Anatomy of Love

by Rivermoon1970, sexycazzy

Summary

Jimmy Palmer's life changed when one Dr. Spencer Reid walked into the NCIS autopsy room. He never expected to fall in love with the intelligent, gorgeous and engaging young man. His happiness is threatened when an enemy of Aaron Hotchner's also threatens Spencer. Now the BAU and NCIS work together to stop the Boston Reaper, hopefully working together they can stop the psychopath before he hurts anyone else.

Notes

For the NCIS Big Bang

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Part One:

Jimmy Palmer was cheerfully working away listening to his boss, Dr. Mallard, tell one of his many, many stories. He just smiled and nodded at the appropriate times, awkwardly interjecting his own observation here and there as he was pulling fluid from the stomach, getting it ready to send up to Abby. He was about to ask Ducky something when the door to autopsy whooshed open and Gibbs came in with another man trailing behind him.

“What have you got for me Duck?”

“Ah Jethro, I was just having Mr. Palmer finish with the stomach contents. It looks like our Lieutenant here ingested some rather nasty fluids. We are just trying to determine exactly what it was and how.”

Jimmy watched as the man had gone right for the neoprene gloves and slipped them on. He started looking closely at the body, going over every inch of it. The stranger leaned in a little closer as he was studying the upper right arm.

“What is this here, Dr. Mallard? It looks like a small grouping of needles. I have only seen something like this in a doctor’s office. And see this minute discoloration? I’ve never seen anything like this before, possible reaction to something?”

“Very good eyes young man. May I inquire as to who, exactly, you are?” Ducky raised his brows as he looked over at a smiling Jethro Gibbs.

“Oh, I ah, I’m sorry. Dr. Spencer Reid, I just started today.”

“So, you have filled the empty desk then Jethro?” Jimmy watched Spencer as he made another, rather intense scrutiny of the body on the autopsy table.

“Obviously, Duck. Dr. Reid is taking Ziva’s spot, though I can tell you he is no probie.”

“I came from the FBI, the BAU to be exact. Dr. Mallard, there are also more of those odd marks
here around the knee, then again on the feet. I’ve seen many strange things used on a person, but this is quite perplexing.” Spencer stood and peeled off his gloves and threw them away. He looked over at Ducky and lifted a brow as he spoke once again.

“I would hope that I’m not some kind of probationary agent. I do realize I need to get caught-up on the latest Naval and Marine protocols, but I am going to assume that procedures are fairly similar. The main difference being that we collect and study the evidence, instead of an outside CSU team.”

Jimmy couldn’t quite help keeping the smile off his face at the looks both Ducky and Gibbs were giving Dr. Reid.

“Oh, yes, I think you are going to have a very interesting time of it. And, this is my assistant Mr. James Palmer.” Ducky chuckled at Gibbs, who just shook his head as he started to head back out of autopsy.

“Call me when ya’ got somethin’ Duck. Come on, Reid, let’s go see Abby.”

“See you later Dr. Mallard, James.” Spencer gave a little wave as he turned around and followed behind Gibbs.

Jimmy was still smiling watching Dr. Reid walk out of Autopsy. He liked it that Dr. Reid called him James.

“Mr. Palmer, Lieutenant O’Connor needs our attention.” Ducky couldn’t quite help the little smirk as he watched his assistant.

“Right, sorry, Dr. Mallard.” The two worked companionably as they collected more samples from the deceased Marine. Ducky handed them to Jimmy, giving him quick instructions on what to do.

“Why don’t you take those samples to Abigail, then we can continue where we stopped when Gibbs brought his new agent in.” Jimmy lifted the corner of his mouth in a crooked smile, knowing exactly what Ducky was doing. He was manipulating him into another encounter with Dr. Reid. A part of him didn’t mind, really. He wondered almost immediately how he was going to get another chance to interact with the interesting new agent, before they were called out on a case.

Jimmy swallowed hard as he grabbed the tissue, stomach contents, and other samples for Abby to run. As he started up towards Abby’s lab, he realized that he still had a smile firmly plastered on his face as he made his way there.

“Well, it’s nice to meet you, Dr. Reid.” Abby was giving Spencer the cold shoulder when Jimmy walked into her lab. He just raised his brows, as he stepped forward to give her the samples.

“I don’t mind you giving me the cold shoulder, Miss Sciuto, so long as we can work together. That’s all I ask. I understand fully what it’s like to lose a close team member.” Jimmy saw that Dr. Reid’s face clouded over for a moment, before he moved next to her looking at the monitor.

“This chemical composition….” Dr. Reid frowned, as his long fingers traced the information on the screen. He was also mouthing something to himself, and furrowed his brow as he studied the screen, much to Abby’s annoyance. “Miss Sciuto, can you put this up on the larger screen over there?” He asked as he moved forward.

“Go on, Abbs.” Gibbs nodded towards her computer. Spencer got closer and Jimmy watched as he let those long fingers trace over the chemical composition, muttering to himself. He didn’t know why he was not only thoroughly charmed, but fascinated by Dr. Reid as well.
“Shit! I need to make a phone call, give me a moment.” Dr. Reid strode out of the lab as he took his phone out of his pocket already dialing a phone number, but giving no explanation as to who he was calling.

“What was that all about?” Abby frowned and huffed as she glared towards the door to the lab that Dr. Reid had left out of.

“Abby, Spencer has a lot of contacts that are above even my head. Just be patient.” Jimmy was about to hand over the samples when Dr. Reid came back in the room a mere twenty seconds later.

“Gibbs, we need to make a very private call. I believe MTAC would be the proper place to discuss this.”

“Reid, what’s going on?” Jimmy was watching this all from the back of the room, but was angled just enough to see Gibbs frown at his newest agent.

“A few months ago there was a case. It was the one that made me leave the BAU. A chemist created a weaponized form of Anthrax. The chemist was killed, and his lab assistant, who was suffering from paranoid delusional disorder, started conducting experiments. We found his lab. I wasn’t being as careful as I should have been, and walked right into the lab without paying attention. As a security measure, the assistant had placed a vial of a purer form of the Anthrax above the door. I was immediately affected when the vial dropped and broke. That,” Dr. Reid turned to the screen, and visibly shook, “Is the compound, though it’s been modified yet again. The military was supposed to have all of the known vials locked away. We need to know what Lieutenant O’Connor was involved in.”

“Who were you calling?”

“The General who was supposed to have had all of the known samples of the Anthrax put into a high security facility. He wants to speak to us, but the rest of the case has been classified.”

“And you only know…”

“Because it fell under the purview of the BAU. Only myself and three other people survived the two separate attacks. The man who released the Anthrax is awaiting trial for multiple counts of murder. Look, I really can’t say anymore. We need to talk to Hotch and the General.”

Jimmy hadn’t said a word while Dr. Reid relayed this information to Gibbs. He was shocked at what he was hearing. That this Dr. Reid had gone through something like that was terrible. He didn’t know what to say, but he needed to get back to Dr. Mallard. He cleared his throat and three sets of eyes turned to him.

“I just came to give Abby these samples.”

“Thank you, Jimmy.” Abby bounced over and grabbed the samples, and set them out near her mass spectrometer.

“We should also contact Dr. Kimura. She was the lead CDC Doctor during the attacks.”

“Okay, lead the way, Reid.” Spencer smiled and once again gave Jimmy a little wave before going out the door. Jimmy smiled back, but didn’t know what to think about the new agent.

“Jimmy,” Abby snapped at him, which made him frown at the woman.
“What?”

“You got all weird and dreamy eyed. Don’t tell me you like the new guy.”

“Why wouldn’t I like him?” Jimmy was perplexed at why he wouldn't like Dr. Reid. They had just met, nothing had happened so far for him to dislike him. He didn’t understand Abby’s attitude.

“Jimmy,” Abby whined and frowned even deeper. “He took Ziva’s place, Jimmy. It’s not right. I don’t understand why Gibbs isn’t trying to get her back.”

“I would have no idea about that Abby, but I think you need to give him a chance.”

“I don’t know why Gibbs even hired him.” Abby stomped over to her computer, and glared at the picture. “What does he know anyway.” She mumbled, and Jimmy shook his head and backed out of the lab heading back to autopsy. He really did not want to spoil the good mood he found himself in. He let his thoughts wander, as he boarded the elevator and pressed the down button. He hadn’t been attracted to any men for a while, and the sting of breaking up with his current girlfriend was still there. For some reason, Dr. Spencer Reid had taken up a part of his mind already.

When Jimmy arrived back in autopsy, the body of Lieutenant O’Connor was covered, and Ducky was putting him back in the cooler. When he asked what was going on, all that Ducky would say was that they were told to go no further until a Dr. Kimura arrived. Jimmy told him what happened in Abby’s lab, that the new agent thinks the attack on O’Connor had something to do with his recent brush with the synthesized Anthrax virus. Ducky was more than happy to wait. The lab assistant always appreciated the fact that his boss was always careful, and never did anything to put either of them at risk.

Jimmy worked through the day with a smile. He kept anticipating the return of Dr. Reid, and couldn’t help feeling a slight disappointment that he hadn’t come back down to autopsy. He and Ducky had other cases to work on in the meantime.

They received a phone call in the late afternoon that the CDC doctor would be there in the morning to supervise the rest of the autopsy. She wanted to take every precaution possible. Jimmy had classes that morning, so he was more than happy to leave it to Ducky and this Dr. Kimura.

“I think we can go no further today, Mr. Palmer,” Ducky said as they were cleaning up after the last autopsy of the day.

“I’ll see you in the afternoon, Dr. Mallard.”

“Say, how is it going with your young lady?”

Jimmy deflated a little as he thought about the young woman who had broken things off with him just a couple weeks ago.

“We aren’t, Dr. Mallard. She broke things off a couple of weeks ago.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. I thought things were going rather well.”

“They were, until she understood that I wanted to be a full-fledged coroner. She thought it strange.”

“Well, don’t give up, Mr. Palmer. You never know what might be around the corner.” Ducky smiled, and Jimmy couldn’t help laughing at the twinkle in his boss’s eye. As they were leaving,
Jimmy felt someone grab his elbow.

“Jimmy Choo, come have a drink with us. We’re celebrating getting a new geek. But, he’s a cool geek, not like our McGeek, and I like him already. How ‘bout it?”

“Tony,” Jimmy lit up at seeing the agent. They had slowly become friends over the last few months, which surprised everyone, but Jimmy genuinely liked one Anthony DiNozzo Jr.. He could see through the masks that the agent wore and usually hid behind. When Tony worked late, he would bring food by and they often talked, or like now, Jimmy would be talked into going out for a beer. “I’d love to. Where are we going?” Jimmy asked, as Tony wrapped an arm around his shoulder, and steered him towards the elevator.

“Chandlers, you know it?”

“Yeah, I’ll meet you there.”

“Don’t flake on me, Gremlin.” Tony quirked up a brow, mocking an air of authority. Jimmy couldn’t help the giggle that escaped, which in turn made him blush.

“I promise Tony, I’ll be there.”

