitting there...

Chapter 5

January 2, 2009

F.B.I. Headquarters, Quantico, VA

Office of the B.A.U.

“Hey, Pretty Boy!” Supervisory Special Agent Derek Morgan said in greeting to his colleague, Dr. Spencer Reid.

Spencer jumped in surprise, spilling his coffee down the side of his mug.

“Crap!” He turned back to the break room counter and sat down his T.A.R.D.I.S. coffee mug before running cold water over his scalded hand.

Morgan looked on sheepishly as he leaned against the door jam.

“Sorry Reid, I didn’t mean to startle you. Everything alright?”

Reid sighed before he grabbed several paper towels to dry his hands on and then mop up the small
spill on the floor. He had managed to miss getting any coffee on his clothes thankfully.

He pushed up the sleeve of his navy cardigan that had fallen before tucking a tendril of honey brown hair behind his left ear.

“Fine,” he said to the annoyingly beautiful (and sometimes plain annoying) man who moved to lean up against the counter beside him.

“I just didn’t sleep well last night, and what you just witnessed was indicative of how my morning has gone thus far.”

Morgan frowned. He knew that this last case had been rough on Reid. Having to deal with his estranged father, the team learning about his mother’s illness, on top of the nightmares he’d had about a crime that had happened years prior, really took it out of the young genius.

“Are you still having flashbacks?”

“Yes-no.” Reid sighed before picking his coffee mug up again. “It’s not flashbacks like the ones I had during the case; it’s just this ridiculous nightmare I’ve had off and on for as long as I can remember. I haven’t had it in a few years though.” Reid rubbed his temple, trying to ease the feeling of pressure in his head. He conveniently left out the other dreams he had been having lately, strangely erotic purple-tinged dreams starring the man beside him.

Morgan threw his arm around the other man’s shoulders, noticing (and secretly loving) how Reid had immediately leaned into him.

“Hey, it’s probably happening because of this last case. It was a rough one for you, and it’s totally understandable that your mind has a lot to process afterwards. No one expects you to bounce back right away.”

He pulled Reid closer as they walked back toward the bullpen until he held him in a one-armed hug.

“I know, Derek.” Reid smiled shyly at Morgan before slipping out of his hold and sitting down at his desk.
Now it was Morgan’s turn to sigh. His Pretty Boy may be a genius when it comes to most things, but he was completely blind to his own appeal.

Morgan sat down at his desk and reluctantly grabbed the top file in his in-box. He glanced up at Spencer who was rapidly reading through his own file. He had been trying to find little ways of subtly showing Spencer that he was interested in him, but the younger man didn’t pick up on any of it.

If Morgan hadn’t noticed Spencer checking him out numerous times when he thought no one was paying any attention, he never would have thought that he might have a chance with the willowy agent. As things stood, he still wasn’t sure about the it, subtle clearly wasn’t working.

Yes, that’s right. Derek Morgan lo-liked a man. Not just any man though, he lo-LIKED damnit, his best friend. It had taken him some time (a year) and little nudge (intervention), before he finally realized what the feelings he had for his genius meant.

Flashback . . .

It wasn’t an easy realization to come to unfortunately. He never expected to have an epiphany about his sexuality at the age of 33, but he had. Rossi, damn nosey too-observant bastard, had apparently been watching him watch Spencer for months before getting fed up and cornering him after they arrived home from a case. He offered an unsuspecting Derek a ride home, as his car was at the mechanic’s shop, and then proceeded to give Derek one of the most uncomfortable talks of his life; and he had to sit through his Momma giving him “the talk” at the age of twelve.

He was pissed at first, and he let Rossi know in no uncertain terms exactly what he thought of his interference and his advice. Thankfully, Rossi is even more stubborn than him. He waited out Derek’s initial anger before he turned his world upside down with his own confession, Rossi was bisexual. Derek was so stunned that he just sat in the passenger seat of Rossi’s truck speechless.

David Rossi, man’s man, never say die Marine, hard-ass FBI agent was bi, and he was perfectly okay with it. He told Derek that he had realized from a young age that he was attracted to both men and women, he had even come out and told his parents. Back then that was an even bigger deal; homosexuality was illegal, and though his parents were as loving and supportive as they had been his whole life, they made sure to caution him about telling anyone, or acting upon his attraction to other males.

It became even more important for him to hide his sexuality when he joined the Marines; if anyone had found out, he would have been dishonorably discharged and imprisoned, if he lived long
enough. After the Marines was the F.B.I., and as Derek well knew, law enforcement had been just as dangerous a place as the military to live a life outside of the accepted norm. Then he told him about meeting his now ex-wife, Carolyn, how it didn’t seem to matter as much that he found men attractive because he was committed to his wife and thought that they would be together for the rest of their lives.

It wasn’t until more than a decade after their divorce that Dave finally had to deal with the reality of being bisexual. He had never lived as an openly bi man, had never acted on his attraction to men; and it was difficult initially to find the courage to do so. Rossi had realized that he needed help to deal with the seemingly monumental changes that this would bring to his life, so he had gone to a therapist. It was at this point in his recounting that Derek had started to recover from his shock and was able to react.

He wanted nothing to do with seeing a therapist, he had no need for one. Dave stopped him before he could go on a full-blown rant (again), by handing him a business card. Derek then realized that they had pulled up in front of his house, but he just sat there stewing.

Rossi explained that this therapist was a friend and had helped him deal with his own sexuality. He was a former cop, and specialized in treating victims of sexual abuse. That had nearly made Derek bolt from the truck; it was only Rossi’s hand on his arm and really the look on his face that stopped him.

“Derek, I’ve never lived through what you have, so I can’t imagine the impact that the abuse you suffered has had on your development as a man. Dr. Rivers though, he does know, and he can help. You deserve to live your life free from the power of that monster; you deserve to be happy with your life, and with yourself. Just - think about it alright? You need to do this for you. And if you ever want the chance to build a life with Reid, you need to figure some things out first. He doesn’t deserve to have you scowling and growling every time someone gives him a second glance, and then do nothing to pursue him yourself. You keep treating him like this, you’ll lose him completely.”

That, more than anything else, jarred Derek enough to actually consider what Rossi was saying instead of just angrily denying it internally. He had nodded and then gathered up his things before exiting Rossi’s truck without a word. It hadn’t been an easy process; it had taken him three weeks to even consider heeding Dave’s advice, and then another two before he called the number on the, by then, dog-eared business card.

That had been seven months ago, and he had made a lot of progress. He realized and accepted now that he was bisexual, with a strong preference for men, or rather one man in particular. The hardest part initially, after he had actually started seeing Dr. Rivers, was working through the things that Buford had done to him, and learning to separate that from his sexuality. Over time he was able to remember that he had always been attracted to men, long before Carl Buford entered his life; and that had been pretty liberating. It helped him to begin to heal, and to see that the perverse things that
Buford had done to him was in no way related to the feelings and desires that he had for Spencer. The two things couldn’t be more different.

So now Derek faced the challenge of winning over his Pretty Boy. He had already come out to his Momma and his sisters, which ended up being much easier than he had anticipated. Apparently, they suspected all along, especially after meeting Reid and watching how the two interacted. He was holding off on telling Penelope, only because he knows that she would want to help him with Spencer, and he had been trying to be subtle. He might have to bring her in after all.

The theme song from Magnum P.I. jarred Derek out of his reverie. He looked around, confused for a moment about where the sound could be coming from before Spencer reached into his bag and pulled out his cell.

“Tony!” Spencer answered his phone with a happy smile.

This made Derek sit up and pay even closer attention to his friend.

Spencer laughed, “Really? Finally!” He looked genuinely happy, Morgan noted, excited even.

“Wait, you what?”

He was now frowning and looking distressed. Derek thought about getting up and going to him, but then he continued.

“Why didn’t you call me, or have someone call me? I would have come as soon as I heard, you know that!”

_Just who the hell is this Tony?_

Morgan thought unhappily.

“Yeah, not a good excuse. So, you’re home now? Is there anything you need? I can come over right after work.”
The tension began to leave Spencer’s body.

“Oh, is this the Jimmy you mentioned previously?”

-” uh huh. Yeah, that sounds great.” Spencer laughed in response to whatever mystery Tony said.

“I’ll see you both then. - Okay, bye.”

Spencer smiled and then placed his phone back in his bag before returning to the files on his desk as though nothing had happened.

To be fair nothing had, really. Though Reid didn’t get a lot of personal calls this wasn’t the first. For Morgan though, it was not just an ordinary call. This Tony meant something to Spencer, that much was clear. Morgan tried very hard to push down the swell of jealousy that rose in him at the thought of someone else in Spencer’s life.

He was just about to ask Reid about the call when an all too familiar phrase pulled his attention back to the present.

“Conference room in five, we’ve got a case.” JJ announced as she walked past on the way to Hotch’s office.

Morgan tossed the file back on his desk before rising and making his way toward the conference room. He would just have to get answers from Reid on the plane. If there was somebody else in the running for Reid’s affections he wanted to know about it. He had to know what he was up against.

He knew that it was unbelievable, not to mention cliché, but Morgan had felt a connection to Spencer from the moment he first saw him. In his heart, he was certain that he was Spencer’s, and Spencer was his. Now he just had to figure out a way of convincing the intelligent, quirky, lithe, sexy as fu- of convincing Spencer, that they were meant to be.

Derek followed Reid into the conference room, trying and failing not to stare at his gorgeous, tight, perky ass. Rossi was already seated and noticed, of course. He gave Derek a grin with a raised brow, which he ignored, thankful for the millionth time in the past few months that his complexion made it difficult to tell if he was blushing. He sat down quickly and took the file that JJ handed to him, before trying to divert his attention away from his friend, who just had to sit right next to him and smelled so
He sighed internally. It was no use, he definitely needed help.

Chapter 6

“A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.” Yoko Ono

He breathed deeply and smiled. Surely, life didn’t get any better than this.

Aaron swayed gently side-to-side in the hammock, his eyes closed and his rarely used guitar draped across his lap.

He strummed the strings and sang,

“I've been meaning to tell you
I've got this feelin' that won't subside
I look at you and I fantasize
You're mine and tonight
Now I've got you in my sights...”

“Should I be worried?” A smiling voice asked from the doorway of the bungalow.

Aaron’s smile grew and he opened his eyes to look at the beautiful man leaning against the doorway. He was tall, solidly built with tanned skin that covered a trim and clearly hard-earned physique. He was met with a blinding smile and a wiggled brow, starkly contrasted by the purple-tinged light.
His laughter bubbled up within him and overflowed, filling their sheltered hideaway before being overwhelmed by the sound of the surf.

