There's No Such Thing As Happiness
by bannering

Summary

After receiving disturbing e-mails, the team heads down to a small town plagued by a string of girls' disappearances that have been going on since the last ten years. Uncovering some dark truths, they find out that even the police is involved. Dr. Spencer Reid is prepared for what comes, but the genius has no idea of what awaits him. Or rather who.

Notes

Look, guys. I don't even know. English isn't my first language, I haven't seen Criminal Minds in a while and I really need to sleep right now. BUT this story has been on my mind for a while and honestly, it felt good opening Evernote and watching the words as they flew by. And it's great distraction for someone (me) suffering from a breakup and heartbreak. AGAIN, I DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH. Well, I do but y'know, I shouldn't be writing this in a language I don't quite master. I barely master my first one. ANYWAYS, this looks like it's going to be LONG AF. Seriously. I didn't even intend to make it as big as it is, but it's just... Idk. I apologize for any grammar mistakes, weird phrasing, or w/e. Feedback is accepted and motherfucking WELCOMED. Seriously. Just point that shit out for me.

Also, it's sort of canon I think? It takes place after Maeve's death, 12th season maybe? A long amount of time for Spencer's recovery, I guess is what I'm trying to say. But the team is Hotch, Rossi, Morgan, Garcia, JJ, Prentiss and Reid, because that's the A team for me and those are the people I somewhat know more. And I'm making shit up as I go.
Spencer Reid sensed an eerie air in the morning as he arrived for work. It was as if he was being closely watched, monitored, which immediately made him search his surroundings for something unusual. Not having noticed anything out of the ordinary at such a familiar place, Spencer resumed his walk attributing his feelings to the chilly air of the coming October. His favorite holiday was approaching at a fast pace and that seemed to somewhat relax the genius, his mind diverting now to the costumes he would use this year, and the plans he’d make to maximize the Halloween experience only a certain doctor could dream up.

Arriving at the bullpen, Spencer made a mental note to drop by Penelope’s office and give her the pain du chocolat and hazelnut coffee he had purchased that morning. She had seemed distressed for a few weeks now, not revealing the reason why and dismissing anyone who’d ask her if she was ok – “Everything’s fine”, she’d say, an immediate and strange smile making way on her face right before she distracted whomever had made the inquisition with funny anecdotes in her usual mood. He had done this a few times, showing up unannounced and surprising her with a delicious treat or a funny pen he’d found which reminded him of her (the last one had been of a cat jumping through what was supposed to be a ring of fire, but in reality was more of a somewhat yellow ring with spikes –or flames, as the salesman at the shop had explained–, chipped in a few places, the black ink used under the gold making an appearance).

This morning however something felt odd. Upon entering her office, he saw that Penelope held her head on her hands, as if defeated, upset. She barely noticed him.

“Hey, Garcia?” Spencer called. She turned, slowly. Her eyes were heavy on her face and her lips were tightened. “Is everything ok?”

She sighed. “I honestly don’t know, Reid. Things have been… weird lately on the IT department”, she confessed, stopping to look at the paper bag the doctor was holding. He gave her a small smile.

“Yes, this is for you.”

She took it out of his hands, mirroring his smile. “Thanks, I forgot to eat today. This has been so stressful and we weren't supposed to say anything, I guess, until there was confirmation something actually happened with our files but I can’t seem–”

“What do you mean ‘our files’?” Spencer’s concern escalated quickly. “The team’s files?”

“Yeah–“ she interrupted herself to take a big bite out of the croissant. The sugary treat seemed to calm her. “Look. We haven't confirmed there was a breach in the system yet –yet” she repeated, emphasizing the last word. “The head of the department said there have been suspicious activity but nothing seemed to have been stolen, or copied, or in anyway transferred from where it was. He said it was barely anything, just a little something out of the ordinary, and that calmed me down a bit. That was until this morning.”

She eyed the computer screen in front of her chair, and Spencer bent down to get a closer look. Penelope had received an e-vite for a children’s birthday party. The invitation seemed standard – balloons, a smiley clown’s face, some strings– and at first Reid failed to notice anything weird. That was until he read it.

Hacking genius Penelope Garcia!
Little Adam Webb invites you to his 12th birthday party. It's going to be a hoot!
Don’t forget his gift or he’ll be very upset :(  
His favorite toy at this moment is the new Star Wars Lego set, with Han Solo!  
The lovely kid is eager for your arrival, Red Kitty.  
There’s no need to RSVP.

And below, in bold and black:

**JUST SHOW UP. PLEASE.**

At the end, there was an address.

Spencer looked at Penelope. She sighed.

“Adam Webb… He was this kid I met in the system. He was 12 at the time and had escaped from an abusive family. Only to end up in foster care, can you imagine? He was lovely and didn’t have an evil bone in him. Wouldn’t hurt a fly,” she sniffed, trying to keep it together. “His favorite toy was an old Lego Millennium Falcon, and if you so much tried to take it from him, he’d scream and cry. It was his and only his, and any kid who eyed it would have been screwed.” She laughed a little and stopped to breathe. Spencer realized she must have been having remembering a particular moment of him and waited for her. “But he liked me and I was the only person allowed to even touch it.” Again, silence. “He died a few months after arriving at the house we were in. This other kid, this kid who had no idea of what it was doing, wanted to play with his toy and after much denial from Adam’s part, he took an wooden owl kept near the fireplace and banged Adam in the head.”

She sobbed and Spencer, shocked but sympathetic, only managed to put his hand on her shoulder and give it a little squeeze. He had never heard this story before and was sure that this wasn’t something Penelope would have shared easily. As a matter of fact, he thought she was only telling him what was absolutely necessary for him to understand to gravity of the situation. His mind began to wonder who had sent that to her. It seemed like torture.

“Reid,” she breathed. “I still have it. The toy. I took it and I keep it in my bedside drawer. But no one knows about this. With the exception of the Bureau's therapist, and I’m positive this is on her notes about me.”

“Which are in your files,” he noted.

“Exactly.”

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Spencer sat at his desk not much later after talking to Penelope. So many questions on his mind, little to no answers. The address was located on a small town called Rhinebeck, in New York, and what had come up after Penelope’s search was that the house listed belonged to a Rhett Sterling, a millionaire of the service industry. He had two companies – one, bigger, more profitable, specialized in frozen meats; the other, a surveillance and security company, was not as big but also very successful. He seemed business-savvy and there were no shortage of articles on the small town newspaper about him and his family. Sterling even wrote a monthly article, about several topics. His family seemed like the exemplary happy family– a businessman, a successful and beautiful lawyer and three children.

Still stuck in his own mind, Spencer didn’t notice the fuss at the bullpen, or JJ calling for him at the entrance of Penelope’s office. She made her way toward the genius and took him out of his trance.
“You have to see this.”

Spencer stood up and rushed behind his friend. Everyone was already there. Hotch, Rossi, Morgan, Prentiss, and Penelope. And they were all staring at him. The hacker took pity of Spencer’s confusion and explained: “I told them about my concerns and the invitation I received earlier. But you need to read the one I just received. It’s for you.”

For him? What could it be? Was there an invitation for him? Spencer rushed to the monitor, unsure if he would find more answers or more questions.

Doctor Spencer Reid!
Maeve Donovan and Robert Putnam happily invite you to their wedding.  
Come, enjoy yourself, have a slice of red velvet cake and don’t forget to bring a present! 
What’s a wedding without gifts, huh? 
The bride requests a worn, cried on copy of The Narrative of John Smith.  
Isn’t love truly something?  
The happy, happy couple is eager for your arrival. 
There’s no need to RSVP.

JUST SHOW UP. PLEASE.

The same address sat at the bottom.

Rossi was the first to speak. “What the hell is going on?”

“I think we need to call the police station at Rhinebeck, try to figure out–”

“This is obviously a threat! How are we going to deal–”

“Look, there has been a breach in the security–”

All of the voices seemed to acquire the same frequency to Spencer. He wouldn’t have been able distinguish one from another if his life depended on it. All of his focus was on the invitation. At first glance, it seemed ordinary, absolutely traditional. With the exception of, well, everything else? Once read, the tone and information containing in it had sent a chill down his spine.

“Please.” Spencer focused on that word. It says “please”. Why does it say “please”? Why is it that this seemingly threatening and damaging invitation would contain such a word? "Please," Spencer murmured. After all it said, all the memories the person wrote knew would surface on the recipients. “Please." And “eager.” “Why would it say ‘please’?” Spencer whispered to himself. It seemed desperate, a call for attention. But not the attention a criminal or psychopath would be looking for after threatening someone. If anything, it would be the attention someone in distress was looking for.

Suddenly he realized he was surrounded by his colleagues, still speaking, still each one with an idea on how to approach the e-mails. “Guys!,” he called for their attention. “I think we need to go to Rhinebeck.”
There's Something About Rhinebeck

Chapter Notes

thanks a lot guys, for the kudos. i’m really super fucking glad. This began as a great distraction and now, idk, it’s gaining quite a lot of traction.

i debated on whether to make this an OFC thing or if i would use the whole (Y/N) thing, and ended up deciding on Your Name TM because i feel like is more relatable to everyone, and i know some ppl prefer it.

(h/c) refers to hair color
(s/c) is skin color and
(e/c) is eye color.

you know the drill.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Reid, I hope you’re right about this. The captain of the police force in Rhinebeck assured me there was nothing going on and that they didn’t need the help of the FBI with any of their ongoing cases.” Hotch spoke, barely looking at the youngest of the team as he was driving the black SUV, only a mile away from the small town. “In fact, he told me yesterday the worst case he had ever seen in his 15 years as captain was when a kid's bike disappeared from his lawn only to find out later a friend had borrowed it without asking.”

Spencer was still staring out the window, his mind going one hundred miles per hour with a million thoughts. At one point, he thought his head might explode, but he wasn’t feeling any pain. Actually to the young doctor, this seemed like a puzzle. A weird puzzle, with several pieces missing and little to no explanation on to how the game worked in the first place. He had a feeling there was more to the eye than it met. He was almost... excited.

“Hotch, as I’ve said before–“ Spencer was interrupted.

“It’s the ‘please’, Hotch. You know the kid won’t let go.” Derek stated, rubbing his tired eyes and sighing.

“I still don’t know what I’m doing here,” Penelope said, looking from one agent to another. “JJ stayed, and so did Prentiss and Rossi. Why did I have to come? One of the best parts of this job is not having to leave my lair.” The computer whiz began working on her tablet, still trying to get any information she could about the address they’d received, the only thing resembling to a clue so far.

“We both got an invitation. I think whoever wrote those things wants us, specifically,” Spencer looked at her and gave her a reassuring smile. “Look, it’s gonna be fine. I just… I have a feeling.”

“The genius, who only relies on mathematical data and factual reports, who only trusts something if it can be quantified, has a feeling.” Derek snickered. He wasn’t too happy about being there. They had just arrived from a gruesome case in Las Vegas a few days earlier and he was excited to relax, see his girlfriend and stay put for a while. But even though he had made fun of his friend for the feeling, the kid had a hunch and that wasn’t common. And honestly, there was absolutely
nothing in the world Derek Morgan wouldn’t do for Spencer Reid.

