Truth or Dare

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Summary

"I know you meant what you said; you just didn't mean to say it to me."

Notes

Season 14 finale fix it because we all know it desperately needs one!

Spencer Reid has always had feelings for Jennifer Jareau, but he had resigned to the fact that they would never be more than just friends a long time ago. And that had been more than good enough for him. He had no desire to be in a romantic relationship with Jennifer, not in any sense of the word. He valued their friendship far more than the miniscule residual feelings he still held for her. Feelings that were locked away in one of his twelve imagined futures. Another one which stored his feelings for Derek Morgan. And one that played out the future he would’ve had with Maeve. His imagined futures were how he coped with his losses. Although he was a man who relied heavily on logic, he deviated from the, at times, faulty realism that defined him through his manufactured alternate realities.

The confession their UNSUB had forced out of JJ at gunpoint the previous day had left the doctor feeling shocked and even more confused. He replayed her words over and over in his mind.

“Spence, I-um-I’ve always loved you. And I was just too scared to say it before. And now things are
He couldn’t make sense of it. He analyzed every hesitation and hitch in her tone, every pause and avoidance of eye contact. He searched his memory desperately for clues that would lead him to some sort of reasonable explanation for the whimsical confession of love she had given, but he came up empty.

There were never any indications of JJ having such feelings for him. She brought Garcia on their “date” to the Redskins game fourteen years ago, and ever since, the two of them had fallen into a older sister-younger brother sort of rhythm. When Jennifer met Will, she didn’t give a glance in his direction nor did she express any hesitations to him. Spencer was the godfather of her sons! He and JJ; they were best friends. They looked out for each other. They loved each other, yes, but they didn’t love each other.

Spencer’s ability to remember every interaction he’d ever shared with someone rarely failed him, and Jennifer Jareau wasn’t fooling him this time. She’s always loved him? No, it wasn’t plausible.

Spencer was no longer listening to the conversation between Garcia, Tara, and Luke. He must’ve tuned out sometime after agreeing to dance with Penelope later on. His eyes were trained on JJ, studying her movements, facial expressions, and behavioral cues. Will was glued to her side as the couple made conversation with Matt and Kristy. Nothing in particular stood out to Spencer as peculiar other than JJ’s tense posture and the stiff grin she had plastered onto her face. But Spencer knew those observations could just as well be because of the awkward situation her confession had created as much as it could be about the confession possibly holding some truth.

His brow quirked with interest when Emily walked in, passing Matt and Kristy without so much as an acknowledgement and made a beeline to JJ. The smile that lit JJ’s face as Emily entered her line of sight triggered the profiler within him. He adjusted his slumped posture, straightening out his back. The wide grin that wore Jennifer’s face was the first genuine smile he’d seen from his friend since the consternation fueling events of the day before. Reid’s eyes narrowed in analyzation, determined to uncover the truth of JJ’s truth.

Spencer was unable to stave off the need he felt to watch JJ throughout the wedding ceremony. He picked up on the way JJ’s eyes followed Emily’s every move as she gave her toast, only looking away from their friend when she felt Will squeeze her hand at Emily’s mention of David and Krystall being “twin flames”. The look of, what could only be described as, shame that crossed her features as she forced a weak smile at her husband, only served to further peak Spencer’s interest.

Jennifer looked up, her stormy blue eyes meeting his gaze, and the unmistakable guilt clouding them caused his heart to constrict. Only on a few occasions had Spencer been able to read Jennifer so clearly, so few he could probably recount all of them in less than a minute’s time. He may know her tell, but JJ was the master of masks. She had one for almost every occasion. A mother mask, a wife mask, a social gathering mask, etc. Underneath all of those masks, hid Jennifer Jareau, and only a select few had the pleasure to know her.

Spencer was beginning to unravel Jennifer’s secret and the blonde agent could tell. The scrutinizing gaze she was under was unnerving and caused her skin to crawl. It felt as though Spencer was staring straight into her soul, undressing the emotions she’s been keeping micromanaged for over a decade. Having to keep her feelings for Emily undetectable to Reid’s perspicacious mind all these years had been one of the hardest things she’s ever had to do. He was the one she told everything to, but this one thing, she just couldn’t. Not even when her life was being threatened. It was too big, too
risky. Jennifer had so much to lose, as did Emily. The brunette was just now settling into a real relationship with someone, and Andrew was such a great guy. She was finally moving on and finding her own happiness. JJ wouldn’t have been able to live with herself if she had ripped that away and given the older woman hope once again for something that could never happen.