“I’m countin’ on you.” Tony smiled then walked towards his car as soon as they left the elevator. Jimmy just shook his head and made his way to the bar and grill. He parked, and made his way inside looking around. He quickly found the table with Dr. Reid, but there were two other people there that he didn’t know. He approached just as he heard the dark haired one ask Dr. Reid a question.

“How’s the new book, Spence?” The dark haired man asked with a note of affection in his voice, and a brilliant smile that had Jimmy swallowing. He took a few more steps when he saw Dr. Reid blushing.

“Hotch, you promised not to talk about that.”

The one called Hotch chuckled and shook his head. Then he looked up at Jimmy, which made Dr. Reid swing his gaze over to him.

“James, glad you could make it. Let me introduce you. This is Aaron Hotchner, my ex-boss, and next to him is Derek Morgan, one of my best friends. Why don’t you sit here?” Jimmy swallowed hard as Dr. Reid patted the place beside him. Blushing, Jimmy sat down, but not before shaking the hands of the two men he was introduced to.

“It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Hotchner. And, it was very nice to meet you earlier, Dr. Reid.”

“Spencer.”

“Spencer,” Jimmy beamed as he sat down, trying to stop the blush on his face.

“I think you got him blushing, Pretty Boy.” The one called Morgan teased.

“No worse than what you’ve done to me on numerous occasions, Morgan.”

“Ah got me there kid.” Morgan grinned as he watched the two men bantering back and forth.

“So, Spencer, you write?” Jimmy was curious, and also a little excited to find out more about the enigmatic new agent.
“Yeah. It started as just an exercise in stress relief. Hotch was the one who suggested it. He noticed that I was always writing journal papers and other academic submissions. Both he and David Rossi thought I should try my hand at fiction. It wasn’t long before I noticed that, without even trying, I had a whole book written. What I hadn’t recognized at the time was that I based my main character, an ousted FBI agent turned private detective, on Hotch.”

“He was nervous about it, let me read the book and thought that I’d be upset. Told him I’d only be upset if he hadn’t told me, and published the book without discussing it with me.” Hotch was about to continue when his eyes softened and his smile widened. Jimmy looked where he was looking, raising his brows so high they almost disappeared. Gibbs and the man, Hotch, were looking...fondly at each other? Jimmy wasn’t sure what to make of that.

“Jet,” Hotch greeted, and Morgan stood to let Gibbs in. Jimmy looked towards Dr….Spencer with a questioning look on his face. He was about to ask, in a roundabout way, when the rest of the team arrived with Tony, McGee, and a reluctant looking Abby in tow. Jimmy didn’t think Ducky was going to show as he needed to go home and take care of his mother that evening.

“Sorry we’re late. Traffic was hell, and McGeek here was trying to give me directions, which, by the way, were wrong.” Tony couldn’t quite keep the exasperation out of his voice, and Jimmy had to stifle his chuckle.

“Oh no, no you do not want to get him started.”

“I graduated from CalTech with Science, Engineering and Math degrees. Let’s just say we aren’t as nerdy as everyone assumes.” There was a twinkle in his eye, and a smirk that Jimmy just couldn’t help finding adorable.

“CalTech, huh? I went to MIT.” McGee had a look of triumph on his face.
“Oh? I’m a guest lecturer there every two years. The Engineering department has an ongoing prank war with CalTech. I think the current score is MIT 3 CalTech 7. We’ll see who wins this year.” Jimmy was immediately aware that Spencer was using the same tone of voice talking about his degrees, as he did when he talked about the Anthrax case. It seemed to him that it was Spencer’s way of relaying information no matter if it was important or not.

“So, those are your doctorates?” McGee asked, and Jimmy thought he heard a bit of jealousy in his voice.

“Yes, but I also have Masters in Psychology and Abnormal Criminal Psychology, BA’s in Philosophy, Child Psychology and Criminal Justice. I want to look into Georgetown’s law program for Agents. They have a tailored program for anyone in the lettered agencies to get their bar association card. It’s came in handy many times on cases with Hotch being a lawyer.”

“You have three doctorates, two masters and three bachelors?” Jimmy saw McGee pale as he took a sip of water the waiter had brought over to the table.

“If he wasn’t working cold cases, he was studying. The kid could probably have a few more, especially if he took Russian, Spanish, French and Italian seriously.”

“Morgan...” Spencer lamented as he blushed deeply, ducking his head.

“He’s right Spencer.” Aaron couldn’t help getting in on the teasing.

“Guys, stop it. Please?” Spencer pleaded with the two men who were fondly teasing him.

“Why? Do you think you’re too good or something?” McGee’s face was turning red, and Jimmy sensed that this wasn’t going to be good. He knew he should say something to help try and diffuse the situation quickly.

“I think he was just getting embarrassed, Tim, that’s all. I think it’s awesome. I’m trying to finish up my degree, but I have a ways to go.”

Appeased for the moment, Tim let it go, and talk flowed around the table. Jimmy opted not to have any alcohol. He had too much studying to do over the weekend, and he wanted to be sober for it. He noticed that Spencer wasn’t drinking anything either and chalked it up to him having to drive. The conversation was fairly pleasant, but Jimmy got the distinct impression that Tim was upset over the fact that Spencer had so many accomplishments behind him. Jimmy was impressed by the new agent, and every so often when he got that smile that he was learning was just for him, his stomach fluttered. Finally, the conversation came back around to books.

“So, Spencer, how many have you written?” Tony asked as he raised his beer to take a sip.

“Three so far, and they’ve all done well. I’m rather surprised too. I never thought being a fiction writer could be so much fun, and I have enough material to write many more. The Bureau is still letting me do as much research as I want, and I can still take home cold cases.” Jimmy was fascinated by Spencer’s hands and how animated he was when he was excited about something.

“What name do you go by? I read a lot of mysteries and I don’t remember a Dr. Spencer Reid.” Tony’s curiosity was peaked.

"Oh, I use a penname. Don’t want to be out in the field and be recognized, especially if I ever have to do undercover. It’s Albert Christie Doyle.” Tony and Jimmy both stared at him dumbfounded.

“You write the Andrew Price books?” Tony was obviously excited by this revelation.
“Yeah. You like them?”

“Like them? I love them. Price is an awesome character. I always wondered if the author did a lot of research into investigative procedures, it’s so spot on. I’m going to have to pick your brain soon. Maybe a movie night.”

“They’re great books, Spencer. My last girlfriend got me into them.”

“Thank you,” Spencer blushed even more at the praises from Tony and Jimmy.

“You deserve it, Spencer, and you know it. If Dave hadn’t encouraged you, I don’t think you would have even tried.” Jimmy saw the look of pride on Hotch’s face, and wondered how close he and Spencer actually were.

“Well, he did put me in touch with his publisher. I’m just happy they liked it.”

Jimmy could tell Spencer was getting nervous. He wasn’t sure why he did it, but he reached out and laid a hand on Spencer’s shoulder. He was surprised that the touch was welcomed as the man visibly relaxed.

“Can we talk about something else?” Spencer asked almost to himself bowing his head and looked in his water glass.

It was Tony who came to the rescue with sports talk, and just like that conversation was diverted to another topic. Jimmy looked down at his watch and noticed just how late it was and excused himself. He wanted to go home and get some rest. If earlier in the day was any indication of how the case was going to go, Jimmy knew it was going to be a long few days.

He stood to go, and heard Spencer giving his goodbyes saying that he would walk Jimmy out. The two men made it to the parking lot in companionable silence. When they got to Jimmy’s car, he wasn’t sure why he was nervous.

“You didn’t have to walk me out, Spencer.”

“Habit. After some of the things that have happened in my team, and the types of people we went after, we always made it a rule to walk each other out, especially when it’s dark out.”

“Even Aaron Hotchner?”

“Oh yeah, even him.” Spencer smiled that smile at him again, and Jimmy’s stomach did another flip. “James, if we don’t go out in the field tomorrow, would you like to go to lunch with me?”

Jimmy’s eyes widened, and he felt the smile split across his face. He didn’t know why it made him happy to be asked, but it did.

“I’d love to Spencer.” Jimmy really didn’t want to think about why that made him even happier. Spencer squeezed his shoulder lightly and said his goodbyes.

Jimmy was walking back to his car with a spring in his step. He wasn’t looking forward to the next day before, but now, now he really was.

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**Part Two:**

Jimmy walked into his apartment after his classes, and collapsed on his bed. The exhausting case
had been going on for three weeks, taxing everyone involved. There indeed was a connection between what had happened with Dr. Re...Spencer, and the now three bodies that were currently in the NCIS morgue. Dr. Kimura was extremely helpful as she observed and directed the autopsies. It was lucky that her and Dr. Mallard got along rather well. He hadn’t relished working with his boss if they hadn’t. Jimmy liked the woman, which made working the case with her bearable.

Then there were the lunches and small snatches of conversation with Dr. Rei...Spencer, which he thoroughly enjoyed. Jimmy laid out on his bed, with his legs bent up, and one crossed over the other. He was reflecting back on this last week, and knew he had not interpreted Spencer’s interest in him wrong. He just wasn’t sure what to do with it. It wasn’t unwelcome, and Jimmy never had issues with dating. He just wasn’t sure what Spencer wanted from him.

Jimmy checked the time on his watch, noticing that it wasn’t as late as he thought it was. He thought he might call someone to talk out what he was feeling. He wondered if Tony was still at work, or if he had gone home. Picking up his phone, he started to dial his friend, but then stopped himself. Rubbing at his face he thought he was being a little foolish, and would wait to see what it was the good Dr. Reid wanted from him. He hadn’t made any type of overt overtures. It was mainly just a few lunch dates and a few snatches of conversation at crime scenes and in the office. He liked the friendship that was building, and it was nice to have someone other than Ducky and Tony as friends. Jimmy smiled to himself shaking his head before he stood to go make himself a quick dinner.

After looking in his cupboards and fridge, he ended up making a sandwich and a can of soup to eat, while he worked on some homework.

Several hours later, he was startled awake by a noise from the upstairs apartment, and almost laughed at himself that he fell asleep studying. Peeling off the piece of paper that had stuck to his cheek, Jimmy let out a self-deprecating laugh, then went to take a shower to get ready for bed. As he stretched out, he thought of one Dr. Reid, and wondered if the man was thinking about him just as much as he was thinking about Spencer. With these thoughts flitting through his brain, he slowly fell asleep with the hope that he would find out sooner and not later just what the agent wanted from him.

Morning came too soon, and Jimmy quickly made some coffee and toast. Once he had his to go cup filled, he ran out the door hoping that he wouldn’t run into any traffic. He really didn’t want to be late today. There were still a lot of unknowns in their current case, and Jimmy knew Dr. Mallard was going to need him at his best.

When he got to work, he changed into his scrubs, washed his hands thoroughly and walked into Autopsy.

“Ah, Mr. Palmer, right on time. Dr. Kimura wants to go over some results, and if you could take these reports up to Jethro, it might help him and your young friend to find what they are looking for.”

Jimmy flushed as he grabbed Ducky’s reports and made his way up to the bullpen. It didn’t take long for him to stride over to Gibbs desk and lay the reports down. He didn’t see his boss, but Spencer was there alonee. It was the perfect opportunity for him to ask the genius the question that had been niggling at him for the last week. He just hoped that he wasn’t going to embarrass himself.