As they began navigating the streets of Rhinebeck, following the GPS’s coordinates towards their destination, wherever it went the big black SUV made the residents of the small town turn their heads. It was unfamiliar, and "this seemed the kind of place ‘unfamiliar’ was a synonym of ‘dangerous’,” Hotch pointed out.

It was an idyllic town. Beautiful colonial houses with green and cared for yards. All of the buildings seemed brand new, the parks too, and kids were happily playing in the streets. Everything felt... clean. Spencer couldn’t help but notice how everything felt too clean actually, too well, too nice. It looked and felt like an utopia, and by definition that cannot exist. The other agents in the car felt the same, expressing their opinions on how small towns are more manageable the big cities, they guessed. But it felt more than that, Spencer thought. It felt artificial.

That was until the GPS, always showing the shortest route, send them through this street. This street. It wasn’t too clean, but it wasn’t dirty either. It looked different from the rest of the town, from what they had seen. It was obvious the people in this street weren’t as well-off as the rest. The houses were smaller, but still cared for. The yards weren’t as green, the cars sitting in front of the garage were older, no white picket fences. This street, Spence began to think, but something cutoff his train of thought. The poles.

“Hotch, will you stop here for a second?”

Spencer got out of the car and walked towards one of the light poles. It was filled with missing person's signs, and all of them were girls. Some papers were old, worn off, and showed younger girls. Thirteen-year-old girls, all with (h/c), (s/c) and (e/c). The signs that seemed more recent, almost intact, showed older girls, 20, 21-year-old girls, with the exact same features. As far as Spencer could tell, all of the street lights in this street were filled with various signs, with girls from the age of 13 all the way to 24. While he read the sign that seemed the most recent one, the one for Amy Hernandez, the corner of his eye caught the attention of an older woman, maybe in her fifties, stapling a piece of paper to a pole no far from him. Spencer crossed the street and walked towards her, his hands full of the signs he had tore away.

“Excuse ma’am,” he began. “I’m Dr. Spencer Reid, I work with the FBI.”

At these words, the woman’s eye seemed to light up. She began speaking at such speed and got too close for comfort that the genius had to calm her down before he could even begin to understand her. And barely.

“My daughter, sir... My daughter. Where is she? Do you know who took her? I know she didn’t run away, I know. Not my little girl. She wouldn’t do that to me. Captain Coulter said there was nothing he could do, but isn’t there? Can’t he bring her back? Why isn’t she here?" she bombarded the young doctor with questions, and he took a breath before talking to her. But someone stopped him halfway.

“Mom, come here,” a young man left one of the nearby houses and approached them. “I apologize for her. She hasn’t been the same since my little sister ran away—"

“She didn’t run away!” the woman screamed. “She couldn’t have!”

“Sorry. Right. She didn’t run away.” her son stated, mechanically. “Still you should go home. Take a nap, eat something. You haven’t eaten today, have you?"

“But the—"
“I’ll hang the rest of the signs, don’t worry.” the man said. He smiled at his mom – a sad smile, Spencer noted – and she walked home, defeated. He turned to look at the agent.

“I noticed these signs,” Spencer showed the man the papers he was holding, “and I was wondering what happened to these girls.”

“Look, man,” the younger man began, with hostility dripping from his tongue, while stapling the papers with his sister’s face on the pole. He halted, looked at his sister’s photograph and sighed, his voice less angry and more upset. “They ran away.”

“All of them.” Spencer stated, in disbelief. He couldn’t have asked because it seemed like a stupid question that these many girls would have been escaping for years now. It felt less odd, somehow, as a statement.

“I guess? That’s what the police said to us. Anyways, this town doesn’t have much to offer, and it’s honestly not that much of a reach to think someone ran away from this place. I kind of want to run away too, but I have to look after my mother.” he said, stopping his job at one pole and moving towards another. “It’s been a week since I last saw her,” he pointed to the girl’s photo, “but it’s not like she didn’t talk about leaving here, y’know? Amy didn’t want to be stuck here all her life, I guess no one does. She took a few clothes, her backpack and got up and left.”

“But did you see her?” Spencer asked.

“No.” he stated, dryly. The young man looked like he was being confronted with a hard truth, something he couldn’t yet face. “She wouldn’t have left without saying goodbye, ok? I know this, my mother knows this, every single one of her friends know this, but…”

“But…”

“What else could have happened to her?” he inquired, his eyes heavy and defeated, his lips tightened.

Spencer couldn’t answer that question as much as he wanted to, but he knew in a short while he might be able to, getting to the bottom of all of those stories, including Amy’s disappearance. He promised himself that he would find out whatever happened to this girl and that he would also be the one to tell her family the news, good or bad. After excusing himself, only to hear a quiet mumble from the young man, he walked to the car, but stopped in his tracks and turned around.

“Why aren’t you hanging these signs in the rest of the town?” he asked.

The man looked at him and rolled his eyes. “Didn’t you notice the rest of the town is impeccable? The city wouldn’t have allowed some dirt in its precious and clean streets. No one cares about this one”, he waved his arm around, as if showing it to the agent. “Plus, my mom did hang some signs all over the town, but yesterday they took all of them down, including the older ones. Some weird fall cleaning shit, I don’t know.”

Spencer thanked the man, opened the door and said, while handing the signs to his coworkers: “I think there’s more to this town than a stolen bike.”

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“Captain Coulter. I’m Agent Hotchner, this is Agent Morgan, Dr. Spencer Reid and Penelope Garcia.” the agent pointed to his coworkers and shook hands with the chubby, old, white man that called himself Donald Coulter, the captain of the police force in Rhinebeck.
“As I explained to you on the phone, agent–” he began, entering the station with all four of them and directing them towards his office. Derek had pointed out, as they parked in front of the building, how weird it was that the captain of the force, alongside with a few officers, had been waiting for them outside of the station. How long have they been there?, Derek laughed, but Spencer didn’t think it was funny, but odd. As if in this small idyllic town, nothing ever happened without people expecting it. The genius had asked Hotch, on the car, how he had convinced the captain that they were needed in this town, and the only response he got was: “I didn’t.”

“– there’s absolutely nothing going on here, and certainly nothing worthy of the FBI’s attention” he stated, sitting on his chair while holding his belt, which seemed like it might break at any moment.

“Well, captain, we have been investigating a few disappearances of young girls in a few states now, and Rhinebeck called our attention” Hotch said. Everyone, including Spencer, thought it was unusual for his boss to lie like this, specially regarding to a case, but apparently, he was convinced, as was the doctor, that something strange was happening. “There have been a series of girls disappearing from this town, but no reports were filed. Is there any reason for that?” he asked, sounding more menacing than he had originally intended.

“With all due respect, agent, they aren’t disappearing. They are just running away”, he spoke, softly, almost like he could convince anyone of what was being said. “You know young kids these days don’t want to live in small towns, they don’t appreciate it. They want what they can see in the internet, parties, a lot of lights, loud music, I don’t know. I mean, we are some six hours away from the Big Apple aren’t we?” he asked, and awaited a response for this ridiculous and seemingly rhetorical question.

“Five hours and thirty-six minutes.” Spencer stated, matter-of-factly. He got this look from the captain, a weird but familiar look. Coulter adjusted himself in his seat and looked at the agents, who were standing.

“Look, you’re welcome to stay here and, I don’t know, investigate things”, he said, putting a weird emphasis on the word “investigate”, as if they were all kids playing pretend. “But I can assure you there’s nothing to see here. Now, if you please, let me take you to the conference room and you can set up shop there.”

As the team made casual conversation while Garcia plugged in her laptop and turned it on, Spencer noticed the arrival of a man in his fifties, grey hair and pristine clothing, and immediately recognized him. The captain rushed out of the room and went to greet the man. They both looked a bit distressed, as if arguing. Spencer touched Derek lightly in the arm and left the room, with the agent following closely behind him.

“Excuse me, captain” Spencer started, having no idea on how to finish the sentence that was merely an excuse to get near the two men. As he and Derek were getting close, the captain and the older man stopped arguing, and their bodies shifted entirely. The expressions went from rough and closed off to open and friendly, and their postured seemed to get less threatening and more amicable.

“Oh hello, agent,” Coulter coughed, trying to get rid of a knot in his throat. “This is–”

“Rhett Sterling.” he said, offering his right hand. “And you two are…?”

Chapter End Notes
I KNOW this is slow as fuck ok? I know, I didn't mean to but I know.

anyways, I'll update quite often as the story is still burning rn in my mind, so I'm guessing (y/n) is gonna show up at the next episode or two? don't worry, it will probably be today.

anyways, thanks!

beijos
A Glitch In The System

Chapter Notes

phew. this is long af. i really hope you guys enjoy this okay?
also, shout out to brooklyn 99 <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I’m Agent Morgan, and this is Dr. Reid” Derek said, having seen on Spencer’s face that he was too busy trying to decipher the man in from of them to introduce himself. They shook hands and when it was the genius’ turn, he just waved.

“I don’t shake hands.”

“Oh, mysophobia? My kid has that.” Spencer felt the snicker behind the man’s pleasant smile. Was he making fun of the genius? It felt like he was trying his hardest to make it seem like he was a friendly man, but it came off as sly and cunning. Not for no reason. “So, the captain here–” he looks at the man beside him and gives him a side hug, a little too strong for the agent’s liking, “tells me you people are here to investigate. Y’know–”

“You are gonna have to apologize to me, sir, but we can’t discuss an ongoing investigation.” Derek cut him, dryly.

“Wow, so it is true.” Sterling pointed out, his eyebrows rising, not without a little concern flashing through his eyes. “Look, detectives–”

“Agent.” Morgan cut him again.

“Doctor.” It was Spencer’s turn to correct him.

Sterling’s lips twitched upwards for a second. “Ok, agent, doctor, I can assure you there’s nothing to see here…”. As Sterling went on and on about the reputation of the town, his work as the head of a security company, and other accomplishments, a little kid came up to him, which halted the profiling the agents had been doing so far. Sterling only noticed the child because of the lack of attention he was receiving.

“Oh, this is the kid I was talking about.” Another side hug, not too strong this time but still weird. And unwanted. Immediately the kid backed away. From the look on Coulter’s face, the kid’s presence was unwanted. “I was picking him up when I got your call. Charlie, these are agents of the FBI.”

The kid was maybe 10-years-old, wore thick glasses and hair up to his shoulders. Spencer noticed right away a tick. He’d rub his index finger behind his thumb, get it caught in between the skin and let go. He was doing it quite often. Charlie looked up, looked at Morgan and Reid as if he had been seeing those faces all of his life, and then it was like something clicked. His face went from one of familiarity to one of excitement. “FBI AGENTS? Oh my god, I can’t believe this, daddy!”

Sterling looked at the agents with a serious face and back at Captain Coulter. “I can’t either.”
“This. Is. Amazing. Wow! Can I talk to them, daddy? Oh, my friends are gonna be so jealous that I met people from the FBI! Are there more?” he began jumping up and down, and took a notepad and pen from his backpack. “Is it weird asking for you autograph? Are there more? Oh. Wow.” Morgan and Reid smiled at each other, which seemed to please Sterling father. Almost like a distraction. The agents signed each and pointed towards Hotch and Penelope.

Charlie looked at them and furrowed his brow a bit, as if he was expecting something else. Spencer noticed it, but it was so fast, and the kid had run towards the conference room so soon that he didn’t think much of it, moved it to the back of his mind and went on to concentrate on the grey-haired Sterling.

