# All These Scattered Dreams

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**Fandom:** Criminal Minds (US TV)  
**Relationship:** Spencer Reid/Reader, Alex Blake & Spencer Reid, Spencer Reid & The BAU Team, The BAU Team & Reader, Maeve Donovan/Spencer Reid  
**Character:** Spencer Reid, Maeve Donovan, Alex Blake, Jennifer "JJ" Jareau, Derek Morgan, Penelope Garcia, David Rossi, Aaron Hotchner, Erin Strauss, Emily Prentiss, Diane Turner, Robert "Bobby" Putnam, Grant Anderson, Ashley Seaver  
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## All These Scattered Dreams

by **IllegalCerebral**

### Summary

Returning home from visiting Emily, you nervously go to tell your best friend that you're in love with him after years of denial. The only problem is that Spencer has recently fallen for a brilliant geneticist and he’s fallen hard. A killer stalking the BAU promises to provide a distraction from your heartbreak but there may be threats lurking in the most unlikely of places.

### Notes

Some chapters of this fic will also double as entries to CM Bingo 2019. This first chapter fills my Season 8 square!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Your heart pounded as you headed through the park towards Spencer’s apartment. You were still exhausted and jet lagged from your flight back from the UK but this couldn’t wait. It felt like 1000 volts of electricity was coursing through your body. It was terrifying and exhilarating all at the same time.

You went over and over what you were going to say but nothing sounded right.

*Hey Spencer so while I was working abroad I realised I’ve loved you almost as long as I’ve known you and I just thought you should know.*

or

*Why yes London was amazing, Emily’s doing fantastically, we got to see some of the Olympics and by the way you’re the love of my life.*

or most honestly

*Emily got me drunk in an East End pub and six pints in I had this massive revelation about wanting to spend the rest of my life with you and Emily convinced me to tell you.*

Thank God Emily hadn’t told Morgan or Garcia, you couldn’t bear the idea of them spending the whole trip teasing you about it or even worse, deciding to tell Spencer when you guys got back. But Emily had been firm on the fact that Spencer should know.

“But why?” you had whined “We’re good friends, I don’t want to spoil that”

“Ugh because you’d be perfect together and he adores you, I’m sure he feels the same way”

And so here you were, trying not to throw up on the side of the street and practicing how you were going to tell your best friend you loved him. All of a sudden, mid thought, you came to a stop. Spencer was ahead of you on the path, talking on a payphone. A massive smile was plastered on his face; he was fiddling with his hair and he blushing. You frowned as you watched him playing with the phone cord, something cold settling in your stomach.

Then he saw you and it got worse.

You raised a hand in a half wave and the smiled slipped off his face. The cold feeling in your stomach grew sharp and your hand fell limply to your side as you headed closer, catching the end of his conversation.

“I’m sorry I really have to go…it’s a…work thing…No I’m sorry….Yeah I miss you already too”

The smile was back fleetingly before he hung up. You opened your mouth to speak but Spencer got there first.

“What are you doing here?”

“I…I just got back and I wanted to see you” It sounded so pathetic you wanted to kick yourself.

“I…sorry I didn’t mean to be so aggressive. I’m just surprised, I knew you and the others were flying in today, you must be exhausted”
“I haven’t slept for seventy-two hours but apart from that I’m okay,” you said with a shrug. The pair of you looked at each other awkwardly for a moment.

“Is everything okay with you?” you asked.

“Everything’s fine!”

“Spencer I know you” you said gently “What’s up? I feel like I interrupted something and you’re on edge so…”

“Okay but if I tell you nobody else can know okay? Especially not the team”

An hour later you were sitting in a nearby coffee shop trying to keep your face as blank as possible as a knife twisted in your chest.

“She’s just…amazing Y/N” said Spencer with a dreamy look on his face “She’s so kind and funny and she’s brilliant. Top of her field, it’s like she thinks at the speed of light, it’s honestly amazing”

Of course it was, you thought as you sipped your tea. It tasted like acid in your mouth, burning your throat but you didn’t care. All your energy was focused on not bursting into tears and hating yourself for that, for being so weak.

“You’ve fallen pretty hard” was all you could say.

“Yeah I guess I have” Spencer blushed again “Is that crazy?”

Yes, you wanted to say, you don’t know anything about this woman really. You’ve never met face to face and yet you’re pouring your heart out over the phone and if you aren’t careful you’re going to get hurt.

Instead you shrugged.

“Feelings are weird”

Spencer frowned and you began to get up and pull on your jacket.

“You’re leaving”

“I am in desperate need of a shower and a sleep,” you said ‘I’ll see you at work tomorrow. Looking forward to meeting Emily’s replacement’

“But…you never said why you came to see me”

“Just wanted to say hi” you lied and without another word you were out the door, leaving Spencer staring after you, bemused.

Something was wrong. Spencer never ended their phone calls abruptly like that. Usually it took about ten minutes to get him off the phone while he talked about how much he loved talking to her, how he was looking forward to their next phone call and being side tracked by some topic he thought she would be interested in.

Maeve didn’t like it.

She wondered briefly if she should be worried, if this was the start of some hiccup that could derail
the plan she and her partner had spent years formulating. The idea that they could lose it all when they were so close was too awful to contemplate.

No, Spencer was an eccentric and when they next spoke he would probably regale her with some weird reason for his shift in behaviour.

She was in control here, everything was going to plan.
Chapter 2

The feeling that overwhelmed you most, apart from abject embarrassment, was grief. You headed back to your apartment and it was only when you were on your couch with a large glass of wine that you allowed yourself to cry. Almost non-stop for an hour you let the tears fall and the alcohol slowly take the edge off of your sadness.

Then when no more tears would come you berated yourself for thinking Spencer could feel the same way as you and for thinking he would fall for someone who couldn’t keep up with his intelligence in the way that Maeve obviously could. Then you berated yourself for allowing yourself to get so invested in a relationship that wouldn’t happen in a million years and for getting so upset over a man. You were a badass FBI agent, strong, independent, and fierce. You shouldn’t be sobbing over the fact that the guy you liked didn’t like you back.

But you were and that wasn’t going to go away any time soon.

The next morning you woke up in a knot on your couch, head pounding and late for work. A quick shower and brushing your teeth made you feel fractionally less gross but you were still in a foul mood when you strode into the bullpen and found Penelope cowering under the gaze of a woman you assumed was Dr Alex Blake.

“The origin of “nice” is 12th century Middle English, meaning “foolish” or “stupid.” I hope you’re referring to the modern use of the adjective”

You could make a pretty good guess at what had preceded that based on Penelope’s beetroot face and Spencer and Morgan’s sheepish looks.

“Diachronic linguistics doesn’t feature into your analysis?” you asked curtly, causing the group of them to spin round and face you. “Given that, as you just said the definition of the word has changed substantially. Or perhaps Pragmatics isn’t a subfield you’re used to. Why would Garcia be using the 12th century usage of ‘nice’ when talking to her co-workers about someone joining our team following the resignation of a beloved former team member? Especially a resignation linked to so much trauma for a lot of people on the team”

Blake raised an eyebrow and you saw Morgan and Garcia’s mouth drop open but you were so not in the mood that you didn’t care.

“Blake this is Agent Y/N” said Spencer “Y/N this is Alex Blake”

“You’re interested in Pragmatics?” asked Blake. Her eyes had lit up slightly which only irritated you further. A small voice in the back of your head told you that you weren’t angry at Blake, no matter how blunt she was with Penelope, but the frustration you were feeling needed an outlet.

“Not remotely” you answered curtly. Blake looked like she was about to respond but Hotch interrupted, letting you all know there was a case. Blake headed off first, followed by Spencer who threw a worried glance in your direction that made your blood boil for reasons you couldn’t articulate. Garcia flew past the pair of them to catch up with Hotch and as you went to follow Morgan caught your arm.

“Woah there hotshot. Everything okay?”

“Why wouldn’t it be?”
"Maybe because you just eviscerated the newbie?"

“I didn’t like her talking to Garcia like that” you said with a scowl that made Morgan drop your arm “Yes Blake’s smart but that doesn’t make her any more capable than anyone else on the team and it definitely doesn’t mean she gets away with treating any of us anything less than respectfully”

“Hey, I totally agree” said Morgan “It was just more…ferocious, than you normally are. Which I love by the way, but I just wanted to check that there isn’t anything else going on. This team needs all it’s MVPs”

You softened at that, some of the anger and hurt cooling.

“You’re not profiling me are you Morgan?” you said, the barest hint of teasing slipping into your tone. Morgan relaxed at the familiarity.

“Me? Never”

Grudgingly you had to admit Blake was good at her job though playing well with others was not a strength she possessed. It gave you a grim sense of satisfaction to know that Morgan was pissed off with her too, pulling her aside and taking her to task for keeping the team out of the loop in favour of secreting herself away with Spencer to bounce around theories.

“She’s not settling in.” Spencer murmured worriedly. The pair of you had watched the whole exchange from a nearby coffee machine.

“Well maybe if she didn’t think the rest of us were idiots” you wanted to say but you were concerned Spencer would melt with the anxiety of it. Instead you shrugged and took a gulp of coffee, wincing.

“Do you like her?”

“I don’t know her”

“Y/N…”

“She makes a lousy first impression” you sighed “Beyond that we’ll see”

“She’s been through a lot to get here” said Spencer as he followed you back to the room that had been set aside for the BAU “You know the 1999 University Poisonings case?”

“Yeah a bunch of professors were sent parcels containing letters that had been tampered with”

“Yeah Blake was on the task force and so was Strauss” Spencer leaned in close unexpectedly and you couldn’t help but start, heat rising in your face “They arrested the wrong guy. Strauss threw Blake under the bus and it took over a decade for her to get back”

“W-wow” You could sort of see how that would make someone defensive though it wasn’t an excuse. “They caught the guy in the end though right?”

“Yeah Stephen Wayland-Parker, a biochemist, had been kicked out of Emerson College where he was a professor and attacked people in academic circles for revenge”

“Academia can be cutthroat” you said, settling down. It was nice, talking like this, almost like old
“Maeve says the same thing” smiled Spencer. Not like old times at all then. “At least in regards to the women in her department. She says when men see a woman’s success they want it for themselves but when women see it they want it so you can’t have it” Spencer frowned as you snorted “What?”

“That’s so…”

“What?”

“You know what, forget it” you waved him off “If that’s Maeve’s experiences with other women…”

“She’s a star in her field” Spencer said defensively “One dominated by men”

“I may only be a dumb FBI agent but I could say the same” you said, your tone calm despite the fact you wanted to scream “And I don’t resent JJ or Emily or Garcia or any other female agents and they don’t resent me. We work together because we all understand we’re working with one hand tied behind our backs”

Spencer looked like he wanted to argue but he remained silent. You felt a surge of sour triumph.

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“Maeve— is hyper vigilant in a way you don’t have to be” said Spencer quietly “I guess that frames how she trusts people”

“What does that mean?”

“She has a stalker” said Spencer, carefully, eyes fixed on his coffee mug “She took a break from working, went into hiding, she can’t leave her apartment. It’s why…it’s why we haven’t met in person yet”

Ten thousand thoughts collided in your brain at that moment but you ignored all but the most pressing.

“She’s told the police right, or at least you’ve been profiling –“

“She doesn’t want to put me in danger. Don’t look at me like that”

“Spencer…” You had no words. The whole thing sounded crazy.

Really crazy.

“I keep offering and I give her advice on how to keep safe. One day…it will be over and I can meet with her properly” The small, sweet smile on his face broke your heart.

“Here’s hoping” you mumbled, unable to look at him anymore.

You were all exhausted when you got back. You couldn’t miss how quickly Spencer grabbed his stuff and ran out the door when usually he would be hanging back to chat with you. Not wanting to go home to an empty department you settled down at your desk to do some paperwork.

Four pages in and a shadow passed over you. To your surprise you looked up and saw Blake hovering there, an unreadable expression painted on her face.
It took you a moment to gather yourself, determined not to shrink under Blake’s gaze.

“I make a terrible first impression,” she said. It was then that your gaze fell on the thermos she was holding. You recognised it from souvenir shopping with Garcia and a small smile spread on your face.

“But apparently you make a good second one” you said with a small nod.

“It’s more like Garcia made the good impression and I…was inspired to start over” Blake thrust out a hand “I’m Alex Blake and I have some issues with defensiveness that I’m working on” You took her hand, shaking it firmly.

“Y/N. I can relate to that. I think I may have been…over zealous when I was defending Garcia”

“Spencer said you were loyal, called it your best quality” smiled Blake. Something cracked inside you but you tried to keep it off your face.

“He…said that?”

“Oh yeah” laughed Blake “He told me lots of wonderful things about you. I was kind of nervous about meeting you in person”

Your mouth fell open. You honestly weren’t sure how to respond to that. On the one hand something ached inside you at the thought of Spencer talking about you like that to someone he admired but that was swiftly followed by sadness that it would never be more than that. On the other hand you were more than a little embarrassed that Blake’s nerves had been met with such a hostile reception.

“I…I’m really not all that but for what it’s worth the BAU is very good at protecting it’s own. Welcome to the family”

“I still prefer Conan Doyle” Spencer switched the phone to his other ear “But there’s something about Christie’s writing right?”

“Yes” Maeve’s voice was warm and lilting and it sent waves of something indescribable rippling through Spencer. He closed his eyes as she recounted her favourite moments from the book, enjoying the contrast of her soothing voice and fierce, fiery intellect. “What is it?” she giggled.

“I just…I was thinking about how huge the world is. How many geneticists and neurological experts there are out there. I mean I consulted a lot of people, I don’t even remember sending you the MRI specifically and yet it landed on your desk and not only did you stop my headaches but…”

“But?” her voice was soft, barely more than a whisper.

He so badly wanted to tell her he loved her, to tell her that he had fallen harder and faster than he ever though possible. But he wanted to do that face to face, holding her close to him when he said it.

“But you make me happier than I’ve even been”
“Oh Spencer”

“God that sounds corny” Spencer screwed his face up “Please forget I said that”

“I won’t” Maeve laughed, “That was the sweetest thing anyone’s ever said to me. Though I’m just me. No one special”

“Don’t say that. You’re brilliant and kind and funny. You helped us solve a case a save a woman’s life. That’s amazing Maeve”

“Oh Spencer that was nothing. I couldn’t do what you and your team do. It’s so…the things you see. Like those poor families being tortured in that house or…what was the one you were telling me about last week?”

“The woman who was composting her victims?” Spencer’s stomach turned slightly at the memory “Yeah…that was an unusual one. It can be hard sometime, seeing the worst things people do to each other…but we also see the best you know? People coming together during their darkest times. Random strangers helping each other. People going above and beyond for those in need”

“You’re always so hopeful,” said Maeve “It’s inspiring”

“My friend Penelope says we need to look for any light in the dark, even if it’s just a pinprick”

Maeve made a small humming noise that Spencer couldn’t interpret. He suspected talking about the team might make her feel a little lonely but she always asked about them. One of the first things Maeve had told him was how you could always judge a person by how they spoke about the people they cared about most. Spencer was happy to tell her about his work family though it made him feel guilty that Maeve didn’t have any of those stories of her own to share.

“That’s a lovely sentiment” said Maeve breaking through his jumble of thoughts.

“I hope you can meet her one day. You’d love her”

“Oh I’m sure I would”

The buzzing of Spencer’s phone made his heart sink. He apologised over and over before hanging up.

“Don’t worry about it. Your job is important. Just promise you’ll write to me, I love hearing about your adventures” Maeve said

“Serial killers teaching other serial killers” JJ sighed “I think that counts as a new low” The case had only taken a few days but the entire team was tired.

“Drinks are in order” Rossi declared “Strong ones. Blake you in?”

“First round’s on me” she grinned. Over the past few weeks you had found yourself warming up to the newcomer despite your initial tension. It helped that she and Penelope were getting on too and you could always judge Penelope’s judgement regarding people.

“Then I’m definitely coming” said Morgan “Baby Girl? Pretty Boy?”

“It’s mojito hour chocolate thunder, wild horses couldn’t stop me”

Spencer looked up from his desk where he had been writing furiously.
“Please tell me you aren’t ditching us for paperwork Spence” said JJ.

“What? I, uh, no. It’s a letter to my Mom” He hastily stuffed the paper away and a knot formed in your stomach as you sensed the lie. It had been a couple of months now and you thought your stupid feelings would have died knowing that Spencer had someone else but your heart still stubbornly leapt every time you saw him. You were even dreaming about him now which was mortifying and meant that you were going out of your way to stay up as late as possible.

The entire team was fixing Spencer with varying looks of disbelief.

“I can finish it later” he said hastily “O’Keefe’s?”

“Yes that’s the spirit boy wonder,” cheered Penelope, slapping him on the back “It’s been too long since you’ve hung out with us”

“Pretty boy has more engaging company to hang out with,” laughed Morgan as every grabbed their stuff and headed towards the elevator.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” said Spencer and the blush that spread over his cheeks made your throat burn.

“You okay?” JJ asked “You look kind pale”

“I think I have a headache coming on” you mumbled, “I might take a rain check”

“What? No!” Garcia whined “We just got Reid to say yes for the first time in months and now you’re backing out?”

You opened your mouth to protest but were interrupted by Hotch appearing down the hall.

“I know you guys were making your escape but can I speak to you a moment Y/N?”

Garcia practically howled in response.

“I’ll catch you up. I promise” you told her, unable to entirely keep the note of defeat from your voice before hurrying up to Hotch and following him to his office.

“The Myers case” he began, gesturing for you to sit “You did really well out there”

“Thank you”

“I got a call on the plane back earlier about a very similar murder in Dallas a week ago” Hotch continued, passing you a folder. Your confusion turned to horror as you flicked through.