“Where is everyone?”

“Oh, case over in Dumfries.”
“And, you stayed behind?”

Spencer smiled a slow smile as he leaned back in his chair, “Computer searches. Gibbs wanted me to keep on with the anthrax case, while they processed this new scene. We may have to get Hotch and the BAU involved, but Gibbs is trying to avoid that.”

“Is there any more information?”

“Only that all the victims were in the same reserve unit. We’re trying to figure out if something is going on in the unit, or if they are all connected somehow in their daily non-military lives. Was there something you needed?” Spencer looked up from his computer, and gave Jimmy that same slow smile that was just for him.

“I ah, Ducky has the latest reports.” Jimmy sat on the edge of Spencer’s desk, “Spencer...” Jimmy was fidgeting a little as he tried to find the right words.

“James, is something wrong?”

“Can we...do you want....” Jimmy sighed as he picked at his fingers, before turning back to Spencer, putting on a brave face to ask that burning question, “Would you go to dinner with me?”

“James, I would love to go to dinner with you.” Jimmy’s blush deepened as he stood back-up, his smile a mile wide.

“Oh-okay, tonight, after work? If, if that’s okay.” He wasn’t watching where he was going when he bumped into Gibbs desk and almost toppled over. Spencer was up and out of his chair in seconds, grabbing the younger man and helping him upright.

“Be more careful.” Spencer straightened Jimmy’s clothes as he helped him stand. Jimmy got the distinct impression that the agent wanted to kiss him. He chuckled and shook his head at his own imagination. “And, tonight sounds perfect.”

“Then I’ll see you later, Spencer.” Jimmy turned around and went down the back stairs, making his way back to Autopsy. He didn’t stop smiling the whole way there.

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Jimmy was nervous. He had taken a shower and changed there at the office. Dinner was going to be semi-casual, nothing fancy, but he still wanted to look good. So far, there hadn’t been any other calls for them, and Ducky already had the body from this last case processed and ready for autopsy in the morning. Jimmy put his other clothes in his locker, and would worry about them later. Grabbing his wallet and keys, he locked down the autopsy lab, and made his way back upstairs. What he hadn’t expected was for Tony and McGee to still be there. He hung back for a moment, even more nervous than he was previously.

“So, Reid, what’s the deal with Gibbs and your former boss?” Tony leaned over his desk with a gleeful smile on his face.

“None of us ever wanted to ask. I know they have known each other for a long-time. I think when Hotch was still in SWAT, they had some kind of case when he was still in Washington that intersected with Gibbs. They stayed friends and after Hotch’s divorce, well he would show up more and more when we went out as a team.”

“You don’t think...” Tony wiggled his brows and tried not not smirk.

“What?” Spencer was looking back and forth between McGee and Tony.
“Oh come on Reid. You haven’t seen it?” McGee also quirked up his brow.

“I seriously don’t know what you guys are implying. We just assumed that they are good friends. And really that is not an image I need. Though, Hotch is very appealing and there was a short-time there that I may have harbored a crush on him, but as far as I know, he’s straighter than an arrow. Can we not talk about this anymore? It’s a little creepy. I don’t need to know if my bosses are sleeping together. Thank you very much.”

Tony chuckled and shook his head, keeping any further thoughts to himself.

“But..”

“No, McGee I am not going to go there. If you want to know, ask Gibbs yourself.”

“Ask me what Reid?” Gibbs came from, well somewhere. Jimmy could see by his expression that Spencer was still trying to work that out. It had become a puzzle to him. Jimmy knew that Spencer had the distinct impression that Gibbs spied on his people and timed his entrances just right. It was something they had often talked about over lunch, but never came to any real conclusions on. Spencer had claimed that he could be sneaky himself, and vowed one day to figure Gibbs out.

“Nothing. At least nothing I want to know about.”

Jimmy was trying to stifle his laugh when three heads turned in his direction.

“Somethin’ you need Palmer?” Gibbs tilted his head to look around his desk at where Jimmy was standing.

“Uh, no Sir...I mean I was just...you know Spencer and I were going to go to dinner.” Jimmy started to get beet red, and thankfully Spencer chimed in before he could get even more embarrassed.

“I’m ready. I’ll see you tomorrow Gibbs.” Spencer stood and put his bag over his shoulder, said his goodnights to the other men and before Gibbs could call him back, Jimmy and Spencer were in the elevator leaving.

“I’m surprised Gibbs didn’t call you back.”

“I knew he wouldn’t. I’m not letting him get away with the same crap he pulls on McGee and DiNozzo. Plus, the director likes me too much, and I’ve already solved three cold cases since I’ve been here. The papers have helped as well. Gibbs will just have to deal with it. So, where are we going?” Spencer turned that boyish smile on, and Jimmy felt his knees get a little weak. He wasn’t sure how much longer he was going to last before he cracked and kissed Spencer. He only hoped that Spencer wanted it also, and that this wasn’t just a one-sided flirtation, or god forbid, just a budding friendship. Jimmy was seriously attracted to the man. It was messing with his head, because this hadn’t happened to him in a very long time.

“I heard you say that you like to try new restaurants. There’s a little greek place that opened-up not to far away, thought we could go there.”

“Sounds perfect.” The elevator stopped on the garage floor, and Jimmy led Spencer to his car.

“Do you want me to drive?”

“If you don’t mind, it’ll help me relax. This anthrax case is getting the better of me. The profile doesn’t make any sense here. I may have to talk to Gibbs about calling in Hotch for a consult.”
Jimmy unlocked the doors, and Spencer slid into the passenger seat, while Jimmy nervously went to the driver’s side, and buckled in after closing his door a little harder than he meant to. He was so nervous he was almost shaking. He was getting ready to put the key in the ignition when he felt a warm hand on his.

“James, this doesn’t have to be anything other than the two of us going to dinner and getting to know each other more. I like you. I like you a lot and, well I have recently learned that life is too short. So, I’m going to do something spontaneous, which would freak out my former team.”

Before Jimmy could even say a word, he was being pulled forward by a hand that had been wrapped around his neck. Next thing he knew warm, soft lips were pressing against his, and an obscene moan was heard. The kiss wasn’t quite arousing, but wasn’t chaste either. When Spencer let him go, he still had his eyes closed, and tried not to touch his lips like a blushing teenager.

“James, don’t you think you should start the car?” Spencer was smirking as he fastened his seatbelt again.

“Right.” Jimmy smiled as he turned back in his seat, and started the car. He found he was less nervous after that kiss. It also made him think things he wasn’t quite ready for, but couldn’t quite keep out of his head. He was thankful that the restaurant he had in mind was far enough away that it would give him enough time to settle back down. When they parked, and after getting out, Spencer reached for his hand. They walked the two blocks to the restaurant holding hands with a comfortable silence between them.

After they were seated and drinks ordered, Spencer had a serious look on his face that worried Jimmy.

“Spencer? Is something wrong?”

“No, I mean not wrong, but just something I don’t really share with everyone, and I see us spending more time together. At least I hope we are going to. I, I like you a lot James, and I don’t want to keep anything from you.”

Jimmy saw Spencer taking a deep breath and tapping his fingers on the table in nervousness. He reached over and took Spencer’s hand rubbing the back with his thumb hoping to calm the other man down.

“Whatever you want to tell me Spencer, you can. I’m not going anywhere.”

Spencer waited until after their drinks were served, which were traditional Greek Iced Frappes. They were set out on the table in front of them, and Spencer took a long sip of his, and smiled in appreciation. Jimmy waited with that infamous patience of his for whatever it was Spencer wanted to tell him.

“It’s my Mom. She is a paranoid schizophrenic, and I had to put her in a full care facility when I turned 18. I try my best to write her everyday. I was afraid for a long-time that I might develop it. However, the older I get, the less likely it will happen, but it’s still one of my fears.”

Jimmy quirked the side of his mouth, and studied Spencer for a moment.

“That doesn’t scare me Spencer. It sounds like you care very much for her. You can’t help your Mom’s illness that isn’t your fault.”

A plate of greek finger foods was placed on the table between them. They both thanked their waiter as Jimmy pulled his hand away from Spencer’s. He picked up a Dolmades, a stuffed grape leaf with rice and greek olives and herbs, and bit into the slightly bitter leaf enjoying the tastes and textures that were so well known in greek food.
“You keep making sounds like that James Palmer, and I don’t know if I’ll be able to keep my hands off you.” Jimmy’s eyes widened in shock. While Spencer liked to tease and joke at work, he had never been forward like this before. He opened and closed his mouth several times, but nothing would come out for a few seconds, then he found his voice again.

“Spencer!” Jimmy ducked his head, but the smile he couldn’t keep off his face. When Spencer tried to feed him a piece of rolled, fried eggplant, he again felt the heat of a blush creeping up his neck and darkening his cheeks. Spencer chuckled softly, and the two men finished off the appetizers, talking in hushed tones as they waited for their main course.

They left a couple of hours later, once Jimmy paid the check, over Spencer’s protests, each with an arm wrapped around the other’s waist. The two leaned into each other, and let their temples touch. Resuming their conversation, the two men continued on their way back to Jimmy’s car. When Spencer separated from him, he lifted a hand and cupped Jimmy’s cheek, flashing that quirky smile of his.

“I had a really nice time James.”

“Spencer, you know you can call me Jimmy.”

“I know, but I like calling you James. If you don’t want me to I’ll use Jimmy. But, James is strong, self-assured but shy, cares about his friends, and is one of the nicest people I know.”

“Spencer,” Jimmy blushed as he ducked his head to the side. Spencer lifted his head just a bit, and gently laid his lips on Jimmy’s. The kiss was even better than the first. This one was slow and sweet. When Spencer pulled back, Jimmy smiled so wide his dimples deepened even more than normal.

“I think we have something worth taking a chance on, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Let’s go back to my car, I’m going to go home and go to bed. Well, most likely I’ll put on a pot of coffee, sit at my computer and try to work on some papers, or my next book. Not sure what yet. Though I did just get a new set of books on modern philosophy starting with Justin E.H. Smith’s book on race in early modern history. I don’t know if I agree with all of Smith’s assessments on xenophobic behaviour. I believe that it is learned and not inherent. It has been shown in several studies that children, who are too young to have learned how to be prejudice, are accepting of anyone in their social group...” Spencer stopped himself and shook his head at himself.

“There I go rambling again.”

“I don’t know. I like it.”

It was Spencer’s turn to blush at the compliment. Finally, he stepped away from Jimmy, and slid into the passenger seat. Jimmy got in and drove them back to NCIS, so Spencer could pick-up his car. They parted after a quick chaste kiss each going to their own apartments. Jimmy started home, and couldn’t help the smile on his face. By the time he fell into bed, he was tired enough to drift off, but it was Spencer Reid that occupied his dreams as he slept.