Charlie, on the other hand, upon opening the door, spouted. “Huh, I thought you’d all be here.” Hotch turned to look at him, finding not only his presence strange but what he’d just said. Charlie began jumping up and down again. “I’d like your autographs please! The FBI is here, wow. And I get to meet them? This is the best day ever!” He went up to Hotch, who looked at Morgan through the open blinds and seemed to subside due to his colleague’s nod and smile. Then the kid went up to Penelope.

“Oh honey, I just work with computers, I’m not like these badass agents.” Penelope said, with a smile, knowing all too well that someone who sits behind a computer and isn’t even issued a gun would barely be consider an agent of the FBI to a 10 year old. And yet, he still handed the paper over to her.

“I think your work is very important, Penelope.” Charlie said, his voice more of an adult this time than of child’s, as she was signing the paper. Penelope came to a halt, and Hotch, who had been reading up on the information from the disappeared girls on his tablet, looked up. “I also think you should keep my pen. Goodbye, agents!”

As oddily and quickly Charlie had entered the room, he left, his dad already calling for them to go home and have lunch. Excusing himself, Sterling said they were awaited at home by his wife to eat, and swiftly left the place. Derek and Spencer stared at the Captain, who made his way to his office.

A police officer approached them. “You might have to excuse Mr. Sterling. He suffered a great loss years ago, and has since been really concerned with the safety of his hometown and the people who live in it, y’know?”

“What happened?” Derek asked.

“His daughter had like, a freakish accident, fell from a cliff behind their house. After that, he opened his security firm and got really involved in the force, exchanging information with the Captain and helping us. I mean, there’s bound to be some trauma when you never managed to recover the body of your first daughter, right?”

“How old was she?” The young doctor asked.

“Thirteen.” The officer shrugged and left.

“The youngest girl in the missing signs was thirteen.” Spencer pointed out to his friend.

“It might be nothing, but then again…” Derek stated, not finishing his sentence and turning around, as he began discussing his profile of Sterling.

“Alpha male, classic narcissist, right?” he tried to get confirmation from Spencer, who just nodded
as they entered the conference room. He was too busy thinking about girls disappearing or dying to respond to Morgan, when Penelope spoke.

“It’s a flash drive, boss.” She opened it up, showing an USB port inside of the pen the child had just gifted her with. Hotch, standing beside her, motioned her for to plug it in.

“What’s going on?” Spencer asked.

“That super weird kid, saying weird stuff –HE KNEW MY NAME–” she said, while typing away at her computer. “–just gave me a flash… Oh my god. You need to see this.”

At her signal, all of the man stood beside her, all staring at the screen. The camera was moving. It was low quality, but you discern a few things. Like, for one, it was of a room, a poorly lit, dirty room, like the ones where they would find kidnapped people but there was some weird vertical lines. Were those prison bars? And there’s was also a girl, asleep at the mattress on the floor, or at least that’s what she seemed. Barely moving, they could only see her (h/c) hair and her bare back, and a lot of bruisings. She was in her underwear. There was a drawer next to the mattress, and on top of it a tray with what appeared to be food.

Who was that girl? Spencer thought it might be the Hernandez girl, the hair and skin color certainly matching her description, but he couldn’t be sure. And who was filming it? That wasn’t even the weirdest part. At some point, Spencer swore he saw a fridge.

Then the girl turned around, and looked completely terrified. She was about to say something, but the person filming shushed her, not abruptly but in a calming manner. Then, it spoke, or rather whispered very quietly. “Don’t worry, okay? I’m here to help you out.”

Charlie’s voice.

Why was it that a child’s voice could be seen in this awful video, showing a battered and traumatized woman.

He went on. “It’s not right now, okay? I apologize, but I needed to film you.” His soft voice seemed to calm the woman a bit. “I promise you everything’s gonna be–” he stopped, while she took some sheets off the mattress and covered herself. His voice came out dripping with sadness. “– I promise you you are going to get out of here.” As if it was all he could promise.

The camera then turned around, stopped, and turned around again. “Please don’t tell my dad I was here.”

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“It told us! The note explained to us! How could I be such an idiot?” Spencer exclaimed inside the car, while Derek sped up on the wheel. “It said ‘There’s no need to RSVP’, and I let Hotch call the police station.”

The black SUV ran towards the address originally on the invitations. The second Charlie said his last words, Penelope covered her mouth, and as if by command Hotch snapped. He demanded Penelope phone the rest of the team. At first, they didn’t go because they weren’t needed. There was no case, there was no body, there was minimum contact with the police, why were they needed was beyond everyone. Derek, Spencer, and him rushed to Sterling’s house, while Penelope stayed behind, making the arrangements necessary to get the rest of the team there as fast as possible. While she was on the phone, she saw Hotch pointing to the Captain, and him following them closely.
As Garcia began doing her thing with the video, uncovering data and trying to figure out as much as possible from what she was given, she noticed a civilian was lurking outside the conference room. A tall, dark-haired man in plain clothes knocked on the door.

“I’m sorry, but this—” he interrupted her.

“I know who you are, I know what is going on, and I’m here to provide you with the information you need.” he said, getting close to her and pulling out something from his pocket. A badge. “I’m Detective Holt, I work here. You should not trust the Captain.”

Which was what she sent as a text message immediately to the agents in the car.

“You can’t blame yourself, kid. This isn’t the time, focus!” Derek exclaimed. They were being followed by one police car, as Hotch requested, but the Captain was riding with them, and had pulled out his phone. He seemed to be typing away, which made Hotch suspicious, only for his beliefs to be confirmed by a text from Penelope.

“Excuse me, Captain”, he reached out from the passenger’s seat and took the Captain’s phone.

“Hey!” he protested. Spencer noticed his face, red and sweaty. His features, worried, and his eyes bugged out.

“This is important, Captain, and I’m gonna the full attention of someone whose worst case was a stolen bike.” he said, placing the phone on the glovebox compartment in front of him. “Don’t take this the wrong way, but for someone who’s not used to this adreline, texting seems like a poor choice.”

Coulter huffed. “I was just letting my wife know I might be late today.” He said, adjusting his collar.

Spencer’s phone buzzed and he checked it. He was glad his suspicions were confirmed, but was worried that someone not to be trusted was sitting two feet away from him, about to go armed at the same place they were. The car pulled to a halt, and they got out towards the enormous house in front of them, the familiar address.

Letting the other man go in front of him, Spencer turned around and noticed some people had already gathered at the site, having heard the sirens as they were approaching. His attention focused on one of them though, and only for a split second. He couldn’t quite see her face, but saw the (h/c) sticking out from inside the hoodie she was wearing and made out her skin color: (s/c). He turned to follow the man in front of him, but is struck him that her facial features demonstrated something different than those of the people standing next to her. How had he turned around from a look he could never forget? It wasn’t curious, like the rest of them. It was stern and serious, but her hands were fumbling in the pockets of the leather jacket she wore on top of the hoodie. He turned around again, but she was gone.

“How did you know…” the Captain began, only to be interrupted by himself and Morgan.

“Let’s go.”

They knocked on the door and an older woman, dressed like a maid, opened the door for them and let them in.

Now, everything happened all to fast, all at once. The one who appeared to be Sterling’s wife stood up from the table, where she had been eating, fear on her face, as Morgan kept screaming “Where is she?!” “You need a warrant, agent!”, but the damage had been done. Rhett wasn’t with her.
Coulter’s face, one of apology and regret, immediately looked at a door in the kitchen, and that’s how Spencer knew at least where to begin. Your body, one way or the other, is certain to give you up eventually.

Behind the regular wooden door, there was a reinforced steel door, with both an electronic lock and a padlock. But it was open. He motioned for Morgan to follow him, while Hotch stayed behind with the wife, telling the officers who had entered with them to keep an eye on her and to try and find their son. Her screams of “I’m a lawyer, this is unacceptable” were muffled as soon as they entered the room quietly. Realizing they were soundproof walls, Spencer had a bad feeling.

What he encountered was Rhett, holding Amy Hernandez in his arms, making a motion for the door and stopping dead in his tracks. Derek told him to give Spencer the girl, who appeared to be unconscious. As he held her from her waist, Spencer felt her pulse. She was alive. At least, the news he was gonna give to her family were good—well, all things considered, she was alive, and that was more than what some people could ask for, he’d later realize. Derek pushed Sterling to the wall, his back turned against the agent while he was read his rights and started sobbing.

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Garcia, on her end, with the help of Detective Holt, had more than enough for a case.

On the board in front of her, stood the smiling pictures of eleven girls. All with the same hair, the same skin color and similar if not the same eye color. But they weren’t the same age, and Prentiss had been bothered by that on the phone.

“This might be transference?” she asked, not addressing the blonde woman on a small town in New York, but the blonde woman standing next to her on the airplane. They had just boarded and were on their way.

“Right, he’s hurting these women in order to avoid hurting someone specific” Rossi pointed out.

“What have we ever seen a case where the victimology had different ages, like this? Like they were the same person growing up?” JJ asked.

Penelope tuned them out and focused again on Jacob Holt, who interrupted the people on the plane to continue talking about the case he had been building for years, ever since he joined the force. Before, even. The blonde hacker was typing away on his laptop, having some difficulties with the second flash drive, the one given to her by the detective. She could see it contained a lot of files, but she was only given access to a few. Being the greatest hacker ever, as she pointed out more often than she intended, Penelope was growing angry at the fact that not only she couldn’t see the files, she couldn’t even see their extension, but also that was the weirdest coding she had ever seen in her life. The system it used felt different, like nothing she had ever seen, or used before in her life.

The elevator doors opened, and the screaming of a woman drew the attention of everyone in the precinct.

Anastasia Sterling was pissed off. The successful lawyer kept citing the constitution, making threats and demanding her husband be released. It was outrageous that that many laws had been broken, but the silver lining, Anastasia thought, was that the case might be annulled. Morgan took Sterling to booking and told an officer to keep an eye on those two.

Leaving behind the wealthy couple and the Captain, Derek entered the conference room, introduced himself to the unfamiliar man in front of them and brought everyone up to speed.
Penelope was about to ask where were Hotch and Reid when she saw the elevator door open again. With the two agents, she saw Charlie, but she also saw a guy who appeared to be on his early twenties and a four-year-old girl in his arms. She recognized them from the file given to her by Holt. The three children of the Sterling family: Isabella, the youngest; Charlie, the middle kid; and Alexander, the oldest.

Hotch put them on an empty desk and began talking to them. Jacob Holt approached the kids, who apparently knew him. When Spencer entered the room, he barely noticed the board.

“Garcia, can you pull up a picture of (Y/N) Sterling? She was the first daughter of the Sterlings and she died when she was thirteen.” At that moment, he saw it. And then felt it. The girls and women staring at him from the board all looked similar, and when Penelope rotated her laptop so Spencer could see the monitor, he immediately realized it.

“So the transference is with his first daughter?” Rossi asked, interrupting Spencer’s thoughts with a voice he wasn’t expecting.

“We still have a lot to uncover, guys. This looks to be the tip of the iceberg.” Spencer began, taking the recent printed photo of the Sterling girl from the printer and placing it below the other girls. “There’s much too much to be concerned when it comes to this family. Have you told them, Morgan?”