“That depends...” Aaron answered as he sat up and swung his legs over the side of the hammock. He leaned his guitar against the bright blue siding of the front porch and prowled towards that other man.

He took pains to be as ridiculous and predatory as possible before grabbing the bronzed Adonis by the strings of his red swimming trunks.

A quickly inhaled breath and a shudder was his immediate reply as Aaron pulled the man forward. He ran his hands upward, tracing over abs and up to a lightly haired chest, then over a set of broad shoulders and down a scarred back before reaching his destination and firmly cupping the other man’s ass.

“On what?” The beauty asked in a rough voice.

“Um...” Aaron brought his lips to his neck, making a trail of hot open-mouthed kisses up the tower. He sucked on the spot right behind the other man’s ear, earning another gasp and a twitch of the man’s pelvis into his.

“It all depends, my beloved, on if you want to be caught or not.” Aaron chuckled.

The other man groaned lowly, before leaning back and halting Aaron’s exploration of his jaw.

He looked into Aaron’s eyes and said with a softer smile.

“Always.”

Aaron was completely besotted, as usual, and leaned forward to kiss his husband. Unfortunately, he had other plans. He caught Aaron’s face in his hands and placed a teasing kiss just to the side of his mouth; and then with practiced ease he broke out of Aaron’s hold and took off running into the house, laughing all the while.
“Nobody said I had to make it easy though!” The other man yelled back to him.

Aaron smiled yet again, something he seemed to do all the time now, before giving chase.

He had just turned the corner into their bedroom as he felt the earth began to shake.

“...Aaron...Hotch...Hotch”

Aaron woke abruptly, running a hand across his eyes.

It was a dream, again. A feeling of nearly overwhelming sadness swept over him and he struggled to not allow his face to reflect his despair.

_It was only a dream. A glorious, beautiful dream, but still, only a dream._

“You okay Hotch?” Derek Morgan stood in front of Aaron’s seat.

“I’m fine.” He looked around in confusion.

Derek frowned, “Alright man, we’ve landed, you slept right through it.”

“Oh...” Aaron said, realizing that he had in fact slept through the landing, and a good portion of the flight it seemed. He took in the slightly concerned and expectant faces of his team as they waited for instructions before deplaning.

He checked his watch, only 15:00.

“As much as I would prefer not to, let’s head back to the office. Everyone finish up their reports and then take a long weekend. I don’t want to see anyone before 08:00 on Monday.”

“Yes!” Emily and Derek high-fived each other before hurrying out of the plane. Spencer and Agent
Todd following at a more sedate pace, which left Dave, looking at him searchingly.

“Are you sure you’re alright, Aaron? You don’t normally sleep that long or that deeply on the plane.”

Part of him wanted to roll his eyes at Rossi’s mother-henning, but he refrained, knowing that the older agent truly did care.

Aaron collected the few papers he had out and placed them in his bag before rising to join Dave in exiting the plane.

“I’m sure Dave. I just didn’t sleep well last night. These back-to-back cases are not conducive to a steady sleeping pattern.”

Dave nodded as they both placed their bags in the back of the SUV before climbing in the back. Derek had snagged the keys it seemed, and then somehow managed to convince Spencer to take the front passenger seat.

Aaron and Dave shared a look, Derek had apparently given up on being subtle in expressing his regard for their resident genius, and was upping his game; it was about time.

They strapped themselves in and Aaron leaned into the seat, taking just a few moments to try to hold on to the swiftly fleeting emotions evoked by his recurring dream.

He had lost track of how many times he had the same dream over the past few years, but it never failed to fill him with joy and longing. His team bantered back and forth as they made their way back to Quantico.

Aaron sighed softly, and steeled himself. It did no good to let a dream affect him so; the man was clearly a construction of his imagination, formed from his yearnings and fantasies. He had never met anyone that evoked such feelings, and he wasn’t sure he ever would.

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Undisclosed location, London, UK

“I believe, gentlemen, that the time to intervene is at hand.”

“Yes, I agree.” A distinguished looking man with steel colored hair and a sharply cut suit said from his wingback chair at the head of the table. “The question remains, however, as to the best approach for addressing this issue.”

“We could arrange for them to be brought here...”

“You mean kidnap them. Is that really your solution for everything?”

“Yes, John. Surely even you should realize by now that Mycroft thinks kidnapping is the means to nearly every end.”

The blond man, Dr. John Watson, glared at his snarky companion.

“Remind me again why I married you, Sherlock.”

Sherlock replied with a confused expression, “You had no choice ultimately, your biology chose for you. That and you did say that you find me at least somewhat tolerable.” He finished softly.

John rolled his eyes before taking his husband’s hand in his own.

“I do believe I actually said that I love you, I never said you were tolerable.”

Several others in the room chuckled.

“Yes, brother dear, do at least try to be accurate.” Mycroft Holmes said with a sly smile to his brother.
“Oh, stuff it, Mycroft!”

“Boys!” The rather imposing figure at the other end of the table scolded the two men.

“Sorry Mummy.” Both Mycroft and Sherlock were quick to reply, though glaring at each other whilst doing so.

Greg Lestrade, Detective Inspector for Scotland Yard and Mycroft’s fiancé, shared a long-suffering look with Dr. Watson. He was dressed for work still, having been summoned (kidnapped) from his office to attend this emergency session.

The Holmes’ cousin, Chauncey Paddington, laughed at them before trying to guide the discussion back to the topic at hand.

He cleared his throat, “I do not believe that kidnapping our dear cousin is the best course of action.”

Lady Holmes nodded in agreement.

“What do you suggest then, Q?” His father, Lord Clive Paddington, asked from the head of the table.

“We know that the transformations are now taking place around the world in such numbers as to draw the attention of the public. It will not be long before we are required to bring the Counsel out of the shadows. So far, our people have been able to provide sufficient support for everyone that has come online. Thankfully, the process has been more controlled due to the alteration Sherlock was able to make to the activation gene, preventing anyone from coming online until they meet their match.”

He sighed before pushing up the sleeves of his cardigan and taking a sip from the teacup in front of him. Chauncey, or Q as he was known to everyone outside of his family, continued.

“I believe it is best if I travel to the United States...”

The two men on either side of him sat up straighter, ready to interrupt.
“With James and Alec, of course;” He said to placate his self-appointed bodyguards/Sentinels/lovers. “...and visit with Anthony. The news we have to share with him will not be easy to hear, and I believe it would be better coming from someone he knows and trusts.”

He glanced around the table, noting that they all seemed to agree on this matter.

“I agree,” Alec Trevelyan, Agent 006 for SIS and one of Q’s Sentinels stated. “We also recently received intelligence that one of the last remaining Syndicate members, Eli David, has changed his orders regarding Tony. His mole within NCIS has been ordered to eliminate him, but to do so on the job, lessening the chances of her exposure.”

Q and Alec’s partner, and SIS Agent 007, James Bond continued. “Yes, and she has already made one attempt. He was shot just last week, thankfully she’s a shitty shot. Given Mycroft and Sherlock’s assessment of the mole, it is highly likely that she will make another attempt soon. She does not deal with failure well”

He looked over at Alec and grinned, “That still surprises me, given how often she cocks things up.”

Alec smirked in reply, but said nothing as he continued working his hand up Q’s thigh. He couldn’t help it; his Guide was distracting!

“Very well,” Lady Holmes stated. “Q darling, you will take your two gentlemen and break the news to Anthony, and it would be wise to include his friend Dr. Reid as well. Meanwhile, Clive and I will visit our cousin and her former husband. We have managed to avert the greatest threat to our world through the activation of our latent Sentinel and Guide genes, and the virtual eradication of the Syndicate. Now we must deal with the matter that started us on this path in the beginning, and reunite the families torn apart by the Syndicate. We shall reconvene in one month’s time; be sure to communicate any updates to the Counsel as necessary”

She rose from her chair and the rest followed.

“Good, that’s over now.” Sherlock exclaimed. “Now, I need to research! I’m positive that John is experiencing mood swings, and I believe it is related to the recent changes...”

“Sherlock-” John said with exasperation as he followed his husband and mother-in-law from the room.
Chapter 7

January 9, 2009

Carletto’s Italian Eatery, Springfield, VA

Tony sat, impatiently waiting with Jimmy in a booth towards the back of the dining room of Carletto’s. It was Tony’s regular booth with lines of sight to every entrance and exit, walls on two sides, and no window.

They had to postpone dinner twice over the last week as Spencer’s team had caught back to back cases. Selfishly, Tony was really glad that Spencer was up for meeting with them the same night of his return.

Jimmy had been back at NCIS for the past week, though Tony had been on mandatory medical leave following his surgery. It was good to have friends in HR; they had his back and weren’t intimidated by Gibbs’ blustering.

Gibbs hadn’t been happy at all to hear that Tony would be out for at least two weeks. He let into Tony over the phone as soon as he was informed. Unfortunately for him, Tony was no longer up to bearing the brunt of Gibbs’ abuse, and promptly told him that he was welcome to contact Bethesda if he didn’t believe Tony had a valid reason for going on medical leave. As his medical proxy (a fact he was in the process of revoking), Gibbs should be able to receive information regarding Tony’s treatment there.

If procedures were followed, discovering that he had been shot in the line of duty would be cause for an investigation. Considering the farce of a law enforcement agency that NCIS has become though, Tony wasn’t holding out any hope. He was sure that HR would push for it, but once the Director got
involved that would be the end of it. She wasn’t about to allow any additional scrutiny to fall on David.

After the incident with Gibbs, Tony hadn’t heard a word from his team. He couldn’t say that he was surprised really, but it did hurt. He knew better than to expect any kind of apology from Gibbs, but he thought that at least Abby would have called. The only person from NCIS to contact him had been Ducky, clearly a result of something Jimmy had said. He did seem genuinely horrified that Tony had been shot and not received immediate treatment.

At least Ducky still seemed to care if he lived or died.

Other than these short moments of drama, Tony’s week had been fairly peaceful. If he wasn’t healing from a gunshot wound and contemplating life-altering decisions it would have been the best vacation he’d had in several years. How sad is that.

Though Tony was mostly homebound the first few days, he was not idle. After talking things through with Jimmy on New Year’s Eve, they had begun to plan. He wasn’t overly worried about himself in the short term, he had enough money between his personal savings and the trust fund from his mother that he really didn’t need to work at all, but he knew that the same could not be said for Jimmy.

He had tried to convince Jimmy to take some time to think things over before making a decision about NCIS. Tony didn’t want to leave him there, but he didn’t want Jimmy to feel pressured to leave if he really didn’t want to do so.

Jimmy had scoffed and told him that he wanted to be included in whatever plans Tony was making.