So she’d lied. And she was disgusted with herself for it.

JJ didn’t know exactly where Spencer’s feelings for her stood now, but she did know that once upon a time, he had something of a crush on her. Shortly after the Redskins game, the thought had slowly faded to the back of everyone’s mind, and it wasn’t brought to the forefront until just a few months ago, during their phone conversation about “imagined futures” and the revelation that he had twelve. That’s when JJ had begun to wonder, if one of them involved her.

Jennifer selfishly took advantage of that possibility yesterday. She didn’t know if it was true or not, but something deep in her gut told her that her inkling wasn’t far off. And to save herself, her family, and Emily from the pain of a confession years too late to be told, she used it against him to save their lives. It was selfish, she knew, and her stomach churned with an overwhelming guilt every time she looked at him.

She needed to tell him she didn’t mean it.

“Can I have a water?” Spencer requested as he approached the bar. The bartender nodded and turned his back to retrieve the order, and he felt the presence of another person slide into the space next to him.

“Hey,” a certain blonde greeted, trying with a little too much effort to sound casual. “So I-I didn’t get a chance to say it back there, but thank you for saving my life.”

There it was. The first genuine thing JJ had said to him in twenty four hours, sixteen minutes and fourteen seconds.

“You’re welcome.”

The tension between the two friends was nearly suffocating. Interactions between them had never been so uncomfortable. A sadness pulled at Spencer’s heart; things weren’t supposed to be this way between them, and part of him feared that things would never be able to return to the way they were before. Change had never been Spence’s strong suit.

Spencer embodied JJ’s discomfort as if it were his own. The way she couldn’t hold eye contact with him for more than a couple seconds at a time told him that whatever Jennifer had come up to tell him was weighing heavily on her subconscious.

“You okay?” He prompted, wanting to get her talking.

“Yeah,” the older woman breathed. Although she obviously wasn’t. “But Luke was right, though. Two guns, huh?” Jennifer’s tried smile wavered insecurely as she attempted to strike up a casual conversation and act as though the lie she’d conjured up the previous day hadn’t possibly caused permanent damage to their relationship. Spencer tilted his head and narrowed his eyes at her, unbelieving. “How long have you been wearing an ankle holster?”

“Around the time I got out of prison,” he answered shortly but still in his usual gentle tone. Spencer hoped she would catch on to the fact that he didn’t want to make awkward small talk; he wanted to have a conversation about what had transpired the day before.
“Right.”

Silence fell between the old friends for a painful few moments. Neither one looked at the other, only staring straight ahead and praying this mess could somehow magically fix itself.

“Look, so, um, what I said back there…” JJ broke the silence. She needed to clear the air; the tension that congested it was squeezing hers out of her lungs. “I, uh, I needed to say something that would get his attention, and I needed to say something that would get your attention, so you know, I just needed to throw him off balance—”

“Jennifer,” Spencer cut off the blonde’s ramble with the use of her full name. It was proven to be effective when needing to grab the woman’s attention.

JJ stilled. Spence only called her ‘Jennifer’ when it was serious. Was he calling her bluff? Did he already know she lied, or did he think she actually meant it? Had she led him on like she had feared?

Apprehensive of the emotion she would find swirling around in his hazel eyes, the blonde hesitated before raising her gaze to meet his. What she saw: a challenging glare. It puzzled her; she was unable to detect any sort of emotion in his eyes. No anxiety, no guilt, no hope, no nothing. Just a challenging stare, like this whole mess of a situation was some sort of game to him.

“Truth or dare?”

The bluntness of his question momentarily startled JJ. A slight feeling of panic rose from her stomach at Spencer’s use of the question that had been spat in her face as she stared down the barrel of a gun just twenty four hours prior. She inhaled a calming breath to settle it.

As the feeling of dread began to dissipate, she noticed Spencer’s glare had eased from its previous challenge to a softer curiosity. He stared at her like she was a case, and she knew then that she hadn’t led him on. Spence wasn’t challenging her; he wanted her to tell him the truth.