The older man objected. “Those kids’ rooms, man. They had locks on the outside. They didn’t look like regular kids’ room, they looked weird reception rooms on doctor’s offices y’know? All white, nothing out of place, looking pristine. Even the four-year-old room was like that. No paintings, no cute drawings. Nothing. You should have seen this.”

JJ felt a cold down her spine. She could only think what kind of monster would lock their kids in.

“And it was as if they were expecting us. As the mother. Anastasia Sterling, were unlocking the rooms, from the motherfucking keys on her necklace, they were all standing there, hands raised. As if expected. Even the little one, Isabella. I had to enter an all white room of a four-year-old girl, no toys anywhere, no sign of a kid ever existing in such a clean room, and she had her hands held high.” Morgan confessed, his voice increasing at each word, breaking. He finished defeated, upset and most of all, angry.

Everyone in the room went silent.

Spencer’s mind had been so busy with everything new on the case he almost forgot about the original puzzle. Who had sent them the invitations? Why was the language so confusing, so menacing at one point and so innocent and demanding of help, desperately, at another. How had this person accessed the FBI database, in possession of such precious information, only to taunt them like that? He was so overwhelmed he sat down, still staring at the picture of the Sterling girl.

At that point, Isabella started crying. The youngest of the Sterling clan was not only crying, was screaming at the top of her lungs. While Hotch tried to talk to her, Jacob Holt got up and started making a phone call. Everyone’s attention turned to the small child.

“Now look what you done! You are making my kid cry. On top of everything else.” Anastasia exclaimed, looking at everyone in the precinct and pointing out how outrageous everything was.

The older one tried to hold her, but she slapped his hand away from her, still crying. It got harder to tune out all of the noise, but Spencer, while looking at the scene, still had his mind on the who. Who did all of this? Who went through all of this trouble?
Alexander looked at his sister and began telling her to calm down. “Look, she’s here, ok? Don’t worry.”

Hotch got up to grab a cup of water for the girl.

“Yeah, honey, don’t worry. I’m here.” Anastasia began, making her way towards the other side of the room, where the Sterling kids were.


At that moment, it became clear to Spencer. The Sterling kid. No body was ever discovered. The kids had signs of abuse, with the weird rooms and the locks. The girls were her. All of those missing girls were (Y/N). She must’ve been behind everything, and she was there, as Alexander pointed out.

“Oh my god.” Spencer said, getting up and ripping the girl’s picture from the board and going towards the entrance of the conference room. “(Y/N). She’s…”

At that moment, the elevators doors opened up one more time, but instead of the swarm of people coming out of it like on the last few times, only one person left it. A girl, on her mid twenties, dressed all in black, her hands fidgeting inside of the pockets of her leather jacket. (S/c) color, (h/c) hair and (e/c) eyes. Unlike last time though, she didn’t disappear. He didn’t know then, but the young doctor wouldn’t dare to look away, afraid she might slip from his sight one more time.

All of the screaming and conversation stopped, with the exception of Isabella’s.

“… Alive.”

“Iz.” she spoke for the first time. Isabella wasn’t shouting anymore. Reid couldn’t help but notice how her voice sounded soft. “I’m going to pick you up right now and put you on top of this desk, okay?”

The young girl nodded, and (Y/N) did what she said she’d do. Then she stretched her own arms on the side. “I want you to do what I’m doing, okay? And look at how much space there is in here.” Isabella did what she was told, and her crying began to subside. “You are okay, you are here and I’m here with you. But we’re not crammed are we?”

“We-we’re not.” the smaller one hiccuped.

(Y/N) smiled and began taking deep breaths, soon being imitated by her sister. “You okay?” Isabella nodded. “Good. I’m going to turn around now, okay? Act as your human shield.” she said, with a brilliant and reassuring smile. The younger one nodded and gave her a little laugh.

Turning around, (Y/N) faced her mother, standing a few feet away from her, jaw dropped, and her father, slightly farther away, equally surprised. “Oh, hi. Mom. Dad.”

Chapter End Notes

damn? hehe

how often do you guys think i should update this? i feel like i might have to speed things up a bit? anyways, let me know
beijos
The Comeback Kid

Chapter Notes

this story is going so slow, and honestly the rest of it will probably go at the same pace
BUT i want to figure out a way to speed things up a bit. to get at the truly
spencerxreader scenes :)

"Look at them. They don't know what to do with themselves."

(Y/N) kept her eyes fixed on their parents, barely blinking. She had been waiting, but also dreading
this moment, for a little over ten years now. She wasn't eager to see them. She had been seeing
them maybe every week since her escape; if not through the cameras they set up all over the house,
including the dreadful makeshift basement, from far away, across the street, as she surveilled their
every move and studied on how to proceed. Anastasia and Rhett arriving home. Anastasia and
Rhett dining at their favorite restaurant. Anastasia and Rhett abusing the girls. At one point,
Anastasia and Rhett in their beds, sleeping soundly after she spiked their takeout food with crushed
sleeping pills in order to see her siblings.

No. She was eager for the moment they would see her. (Y/N). After all these years. The last time
they’d had seen each other, she had jumped from the cliff near her house, choosing death over the
pain and suffering she’d endured at the enormous white house the "lovely Sterling family", like
some would say, lived in. (Y/N) wasn’t quite greeted by death, but by an old schizophrenic woman
who lived in a cabin in the woods, a few miles down the river she almost drowned in. But she
didn’t dare think about that now. She didn’t dare speak.

In fact, the one who spoke was Charlie, his voice sounding different again. Like he was a grownup
stuck in a ten-year-old body, which in more ways than one might be true. At one point, all of the
Sterling kids were too old for their age.

He spoke again. “You know, I always thought that when (Y/N) would finally see them, she would
take out a knife...” He stopped, dramatically, acting like he had a knife in his pocket and was
reaching for it. “And she would be like, STAB STAB STAB! Like making as many wounds in
Anastasia as the hours she spent locked up.” He chuckled, almost like he was a kid again,
eyebrows raised, amusing his siblings, who were smiling at him.

“See, I don’t think there’s enough surface in the human body to quite welcome those many
punctures.” Alexander pointed out.

The agents were aghast. Not only this entire case, that didn’t even begin as one, was getting
weirder and more mysterious as the time passed, instead of the enlightenment that usually came
with getting more clues, they felt like they were witnessing something not for them. And perhaps
that was true.

That felt like a family moment that just so happened to be taking place in a police precinct,
surrounded by complete strangers. But a weird family moment. With all that dark humor, it was
like they were witnessing the twenty-first-century version of the Addams Family.

“Actually, that was Plan V.” (Y/N) spoke again. Her voice sounded serious and humorous all at
once, like she was joking but not so much about brutally murdering her own mother. Not that she hadn’t thought about it.

“When one is this?” Jacob Holt asked, smiling. She turned to look at him, one of her two allies in this fight. One of the five people that knew (Y/N) was still alive. Holt had no idea, when (Y/N) showed up at his house, when she was eleven, for a slumber party with his little sister, that that woman would have such an influence in his life, including but not limited to the career he chose for himself and even the boyfriend that was at his place at the moment, eagerly awaiting the news about everything that was going on. She smiled.

“Plan E.”

“What was Plan A?” He asked again. At that point, (Y/N) didn’t know how much of what they were doing was an actual conversation on a performance, or even if those things were distinguishable from one another.

“Well,” She turned to look at Captain Coulter, who immediately swallowed hard, knowing what was coming right at that moment. “Plan A was when I was five and decided to come clean to the captain of the police force about my abusive mother who would beat me up and then lock me in an old, out of order freezer for hours.” She said, not even one emotion traversing her features. ‘That’s what it was, a freezer,’ Spencer thought, recalling the first video. “See, that wasn’t very clever of me, seeing as he was a friend of the family, or a lackey? I don’t know. Is there even is a difference with you two?” She asked, staring now at her parents.

“You little bitch.” Anastasia spouted.

“I have missed you so much, honey.” Rhett breathed.

(Y/N) couldn’t quite figure out which of those reaction’s was the most disgusting.

“Officer, if you will, take Mr. and Mrs. Sterling to holding. Different cells, please.” Hotch spoke, daring to end that scene. He pointed at one of the policeman standing, who had been watching as vicariously as everyone else. “I’ll take the Captain personally. This is going to be a lot of work.” He left, having said that last sentence to Derek, Spencer and Penelope.

Penelope, stand beside her coworkers at the entrance of the conference room, didn’t remember seeing (Y/N) at the files in the flash drive Holt had given to her, though. Granted, she knew she only could access the files she had been given access to, but still she felt like there should have been something in there with at least some information regarding what seemed like the first abuse that took place at that house. The only thing she could identify on the drive were pictures of the girls, the same ones used in the missing signs, their names (which she had used to search the FBI database) and one photo of each of them inside the basement, at a wide angle, perhaps from a surveillance camera.

All the superficial things the blonde had known about what happened in that poorly lit dirty room came from Detective Holt’s mouth, but he was dismissive. “Look, you’ll find out everything later. Right now, just focus on searching their names, okay?” Jacob’s tone had been friendly and soothing, and honestly that was the only thing that made Garcia not go full sassy on him for giving her orders. That and the likelihood he knew much more than her team did.

But still. Penelope looked at (Y/N) and wondered why was it that there was nothing about her. If she was responsible for all of that, the flash drive, the diversions, the invitations, she was most likely a genius, trying to circumnavigate the system, that had been rigged from the beginning. Being betrayed at such a young age by an adult, working for the police no less, probably made her
suspicious of anyone in law enforcement. And yet she contacted them. Plus any genius would’ve
known that the more evidence, the bigger the chances of a conviction, but perhaps the Sterling
girl’s privacy trumped it all.

“Wait!” Charlie spoke, and looked at (Y/N). All she gave him was a slight nod. He ran towards
Anastasia and gave her a hug, reverting back to a kid. A ten-year-old whose mother was being
arrested for abuse. Still, his mother, he thought.

Spencer had been eyeing (Y/N) all of the time. He missed Holt’s smile at her, he missed the severe
fearful reaction on Coulter’s face, he missed the fire behind the eyes of Anastasia and the tears
beginning to form on the eyes of Rhett. He missed all of that emotion to focus on the firmly
detached and deadpan face of the Sterling girl. There had to be to first time she confronted them
after all these years, it had to be her the one who did all of what brought them there, and yet… So it
came as a surprise to the young doctor when her brow furrowed ever so slightly and her lips
tightened only for trained eyes to see. At that moment, Spencer dared to look away from her and
see what she was seeing.

Charlie was whimpering quietly.

“This isn’t how this is supposed to go, (Y/N).” Anastasia said, hugging him tightly, but focusing on
her eldest daughter. (Y/N)’s features returned to their original stoic state.

“And how is this supposed to go, mother?” (Y/N) asked. “I guess I’m supposed to kill you? Like
you killed grandmother.”

Anastasia stared at her and smiled. “It is tradition, honey. Don’t deny it, I know you want it.”

“I do want it.” (Y/N) stared back, smiled and sighed. “I’m just not allowed to do it.”

Charlie broke the hug and looked at his mother. He took one hand, caressed her face and said: “I’d
never let her be anything like you.” And went back to stand at (Y/N)’s side. There was a moment
of silence until Holt demanded the officer to take them inside.