“Hotch this isn’t similar, it’s identical” you said “But Myers is dead…this has to be a copycat”

“One with very detailed knowledge about the case” nodded Hotch “Since you helped Gideon write the original Silencer profile and you did great work on this case I was hoping you could go down and take a look. It may be nothing, Strauss doesn’t want the whole team to go, and you are the best person for this.”

“Of course” you said not taking your eyes off the crime scene photos. Something felt very, very wrong.

“If you need an extra set of eyes Reid could-"
“No” you interrupted, then cursed yourself for it “No sense in two team members going…maybe Anderson?”

“Is this about the change in team dynamics? I know you and Blake got off to a rocky start”

“It’s not that”

“Oh”

Your shoulders sagged, the look on his face was far worse than annoyance at your unprofessionalism. It was pity.

“I heard Garcia and Morgan teasing him about some mystery woman” said Hotch “I imagine that must be difficult to hear”

“How do you…oh my god I’m going to kill Emily”

Hotch let out a laugh, a genuine one at that, as you buried your head in your hands.

“I am a profiler Y/N. I was able to work out some it for myself. But Emily did fill in the gaps. I am sorry though. I suppose I always thought the two of you would make a good match”

“You did?” You peeked up at him through your fingers. He nodded, smiling sadly.

“I’m sorry. I know how much it must hurt. But it will fade eventually and you still have a wonderful friendship”

You nodded, your throat feeling kind of tight.

“When do you need me to fly out?” you asked.

“I’ll let Anderson know tonight and you guys can head out tomorrow. I just hope this isn’t something worse”

At the bar, you sidestepped any questions about your conversation with Hotch and after that you just sat miserably watching Spencer surreptitiously continue his letter under the table while the others danced. After an hour or so it got to be too much and you made your excuses.

“Everything okay?” asked Spencer

“Yeah I’m tired is all” you smiled weakly “And Hotch wants me to go and do a consult out of town tomorrow so I’m going to get an early night”

“Oh okay” he went back to his letter.

“That will keep to the morning” It slipped out before you could stop yourself “She’s not going to leave you if you have fun with your friends for a while”

“Oh I know I-” but when Spencer looked up you were already halfway out the door.
Two things you learnt very quickly about Agent Anderson was that he was a country music fan and he was getting over a break up. Judging by the way he was mournfully singing along to the radio on the way to the airport it was a bad one.

“Sorry” he winced when he caught you looking at him “Bad habit”

“No it’s fine” Honestly you liked the distraction. You would much rather be focusing on someone else’s heartbreak than your own.

Spending a couple of days with Anderson would be a relief, you thought, by then Spencer and the rest of the team would forget about your odd behaviour at O’Keefe’s the previous night and you wouldn’t have to hear or even think about Maeve.

Twice you had picked up your phone to text Spencer and apologise but you had no idea how to even begin explaining why you left so abruptly. The only messages you got from the team were from Morgan reminding you about the softball game against the secret service that weekend and Garcia asking you to bring back a souvenir while also chiding you for missing girls’ night. You weren’t prepared to spend the whole trip wondering whether Spencer was angry at you or he hadn’t thought your behaviour odd enough to comment on so you told Anderson to whack the radio up and sing as loud as he wanted.

You even joined in.

The locals were welcoming, they had never had a murder like this before, and it was a small station so they were glad for your help. Anderson stayed there and dealt with the case files, paperwork and admin while you visited the crime scene and spoke to witnesses before interviewing the ME.

“There’s something going on here,” you said, handing Anderson a mug of coffee.

“It’s uncanny” he nodded. You cast your eye of the table of the conference room. Everything was laid out in neat little piles with coloured tabs and the evidence board was covered in neatly written post it notes with a series of arrows connecting everything together. It was simultaneously thorough and organised.

“You’ve been busy” you said, “This is impressive” Anderson gave a small shrug.

“I like order you know”

“I’ve done this with Reid a few times and his system is just to speed through it and pile everything up. I usually get hopelessly lost,” you laughed but it was hollow. Why the hell had you brought up Spencer?

“I’m more than just a pretty face Agent” Anderson grinned, “We all have our strengths”

Despite yours and Anderson’s combined efforts you weren’t getting anywhere with the consult. Hotch called at the end of the second day and ordered you both back in the morning. You slumped into bed at the cheap motel, frustrated and a little apprehensive about going home.
Sleep remained elusive. You stared at the stucco ceiling and despite your best efforts your mind wandered towards Spencer. A few years before the team had been called to Alaska and you’d stayed in the Sheriff’s house, as there were no hotels.

“I’m not sleeping with Reid”

You snorted at the face he pulled at Morgan’s words.

“I’ll bunk with you” you nudged him “If you promise not to snore”

“Deal” he grinned

No, no, no. You didn’t need this right now you thought as you rolled over, ramming your face into your pillow.

“I haven’t had a sleepover since I was a kid” you said wistfully as you flopped down on the bed. Spencer hugged his knees to his chest.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to take the floor?” Was that a blush creeping across his cheeks?

“One: You’ll freeze to death. Two: I’m pretty sure I can control myself if we share a bed. Can you?"

The answer came in the form of a spluttering sound that sent you into a fit of giggles. A swift pillow to the face put a stop to that.

“Spencer!” You lunged forward and his eyes bulged as you began to tickle him mercilessly where you knew he was most sensitive.

“No no no no no!” he wheezed, wriggling out of your grasp “You child!”

“You started it”

“Did not”

“Did too!”

“Is this how all kids sleepovers are? Because if yes then I clearly didn’t miss much” His face softened when he saw your expression. “It’s no big deal, honestly”

But it was, you sighed at the memory. You shuffled out of bed and wandered to the window. Everything was quiet and still. You knew Spencer hadn’t had the easiest upbringing, with his father leaving and having to take care of Diana but you suspected that there were other things he had buried deep down, trying to forget. You had pressed him into sharing that night, when the lights were out and the pair of you were shivering under the covers. Spencer’s voice was steady throughout the whole sorry story, wavering only at the end when he described finally freeing himself from the flagpole and trudging home only to find his mother hadn’t realised he was late.

“And you never told anyone?” You propped yourself up on your elbow. Spencer had his eyes screwed shut. You were flooded by an intense urge to hold him in a way you never had before, as if your touch could draw out the pain. It was a fleeting desire but stronger than anything you had ever felt before.

Instead you reached out and entwined your fingers with his. Rolling on to his side, Spencer opened his eyes and his grip tightened ever so slightly. There was a sadness there that struck something
deep inside you.

“I told Morgan on a case a few years back. You’re the only other person who knows”

“I wish I could go back in time and kick their punk asses”

“I know” he smiled “You’re a good person”

“You’re better” you whispered back, “Everything you’ve been through, and it’s only made you kinder”

You rested your head on the cold window pane, hot tears rolling down your cheeks. Why couldn’t these feelings just go away? If anything they were getting stronger, as was the pining and the pain.

You had fallen asleep like that, your thumb brushing his knuckles, sharing secrets until you had drifted off. Looking back you wondered if that was the point you had started falling.

With heavy limbs you dragged yourself back to bed. It didn’t even matter anyway; there was no one to catch you.

The journey home felt quicker than the journey there. You read on the plane and then spent the ride to Quantico quietly chatting to Anderson about music and films. Mostly you let him talk while you listened. The sorrow from the previous night had numbed you a little and a kind of tiredness that wasn’t due to lack of sleep permeated your whole body.

You hoped that after you and Anderson had filled in Hotch about the copycat murder you could get home without being seen, desperate as you were for a hot bath and a large glass of wine. Fate had other plans however. When you bid Anderson goodbye in the bullpen, the team materialised and bombarded you with hugs.

“Guys it’s been three days” you chuckled despite yourself.

“But one of those days had the single greatest sporting moment of this century and you missed it” whooped Morgan.

“You beat the secret service?”

“Boy Wonder beat the secret service” cheered Garcia “With a home run” Spencer beamed at you as the team clapped him on the back. Morgan looked at him like he wanted to pick him up and swing him around the bullpen.

“You should have seen him,” said Rossi “And the look of those secret service agents’ faces was priceless”

“Congratulations” you said with genuine warmth “I’m sorry I missed it”

“It was no big deal,” Spencer mumbled as the team dispersed.

“So not the start to a glittering career as an athlete then?”

“Nah, I figured I would go out on a high”

You both laughed and it felt good. Warm and familiar. Normal.

“Can we talk?” Spencer asked quietly. Hesitating slightly you nodded and the two of you headed o
a spare room, away from listening ears.

“I’m sorry for running out of O’Keefe’s the other night,” you said before Spencer had a chance to speak “I’ve got a bunch of stuff going on but I shouldn’t have taken it out on you”

“No..Y/N…I get it. I have been really preoccupied lately-”

“You’ve been happy” you said. It hurt so fucking much. It burnt in your throat as you said it but you kept steady.

“I am” said Spencer softly “I never thought I would get to feel something like this and it’s amazing…but being your friend is amazing too. I need you to know that isn’t going to change, no matter what happens with Maeve.

Deep breath in. Deep breath out.

“Thanks Spencer”

What else could you say really?

“Being your friend is pretty amazing too” you smiled and Spencer pulled you into a tight hug. He felt so solid and reassuring in your arms. You breathed in deeply. “You know I was thinking about that case in Alaska while I was away”

Why the hell did you bring that up?

“Where we roomed together and I let you braid my hair? That was nice” he said, stepping back.

“Oh god I forgot about the braiding!” your hand flew to your mouth “You could really pull it off though. it was kind of a elvish look, like you were about to head off to Middle Earth”

Spencer snorted. It was true though, it had weirdly suited him. He had made you swear to undo it all afterwards though and never tell Morgan, under pain of death.

“We should hang out again soon,” said Spencer “We haven’t done that in a while”

“I’d really like that” you said truthfully.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is also another entry for CM bingo 2019 The trope this time is flashback!
Chapter 5

“So how was work?”

It was amazing how suddenly that had become a loaded question for Spencer and his stomach squirmed as he struggled to find an answer.

“Tough” Which was technically true, it felt like cheating though.

“You want to talk about it?” asked Maeve “Talking helps” That was also technically true but there was something about this case that was making him hesitate.

“I’d rather hear about your day,” said Spencer.

The phone call ended sooner than it usually did. Maybe she had been able to tell? But tell what? Spencer hadn’t done anything wrong. The thing was it didn’t feel that way. He leaned his head against the side of the phone box and sighed. It would all have been fine if Y/N hadn’t brought up that case in Alaska. She hadn’t done it on purpose of course, all she could remember was them talking through the night and the pillow fight and messing about with Spencer’s hair, all the cute friend stuff. The night stuck in Spencer’s mind for a different reason.

He hadn’t been able to sleep, he was always a bit of an insomniac, and it had been cold despite the shared body heat. Y/N had fallen asleep almost immediately and it had been peaceful, watching her lie there, still holding his hand. Just as Spencer had begun to feel his own eyes closing she had rolled over gently, one arm snaking around his waist and he had jerked wide awake again. Shuffling away had only made her hold on tighter, a small frown on her face. There was always the option of waking her up but she was his best friend and he didn’t want to embarrass her. Besides it had been a long day, she needed a rest.

The thought about how nice it was to have someone’s body so close to his sprung into his head and he hadn’t been able to get rid of it. Her head lay on his chest so he could breathe in the scent of her shampoo. It sent a pang of loneliness through him. In the quiet, secretive dark he had let himself pretend that this wasn’t a work trip, maybe he was at home enjoying a weekend off. He didn’t want to interrogate the fact that he didn’t substitute her for someone else in this fantasy so he ignored that.

In the early hours of the morning she had rolled away and they had woken up on the far sides of the bed, with Y/N none the wiser. Spencer had mostly forgotten about it, apart from on a few cold nights when he wished for heat. Until Y/N brought it up again, after that it stuck in his brain like a movie on a loop and even talking to Maeve didn’t silence it fully. Without knowing why, he knew it wasn’t something he could share with her. That in and of itself was ridiculous because there wasn’t anything he couldn’t tell Maeve. She knew that Spencer and Y/N were friends, he could play it off as a silly story but that would be...a lie. A lie of omission would somehow be easier for him than that.

When he told Maeve about the incident with the football team, he didn’t tell her that Y/N knew first. It nagged at him that he couldn’t articulate why that was significant. All of that paled in comparison to their most recent case though.
Four couples in Des Moines found with their throats cut and posed in public places to look as though they were embracing. Thanks to Garcia it became clear that the unsub was finding them at couples’ nights at trendy bars. An increased police presence outside the bars didn’t stop a fifth couple being murdered so they had to change tactics.

“Undercover?” JJ frowned “Isn’t that a little risky?”

“They’ll be plain clothes officers everywhere,” said Hotch “We’ve narrowed it down to two bars based on his pattern so far. You and Morgan will take one and Y/N and Reid will take the other. You’ll be surrounded at all times. Nothing with happen to you”

“You want us to pretend to be on a date?” asked Y/N. Hotch nodded.

“You know what behaviour will entice him. Better it’s our people than the locals”

Beside Spencer, Y/N inhaled sharply and before he could wonder what that meant she and the others were talking strategy while he just stood there uselessly. It was pretty much all he did until they were fully briefed, changed and driven by van to one of the two bars their unsub was expected at.

“You okay?”

“Huh?”

“I asked if you were okay” Y/N’s voice was low as she smoothed down her dress. If Spencer had been paying attention he would have noticed her playing with her hands the whole ride over or the glances she kept sneaking his way.

“Yeah you?”

“Oh totally!”

“We’ll have eyes and ears on you the whole time” said Hotch, adjusting Spencer’s mic “Now we know this unsub is drawn to couples who tend to be more public with their affections”

“So get down and dirty guys,” said Rossi with a wink. Both Y/N and Spencer made odd choking sounds.

“Don’t go that far” said Hotch “But be tactile. Reid put your arms around her as much as you can, hold hands, Y/N touch his hair or his face a little”

“His hair” she echoed.

“You’re a couple,” grinned Rossi “Act like it”

Since projectile vomiting all over the pavement outside the bar was not couple behaviour, Spencer took a couple of deep, steadying breaths.

“I promise I won’t be too embarrassing” said Y/N. He couldn’t quite read her tone, if he didn’t know better he would think she was upset but...perhaps she was nervous too?

Or perhaps she was disgusted by the idea of pretending to be intimate with him. A flash of the night in Alaska darted through his mind, the weight and warmth of her body on his.

Spencer felt the heat rise in his cheeks, followed by a sharp stab of guilt when he thought of Maeve. His stomach began to roll and he worried he would be sick.
All of that melted away when Y/N held out her hand.

“Shall we?”

It was weird. Weird in a nice way but still very weird.

Maybe weird wasn’t the right word because sitting there at the bar with an arm around Y/N’s shoulder while she played with his hair and tried to make him laugh with corny jokes felt entirely natural. Her body was pressed close to his and her warmth was almost comforting, the rhythm of her fingers mimicking the beat of his heart.

“Anything?” she whispered lowly. Spencer struggled to reply and then felt colossally stupid when Hotch responded.

“You have a couple of people watching you. Two college girls who keep cooing over you, a guy checking one or both of you out but no one displaying signs of significant ill intent”

“You guys need to ramp it up a notch” said Rossi “Can you go onto the dance floor?”

“I can’t...I can’t dance” mumbled Spencer. While that was truth it was more that with each passing second he felt less and less in control of the situation. He could also hear Maeve’s voice in the back of his mind once again and the sting of guilt had returned.

“It’s a slow song, all you have to do is follow my lead” said Y/N, a reassuring hand on his arm. Resigned, he allowed himself to be led to a spot where they were visible to the whole bar. Gingerly he placed a hand on her lower back; in the other he held her hand fingers interlocked. They swayed back and forth to “At Last” while trying to keep eyes on everyone around them.

“There’s a guy on my two o’clock. Do you see him Hotch?” Y/N mumbled.

“Green sweater and glasses? Yeah we got him. We need to make sure he follows you guys out of the bar though, that’s the only way we’ll know for certain it’s him”

“I have an idea,” said Spencer. Before Y/N could ask what he tilted her face upwards towards his own. His mouth was on hers, first softly and then more firmly. There was a small gasp though neither was sure if it was them or the other. Melting into the embrace, Y/N brought her free hand up to Spencer’s cheek, her thumb running along his jaw. He tilted his head, lips parting fractionally as he deepened the kiss and pulled her flush against him. Her mouth was hot and Spencer could taste the sweet drink from earlier on her tongue as something low and warm bloomed in him.

“Well that got his attention” Rossi’s voice sounded far away and Spencer knew he should probably stop. They had more than made their point, people were starting to stare, and once the rest of the team found out he was never going to live this down. The problem was his body hadn’t quite caught up to his brain yet, the rational part anyway.

Hotch cleared his throat. The spell and the kiss were both broken but they didn’t move apart. A beautiful rosy flush dusted Y/N’s cheeks; he could feel the heat from her skin against his own.

Nothing made sense except the feeling of her hand in his as they headed outside. Even the cold night air couldn’t shock his brain into stringing together a single coherent thought. He didn’t register the footsteps behind them, Y/N’s lightning fast reflexes or her tackling the unsub to the ground. A dozen police officers and agents appeared around them, then they were being debriefed.
and driven somewhere and the whole thing felt like an out of body experience.

Spencer didn’t really get his thoughts in order until the jet ride home. As expected there was some teasing from the team but most of them focused on showering Y/N with praise.

“Best takedown I have ever seen” said Rossi “Worth a drink at O’Keefe’s when we get back”

“Maybe Pretty Boy can give you another kiss as a reward?” teased Morgan.