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Part Three:

The days went by, and Jimmy was happy. The team was closer to catching the killer, and Dr. Kimura was able to tell them that it was a modified form of the Anthrax that Spencer had been exposed to. It had been modified yet again to be able to target a single individual without
exposed to. It had been modified yet again to be able to target a single individual without spreading to other people. Jimmy knew Gibbs and the team had a couple of suspects lined up already. They were in the process of eliminating, and bringing in the people they needed to talk to, so they could get to the truth. He was happy with how Spencer was settling in more and more, and the two men were growing closer.

Another call, and another body related to their case. Gibbs yelled at everyone. His frustration about solving this case was high, as was everyone else's. He knew they were close, but it had been gruelling and frustrating for all involved. The list of suspects was growing smaller with no clear answers. Spencer suggested bringing in the BAU to help, and Gibbs almost said yes.

“Hey, Autopsy Gremlin.” Tony called out as Jimmy waited for Ducky to do his analysis before they took the body back to NCIS. They knew what they were going to get. He had catalogued four puncture wounds that were identical to the other bodies.

“What is it, Tony?”

“What’s with you and the Doc?” Tony nodded his head towards Spencer who was going over the scene with a scary efficiency that Ziva never had.

“I like him.” Jimmy couldn’t help the blush that crepted across his face. He also was tired of blushing so much, but Spencer seemed to bring it out in him.

“Good. He’s a good guy. You deserve it, Jimmy.”

Jimmy looked over at Spencer who was currently on the phone, and whoever he was talking to was not making him happy. A tight look on his face made Jimmy worry about what was going on. He made his way over to Spencer, more to lend support in case there was bad news.

“Emily….what? What? Are you sure? Yeah, yeah I’ll see what I can do.” Spencer closed his phone, and took a few deep breaths before he quickly made his way over to Gibbs. There was a look on his face that Jimmy had never seen before, and it worried him what the phone call was about. If it had been his Mother, Jimmy knew Spencer’s reaction would be very different. Jimmy also noticed Spencer was shaking and agitated. He told Ducky he wanted to find out what was going on. Ducky just smiled, and told him to take care of his friend.

“Boss,” Spencer yelled out as he made his way over to Gibbs.

“What?”

Jimmy could see that Spencer was searching for the words he needed, but was struggling. Jimmy laid a hand on his arm, lending him his support hoping to settle his friend.

“Gibbs, it’s Hotch.”

“Reid.”

“He’s in the hospital.”

“Get your bag. Let’s go.” Gibbs turned to Tony, “Get this finished. I’ll call when I find out what’s happening.”

“Sir, I’d like to go with you.” Jimmy swallowed hard as he stood next to Spencer, waiting.

Gibbs studied the two men a moment, and it didn’t escape Jimmy’s notice that his boss saw how they were touching.
“You got this, Duck?”

“I did this alone for many years, Jethro. I have Timothy and Anthony. You go and see what is happening with your friend.” Ducky was one of the very few people who knew the truth of Gibb’s and Aaron’s relationship. He just waved the three men off, and got back to taking care of the body.

Jimmy, though, was concentrating on Spencer. His boyfriend? He really wasn’t sure, because they had not really defined their relationship, yet. Spencer was more upset than he was letting on. He knew Aaron and Spencer were close, like brothers even, and it worried Jimmy about what was happening.

“Come on. What hospital, Reid?”

Spencer gave the name of the hospital, and after they piled in the car, Jethro took off. Jimmy had only rarely ever had the pleasure of being in a car with Gibbs. He came to the conclusion that he never wanted to do it again. Cringing as Gibbs weaved in and out of traffic like a crazy person, he held on, and almost laughed seeing Spencer just take it in stride.

“Can you tell me anything, Reid?”

“All Emily would say is that he was attacked in his apartment, and that he was just out of surgery. She didn’t want to give me any details. They had just come back from a difficult case in Canada, and they were all tired and not at their best. They had only a few hours rest when the locals asked for the BAU’s help. Past that she wouldn’t tell me anything.”

Jimmy saw Gibbs shoulders tighten and his face pinch. He may not be an investigator, but the relationship between his boss and Aaron Hotchner started to become much clearer.

“Did she say if he was going to be alright?’

“She said they were bringing him back to his room. He was unconscious. I...I have a bad feeling about this, Jethro.”

Gibbs was silent a moment as he scrubbed his face. They drove the rest of the way to the hospital in silence. Spencer and Gibbs were anxious as they practically ran through the halls of the hospital. Worry pouring off them in waves. They quickly found Aaron’s room where Emily Prentiss was nervously pacing just outside of it.

“Spencer,” Jimmy saw the fond expression on her face when she pulled his partner into her arms.

“Emily. What happened?”

“It was Foyet, Spencer.”

Gibbs swore as he turned away for a moment. Jimmy was there holding Spencer’s hand, trying to give him something to hold onto, wishing he could do more.

“How do you know?” Spencer tried to look calm, but even in the short time they have been together, he knew the former profiler wasn’t. He was holding in what he was feeling, and Jimmy knew he would have to push a little to get him to open up to him.

“He was stabbed. The same pattern Foyet did himself. There’s also video footage.” Emily sighed as she put a hand on Spencer’s arm. “He dumped Hotch out in front of the hospital like...like garbage. I so want to nail this guy, Reid.”
“Yeah? Well so do I,” Gibbs growled low in his throat as he walked over, no one missed the simmering rage in his eyes.

“What can we do to help?” Jimmy asked as he leaned a little into Spencer, hoping to calm his agitated boyfriend.

“I don’t know yet. The rest of the team is still working on a local case. I’m not leaving here, though.”

Jimmy wrapped an arm around Spencer’s waist and pulled him closer, lending him as much support as he could.

Gibbs was watching the unconscious man through the observation window to his room. Jimmy didn’t really know what to do other than be there for his boss and Spencer.

“What do you need, Spencer?” Jimmy asked.

“I don’t know, James. I should have…” Spencer looked towards Aaron’s room, and shut his eyes a moment. “I should have been there.” Jimmy felt Spencer’s chest start to rumble, and his breathing became shallow and labored. He knew that stress sometimes brought on Spencer’s attacks, and this situation had pushed him to his limit.

“Spence, you have to calm down. Where’s your inhaler?” Spencer tried to fumble for his bag, but his fingers were shaking too much to get a grip on anything. Jimmy gently grabbed his hands, and led him to a chair to sit. He was glad that the man didn’t fight him, though he was getting more concerned as his breathing started to worsen. Jimmy searched Spencer’s bag, and found the inhaler at the bottom. Pressing it into his hand, he guided Spencer in taking a dose.

He saw out of the corner of his eye that Emily looked concerned for Spencer. He didn’t know if the other man had had any of these attacks when he was still with the BAU or not.

“It doesn’t happen often. Only a couple of times so far. Once when we had to deal with a bombing, and the second, well both Tony and Spencer needed breathing treatments. Stress can sometimes bring it on as well. The EMT’s coached me on what to do in the future.”

“This is because of the Anthrax?” Emily sat down next to Spencer, laying a hand on his shoulder.

“Yes.” Jimmy searched his bag, and found the bottle of pills that were almost full. “Please tell me you’ve been taking these.”

Spencer frowned, and kept quiet. Jimmy gripped his chin, and made him look up.

“You haven’t been taking your medicine?”

Spencer swallowed hard as he lifted a shoulder, shrugging.

“They aren’t addictive, Spencer, you know that.” Spencer told Jimmy one night about his ordeal with Hankel, and how he had become addicted to Dilaudid. Jimmy cocked his brows, and couldn’t help the look of exasperation he had on his face. Spencer had become so very important to him. He didn’t want to lose him to something that was easily managed and preventable.

There was a long moment of silence, then when Spencer finally spoke he couldn’t help the raspy quality to his voice.

“I know...James. It’s just...I have a hard time….taking anything…”
Emily left and came back with a cup of water handing it to Jimmy as she sat down again, but didn’t hide her worry.

“Thank you, Miss Prentiss.” Jimmy set the cup down, and shook out the proper amount of pills handing them to Spencer. When he didn’t immediately take them, Jimmy was about to say something. He wasn’t sure if it was the look on his face or not, but Spencer finally took them from his hand swallowing with the help of the water.

“You have to take care of yourself, Spencer. You aren’t alone anymore, remember?” Jimmy couldn’t help being both angry and worried. He sat next to Spencer in the waiting area holding his right hand, while Emily was holding his left.

“I’m sorry. I thought I could handle it.” Spencer rubbed his thumb over Jimmy’s knuckles, and it helped settle him more. Jimmy couldn’t help keep the look of concern off his face. “James, I’m okay.”

“I’m going to get some coffee.” Jimmy didn’t get angry often. It wasn’t in him, but Spencer not taking his medication, especially with this case they were on, was making him very upset. He needed to step away so as not to say or do something to agitate Spencer further. “Miss Prentiss would you like some?”

“Yes, thank you. And Jimmy, please, call me Emily”

Jimmy nodded at her, then stood and looked for Gibbs. He found him at Hotch’s bedside holding his hand. He felt a little shy walking in, but knew if he got coffee for them, Gibbs would want some too. He lightly cleared his throat before taking a tentative step inside.

“Palmer.”

“I ah, I was going to get coffee…” Jimmy trailed off, and stood there nervously.

“I could use a cup.” Gibbs hadn’t taken his eyes off the bed, and Jimmy felt like an intruder. Slowly he backed out going to find the cafeteria to get coffee. It didn’t take long, and he was back in just a few moments. He saw Spencer had moved into the room with Gibbs, and Jimmy, with coffee in hand, silently walked up to his boyfriend handing him a cup. He put the other on the table near Gibbs then walked out to give them some privacy. He sat in one of the waiting room chairs near Emily.

“He’s happy,” she said as she smiled at Jimmy. “I’m going to assume that he finally made his move.”

Jimmy blushed as he took a sip of coffee. “It kinda started slow. We’re taking it slow. How is he really, Miss...Emily? I know Mr. Hotchner is important to Spencer.”

“He is. He’s important to all of us, but yeah, they have this special bond.” Emily turned her eyes up to the window, and Jimmy followed the line of her gaze. He saw that Hotch was sitting up, and talking to Gibbs. “You should go in there.”

“No, they don’t need me.”

“I think he does.” Jimmy looked to see that Emily was pointing at Spencer. At her prodding, Jimmy stood, and walked into the room, trying not to disturb anyone.

“Jet.” Jimmy couldn’t help notice the fingers that tightened around each other.

“I should have known something was wrong when you didn’t call.”
“Not your fault, Jethro. Happened so fast.”

Jimmy wrapped a hand around Spencer’s wrist, who he noticed was trying to hold in his emotions.

“Hotch, did ah, did he leave anything?” Spencer asked as he pressed his lips together.

“My bag. Jet, my wallet and badge.” Gibbs grabbed the bag and pulled out the items Aaron requested. When he opened up his badge, he saw that Morgan’s was there also.

“Aaron?” Jethro stood at the look on Aaron’s face. “You in pain? Need somethin’?”

Handing his wallet to Gibbs, the man swore, and swung his gaze to Spencer.

“You are staying at NCIS till we get this bastard.”

“What? Boss, no. I’m not some weakling that needs to be protected. I was an FBI agent. I think that should go a long way to knowing how to protect myself.”