Spencer looked at (Y/N). Her face was uneventful, as if nothing weird had just happened. She
seemed absolutely unfazed until he looked at her right hand, no longer inside a pocket. She had the
same tick her brother had, the rubbing of the index finger on the back of the thumb, holding it in
between the thumb and the hand, and ultimately letting go. A nervous tick.

When the Sterlings were out of sight, she took a deep breath and closed her eyes.

“Can you believe this finally happened?” Holt asked. She opened her eyes and stared at him.

“No.”

(Y/N) looked down at her younger brother, tears streaming down his face even though he wasn’t
making a sound. She asked for permission and he held his arms high for her to pick him up. She
made a face; he was too heavy to be carried. But still a child. Still his youngest brother. Still
someone she loved and who needed her at that moment. Alexander picked up the little one, as they
prepared to leave.

“Where are you going?” Hotch came back from locking Coulter up and saw them leaving. He had
to ask, concerned with the victims, who were also witnesses. He originally thought they should
stay and give statements, but had a feeling that might not be the best idea. He knew somehow the
best course of action would be to let them go for the time being.
“Home.” Alexander said, plainly.

“I’m sorry, but you home is seized for the time being. It’s currently being thoroughly inspected by forensics.”

“No their house. Our home.” (Y/N) emphasized.

She turned to the other agents and looked at Penelope. “Thirteen–Five–Three–Twenty-four.” With that, the Sterling kids turned around and left.

Penelope ran towards her computer and typed in the numbers said by the girl, and all of those files she knew existed but couldn’t see appeared in her screen, as if magic.

Several video feeds of the girls in that basement, gruesome images, terrifying scenes, it all popped up on her screen.

Some videos were long, lasted days even, and were titled with an young woman’s name. Others were shorter, maybe a few minutes long, and were titled with a name followed by: “edited / lawyer – court”. At that moment, Penelope’s heart broke. For those missing girls, going through an unspeakable and painful experience, crying, afraid, missing their loved ones. And it broke for (Y/N), who she knew had to have seen all of them, had to be the one looking at the footage of his father –and sometimes mother– abusing girls who looked exactly like her. And were her.
look, i'm no detective and i have little to no understanding of the system, so just go with it ok?

but thanks for hanging on so far! :)  

ALSO (Y/N/N) stands for Your Nickname, like something cute a little brother would call you.

“We are gonna need her, right?” Emily asked, shortly after entering the room. She had been interrogating, or rather trying to, the Sterling couple. To no avail. Hotch had been getting similar results, or lack thereof, from Coulter.

Aaron nodded and looked at Holt, who sighed.

The truth was, without her help, they were getting nowhere. Aside from all the information given to her by them, they weren’t getting any results. For the past day, Penelope had been vigorously working on her computer. She found all of the girls' families in order to contact them and let them know what happened. Except the agents didn’t know what happened. The odds are all of them, especially the younger girls, the ones who were thirteen, fourteen, were dead, but they had no idea where the bodies were and none of the interrogations had any results. They were frustrated and needed (Y/N), which made Holt sigh.

But he knew he could trust the team, he knew they were reliable. Which was exactly the reason he suggested (Y/N) she look them up a few months ago. There was a serial killer in the hometown of Holt’s boyfriend, when they were visiting it, and the detective got to see firsthand how they worked so well, how they were fast and how, at a first glance at least, they seemed like good people. The killer was brought to justice fast, and Holt couldn’t help but hope the BAU was exactly what (Y/N) and him had been looking for all these years.

It’s not like she didn’t contact the FBI, but her father had friends in high places. A few years back, she had sent them an anonymous letter informing the wrongdoing going on in Rhinebeck, but quickly saw nothing would come of it when her father received a phone call asking about what was going on. Rhett had laughed, attributing the “very false” accusations to his opponents in the business and in life. “A rich man doesn’t get where he is without making a few enemies right?” He had laughed, and his FBI friend on the other side of the line laughed as well. After that, he increased his alertness when it came to the kidnapping of young girls and became much more cautious.

(Y/N) was angry. She had hacked inside the security system at the Sterling house, tapped into their telephone line and had been gathering evidence for some years now, and Rhett's sudden increase in discretion caused him to change all of those things, which made her job more difficult. But not impossible as she had hacked into all of them a mere week after the development. But that wasn’t what made her angry. She tried the police in Rhinebeck, they failed. She tried sending a couple of letters to the media, that failed as well. She tried a private detective, he was nowhere to be found, either he was dead or her father sent him running away. The FBI, the same, even though her hopes
weren’t high regarding that one. Law enforcement, as she had learned at a very young age, didn’t exactly mean anything.

So when Holt informed her of the BAU unit, she wasn’t exactly happy. “I’ve contacted the FBI, Jake.” (Y/N)’d said, taking a sip of her beer and putting her feet up on her desk. “No, but listen to me. Forget the institution. Forget the FBI. It’s them.” He stated, sitting next to her and staring at her computer screen. She groaned and sat upright, hacking into the FBI database and searching for their names. After a long time considering whether she should contact them, she went about deciding how that would go.

That’s how Jacob knew he could trust them with a very prized information that only a handful of people had. (Y/N)’s address.

----------------------------------------------------------------

Spencer and Derek were outside the three-story building. An old taffy factory, with the sign still hanging on the side.

“Huh, this doesn’t seem like a home, does it?” Morgan asked his friend beside him. Spencer said nothing and walked to the door Holt said was the entrance. There was a sign that said “Employees ONLY. Visitors please use front door”, and they entered. The factory was empty, rusty old machines still there. They walked towards and old freight elevator and pressed a button.

“Well, hello there.” Came the voice from the other side. At the sound of (Y/N)’s voice, Spencer felt excited, like he was closing in on a puzzle. He was intrigued and he hadn’t been yet completely aware that he was more fascinated with this case than anyone of his coworkers. Or honest with himself as to why he was so interested.

“Miss (Y/N), how have you been? Were you expecting us?” Morgan asked.

“No one gets anywhere near this place without me expecting them, Agent Morgan.” They heard a buzz but stood still, unsure of what they should do now. “Y’know, that sound means you can try to open the elevator door now. Don’t just stand there.” She said. They heard a click, like she hanged up, and looked at each other, intrigued. Morgan pulled the handle and opened the elevator doors, showing a much more clean and modern place then they’d seen so far. They entered and pressed the button they thought would lead them to the top floor, not knowing that the buttons didn’t exactly work and she was the one leading them up with her phone.

When the doors opened again, they were greeted with a long hallway and a heavy door at the far end of it. They walked all the way and pressed another buzz. Everything felt carefully constructed to Morgan. The old factory at a deserted location, but still within the town’s limits, that Garcia had tracked and found out belonged to a corporation in the business of renovation and real estate, one Penelope didn’t find absolutely anything about with the exception of website showcasing their work. “Yeah, that’s all fake, all for show. She bought it.” Holt said, plainly. The security measures and the lengths (Y/N) went to so that no one would find out about her seemed absurd to Derek, but not irrational. The only thing on Spencer’s mind however, as he went about the same places as his friends and thought the same things, was how this woman must’ve been afraid. He knocked.

After many clicks, the door opened to show a cheery Charlie holding two mugs containing coffee and a smiling Alexander, wearing clothes covered in paint. The agents said their hellos and started sipping the coffee, taking in the enormous loft they found themselves inside. With the exception of four doors at one end, everything else was open and the large windows let an insane amount of sunlight in. It was almost beautiful. The place was clean, but not exactly tidy. Isabella was playing with some Legos near the kitchen, building a large tower only to destroy that moments later with a
plastic dinosaur, and was surrounded by several toys, dolls, and plastic animals. Alexander’s nook was obvious, with a half-blank, half-painted canvas, a colorful portrayal of what could be seen out the windows. Charlie was still standing in front of them, waiting for their reactions to the coffee. It was exactly how they took it, and even Spencer’s coffee was the way he liked it: too sweet for anyone else to appreciate it.

“Hi, agents! Would you like to see my room? It’s a lot more cool than my other room.” He chuckled.

At that moment, (Y/N) appeared from behind a fridge standing in the middle of the living room near the kitchen, with her clothes dirty, like she had been trying to fix it. Spencer noticed there were a lot of refrigerated food on the counter and an empty space where it had been originally. He realized that was what she was doing. She took a tool from a toolbox near her feet and disappeared behind the broken item again.

“He has been really excited to show you his room, Agent Morgan. I would go with him if I were you, that kid doesn’t take no for an answer.” They heard her say. Derek smiled at Charlie and felt a hand on his. Isabella came up to them and wanted to show her room as well, still not speaking. As he was being dragged by the smaller kids, followed closely by Alexander, Spencer and (Y/N) were left alone.

The older genius made his way towards where she was, still sipping in his coffee. Unsure of how he should start a conversation, he just stared at the yogurts, the milk, the takeout containers and miscellaneous things on the counter.

“You’re free to take one of those things if you want.” (Y/N) said, staring at him. He gave her a small shy smile, with his lips tightened.

“I’m good.” He said, and watched her as she went back to working on the fridge. She was wearing a long-sleeved shirt, baggy worn-out jeans and her hair tied up.

Spencer couldn’t help but wonder what was going through her mind. Her abusive parents had been imprisoned. Her siblings were living with her, although it did seem like they had their own rooms and stuff at her house for longer than one night. The secret about her family was out, and everyone in that small town was talking about them. And here she was, trying to fix a kitchen appliance on her. The absurdity of the situation was not lost in Reid. He must’ve been quiet for a while because when he came to himself, she was standing a few feet away from him, analyzing the genius.

“Dr. Reid, was there anything you needed from me?” She asked, arms crossed and a playful smile on her face.

He cleaned his throat, but instead of his usual approach, he decided he’d try something different. “Um, since you’re not gonna like what we are about to ask you, I’m not sure on how to request what we need from you.” He said, as if they’d known each other forever, and not just met. Spencer thought he recognized some sociopathy or psychopathy signs on her and decided to act accordingly, not wanting to waste the time of people who didn’t like to have their time wasted.

“Which is… my help.” She said, messing with some wires behind the appliance.

“Your help, yes.” He agreed, watching as she made some force with a screwdriver.

“After everything I already did for your team, all the information I gathered, all of the evidence I handed over to the FBI."
“After all that, yes.” Spencer nodded, watching as she nodded dramatically, still hard at work.

After a moment of silence, she spoke.

“Do you wanna know the beauty of Plan E, Dr. Reid?” She asked, rhetorically, but Spencer answered anyway, though not quite what she had asked.

“You can call me Spencer.” He said, serious, but his friendly hazel eyes getting the message across, the “You can trust me” message.

“You know, I’d rather not. I prefer Dr. Reid.” She continued, ignoring his attempt. “The beauty of Plan E, Reid, is that once I handed all that I had on my parents, every single bit of information, I no longer would be a part of this. I wouldn’t have to obsess over whether or not their cameras were working, whether weird phone calls were being made, if another girl had disappeared. Nothing. And I wouldn’t have to testify since I was never in on anything. All of the responsibility would be passed on to the FBI, and I wouldn’t have to be caught up in this mess any second longer.” She explained, the same detached voice tone Spencer recognized, but also the same nervous tick on her hand. (Y/N) saw where he was looking and immediately stopped fidgeting.