Tony had explored numerous options, he had looked at everything from other law enforcement agencies, to private investigations, to teaching at universities. After discussing the options with Jimmy, they had decided that talking with Spencer would not only help hone their plans, but might also open some doors, at least they hoped.

He was also anxious to speak with Spencer about other matters. Tony knew that Jimmy would chide him for not saying anything, but he had been feeling very strangely over the past few weeks. Periodically he would get these blinding headaches, if he didn’t know better, he would think that he was picking up on emotions around him. Entering crowded places had become challenging. He knew that Spencer suffered from migraines and wanted to talk with him first before having to deal with any more MDs.
“...arrabiatta. What do you think?”

“I’m sorry, what?” Tony was drawn from his introspection by Jimmy’s question.

“I asked which you dish you would recommend, the bucatini all ’amatriciana or the penne all ’arrabiatta.”

“They’re both excellent. Do you want meat in the dish?” Tony asked as he picked up his neglected menu and began to peruse the familiar offerings.

“Ah, no. I think I’m going to lay off the meat for a while considering some of our recent cases.” Jimmy frowned in disgust.

Tony crinkled his nose, “Yeah, I get that. Go with the penne then, no meat, but lots of big flavors.”

“I will, so, are you going to tell me what else is bothering you?”

Jimmy sat his menu down and picked up his glass of Valpolicella Ripasso that Tony had ordered for the table.

“Eh,” Tony looked up from his menu guiltily. “I was going to -”

“Tony!”

They were interrupted by the arrival of Spencer and a gorgeous hunk of man who followed him to the table.

“Spence!” Tony stood up and enthusiastically pulled Spencer into a one-armed hug. It had taken him months, but he had finally worn Spencer down to where he would even occasionally initiate a hug.

“How are you, man? It sounded on the phone like these last cases were pretty rough.”
Tony drew back and held on to Spencer’s shoulder.

“Me? I’m fine! I’m not the one that got shot, which we will be talking about later.”

“Of course,” Tony said while grinning at Reid. “This is my friend that I told you about, Dr. James Palmer. Jimmy, this is Dr. Spencer Reid and...”

“Hello,” Jimmy greeted the pair.

Spencer looked down shyly, which caused Tony to frown; Spence didn’t do that anymore, at least...oh!

“Derek Morgan.” Derek reached forward and shook both of his and Jimmy’s hands. He knew his Pretty Boy struggled with social situations.

“Great to meet you Derek!” Tony said as they took their seats. “Spence has told me a lot about you.”

“Has he now?”

Spencer blushed before shooting Tony an annoyed glance.

Always quick on the uptake, Tony steered the conversation away from Spencer.

“Yeah, he’s told me all about your team. They seem like good people.” Tony observed.

“They are pretty great. Every team has it’s struggles you know, but I wouldn’t trade them.”

Tony’s answering smile was mixed with a grimace.
Derek noticed that this was a sensitive topic, so he tried a new direction.

“So, I apologize to gate crashing. I asked Reid to dinner as we were finishing up at the Bureau, but he mentioned that he already had plans and invited me along. I hope that’s alright.”

“Of course.” Jimmy and Tony said in unison, causing both the chuckle and break the tension.

Spencer decided to relax, and try not to let the presence of an unfamiliar person and Derek make him anxious.

“Dr. Palmer, Tony mentioned that you’re a medical examiner, how did you come to choose that specialty?”

“It’s Jimmy, please.” He replied with a smile. “Working as an ME is actually not my chosen path. I am actually a doctor of medicine and forensic anthropology. The former Director of NCIS is friends with my uncle, and he thought that having a forensic anthropologist on staff would benefit the agency.”

Jimmy paused to take another drink, before continuing.

“It just happened that a few months after I started, the Assistant ME, Gerald, was shot, and so Dr. Mallard needed help in autopsy. I volunteered to help since my role was still developing and I didn’t have much of a case load. Unfortunately, the new leadership of the agency seems to be under the mistaken impression that I was hired into that roll and am still in training.”

Both Spencer and Derek seemed confused by this.

“Wait.” Derek said. “How could someone running a Federal Agency not know that they have a man with two doctorates playing assistant in the basement?”

Tony smirked and shook his head, “Welcome to our world gentlemen.”

“Tony, I knew you said that things weren’t great recently, but Jimmy’s situation coupled with your own issues makes it seem like there are some far-reaching problems at NCIS.”
“Ha,” Jimmy chuckled softly. “That is putting it mildly.”

Jimmy and Tony shared a glance.

“Well Spence -”

“Gentlemen, are you ready to order?” The waiter asked as he arrived at the table.

He gave them all a once-over before settling his clearly interested gaze on Spencer; a fact that did not go unnoticed by everyone at the table but Spencer. Jimmy and Tony smirked as Derek tried to kill the man with his glare.

“Yes,” Tony interjected, in hopes of defusing the situation. “I’ll have the...”

Over the next hour, the four men talked, ate, and drank to their hearts content. They all enjoyed getting to know the others and found themselves more relaxed than they normally would be in such situations.

Spencer and Jimmy got into a debate over Earnest Hooton’s connection to the eugenics movement.

Once it was revealed that Tony and Derek had both played college football, the inevitable razing commenced.

“I can’t believe you played for Northwestern!” Tony exclaimed. “Do the kitty cats even have a football team?”

“Oh, it’s on now!”

Eventually they ran out of food and wine and Jimmy suggested that they continue their discussion somewhere more private.
Derek wasn’t quite sure what the need for privacy was about, but he offered up his house anyway.

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**Derek Morgan’s house, Lorton, VA**

After arriving at Derek’s house all four men settled in the living room with coffee. Derek made a point of pulling Spencer down onto the loveseat beside him, earning himself a gorgeous blush as a reward.

Tony just rolled his eyes, his friend was so oblivious.

“So, Tony,” Derek began. “Reid said you two met at one of his lectures at Georgetown. Did you two date after that, or what?”

*All the subtlety of a wrecking ball.* Tony thought.

“Derek!” Spencer said, “That was rude! What does that have to do with anything?”

Morgan was immediately sheepish, apparently his mouth got ahead of his brain for a moment.

Tony laughed before interjecting and stopping Spencer’s forthcoming lecture.

“Nope, never dated. As fond as I am of the good doctor, he’s way too much of a twink for me.”

Derek and Jimmy both choked on their coffees.

“Hey! I am not a twink!”

“You are totally a twink Spencer.” Tony said with a wiggle of his brows. “There’s nothing wrong with it, own your twinkiness, it works for you!”
“There is nothing wrong with you Pretty Boy.”

“Oh my gosh,” Spencer said as he looked between Derek and Tony. Jimmy just watched with great amusement.

“You agree with him!” He turned an accusing glare at Morgan.

Derek knew he was on thin ice, apparently Spencer didn’t care to be referred to as a twink.

He let his arm that had been resting along the back of his brown leather loveseat drop to Spencer’s shoulders.

“Spencer, you are beautiful. It doesn’t matter if your physical appearance falls in line with a certain stereotype, there’s no one quite like you Pretty Boy.” Derek said as he squeezed Spencer’s knee.

“Nice!” Tony mouthed to Derek while Spencer suddenly found the area rug interesting and his face flushed red.

“Speaking of potential dates...” Jimmy interjected. He’d had plenty of moment of social awkwardness himself, and took pity on his fellow doctor.

“What exactly is your type anyway. I seem to remember you saying not long ago that you had sworn off women.”

“Yep! I’m turning a page in my bisexuality. Does that make me unisexual, is that a word?”

“No Tony, it’s not a word.” Jimmy laughed at his friend.

“Oh well, anyway, I prefer my men tall, dark, competent, and broody. That just seems to be a difficult combination to come by lately.”
Jimmy looked at Tony with a raised brow and a look that was clearly meant to communicate something. It took him a moment before Tony realized what Jimmy might be implying.

“Ew no! Get that thought out of your head James!”

“Uh, what did we miss?” Spencer asked.

“Gibbs! I do not have the hots for Gibbs, that’s just wrong!” Tony shivered.

“Okay, okay.” Jimmy said with a grin. “You do have to admit that sounded like him though.”

“It so did not! Is he tall? Yes. Is he dark? Maybe once upon a time. Is he competent? Jury’s out on that one. Is he broody? Yes, to an unhealthy level. So, see, not my type!” Tony gestured wildly with his arm that wasn’t in the sling.

“Alright, alright!”

“You know who that does sound like?” Spencer added, drawing both Tony and Jimmy’s attention.

“Hotch.” Derek said. “That’s Hotch to a tee.”

Tony felt a pang in his chest at that name.

Weird.

“Just who is this dreamboat?” Tony asked.

“He’s our boss, Unit Chief of the BAU.” Derek explained as he grabbed the afghan on the back of the loveseat and settled it on Spencer’s lap.

His Pretty Boy was cold, sue him.
Spencer smiled softly at Derek’s thoughtfulness.

“Is Hotch even into guys, do you know?” Derek asked Spencer.

“Well, I can’t be certain, but I believe so. He has exhibited evidence of attraction towards males before.”

“Wasn’t he married to a woman though?”

Spencer nodded. “Yes, they had apparently dated through high school and college and married shortly thereafter. It didn’t last long though, after he decided to join the FBI she filed for divorce. Apparently, she believed that she was marrying a future politician, and wanted the life that would entail. Being the wife of an FBI agent wasn’t on her list of aspirations. She tried to sue him to get at his family’s money, but Aaron’s too smart for that. He made sure that she signed a prenup before they were married.”

Derek grinned at Spencer, “Just how did you find out all the juicy gossip, Pretty Boy?”

Spencer smiled at him, “Well it’s not my fault if people tend to ignore my presence simply because I don’t participate in gossiping.”

Morgan laughed and the sassiness of his friend.

“Wait, SSA Aaron Hotchner? The Aaron Hotchner! Spencer, you’ve been holding out on me! How could you fail to mention that your badass boss is also my ideal man?”

“I’m sorry?” Spencer wasn’t sure whether Tony was really upset with him or not.

“You should be,” Tony said with a pout. “But I’ll let you make it up to me by introducing us.”

Derek laughed at the man’s maneuvering. He was growing on Derek, and he could see that this man was a good friend to Reid. So, he determined to take time to get to know him better, especially since
he noticed how he feels about Spencer, and seems to be in favor of the match.

They all felt the change, it was time to stop avoiding what they had come together to discuss.

“Alright, I guess it’s time to explain why I asked to meet with you, Spence.”

Tony glanced at Jimmy before continuing.

“Things recently have gotten much worse, so much so that I -”

He was interrupted by a knock on the door.