“Look,” Gibbs shoved the wallet at Spencer and Jimmy. There wasn’t only a picture of Haley and Jack, but one of him and the team. An Eye of Providence, the Reaper’s signature, was above Spencer’s head.

“This doesn’t mean anything. It could be a ruse. We already profiled him as an Omnivore with an extreme sense of ego that has the ability to hold himself back when he knows he has something over another person. He wants power, Hotch, over you. Hurting me gets him nowhere.”

“Reid, he know’s you are important to me and to Jack. Don’t let your stubborn streak get in the way of your safety. If he hurt you…”

“If he hurt you, there’s more than one person that would be hurt by that Spencer.” Jimmy couldn’t stay quiet as he twined his fingers with Spencer’s. “He would hurt a lot of people by hurting you.” Jimmy frowned, as he took a deep steadying breath. “Please, do as Gibbs says.”

Spencer looked like he was going to protest when all three men shot him a glare.

“Fine. But I can’t stay locked down forever. I’m helping you find this bastard.” Spencer let go of Jimmy’s hand, turned, and stormed out of the room.

“Palmer.” Gibbs lifted a brow staring right at him.

“Yes, sir?”

“You together?”

Jimmy stood straight crossing his arms in a slightly awkward display of defiance.

“Yes.” He wasn’t going to beg for his job, right now he didn’t care about rules and regulations. He cared more about Spencer’s safety.

“Good. Gun range tomorrow morning.”

“I...I...I can’t shoot a gun.”

Gibbs stood, and Jimmy swallowed hard. Even though he wanted to take a step back, he squared his shoulders even more. Gibbs smiled, and nodded at him.
“Gun range tomorrow morning, early. You want to be with him? Yer gonna protect yourself. Got it?”

“Yes, sir.” Jimmy knew not to argue. He knew his glare was far from intimidating, but he wasn’t going to let Gibbs know he was terrified.

“Good. You should check on him.”

Jimmy took a moment, then deflated a little as he swung his gaze out towards the waiting area seeing Spencer pacing. He nodded once then left the room. As he started out, he heard Hotch saying something to Gibbs.

“You’re an ass.”

Jimmy almost choked on the laugh that wanted to escape, but he knew better. Gibbs would only let him get away with so much. By the time he found Spencer, the rest of his old team was there along with Hotch’s ex-wife and son. They watched from the sidelines as Jack cuddled up to Hotch, then was being picked-up by Gibbs and hugged.

“‘Pencer,” Jack cried out holding his arms out for Spencer. The genius took the few steps over to Gibbs, and took the boy into his arms.

“Hey buddy. Now, are you going to be good for your Mom?”

“Yeah.” Jack’s brows were furrowed in an almost imitation of the father.

“You know how we have adventures at the park?”

“Yeah.” Jack’s face lit, and a tiny smile curled the sides of his mouth.

“Well, I want you to think of this as one of our adventures. Before you know it, you will be back home, and your dad will be all better. You trust me?”

Jack laid his head on Spencer’s shoulder, and hugged him tight. “You take care of Daddy?”

Spencer smiled softly, as he gave Jack one last hug. “Your Uncle Jethro and I will take very good care of your Dad. I promise. Now go to your Mom. It’s going to be your job to take care of her, okay little man?”

“Okay ‘Pencer.” Jack looked back at the bed on more time, and blew his Dad a kiss. “Love you, Daddy.”

Jimmy saw that Hotch was getting emotional. His eyes shimmered with unshed tears. He was trying to hold onto that stoic nature of his, and Jimmy wondered how long he could last like that.

“I love you so much, buddy. You mind your Mom, and I promise you’ll be home before you know it.” Haley took Jack from Spencer, and a moment later they were being taken away by the Marshalls to be put into protective custody. No one knowing where they were going, which was the point. Jimmy felt bad for everyone involved, and tried to put himself in their shoes. He was brought out of his reverie when he felt a hand curling with his. He looked up, and waited for Spencer to say whatever it was that was on his mind.

“Hey, what did Gibbs want with you earlier?” Spencer finally had gotten around to asking Jimmy after Haley left.

“He wants me on the gun range in the morning.”
“Makes sense. You and pretty boy here gotta good thing goin’. Smart to protect yerselves.”

“He’s benching me, Morgan.” Spencer was still upset over the possibility of being stuck in the office.

“Yeah, and I know you. In a couple weeks, yer gonna use that big brain to talk circles around yer boss, and get yerself back in the field where it’s harder to protect you.” Morgan clasped a hand on Spencer’s shoulder. “Don’t you get it man? Foyet threatened you. That doesn’t hurt just Hotch, it hurts all of us. We still care, pretty boy, and now you got more than just the team. Hurting you, that would be maximum damage, and you know guys like Foyet would get off on that.”

Jimmy was grateful for Morgan at that moment. He saw that his words hit home with Spencer.

“How you think Henry is gonna feel that he didn’t get a chance to know his Godfather? Huh?”

“Hey, that was low, Morgan.”

“Nah man, that’s what is at stake if you don’t listen to your boss.”

“He’s right, Spencer.” Jimmy laced his fingers with Spencer’s, grateful when all the fight went out of the man. He was pulled into a hug, and Spencer held on, fighting with himself.

“I can’t lose you,” Jimmy whispered in his ear.

“James, you aren’t going to. We, together, are going to catch this bastard, and he won’t hurt anyone else.”

“And, you are staying at my house.” Jimmy jumped because he hadn’t heard Gibbs come up to the group. His silent stalking always made Jimmy a little jumpy.

“I am not going to change how I live because some sociopath is taunting Hotch.”

“Spence, maybe this is one fight that you need to give up. We care about you, and if you need to make some changes to stay safe, do it for us.” JJ flashed her big blue eyes at him, and Jimmy almost lost it. He knew what she was doing, and watching his boyfriend, he knew it was working.

“She’s right. Tony has stayed there when he’s been in danger.”

“I’ve been where?” Tony and McGee finally made it to the hospital, and walked up to the group.

“Spencer is staying with me. Hotch is going to stay with you.”

Tony smiled nervously at Gibbs, “Boss, come on. You know I don’t like people in my place.”

“And, your place isn’t registered at NCIS. It’s not in the system, its in a quiet neighborhood. Foyet wouldn’t look there twice. I’m getting a coupla Marines I know to check on you guys from time to time.”

“Y-you’re serious.”

“Yes DiNozzo, I’m serious.”

“Tony,” Jimmy took a page out of JJ’s book, and widened his eyes to look as pleading and innocent as he could. He knew keeping Hotch safe would ease Spencer more, and if Spencer was calmer, then he would go with Gibbs. “Please.”
Tony’s expression went flat as he looked at Jimmy. He frowned, and tried to say something but all that happened was he opened and closed his mouth a few times.

“That’s low, Jimmy, even for you.” Tony tried to protest some more, and Jimmy just furrowed his brow. “Fine! Hotch comes to my house. But, one of you is carting him around. It ain’t gonna be me.”

Gibbs grinned, and Jimmy just shook his head at the look of victory on his boss’s face.

As everyone was discussing logistics, Jimmy noticed that Hotch was alone. Taking one last look at the group, he walked over and stood just outside the room.

“You okay, James?”

“I should ask you that. Is there anything I can get you, Hotch?”

Jimmy felt like he was being assessed by the look he was getting from the BAU Unit Chief. Finally, after what felt like forever, Hotch motioned him into the room.

“You want to ask me something, but you don’t want to be insensitive. It’s fine, James. Sit.” Hotch motioned to the chair next to his bed. “I take it Jet is arguing with the team about me staying somewhere other than my apartment?”

“Yes.” Jimmy chuckled, and ducked his head a bit.

“I see what Spencer sees in you. You’re smart, and probably more observant than they,” Aaron indicated the group out in the waiting room that was quietly arguing, “give you credit for. You remind me a lot of when Spencer first joined the team. You’re good for him. You balance him, and he needs that.”

“I sometimes feel like he could do better. I know we can talk about a lot of what he’s interested in, but there are times…” Jimmy trailed off and looked down at his hands. He heard a low chuckle then a slight moan of pain. “I should go. Let you sleep.”

“Stay. It’s fine. I know exactly what you mean. He can go over your head, and not even realize it. But it isn’t annoying because he’s oblivious he’s doing it.”

“Exactly. How do you keep yourself from feeling stupid around him? Because I have no idea what I’m doing.”

“James, for all of his outer strength, there is a kind, loving and tender man inside him. Just be yourself. That’s who he fell for, and don’t look like that. I know falling in love when I see it. Hold onto it, James. You both are worth it.”

Jimmy smiled wide, “Thank you, Hotch.”

“You did good against Jethro. He’s a hard, stubborn, jackass. Don’t let him bully you.”

“I don’t, or at least Ducky doesn’t let him.” Jimmy was about to ask the question that had been on the minds of the whole MCRT team.

“I think you are smart enough to figure us out.”

“He won’t show it, but he’s worried. About you and about Spencer.”

“You sure you aren’t a profiler?” Aaron frowned.
“I’m going to go. You rest. We’ll take care of Spencer. I promise.” Jimmy stood, and walked back into the fray. Spencer pulled him close, tucking him into his side. He let the conversation flow around him knowing how much everyone there cared for the man. He made up his mind in those few moments that if Gibbs wanted to teach him to shoot so he could help protect Spencer, then he would learn. He just hoped he didn’t hurt himself in the process.

Part Four:

“Marcus Brown.”

“What?”

“Look, Garcia sent me that. Marcus Brown was buried deep. I don’t even know if Chad Brown knows about him. Mother disappeared, but kept the last name for the son. We profiled Brown as a loner, and couldn’t find any records of any girlfriend.” Aaron turned the laptop for Spencer to see. He and Jimmy were over at Tony’s apartment with Gibbs. They were working on two projects, trying to finish tracking the Anthrax killer, and searching for Foyet. Aaron was still recovering, which was why they all decided to meet at Tony’s.

Jimmy was on his laptop looking to see if he could find anything on social media, or in blogs for this Marcus Brown. He knew he wasn’t as good as McGee, Abby, or Miss Garcia, but he knew how to troll the social networks. They didn’t want to get McGee or Abby involved just yet. He was eliminating one site after another when he stopped on a blog dealing anti-vaccinations.

“Oh, guys, I don’t know if this is what you’re looking for, but this blog is all about anti-vaccinations and government conspiracies.” Jimmy handed his laptop over to Spencer who started to earnestly look through it.

“I think he’s right, Hotch.” Spencer replied, quickly reading through the blog posts. He found that they were essentially rants about the government covering up the truth regarding how safe people were from the chemicals being pumped into the food and water supply. “There is a lot of rhetoric on here that mimics Nichols’ paranoia. But, if Chad didn’t know he had a son, how is the language so similar? Many of these posts are linguistically very similar to Chad Brown. See this text here? It is almost identical to the dissertation that Brown was working on. We need to find out if they had contact and when.” Jimmy was given his laptop back, “Bookmark that site then send it to Garcia. Ask her in the e-mail if she can get me paper copies.” Jimmy copied the address of the blog, and sent it off to Garcia. He hoped they were on the right track. They all wanted this case that had been weighing on them, done.