“Okay guys that’s enough” Y/N rubbed the back of her neck “It was no big deal”

“Actually it was a big deal” Spencer sat down next to her once the team had headed to separate parts of the plane to sleep. “I owe you my life”

“You don’t owe me anything Spencer,” she said softly, head tilted.

Something rose in Spencer that he was too afraid to name so he quickly pushed it down and scrambled for something else.

“Listening to another podcast?”

“No Anderson has been making me some playlists” she laughed “I think he’s trying to turn me into a country music fan”

An entirely different emotion flooded Spencer’s system.

“Is it working?”

“Maybe kinda”

If he didn’t know better Spencer would say it was a spark of jealousy but he knew that couldn’t be true.

“I think the stalker’s gone,” Maeve said breathily.

“You know, oftentimes when a stalker's advances are completely ignored, their erotomaniac fantasies will be diverted to a more receptive target” said Spencer. He didn’t dare to hope that after all of that she might finally be safe. He banished all thoughts of Y/N, of the kiss that he could still feel on his lips, of the lingering thoughts he couldn’t reconcile with his feelings.

“I want to meet you”

Then a thousand other thoughts and feelings came crashing down on him.
"Another gift on your desk from Anderson?" JJ held the CD up with a smirk, "A mix CD? That's the cutest thing. He's crushing hard!"

"He really isn't" you said, grabbing it back "He's still reeling from his break up"

"With Seaver? But from what I heard he broke up with her and she's devastated"

"Really? 'Cause Grant said-"

"I need you all in the conference room now!" Hotch's voice cut across all of you "Y/N can you grab Agent Anderson?"

All of you stood nervously in front of Hotch and Rossi like kids about to be scolded by their teacher.

"A while ago I sent Y/N and Anderson to Texas to consult on a case where a victim was found with their mouth sewn shut"

"Like the Silencer case?" asked Blake

"Identical to that one" you said "Has there been another victim?"

"Yes" said Hotch slowly "Except this one was in Las Cruces and he had his right leg removed and someone else's attached in its place"

Collectively there was a sharp intake of breath.

"Someone's copying our cases" you said, "There's no way this isn't about us"

"The Director agrees," said Hotch "We'll be looking into this while working on our other cases. Anderson can you liaise with ViCAP? I need to know if there are any other cases that could fit the pattern"

"Yes Sir" he said, shooting you a "This is going to be a bad one" look. You gave him a sympathetic smile in return.

"If the second victim is anything like the first then this guy has the details spot on... Spence did you hear me?"

The pair of you had headed straight for the coffee on dismissal.

"What? Sorry I'm kind of all over the place today"

"You okay?"
"It's Maeve"

Your immediate thought was that they had broken up and the little leap your heart did filled you with shame.

"Is she okay?"

"She wants to meet"

"That's a good thing right?" you frowned. Spencer sighed.

"What if she doesn't like me?"

"You've been talking for months. Of course she likes you" Who wouldn't.

"No I mean what if she doesn't like the way I look? Hey don't laugh!"

"Oh Spence you have zero problems in that department trust me" you said "She already knows how kind and funny and smart you are. Maeve's going to think she's died and gone heaven when she sees you"

"You have to say that you're my friend" Spencer scoffed. You put down your coffee and grabbed his arm.

"Hey, look at me. It's because I'm your friend I'm telling you the truth"

Before Spencer could respond Garcia called out that you guys had a case. You sighed.

"We'll talk more later okay?"

Later never really came. The case was a weird one - human marionettes. Just when you thought you had seen everything.

Blake had slipped into a side room where Spencer was working and after that he had seemed calmer. You didn’t want to resent the fact that he took her pep talk better than yours; it was another reason for you to feel like the worst friend in the world. You also couldn’t shake the bad feeling you had about the whole situation.

This woman had mysteriously shown up when Spencer needed her most, solved all his medical issues but because of a threat to her life, one she wouldn’t let a trained federal agent help her with, they couldn’t actually meet in person. Spencer didn’t even know her last name; he had no way of verifying if anything Maeve said was true.

What if it wasn’t?

No, that was too far fetched to even contemplate. And yet the thought still nagged at you for reasons beyond simple jealousy. Perhaps the copycat had you on edge but for whatever reason all your senses were on high alert and remained that way throughout the remainder of the case.
Back at Quantico Spencer promptly disappeared and the knot in your stomach grew tighter. Everyone else was heading to Rossi’s place and you tagged along rather than sit and stew in your apartment.

“Where’s Reid?” exclaimed Morgan.

“He said he had something important to do” shrugged Garcia. You and Blake exchanged a look.

“Spencer has a girlfriend” The disbelief in JJ’s voice would have annoyed you if it registered over the sound of alarm bells in your head.

You were one glass of wine in at Rossi’s before you made your excuses.

“Everything okay?” asked Blake. Why did she of all people have to be the one to come after you? Pausing on Rossi’s doorstep, you debated telling her the truth about your hunch.

“I’m not feeling too great all of a sudden,” you said eventually. Before she could say anything else you were in your car, your service weapon on the passenger seat. Still unsure whether or not you were making a huge mistake, you headed to the restaurant.

Something felt off, something that went beyond nerves. Spencer drummed his fingers on the table absentmindedly, scanning the room for any potential threat. As soon as he locked eyes with the dark haired guy in the booth, the hairs on the back of his neck stood up and he fumbled for his phone.

"Maeve, it's me. Listen, don't come to the restaurant” The blood pounded in Spencer’s ears.

“What are you talking about? I'm outside”

"Go home” he pleaded. There was a long pause and for one sickening moment Spencer thought he was too late. Her voice was laced with so much hurt when she spoke it made his heart ache.

"Spencer, if you don't want to meet me, you can just say it”

"No, that's not it. Look, I think your stalker's here”

“What?”

“Please just go!”

Just when Spencer thought Maeve was safe he looked around only to find that the guy at the table was gone. Shit, shit, shit. He’d sent her home alone. Where she was vulnerable. How could he have been so stupid?

Nearly sending the poor waitress flying, Spencer charged out of the restaurant and into the deserted street. There was no sign of the man or Maeve, or at least anyone who could be Maeve. The world suddenly seemed very close, he couldn’t breathe.

“Hey”
Whipping round, Spencer came face to face with the guy from the restaurant, eyes flashing to the baton gripped in his hand. Everything stopped for a moment.

“FBI put it down” a familiar voice cut through the darkness.

“Y/N?”

“I said, FBI. Put down the weapon,” you said calmly, gun raised “You seem like a smart guy, I’m sure you can guess what the penalty is for assaulting a federal officer. Adding that to the stalking charge and you are in serious trouble buddy”

“Federal officer? You mean that guy?” he dropped the baton, head swinging back and forth between the pair of them. Nausea enveloped Spencer as you got the guy to turn around and empty his pockets.

“What are you doing here?” he croaked.

“Couldn’t enjoy my drink with the possibility of you getting yourself murdered by some psycho stalker hanging over me”

“Wait psycho stalker? What are you talking about?”

“What’s your name?” you demanded.

“Bobby. Bobby Putnam. Can I pick up my baton now?”

“No. Why were you threatening my colleague?”

“I didn’t know he was an FBI agent,” Bobby babbled, “I swear! I thought he was Maeve’s stalker. I was just trying to keep her safe”

“How-how do you know Maeve?” asked Spencer. He swayed slightly and his face was white as a sheet.

“I’m her fiancé,” said Bobby. You shot Spencer a warning look as he lurched forward. Bobby shrank back. “I mean...I’m her ex-fiancé...When that guy started writing to her and the calls and emails and everything Maeve thought it would be safer if we broke up but...I was still worried”

You holstered your gun, feeling half vindicated for your suspicions, and half mortified for Spencer. He had turned away from the two of you and as much as you wanted to put your arms around him you led Bobby away.

“I want her name and address now. I also want your details”

“W-why?”

“Because I’m an FBI agent and a crime is being committed”

“Am I in trouble?”

“No. But what you did today was reckless. If that had been Maeve’s stalker then they wouldn’t have let anything get in the way of their mania. Anyone in Maeve’s proximity could be a secondary target” you pulled out your card “Call me if you need help”

Bobby mumbled thanks and took off, leaving you to deal with Spencer. He had made his way back towards the door to the restaurant. What the hell were you supposed to say to him?
“Hey-” you began but Spencer cut you off, a gift bag in his hand.

“She bought me the same book I got her” he said faintly “The Narrative of John Smith”

“Spencer-”

“I’m really sorry I can’t do this right now Y/N”

You watched him head down the street, head bent, gripping that book like his life depended on it.

You could feel in your bones that something wasn’t right.

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After Spencer had gone the woman, Y/N Maeve supposed based on Spencer’s description, stood for a moment before heading to her car.

How had her plan come apart so quickly? Spencer was supposed to be alone. He never told his team about his personal life and yet one of his teammates had not only gate crashed his date she’d been armed, clearly expecting trouble.

That was not good.

A light wrapping on the window caused Maeve to look up. Bobby stared at her through the glass looking like a kicked puppy. The revulsion Maeve felt didn’t register on her face.

“I fucked up,” Bobby said mournfully when he was inside. Maeve kept her eyes on the road, her voice calm.

“What did you tell them?”

“The guy, Spencer? He wasn’t really paying attention. The woman though asked who I was”

“You lied though right? Right?”

Bobby said nothing; sinking down in his chair, lip quivering.

“It’s fine. I can deal with that,” Maeve said, more to herself than him. She pulled into an alley behind an old warehouse “So you told her your name...did she ask about me? Bobby it’s very important you don’t lie to me okay?”

“I said we were engaged,” he whimpered.

Maeve got out of the car and took a couple of steadying breaths. With a jerk of her head she signalled Bobby to follow her into the warehouse. The plan would need to be accelerated, her partner would be pissed, but the real problem would be what Spencer did next. Did she have him?

“Maeve I’m so, so sor-”

Bobby didn’t even see the knife. All he felt was the strange sensation of blood foaming in his mouth, and something hot and damp dribbling down his chest. Maeve didn’t even flinch as he
slumped to the floor, jerking around as he bled out. She pulled out her phone and took another deep breath before dialling.

“Hey it’s me. There’s been a slight complication but I’ve handled it”
Seven missed calls to Spencer and around two dozen text messages. That was just between him leaving the restaurant and you showing up to Quantico the next morning to find his desk empty.

“Hey it’s me” you said for the eighth time that morning, your voice low so the rest of the team couldn’t hear you, “Please just let me know you’re okay. You don’t need to tell me anything other than that. I’m going crazy here, imagining the worst”

“Everything alright?” You jumped at Anderson’s voice.

“Sorry Grant. Yeah...I’m fine”

Anderson look unconvinced but instead of saying anything he just hovered by your desk. Over his shoulder you could see Morgan and JJ craning round to see what was going on. You resisted the urge to roll your eyes, or punch something.

“Are…you okay Grant?”

“Oh me? Yeah I’m cool. Coolio. Cool beans. I uh, I was just wondering if you were free this weekend. ’Cause I’m free and if I’m free and you’re free maybe we could…not be free…together…”

“Like a date?” you felt a little light-headed. You couldn’t go on a date could you? Not with Anderson and certainly not while you felt this way about Spencer.

“Yes! Except…no? I mean would you like it to be date?”

No, not remotely but then you couldn’t live your entire life pining after a guy who loved someone else. Even after what happened last night.

“Where did you have in mind?”

The relief rolled off Anderson in waves and you couldn’t help but smile. He rambled for a little while about a new bar in town that did open mic for new musicians and great fusion food.

“Okay, well if we don’t have a case this weekend then I am definitely in”

“Neat!” exclaimed Anderson “I mean cool, I mean…see you then?”

He strode off to the SCIF with a spring in his step and you cringed as Morgan gave him two thumbs up on the way to your desk.

“No”

“I didn’t say anything,” he said, holding his hands up.

“That was the most adorable thing I have ever seen,” said a newly materialised Garcia “You guys are going to an FBI couple”

“It’s one date” you protested, the regret already creeping in “By the way have any of you seen Reid this morning”

“Nuh-uh lady don’t change the subject. Dish the dirt. Did something happen when you and
Anderson went away for that consult? Is he a good kisser? He looks like he would be but then again looks can be deceiving. I mean, I wouldn’t have immediately pegged him as your type but Agent Evans is always gushing about how he brings in baked goods for his co workers and did you know he runs charity marathons twice a year?"

It was going to be a very, very long day. But then as Garcia continued to gush about you and Anderson a thought struck you.

“Hey we’ll make a deal. If you do me a favour, I’ll tell you everything”

“Spencer! I hoped you would call today. Last night was–”

“You’re engaged?”

It came out harsher than he expected. He was still convinced that there was a rational explanation for all of this. He and Maeve had told each other everything, every intimate secret, every deepest desire, every darkest shame. There was no way in hell she would have kept something like this from him.

“I-I was” she said “It was before the stalker. His name was Bobby Putnam. He was a friend of a friend. But Spencer, we aren’t together any more, it’s was over long before I met you. How do you even know about him?”

“He was the guy at the restaurant last night” said Spencer. His head was starting to throb and he rubbed his eye aggressively, not caring how much it hurt “The one I thought was your stalker. He confronted me outside when I went to find you’

“Oh my god are you okay?” gasped Maeve “Spencer, Bobby has a temper, he can be really controlling. If he hurt you–”

“He didn’t I’m fine” As relief ebbed through him, Spencer’s voice was gentle and soothing. He could hear Maeve breathing heavily down the line.

“That’s why we broke up. The stalker was just an excuse. I made him think that he could be in danger too. I thought he had found someone else and even though living like a prisoner in my own home has been terrible, the one upside has been that Bobby is out of my life. Talking to you has made me realise what a relationship should be like”

“Maeve...I’m so sorry I got angry”

“Anyone would have! I’m just glad you gave me a chance to explain, and that Bobby didn’t hurt you”

“A colleague from work followed me to the restaurant. She was scared for both of us. She got the drop on Bobby”

There was a pause from Maeve. The relief that Spencer had felt gave way to unease.

“That was very nice of her I guess”

“You guess?”
“I’m sure she had a good reason for following you but...”

Spencer bit his lip. Part of him wanted to challenge that. But what? Bobby had been armed when he confronted Spencer and if he was as temperamental as Maeve said then he could have been in real danger.

“We always have to be aware of threats” Spencer said carefully, his mind flew to the copy cat crime scene photos but he didn’t dare mention them. “She was looking out for you too. I’ve told her all about you. Y/N’s loyal and caring, she’s on your side already. You’re going to love her so much when you meet her.”

“If that’s the only reason she came then I’m glad she was there,” said Maeve warmly before Spencer could question that she continued “How was the case you were called away for?”

“Glad you could join us pretty boy” joked Morgan. Your head snapped up from the papers stacked in front of you.

“I had an appointment. I called Hotch”

“Okay” Morgan shot you a look as Spencer sat down at the round table.

“What’s all this?” he asked.

“You know the guy copying cases we’ve solved? Kind of a priority right now” you snapped, “We’re going over the evidence from both cases”

“We’re also looking back over cold cases, seeing if we can link it to any of those and also checking out old unsubs who may be capable of this” added Blake. She looked between the pair of you, you could practically hear the cogs in her brain going a mile a minute. Fantastic.

“I need to double check something with Garcia” you said, gathering your papers and stalking out. There weren’t enough words to described how fed up you were with the whole situation.

“Hey my beautiful crime fighter!”

“Hey Pen, you know that thing I asked you for?”

“Yeah...” Garcia’s face fell “You were right. Fake name and fake address”

“For both of them?”

“Bobby Putnam checks out but I can’t find a Maeve Huntington anywhere in DC and the address was for a vacant lot”

“I fucking knew It,” you muttered.

“Who are they? Is this something to do with the replicator case?”

“No” you drew out the word “It was...personal”

“Are you okay? Please tell me you aren’t pulling an Emily”

Garcia was the best person in the world, you thought with a smile. You sat down next to her,
taking her hand.

“I am not pulling an Emily” you reassured her “I just...crossed paths with them and got a bad vibe. Not sure if it’s general jerkiness yet or something else”

“You want me to dig deeper?”

“Not yet. It may be nothing and I don’t want to get you in trouble”

“And of it turns out to be something?”

“Then I’m going straight to Hotch I promise” you gave her hand a squeeze “No secrets and no lies”

“That’s my new mantra” sighed Garcia “Though I don’t think everyone’s got the memo. Have you noticed how squirrelly Reid is lately? You reckon it’s something to do with his date?”

“I know better than to go digging there” you said as you stood up “Catch you later”

Also immediately after leaving the bat cave to ran into a sheepish looking Spencer, blocking your way in the corridor. It took every ounce of self control not to yell at him to move.

“I saw your messages”

“That’s comforting” you growled “I mean, actually replying to them so I didn’t think something terrible had happened to you would have been better but I guess that wasn’t a priority”

“I’m sorry... I didn’t think you would be that worried?”

“You what?” you shouted. Spencer glanced around frantically “You were nearly attacked last night on your way to a blind date. You found out the woman you’ve been talking to for months lied to you and then you disappeared. Only a psychopath wouldn’t have worried about you!”

You brushed past him, seething.

“Hey Y/N! I said I was sorry” Spencer jogged after you “I wasn’t thinking right last night. I never meant for you to worry about me. Nothing was going to happen to me, Bobby wasn’t the stalker”

“You looked devastated. The last time I saw you like that was in Atlanta”

You kept walking as Spencer stopped suddenly, you took deep breaths to try and keep the tears at bay.

“You mean Hankel?”