He deserved to know; she knew that. She had played with his emotions in the most deceptive way yesterday. She’d already lied to him about Emily once before, and she’d nearly lost him because of it. But, this wasn’t the same thing. This would risk Will and her boys, the family she’d built over the last twelve years. This would risk Emily’s chance at finally moving on with her life and being happy with someone who was able to love her in the way that she deserved. This would risk the future of the team. Could she really risk all of that? Could she risk being responsible for the downfall of everyone she loves? Granted, it would feel so, unbelievably good to finally get her deepest, most darkest secret off of her chest, even if it was to just one person. But could she do that to Spencer? Could she trust Spence with this?

Looking into the most gentle, hazel eyes gazing into her blues with genuine concern, JJ offered him a sad smile. Of course, she could. It was Spence.

“Truth.”

The word scratched against the dryness of her throat like sandpaper.

“Did you mean it?” His sincere question came out more like an accusation. He watched her face intently, analyzing her reaction. Jennifer didn’t say anything, but from the way her lips twitched between the slightest smile and her big, blue eyes that remained full with the look of sadness and guilt he’d observed in them since the confession, Spencer knew. She didn’t mean it. A wave of relief flooded over the younger agent. Now, he just hoped she would tell him the truth.
Spencer noticed her mouth adjust, preparing to open for speech, but before JJ could get a word out, they were interrupted by the one specific brunette that, unbeknownst to Spencer and JJ, was at the forefront of both of their minds.

Spencer Reid stood witness to the interaction that solidified his suspicion. He surveilled, with curious eyes, Emily Prentiss reach out and place her hand on JJ’s upper arm.

“Guys, they’re about to cut the cake.”

It was hard to miss. The way JJ’s shoulders dropped, releasing their tension at the older woman’s touch and how her entire face lit up with a radiant glow as she acknowledged her presence. Her blue eyes became a shade lighter and there was a noticeable sparkle to them. A sparkle he hadn’t seen in her eyes for a time that was exceeding far too long. Her gaze followed their Unit Chief as she began to walk away, the luminous smile still firm on her lips. It was very hard to miss indeed.

Spencer began to walk away. His suspicion had been confirmed, and it ran far deeper than he’d originally assessed. He no longer felt the need to pressure his friend into admitting it out loud as he now understood, it would be far too painful.

He felt a hand press firmly against his chest, pushing him back before he could get away.

“J-just,” Jennifer stuttered. Spencer retreated back to the spot he’d been standing in just a few moments before. “I—”

Spencer looked down at JJ with empathy as she pushed her blonde locks behind her ears. The distress that wracked her petite form was blatant and he understood what she was feeling all too well. He’d been there before.

“It’s okay,” he whispered earnestly to the woman before him. She had her finger curled and pressed against her lips, as if she was preventing something from tumbling out. She looked up at him, her eyes large and filled with hope for the possible relief of her secret tormentation. “Everything’s okay.”

JJ nodded.

“Yeah?” Her tone was quizzical, but he understood her hesitation. He knew how important it was for her that no one else could ever find out about what she felt for Emily. She’d risked her life, and his, with a lie to protect it. Spencer knew her questioning tone wasn’t just for him to assure her that her secret was safe with him, but that he understood how incredibly, and truly, remorseful she was for the selfish act. And he did. Because he’d done it before. When Cat Adams wanted him to admit a truth about himself that no one knew. But what she had wanted from him, it wasn’t a truth, so he’d had to lie, knowing that if he didn’t sell it, his mother would be killed. JJ was there with him the whole way. He understood.

Spencer nodded his assurance before he cleared his throat, composing himself for the verbalization of the confirmation that had just occurred.

“I know you meant what you said,” Spencer articulated, his utterance barely above a whisper. He was deliberate in making sure there was no way either of the two people standing just a few yards away would be able to overhear.

JJ’s brows drew together, a look of confusion crossing over her face. They’d just verified that she hadn’t meant it, unless some sort of severe miscommunication had just transpired.

“You just didn’t mean to say it to me.”
JJ’s heart stopped beating in her chest. Her breath caught in the back of her throat and she was sure her entire face had fallen sheet white. She knew that Spence knew. It was just the verbalization of it that threw her completely off quilter.