“What else?”

“Coffee. I need more coffee.” Spencer stood, and made his way to the kitchen. This wasn’t the first time that the five of them had gotten together over the days that Aaron had been staying with Tony.

Tony also stood, and followed Spencer with the excuse of helping him.

Jimmy was continuing his searches keeping his head down as Gibbs took Hotch’s hand and laid a gentle kiss on his upturned palm. Times like these, Jimmy saw a different side of his boss. He knew Gibbs cared about the team, but this was different. Jimmy often wondered, though, how two men who didn’t talk much actually made it work, but they seemed to have. He also wondered what Vance or the FBI would do to either of them if it was found out. Though they didn’t work for the same agency, and although there were discrimination laws in place, Jimmy was realistic. He knew, just as Spencer did, that either of their relationships could end their careers. Gibbs and
Hotch just didn’t seem to care.

Jimmy was lost deep in his thoughts when a hand was laid on his shoulder. He looked up to see Spencer there with a steaming hot cup of coffee for him.

“Thank you, Spencer.” A kiss to the cheek had Jimmy blushing, yet again. He felt the heat creep up his face. He also saw identical smirks on the faces of the older men across from him.

“What should I look for next?” Jimmy wanted something to do to take his mind off said older men’s smirks.

“Troll some of the conspiracy theory sites. Maybe even look and see if there is anything that is linguistically similar to Marcus Brown’s own site. Then we probably need Garcia to track where he’s been. I can set-up a geographical profile here.”

“You are not sticking pins in my walls, Doc.” Tony shoved coffee at both Gibbs and Hotch.

“Of course not. I’d bring over a pinboard. We could set it up where it would be easy to take down. On one side we track the Anthrax killer. On the other we can set-up any information we get on Foyet.”

“That sounds good, Reid. If you go to the FBI building, in my office are three boxes. It’s everything from the last ten years we have on Foyet, plus all of the new information we have from the Boston investigation. I can go back through, see if there’s anything we missed.”

“I’ll help. Fresh pair of eyes can’t hurt.” Tony reached for one of the files that they were going back through on the Anthrax killer.

“There wasn’t anything about a girlfriend?”

“No, Chad Brown is a man who thinks that he is more important than he really is. He wants to be recognized for the scientist and intellectual equal that his mentor was. His delusion and ego have increased quite a lot since getting caught. He now believes that the Government is out to silence him and his cause.”

“Spencer.” Hotch was narrowing his eyes as he scrutinized the younger man.

“Yes, Hotch?”

“When did you go see Chad Brown? And, how did you get access? General Whitworth is supposed to have him locked down.”

“I asked to see him, Hotch. I went a few days before joining NCIS. I wanted to know.”

“Spencer, you know someone like Brown isn’t going to give you the truth.” Hotch sounded exasperated.

“I know, but I almost died, Hotch. It would have been the second time, and I wanted to know why he would do what he did. Why he put all those lives in danger, killed all those people, almost killed me.” Jimmy reached over laying a hand on Spencer’s thigh and squeezed.

“Sometimes we don’t get to know the why. You have this amazing capacity for empathy, and I know how much it sometimes hurts you. But someone like Brown, an agenda based offender, they don’t care who it is they hurt. There’s nothing you can gain by torturing yourself.”

“I know that. I just, it was like with my Dad. I needed some closure, I needed to know. And,
thank you, Hotch.” Jimmy knew there was a whole other level of conversation going on that he couldn’t decipher. But, if Hotch knew how to settle his partner, then he was all for it.

“I can’t find anything else relating to Marcus Brown. Miss Garcia might be better suited to this than me, Spencer.”

“It’s okay, James. We’re just looking for a needle in a stack of other needles.” Spencer shut his computer down, and rubbed his face.

“But, I did find something. Here, it’s a local amateur hockey team. If you look, all of the victims are in the photo. Maybe something related to this?”

Spencer grabbed the laptop, and went through the whole of the team’s website.

“How did we miss this?” Spencer flipped the laptop around so that Gibbs, Tony, and Hotch could see.

“Probably because we weren’t looking. There was nothing about a hockey team anywhere in any of the victims residences. We need to re-interview the family members, Gibbs. Ask them about this. Looks like the website hasn’t been updated for a while. I wonder if something happened to have it disbanded,” Tony said as he scrolled through the website.

“We’ll do that in the morning, Tone. Right now we all need some sleep. Come on, Doc, let’s go home. It’s late.” Gibbs stood, and leaned down placing a chaste kiss on Aaron’s lips. “We are so talking about a few things when this is all over.”

“Jet.” Two fingers were placed on his lips to stop him talking.

“We are having that talk that we both keep putting off, Aaron.” Gibbs kissed him again, before turning to Spencer and Jimmy.

“Well, come on.” Jimmy had his bag packed quickly, as did Spencer. The two of them followed Gibbs out after saying their goodbye’s to Tony and Hotch. It wasn’t that long of a drive to get to Gibbs’ residence, and Jimmy looked out the window surprised they were there. He just raised a brow as he met eyes with Gibbs in the rearview mirror.. “I assumed you were staying.”

“Oh, um, Spencer?”

“I’d like you to stay,” Spencer reassured Jimmy that he really didn’t want him to leave..

“But, we aren’t...we haven’t...I mean…”

“James, stay.”

Jimmy swallowed hard. He did want to stay, even if it nothing happened. He wanted to be around Spencer more and more.

“Okay.”

“Okay.” Jimmy got a flash of Spencer’s brilliant smile as his hand was taken, and he was pulled along to the bedroom Spencer was staying in. “We don’t have to do anything. I just want you here.” Spencer pulled Jimmy close, and wrapped his arms around him. The two men just stayed there holding each other, finding comfort in each other’s arms.

Jimmy was woken-up by the ringing of a phone. He heard someone moving around, and sat up.
Grabbing his jeans, he slipped them on. Noticing Spencer wasn’t in bed, he wondered where his lover had gone. Softly padding out, he went in search of Spencer, wanting to know if they had a case. He found himself in the living room where Gibbs was finishing buckling up his belt while juggling the phone against his ear.

“I’ll be there in a few minutes. Tony, I trust you.” Gibbs was putting his shoes on, and grabbing his wallet. He was just closing up his phone when Jimmy found him. “Gotta go. Stay here, there’s a detail outside. Don’t leave till morning. That’s an order Palmer, and it goes for Spencer as well.”

“Do we have a case?”

“Nope.”

“Sir?” Jimmy frowned while Gibbs was checking he had everything.

“It’s personal, Palmer. I may not be back. You two be careful.” Gibbs was out the door, and in his truck in no time. Sighing, and knowing he wasn’t going to get back to sleep, Jimmy went in search of Spencer. He found him in Gibbs office curled up on the small couch with a book in his hand.

“Hey,” Jimmy yawned as he sat on the other end of the couch.

Spencer closed his book, and looked over at Jimmy, “Hey.”

“Couldn’t sleep?”

“No. I keep wondering how we missed something so important. And, wondering what this Marcus Brown has to do with these Marines. The profile doesn’t make any sense.”

“I don’t know, but brooding about it isn’t going to help. Come back to bed, Spencer, and try to get some sleep.”

Spencer nodded, and let Jimmy lead him back to his temporary room. Jimmy had Spencer lay on his stomach as he straddled the genius’s legs. Using hands that have been made strong through his work with Ducky, he started to massage Spencer’s back, hitting all of those places that he held most of his tension.

“God, James, that feels amazing,” Spencer slurred, and Jimmy could feel how his body was relaxing under his ministrations. He wondered just how much sleep Spencer was getting, and it worried him. He dug deep into the knots in his shoulders making the man under him moan obscenely.

“Where did you learn how to do this?” Spencer purred under Jimmy’s talented hands.

"I took some physical therapy classes when I wasn’t quite sure what I wanted to do. It stuck with me.”

“It’s wonderful, James.” Spencer closed his eyes, and Jimmy knew when he started to fall asleep. His breathing deepened, and his body relaxed completely. Jimmy slid down next to Spencer cuddling next to him trying not to let worry cloud his mind over everything that was happening. He hoped that the case would get resolved without any more loss of life now that they had what looked to be a solid lead. He also hoped that Foyet would be caught in time, and that no one else got hurt. Spencer was worried about Hotch, and he knew what all of this was doing to his friend. Jimmy knew he also needed to get to sleep. Eventually, he was able to close his eyes surrendering to the needs of his body hoping that the next day was a better day.
Jimmy woke to the smell of bacon frying and fresh coffee. He lazily stretched, looking next to him, and wasn’t surprised that Spencer wasn’t there. He picked up his watch, and saw it was still a little early. He knew he wasn’t going to be able to go back to sleep, though. Slipping out of bed he threw on the clothes from the day before, then padded out to the kitchen. He wasn’t all that surprised to see Hotch at the table on a laptop on one side and Spencer on the other. Though, they were talking animatedly, Jimmy wondered if they found something significant.

“Garcia isn’t going to like that you got her up early,” Spencer teased.

“No, but the information she’s feeding us is exactly what you guys needed.”

“Did something break in the case?” Jimmy asked as he walked towards the table.

“Oh did it. Hotch got Garcia up early to start searching for Marcus Brown. She found him. He had gone into Sports Medicine. There wasn’t anything in his background to suggest the same type of psychopathy as his father. But, what we have been able to determine is that Marcus was the victim of severe and intense bullying. We found police reports, school records, and more. Then we started to dig into the lives of the Marines that have been killed. Marcus Brown was the hockey team’s volunteer physical therapist, but there are several complaints he made to the Fairfax Hockey League Administration about the treatment he was receiving on the team. He was getting ready to resign his position. We need to figure out the stressor that pushed him over the edge.”

“Garcia also found that he obtained a masters in Chemistry, and was attempting a doctorate. She’s still trying to find where Chad and Marcus crossed. But, we now have a major break. Jet is going to bring in the rest of the team to find out just what it was that pushed Marcus Brown over the edge.” Jimmy saw Hotch wince a little as he moved. He smiled up at Gibbs, as a plate of food and some coffee were placed in front of him. A hand lightly squeezed his shoulder and he smiled, but it didn’t quite reach his eyes. Jimmy felt so bad for Hotch, but he didn’t know what he could do for him. He turned to the side, and let his gaze fall on Spencer for a moment. His heart ached a little knowing that his boyfriend was so conflicted over Hotch’s situation.

“Is there anything that I can do?” Jimmy asked as Gibbs placed plates in front of him and Spencer respectively.

“No, Palmer. You just help Ducky and Kimura, and keep meeting me on the shooting range. We’ll get this all taken care of.” Jimmy wanted to protest that he could do more, but Spencer laid a hand on his thigh shaking his head.

“What you do is just as valuable as what we do. And, you help immensely when we have our strategy meetings. Just keep doing your job, James.”

“Alright, but you know where I am if you need extra hands.” Spencer squeezed his thigh in a reassuring grip. There wasn’t much more they could do that morning as they ate breakfast, and Jimmy listened as Hotch, Gibbs, and Spencer batted around ideas sketching out a profile of Marcus Brown. He hoped that when the man was caught, they would get more answers. Not for him, but for the families of the Marine’s he and Ducky were the custodians of.