“Yeah” you whirled round “Yeah I mean Hankel. That was the last time I saw you like that and I was terrified. I know how much you trust people, I know how deeply you feel”

“Y/N” you jerked away as he reached for your shoulder “I promise I will never let myself get that way again. I worked too hard getting clean. Also Maeve wasn’t lying”

You scoffed despite yourself.

“She and Bobby were engaged but he was abusive, controlling. When the stalking started she was able to convince him to leave”

Your first instinct was to tell him about what Garcia had found. Bobby had given you Maeve’s full
name and address and it was totally made up. A small, nagging voice at the back of your head though told you Spencer wouldn’t buy it. You needed more evidence first.

“I’m sorry I put you through that” said Spencer “I didn’t think and I was stupid but it’s fine now. Maybe I could take you out for pizza this weekend to make it up to you?”

“I’m busy” you mumbled “I have a date”

“A date? With who?”

“Don’t sound so surprised” you said “Grant asked me out”

“Grant... Agent Anderson?”

“I think it would be weird if I called him by his last name on a date” you said “But yeah”

“Oh”

“Your enthusiasm is electrifying”

“No I didn’t mean to be rude! I just didn’t think he was your type”

“And what is my type Spencer?” you asked, taking a step forward.

Spencer’s mouth dropped open just as Rossi’s voice cut across the two of you.

“We have another one guys”
“We’ve got another one,” said Rossi.

“Another Replicator case?”

“We’re not really supposed to name them” frowned Spencer. The three of you made your way back to the roundtable room where Hotch was in deep conversation with Strauss.

“Phoenix PD found a 31 year old woman transformed into a human marionette” Strauss said “Exactly the same way as Adam Rain killed and disposed of his victims, right down to the vintage clothing”

“The similarities are uncanny. Any seasoned investigator would assume that the crimes were committed by the same offender,” said Hotch.

“Then the unsub must be getting their hands on classified reports” you said, “They’re mimicking details that weren’t released to the press”

“The Bureau is stepping up all data security around the BAU,” said Strauss. “If this unsub is using cases you’ve solved as inspiration for his crimes then you are all victims”

“Erin you can’t pull us off this case” said Rossi. He ignored the collective raised eyebrow at the use of her first name.

“I’m not going to but the Director is monitoring the situation and if she feels like any of you are at risk then she has authorised me to hand the case to a different unit. You all need to be very careful”

Strauss left with Rossi while Hotch set everyone to work combing through old case files, reading press releases and cross checking lists of agents from a dozen different units. Nothing stuck out for any of you and at gone midnight Hotch finally sent you all home for a well deserved rest.

The next few days followed the same pattern and with each new dead end the tension around the team grew thicker and thicker. You took to working in the bat cave with Garcia; the prospect of working in close proximity to Spencer was too much. He tried to engage you in conversation a couple of times over the coffee machine but you met him with one word answers and shrugs. Eventually he stopped trying.

Given the situation it was probably entirely inappropriate to say that you felt like you were missing a limb but it was the only way to describe how bereft you felt. The thought of going out with Anderson at the weekend was daunting and you avoided him too. It was the loneliest you had ever felt in your entire life.

“I get you’re still mad” Spencer managed to corner you while you were having your lunch on Friday “I’m not sure how else I can apologise for the restaurant”

“You know what Spencer? That’s not what’s making me mad. I just can’t get why you buy that bullshit excuse that she sold you”

As Spencer’s face when slack with shock you realised what an awful mistake you made but the simmering anger inside you had already taken a hold.

“It-it wasn’t—”
“Yeah Spencer” you stood up, looking directly into his eyes “She is lying to you, just like she lied about being engaged and god knows what else because you don’t even know her name, where she lives, where she works or any significant information about her”

JJ, Morgan, and Garcia were hovering a short distance away, looking like they were debating whether to jump in.

“That’s not true. She found me through my doctor…I know she’s a geneticist”

“How?”

A thick silence engulfed the pair of you as Spencer struggled to speak.

“You’re talking to a complete stranger, telling her everything about you and you have no idea who she is. I got her name and address off Bobby Putnam and got Garcia to run it through all our databases. You know what I found?”

At the mention of her name Garcia let out a little gasp and shifted behind Morgan as all the colour drained from Spencer’s face. You were literally vibrating with anger at this point and every fibre of your being that told you not to hurt the person you cared about most went ignored.

“Nothing. There was nothing. The name and address was bullshit so you aren’t even the first guy she’s duped”

You snatched your lunch up of the table, appetite gone, and ready to storm out when Spencer grabbed your arm.

“Hey guys” you heard Morgan say quietly and out of the corner of your eye you saw him step forward. Spencer didn’t take his eyes off your face, even when you jerked free.

“You’re taking Bobby’s word for that? He’s an abuser.”

“According to Maeve” you snapped back “He doesn’t have a record. No record of domestic disturbances.”

“So you’re ignoring a victim’s testimony now? I know her, everything that counts about her” Spencer yelled “And I’m a profiler, I can tell when I’m being lied to”

“I can think of at least one occasion when you didn’t,” you hissed. You felt a small pang of regret when JJ fled out of the room but before it could turn into anything more Spencer retorted.

“You didn’t then either, that was different! This here is about you never trusting anyone. Just because you can’t open up to people and you aren’t capable of relationships outside the team doesn’t mean the rest of us need to be as miserable as you are. Some of us aren’t heartless”

“Stop, come on” pleaded Garcia.

“You’re cold,” said Spencer “You can’t relate to people and you’re incapable of getting close to them because you see threats everywhere”

You were about to start yelling again, any moment now you were going to launch into a tirade about all the reasons why Spencer was wrong. Except you didn’t and the room began to swim in front of you as your eyes filled with tears.

Your lunch abandoned, you headed in the same direction as JJ. Behind you, you could hear Garcia
“C’mon man, that wasn’t cool”

“I’m going after her!”

“Baby Girl, give her some space”

You didn’t need space; you needed to black out and feel nothing for a while.

You rushed past both Alex and Rossi in the corridor, ignoring their questioning looks. There was no air, you needed to leave. Outside the sun was too bright but the sensory overload at least took your mind off of things briefly.

“Hey Y/N”

“Grant?”

You wiped your face with your sleeve but you couldn’t hide the blotchiness or you swollen eyes.

“I heard about what happened” he said gently “You okay?”

“No”

“Can I hug you?”

You nodded, your throat was too tight to speak, and the tears had started up again.

“You know what, forget about tomorrow. We should have our date tonight” Anderson rubbed your back “It’s two for one cocktails and open mic night”

That sounded like hell but you nodded.

“That would be nice”

The rest of the day seemed to drag. You holed yourself up in the batcave with Garcia and refused to talk about anything except the Replicator case, which was proving to be dead end after dead end. Finally as the clock hit finishing time you bolted. You took a quick detour home to change and attempted to make yourself presentable despite feeling like shit, and then you headed to the bar.

It was achingly cool. Mismatched furniture, alcohol you had never heard of and the food was served on everything except plates.

“You look really nice!” Anderson greeted you with a peck on the cheek. As nice as it was, there was no spark, no warmth flooding our body like when Spencer so much as looked at you. Perhaps the whole thing had been a mistake.

“You look nice too,” you said. It was true, the casual look suited him.

“Well” Anderson said after a pause “Should we order?”

The food was nice and the conversation was better. Anderson was funny and more interesting than anyone in the department gave him credit for. As you ate and chatted you realised just how little you knew about him, his background, or his interests.
“My whole family is musical. My sister plays in an orchestra in Europe, my brother is a music therapist and both my parents were music teachers and played in bands so me becoming an FBI agent was a little out there”

“I bet they’re really proud though”

“They are” Anderson grinned, “Though my Mom always makes sure I’m still playing and writing in my spare time. She thinks music has healing properties and it counteracts all the awful things we see on a daily basis”

“Wait” you held up your hands “You write songs?”

“A little” Anderson said, blushing “I play here every couple of weeks”

It was settled, Anderson didn’t even protest that much when you asked him to sign up to perform. There were a couple of slots left, it was a quiet night, and you got the impression that he liked to share his work.

Excitement bubbled up inside you when it came time for him to take the stage. There was applause from those who recognised Anderson and you joined in enthusiastically.

“Hi guys, I’m Grant. I’m going to play a song that I wrote a while back when I was going through…yeah that’s not important. Um, okay here we go…”

What shocked you first was just how good his voice sounded, soft but strong. After that sunk you in you began to realise how beautiful the song was.

It was a love song; or rather it was a song about losing love. About the moment you decided you wanted to spend the rest of your life with someone being the exact same moment that it slipped away. It was about no one being at fault but hurting so bad you didn’t know how to function.

It was about you and Spencer.

Except of course it wasn’t. It was about Seaver. You wiped a stray tear from your eye as Anderson finished and the place exploded into applause. It wasn’t sad tears; it was the emotional release of realisation hitting you like a crashing wave.

“What did you think?” Anderson sat back down next you, hands twitching “I guess it was a little on the sappy side, I still need to tweak a few bits and-”

“I think it was amazing,” you said “And if Seaver heard it she would think it was amazing too”

“I…um…I-”

“You still love her right?”

“Yes” all the tension flooded out of Anderson’s body, his shoulders sagging “I’m so sorry but yeah. I don’t know what happened. We were together one day and then…we weren’t”

“Do you think she feels the same way? Is there even the slightest chance?”

“I…maybe?”

“Grant you need to find out. If you feel that strong about her then you should tell her as soon as possible. Trust me, you don’t want to wait”
“Is that what happened with Agent Reid?”

Hmmm, far more perceptive than you thought. Well he did spend most of his working days with profilers.

“Kind of. But he doesn’t feel that way about me so it’s not the same”

“I am sorry. I did want this date to go well, I do like you. It’s just…”

“Not in a romantic way” you smiled “Honestly, I feel the same. You’re a good man Grant and you deserve to be happy”

“So do you” Anderson said, giving your shoulder a gentle squeeze “And if you don’t mind me saying it, Agent Reid is pretty blind if he can’t see what an amazing person you are”

“Thanks Grant”

Anderson ended up walking you home after you made him promise he would speak to Seaver the next day. When you finally climbed into bed, you thought you could sleep for a decade. The idea of going into work on Monday drew up a surge of emotions that made you want to curl up into a ball and never speak to anyone ever again. What the hell were you going to say to Spencer?
Chapter 9

JJ and Garcia watched you in fascination from the other side of the bullpen. You knew they were trying to listen in on what Seaver was saying to you, ready to jump in at a moment’s notice of looked like a cat fight might break out.

Nothing of the kind was happening, though you had been startled when Seaver had nervously approached.

“I think I owe you a thanks” she said “Grant came to my apartment after your...”

“Not really a date?” you offered.

“Yes that” laughed Seaver “And we talked, properly talked and I just wanted to say thank you for giving him a push. I nearly lost something really special”

You pushed down the pang of whatever it was that shot through you.

“It was nothing really. I hope you guys are happy”

“Would it be okay to hug you? Is that weird?”

“Come here”

Both JJ and Garcia looked like their eyes were going to pop out of their heads as you pulled Seaver into a hug. Settled back down to work, you braced yourself as they hurried over.

“What. Was. That?”

“It’s a long story” you grinned. Perhaps Monday wasn’t going to be as terrible as you thought it would be.

Spencer pulled his scarf higher around his neck as he punched the numbers on the payphone. It rang a few times before he hung up and waited for the call-back. Usually he would read a paragraph or so of whatever book he was carrying around but since the massive argument with Y/N on Friday he hadn’t been able to concentrate on anything. The words swam around on the page and he kept seeing her shocked face when he told her how cold and heartless she was. Of course he was still seething but over the weekend his anger at her judgement of Maeve had mixed with guilt and resentment.

As soon as he’d said it Spencer had regretted his words. Not only were they not true in any respect but also he knew that she was self-conscious about voicing how she was feeling. He had lashed out and attacked her where she was most vulnerable.

The phone trilled, startling Spencer out of his reverie.

“Sorry Maeve I know we usually speak on Sundays but I wanted to make up for missing yesterday and I’m having a tough-”
“Zugzwang”

“W-what? What did you say?”

The mechanical voice repeated it, slowly

“Zug-zwang”

Then the line went dead.

“He thinks he'll get away with this, and he might. I have a wealth of knowledge I should be applying to this case. Behavioural patterns of violent stalkers, tactical recovery strategies, victim survival odds. But right now I can't focus on anything for more than four seconds at a time, which makes me the dumbest person in the room. So... Please help me. Help me find her”

No one said anything; Garcia snuck a glance at you that you couldn’t quite read. The hairs on the back of your neck were up, animal instinct screaming that something was very, very wrong.

“We don’t know if we have a case,” said Hotch “So we’ll be working on this on personal time. Does anyone want to leave?”

Now other eyes were on you, including Spencer’s. He looked so...bereft. Nothing like your friend at all.

“Please” he mouthed, to you and you alone.

“No” you said in answer to Hotch’s question. The rest of the team followed suit and then you all listened in silence as Spencer explained how Maeve had reached out to him when a neurologist showed her his medical file, they had spent three months writing to each other because she was so afraid of her stalker.

“So you don’t know where she lives or works or her last name?” JJ asked softly. Spencer shook his head.

“We can find out” Garcia was on her feet, arm hooked in yours as she dragged you towards the bat cave.

“Ouch, Garcia!”

“This was the search you had me run wasn’t it? The one you had a hinky feeling about. Can’t be a coincidence that the name is the same”

“Yes! Okay, yes!” You rubbed your arm; the technical analyst was deceptively strong.

“And?”

“And what?”

“Do you still have a hinky feeling?” Your sigh was answer enough and Garcia fired off a text that brought Hotch running.

“SOS?”
“More like SSS” said Garcia “Save Spencer’s Soul. Or Sanity. Or-”

“Spencer told me a few months ago about Maeve” you explained “When he went and met her at the restaurant I followed because I had a bad feeling”

“What happened?”

“A guy confronted us. Said his name was Bobby Putnam and he was Maeve’s ex-fiancé, checking up on her. He gave me both of their names and addresses and I sent him off with my card”

“Then Y/N got me to run the names. Bobby checks out but the address and full name he gave for Maeve was false”

“So he could be the unsub?”

“I’m not sure. Spencer said he spoke to Maeve after, she confirmed they were in a relationship but she claims she used the emergence of the stalker as an excuse to break up because he was controlling” you said “He doesn’t have a record though and I talked to local PD, no callouts to his place, no domestic disturbances, no noise complaints”

“But Maeve could still be telling the truth” said Hotch, more pointedly than you were comfortable with.

“I’m not saying she’s a liar” you lied “But there is something suspicious going on”

“And our boy wonder could be danger!” said Garcia. Hotch dragged his hands through his hair, screwing up his eyes for a moment. Your eyes flicked between him and Garcia.

“Guys” JJ poked her head round the door “Metro PD traced the number that made the call to the payphone. We have her address”

“Okay here’s what’s going to happen. Tell Spencer he doesn’t move from his desk. Have Blake to stay with him if needed. You, Rossi and Morgan will head to her apartment while Y/N and I check out another lead”

“Another lead?”

“Do. Not. Tell. Reid”

“I...okay” she nodded and disappeared.


“Garcia I want to know everything about him but I also need you to try and track down Maeve. Maybe Bobby gave the wrong surname but there must be a way to link them”

“There can’t be a lot of geneticists with that name” Garcia mock saluted “I will find her, girl guide promise”

There were butterflies in your stomach as you and Hotch made your way up the stairs to Bobby’s apartment. In the car he had gotten you to recap everything Spencer had told you from the moment he had revealed his relationship with Maeve but afterwards you had both fallen silent. You preferred it that way to be honest but as you reached the door Hotch took your arm.
“I need to know you aren’t compromised here Y/N” he said.

“I think I’ve proven that I can look at the situation with a clear head” you said tersely “I didn’t want to come to you until I was sure. Honestly I’m still not”

Hotch nodded before knocking.

A petite woman with long dark hair and a pretty face flung the door open. Her slightly wild eyed look of desperation sent the butterflies into over drive.

“FBI we’re looking for Robert Putnam,” said Hotch.

“FBI? Did the police sent you. I filed a missing persons report on Friday but they said it hadn’t been long enough and then he texted but-”

“I’m sorry Ma’am, who are you?”

“Diane Turner. I’m Bobby’s girlfriend”

“And he’s missing…” you said, looking sideways at Hotch.

“Yes! Isn’t that why you’re here?”

“May we come in?”

“God, sorry, yes” she waved you in. The apartment seemed slightly chaotic, dirty dishes in the sink and blankets and a pillow on the couch.

“We actually need to talk to Bobby about Maeve, his ex-fiancé. Do you know her?” you asked.

“I know about her but I’ve never met her. Wait do you think that’s where he is?” Diane’s face fell, her lip trembling slightly.

“Diane” Hotch said, soothingly “We’re not sure where Bobby is or how he is involved with our case. Do you think you could walk me through the last time you saw Bobby?”

Diana nodded emphatically then launched into a mile a minute recount of every minute detail of the past few days starting with kissing Bobby goodbye as she headed into work.

While Hotch had her distracted you sent Garcia a message with Diane’s name, asking if there was any more information on her or her connection to Bobby and Maeve.

When you turned back Diane was struggling to hold back tears.

“All I know is that Maeve and Bobby broke up about three months before we started dating. Bobby wouldn’t say why and I didn’t want to push it...but recently he’s been acting kind of secretive. I worried that...you know…”

That certainly sounded familiar.

“Diane Turner! FBI! Open up!”

“Is that Morgan?” you asked Hotch.

“I think so. Can you stay there Diane?”
The girl nodded, wide eyed and clearly afraid. Morgan shouted again and as you opened the door Spencer shoved him forward.