“That’s foolish.” He said, and her eyebrows furrowed at that insult. “N-no, no, no, I don’t mean it that way. I mean… Look, we obviously need your help, none of this would have been accomplished without you. That much is obvious. But it’s not about testifying. It’s about making the Sterlings talk. They haven’t asked for a lawyer yet, but aren’t saying anything, which makes me think they might be enjoying the attention. The profile certainly fits. We just need a little more of your time.” He explained, fidgeting with his own hands now, starting to get ready to ask her something on the back of his mind. He pushed it a little further. “You can trust us, okay?”

(Y/N) laughed. “Right, because you people did an impressive job so far protecting innocent girls. I don’t quite trust your team, Reid.”

“But you do trust me, right?” He said, the question burning in his tongue as it left his mouth. He had been thinking about that for a while now. It’s wasn’t like the whole team received e-mails, only Penelope and him. And they were as personal as they came. From what Spencer could gather, everything that girl did, she did for a reason. (Y/N) stopped what she was doing, her back turned to him. He could see her tensed muscles, her rigid posture. It felt like he had touched a nerve about trust. “And Garcia as well? Isn’t that why we both got those menacing invitations?”

She turned to look at him, and her facial features were very different than what her body appeared to be showing. Spencer realized at that moment he would have a very hard time reading her.

“You’re dying to know why, aren’t you?” She asked with a smile, eyebrows raised, taking a cloth from the counter and cleaning her oiled hand. He didn’t answer, but then again, he didn’t have to. “The rest of the team had quite the file, Doctor. All of them pristine employees, superb agents, extremely accoladed and accomplished. But you, Reid… You. You had an addiction, right?” She inquired, watching his face twitch slightly. “Yeah, Dilaudid huh? After being kidnapped and tortured, you developed an addiction to what the offender had been giving you to numb the pain. And for the longest time you kept that away from your coworkers, your colleagues and friends. Your superiors, even. Your files do bare it all, Doc.” (Y/N) explained, even though he never asked how she knew all that. “And Garcia, well… She did begin her life as a hacker working to bring down big, evil corporations.” She emphasized dramatically. “So…” (Y/N) let that sentence hanging.

Spencer just stared at the woman in front of him, dumbfounded. “You trust me because I had an addiction?” He asked, astonished. It didn’t escape (Y/N) that he had only mentioned himself.
“You see, around here a spotless record is just another lie, Doctor.” She said plainly, trying to
gather from his reaction what was going through his mind. It’s not that she liked him or disliked
him. She just didn’t care enough. Her interest was a mere reflection of curiosity. He looked away
from her face and stared at the open back of the fridge.

“Have you tried adjusting the refrigerator’s high speed compressors?” He asked, abruptly changing
the subject and reaching for the fridge, standing right next to (Y/N). She smiled inwardly and went
along with it. It was likely he wasn’t too ready to talk about trust yet.

“It’s not the compressor, it’s the expansion device.” She explained, and saw on the other side of
the room, Derek and her three siblings. (Y/N) thought she saw a sparkle in his eyes, like he had
been on the verge of tears.

Which wasn’t wrong. Upon entering the kids’ room, Derek felt a twitch in his heart, but a good
one. In high contrast with the white tidy rooms where nothing was out of place, their rooms at
(Y/N) had life.

Charlie’s room was filled with posters of gore and horror movies, one of Marie Curie –his favorite
scientist–, and one of the mushroom cloud formed right after the bombing of Hiroshima. Below
that, there was a smaller photo of the devastated city. “I like building bombs. I’m really good at it
too. Fireworks as well. (Y/N/N) put up that picture—” He pointed at the photo, “—so I’d know how
to use this knowledge of mine, y’know? She explained that, as geniuses, we absolutely need to do a
lot of good. Plus nuclear fission can be used for a lot more than destroying entire cities.” He had
explained, with a smile. Derek wasn’t sure how he should feel about that, but made a mental note
to discuss that with the team later on.

Isabella’s room was another mess, and impossible to get in. The Lego-filled floor made it seem like
it was a minefield, but Iz had no problem walking around it, with a sparkle in her eyes and a huge
smile on her face as she showcased her favorite place to the agent. It almost made him crack. The
duvet, instead of a blinding white one, was one of a little girl riding a unicorn. The walls were
filled with her own artwork, “the happy ones”, as Alexander had pointed out. It looked like her
favorite things were drawing and building and destroying big block structures, and Derek was so
very touched that at that place she got to be surrounded by those things.

They didn’t go in Alexander’s room, he was merely chaperoning Morgan, but the door was open
and Derek peeked inside. A lot of paintings hung up and some sculptures. He was the artsy type,
apparently.

So it’s understandable why the agent, who had rescued the kids with their arms held high at that
monstrous house, had a hard time keeping it together upon seeing their actual rooms.

“Reid—“ Derek began, but was interrupted by a very concentrated Spencer.

“What about trying rerouting these wires? I’m thinking that, if it doesn’t work, you might have to
buy a new device.” He explained, bent down slightly, eyes fixed on the appliance. (Y/N) stared at
him and bit her lips, trying to conceal the smile making way on her face. He had completely
forgotten why they were there in the first place. At that moment, she figured out she might as well
give the team a chance— another one.

Derek cleared his throat and Spencer realized he had been focusing on the wrong thing and made
an “Oh” sound.

“I’ll go.” She said, looking at Morgan and avoiding Spencer’s gaze. “I’ll help you. I just need to
take a shower first—“ She showed her dirty hands and clothes, “—and then we can go.” (Y/N)
Derek looked at Spencer, surprised and proud he had managed to convince that girl she should face the ones she had been escaping from her entire life, but the young doctor knew he had little to do with it. He knew that (Y/N) weren’t the kind of person to be convinced to do something, she was either willing or weren’t, no in between.

“So you’re the artsy type?” Derek asked, nodding to Alexander. He smiled.

“Charlie, can you look after Iz? I’ll show them my spot.” He said, and lead the agents to a shaft. He opened it and went inside first, Derek and Spencer coming down the stairs right behind him. He turned on some lights to show an enormous room filled with artwork, supplies, and blank canvases. He then turned back to the agents and studied their reactions.

“Look, guys. I don’t know what it is that you plan on doing asking my sister for help again, after everything she’s already done. But I’m pretty sure that you know better than to put her at risk. I’ve seen how you look at us, Agent Morgan, and how you examined our rooms closely, and you know that not only are we better off far away from that house, but also there’s no better place for us than here. She risked everything, and I mean everything to get to the point where we are right now. So you better know what kind of help you’re asking her to do, because she can’t even fathom any limits when it comes to putting Anastasia and Rhett in jail. No one ever took care of her, so she doesn’t know when to stop.”

Spencer paid close attention to what Alexander was saying, one of the few glances into (Y/N) they’ve had so far. But something caught his eye hanging in one of the walls. He continued to listen, but his eyes were no longer on the oldest Sterling boy.

“You need to stop her before she gets hurt.”

Derek nodded and settled some of Alex’s concerns, but Spencer wasn’t listening anymore.

It was a portrait of (Y/N). Extremely colorful, with a heavy use of orange and red, which caused quite a contrast with the look on her face. She was sad, her eyes seemed empty and her mouth dropped on the sides. Some light colors were used on the corner of her eyes, to characterize some tears the doctor assumed.

“Oh, I used some gouache paint and sort of played around…” Alexander started explaining, but Spencer wasn’t listening yet again. He was barely breathing. After a long description of the techniques used, the young painter asked: “Beautiful, huh?”

The words left Spencer’s mouth in an breathy sigh. “Yeah. Beautiful.”

Upon hearing some talk upstairs, they went back to the loft and saw a damp haired (Y/N), still putting on her leather jacket. It was then Spencer noticed all the tattoos going up and down on both her arms. She felt his gaze and finished covering herself, zipping up the jacket.

She looked up at them and asked: “Shall we?”

walked away and went into the bathroom.
The Help

Interrogating Rhett had been easy.

The mere sight of (Y/N) had made him crack again. He detailed everything he had done to those girls while Agent Hotchner sat at the other side of the table and she stood against the wall, her back to the two-way mirror. He did so while sobbing and staring at her from time to time, as if apologizing, but at no point she gave him another look than her standard stern, serious look. At one point, he had been crying so hard that the agent sent him back to the cell for him to calm down, so they could continue the next day.

As he left, Hotch turned to her. “Is all of it true?”

“Yes.” She said, her monotone voice conveying she knew what he was asking. “He never touched me. In any way. I don’t recall him ever hugging me.”

After a pause, the agent asked: “You know, at some point we might have to interrogate you, to get your side of the story.”

“Later rather than sooner right?” She asked, giving him a nod and leaving the room.

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Interrogating Anastasia was entirely different.

(Y/N) closed the door of the interrogation room and stood still. There she was. Her abusive mother. The woman who had locked her in an out of order freezer for most of her childhood and that got her out of there hours later, apologizing profusely, hugging her tightly, promising she would never do that, ever again. (Y/N) was a genius, like Spencer. An IQ of 193, a photographic memory, performed quick mathematical thinking. And even she had a hard time figuring out how many hours she had spent locked up. But she knew it was only because of the pain getting in the way of her abilities. And while it took her longer that it should to perform that calculation, (Y/N) still held the answer.

“Eight thousand, six hundred and forty-three hours, twenty-seven minutes and two seconds.” She said, still standing, her eyes burning a hole on her mother’s face. Anastasia smiled.

“You can’t still be mad about that. It’s how I was taught discipline. It’s how you should’ve been taught discipline.” The older woman answered plainly, placing her handcuffed hands on the table, one on top of the other. She studied her daughter while (Y/N) had a hard time keeping her serious features. And the young genius knew that’s what her mother intended, so she thought of a way to pay her back.

“I guess I’m not very disciplined then.” (Y/N) answered, nearing the table. She started taking off
her leather jacket, and at the sight of her tattooed arms, Anastasia lost it. Completely.

“What have you done to my body?” She shouted, trying to stand up but being prevented by the handcuffs attached to the table. Anastasia looked enraged, and the vein on her forehead was starting to show. (Y/N) had almost forgotten about that vein. Almost.

“You mean my body, right? I’m not yours.”

“You are MINE, (Y/N)! Mine and no one else’s and this is my body.” She screamed pointing at her daughter, and Emily began to leave the room behind the mirror, making way to the interrogation room, but Hotch stopped her, saying they would only get in the way. Anastasia’s entire body language and posture changed. "I had so many plans for you, my darling.” She stopped. (Y/N) expected it. “You truly are beautiful, something special.” And there it was, that sentence. That sentence that made her be eleven again, that turned her into a little girl who just wanted some affection even if it came from the woman who had just lock her up.

“Yeah.” (Y/N) laughed a little, and looked straight into Anastasia’s eyes. “You have no idea how many people said I was beautiful too. In fact, you have no idea how many people have touched this body, your body, right? How many people desecrated your body, how many people touched it and felt it and soiled it with their own body.” She ran out of breath, and her mother was on the verge of tears.

“You know better than to let anyone touch you. I told you: do not let ANYONE TOUCH YOU.” She screamed one more time, and the room felt silent. (Y/N) considered her options.

“Dad already confessed, he said all the things he did and all the things you did. In fact, giving your side of the story can only help you, so I’m not even sure why I’m here, trying.” The young woman lied. “But I guess is to ask you this: if not even good ol’ Rhett is on your side, who is?” After a moment of silence, she asked again. “Do you even know why you do the things you do?”