After breakfast, Gibbs drove Jimmy to his apartment so he could take a quick shower and change into clean clothes. Then they drove into the office together where they got started on trying to wrap up this case. Though Foyet was still looming over them in the background, there wasn’t anything they could do about him for the moment. They would worry about him when the Brown case was wrapped. Jimmy just hoped it was in time to prevent Foyet from hurting anyone else.
Part Five:

After interrogating the remaining reservists in Lieutenant O’Connor’s unit, they had their motive, and Marcus Brown was in custody. Gibbs and Tony were interrogating while Jimmy and Ducky were closing out their files on the case. The bodies were signed off to be transported to the various funeral homes of each family’s wishes. Jimmy was preparing the final paperwork for the last victim when Spencer had wandered down to Autopsy.

“Spencer, what are you doing here? I thought you would want to be there watching the interrogation of Marcus Brown.” Jimmy had just finished zipperimg up the black body bag Seamen Waylon Roberts was in, a victim of gang violence when he had gone home to see his parents. Jimmy always felt that sometimes the random death was the worst. There were no motives, and sometimes no answers. But, it wasn’t his job to try to explain, it was his job to take care of them, and give some closure to the families.

“I’ve already had my go at him.” Jimmy saw that Spencer looked upset and agitated. After putting Seamen Roberts back in the cooler drawer, Jimmy took off his gloves, washed his hands, and walked back to where Spencer was still standing.

“What’s wrong?” Jimmy took his hand and gently squeezed lending support and, he hoped, affection.

“I just talked to Morgan. Hotch is losing it, and it scares me. He resigned as Unit Chief, and put Derek in charge so the team could stay together. Why can’t I find this man James?” Spencer scrubbed his face, and leaned back against one of the stainless steel tables.

“Spencer, the whole of the BAU is looking for him, as is Gibbs. You have to trust them.”

“I know, and I know I made my decision to leave the team. It doesn’t help when someone I care about is hurting, and I’m not there. I should be there.”

“No, you should get back in interrogation. You connected with Brown better than DiNozzo or myself have. You understand him Reid.” Jimmy jumped at Gibbs voice. He hadn’t heard him coming into autopsy, the man was just too damn sneaky. It never seemed to faze Spencer though, and Jimmy knew he saw it as a kind of game in trying to figure him out.

Jimmy could see that Spencer wanted to protest, but one look from Gibbs had him scrambling.

“Here’s the paperwork for the families.” Jimmy handed Gibbs the files that he had finished. “How did he do it? Administer the Anthrax.” Over the course of working with Gibbs, Hotch, Tony, and Spencer, on their off time, Jimmy had started to become more comfortable around the MCRT leader. He wasn’t as afraid of asking questions, or speaking his mind as he had been when he first started.

“During routine massages. Each of them was relaxed and trusting enough for Brown to take advantage of. He’d give them a muscle relaxer disguised as aspirin, then he’d use a vaccine gun he had modified to inject the liquid form of the Anthrax into their bodies.”

“That’s kinda scary.” Jimmy felt horrified. These men had trusted Brown, and he abused that trust to gain his own revenge. “What happened to set him off?”

“It wasn’t one thing Palmer. It had built up over time. But, we believe the catalyst was meeting his father.” Gibbs turned and walked out. Jimmy sat down and wondered what more he could do to help. When no answers were forthcoming, he scrubbed his face and got to work cleaning. He hoped answers would come in time.
Later that night, Jimmy found himself curled in Spencer’s lap being kissed stupid. He had invited the genius over for dinner, and now they had a nature documentary on in the background. Neither of them were paying any attention to it, though. When Spencer’s hand slid under his shirt, he moaned at the touch, and melted even more in Spencer’s arms. When he felt a shift in their positions, and found himself laid out on his couch with Spencer on top of him, he couldn’t help the surge of want that went through him.

“James,” Spencer whispered against his lips, “I want you. I don’t want to wait anymore.”

“You don’t have to Spencer.” Jimmy watched as Spencer’s eyes darkened with lust as he stood and held out his hand. Jimmy smiled and stood, placing his hand in Spencer’s, he was led to the bedroom where his lover took his time with him.

After they were cleaned up, and curled around each other in bed, Jimmy felt more contentment than he had in a very long time.

“James,” Spencer began, and Jimmy waited patiently for him to continue. “James, I want to tell you something, but I don’t want to scare you. I’ve already scared myself.” Jimmy heard the self-deprecating chuckle that came out of his lover’s mouth.

Jimmy sat up on one arm, and looked down on his lover, “What is it Spencer?”

Spencer turned those hazel eyes that Jimmy loved so very much on him There was a bit of trepidation on his face, and Jimmy wanted to reassure him of whatever it was that was making him nervous.

“I love you.” Jimmy smiled, and with his free hand cupped the side of Spencer’s face, stroking a thumb across his cheekbone.

“Spencer, I love you too. I didn’t say anything, because I was waiting for the right time.” Spencer smiled so wide that it made Jimmy’s heart flutter in his chest.

“I know everything is crazy right now, but I like being with you. I want to be with you more.” Spencer took a deep breath as he reached out and stroked Jimmy’s arm.

“What are you asking me Spencer?”

“I know it’s fast, I do, but I’m tired of being alone. James, will you move in with me? You know, after Gibbs let’s me off house arrest.” Spencer couldn’t help making the joke, because it was how he felt at times. Even now there was someone watching Jimmy’s place while he was there.

“Spencer,” James was speechless. He bit his lip as he thought about it a moment and came to the conclusion, rather quickly, that he liked the idea. He was also tired of being alone, and Spencer understood and accepted him like few others had. He smiled down at his lover then kissed him. “Yes, yes, Spencer, when all this is over I will move in with you.” The blush was back, but Jimmy didn’t care. His was happy, and he looked forward to his future with Spencer. He sighed in contentment when a hand fisted in his hair, and his head was gently brought back down so Spencer could kiss him some more. He had already figured out that kissing Spencer was his favorite thing in the world. He didn’t ever want the feeling to go away.

“We should sleep.” Spencer tucked Jimmy in the crook of his arm, and the two men fell asleep happy despite everything that was going on around them. Jimmy knew no matter what the outcome, right here in Spencer’s arms was where he wanted to always be.
In the morning, both men woke with a new outlook on life. They moved around each other like they had been together for years. Even making breakfast was a silent ballet. Neither man had to say anything as they worked on a quick meal of scrambled eggs, toast, and sausage. They then hurriedly dressed, and headed into the office with a renewed sense of optimism and hope.

Jimmy was heading down to Autopsy when Gibbs came flying through the office and stopped him.

“Reid, grab your gear, Palmer you’re coming too. Rest of you stay here.”

“Boss?” DiNozzo stood and frowned.

“Anything short of an extreme emergency, take care of it, DiNozzo. Come on you two, we have to go, now,” Gibbs growled as he he marched towards the elevators.

Jimmy wasn’t sure why he was going wherever they were going, but he wasn’t going to argue.

“Boss, what’s going on?”

“Lead on Foyet. BAU asked for you to join them. Something to do with following some drugs. And you, Palmer, are coming to watch his back. Just like we’ve been practicing.” Jimmy swallowed and couldn’t help the trepidation that crawled up his spine, and settled in his stomach. He had proved himself at the gun range. He surprised himself at how quickly he learned, and that he was a fairly decent marksman. He wasn’t the best by a long shot, but he knew he’d hit whatever he was aiming at. Though he still wasn’t sure if he could actually hurt another person. He just hoped that if the time came he could do it, especially if it was to protect Spencer.

“Makes sense. Foyet would probably be on some kind of cocktail of painkillers for much of his life considering the extent of the injuries he inflicted on himself.” Spencer was about to say more, but the look he got from Gibbs had him shutting up. Jimmy wondered if it was because many of those injuries were replicated on Hotch, and the possibility that he also was on some of those painkillers.

They hurriedly made it down to Gibbs car. Jimmy really didn’t relish another crazy ride from him, but he had no choice at this point. They piled into the car, buckled up, and in typical Gibbs fashion, flew down the short drive heading to the other side of the Quantico base to the FBI Training building. They made it through security quickly, perks of working for NCIS, and headed straight up to the BAU offices.

“Pretty boy, thank god you’re here. We need your help. We found one of Foyet’s hideouts, but he wasn’t there and we’ve hit a dead end. Garcia is trying to narrow down the drugs we found, but a lot of them seem like decoys.”

“You could have just called Morgan, why the rush over here?”

“Because, we think we alerted Foyet that we are onto him. We need to move and move fast.” Morgan showed Spencer the map that they were already working on. He told Spencer about the letters to Karl Arnold, and showed him on the map where they were postmarked from.

“We have him somewhere between Arlington and Fredericksburg, but we haven’t been able to narrow it down.” Hotch told him as he was reading a report that was handed to him by another agent.

“He has a list of prescriptions, but when I was at the pharmacy for Henry I was told that there can be over-the-counter substitutes for many of them. Got me thinking that we may be able to narrow down the list.” JJ had moved up next to Spencer filling him in even more on what was going on.
“We need to look at his list of prescriptions and sort out the ones that can’t be substituted.” Spencer was looking at the map and thinking.

“Aaron, where is Kassmeyer?” Gibbs was looking at all the information laid bare. Jimmy knew that his protective instincts were to bully anyone and everyone till he got what he wanted.

“Jet?”

“He’s going to go after Kassmeyer first to try to get Haley’s whereabouts, or get her to go to him. If I can get to the Marshal in charge, maybe we can cut him off before this goes any further.”

Jimmy and Spencer, along with the others in the room, were waiting with bated breath for Hotch’s answer.

“How do you know? Wouldn’t you be gambling with Haley’s life if you’re wrong?” Morgan crossed his arms and frowned as he glared at the NCIS agent.

“It’s what I would do. Foyet isn’t as complicated as y’all seem to think he is. What he is good at, is hiding. The rest is just human behavior.”

Hotch looked like he was considering what Gibbs was saying. Jimmy just sat back and waited to see what was going to happen.

“That’s a good idea. Go, and Jet?”

“I’ll be careful.” Gibbs crooked smile didn’t seem to reassure Hotch at all, and Jimmy knew if he was in the man’s shoes, he’d be worried too.

Hotch hesitated a moment, but then nodded his approval, and Gibbs was flying out the door. Afterwards, Hotch left the room to go speak with his analyst, and Jimmy wasn’t sure what he was needed for, but he would just wait to see.

It wasn’t long before they had the name of one of the medications that couldn’t be substituted. Garcia had run into the conference room with her laptop and was frantically relaying information before she even set her computer down on the table.

“There is one medication, Tapazole, it a medication to treat hyperthyroidism. It is highly regulated and can’t be substituted. But, there are a lot of people on it, I need a name or something to help me narrow down the location.”

“He’s not going to use his own name.” Spencer grabbed a marker, and Jimmy just watched as Spencer started to work quickly on an anagram of George Foyet’s name. Before long Spencer had it, Stephen Rhea.