‘Ms Turner we need to- Y/N? What the hell are you doing here?’

“This is Bobby Putnam’s apartment” Hotch said.

“Who the hell is Bobby Putnam?” Rossi asked. You raised an eyebrow at Spencer who at least had the grace to look a little ashamed.

“He’s Maeve ex” you said. Impressively you managed to keep both the smugness and the venom out of your voice. “Why are you guys here?”

“We found evidence at Maeve’s flat” Spencer pushed past you and pointed a finger accusingly at Diane “She’s the unsub. She took Maeve”

Everything happened at once. Diane leapt to feet, bursting into tears, and protesting her innocence and ignorance. Spencer charged forward. Hotch moved between the pair of them and Morgan grabbed Spencer by the arm and dragged him out of the apartment. Diane was now howling. Hotch charged after them, in full unit chief mode.

This was the dictionary definition of a clusterfuck, you thought as you tried to calm Diane down.

“It’s okay Diane” you said, “We’re going to get to the bottom of this”

“I never even met Maeve I swear!” the girl bawled, “I told Agent Hotchner so”

“It may be best to continue this at Quantico” said Rossi “For your own safety until all this straightened out”

“A-a-am I being arrested?”

“No” you said firmly. Your gut told you this girl wasn’t a stalker. Hysterical and over dramatic definitely but she wasn’t a threat to anyone. “But Diane there is someone dangerous out there, Bobby is missing and you were the last person to see him. Quantico is completely secure; you’ll be safe there.

Diane hiccupped in response and allowed you to lead her to the SUV outside. Hotch and Morgan had pulled Spencer away, as Rossi was getting Diane settled you headed over to them.

“We need to bring her in”

“Because she knows where Maeve is!” said Spencer “I’m telling you Diane is the stalker”

“The worked at the same university, that’s hardly iron glad evidence” said Hotch “They were in different departments, do we know their paths even crossed?”

“Wait so you found out who Maeve is?” you asked.

“Maeve Donovan, thirty years old, junior researcher in the genetics department at Mendel University” said Morgan. The look in his eyes told you that wasn’t everything.

“See!” Spencer said triumphantly “I told you Maeve wasn’t lying!”

“Except she wasn’t a doctor” said Morgan “She’s still a postgrad but her studies were suspended-”
“Because of the stalker!"

“That’s not what her thesis supervisor said,” sighed Morgan “She said Maeve struggled, she was combative with the other students, particularly other women”

“When men see a woman’s success they want it for themselves but when women see it they want it so you can’t have it” you said “That’s what Maeve told you right Spencer?”

Spencer said nothing, mouth set in a grim line, fists clenched.

“So they made her suspend?”

“She got into a fight with another student” said Morgan. Spencer was shaking his head furiously now, “Apparently they have these sessions where they share ideas, compare research and one girl questioned some small piece of Maeve’s work, and she flipped”

“No!” shouted Spencer “Maeve wouldn’t do that! I’m telling you there had to be a mistake”

“Spencer-”

“No!” He shoved you out of the way as he stormed to the other SUV.

“As soon as we get back to Quantico I’m officially taking him off the case” said Hotch “He isn’t seeing things clearly”

“What even is this case?” asked Morgan “We had one missing woman, now we have Bobby Putnam. Diane Turner is linked to both but she isn’t showing any signs of deception”

“Something bad is going on I can feel it” you said “I feel like I can see the pieces but not how they fit together you know?”

The others nodded silently and the three of you headed back to Quantico with the rest of the team.
“Diane Turner, twenty five years old, only child who has lived in DC all her life. She is a neurology postgrad looking at the effects of depression on brain structure. No criminal history, her social media is fairly run of the mill. She posts loads of photos of her cat, loves ranting about plot twists in trashy TV shows, taking pictures of hipster food and hanging out with some of the other students in her department” Garcia said.

“So not a criminal mastermind then” Rossi said.

“This bitch is nobody!”

The entire team jumped at the sound of Spencer’s yells.

“Maeve is out there somewhere and we’re wasting time. C’mon Garcia there must be overlap between her and Diane. Student clubs? Mutual friends?”

“Diane isn’t really a social butterfly. All her friends are in her department. The neurology department is on the opposite side of the campus to the genetics lab. Plus…from what I can see Maeve didn’t socialise with anyone…ever. She wasn’t part of any clubs, she didn’t even hang out with other genetics students and…she was barred from coming onto campus while the fight was being investigated”

“Spence” said JJ gently “Clearly there are things you didn’t know about her-”

“No, no, no” Spencer started pulling at his hair. You looked at Hotch in desperation.

“Okay” he said smoothly “pick one of us and go through everything you and Maeve talked about over the past few months. She may have spoken about a significant place or person that could help us find her”

“Blake, I want Blake”

You wondered if your shoulders dropped like JJ’s, if the hurt and rejection showed on your face too. No one said anything until Blake had led Spencer out of the bullpen. It was like everyone was holding their breath.

“We can all collectively agree that this Maeve character was taking the kid for a ride right? It’s not just me” said Rossi

“Hell no” you said darkly, “This is all my fault. I had a bad feeling from the start, I should have pushed harder”

“JJ can you and Morgan interview Diane?” asked Hotch “We need an entire history of her relationship with Bobby Putnam. He’s the only tangible link between her and Maeve. Garcia can you continue to deep dive into both of their backgrounds?”

“You think there’s a connection we’re missing?”

“I do. There are too many coincidences”
“Um… I don’t know if it’s relevant but before applying to Mendel, Maeve had applied to three other universities and was actually accepted into one. She withdrew the application though and then applied to Mendel the following year.”

“Was Diane already there?” you asked.

“Yeah she would have just started when Maeve applied”

“What are you thinking?” Morgan asked.

“Maybe this is a stalking case after all but we were wrong about who was stalking who” you said “Maybe Maeve followed Diane to Mendel, the question is why”

“We’ll find out” said JJ

“Y/N” you looked up from the evidence board to find Strauss hovering in the door “Agent Hotchner informed me about the case you’re working on”

“And the connection to Agent Reid?”

“That too” she said “This must be very distressing for all of you. I just wanted to let you know that if you need any extra resources let me know”

“Thank you Ma’am” Strauss smiled awkwardly before heading out. You saw her slow down in front of Rossi’s office, looking around before knocking. Once she was in the blinds were drawn.

You wondered if you weren’t so drained would you feel a pang of jealousy. Everyone around you seemed to be reveling in loving relationships except you. Rossi deserved to be happy though, you were never resent him for that. When he and Strauss left the office a moment later you caught the almost imperceptible movement of her hand squeezing his. How could you begrudge either of them that?

“That’s not the most conventional pairing” Morgan followed your eye line as he approached.

“Maybe not but they seem happy” you half smiled “How’s Diane?”

“JJ is sitting with her, she needed a break. Poor kid won’t stop crying. She has no idea what’s going on but she’s convinced Bobby is a victim”

“And you aren’t?”

“She met Bobby on an online dating app” said Morgan “She instantly knew he was the one because he had studied psychology too, they loved the same books and movies and he was a dog owner just like her”

“I’m sensing a but”

“Garcia has only done a basic check so far but Bobby was a drama major and he adopted a dog from the local rescue centre two weeks after first messaging Diane”

“Shit” you rubbed your face “This is all my fault”

“Oh you got Bobby to catfish this girl? That’s useful to know. Case closed”
“Morgan-”

“Y/N. Listen to me. This is not your fault okay? You couldn’t have known how elaborate this deception was when Spencer first told you about Maeve. Punishing yourself for something you couldn’t foresee is not going to help Spencer or Diane”

Reluctantly you had to agree. It didn’t ease the guilt though. To compound your feelings of shame you saw Blake leading Spencer through the bullpen. It would be an understatement to say he looked awful. Blake guided him gently around the desks like he was sleepwalking, his eyes were glazed and still swollen from crying.

“This could break him” you mumbled.

“He’s stronger than he looks Y/N. You know that”

“He feels things so deeply” you closed your eyes “He trusts so deeply and when that trust is broken…”

“Shit”

You opened your eyes to the image of JJ charging up the stairs two at a time.

“She slipped away”

“What?”

“Diane asked for a drink and when I got back to the interview room she was gone. Garcia is checking CCTV now” JJ was white as a sheet.

“I’ll check outside, maybe she’s just gone for some air” you said.

“I’ll check the stairwell, JJ check the cafeteria” Morgan charged off.

The sunlight outside blinded you but you were cold regardless. You raced around the entrance, the parking lot praying desperately that Diane was curled up somewhere, needing to be alone.

When you ran around for the fifth time and your phone rang you knew the prayers had gone unanswered.

“Guys” Garcia’s voice was thick with fear “Diane got a short call from a burner phone and she’s heading back downtown as we speak”

“I’m on it” you said, racing to your car.

“Y/N wait” Hotch ordered

“It must be Maeve or Bobby, they could be luring her into a trap” you said, punching the horn as you pulled out, other cars screeching to a halt.

“The same burner made another call just afterwards” cried Garcia “It was to Reid’s phone”

You slammed your foot down on the accelerator.

“Is he still with Blake?”

“No she went to help Morgan look for Diane now he’s gone too”
“It’s a trap for both of them” you said “You guys can follow but I’m not waiting around. You said downtown right?”

“Diane’s phone has stopped outside a warehouse. It’s abandoned by the looks of it”

“Address now”

You didn’t realise it was possible to feel elated and terrified at the same time until you saw Spencer’s car outside the warehouse. Screeching to a halt, you saw him clamber out with his weapon in his hand.

“Maeve is in trouble!”

“Spencer this could be a trap” you pleaded. He looked at you wild-eyed. It was like he was a complete stranger.

“I’m going in no matter what”

“Then I’m going with you” you pulled your gun from it’s holster. Spencer frowned, like he didn’t quite believe you but after a pause he nodded and you followed him inside.

The sickly, familiar smell of decaying flesh floated down a dingy corridor, growing stronger as you headed towards a dim glow emanating under a door.

“Let me go first” you whispered. Your heart sank as Spencer shook his head fiercely and then forced the door open.

“FBI! Diane put your-”

You moved out from behind Spencer, a clash of images and smells assaulting your senses. It took you a moment to make sense of it all, even as Spencer’s hands fell limply in front of him.

“Maeve Donovan” your gun was aimed squared at her chest, eyes fixed on the large knife she was holding against Diane turner’s throat.

The smell was overwhelming now. Bobby Putnam was mottled and bloated, stale blood oozing from his neck. His arms had been forced around a gagged, crying Diane. Her duck taped wrist, bound around his neck. Maeve inched closer, you weren’t sure you got get a shot off before Maeve moved, the lighting was too dim and you didn’t want to hit Diane by accident.

“Agent Y/N right? Spencer’s told me so about you” Her voice was eerily calm.

“Maeve?”

“Poor Spencer, he’s a little overwhelmed by all this” Maeve’s eyes never left you.

“Get on your knees” you ordered

“Y/N! She’s… defending herself! Diane kidnapped her! But you’re safe now Maeve” yelled Spencer. Maeve bit her lip, her knuckles whitened as she gripped the knife.

“Look at them” you told Spencer as calmly as possible “Look at them, what does that remind you of?”

“Look at wh-”
“The case in Des Moines, where those couples died” you whispered “Spencer, she’s *replicating* that crime”

“No…”

“Smart girl” scoffed Maeve “Though of course that case would stick in your mind” She quirked an eyebrow and you felt something churn in your stomach.

“Now you’re going to let me leave or I’m going to cut Diane’s throat”

“Maeve listen to me” you said “There is no way out of this” You really wished you could see Spencer’s face right now, you needed to know he was okay. Also something about the way Maeve stared you down was unnerving, like being cornered by a rabid animal. Slightly out of touch with reality but all the more deadly for it.

“She-she can’t be the Replicator” Spencer said weakly, “Maeve tell her!”

“I know Spence, the marionette victim was killed the exact night she was at the restaurant” you said, “She must have a partner”

“No”

“Back off Agent Y/N or I will kill Diane”

“Maeve. Maeve please” Spencer begged “Please don’t do this”

“Please don’t do this” Maeve mocked. Spencer looked like he’d been punched in the gut “You know what you’re problem is Spencer, you’re weak”

“Shut up” you hissed.

“You’re so desperate to be accepted, to be loved that you were totally blind to what was right in front of you. God you’re pathetic”

The knife nicked Diane’s throat and she let out a whimper. Maeve grabbed her hair and pulled.

“Maeve we can make a deal. All you need to do is let Diane go and put down the weapon”

“You’re all liars. You cheat and your betray and you let ordinary people get hurt”

“I’m not lying. Neither is Spencer. You’ve known him for months, he’s an honest a man. Tell her Spencer”

Spencer looked between the two of you, face screwed up in anguish.

“Tell her!”

“We’re not lying. I promise you we can work something out”

“I don’t want to work something out” said Maeve “I want all of you to suffer and hurt and beg for it all to be over just like I have for years”

“You hate the FBI? Fine, that’s fine” you said. You lowered the gun slightly and glanced at Spencer. shakily he half raised his own weapon. You didn’t trust his accuracy right now but you were desperate. “How about we do a trade, me for Diane? She’s innocent”
Maeve laughed, the sound echoing off the walls.

“You really don’t get it do you? She is just as guilty as you are and she deserves to die. You deserve to watch and know it’s your fault”

“Wait!”

Everything seemed to move in slow motion as Maeve dragged the knife across Diane’s throat. Her eyes went wide as blood spurted forth. Maeve leapt back, dodging the rounds you managed to fire in her direction. Spencer stood motionless behind you. As Maeve vanished into the darkness you threw yourself forward and pressed down on Diane’s neck to stem the bleeding. With your free hand you pulled off the gag.

“I’ve got you, you’re going to be okay”

“P-p-p-please. I don’t…don’t wanna die” Diane coughed, blood foaming at her mouth and dribbling down her chin.

“Help is on the way”

As if summoned you heard the sirens in the distance, and then the sounds of footsteps before the team burst through the door, sweeping around you.

“She took off that way” you nodded in the direction Maeve had run and Morgan, Rossi and JJ ran out. Hotch knelt beside you, helping you keep the pressure on Diane’s throat and trying to separate her from Bobby’s corpse. You were losing grip as the blood flowed faster and faster over your hands. You thought you could hear Blake whispering to Spencer but you couldn’t make out the words.

‘It’s okay Diane, you’re going to be okay” Your face was wet, when had you started crying?

“Mommy?”

Everything was still, the pumping underneath your fingers slowed, the light in her eyes died.

“She’s gone” Hotch whispered. He caught your hand in midair as you went to close her eyes. “It’s a crime scene, we need to leave everything as we found it”

“Look at the walls”

You and Hotch looked at Blake in confusion as you stood up. She shone her torch around the room, illuminating the photos that papered all the walls from floor to ceiling. They were all black and white, some of the team on cases and some of them outside of work. You saw images of JJ and Garcia at girls night, Spencer and Morgan at the softball game, Hotch in the park with with Jack. With a lurch of your stomach you caught a shot of you with Spencer’s arms around you at the bar in Des Moines. Daubed over and over in red paint was the word Zugzwang in all caps.

Spencer let out a guttural howl and slammed his fist into the wall over and over, the image of the pair of you slowly turning red.

Chapter End Notes
This chapter is also another entry for Criminal Minds Bingo The trope this time is betrayal!
“Y/N? Y/N?”

“What?” You tore your gaze away from Diane’s lifeless body. There was a tear on her cheek still. Hotch looked at you in concern.

“CSI need your clothes and I need your weapon for the after action report”

“Sorry yeah. I got off two rounds but I don’t think either of them landed” you said, handing it over

“He didn’t fire”

“He still needs to hand it in and you both need to be debriefed”

“Hotch look at him” you nodded to where a paramedic was trying, without success to bandage his hand “This has really done a number on him. Can’t it wait?”

Hotch paused for a moment. Blake was kneeling beside Spencer, begging him to let the paramedic see his hand but her words were falling on deaf ears.

“You’re going to take him off the case right. At least let me take him home, patch him up and make sure he’s okay?”

“Okay, but only after you change and then you meet us back at Quantico. I’m having all this evidence moved there”

The ride to Spencer’s apartment was horrendously silent and strained. Spencer stared straight ahead the whole time, his injured hand balled in a fist in his lap. He followed you zombie-like upstairs and into his home. You needed to take him by the arm to get him into the kitchen. It was only when you were running his hand under the cold tap and grabbing some ice from the freezer that you finally spoke.

“We need to make sure it doesn’t swell up” you mumbled “It doesn’t look broken but it’s bruised and you might have trouble using it if we don’t put some ice on it”

“What would I be using it for?” Spencer’s voice was thick, if you didn’t know better you would say he was drunk. Or high. You had found him one night after he had shot up years ago. It was the most frightened you had ever been.

Until now.

“Keep the ice on it” you steered him to his sofa “I’m going to get some bandages”

As you you grabbed Spencer’s first aid kit from above his fridge, you heard the sobs from the other room. It was loud, unrestrained crying. The sort you knew he would have suppressed at the crime scene where Hotch and the others, even Blake, could see him. With you, in the safety of his
apartment, finally he could allow all his feelings to burst forth. You took a deep steadying breath. Your own tears had no place here.

You crossed the room and sat beside him on the sofa, pulling him close and letting him cry into your shoulder. You said nothing, there were no words that could fix or soothe this. You held Spencer close, one hand on his back, the other stroking his hair as he shook with tears.

Your muscles began to cramp the longer you sat in that position but you ignored it. Instead you focused on how the sobbing subsided, how Spencer’s breathing slowly returned to normal and how he grew still in your embrace. Still you kept threading your fingers through his hair until he was so quiet you wondered if he had exhausted himself with crying and fallen asleep.