Chapter 8

January 9, 2009

Derek Morgan’s house, Lorton, VA

All four men looked at each other, as if to check if they were expecting anyone.

Derek stood up from his very comfortable seat to answer the door. He heard the click of Tony releasing the strap on his holster.

He opened the door to find three men on his front porch, two that were clearly ex-military, and one that seemed to shop for clothes at the same place Spencer did.
“Can I help you?” Morgan asked, he was a little leery of these men showing up at his house at 10:30 at night.

“Yes,” The cardigan clad man answered. “I apologize for calling so late in the evening, but this is a matter of utmost importance.”

The man was obviously British, which confused Derek as to what urgent matter they could have with him.

“I’m actually here to see-”

“Chauncey? Is that you?” Tony asked as he walked out from behind the corner to the right of the front door. Derek hadn’t even heard him move.

He looked back at Tony as he approached.

“Hello Anthony.” Q smiled at his cousin.

“What the hell are you doing here, and with the hunk sandwich in tow?”

James rolled his eyes and Alec smirked.

“We need to speak with you and Dr. Reid urgently. I hate to impose, but may we come inside?” He said the last to Derek who still stood in the doorway.

Morgan looked to Tony. “They’re good Derek.”

He then moved back and let them inside.

“Can I get you anything to drink?” Derek asked politely.
“No, thank you. It’s quite late to our bodies.”

Q, Alec and James all settled on the other couch opposite the one that held Jimmy and Tony. Introductions were made all around before Derek asked the question he most wanted to know.

“Why do you need to speak with Reid when it’s obvious you’ve never met before tonight?”

Spencer, Jimmy, and Tony were wondering the same thing.

Chauncey sighed, this was not going to be an easy conversation.

“James, Alec, and I have come to inform both Dr. Reid and Anthony of several different things. This will be a conversation of some sensitivity, Anthony. If you would rather do this separately we can.”

Tony glanced between his dinner companions and then studied his cousin and his lovers.

“No, it’s alright Chauncey. If you need to talk to both Spence and I then I’m fine with everyone remaining. Spencer, are you alright with that.” Tony asked his friend who was unconsciously burrowing into Agent Morgan’s side in the presence of these new strangers.

“Um, sure, I don’t mind if Derek and Jimmy stay.”

“Very well then.” Q said. “There are really two separate but related issues that we need to discuss with you, I warn you now, neither is entirely pleasant.”

Tony and Spencer nodded. Jimmy sat forward in his seat, and Derek pulled Reid a little closer.

With a glance between the lovers James began, “A group known as the Syndicate was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. It consisted of a founding group, but unknown to the other members it was the brainchild of a man known today only by his alias, C.G.B. Spender...”

“...so, wait!” Derek said. “You’re saying that aliens really exist, came to earth, and then threatened us with enslavement and extinction?”
All four men were confused and extremely skeptical.

“No,” Alec answered. “That is the story that Spender fed to the group to convince them to join his cause. I’m not about to get into an argument, again, about the possible existence of extraterrestrial life.”

Chauncey grinned at his lover, that had been a fun night.

“However, Spender’s plans went far beyond convincing a select few to form a shadow government group. You see, there is a gene that exists in most of the human population. It had been largely dormant for centuries before the outbreak of the Great War. After that people began to come online in places around the world. This gene is known as—”

“The S & G gene...” Jimmy said with wonder. “It’s real?”

The three Brits nodded.

“It is very much a reality Dr. Palmer.” Q replied.

“So, Sentinels, Guides, hyper sensory perception, empathy, you are saying that the myths are actually true?” Spencer asked.

Q smiled at Reid. “Yes Dr. Reid, I am unsurprised that you have heard of it.”

“Okaaaaay.” Tony said, still not quite sure what to think. “So, what does this gene have to do with this guy Spender? Was he hoping to make a profit off it?”

“No, he planned to suppress it.” James replied. “We are still unsure as to what his true motivations were but we are very familiar with the Syndicate’s tactics.”

“The Syndicate put a great deal of effort into a disinformation campaign that explained away the emergences as aftereffects of the war, shellshock and such. They then began to look for ways to
suppress the gene once more. Now the other members of the Syndicates believed that they were researching a vaccine for a biological weapon that the aliens would release at a future date.”

Derek could hardly believe what he was hearing, but since Spencer seemed to be listening intently he decided to withhold his comments for the moment.

“I’m assuming then,” Spencer said. “That they learned how to suppress it.”

“Right you are Doc.” Said Alec as he settled back into the couch, things were going well so far so he allowed himself a moment of ease.

“I won’t go into all the methods they used to initiate suppression around the world, it’s an exhaustive list. The method they used that is most important to our discussion though was kidnapping.” Q started to explain. He paused though as he looked at Dr. Reid and his favorite, don’t tell Sherlock, cousin.

Feeling his guide’s turmoil James continued.

“This method was instituted in the 1970s. It started by kidnapping children from hospitals shortly after their birth and then placing them with couples that were affiliated or indebted to the Syndicate. From there they also began to abduct adults, staging what appeared to the victims to be alien abductions.”

Q stepped in at this point, he felt it was his duty to tell the next part.

“Our family, Anthony, became unknowingly involved in their plots in the late 70s.” He took a deep breath. “I don’t know if you are aware of this, but grandfather was not the eldest Paddington son.”

That was a surprise. Tony had always thought that it had only been his grandfather and great-aunt Clarissa.

He was beginning to get that feeling of dread again.

“Heir Paddington, Corbin, served in the RAF during the war. He met a nurse named Amoreena
Holmes. Yes, those Holmes.” Q said as he noticed that Tony was about to ask.

“That’s how our two families initially became acquainted. The couple wed not long after the war ended. Corbin had little desire to follow in great-grandfather’s footsteps, especially at the young age of 20, and Amoreena was an adventurer at heart. They left for America in 1949, and made their home in California. The couple enjoyed their first few years of freedom with Corbin working as an aircraft designer while Amoreena was content to take part in the busy social calendar of the Los Angeles elite.”

Q paused for a moment, and considered asking for a drink after all, but seeing the trepidation on his cousin’s face spurred him onward.

“Eventually, in late 1954 they discovered that Amoreena was pregnant. Tragically, just a month before his daughter, Carolyn was born, Corbin was killed in a plane crash. Both families were insistent that Amoreena and Carolyn return to England and allow them to care for the young widow and her child. However, Amoreena met a doctor named Harold Baker a month after Carolyn’s birth, and the two married not long after that. For whatever reason, no one from either the Holmes or Paddington families ever understood, Amoreena began to draw away from them.

Years passed, Amoreena had only returned to England once upon the death of her father, Lord Holmes. She only wrote sporadically, and her letters grew increasingly impersonal. She stopped writing to the Paddingtons altogether soon after Carolyn’s fifth birthday. Their only news of their granddaughter came through the Holmes, and that fount dried up as well when she stopped writing altogether after her mother’s death.

As you can imagine, both families were worried for her and extremely hurt. Her brother, Great-Uncle Ambrose, traveled to California to discover the reason behind his sister’s actions. He was not welcomed into the Baker home. It was clear to him that his sister had changed greatly from the girl he once knew. She was no longer the vibrant, effervescent beauty that roamed the Malverns. In her place was a timid and harried woman, one who he found out, had allowed her daughter to be adopted and then agreed to never tell her of her true parentage. He tried to get her to return home with him, but she adamantly refused.

No one in the family ever saw or heard from her again. She died in 1972 due to appendicitis. Carolyn went to college and then married, she and her husband had their son in April of 1979.”

Tony could feel his heartbeat accelerating.

“Her son was named James David Rossi.”
Both Spencer and Derek started at that. They knew that name, hell, everyone in the Bureau knew that name. Chauncey nodded at them both.

“Yes, her husband was David Rossi.”

Tony and Jimmy looked between Chauncey and the two FBI agents in confusion.

Spencer explained.

“James David Rossi was kidnapped from the hospital nursery hours after his birth. They never found him, or found any clues as to who abducted him. Oh!”

He looked at the three men beside him questioningly, “The Syndicate?”

“Yes, we now know it was the Syndicate that kidnapped James Rossi.”

“My God!” Derek exclaimed. He quickly rose from the loveseat and began pacing behind it.

“There was also another child kidnapped from his home a few years later. I believe you will also be familiar with that case as he is the son of Assistant Director Walter Skinner.” Alec explained.

“So, this Syndicate group,” Derek said as he paused behind Spencer. “They kidnapped the sons of two FBI agents and got away with it? What happened to the boys? Do you need our help to find them?”

Tony felt himself relax a little. That made sense. This kid was family yes, but the reason Q was here is that they are law enforcement officers. His family would need their help to find the, now men, and bring down the people involved in the kidnappings.

Derek had stopped pacing and was now rubbing his head in a nervous gesture, all he could think about was Rossi and how his eyes clouded with pain anytime children were mentioned.
“It took us many years, and we had to tear the Syndicate to the ground, but yes, we did find them.”

All four of the other men looked relieved.

“We’ve got to tell Rossi.” Spencer quickly stood up and moved to grab his coat, Derek was right behind him.

Alec halted their exit by explaining, “That has already been seen to. Lady Holmes is with Agent Rossi and AD Skinner at present informing them of the situation. Also, Lord Paddington has traveled to meet with Carolyn as well.”

“So, do you need us to bring in the people that held them, is that why you’re here? Tony asked his cousin.

“No Anthony, that has all been resolved as of this afternoon.”

“Then why-”

“Please,” Q interrupted before Tony could continue. “Dr. Reid, Agent Morgan, it would be best if you returned to your seats.”

Jimmy had a feeling that he knew where this was heading, he really hoped he was wrong though. Tony had enough going on in his life already, he did not need what Jimmy feared this would be.

Morgan and Spencer returned to the loveseat, and Spencer reached for Derek’s hand. He grasped it quickly and held onto Spencer tightly.

Tony just sat there, dreading whatever would come out of his cousin’s mouth next.

“Alexander Sergei Skinner was kidnapped on 23 January 1983. James David Rossi was abducted the day of his birth, 26 April 1979.”

Tony was frozen, that was his birthday. Jimmy was watching his friend worriedly.
“James was given to Anthony and Celia Dinozzo.”

Spencer and Derek both stared at Tony in shock. Jimmy closed his eyes and bowed his head, wishing with everything he has that he could take this pain away from his friend.

“Alexander,” Q continued gently. “Was taken to the opposite side of the country and given to William and Diana Reid.”

Derek’s heart stopped as he turned to look at Spencer. There was a look of pure devastation on his perfect face.