“Tradition, honeybee.” Anastasia said with a smile, after taking a deep sigh. (Y/N) shivered internally upon hearing that nickname. She took a pen from her pocket and placed in front of her mother, on top of the yellow pad already sat there.

“You don’t have a choice, it seems.” When (Y/N) made a motion to leave, her mother spoke up.

“You know your father is a monster too, right? An even worst one” She said, accusations hanging in the air, remembering the last thing ever spoken by (Y/N) to her mother more than ten years ago. Her mother looked almost... hurt. The young woman stopped at the door, her hand on the knob.

“I know.” She turned to Anastasia. “He’s just not my monster.” And left.

Spencer analyzed the situation quickly. When interrogating her father, (Y/N) seemed more calm, if not relieved. And when she left the room, she turned to Agent Morgan, already prepared to go wherever her mother was. She wasn’t out of herself, specially if you considered she had just confronted the man who had been kidnapping girls who looked like her, his first daughter, and subsequently abusing them on his basement. But it’s not like she didn’t know that; in fact, (Y/N) had been one of the only people who actually knew that for the longest time. So Spencer figured out that it must’ve been the prolonged exposure to the atrocities he committed that accounted for the way she acted. But when (Y/N) had to face her mother, she was a mess. The young doctor knew that reading her was a challenge, but it wasn’t that difficult when she was overtly upset after confronting her monster, as the girl had said herself.

Upon seeing that she had quickly reached the elevator, Spencer walked towards the stairs. He tried
looking for her at the first floor, but she was nowhere to be found, so he took a quick look to see what was different from the last time he had glanced at that place and realized the back door was slightly open. When he went outside, he saw her. (Y/N)’s eyes opened wide, surprised that she had been caught, and she put her hands on her back, but not before Spencer saw the bruise and blood on her right knuckle, a clear indicator she had punched a hard surface.

“You might wanna get that checked out.” Spencer said, absentmindedly taking a step towards her. She took a step back and he immediately stopped.

“I’m fine.” Her words dropped out of her mouth dryly, and there was a little bit of regret on (Y/N)’s part. Just a tiny bit. Just a slither of regret after being annoying to someone who had done nothing but help her so far. But honestly, it was almost nothing, that small bit, so she let that go. There was a heavy silence, and she winced from the pain, against her will, so Spencer changed the subject to get her mind off of it.

“We truly appreciate your help, and I think your work might be done here for the day. So thank you.” He said, putting his hands on his pockets and looking down. He bit his lips. “Um, would you like a ride back to your apartment? It’s a bit far, and you did come with us so..."

“It’s okay, I’ll walk home.” She insisted and entered the building again, being followed by the agent.

“Um, right. Okay. Yeah.” They both entered the elevator and Spencer spoke again. “It’s just that your brother, Alexander, is very protective of you—” He began, and saw a small smile creeping up on her face. He had to refrain from smiling himself. “And I– well, both Agent Morgan and I promised we would look after you. Plus, it’s getting late, and dark, and you know that there is an increase of 58% in the chance someone might be robbed or attacked in the streets after the sun sets?"

“I did not know that, no."

The elevators doors opened and (Y/N) grabbed her bag from the table on the conference room. When she turned, Spencer, who had been following her closely while going on in his ramble, was standing too close and she could smell the vanilla and nutmeg scent that radiated from him.

“You’re on my way.” She said, pointing at the door behind him.

“Right.” He gave her some space, and she rushed past him. He followed her, again. “So, as I was saying, I think I owe it to your brother– and very likely to the profession I chose– to make sure you arrive home safely.” Spencer stood next to her while she pressed the button of the elevator and had a thought as he saw her entering the elevator. He did a quick analysis again, and thought the risks outweighed the uncertainty of the situation. “Wait!” He exclaimed, and ran off to the kitchen of the precinct. He grabbed a cloth, some ice and made an ice pack only to see she had already taken the elevator. Spencer groaned and went down the stairs one more time, rapidly. He ran to the entrance of the police station and looked to his right, out of breath.

“Don’t agents have to go through physical training or something like that?” She asked on his left, standing against the wall. He smiled and offered her the icepack. She furrowed her brows.

“Your fridge is broken.” He said, pulling the keys out of his pocket and walking towards the car. She followed him, trying her best not to appear touched. Which she was. She looked at him, standing with the door to the driver side open, waiting for her.

“Right, yeah.”
She entered the car and looked at him. “You know, I am probably coming back tomorrow, so you really don’t need to be so eager to interrogate me right now. I mean, you can try to profile me tomorrow.” She chuckled, putting on her seatbelt and placing the ice on her hand.

“That is not the—“ He stopped, seeing how she was staring at him and realizing there was a very little chance of him getting away with a lie. “—entire reason I offered you a ride.” He said, and they sat in silence for a while.

“You call him ‘father’, and her ‘mother’.” Spencer said, after a while. She had been enjoying the quiet but his sudden questioning made her chuckle. He just couldn’t hold it in.

“What?” She asked, with a smile.

“You call them the way one is supposed to call their parents, but your siblings don’t. They use their first names.” Spencer explained, his eyes on the road. She nodded.

“And what does that tell you, Reid?”

“That it was easy for you to dissociate—“ He started, but (Y/N) interrupted him.

“Easy might be the wrong word, Doctor.”

He looked away from the road, and his eyes found hers. She looked relaxed, her posture was of one who wasn’t alert and Spencer considered why was that, and if she actually trusted him for the reasons previously stated by the girl. But then again, he couldn’t be too sure (Y/N) was actually calm as she seemed. And he had looked at her after phrasing the question the wrong way. He couldn’t quite trust the features of a sociopath to tell the truth.

“Right, well having been gone for so—“

“I haven’t been anywhere but here.” Shen interrupted one more time, calmly. They reached the old factory where she lived, and Spencer stopped the car. “Don’t look too sad you haven’t been given a chance to psychoanalyze me, Doc. Tomorrow, I’ll just have to tell the truth, otherwise I might be risk going to jail for something as stupid and daft as obstruction of justice. So don’t worry.” She said, getting out of the car. Before she could close the door, Spencer opened his mouth, but no sound came out of it. (Y/N) raised her eyebrows and waited for him.

“Does it hurt?”

She looked at her hand, and felt so many things all at once. The woman was sure the man in front of her had asked about her fresh injury, but it could be about anything really. The way he asked her, his eyes never leaving her eyes, not to glance at her hand once. She bit her lip and looked away, staring at the door of the factory, her life waiting for her inside of that old building. (Y/N) smiled a bit and looked at him.

“It’s getting better. Thank you, Reid.” And left.

(Y/N) made her way upstairs and was greeted by her brothers and an eager Isabella, who had been promised early in the day by the oldest of the Sterling kids that chocolate chip cookies and banana bread would be their dinner. But there was a bit of disappointment on their faces after the recipe didn’t turn out the way it usually did. Apparently, (Y/N) hadn’t used vanilla extract or freshly grated nutmeg, and it threw the whole recipe off balance. She couldn’t. It was hard to pinpoint why, but that smell, that particular smell when she grabbed the vanilla beans and the nutmeg had been making her… queasy.
Spencer, on the other hand, was a bit confused as he drove back to the station. She said he looked sad, but he didn’t remember feeling sad. What was it about him that made her feel like the young doctor was sad? Had he been sad? He tried to figure out what was it that might’ve made him feel a bit gloom, but he couldn’t. Nothing of extraordinary happened. The only thing that happened before she said that, Spencer thought to himself, was that they had arrived at her destination. And why should that make him feel sad?
Even though she had anticipated all that happened, it was hard for (Y/N) not to feel ambushed. But that was her own fault, for letting her guard down.

The following day, she arrived at the police station alone. She wore a white tank top underneath the black leather jacket, black skinny jeans and a pair of combat boots. Upon seeing her leave their home, Alexander jokingly asked if she was gearing up for battle, which she responded by giving him a weak smile. That had made him suspicious, and the fact that (Y/N) had rejected his multiple offers to take her to the station and wait for her there to take her back, perhaps alongside Charlie and Isabella, made him even more weary of what was going on, but he let her go alone.

As if completely familiar with her surroundings and almost like she had belonged there her entire life, (Y/N) went straight to the conference room where they all the agents were, all of them stopping to look at her. Silence fell into the room until she spoke.

“Jacob is on his way here.” She said, absentmindedly, entering the room and walking around looking at the files, like she hadn’t been the one to give them to the BAU. “He’s really excited to be back to work, so he’ll want to thank you, Agent Hotchner.”

“Was he suspended because of this case?” He asked, carefully reading the girl. But, much like his colleagues, he was finding it difficult.

“There wasn’t any case, Agent. He was suspended for asking too many questions about the missing girls. And for ‘sticking his nose where it didn’t belong’, that was Coulter’s exact phrasing apparently.” She stopped in front of the board with all the girls’ missing signs photos and carefully and slowly looked at each one of them. The air in the room was heavy, as everyone tried anticipating her next move, her feelings, her thoughts.

“We can talk with you in another room, if you’d like.” Said JJ, her kind eyes apologetic and soothing. (Y/N) smiled for a moment without looking at the blonde woman.

“No, no. This is fine. I quite like looking at these photos. They look different then what I’ve grown accustomed to.” (Y/N) explained, eyes peeled on the photographs. “Not crying, not suffering, not wishing they were dead.” She said, then turned around and smiled at the agents. “So, to which one of you should I talk?” She sounded peppy almost, and Emily wasn’t sure about whether she should trust this girl or not.

Most of the time they weren’t discussing the case and how to proceed with it (having ultimately decided to reach out to the branch of the bureau that handles police corruption that damaging to come to Rhinebeck and manage its police station, amongst other important matters), the team was talking about (Y/N). They have discussed everything, what they knew—which was almost nothing—and even what they didn’t know—having been left to guess pretty much everything about the girl. All of them had formed their opinions on her, and while some were sympathetic and ultimately trusted her, some were suspicious of her behavior and wondered to what extent she was being honest. Alas, none of them actually knew much, so they never actually disagreed with one another when an opinion about (Y/N) was being voiced—anyone could be right, or wrong.

A tall bespectacled man entered the room at this moment and directed himself to the girl. She had recognized him from her research the night before: Tim Jefferson. The name had popped up when she was listening to the agents talk through the bug she planted. He was the lead of the task force that was assigned to look into the corruption at the station, and he was brooding.
“Excuse me, agents, Miss Sterling.” He turned to Hotch. “Agent Hotchner, we’ll need to interrogate her.”

“That’s what we plan on doing as well, Agent Jefferson.”

“Properly.” The man said, fixing his glasses and looking around the room. “A proper interrogation must be done in the interrogation room, Agent. Miss Sterling, if you’d like to accompany me.” (Y/N) looked at him and smiled inwardly. So it begins.

“I don’t think this is necessary, Jefferson.” Hotch replied, his brows lightly furrowed. “She has been cooperating with us since the beginning.”

“Look, I don’t know how you do things on the BAU…” Jefferson said, an air of superiority about him. “But in my division, we like to do things by the book, and Ms. Sterling is also a criminal. She tapped into the FBI database, she hacked the Sterling house cameras, she took guard of her siblings without expressed permission from their parents or the state. So, I won’t say again. Miss (Y/N), if you please.” He said, and opened the door for her. The girl followed suit, with a light nod. They took her to the interrogation room, but not before Hotch had a few words to say to Jefferson, so she was left alone.