“What do I do?” Spencer asked finally in a brittle voice.

“I don’t know. I’m so sorry but I don’t. If I could take away everything you’re feeling right now I would”

Spencer sat up and looked at you, his gaze sharp despite everything. You took his injured hand and rested it on your knee while you cut some bandages to wrap round it.

“What I said to you-”

“Nope. We aren’t doing that now” You laid some gauze on his bloodied knuckles and the gently wound the bandages round. Spencer winced and you mumbled an apology.

“If I had listened to you none of this would have happened”

“You were targeted” you said pointedly as you tied off the bandage “She is a sophisticated manipulator. You had no reason to suspect her. We’ve seen it a thousand times before”

“That’s different. I’m a profiler, an FBI agent. I should have known no one could feel that way about me. Maeve was right, I’m weak and pathetic and-”

“No! Don’t you dare talk like that. Do you remember what I told you in Alaska?” Spencer’s eyes widened “I told you how much I admired you because after everything you’ve been through it’s only made you kinder, gentler, more compassionate and understanding than anyone I have ever met. That is a strength Spencer. That is a goddamn superpower and I will not let that bitch take that from you”

“Y/N...”

This was what heartbreak felt like. But this was a different type of heartbreak to when you had found out about Maeve. It wasn’t a rejection, it was worse. It was the utter powerlessness of seeing the person you loved most, the person who inspired you, lose all faith in themselves and lose all hope in love.

“Please” you begged “Please promise me you won’t give up. I swear to you we will find Maeve and bring her to justice and then we will bring down the Replicator. I’m asking you to trust me. Do you?”

“More than anyone else” It wasn’t a smile but it would do. Spencer leaned forward, his forehead resting against yours.

“I’m still sorry” he said “I hurt you and I’ll never forgive myself”
“It...” You wanted to say it didn’t hurt but that would have been a lie and right now, even if it would make Spencer feel better it wasn’t what he needed. “That’s a problem for tomorrow okay?”

Another tear fell from Spencer but he nodded. You were acutely aware of every twitch of his eyes and quiver of his lips and you cursed yourself, this was neither the time nor the place. It was exhausting to maintain that professionalism when all you wanted to do was... What did you want to do? Confess your feelings right now? Kiss him like he was oxygen and you were a drowning woman? Hold him and never let him go? Demand to know why he chose Maeve and not you?

“Y/N?”

“I told Hotch I would make sure you were okay and then go back to Quantico... I don’t want to leave you”

“I want you to stay so badly but I think they need you more than me”

Reluctantly you broke apart, clambering awkwardly to your feet.

“You need to call me if you start...”

“Craving? Thinking about calling my old dealer? Don’t worry I have my sponsor on speed dial. I’ll call him once you’re gone. I’m not craving but just in case”

“Good, that’s good. I’m still going to check in if that’s okay?”

“As long as I’m not distracting you from the case. I...I’m not thinking clearly right now but I know that this couldn’t be the endgame, there’s something else coming. The team need you”

“Spencer” you paused halfway through the door suddenly struck by the notion that if something terrible was coming, this could conceivably be the last time you saw each other “Always remember I love you okay?”

“How is he?” Hotch asked as you entered the bullpen.

“Not good but he’ll survive” I hope, you wanted to add but didn’t. “What have you guys found?”

“The Replicator has been watching us for months” said Morgan “She’s old school, they’re printed on photographic paper. And she seems especially pissed at Blake”

“What?”

“There are more pictures of me than anyone else” she said “And we found a laptop with videos from my lectures”

“I’m so sorry”

“That’s not important right now. What’s important is finding out who Maeve was working with” Blake waved her hand. Clearly she was shaken but you had to admire her focus. You weren’t sure you could do that.
“Are we sure she is working with anyone?” asked JJ “Spencer must have told Maeve everything about all the cases we’ve been working with, that’s probably how she replicated the crimes”

“Maeve doesn’t fit the profile” Hotch frowned, “Her anger makes her impulsive and we profiled the Replicator as being meticulous and in control of his impulses.”

“Maeve was in DC when the Marionette murder happened too” you said “She was at the restaurant to meet Reid. Bobby was there so he isn’t the partner”

“He was a patsy” said Rossi “Phone records show he met Maeve about a year ago, she saw he could be easily manipulated so she started a relationship with him all so she could groom him to target Diane”

“Okay I think we need to go back to the start” you said, rubbing your eyes “This whole thing was a coordinated attack. On us and on Reid...and Diane”

“What are you thinking?”

“The way Maeve was talking about Diane before she killed her...that kind of rage is personal. The level of surveillance they’ve been doing on us?”

“That’s personal too” finished Hotch, “We need to find out what connects us to Diane. That should tell us what what connects Maeve to the Replicator”

“She said Diane wasn’t innocent and neither were we” you told them “So they’re avenging some slight or insult they believe we’ve perpetrated against them”

“I’ll do a deep dive into Diane’s life” said Garcia

“I’ll talk to Erin, see if we can do a sweep of the bureau records. This could be linked to an old case” Rossi said.

“Good. I know everyone is shocked and feeling vulnerable right now” said Hotch “We’re all worried about Reid but there are agents outside his place as well as your homes too. Our families are protected and there’s a safe house on standby just in case. Let’s get this guy”

“Okay, get some rest, I’ll call you again in a few hours” you said to Spencer right before hanging up.

“How is he?” Blake appeared in the canteen looking drawn, almost defeated.

“He blames himself” You said “He knows he was Maeve’s way in to the BAU “

“It’s just as much my fault” said Blake “I saw she was making him happy and I didn’t question her motives. I pushed for them to meet’

“You had no reason to suspect she was stalking him or helping some psycho with a revenge fantasy to murder innocent people” you said, handing her a fresh cup of coffee “I shouldn’t have dismissed my gut feeling”
“Why did you?” asked Blake. You took a sip, the coffee was way too bitter but discomfort was keeping you alert right now. “Was it...did you wave it off as jealousy?”

You sighed. There seemed little point in keeping it a secret now. After the odd moment in his apartment even Spencer probably knew.

“Yes” you admitted “I was going to tell him how I felt when I came back from London and that same day he told me about Maeve so I always figured that was what it was.”

“I’m sorry” said Blake.

“None of it matters anymore” you said with a shrug “It’s all-”

“Help!”

The pair of you turned to see Anderson flying down the corridor to the bullpen.

“What the-”

“Strauss collapsed in her office while talking to Agent Rossi” he gabbled “She can’t breathe”

“You called an ambulance?”

“Yeah they’re coming”

The three of you sprinted back to Strauss’ office. She was sprawled on the floor, eyes wide as Rossi cradled her head.

“What happened?” Blake fell to Strauss side.

“I don’t know. we were talking and then she started to feel funny and she just collapsed”

“Dave?”

“I’m here Erin”

“It’s poison” you said, your eyes falling on a powdery substance that coated an opened envelope on the desk ‘Nobody touch anything, we need to call the CDC”

“CDC?” Anderson asked

“We have no idea what that stuff is and whether we’ve been exposed” you said “Can we move her out of the room?”

Between you, you were able to carry Strauss outside, the corridor now filled with agents. A few bellows from Rossi quickly dispersed them.

“Everyone else feeling okay?” you asked. There was a chorus of nods. Clearly it wasn’t a strong dose, enough to knock Strauss out but not enough to infect whoever came to her aid.

You let the paramedics know your suspicions as they carried her away, Rossi insisting on joining them. The crime techs arrived shortly afterwards and sealed the whole area off while you, Blake, and Anderson were given the once over and a dose of cipro in case it was anthrax.

“This is the Replicator” said Blake “It can’t be a coincidence, it just can’t”
“So Strauss was a target along with the BAU” you said “And the unsub used a power substance. That was the case that you and Strauss had a falling out over right? The University Poisonings?”

“Oh my god”

“It must be connected to that” you said

“But how?”

Chapter End Notes

Another CM Bingo entry, the trope this time was "victim"
“Dave called. He says Strauss is stable but unconscious. CSU is testing the substance found in her office but they’re going to scan over the letter so we can analyse that” Hotch told you all.

The tension in the room was thick. The Replicator had been here, they had penetrated Quantico, a veritable fortress where you all should have felt safe and they had targeted one of their own. An intense feeling of being watched pricked at every single team member.

“We’re ten steps behind this guy” said Morgan.

“Maybe only five” said Garcia as an alert dinged on her laptop.

“We’re due for some good news. Is this the deep dive into Diane?”

“It is my superhero super agents” said Garcia “So Diane had a relatively normal upbringing, she was born and raised in DC, both parents were chemists and...hello...they worked at Mendel University”

“Maybe Maeve was drawn there because of them rather than Diane?” JJ suggested “But what’s the link to the BAU, have we ever dealt with them?”

“We...we haven’t but Blake has”

All eyes turned to Blake, her brow furrowed as she tried to place the faces Garcia had put on the screen.

“Oh my God” It clicked “Dr Anneliese Turner, she was a victim in the University Poisonings case. Her name was never published in the press because she didn’t die. Her and her husband recognised the symptoms as they set in and she was rushed to hospital. I interviewed her when she was released. Diane was there! She was a teenager, I never spoke to her but she and her father were there as I questioned Anneliese about her movements leading up to the poisonings”

“This whole thing has to be about the University Poisonings case” you said “It can’t be a coincidence”

“It’s not,” said Hotch, staring at his tablet “CSU have sent over a scan of the letter. There were no fingerprints and no other trace evidence except the powder”

“Was it the same poison?”

“Yes but it appears to have been modified to act slower, hence why you guys weren’t infected and Strauss is still alive”

“The aim was to terrorise not kill,” said JJ “They want to prolong our suffering”

“What does the letter actually say?” you asked. You all turned as Hotch sent the image to the screen.

Justice delayed is justice denied

“Justice for who though?” asked Morgan “They caught the real poisoner. He died in prison”

“This is about revenge right? So maybe someone else was hurt by the case,” you said “Someone
like Blake! Were there other agents who were demoted or transferred?"

“A couple yeah” Blake nodded

“You think our other unsub could be an agent?”

You held up your hands as everyone stared at you.

“There’s no way Maeve could have gotten all of those details just from Spencer. She must have had another source. I know it’s crazy but it explains why we’re being targeted now after all this time. It started when Blake joined the team. What if they were transferred because of the case and they’ve been stewing in their anger and resentment all this time. Suddenly Blake gets the open position at the BAU, a role they think they deserve, and it all comes bursting out”

“What about Maeve? How does she fit in?” Morgan asked, “From what Reid said they were talking before that”

“She was mining me for information”

Everyone turned towards the forlorn figure in the doorway. It took every ounce of resilience not to race over to Spencer then and there. JJ had no such qualms and practically jumped on him, pulling him into a tight hug.

“You shouldn’t be here” said Hotch, sounding more tired than annoyed.

“I know, I just...I need to help. Even if it’s in a small way”

“Tell us your theory kid” smiled Morgan.

“Looking back I think the tone of our conversations changed around the time Blake joined the team. I told Maeve...a lot. Too much. But one of the first things I told her was how exciting it was to have Blake here”

“If she had a prior connection to the unsub then she could have told them Blake was back and that could have kicked the plan into action” you said

“Right” nodded Spencer “Maeve must have had a reason to target me in the first place”

“It must be the same reason as the other unsub. Something connected to the University Poisonings” JJ said “Could she have been related to a victim like Diane?”

“That wouldn’t explain the rage against Diane” you said, “Maeve was furious with her, she wanted her to suffer” You shuddered at the memory, your eyes started to sting. A warm hand in yours pulled you back to reality. Spencer had moved to stand beside you, a faint, tired smile on his face.

“You did the best you could” he said softly “I think it must have been a comfort for her to be with you when she died”

“Garcia can you look up Maeve’s family. See if there is anyone else who worked at Mendel University?” asked Blake, wringing her hands “I have this vague memory...”

“Her mother” Spencer said suddenly “Maeve was really close to her Mom, or at least she pretended to be. Maybe that’s a clue?”

“Gotcha!” Garcia yelled in triumph “Dr Mary Donovan was a chemist and oncologist that taught at Mendel University. Holy Moly!”
“What?”

“She was questioned four separate times by the FBI after Anneliese Turner was poisoned”

“Anneliese gave the Bureau a list of colleagues that would have reason to target her” said Blake “She sat on a board that dealt out research grants across several departments, not just her own. I think there were some occasions when people took the rejection personally”

“When men see a woman’s success they want it for themselves but when women see it they want it so you can’t have it” Spencer said, his eyes closed “That’s where Maeve’s distrust of other women in academic circles comes from. What happened to Dr Donovan?”

“She was eventually dismissed as a suspect but she had been suspended while she was being investigated and Dr Donovan sent threats to some of her supervisors during that time as revenge. They fired her. She died two years later from a heart attack”

“Maeve could see Dr Turner as the reason her mother lost her career and died so suddenly. It makes sense for her to want revenge on the FBI. Then she gets lucky, sees, or seeks out Reid’s medical file for information on the team. It still leaves the question of who she’s working with?”

“I have the list of other agents moved or demoted or otherwise sent to the abyss after the case” Garcia posted the list on the screen ‘One is dead, two have moved abroad and haven’t been back to the States in years so we have six names’

“You know all of them?” Hotch asked Blake.

“Yeah I interacted with them all to a certain extent” she said “No-one jumps out immediately though”

“Rossi is calling!” said Garcia, “Sir, you’re on speaker”

“How is Strauss?”

“Giving the staff here the run around. She woke up and is insisting she speaks to you all. I managed to hold her off” Despite the fatigue in Rossi’s voice there was a frail note of amusement. You could picture Strauss still exuding boss lady vibes to the max even in a hospital gown and hooked up to all sort of machines.

“We’re trying to narrow down who The Replicator is,” said Hotch, “We think it could be an agent”

“I may be able to help. Strauss said an agent dropped off the envelope by hand. She didn’t recognise him but he spoke to her as the poison started to take affect.”

“Wait he poisoned her in person?” gasped JJ, “That’s brazen”

“It’s a taunt. He’s telling us he can get to us anywhere, even Quantico,” you said.

“He mentioned Strauss’ children” Rossi said, “How she wasn’t able to protect them, he stressed that. Children always need someone to protect them’’

“He could see himself as a surrogate parental figure to Maeve” you said, “It does kind of feel like a mentor/student relationship”

“Which agent dealt with the Donovans most during the case?” Hotch asked Garcia.

“That would be a John Curtis”
“That’s him,” said Blake, “Introverted, very intelligent and his passion was biochemistry. It’s how he got on the case in the first place”

A name. Finally it felt like you were getting somewhere. Spencer’s hand was still in yours and without either of you realising, you squeezed it tighter as Garcia reeled off everything she could find out about John Curtis.

Evidently Curtis had been something of a rising star in the bureau before the University Poisonings. He was brilliant, had multiple specialities but no family or friends to speak of. His job had been his whole life.

“From what I can gather they were in communication for years, ever since the case. Curtis was Maeve’s emergency contact as a student, he also paid all of her mother’s funeral expenses and her tuition fees”

“Like a twisted found family” said Morgan with distaste “Where can we find Curtis now?”

“He owns property, acres of it actually. It’s a converted farmhouse, very isolated”

“We need to be careful,” said Hotch, “We’ll divide the team and I’ll get tactical units to meet us there. Rossi can you let Strauss know what we’ve found?”

“Will do. Then I can coordinate with SWAT”

“Everyone else get ready. Reid-”

“You want me to stay here right?”

You looked at him, a pain in your chest. On the one hand you felt so awful for him being side-lined when you knew all he wanted was to help. On the other hand the thought of him getting hurt more than he had was too much to bear.

“It’s okay” he looked at you with a watery smile “I get it” Your hand felt empty as he let go.

“I’m sorry,” said Hotch, “You can stay here with Garcia though”

“The dream team is back in action baby,” said Garcia, patting Spencer’s arm.

“Please just stay safe and if you see Maeve...”

There was an awkward silence as you all waited for Spencer to continue. His brow furrowed, you could see his mind going a mile a minute.

“Spencer” you spoke as gently and as softly as you could “If this is The Replicator’s endgame then it’s Maeve’s too. I know this must be difficult to hear but-”

“Do what you have to do,” said Spencer firmly “Just come back safely”

You nodded and along with the rest of the team, headed up to the roof where two choppers were fuelled and ready to go. Quantico fell away as you rose up, the glittering lights sparkling beneath you.

The endgame. This was it. You felt strangely calm as you flew towards what was probably a trap of some sorts. All you could think about was Spencer’s words to you all, though a small part of you hoped they had been directed at you in particular.
Just come back safely.

“I promise” you whispered.
Chapter 13

It wasn’t evident straight away that something was wrong. At first you thought it was just turbulence as you approached Curtis’ property but then suddenly the pilot lost control of the chopper and you plummeted downwards.

You were in the back with Blake, who gripped your hand as you hurtled towards the ground. The last thing you heard before the crash was Hotch radioing the other chopper. Then everything went fuzzy. There was smoke and a flash of light and someone roughly pulled you from your seat. Your mind was clouded with thick fog and you struggled to get your limbs to obey you. You fumbled for your gun but couldn’t reach it and you couldn’t get your legs to support your weight so you were ragged along, the world spinning around like you were on a carnival ride.

“This wasn’t the plan” A man’s voice cut through the buzzing in your head.

“It is now. This bitch almost ruined everything”

Maeve! That was Maeve’s voice.

“She’ll get what’s coming to her”

“No, I want her to suffer. I’ll deal with her then help you with the others”

They continued to argue but the words made less and less sense as your vision blurred and everything went dark.