“To the best of our knowledge neither Mrs. Reid, not Aunt Celia knew about the kidnappings. They were both suffering from the manipulations of the Syndicate themselves. Their S&G gene was forcibly suppressed after they had already begun to come online. This caused untold damage to their bodies and minds.”

Q really wanted to stop talking. He hated that blank look on his cousin’s face almost more than the tumult of emotions he could feel pouring out of him. Dr. Reid’s devastated face matched his internal heartbreak, but it was so potent that it came close to undoing him.

As always though, just when he needed them, his Sentinels were there to ground him. James laid his hand on the back of his neck and ran his thumb back and forth. Alec had taken his hand in both of his and was softly stroking it.

He took a deep breath and continued, better to get it all out now.

“We do not believe that Anthony Dinozzo knew of the familial connection between his wife and the child he kidnapped; though we are relatively certain, given the hatred he has always held for our family, that any such knowledge would not have altered his actions at all. Both Dinozzo and Reid were indebted to the Syndicate, and the price for their continued existence was to kidnap and then monitor the abductees.

“Both boys, both of you...”
Tony twitched at this.

“Were suppressed by the insertion of a chip in the back of the neck near the hairline.”

Spencer and Tony were both shocked, any lingering disbelief was swept away by this information. Both men had scars on the back of their necks for their entire lives. Scars they had asked their mothers about as children, and received only confused looks in reply.

“Once these chips are removed you should online fairly quickly, even with Sherlock’s tinkering.”

Tony groaned, he wasn’t sure how much more he could take of this.

“What did Lock do now?” He asked.

James explained, “He manipulated the trigger for gene activation. They entire planet’s been dosed with his modification through various delivery systems. It allows all those who possess the gene to come online once they encounter their match or matches, as long as they are not being actively suppressed.”

“So, you think that we’ve encountered our matches.” Reid asked as he tried to process everything and not glance at Morgan.

Derek tensed beside him.

“Let me ask you all some questions.” James said. “Have you found yourself feeling more aggressive lately, more possessive of one particular person? Does it seem like every now and then you can see or hear things that you’ve never been able to before?”

Morgan slowly nodded his head, drawing Spencer’s attention. Reid tried not to let his heartbreak show, of course Derek would be a Sentinel, and he apparently already had a Guide. His mind flashed to Agent Todd and the flirtatious glances she threw Morgan’s way. He would not let himself crumble, he had to keep it together until he could be alone.

Why was Derek gripping his hand so tightly?
“Conversely,” James continued. “Have you been feeling overwhelmed frequently, especially in crowds? Does it seem like you can almost feel what someone else is feeling? Finally, regardless of status, have you been having dreams of you and another person where the light is purple?”

Spencer was uncharacteristically struck dumb. That was him...then that means that he’s a Guide, a Guide who has already met his Sentinel. He viciously squashed down the hope to wanted to rise in him.

Tony was focusing on the fact that he is a Guide, he can’t think about the rest of it now. He was stuck on one detail though.

“I haven’t met my Sentinel yet, I’m sure of it.” So why was he experiencing symptoms of coming online?

“You must be in regular contact with someone that also has regular contact with your Sentinel.”

Alec explained.

*Hotch.* Morgan and Spencer both thought.

“You’re also very powerful. All three of you are even without being online. Dr. Palmer I’m almost positive that you have not encountered your match yet.”

Jimmy had stayed on the sidelines up to this point, he filed that information away to examine later, but he knew that it was time to step in for the sake of Tony and his new friends.

“Is there anything else immediately pressing? You’ve given us a great deal to think about and it would be best to give everyone some time to process.”

Q nodded in agreement. “We only have one more thing to discuss.”

Tony laid his head in his hands and let out a slightly hysterical laugh. Jimmy laid his hand on his back, hoping to offer some comfort.
“While we have dismantled most of the Syndicate and seen to the elimination of Mr. Spender, there are still a small number of members in play that were too well-placed to take out initially. The ones of most immediate concern are Eli and Ziva David.”

“Son of a bitch!” Tony exclaimed as he jumped from the sofa, startling Spencer and Jimmy.

“I fucking knew it! I knew that whole damn family was rotten!”

“Yeah, well that isn’t all.” Alec added, he never was one for tact and diplomacy.

“In a desperate attempt to save his crumbling tower he is looking for a way to gain back the influence that the Syndicate had within the American government. His solution, as I’m sure you can guess, was to send his children to infiltrate NCIS?”

“Why NCIS though?” Morgan asked. “No offense.”

“None taken.” Jimmy replied. Tony just waved offhandedly.

“Why not one of the larger agencies? Seems to me that it makes more sense to go where there’s more money, and therefore more power.”

“Part of the reason lays in David’s contacts. Jennifer Shephard has been in his pocket and warming his bed for some time now.” James stated.

Tony sat back down heavily and with a defeated sigh. Part of him felt vindicated that his suspicions were accurate, but he was just too torn to feel it.

“The matter of immediate concern is the altered order that Director David has sent to his daughter. Her initial assignment upon infiltration was to upset the power balance within the Major Crimes Response Team. She was then to utilize Shephard’s influence to make influential contacts within the government. The MCRT was meant to be her base of power, she was to make herself invaluable to Agent Gibbs by any means necessary.”
“Ew!” Jimmy and Tony exclaimed.

“So, the Director of Mossad ordered his own daughter to prostitute herself if necessary?” Spencer said with disbelief.

“It’s not hard to believe if you’ve met these people. Trust me, there is nothing that is off the table for them.” Tony said with confidence.

“Most definitely,” James replied. “Which is another reason why we are here. Ziva David has been ordered to eliminate you while on the job. Eli hopes that killing you in the line of duty will dispel any suspicion from his daughter.”

Spencer gave his friend a worried look that matched to one painted on Jimmy’s face.

Tony just nodded and said to Q, “I figured as much when I received your warning.”

“Oh good, you did receive it then.”

A ghost of a smile flitted across Tony’s face. His cousin, wait, no still cousin, was a master of the understatement. At least that hadn’t changed.

They all sat in silence for a moment, reflecting on all the earth-shattering information that the British trio delivered.

“Alright gentlemen,” Q said as he rose from the couch. “It is dreadfully late, or rather early at this point. I suggest that we head to our beads before the tasks of the morrow engage us.”

Tony was relieved, he needed to be alone right now, desperately.

“Yeah, let’s go. Derek, thanks for hosting...this. Maybe we can do it again sometime under better circumstances.”

“Sure man, that’s no problem.” Morgan rose to shake everyone’s hands before they left.
This had certainly been the most surreal night of his life.

“Tones, I noticed that you rode with Dr. Palmer. You can ride home with us.” Alec said.

“You’re staying with me?” Tony asked. He was a little annoyed, he wanted his privacy.

Chauncey walked up to his cousin and looped his arm through Tony’s good one.

“Dearest cousin, I didn’t come all this way and go to all of this trouble to allow you to be killed by the Mossad assassin who is currently watching your flat.”

More quietly he said, “I know that you want space right now; the boys and I will be in the guest room, taking turns sleeping and watching the surveillance.”

“Do I want to know how many surveillance cameras you’ve placed that I’ve missed.”

Q patted his hand, “No dearest, you don’t. You might want to refrain from walking through your kitchen in the nude, it gave Auntie quite a start.”

“Fuck my life.” Tony said in exasperation.

“Come along, Tourmaline.” James said as he moves to Tony’s other side and put his arm around his waist. “Alec needs his beauty rest.”

“I can give you a ride home if you need one Dr. Reid.” Jimmy offered.

They all moved toward the door except for Spencer and Derek.

“I guess I’ll see you on Monday?” Spencer said self-consciously.
Derek snagged his hand before he could pass him. “Spencer, wait. Could you- would you stay? You can stay in my guest room, and I’d really like to talk to you in the morning before all the chaos starts.”

“O-okay. Um, Jimmy, I guess I won’t be needing a ride. Thank you for offering.”

“No problem Spencer. I suppose I’ll see you both soon, if not later today.”

“Goodnight,” Derek and Spencer said as the rest left.

The could hear Tony as they walked towards the Brits’ vehicle.

“Oh, thank God, you brought the Land Rover this time!”

“Why, what’s wrong with the Phantom?” Alec said peevishly.

“It’s to conspicuous. I might live in a decent neighborhood, but nobody drives around in a Rolls Royce!”

“No class, I swear! Q, my lovely, do something about your cousin.”

Derek shook his head and drown out the noise of the quartet’s departure by closing his door.

Spencer was across the room now, looking so very lost that it broke Derek’s heart.

“Hey Pretty Boy.” He said as he walked over to Reid.

“Hmm?” The genius replied.

Morgan reached to take Spencer’s hand again and was met halfway. Well, that was encouraging.
“I know that you’ve probably got a thousand things running through that brain of yours but I want to clear something up before we go to bed.”

He loved it when Spencer blushed.

“I can’t imagine everything that you must be feeling right now, but I want you to know that I’m right here. Whatever you need, any time, I’m there. You got me?”

“Of course, Morgan. You’ve always been a great friend.” Spencer said in a carefully controlled voice.

Morgan mustered his courage and continued.

“We are friends Pretty Boy, best friends, but I’m talking about something more.”

Spencer jerked his head up to meet Derek’s gaze. Of course, he was immediately flustered and started to turn his head.

“Huh uh, none of that.” Derek gently touched his chin and turned his head until their eyes locked once more.

“Reid, all of this gene stuff, Sentinels and Guides, and purple rain dreams...”

Spencer grinned.

“That’s nice and all, will probably be great once I know more and my head stops spinning. More importantly though, is you and me.”

“You and me?” Spencer asked with hesitation.

“Yeah GQ. Spencer, all that stuff just confirmed what I already knew. You’re it for me. I’ve lo- lik-,
ah screw it! I’ve been in love with you for a long time, it almost feels like I’ve always been in love with you. And I know that the rules of dating or whatever would say it’s way too soon to be talking about love, we haven’t even been on a date yet, but-

“I love you too!”

Spencer said breathlessly. He was a little awestruck. One moment he had been drowning in the deluge of his thoughts and the next his biggest dream was coming true.

Derek’s face lit up with a smile that Reid had never seen before.

“Really, Beautiful Boy, you do?”

Spencer could only nod, his throat tight from the tears he was holding back. Derek moved his left hand to join his right in cradling Spencer’s face.

The way Derek was touching him, with such gentleness and almost reverence, made Spencer loose his control over his tears. Derek brushed them away as they fell down Reid’s stubbled cheek. Spencer bit into his lower lip.

“Ugh,” Derek moaned before pulling that lip from Spencer’s teeth and replacing them with his lips.

Spencer’s world caught on fire.