Spencer’s gaze flickered to the brunette standing next to the southern detective, and Jennifer followed his gaze. Her eyes landed on the two people she loved most, just one in a different way than the other. And the one that she could never have.

“Spence,” JJ choked on his name as she turned her back on the ones she felt she was betraying. The mascara coated rims of her eyes began to sting as tears welled in them. She felt an unbearable need to explain herself, to explain the string of questionable decisions she’d made over the last twelve years.

“Jennifer, it’s okay,” he soothed. The shame and the guilt oozed from her pores, and an agonizing need to comfort his suffering friend rose to the surface. She stared past him with pursed lips as her right hand gripped at her upper left arm. All were signs of the blonde trying desperately to maintain her composure, so Spencer made the quick decision to change the topic. “I know how you feel.”

JJ’s eyes snapped to his, bewilderment flashing onto her previously anguished features. He could read the question in her eyes. ‘What are you talking about? Who are you talking about?’

Spencer swallowed. Like Jennifer, his confession was something he had never shared with anyone before, not even his best friend.

“You might know him,” his voice was hoarse, sounding like he’d just finished screaming at the top of his lungs at a concert. The thought almost made JJ chuckle; Spence at a concert. The reality was that it was just nerves. It was the first time he was admitting to having an attraction for men out loud. “He got married two years, eleven months and ten days ago.”

Recognition flashed in JJ’s eyes as the understanding of who Spencer was referring to settled in. Derek. She tilted her head to the side as his gaze fell to the floor. He’d spent years grappling with his sexuality and a part of him, a large part, though he hated to admit it, still harbored feelings of shame regarding his attraction towards the same sex. Little did he know, JJ felt the exact same.

Jennifer was surprised to find herself feeling somewhat blase about Spencer’s revelation. She’d never actively considered Spencer being bisexual but she’d never outwardly denied the possibility either.

JJ recognized the familiar look of shame that wore Spencer’s downward tilted face, and it dawned on her that this was likely the first time he’d ever admitted this to someone. Momentarily forgetting about her own similar, and much more dire, predicament, JJ felt a sense of pride well up in her chest for Spencer’s courage to do what she never had. And what she now couldn’t.

She reached forward, grasping Spencer’s hand in her own. He lifted his gaze to hers when he felt her hand on top of his. She gave it a tight squeeze, hoping that it would be able to convey how proud she was of him for just being himself.

The corner of Spencer’s mouth twitched to form half a grin. His eyes shone with gratitude for her acceptance, although he never doubted for a second that she wouldn’t. Jennifer returned a tight lipped smile, her eyes shining with gratitude for the same yet entirely different reasons. For accepting her, but also for understanding the decision she made yesterday, and for being willing to aid in maintaining her long-held secret.

The reminder of her current predicament extinguished the heartwarming exchange between her and Spence as the gratitude on her face was once again replaced by sadness and guilt. JJ pulled her hand away from his and ran it over her face as she released a heavy sigh. Spencer’s frown and worry-filled
eyes returned at the sudden change in demeanor.

Sparing a quick glance over her shoulder reminded JJ where they were and where they were supposed to be. Rossi’s wedding. Cutting the cake.

Spencer watched with concern for his friend as she walked away. He felt a pang in his chest when JJ glanced briefly at Emily before resuming her position at Will’s side, wrapping her arm around his neck and hugging him close. Spencer didn’t think it could get any worse, knowing JJ was in love with someone she could never be with. That was until he observed Emily cast a glance at the blonde behind her and the strained grin that she’d become accustomed to force after so many years. It would go undetected by many, but Spencer was able to pick up on the hint of despondency in her expression. His heart shattered with empathy for Emily as he found himself relating to his friend, reliving the heartache of watching Derek fall in love with Savannah, get married, and have little Hank.

If only JJ hadn’t met Will twelve years ago, maybe things would have been different. Maybe Jennifer would smile that smile that made her eyes sparkle much more frequently. His heart ached for his friends that missed their shot with one another. Now all that remained were the *what if’s and the if only’s*.

Spencer Reid and Jennifer Jareau really are twin flames.

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