Your last thought before you blacked out was hoping that Spencer would forgive you for not keeping your promise.

“Wake up princess” Your face stung from a slap and the chair beneath you jolted from the kick that accompanied it. A wave of nausea crested over you as you struggled to get your bearings.

The room was dark and you strained to see what was around you. You were definitely concussed in the crash so your vision still wobbled a little as Maeve came into focus before you. Her face was twisted with loathing as she sat opposite, the knife that killed Diane twirling in her fingers. The next realisation was that you were tied to the chair. The ropes around your wrists burnt as you struggled against them.

“Not going to happen” Maeve smirked “You’re aren’t getting away with this”

“Neither are you” Your voice was steadier than you expected in to be. Maeve’s face darkened. If you were going to die you weren’t giving this bitch the satisfaction of seeing you scared. The chair scraped against the stone floor as Maeve yanked you forwards.

“Honestly, I have to say I’m a little impressed” she hissed, “If it weren’t for you, Spencer would be here right now. He was my way in to the BAU, I had him wrapped around my little finger but then
you started whispering in his ear, sowing all those doubts and he started being cagy. Before you came back he told me everything about all of you but then it got harder and harder”

“Maybe you aren’t as good as you think you are” you smirked, “But that’s a running theme with you right? Love how you told Spencer you were doctor by the way. Did it make you feel smarter, all that pretending?”

Your head jerked back as she slapped you again.

“I am smart. I am a fucking genius and everyone who doesn’t recognise that is going to suffer for it”

“Sure Maeve. All those professors and rival student must be totally wrong right?”

If you could make her lose control you had a way in

“They are!” Maeve screeched “They’re petty and small and jealous. Every single time I’ve made a break through they conspired against me”

“No. The truth is you just aren’t good enough”

Maeve drew back her fist and you braced yourself for the blow. It never came, instead a tight smile spread on Maeve’s face.

“You’d know all about not being good enough, right Agent?”

Shit.

Maeve settled back in her chair, finger dancing along the edge of her blade. A small bead of blood oozed from the tip and slowly ran down the metal. It glinted as Maeve turned it, catching the light from the dim bulb above your head.

“It took me a little while to see it” Maeve said softly, “The BAU are all so close. Like a little family. Mommy Hotch, Daddy Rossi and all their wayward children. Spencer had a lot of over protective siblings that I was wary of”

“You should be” you said “We’d all die for for each other”

Maybe don’t give her any ideas Y/N

“Oh I believe it” Maeve laughed, “But it’s different with you right? You don’t exactly look at Spencer in a sisterly way”

You said nothing, what could you say? She was right but you didn’t want her to know that.

“The case in Des Moines was a big hint. When John sent me the photos he took of you two getting all hot and heavy I was worried I lost him but he kept phoning, writing, pouring his heart out and I figured it was just business. Outside the restaurant though? That’s when I knew how you felt. Running after him to interrupt his date. That had jealousy written all over it. Jealousy and desperation”

“There was an unsub out there tracking us” you kept your voice as steady as you could, “And Spencer had told me there was a psycho after you. Anyone else would have done the same thing”

“Blake didn’t” said Maeve “And Spencer told her all about me. She was our biggest cheerleader. No, you were there because you couldn’t stand to see Spencer with anyone else”
Her fingers brushed your cheek, you tried to squirm from her touch but you were bound too tightly. A stray lock of hair had come loose in the struggle and Maeve wound it around her finger, not even looking at you.

“Poor Y/N, so desperately in love with someone who will never see her”

“If that helps you admit you lost, then believe whatever you want” you scoffed.

“Admit it” Maeve hissed. She yanked on your hair sharply then brought the tip of your knife to rest just below your eye, “Admit you love him”

“Of course I-”

“Not like that. Admit you’re in love with him... and admit he doesn’t love you back”

“Why? So you can go to prison believing there’s at least one thing in your pathetic life you didn’t fail completely at?”

Swiftly, Maeve brought the blade down, slicing into your cheek. The cut burnt, and hot fear churned in your stomach. This was it. You were going to die.

“Admit it”

“I’m sorry for happened to you mother Maeve I really am” you tried to change tactics “That’s what all this is about right? You want to avenge her. She’s the only person who every believed it you, who ever loved you and-”

A second cut on the other cheek.

“Don’t you dare talk about my mother” Maeve hissed, “Admit it”

If you were going to die then at least you could die truthfully.

“Okay. Okay, yes. I am in love with Spencer”

The moment Hotch and the team had left Spencer had sprung into action. There was no way he was letting them take down Maeve and the Replicator alone.

Rossi was already there with SWAT when he arrived at Curtis’ property.

“What’s going on?”

“Curtis hacked the chopper” Rossi explained “The pilot says a man and a woman dragged Blake and Y/N from the crash. They split up and when the team came to they headed into the house”

The chopper was still there and lying in the back seat was Y/N’s gun and badge. Spencer picked up the weapon, turning it over in his hands before sliding it inside his jacket.

“Maeve will have taken Y/N. It’s all about revenge for her”
“Kid this property is huge we have no idea - Spencer!”

Spencer raced into the darkness, running through every conversation his had even had with Maeve.

*Think, think, think*

Y/N’s life depended on him keeping a cool head. Maeve would need somewhere separate from the main house, secluded. It also had to be somewhere she felt comfortable.

Greenhouse! In the darkness he had nearly missed it but as he approached he could hear Maeve ranting. There was too much moss and Ivy to see inside. Spencer’s heart raced as he looked for a way in.

Then he spotted the broken pane of glass and gingerly eased it away. The broken shards bit into Spencer’s palms but he ignored it as the gap became wide enough to crawl through. Inside the air was stale and warm, the plants that obscured every path were dead and the sweet smell of decay was everywhere. Heart pounding, Spencer made sure to be as quiet as possible and he crept towards the sound of voices.

“Okay. Okay, yes. I am in love with Spencer. I have been for a while now and I wanted to tell him but by the time I sorted out all my feelings...he’d met you”

Triumph glinted in Maeve’s eyes and she stood up, the knife gripped in her hand. She brought it to your throat.

“And?”

“And he’s in love with you, not me. He has never felt that way about me”

“So I won” she smirked “You’re superfluous now”

“Yes, you’ve won” Tears pricked your eyes. This was it.

“I’ve won” she said in a sing-song voice.

“No you haven’t”

Everything happened at once and you could only register parts of it. Spencer’s gun. Maeve’s shocked face. The knife. The gunshot. The hot spray of blood on your face.

“Y/N? Y/N? Can you hear me Y/N?”

Spencer was careful not to touch the cuts on your cheeks as he cradled your face. You couldn’t tear your gaze away from where Maeve lay on the floor, coughing up blood.

Your head pounded and the room spun around you.

“I...I was going to die?”
Nothing made sense. One arm was free, then the other. You fell forward into Spencer’s embrace, burying your face in his shoulder to block out the horrifying sights.

“I’ve got you” he whispered over and over.

“The team!” you gasped “The chopper crashed. What happened to them?”

“They went into the main part of the house but I guessed Maeve took you somewhere else. She mentioned this place a few times. It’s an old greenhouse”

Now you could properly take in your surroundings, the darkness was from thick vines growing up and down the walls, the windows were caked in grime and moss.

A wheezing sound made you both jump. Spencer tightened his grip around you as Maeve took one last, choking breath and went still. Neither of you moved for what felt like a lifetime.

“It’s over” you whispered to Spencer.

“Not yet. Curtis will want to punish the rest of the team. We have to find them”

“My gun. I-” You stopped as Spencer produced it from his jacket, “Are you up for this?”

“Are you?”

“Not sure but I’m not letting this psycho hurt any more of my family”

On shaking legs, you followed Spencer out into the night, the cold air bringing everything into focus. Despite the fear and adrenaline coursing through you, you couldn’t help but wonder how much Spencer had heard before coming to your rescue.

“Spencer before you got here-”

“Y/N?”

He looked down at you and you couldn’t make out the expression on his face. His grip on you tightened as you went to speak.

Before you could get the words out an explosion tore through the house, the shock waves sending you and Spencer sprawling.
Spencer bore most of your weight as you stumbled through the smoke towards the sound of sirens and voices. Your head was still spinning and your legs felt like jelly. All you could hear was Maeve taking her dying breaths, her twisted face hovered in front of your eyes and the fear that Spencer was going to hate you forever for this permeated every fibre of your being.

“Y/N?”

Why was Rossi here? He and Spencer guided you into the back of an ambulance. You blinked in the harsh light.

“I…the team?”

“On route to the hospital” Rossi said hoarsely, “Curtis dosed them with something before setting off the explosion”

“Oh God!”

“Hey, hey it’s okay” Rossi took your hand. The paramedic was swabbing your cheeks, you hadn’t even noticed she was there. Where were you again?

“Everyone’s fine. Rossi got them out” Spencer cooed. You wanted to throw up, you felt like your limbs were on fire.

“Lie down” an unfamiliar voice instructed you.

“Spencer I’m so sorry” you sobbed. No matter how hard Rossi and Spencer tried to console you, you just kept choking out the words again and again until everything went dark.

The room was dim when you woke up, quiet too save for the hum of the machines and hushed voices in the corridor beyond. Reaching up to feel your cheeks, your fingertips brushed gauze. There was another bandage around your head but everything felt less foggy. Gingerly you slipped out of your hospital bed, the room stayed still around you and your legs supported you. You were still wearing your clothes from the show down with Maeve but on the nightstand your favourite pyjamas lay folded and waiting.

“Good you’re awake” a nurse’s voice made you jump.

“My team-”

“Agent Reid is outside. The rest of your team are being treated and I believe an Agent Rossi is with them. They told me to tell you not to worry. Everyone is fine and you can go and see them when you’re feeling better.”

“That’s my go bag” you said, more to yourself than the nurse. Spencer must have brought it along with the pyjamas. The thought made you feel kind of flustered. “How long was I unconscious?”

“Six hours” the nurse smiled “If you want to freshen up and get changed the doctor will be along in a moment”
It was the best shower of your life and those pyjamas had never felt better. You were even starting to feel a little hungry as the doctor finished giving you the once over. You had a concussion but she was happy to let you leave in the morning. The cuts would likely leave scars but time would tell how noticeable they would be, the ligature marks on your wrists would fade quickly though.

You mumbled a thanks as the doctor left and Spencer slipped into the room in her place. For the longest time the two of you just stared at each other.

“I’m so-”

“Spencer I-”

You laughed, it was weak but it was still a laugh. Spencer managed a small smile of his own.

“You first” you gestured for him to sit. Chewing his lip, Spencer gingerly perched on the end of your bed. You could practically hear the gears in his head whirring. You drew your knees to your chest, twisting your hands together as your nerves built.

“I thought you were going to die” Spencer said slowly, “And I’m not sure I could have lived with myself when the last proper conversation we had was me telling you that you’re heartless”

“You were angry and-”

“That’s no excuse” Spencer’s voice cracked “It was terrible but more than that it was wrong. You’re aren’t heartless. You’re the most caring, compassionate person I know and…”

You eyes began to sting and you bit down on your lip to keep the tears at back.

“How…how much did you hear of what I said to Maeve?”

Spencer paused again, his brow furrowed.

“You love me”

You didn’t dispute it, instead you stared down at your hands.

“You love me” Spencer repeated, a note of disbelief in his voice “You didn’t tell me because you thought I wouldn’t feel the same way”

You could have argued. You could have said that the only reason you said it was because Maeve had a knife to your throat and you didn’t want to die. That would be a lie though and after everything you had both been through neither of you deserved that.

“I’m sorry” you said. God you were so tired.

“Why?”

You looked up. Spencer looked tired too. Tired and haunted and…broken.

“It’s a heavy thing to put on someone” you said, “It’s the last thing you need right now”

“I…” Spencer stood and the anguish you felt was almost physically painful.

Don’t cry, don’t cry, don’t cry.

“I think…it helps?”
“Oh” You weren’t sure what else to say.

“I’m not sure I can give you what you want” said Spencer gently, “Not right now and maybe… maybe not ever”

“I don’t expect anything from you” you said. The tears finally began to fall, it was almost cathartic. At least you weren’t hiding anything anymore.

“I know” Spencer smiled at you and this time it was warm and full “You never have. You’ve always been so giving. Even when I was an idiot and didn’t deserve it. All I want is to be able to repay that”

A sob escaped your lips. You should have felt embarrassed but you didn’t, not even when Spencer put an arm awkwardly around you.

“Whatever happens you’re still my best friend. Whatever you need, whenever you need it”

You nodded, not trusting yourself to speak. Spencer kissed the top of your head.

“Rest. I’m going to check on the team and Rossi wants to come by and see you later”

You settled down under the covers, sleep took you quickly. You didn’t dream of anything in particular, just the smell of smoke and a feeling of safety.

“How is she?” Rossi handed Spencer a cup of bitter, tasteless coffee. They winced simultaneously as they both took a sip. It didn’t seem possible but hospital coffee was worse than police station coffee.

“She’s…” Spencer didn’t even know where to begin.

“Okay, different question, how are you?”

That one was even harder to answer. Y/N had quickly fallen asleep after he had left, tears dried and a frown on her face. It hurt to see her like that when he had checked on her.

“I’m pretty sure everyone on the team picked up on the tension between the pair of you before… what happened with Maeve” continued Rossi. He dropped the coffee in the trash and settled down on a hard plastic chair “And it doesn’t take a profiler to guess what was going on”

“I didn’t get it” Spencer mumbled.

“She loves you,” stated Rossi “And you?”

“I love her but…I’m not sure how”

“You know that’s okay right? Given everything you’ve both been through, it’s overwhelming”

“It makes me feel good to know she feels that way about me” said Spencer carefully “And then I feel guilty for that”

“Everyone wants to be loved”

“It feels different to Maeve,” said Spencer. “I thought I loved her but it didn’t feel like this. So is this not love? I know she was lying but on my part…it was real. Or at least I thought it was. I’m confused.”
“We all nearly got blown up earlier,” said Rossi, “The rest of the team was poisoned. I think you’re allowed to take some time to process”

“Y/N says she doesn’t expect anything from me” Spencer said “And that’s…that’s healthy and generous and so good of her but it also makes me feel…kind of like sad but not exactly”

His own coffee followed Rossi’s into the trash and he slumped down next to his friend, head in his hands.

“She’s a good person” smiled Rossi, “And so are you. You’ll both be okay, it’s just going to take a little time”

“You know I can walk right?” you grumbled as Rossi wheeled you down the hall of the hospital towards the wing where the rest of the team was being treated. The doctor has discharged you with some pain meds but Rossi still insisted on pushing you in a wheelchair.

“You still have a concussion” said Rossi in a tone that warned he wasn’t going to take any argument “I don’t want you fainting here there and everywhere before I can get you home”

You rolled your eyes but secretly you had to admit you were touched by his concern.

“Y/N!” Ahead of you Penelope threw her arms out and rushed towards you, enveloping you in a bone-crushing hug despite Rossi’s protests “Oh my god I have never been so scared in my life”

“I’m okay” you smiled, “We’re all going to be okay” You saw Penelope’s gaze drift to the fresh bandages on your face. “These scars are going to make me look so badass”

“You didn’t need any help in that department” Penelope said, eyes watery “Is it terrible that I’m glad she’s gone?”

“No” said Rossi

“Is Reid here?” you asked. You weren’t entirely sure what you wanted the answer to be.

“He’s in with Blake. She won’t stop crying, she thinks the whole thing is her fault for pushing him to meet Maeve”

“Oh God” you gasped, “She only wanted him to be happy”

“The others?”

“JJ is being discharged now and the doctor says Morgan and Hotch will probably be able to leave later today once test results and stuff come back. Blake may have to stay a few days, Curtis delivered her a higher dose than everyone else” Penelope paused, “She’s also refusing to see anyone. Spencer got Strauss to force her way in and they’re the only ones to see her”

“I would have liked to see that” you said. Penelope snorted, some of her usual cheeriness returning.

“I have cake and treats for Hotch and Morgan, wanna come say hi?”

“Hell yes”

It wasn’t as bad as you had feared. Hotch had an oxygen mask on but he was sitting up and Jack had been allowed to visit which you knew must have done wonders for his mood. Morgan’s arm was in a sling but he was walking around, leaning down for a hug as Rossi pushed you in.
“Good to see you up and about” he whispered.

“I was gonna say the same to you” you said, “How are you guys doing?”

“It’s worse than it looks” said Hotch. He sounded absolutely exhausted.

“So…no day off then?”

“Strauss is giving us three weeks” JJ appeared in the doorway, followed by Will “I heard her on the phone to the director earlier”

“She’s made a full recovery then” you laughed.

“That’s my girl,” said Rossi and he was greeted by a chorus of ahhs. The conversation continued quietly as Garcia passed around snacks, everyone avoided the subject of Maeve or Curtis and though Spencer and Blake’s absence was keenly felt, no one touched on that either.

A nurse told you all that visiting hours were over though she relented and let Jack stay with Hotch for a little while longer. You were silent as Rossi helped you into his car and began the drive back to your apartment.

“I’m going to tell you the same thing I told Spencer” he said as you arrived “You’ll both be okay, it’s just going to take a little time”

“I know” your voice cracked, “I know it’s just that I keep thinking about all those pivotal moments when I could have said something or done something different. Maybe if I had things wouldn’t have been so bad”

“Maybe” said Rossi, “Or maybe Curtis and Maeve were so determined it would have all happened anyway. Maybe Maeve would have tried to take you or Spencer out sooner. One or both of you could have died but you’re both here, you’re both alive”

“I don’t know what to do” you sniffed.