He had never felt anything like this. None of the people he had kissed in the past had ever caused him to burn like this. He pushed his body closer, closing the distance between them. As his body aligned with Derek’s he felt a rush of satisfaction, love, lust, and something he couldn’t quite identify; they just fit.

Derek deepened the kiss, licking at Spencer’s mouth until he was allowed entrance. He plunged in heatedly, trying to map every surface, all the while knowing that there would never come a day when he had enough.

He felt himself rapidly losing control, he was so hard that his jeans were painful, and all from a kiss.
Oh, he could hardly wait for more!

With a great deal of effort, he slowed their kiss and slowly pulled back from Spencer’s heavenly mouth.

“Derek...” Spencer whined and lean back in to continue.

With one last kiss and an immense amount of self-control Derek stepped back from his Baby Boy.

He kissed Spencer’s jaw, unable to resist the temptation with his head tilted back as he drew in gasping breaths.

“We should stop, Spencer.”

“Why?” Spencer was having trouble engaging his brain.

Morgan smiled that smile again and pecked his lips.

“Because my beauty, I’m not going to just drag you off to bed, as much as I would like to.”

Spencer frowned, he would like that too.

Derek chuckled and kissed his cheek before pulling him forward until their foreheads touched.

“You know how I was in the past. I thought nothing of jumping straight into bed with someone, because that was easy. I wasn’t invested in those women; I’m ashamed to say that they were a means of distracting me from what I was running from.”

Spencer listened quietly, he had no desire to hear about Derek sleeping with other people, but this was clearly important to his love.
“I was all messed up, Spence. I couldn’t figure out why I had all these feelings for you when I could simply not be gay. It wasn’t until Rossi cornered me one day and made me get help that things started to become clearer.”

“What did Rossi do?” Spencer laid his hand over Derek’s heart.

“That nosey bastard,” Morgan chuckled. “Gave me a card for a friend of his who is a therapist, and basically told me to get my shit straightened out or to leave you the hell alone.”

“What did you do?” Spencer asked, he knew how Derek felt about therapy. It was fine for others, but it was definitely not for him.

“What could I do Pretty Boy? He gave me the best ultimatum possible; I had to choose between my issues and pride, and you. It really left me no choice, and I was surprised how much I not only benefited from it, but also came to enjoy it.”

“Am I hallucinating?” Spencer said with a wide smile.

“No, you deliciously taut smart-ass!”

Reid burst out laughing.

“What kind of name is that?” He continued to giggle.

“Oh, I love that sound. It’s an accurate name GQ, very, very accurate.” Derek ran his hands down Spencer’s sides, grazing the sides of his ass with his big hands.

“Mmm,” Spencer moaned and leaned back into Derek’s body.

“Lord, help!” Derek exclaimed. “Alright, gorgeous boy, I’m going to walk you to your room, oh look, here it is.”

Spencer laughed again as they stopped before the first door down the hallway, it felt really good.
“And now I’m going to say goodnight so we can get some sleep before the crazy train returns. Then,” he leaned forward to whisper in Spencer’s ear. “As soon as possible I’m going to take you on a date, probably several dates, and then Baby Boy, I’m going to take you apart.”

“Oh Derek.” Spencer groaned into his neck.

He tried to mold himself to Morgan again, but he was gentle pushed back and held at arm’s length.

Morgan kissed him once more before stepping back a few feet, and smiling that special smile again.

“I love you Spencer, I’ll see you in the morning.”

Reid’s brain finally started receiving blood flow again as Derek began to walk down the hallway toward the master bedroom.

“Goodnight, Derek, I love you too.”

Derek stopped and looked back over his shoulder to give Spencer a wink before he continued into his room and softly closed the door.

Spencer still wasn’t 100% sure that this entire evening wasn’t a massive hallucination. He stumbled his way into the guest room before collapsing on the bed.

Although, he decided that if having his entire life turned upside down was the price he had to pay to have Derek, then it was one he would gladly pay a hundred times over.

He had thought earlier that there would be no way he would ever get to sleep that night, but before he knew it he had fallen into a deep sleep, still clothed and on top of the covers. It was the best night of sleep he had had in months.
Rossi hadn’t slept a wink. It all seemed too good to be true.

His son was alive! He was beautiful, just as Dave had always known he would be. He was in law enforcement, just like him, and the part that was a bit of a kick in the gut is that he lived thirty minutes away.

For almost four years he had been just up the road. He was friends with Spencer Reid, who was actually Walter’s Alexander. They had been so close!

Dave knew he was riding on the high of discovery at the moment, and that there would eventually be a painful crash; right now though, he was going to enjoy it for as long as possible.

He had spent all last night after Lady Holmes and Walt had retired to their rooms, he insisted on them staying due to the late hour, repeatedly reading the file given to him on his son.

No man could possibly be prouder than him. His son had paid his way through college on a dual athletic-academic scholarship, started in both football and basketball, and was being seriously scouted by several NFL teams. His heart broke a little when he read of the injury that ended any chance his son had of a professional sports career, but he was simply amazed at how he turned things around for himself.

He completed his degree in four years, instead of the five that many athletes take. It only took him that long because he doubled majored in Physical Education (almost exactly the same as Pre-Med) and Criminology, as well as obtaining minors in Psychology, Chemistry, and Sociology.

Immediately after graduation he applied and was accepted to the police academy in Peoria, IL. They
location was one that seemed extremely ironic given that was the location of the case Dave was returning home from when Carolyn went into labor with Jamie. He worked his way up in the department to Vice, earning his gold shield before the age of 23, the youngest Dave has ever heard anyone achieving the rank of Detective. His boy uncovered a bevy corruption at the Peoria PD, and received numerous commendations. Unfortunately, given the police culture, he was also encouraged to move on from the department.

He then moved to Philadelphia where he worked undercover. For almost two years he worked from inside the Macaluso crime family, earning their trust, respect, and ultimately a place as second in command of the family. Big Mike had thought so highly of him, even after Jamie sent him to prison that he forbids any of his people from going after him as long as he stayed outside of Philly.

His son was amazing. Dave had grown up on Long Island, in a neighborhood run by a mafia family. He knew exactly how dangerous those people could be; he’s pretty sure that he’ll be saying Hail Mary’s in thanks for the rest of his days.

Out of necessity Jamie had moved on to the Baltimore PD, where he seemed to have started putting down roots, preparing to get married even. Then his partner turned out to be on the take, and Tony had been quickly snatched up by Leroy Jethro Gibbs from NCIS.

Rossi remembered Gibbs vaguely. He was a young buck that joined the Marines a couple of years before Dave had retired from the Reserves. As far as he could remember, the kid was a hell of a shot, headstrong, and about as approachable as a hibernating grizzly.

Despite all the wonderful things Jamie’s file detailed, there were a couple of sections that made him shake with rage. He could see clearly that his son had grown up neglected, abused, and abandoned. He had already been assured by Lady Holmes that Anthony Dinozzo would be paying in a very public and painful manner.

Other than his childhood, the past year or so at NCIS raised all kinds of red flags. Anyone with a brain and a smidgen of investigative skill could see that the death of Agent Caitlyn Todd and that of her assassin had been part of a set-up. Even before Lady Holmes explained the connection between the David family and the Syndicate, Dave knew they were bad news.

He had just about lost when he learned that James was their next target, wanting to find his son and bring him home where he could ensure his safety. Walt and Lady Holmes has managed after some time to calm him enough so that he would listen to reason.

Lady Holmes’ nephew, Chauncey, along with his two SIS Double-Os, who Jamie already knew had
gone to explain the situation to him and Spencer. They were going to stay with him and keep him safe. Dave’s head was still spinning from the twisted family tree that resulted in his son still being related to the same family he had always known and loved. Thank heaven for small mercies.

He was choosing not to think about the latent gene activation and a shadow government agency playing God with all their biology. There would be time for that later.

Now he was nervously waiting for his son to arrive home. He had showered, shaved, and changed his clothes six times before coming back downstairs. Dave tried to remain calm, reminding himself to consider things from his son’s perspective, and to try not to overwhelm him when he arrives. Lady Holmes said that he didn’t deal well with intense emotions, which was understandable given the life he had lived to this point.

It wasn’t long before Walt joined him at the breakfast bar, squeezing his shoulder as he passed him on his way to the coffee machine. He seemed to have had as much sleep as Dave. As much as he wished that neither of them had ever had to endure almost 30 years of missing their children, Dave couldn’t have asked for a better friend and support.

There were times when Dave had to stop himself from wishing that they could possibly be more. It was a strange feeling, and one he hadn’t felt for someone since Carolyn. That wasn’t a priority right now though, their sons were coming home!

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The morning had been extremely draining.

Tony’s entourage, including Jimmy, had arrived at Derek’s house promptly at 09:00. Given the small amount of sleep they had, Spencer was dragging. He hated mornings, and stupid morning people, stupid people who acted like it was no big deal to only get four hours of sleep.

Ooo, coffee!

Spencer snatched the large coffee out of Tony’s hand, and was happy that it had apparently been meant for him given the preparation.

“You are forgiven.” Spencer mumbled.
“For what?” Tony had asked with no small amount of amusement. Pre-coffee Spencer was hilarious.

“Their laughter had sent Spencer to Derek where he burrowed into his arms to escape the evil morning people. He decided to graciously overlook the fact that the chest beneath his head was shaking with poorly concealed mirth.

Derek was pretty and gave yummy kisses, so he got a pass.

After waiting about five minutes for Spencer to finish his coffee and allow some of the caffeine to filter through his system, the group decided to take two cars. Derek, Spencer, and Jimmy would ride in Derek’s car, while Tony, James, Alec, and Chauncey rode in the Land Rover.

They arrived at Rossi’s home much faster than either Spencer or Tony had anticipated.

“So, close...” Tony said softly.

He had tossed and turned all night. Part of him felt that he should have anticipated that his life was part of some vast conspiracy, that was just his luck. Years of anger and resentment toward Anthony Dinozzo, he would no longer call that man his father, had grown exponentially into a deep-seated loathing.

From everything that Chauncey told him about his real father he couldn’t help but be even more angry at Dinozzo. His real parents love him, they wanted him. His father has never given up looking for him, even almost thirty years after his abduction. He should have grown up with two parents that never would have beat him, locked him in closets, thrown things at him in drunken rages, leave him in hotel rooms thousands of miles from home, or disown him at the age of 12.