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When Jacob arrived at the precinct, it had been ten minutes since the two agents from different divisions started bickering on how going about talking to (Y/N), who was still waiting. Rossi was trying to mediate them, to no avail.

Holt was angry. As her close friend, he was forbidden from making her company, so he entered the room with the two-way mirror. Spencer, Morgan, JJ and Prentiss were there, talking about the argument going on outside. Upon his arrival, they stopped talking and stared at (Y/N), as if suddenly remembering someone was on the other side of the glass. So he just leaned against the wall and stared at his friend, who was standing behind the table, hands on her pockets, looking at nowhere in particular. Her eyes the only part of her body that was moving.

“She’s been standing like that for a full ten minutes. She only moved to stretch her arms to her side once.” Prentiss stated, almost scoffing, and Holt could hear it in her voice. How the agent thought (Y/N) was weird, and demonstrated psychopathic and sociopathic features, how something deep down was wrong with her, because no normal human being would have just stayed like that. He got even angrier, and it was hard for him to conceal the despise on his tone when replying to the brunette.

“You try spending most of your entire childhood locked up, alone, in a chest freezer only to find yourself years later alone in a 6’ by 7’ interrogation room when all you’ve done is help the police, if not do their entire job for them.” He bit back, still looking at (Y/N). God, how he wished someone, anyone was in there with her, just an actual person so she wouldn’t feel like the walls were closing in on her. He knew. He knew that was why she was standing like that, not daring to sit, because being up on her feet was something she couldn’t do inside the freezer. And he knew that when standing wasn’t enough, and she still felt trapped, (Y/N) would open her arms, the feeling a bit more liberating. It was a good thing she only had done it once though. It was still manageable.

Spencer had a revelation at the same time his heart ached inside his chest. For both of the girls.

“Did Anastasia ever lock Isabella on that freezer at the basement?” The genius asked, having suddenly connected that movement to the one (Y/N) made her little sister do the first time they all
saw the oldest Sterling girl. The Isabella must’ve been so scared, all those people on the precinct, a lot of yelling. And it made sense to Spencer now, that she said “crammed”.

Jacob stared at someone else besides his friend for the first time and sighed. “Yeah, a couple of times. My guess is she was beginning to do with Iz the same thing she started with (Y/N) a long time ago and never got to finish.”

The room felt silent, and Prentiss was starting to feel bad for the girl the other side of the mirror. She was still wary, though. All of them watched Hotch and Jefferson enter the room and start the interrogation. (Y/N) sat for the first time.

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What followed was an interrogation that frustrated both of the agents. She barely said a word, refused the presence of a lawyer, and yet knew exactly how to behave in that situation. She answered dryly to all of the questions posed by Jefferson and was a little more polite, but not a lot, when Hotch had been the one interrogating her. Although Hotch was secretly glad she had been making it so hard for them. He knew it was only because of Jefferson and was beginning to form an idea that would probably free her from any jail time or conviction in case the other agent got his way, specially after JJ had informed him of the conversation that went down earlier. Tim Jefferson was hellbent on watching (Y/N) pay for her crimes, ignoring all the good she’d done, because ‘it was the law’. He really was by the book.

“One of you should talk to her now.” Hotch said directing his attention to Spencer and Penelope. He had called for Garcia and they were standing in the hallway right outside the room (Y/N) was in.

“What? Why? Sir, I have no experience with that, you know. I just sit in my perfect posterior all day, being my fabulous self. I don’t know how to interrogate people.” Penelope protested, and Spencer just looked at her. “I know you said she trusted me, but how, honey? That makes no sense.”

“Look, Spencer already talked to her a few times.” The boss stated, and Penelope interrupted.

“So that means she already established a bond with him, right?” The blonde woman asked, trying to get out of having to talk to (Y/N).

“Yes.” Hotch said, and she sighed in relief. But too early. “It could also mean that she might feel like she revealed too much already to Reid, and a new face might reset something in her brain. This is a woman who’s been having all these informations for far too long but no one has been listening to her. She might be more talkative if more than one person talk to her. So you’re both gonna do it, but I need you to go in there now, Garcia.”

She sighed again, but defeated this time. She was kind of afraid of (Y/N), with all the talk she was a psycho and the Adam Webb invitation, but also simultaneously impressed, having been blown away by the intelligence of the Sterling girl. The code she wrote, the hacking of the FBI database with almost no sign of anything strange, and everything else about that case.

She mumbled an “Yes, sir” and entered the interrogation room. (Y/N) was standing up again, but sat as Penelope did the same. The blonde perky woman was visibly upset and subtly shaking, nervous, and (Y/N) felt almost bad about what she’d done, bringing up childhood memories for the tech analyst. Almost, because it was a mean to an ending.

“Hi.” Garcia stated mechanically. (Y/N) smiled.
“You don’t do this often, do you?” The Sterling girl asked.

“No, not really.” Penelope breathed, feeling almost a bit relieved. Like she wouldn’t have to pretend she was an expert at what she was doing.

“It’s okay, I’ll help you out. What do you need to know?” At that moment, Garcia thought Spencer might have been right. (Y/N) was peculiar, and certainly acted different around the BAU geniuses. But then again, she never did really acted the same with anyone.

“I honestly don’t know what I’m supposed to ask you.”

(Y/N) smiled one more time. “I know what you’re supposed to ask me. But aren’t you gonna ask me first what you want to know?”

“And what do I wanna know?”

“Why you.” (Y/N) stated simply, and Penelope swallowed in fear. She had been wondering that, even though she told Reid she didn’t believe in him. The truth was, the blonde woman just didn’t want to be a special part of any of that, particularly if it involved bringing back awful memories.

The room was silent. “You know, hacking in the FBI was fairly easy, but accessing the files of the BAU was the hard part. And I knew that was because of you, Miss Garcia.”

“I take care of my own.” Penelope said, firmly. The other girl just nodded. “And so do you, right?”

“I certainly try.”

“I think ‘succeed' might be the better word here. You saved their lives. That girl. Your siblings.”

(Y/N) just smiled and looked down. The room fell silent.

Prentiss smiled lightly at the other side of the mirror, impressed with her friend. They had been eyeing the brief interaction so far, a sulked Jefferson leaning against the wall with his arms crossed. JJ eyed Spencer carefully, his own eyes completely focused on the two women in front of them.

“You were never angry.” JJ whispered, and Spencer looked at his friend, furrowing his eyebrows.

“The invitation. Maeve.”

Spencer stared at the blonde woman at his side. “I just… I don’t know.”

“You noticed it from the very beginning, didn’t you?” She asked again in a low tone, to keep the others outside of their conversation. He nodded, a small smile making way on his face.

“I guess I was, a little bit. Angry, I mean… Maybe sad actually. Mostly because it reminded me of her in an upsetting situation, marrying her abusive ex. But it was so weird and then… I could only read it as a cry for help. Plus Garcia had just received a similar one, and I started making comparisons, you know? They both alluded to abusive situations, they both mentioned something red—a clear indicator of blood, it could have been an unconscious choice on her part because it’s also highly connected to stressful situations—plus it said ‘eager for you arrival’. And I sort of became too wrapped up in the puzzle to focus on the fact that Maeve was ever mentioned. I’m not sad anymore… I mean, I just think now that, with everything that has been going on in this town, there isn’t really anything (Y/N) wouldn’t do to free those people. So I can understand that she tried to find a way to call our attention without being too on the nose. If I’m being fair, I think neither I nor Penelope should resent her for those invitations.”
JJ smiled lightly and placed a hand on her friend’s shoulder. “You can, you know? Just because it’s somewhat justified…”

“I know, but it’s counterproductive, won’t lead me anywhere and, honestly? I think Holt is right. Wouldn’t we all had done the same? The hurt brought upon either of us doesn’t come near the hurt these people, specially her, went through for years. And I can tell you feel the same.” Spencer said, and JJ raised her eyebrows and smiled lightly, but didn’t say anything because the Sterling girl was about to talk again.

“I saved their lives.” She mirrored the sentence Garcia had said to her. “You know whose life was saved? Mine. Several times throughout all these years.” The girl said, starting to feel her heart beat faster. She suspected what she was about to say next would scare the blonde woman in front of her, but (Y/N) had a plan and she was going to stick with it. “When I was about three-years-old, I killed my first pet. A bunny named Clyde. I took a kitchen knife, went to the backyard and sliced him open.” She smiled at that moment, feeling good. The startled look on Penelope’s face didn’t stop her. “It was only when I was about fifteen that I found out that killing small animals as a kid might be a sign of psychopathy and also a clue to a future serial killer. Because when I was a child, all I had was this deep desire to hurt something. When my mother told me she was pregnant, all I could think about was that a small thing, that thing that was like a pet, would be born in a while, and I would hurt something more than an animal. I was so excited I could barely sleep, Miss Garcia. So you can imagine my surprise when Alexander was born and the only thing I felt was this intense need to protect him. That little thing, that tiny baby was one of my own I realized soon enough, and he was doomed to suffer in the hand of our parents what I had suffered. And I couldn’t let that happen. I wouldn’t.” (Y/N) paused, feeling her mouth dry up.

Penelope had a look of sadness and fear.

"I was so scared to hurt him, actually, that the very first time I held Alex, I almost dropped him. And then I spent a week feeling guilty whenever I looked at him, but he just adored me. From the very beginning. He laughed at things I did, which no one had ever done before. He’d extend his tiny hand to caress my face, also an unprecedented thing in the Sterling household. We bonded immediately. So I kept focusing on my pets. When he was a bit older, he had a kitty. Mr. Tickles was his name. One day I took Mr. Tickles and went to the backyard to do what I always did and had been enjoying myself when I saw Alex. He looked horrified, and I froze. I had failed the one thing I had promised I’d do, which was to not hurt him. At that moment, seeing the look on his face, the scared face of the only person I loved in the world, as organically and naturally as the need to hurt things came, it went away. And I was a bit scared he was gonna tell our mother what I’d done, because no doubt she would have locked me up for a long time for it. But another part of me wanted him to cry and make a scandal, because I deserved it. I deserved to be beaten up and imprisoned for the crime of hurting my brother.” She stopped and looked down, fiddling with her fingers. “You see, you think one of the lives I saved was his, but from where I’m standing, Miss Garcia, if it hadn’t been for Alex, we would be standing just like we are right now, opposite sides of this table, but in a much different situation.”

Penelope was on the verge of tears now and all she wanted was to leave. She stood up and walked to the door, but (Y/N) spoke when she touched the door knob.

“Your hacking job before you started working with the FBI and your desk.” (Y/N) said, and Garcia turned to look at the girl, regretting ever being there in the first place. She wasn’t afraid anymore, ironically. Just terribly sad. ‘Why you.’ You hacked the website of companies that tested their products on animals and your desk is filled with colorful trinkets of several animals, specially cats. When I saw that, I just knew. You are a good person, Penelope Garcia. Radically different than me. So why wouldn’t I trust you?”
Wow, you reached the ending. I was sure no one would read this. Anyways, just message me about anything if you wish. THANKS FOR READING!

beijos

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