“Let me let you in on a secret kid, none of us do”

“That is both comforting and terrifying all at once”

“So is life,” said Rossi, patting you on the hand.

Things were going to change, how could they not? But Rossi was right, you were alive and Spencer was alive and despite everything that happened there was still a small spark of hope that things would work out.

Chapter End Notes

Another CM Bingo entry. This one fulfils my Rossi x Reid (platonic) square.
One Year Later

“Don’t be nervous” Strauss ordered, “The director will say a few words then she will invite you and Agent Rossi on the stage, you’ll both be given your awards, pictures will be taken and then it’s all over”

“Great” you smiled tightly. It felt wrong to be getting a bravery award for taking down “a threat to the bureau” as they were vaguely putting it. They didn’t want the details of the case getting out but considering what had happened someone somewhere had decided that internal recognition would be good for morale. Hotch had been behind it 100% and between him and Strauss there was no way you would get out of it so you just sort of let it happen.

“It’ll be 3pm this afternoon” Strauss nodded as you got up to leave “And if I haven’t said it before…thank you for what you did”

“I didn’t do anything” you said softly “It was all Agent Rossi and Dr Reid”

“You helped identify a threat to your team before anyone else, without that the casualties would have been much greater”

“Is there no hope of persuading Spe-Dr Reid to change his mind about accepting an award too?”

“He was adamant,” explained Strauss, removing her glasses “And considering the investigation into his relationship with Ms Donovan, the director agreed”

You nodded, a lump in your throat forming at the memory of Spencer being suspended for two weeks, of agents from OPR swarming the bullpen and subjecting all of them to hours of interrogations.

Blake had handed in her notice but Hotch had refused to take it. Somehow, during the three weeks mandatory leave he or Strauss or Spencer managed to convince her to stay. You suspected that Spencer being reinstated helped too.

“You ready for this afternoon?” Morgan asked as you got back to the bullpen “The Bureau’s superstar”

“Guys this is already awkward enough” you whined, “Please cut it out”

“Just don’t go thinking you’re too special to hang with us lowly mortals” JJ teased.

“Do we have to salute you or something whenever we see you now?” asked Penelope.

It was going to be a long morning. With a sigh you glanced over to where Spencer and Blake were quietly chatting as they got coffee. The jokes would stop as soon as they were in hearing range, everyone acutely aware of the scars that hadn’t quite healed.

Spencer caught you looking and waved, a small smile on his face. A familiar, warm sensation bubbled up inside you as you returned the gesture. You couldn’t see the grins on the faces of those
around you as you buried your head in your paperwork or the slightly wistful look on Spencer’s face as he watched you work.

“Has she guessed what you have planned yet?” Blake asked softly.

“No” he grinned, “Penelope has been helping me. I just hope it makes this whole thing easier”

The butterflies in your stomach were swarming as you and Rossi took to the stage to collect your awards. You posed awkwardly, clasping the director’s hand as cameras flashed in your face. You had never been so relieved in your life as when you were finally allowed to get off the stage and return to your seat.

“How do you get used to that?” you asked Rossi afterwards when everyone was mingling.

“I don’t think you do,” said a familiar voice “Rossi is an unusual case”

“Emily oh my god!” you shrieked and threw your arms around your friend “What are you doing here?”

“I’m Reid’s guest” she said proudly, “He knew there is no way I would want to miss your moment of glory”

Your vision began to blur as Spencer walked into a view with the rest of the team.

“Best gift ever” you hugged Emily again, mouthing ‘thank you’ to Spencer over her shoulder.

Sensing that no work was going to get done that afternoon everyone headed back to Rossi’s, including Strauss, Will and even Beth. Emily regaled everyone with tales of how she was doing in London and despite how much you all missed her it was heart warming to see how she had thrived.

One thing you couldn’t help but notice was how Emily and Blake kept pulling Spencer aside for little chats as the afternoon turned into evening. You pretended not to be interested but you couldn’t help yourself as you watched Spencer glance nervously around.

No, after all this time you couldn’t let your feelings overwhelm you again. You squashed down your curiosity (and your concern) and threw yourself into telling funny stories with Morgan and Garcia.

By midnight JJ and Will had headed home as had Hotch and Beth. Garcia was going through Rossi’s records and demanding he dance with her while Morgan and Emily were catching up.

“Now Spencer” you heard Blake say before she went off to mediate in Garcia and Rossi’s growing debate.

You didn’t tense as a warm hand touched your shoulder, almost like you were expecting it.

“Take a walk?”

“Sure. I’ve always wondered if there’s actually an end to this garden”

It was a warm night as you strolled down the garden path, the voices of your friends growing fainter. There was an easy silence between you laced with something else you couldn’t name.

“I’m really proud of you, you know?” said Spencer eventually “You deserved that award today”
“So did you” you replied, “I know you don’t think that but you saved my life”

“You were in danger because of me in the first place”

The last time this had come up it had turned into a fight so you let it drop.

“Thank you for inviting Emily” you said instead “I can’t tell you how good it is to see her”

“Like old times?”

“Not quite”

“Sometimes…” Spencer stopped suddenly “Sometimes, new times can be better than old times. Sometimes changes can be good”

“What kind of things?” you asked. Your heartbeat quickened. After a year your feelings hadn’t changed. You were dealing with them differently now, not losing yourself to what ifs and mourning things that hadn’t quite been. Part of that had been confronting the possibility that after everything he had been through Spencer might leave the team and where even the thought of that would have previously broken your heart, now all you felt was a gentle sadness that was overwhelmed by the desire to see him properly happy again.

“Changes in dynamics” Spencer rocked back in his heels, playing with his tie.

“Like not seeing someone day in day out” you offered.

“What? No”

“You…you aren’t leaving?”

“No! Do you want me to leave?”

“No” you said more quickly than you meant to “I want you to be happy and I just thought that maybe…if you would be happier not working at the bureau”

“No I meant a change in our dynamic. A change in our relationship”

“Oh”

Spencer’s shoulder’s sagged.

“I thought that maybe you still felt the same way you did last year. No that’s not right. I hoped you felt the same way”

“Oh” God you wished you could think of something better to say.

“If you don’t that’s fine but-“

“I do!” Without thinking you leaned forward and clasped his arm making him start “Sorry”

“Don’t be,” he said breathily “I thought I was too late” His free arm wound around your waist, easing you closer to him. Your eyes widened as you came almost nose-to-nose, lips inches apart.

“Are you sure?” you whispered, “I mean really sure?”

“Do you remember sharing a room in Alaska on that case?”
“Yes” You dragged the word out as heat rose in your cheeks.

“You know that night after you fell asleep you curled around me and wouldn’t let go? You were sleeping in my arms for most of the night”

“What? You never said anything!”

“I think about that sometimes and then there was the case with those couples when I kissed you. Those moments are precious to me Y/N”

The way he spoke your name, like a wish or a prayer, sent a shiver through you.

“This would change everything Spencer” you said slowly “You know that right?”

“I know. I think things could change for the better. I’m willing to take that risk. Are you?”

You tilted your head as your gaze swept over his face, open, honest and hopeful. With trepidation you stood on your tiptoes, eyes closed, pressing a chaste kiss to his lips. It was soft and warm, not really how you had imagined it but so much better. Breaking apart, you tried to gauge his reaction. In a swift movement, Spencer brought you back to him, mouth crashing down on yours as he lifted you off the ground. Lips parted and hands tangled in hair, you gripped each other hard. He only returned you to the ground to pause for breath, his forehead resting against yours.

You stifled a giggle as you took in his mussed hair and dreamy look.

“The woman I love” he smiled, brushing a stray lock of hair from your face.

That alone was better than any medal or award.

Chapter End Notes

Another CM Bingo entry. This one is "One decision changes everything"
Chapter Summary

A one shot inspired by an ask I received on tumblr wanting to know when Spencer decided to pursue the reader and what their relationship was like in the one year time jump.

“Are you serious?” Morgan demanded. Hotch’s mouth was set in a grim line, a terse nod in response. Out the window of the bullpen you watched the OPR agents tearing through Spencer’s desks. His beloved books were being leafed through, his computer taken and his meticulous paperwork scattered about.

“I’m guessing we’ll all be interviewed?” said Rossi.

“Yes. The bureau needs to know how much the team was compromised by Reid’s relationship with Maeve. They’re confiscating all the files from cases we worked on since she made contact and all the evidence from the Replicator case. You’ll each be asked to give a full account of everything that happened from the moment Reid told us Maeve was missing”

“She was a sophisticated predator,” said JJ, arms folded across her chest like she was trying to stop herself from hitting something, “They need to take that into account. She knew what she was doing.”

“Excuse me” Blake stood up suddenly and flew from the room.

You swallowed. Though your injuries from Maeve’s torture and the subsequent explosion were pretty much healed you were still wounded and it felt like you were sliding backwards every minute the team was barraged like this.

“Where is Reid now?” Garcia asked.

“He’s suspended and none of us can have any contact with him” said Hotch, “Those are orders Garcia,” he added as she was about to protest.

“It’s for him as much as us,” said Rossi, putting an arm around her shoulders, “They’ll see that Reid didn’t do anything wrong soon enough” Everyone else looked unsure as an awkward silence descended on the room.

“You wanted to see me?”

“Y/n come in”

Despite being with the BAU for years you always kind of felt like you’d been summoned to the principal’s office when Hotch asked to see you like this. The last couple of weeks had been rough but Spencer’s reinstatement marked a new beginning. He’d been on desk duty for a while but now he was going to be coming out to Kansas with you on a child abduction case.
“I’m going to get right to the point” said Hotch, “I need to know whether there are going to be any problems with you working with Reid in the field”

Anger rose inside you.

“Have you asked Reid?”

“Yes, among other things. He said he’s fine to work with you and I already know you’re going to say the same thing”

“But?”

“But when lives are on the line I need all my agents to be focused. What Reid went through, what you went through too, was an ordeal”

“Look, you’re right” you sighed, “That’s why I’m seeing the FBI shrink. It’s why I’m going to a support group. My feelings for Reid haven’t gone away but I am dealing with them and I just want to get back to helping people. I think you know me well enough to know how dedicated I am to this job and I’m not going to let anything stand in the way of that”

“I do,” said Hotch, “But for the foreseeable future I’m not going to pair you and Reid up together in the field. It’s not a comment on either of you or your capabilities. I think we all need sometime to return to normal”

“Do what you have to do”

No one spoke on the jet back from Kansas or when you all trudged out of the elevator at Quantico and grabbed your stuff from your desks. Garcia met you with red-rimmed eyes but even she didn’t say anything. She and Derek disappeared into the bat cave, JJ and Hotch sped home to their families, and you saw Rossi steering Blake out of the way saying something about whisky and blowing off steam. Part of you wished you were going with them but Blake had been somewhat delicate recently and probably didn’t need to be crowded.

Looking up, you were alone in the bullpen. Spencer had slipped away without you noticing and you felt something crack in your chest. Six months ago he would have been right there checking you were okay.

You were very much not okay. The case probably couldn’t have gone any worse and you had left four victims and four devastated families behind. All you wanted to do was black out. You buried your head in your arms on the desk and finally let it all out, shaking with sobs. You didn’t know how long passed before a soft voice called your name.

Spencer stared down at you, face twisted with worry, his fingers fiddling with the strap of his bag.

“Sorry” you said thickly as you wiped your eyes, “I thought you’d gone home”

“Don’t apologise,” said Spencer, “It was difficult for all of us” You nodded, biting your lip to try and stop the tears.

“You know the worst part is?” you asked before you could stop yourself, “I can’t even talk to my best friend about it”
“Y/N…”

“Sorry that was a really shitty thing to say” you said, clambering to your feet, “Like you said it’s been tough on everyone. I’ll be fine, I’ll see you tomorrow”

“No” Spencer’s hand shot out and grabbed your arm, causing you to jump. His touch was warm, had it always been that warm? You could almost feel your skin vibrating under his touch as his hand stayed on you. “You’re right. It’s hard to deal with this stuff alone and…I miss you. I miss my best friend”

“I miss you too,” you sobbed “I miss being able to talk about anything and everything”

“Then maybe we can…set some boundaries? So we can start doing that again without… The last thing I want is for you to get hurt y/n”

“Right now all I want is to be friends again” you sniffed, “Everything else is…too messy right now”

Spencer nodded, his hand falling from your arm. You couldn’t quite read the expression on his face but it didn’t seem to matter as you followed him out of Quantico.

“Everything’s fine Emily” you sighed.

“Uh huh”

“We’re both very clear on where we stand” you explained, “It’s different now”

“You’re still in love with him though”

“I will always love him just like I love all my BAU family”

“You know that’s not what I mean y/n!”

“I know, I know” you sat back on your sofa, “Look feelings fade. In a year’s time I won’t be pining for him anymore”

“Y/n it’s not that easy…”

“God you sound like my therapist”

“I sound like I’m right”

Your phone buzzed and you seized the opportunity to change the subject.

“I have to go. We still on for online scrabble tomorrow?”

“What’s up? Sounds important”

“Just meeting a friend for coffee,” you said. Emily made a noise down the phone and you braced yourself.

“A friend huh?”

“Yeah”
Maeve was off limits as a subject but nothing else was. At least once a week they would go for coffee and at first they just talked about the cases they were working on. Then you asked Spencer about what he was reading, and then Spencer asked you why Ashley had spirited you away from your desk the previous week.

“Band t-shirts?”

“Yep” you laughed, “She’s our merch person I guess”

“I didn’t know you were in a band” Spencer sat back. He looked astonished but not offended. It hadn’t been a secret and you hadn’t deliberately kept it from him. Grant had asked you if you wanted to join him and some other agents at the bar on one of the open mic nights. It was a good way to de-stress.

“I’m learning the bass” you said, “I’m not great but I’m better than Karen from ViCAP on drums”

“Oh”

“Yeah we’ve decided we’re a punk band so we have an excuse to not play well. It’s about the message” you quoted one of Grant’s favourite sayings.

“I’m glad you’re having fun,” said Spencer.

“You should come along to our next gig” you smirked, “We’re terrible but I’ll get Ashley to put aside a t-shirt for you”

“I’ve told Derek no five times!” Spencer paced across his apartment, “My homerun last year was a fluke, there’s no way I can do it again but he won’t take no for an answer”

“It might be fun” Emily struggled to suppress her laugh down the phone.

“Y/n said the same thing” Spencer groaned, “She missed the game last year and Garcia and JJ were raving about it so I think she wants me to play again she can watch”

“Well that’s-“

“She is last person I want to make a fool of myself in front of!”

“She is?”

Spencer stopped suddenly, realisation creeping over him.

“Because she’s my best friend and I don’t want her to laugh at me” he clarified.

“She wouldn’t laugh at you”
Spencer swallowed. His thoughts felt too loud all of a sudden.

“Anyway what’s going on in London?”

You stared at Hotch in shock

“They asked for me personally?”

He nodded.

“Your work on that case in Idaho garnered a lot of attention. They asked if you would be able to go and consult and maybe provide some training. I’m happy to sign off if you want to go”

“I… I’m really flattered but are you sure? I’d be representing the team on my own”

“I think you can manage it” Hotch smiled.

You agreed, slightly dazed, and headed back to your desk. You would leave first thing in the morning so you wanted to at least leave your desk tidy.

“I just heard!” JJ bounded up to your desk, “Check you out”

“What’s going on?” Spencer looked up from his own work.

“Interpol want y/n to consult!”

“How did you find out so quick?” you asked.

“Emily told me” JJ waved off the question, “This is so exciting”

“How long will you be gone?” Spencer’s brow furrowed.

“A few weeks at least” you shrugged, “They want me to help with some training too”

“No chance for sight seeing then” said JJ, “I’ve always wanted to see Paris”

“Their head office is in Lyon,” you said, “I’m going to work not play”

“You know what they say about all work and no play,” laughed JJ. You couldn’t help but notice Spencer didn’t join in.

“I guess we won’t be grabbing coffee for a while” you said as JJ returned to her desk.

“Guess not” said Spencer, “But it’s good news y/n and I hope you’ll have a good time. I mean not a good time because you’re consulting, there will be crime and… stuff. You know what I mean?”

“I do” you said, “I’ll miss you”

“I miss her Emily”

“Spencer it’s 3am here and she’s been gone two weeks”
Glancing at the clock Spencer felt a twinge of guilt. It was nothing in comparison to the ache in his chest however.

“Emily you don’t understand. I miss her”

“Spencer—“

“I don’t miss her as a friend.”

There was a thick silence and for a moment Spencer thought the call had disconnected.

“Oh thank God” Emily breathed after a moment, “Took you long enough”

“I…what?”

“So when she gets back you need to tell her”

“Emily I can’t!”

“Why?”

“What if she doesn’t feel the same way?”

There was a sharp intake of breath.

“Don’t you dare do that to me Spencer Reid. Don’t you dare use that shit excuse after everything that has happened to the pair of you this past eighteen months. Who the hell do you think you’re talking to? I swear to God I will jump on a plane right now and come and punch you in the face if you pull this nonsense”

“I just mean that she may have moved on,” said Spencer, weakly, “Wouldn’t it be unfair of me to bring it all up again now?”

“She deserves to know the truth,” said Emily. Deep down Spencer knew she was right.

He was going to be sick, Spencer was certain of it. He had spent the whole night watching y/n as she caught up with Emily and laughed with the rest of the team. Several times he had moved to talk to her but there was always someone else around and he lost his nerve. Blake and Emily were well aware of his plan and kept giving him micro pep talks. Or rather Blake did, Emily just playfully threatened violence if he didn’t get his act together.

It was now or never. He tapped her on the shoulder.

“Take a walk?”

End Notes

Thanks for reading! This story will update every Wednesday
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