Basically, he was never meant to be Anthony Dinozzo, Jr., that person didn’t even exist. He was James David Rossi, son of David Rossi and Carolyn Paddington Baker. He was the son of a Marine turned FBI profiler, and a film curator, not that of a conman and an alcoholic socialite. His feelings for the woman he had thought was his mother were complicated. There was part of him, that scared and lonely little boy, that would always miss her. He knew that she was not to blame for him being taken from his family. She was just as much of a victim as he was, just as much as Spencer and Mrs. Reid, their families, and God knows how many others that had lived through this hell.
Tony had gotten lost in his thoughts as he took in every detail of his father’s home. It was a beautiful house, small mansion really, a three-story Tudor with woodlands on three sides and a small river on the other. The grounds were carefully tended, but not pretentious. It seemed that his father wore his wealth with the same reserved distinction of his Paddington and Holmes relatives. Thankfully it looked nothing like the monstrosity he had lived in for the first eight years of his life.

As Tony was looking around and thinking, the others all made their way inside. It was such a peaceful place, he could understand why his father had chosen it.

He was so absorbed in his thoughts that he didn’t notice someone walking toward him until they were within eight feet of him. Tony looked at the man that was gazing at him with a radiant smile and tears in his eyes. He knew logically that this must be his father, but he wanted to see it for himself. People always mentioned that he looked like Dinozzo, but he never saw it. He had always thought that he looked more like his mo-Mrs. Dinozzo, now it made sense why.

Tony quickly assessed his father with an investigator’s eye, same height and build, same mouth and eyebrows, and if he wasn’t mistaken, those were his ears. Outside of the physical similarities what really convinced Tony that this was his father was the way he kept clenching and releasing his left hand, just like Tony did when he was trying to control his emotions.

“Sei tu mio figlio?”

He choked up when he heard his father speak, calling him son.

“Sì, papà, sono io.”

They weren’t sure who broke first, not that it even mattered. However it happened Tony found himself wrapped up in the greatest hug he had ever received, his very first hug from a father. He was weeping, there was no denying it, but he figured that today of all days, he had a free pass.

The others looked on from inside the house, each one of them joyful for the reunited father and son. Soon they turned to go into the den, attempting to give the two men some privacy.

Dave clung to his son, holding him to him tightly. He was trying to reconcile this strong, handsome man with the tiny baby boy he had held on his chest. He stroked his soft hair, so like his mother’s, and crooned to him.
“Oh, mio bebè! Il mio bellissimo bambino.”

He kissed his son’s cheeks as the tears ran down them before pulling him back in to lay his head on his chest.

“Andrà tutto bene, figlio mio. Papà è qui ora.”

Tony really lost it then, never before in his entire life had someone held him and told him that everything would be okay; that they would stand between him and anything that wished him harm.

In that moment, he came to a decision, to leave the name of Anthony Dinozzo behind him for good, no professional name and personal name for him. He had also been torn over what to call his father before they arrived, but now he had no doubts, this man isn’t “father,” he’s “daddy.”

For several minutes, more the two men held each other. Dave finally felt at peace, and James felt loved and protected for the very first time.

Slowly they became aware of the sounds of the birds around them and the cold of the January air. Dave rubbed his son’s arms, remembering suddenly that his lungs were damaged from the plague (the plague!).

“Come on piccolo.” He reached for his son’s hand. “Do you want to go inside or take a short walk?”

“A walk I think. Sorry.” James apologized, feeling self-conscious about crying all over him.

“Hey,” Dave affectionately chucked him under the chin. “None of that now. If you need to cry, you cry, there’s no shame in that. I’ll cry right along with you.”

James could hardly believe how wonderful this man was. He was suspicious by nature, so he had done his own digging last night in addition to the file that Alec gave him. And by all accounts his real father was one of the good guys. It felt nice to be able to feel pride in his parentage, he’d never had that before either.
They walked back toward the house to take the path that lead to the back garden when Walter and Spencer joined them.

“Well,” James said. “It seems that we all should have bought shares in Kleenex last night.”

All four men chuckled.

Walt spoke up next. He had Spencer firmly nestled under his arm, and it looked like he was in no hurry to leave there.

Spence and James shared a smile. This was all insanity, but it was also just about the greatest thing to ever happen to them both.

“I’m Walter Skinner,” he introduced himself while reaching to shake James’ hand, stopping just short of it.

“What am I doing?” He laughed before pulling James into a one-armed hug while still holding his son with the other. “God, it’s so amazing to finally meet you.”

James smiled at his father’s friend, and maybe more than friend if he was reading those looks correctly.

“It’s wonderful to meet you as well, I’m James Rossi.” Spencer and Walt grinned at him.

Walt noticed the gob smacked look on Dave’s face, he clearly wasn’t expecting that.

Overwhelmed with love and admiration for his son, Dave took his face in his hands and loudly kissed his cheek.

“Sei un bel ragazzo coraggioso!”

James blushed at his dad’s praise and affection.
“Well, since we’re introducing ourselves, I’m Alexander Skinner, Alexi for short.”

Walt grinned at his baby, all grown up.

“Alright, gentlemen, my son and I were going for a walk. Would you like to join us?” Dave offered.

Alexi looked too his father who indicated that he could choose.

“A walk sounds nice.”

“Great!” James exclaimed. “Let’s go!”

Dave’s joyful laughter echoed across the valley as his son grabbed his hand and began to swing their joined hands between them like a little boy.

James had never been able to do something as simple and yet wonderful as taking and walk and holding his father’s hand. Well, he didn’t care if he was 29 instead of 9, he was going to enjoy it.

Walt and Alexi followed behind with the father’s arm over his son’s shoulders, and his son’s arm around his waist. He and his wife used to walk together this way. With an eidetic memory Walt wouldn’t be surprised if Alexi remembered that on some level.

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Once the reunited fathers and sons decided to go inside, they quickly realized that Dave’s den had been turned into a war room.

“Auntie,” James asked cautiously. “What are you up to now?”

“Hello my darling!” She kissed his cheeks. “We’re waging a war dearest, our way.”
All the non-Paddington men in the room shivered, and the Paddingtons shared a feral grin.

“Does our property insurance clause include aerial bombardment and nuclear war, James?” Alec asked.

“Of course it does, Mycroft recommended it.”

“Ah, good! Let the bloodshed begin then!”

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Some of those present that day had initially thought that the Paddingtons were merely joking about their intentions. What they didn’t know is that Paddingtons never joke about going to war.

The following week consisted of another tearful reunion for James, this time with his mom. She and his Uncle Clive arrived two days after James met his father. He loved her already and looked forward to sharing their mutual love of film. Though he doubted that they would ever be as close as he felt he and his dad were becoming, he had high hopes that they could have a great relationship.

The three of them had sat down and had a long talk. As an adult James fully understood and even supported his mother’s decision to try to make the best life she could for herself. He didn’t hold her actions against her at all. James knew that the affection starved boy within him though would always view his dad as his hero, and equate him with truly unconditional love. Never giving up on someone even after 30 years of disappointment showed a love so deep that James found it hard to comprehend.

His mom had stayed for a week, spending time with him and her newly discovered relatives before she had to return to LA. He promised to come and visit her as soon as he could, and they all parted on good terms.

Then the real action started.

********
Politicians were resigning in disgrace across the globe and some met with untimely accidents (James and Alec were rather busy); one by one every person that had worked or cooperated with the Syndicate was dealt with according to the nature of their crimes until only one real player remained, Eli David.

Mycroft had been in closes contact with the Israeli government. The Prime Minister wanted all the evidence he could gather on Eli’s illegal operations. It would be easy to simply eliminate Eli, but he still had several key influential people in his corner that remained unconvinced of any wrongdoing.

After a couple of weeks of Q, James, and Alexi working together that had ample evidence of more than forty years of criminal actions. They were a little scary.

There still remained the issue of Ziva David and Jennifer Shepherd.

Though no one else thought that it was a good idea, Tony knew that he had to give Gibbs one last chance to do the right thing. Despite all his faults, Tony believed that Gibbs was a good man and a good investigator, and that he would make the right choice when presented with the evidence.

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January 22, 2009

McLean, VA

James entered Gibbs house with Bond right behind him. He had hoped to make this visit alone, but the family wouldn’t hear of it. It was annoying and a huge adjustment for him, but at the same time it was nice to know that people cared about his wellbeing.

Alec was keeping watch outside and Q was monitoring the area surveillance. Currently, Ziva was at the Israeli embassy, no doubt passing on classified intel to one of her father’s men.

He walked to the familiar staircase and felt a moment of longing for the days when he was welcome in this house. Pausing at the top of the stairs he waited for the go ahead from James.
Activating the signal jammer, James waited a moment before nodding.

“You’ve got about five minutes.”

Gibbs had been tense when they first stopped on the landing. He didn’t turn but James could tell that he had a hand on his weapon. He turned around when Bond spoke, and frowned.

“What’s with the muscle Dinozzo, and what are you doing here? You got your medical leave extended so you should be home.”

James just ignored Gibbs questions as he walked down the staircase and across the floor to the man he had once respected so much.

“I’m here to give you some information Gibbs, and you’re not going to like it.”

He noticed Gibbs immediate defensive response.

“Look, I’ve given you a lot of blood, sweat, and tears over the past several years and it would be nice if you could pretend, just for a moment to remember the days when you respected me, thought I had value, and you trusted my opinion.”

Gibbs was taken aback by Tony’s statement.

“What the hell are you talkin’ about? I respect you just fine!”

“No Gibbs, you really don’t.” He held up at hand to stop Gibbs characteristically angry retort.

“We don’t have much time-”

“Why’s that, and what’s with the signal jammer?” This whole situation was off, something wasn’t right.
“The signal jammer is disrupting the transmission from the 7 audios and 2 video surveillance bugs placed throughout your basement. 3 minutes.”

“Shit.” James said. “Alright-”

“Wait a minute, that’s bullshit, nobody’s bugged my basement, I would know.” Gibbs glared at the blonde man on his stairs.

“Gibbs, shut up!” James yelled, shocking both himself and Gibbs.

“Look, here’s a file containing all the evidence of everything I’ve tried to come to you about over the last year and you’ve blown me off. If you don’t believe me, which let’s face it, you won’t, you can contact Tom Morrow, Hetty Lang, or Sec Def for confirmation.”

That at least elicited a raised brow.

“Despite the way you’ve shit on me at every turn since the day Kate joined the team, I still think that when faced with the truth you’ll choose to do the right thing. The others disagree, but I guess we’ll just have to wait and see.”

“2 minutes.”

He held the three-inch thick folder out to Gibbs who grudgingly took it after a moment of staring at Dinozzo.

“I’ve got to get out of here and you have some reading to do, preferably in a secure location where you can’t be interrupted by anyone from NCIS. So definitely not here.”

James turned to go up the stairs but stopped when Gibbs grabbed his arm.

“Just what the hell is this Dinozzo that you can’t just be straight with me?” He said, invading James’ personal space in an attempt to intimidate the information out of him. It was kind of funny now, he
has nothing on Lady Holmes.

“1 minute, we’ve got to move.”

James broke out of Gibb’s hold and walked halfway up the stairs.

“For what it’s worth, I hope you do the right thing. Oh, and you really do need to sweep for bugs. I would get that folder out of sight before we leave. For a while there Gibbs, it was an honor. Take care of yourself.”

Gibbs frowned again at Dinozzo’s strange behavior but decided to do what he asked at least until he found out what was in that folder that was so damn important. He quickly stashed the folder under the jacket that was tossed on top the workbench before looking up to see the blonde man watching him with a look of disgust.

“You broke you our rule; you wasted good.” The man sad a then walked out, turning off the signal jammer as he went.

Gibbs’ gut was telling him that whatever this is, it’s something serious. No matter how much Dinozzo screws around this wasn’t his style of practical joke. The final comments of Tony and the blonde man gave him a moment’s pause, it almost sounded like Tony was leaving.

He snorted and shook his head. That would be ridiculous. Dinozzo knew that he couldn’t leave until Gibbs said so, he’s too damn loyal to do otherwise.

Anyway, he had things to do. He’d wait awhile before taking the file to one of his bolt holes, and find out what all the fuss was about. Then he had work to do. Dinozzo couldn’t have picked a worse time to get shot by those damn counterfeitors, with all this gene stuff going on work was even more hectic than normal.
James had tendered his resignation the same day he visited Gibbs. He had so much time on the books that he was able to just clear out his desk and leave while most of the floor was a lunch.

Gibbs and Madame Director had both gone ape-shit, trying to contact him to ask/order him back, threaten him, or whatever else they had in mind. Unfortunately for them, James apartment had been cleared out two weeks previously and all of his contact information was changed.

The Director tried to force him back by attempting to black-ball him to other agencies. All it took was one call from Tom Morrow to Sec Def and that plan was halted in its tracks.

Since then, James hadn’t paid any mind to NCIS outside of the assassin ordered to kill him.

He had visited his mother, spent more time with his family. His dad had insisted that those that were staying stateside for the time being would stay with him. It wasn’t like he didn’t have the room, and superior security, especially after Q got done tweaking things.

His dad had shown him his room on the first day they met, and it inevitably lead to more tears. Though the room was done up in accordance with his age, the entire sitting room was filled with 29 years’ worth of birthday and Christmas presents.

Over the following weeks members of the family and their friends came and went. Sherlock and John visited, which is always great for a laugh. His dad suggested to Auntie that they speak to the parish priest about canonizing John; certainly, if anyone has the patience of Job it’s Dr. John Watson.

They worked with other groups around the world to found Sentinel & Guide centers that are specially equipped to handle the needs of online, emerging, and feral sentinels and guides. There were all kinds of talk in the groups of a need for a ruling counsel to oversee everything. His dad, and most of the family felt that this suggestion had little to do with the community, and more to do with a lust for power and avarice.
For now, the centers would be overseen by the continental or national Prime couple. They could then select Alpha level couples to administrate regional issues, and then delegate further as needed. If serious issues arose that could not be handled directly by the Primes or their representatives, then a couple would be elected from each Prime territory to form a single congress to address the issue. This was only for the most extreme cases.

He had met some really interesting people at the meetings, notably the North American Primes, Blair Sandburg and Jim Ellison. After the first couple of days though, he was starting to get creeped out big time. Sandburg would not stop staring at him. The Prime couple had noticed his discomfort and sat down with him one afternoon to explain that he was the highest powered pre-emerged guide they had every encountered. They said that they looked forward to working with him and his Sentinel in the years to come.

After all the meeting were over, eventually the family all sat down and discussed the removal of the chips in James, Alexi, and surprisingly Walter. Alexi had a million questions for the others that were online already, of course. They elected to take it in turn, with Alexi going first, followed by James, and then Walt.

That quickly lead to a surprise proposal from Derek. He figured that getting married was just the legal bit of what they were already planning to do. Once they come online and are bonded, there will be no going back for either of them, so why not get married? Although he chose to sweep his groom off his feet with logic instead of romance that time, he did pour a lot into the preparation for the wedding in between their cases. He had also asked for and received Walt’s blessing.

So, here he was dancing on the edge of the dance floor with Agent Jareau’s baby, Henry. He was a cutie, and he was beginning to see the appeal. If he ever found someone to spend his life with like Alexi and Derek have, then he might be willing to adopt a couple of kids.

James had so much to be thankful for these days. He had more people that loved and liked him than he had ever dreamed possible. For so many years love had been this intangible thing that everyone else seemed to have but him. Now days he found the amount of affection directed toward him on any given day to be almost overwhelming. He was still trying to figure out how to balance it all so that everyone knows how much their love means to him. Somehow, he just knew that once he came online things would get better.

Because of that, Jimmy had removed his chip last night on his request. Yes, he cheated and went out of order, though to be fair, when they devised the order he didn’t think that Alexi would wait more than a month to remove his; or that Derek was such a sap that he just had to get married on Valentine’s Day. He couldn’t take the waiting and the sometimes overwhelming emotions of the people around him.
He wanted to find that someone meant for him. Someone that would love him and decide that they liked him enough to stick around. He basked in the love of his parents, family and friends, but he could always feel that there was someone missing.

James was lost in his thoughts, just enjoying the little glimpses of emotions he was getting off of Henry as he waltzed them across the floor.

That was when he felt her. Ziva was disheveled and unwashed. She felt like, well like she was broken, just a big jumble of anger, hatred, resentment, and jealousy. He watched her barrel toward him from the tree line, yelling at everyone else to get down as he quickly passed Henry off to his father and squared up to meet the incoming threat.

At first, he thought she was going to physically attack him, but as she closed the distance between them to 25 yards she raised her gun and took aim. All the noises around him seemed to fade away as she leveled that gun at his head, he was cursing himself for not being armed, like an idiot.

Just as he sensed her begin to pull the trigger there was a loud pop followed by a deafening roar of “MINE!”

It was all so confusing but the last things he saw were a bullet hole in the perfect center of Ziva’s forehead, and then a frantic pair of deep chocolate eyes, before he knew no more.

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May 7, 2009

Salt Cay, Turks & Caicos

Aaron Hotchner swayed gently side-to-side in the hammock, his eyes closed and his rarely used guitar draped across his lap.

He strummed the strings softly, not paying too much attention to what he was playing. His mind was wrapped up in more important things, namely the man that had taken over his thoughts, his heart, really his whole world.
It has been just under three months since the day they sort of met, and then come online. As Mycroft always told it, James would never have been content with an ordinary meeting an emergence, it had to be dramatic and exciting.

He always argued that as they were unconscious for the two weeks following their emergence they missed all the excitement. That wasn’t the point apparently.

During those two weeks things happened that neither had even known were possible. Apparently, they were such a powerful couple that Jamie was able to pull him into the Spirit Plane with him, and keep all other guides away from them.

They spent those days getting to know each other, learning about their pasts and their dreams for the future. Aaron was so enamored of his gregarious yet sensitive guide that he pulled out all the stops to romance him in their secluded, purple, Spirit Plane, private beach.

Aaron took Jamie diving in the reefs, something he couldn’t do in the physical world due to his lungs. They explored underwater caves, swam with sea turtles, and surfed the waves before spending every night wrapped in each other’s arms.

There was no BAU, no crazy relatives, no assassins, just the two of them falling deeper in love every day within the shelter of the Spirit Plane. About a month after they woke up and subsequently bonded, Aaron proposed to Jamie beneath a large oak tree that hugs the bank of the river that runs past Dave’s house.

Jamie had screamed, “YES!” And then promptly managed to dunk them both in the river by tackling him. That was a great day.

“Should I be worried?” Jamie asked as he stood over the hammock.

“That depends, what makes you think you should be worried?” Aaron replied before setting his guitar in the chair beside him and gesturing for his new husband to join him.

Jamie made himself comfortable between Aaron’s legs and leaned back into his chest.
“You were just laying here, grinning like the Cheshire cat.”

Aaron chuckled, “No need for worry then, that’s just a side effect of having the sweetest, sexiest husband in my bed every night.”

Jamie smiled and turned his head for a kiss.

“You know, for a moment there it seemed like I was back in a dream I once had of you. Only then, you were wearing far less clothing.”

Aaron frowned at the button-down shirt blocked his hand and eyes from his husband’s torso.

“I think I might have had the same dream.”

“Really?”

“Oh yeah, but in my version, you’d already chased me up the stairs and stripped me naked.”

“That is such a great idea, why aren’t we in there having crazy loud sex right now?”

Aaron asked as he kissed Jamie’s neck and slowly begin to unbutton his shirt.

“Hey there boys!”

“That would be why.” Jamie said with fond exasperation as his father and new stepfather walked past.

“We’re going down to the reef, so it’s your turn to have sex now!” Walt yelled, earning himself a smack on the behind from Dave.

“What, it’s a system, it works!”
Their lighthearted bickering faded as they walked further down the beach.

“Whose idea was it again to have a dual destination wedding with my fathers?”

Aaron laughed at the pout on Jamie’s face, “that would be you my love.”

Jamie smiled as Aaron laughed, he loves when Aaron laughs.

“I guess I was just worried that someone would be left out if they weren’t all deliberately included somehow. They’ve given me so much and it would kill me if I messed up and somebody that that I don’t love and appreciate them.” Jamie said as he carefully turned on his side to better cuddle with Aaron. “My heart just feels so full most days that there just won’t be room for any more.”

“Oh, my Jamie, don’t you see? You have the biggest heart of anyone I’ve ever met, other than probably your father. There’s room in there for all of us, for me, your parents, the Paddingtons, the Holmes, your friends. Just because you were denied the love you deserve for most of your life doesn’t mean that you have to choose between us. We all love you in different ways. All you have to do is let it happen; you don’t have to earn it or pick some of us over the others, just open your heart and love us back. Let us forge our own paths in your heart”

“What if I don’t know how?” Tony asked, soft and vulnerable.

“Then I’ll show you.” Aaron answer before dropping a kiss on his husband's lips.

“Mmm, I think I like that idea, but first...” Jamie rolled out of the hammock almost dumping Aaron out in the process. “The parents will be gone for at least an hour, that should give us enough time for a couple rounds of sexy times, but only if you can catch me first!”

He took off at a sprint and Aaron quickly jumped from the hammock to give chase. They will find their way through this new world together, they’ll tread their own path, and spur each other onward in whatever lies ahead.
End Notes

You made it! I hope that you enjoyed the story. I would love to read your reactions and I always welcome constructive criticism.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!