“Wait a second,” Jimmy remembered a case a short while back where a Navy officer was using false identification to obtain certain regulated drugs, and reselling them on base. “What if he has an alert, some kind of, I don’t know, system to tell him when someone searches for any of his aliases.”

“Oh, that’s brilliant my young friend, who I’ll get introduced to later. Let me see what I can do.” Garcia’s fingers were typing fast, and everyone waited with bated breath.

“That’s good thinking, Jimmy. What made you think of that?” Hotch asked while Garcia worked.

“A case a little while before Spencer started. A Navy officer was using aliases to obtain controlled
prescriptions, then selling them on base. He was good with computers, and had alerts on all of his aliases. McGee and Abby were able to, I think they called it backhack? I’m not sure, but they were able to stop the alert from going through.”

“That is exactly right...I just need...a...few more... minutes. Oh you are crazy good, but not as good as me.” Garcia was muttering to herself while her fingers flew across the keyboard.

“Garcia, we don’t have a few minutes.”

“I’m going as fast as I can, sir. With only a name and vague location, it’s not so easy, but give me...” Garcia scrunched up her face, and concentrated. “There got it. Stephen Rhea, and here’s the address.”

“Good, let’s go.” Everyone scrambled out, and Spencer pulled Jimmy along with him. They rapidly converged on the address, and SWAT set-up an undercover perimeter around the apartment building. Jimmy and Spencer were ushered into the command center that Morgan had quickly gotten set-up. The tension was high as everyone waited for some kind of instruction from Morgan.

Hotch had previously called Morgan to tell him that Gibbs was at Kassmeyer’s place. He was inside the house, hidden and waiting, just in case Foyet showed up. He would also alert Kassmeyer to the danger that the Marshal was in.

Tension ramped up as everyone on the task force was getting antsy. When Morgan saw movement in Foyet’s apartment, he ordered all units to go. He made Jimmy and Spencer stay behind in the command center. He didn’t want any issues from the FBI brass for them being involved. Gibbs, Hotch said, could handle himself.

Jimmy and Spencer sat back to watch, but they each were given a weapon and a walkie talkie with instructions to stay out of it. But, just in case anything went wrong, Morgan wanted them to be able to protect themselves. When they saw movement in the apartment and Foyet stepping out onto the fire escape stairs, Spencer alerted Morgan and the SWAT teams via his walkie talkie.

They watched as Foyet was halfway down the fire escape stairs, when the team was backtracking, or coming out of the apartment building on the ground floor. Foyet entered another open window and disappeared. Spencer and Jimmy couldn’t see him anywhere.

“Kid, where did he go?” Morgan was yelling into the walkie talkie at Spencer.

“I don’t know Morgan, he went into an open window just two below his own place, then I lost him.”

“Shit. Keep alert, the both of you.” Morgan growled as he came out of the window and followed down on the fire escape.

The tension in the air kept getting worse, and both Jimmy and Spencer were paying more attention to what was happening across the street, than the room they were in. It was several long minutes before anything happened.

“Make no sudden moves. Slowly turn around.” Jimmy saw out of the corner of his eye how close Foyet had gotten, and the gun that was pointed right at Spencer’s head. Spencer just gave a little nod to Jimmy telling him to comply. They both turned and faced Foyet. Jimmy knew he wasn’t fast enough to try to take the shot. They were too close. He worried that he would miss, and Foyet would hurt Spencer. Taking a deep breath he steadied himself and waited, his body vibrating with tension and fear.
“You’re not going to get out of this, Foyet. There are undercover agents, SWAT and the BAU swarming the area.” Spencer kept his voice calm and controlled. Jimmy knew if he tried to talk it would be neither calm, nor controlled. His fear would clearly be heard in his voice, and he knew that was what Foyet wanted. It was that knowledge which made him stay silent, and let Spencer take the lead.

“See, that’s where you two are going to be my ticket out of here. Now, drop your weapons and communication devices, or I put a bullet in your boyfriend’s leg.” Spencer nodded at Jimmy telling him to do it. Both of them complied, and Foyet was on them in seconds. He had Spencer in a hold with one arm around his neck, bending the genius down at an awkward angle. The gun still pointed at him.

“This is what is going to happen, we three are going to walk right out of here, and no one is going to stop us. If they do, I will not hesitate to shoot the boy genius here. Understand me?”

Jimmy didn’t trust his voice at the moment, so he just nodded to acknowledge his acceptance of the order.

“Good, walk ahead of me, but don’t do anything stupid.” Jimmy swallowed as fear clutched his stomach, but he knew he couldn’t let this man see it. He took a couple of deep breaths, squared his shoulders and walked out of the room. He could feel Foyet and Spencer following behind him. When they got to the sidewalk, Hotch and the rest of the BAU had their guns trained on them.

“Foyet, let them go,” Hotch growled as his face scrunched in anger.

“Agent Hotchner. You just do love ruining all my plans, don’t you? How are you feeling by the way? Because, I know that you must be in pain, but that famous stoicism of yours won’t let you admit it to yourself, or your team.”

“George, you need to let them go, this is over.”

“No, Aaron, it isn’t. It’s over when I say it is. I’m in control here, not you. I have someone you care about, and his little boy toy here, and you aren’t going to do a damn thing. You know why? Because, you won’t take the chance that one of them will get hurt.” Jimmy saw the struggle on Hotch’s face, but he knew the man cared too much about Spencer to do anything foolish. Jimmy was more worried about Spencer than himself. This was exactly the type of situation that could cause him to have an attack. Spencer had left his bag in the SUV that they rode with Morgan in.

Hotch closed his eyes pressing his lips together in a hardline, and Jimmy knew he was conceding. He nodded at Morgan who ordered everyone to lower their weapons.

“Give Mr. Palmer the keys to one of your vehicles. Throw them over here.” Jimmy would thank Morgan later for giving him the keys to the SUV they had driven in. “Back off because you know, Aaron, that I will not hesitate to shoot one of these precious boys.” Jimmy didn’t need to look at Foyet to know what kind of expression was on his face, He knew the man would do it. He just hoped that Gibbs was right, and that Foyet was going to first go after Kassmeyer. If he did, then they had a chance.

“Alright, everyone back off, give them some room.” Morgan ordered his teams to back away, and keeping his distance, he led them towards the SUV.

“Get back, Agent Morgan.” Jimmy felt for the man as his face was flushed with barely controlled rage. Foyet got the vehicle opened, and shoved Spencer in the driver’s side, then he grabbed a hold of Jimmy’s arm. He was pulled around the vehicle and shoved into the backseat. Foyet then got into the front passenger’s seat as he ordered Spencer to drive.
“I need to know where you want me to go.”

“I’ll tell you where to turn, just drive and no sudden movements, or loverboy back there won’t see past the next few minutes, understand?”

Jimmy and Spencer shared a look in the rearview mirror, then Spencer started the car. He followed Foyet’s directions, and didn’t deviate at all. Jimmy had, without Foyet realizing it, activated the panic button that he carried with him in his pocket. It was keyed to both Gibbs and Hotch’s phones. McGee had made one for both him and Spencer shortly after the threat on Spencer’s life was taken seriously. It would let them track where either of them were once activated. Jimmy figured this was Foyet’s first mistake. He just hoped there would be more.

While Foyet focused on watching Spencer and giving him directions where they needed to go, Jimmy had gotten into Spencer’s bag that was in the backseat. He felt around and found the inhaler. His heart was pounding as he kept his eyes on Foyet, hoping he wouldn’t turn to see what he was doing. Slowly, he pulled the inhaler out of the bag. He gripped it tight, though his hands were sweating from his nerves. He was able to keep his grip as he pulled it free from the bag, and stuffed it in his pocket.

“Park here.” Spencer was directed to a spot on the street, and Foyet forced the both of them out of the car. During the short walk to the house Jimmy could tell that Spencer’s breathing was getting labored. The anxiety of the situation was putting undue stress on his lungs. “There, that house, go.” Foyet shoved Spencer towards the house, and he almost fell from the force of it. Jimmy was there to hold him up, and when he did he slipped the inhaler into Spencer’s pocket.

Jimmy wondered if Foyet had been here before, because they were led around to the back of the house where there was a back door, which Foyet opened with a key that he had produced from his pocket. There was no doubt that he had either made an impression of the key, or had gotten hold of a spare somehow. After giving it to Spencer, who was ordered to open the door, both men were shoved inside.

“Now, we’re going to play a little waiting game. Kassmeyer should be here soon, and then I will know where the little bitch ex-wife and her brat are. If either of you thinks to get heroic, I will not hesitate to kill you. Understand?”

“If you touch Haley or Jack, Hotch will not hesitate to kill you.”

“Oh I doubt goody Agent Hotchner would stoop to my level. He thinks he’s going to catch me, and lock me in a cage. I won’t stay, and he knows that. I know too many ways to escape from any prison in Virginia, if he want’s to stop me, he most certainly will have to kill me.”

“Give this up, Foyet. You know you won’t win. You can’t keep going like this. Your pain will increase because you can’t get substitutes for everything you’re taking. You’re getting tired, and running out of money. You could probably last a few weeks, but eventually you will make a mistake. Then we will find you. Hotch will make sure of it.” Spencer glared at him. Foyet’s face filled with rage as he backhanded Spencer across the face. Jimmy couldn’t help the yelp that escaped watching his lover being hurt. He never felt as helpless as he did at that moment. He wondered where Gibbs was, if he was there. He also wondered why the man was hesitating to take any action.

Foyet pressed the gun against Spencer’s head and the cold, deadly stare sent shivers up Jimmy’s spine. He was scared, and wasn’t afraid to acknowledge it.

“You think that scares me? I’ve had a gun pointed….” The movement was quick, and neither Spencer nor Jimmy had seen it coming. The knife seemed to come out of nowhere. It was buried
in Spencer’s side and Jimmy felt a bubble of panic rise inside him.

“Afraid now, boy genius? Your famous babbling going to get you out of this one?” Foyet pulled the knife out, and was so close to Spencer’s face that Jimmy almost lost control of himself. “He should have taken the deal. And, once I’m done with you two, I’ll deal with Agent Kassmeyer, then Aaron Hotchner will know real pain.” The gleeful look on Foyet’s face had Jimmy vibrating with fear and rage, but he had no way to let them out. He knew he wasn’t strong enough to take on the likes of Foyet. He was paralyzed with indecision on what to do. He was also wondering where the hell Gibbs was. He was supposed to be here already.

“Please, please don’t hurt him, again.” Jimmy begged, and he couldn’t help the tear that fell down his cheek.

“Oh, Jimmy my boy, the fun is just getting started.” Jimmy heard another grunt, and felt completely and utterly helpless.

“Put the weapons down, Foyet.” Jimmy almost collapsed in relief when he heard Gibbs voice, but wondered what the hell took him so long.

“And, here we have the lover. You don’t scare me Special Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs.” Foyet stood up from his bent position, turned, and Jimmy immediately grabbed Spencer and pulled him down to the floor. He knew not to take the knife out of the second wound, it was the only thing slowing the blood down. He pressed his hands against the first wound, and tried to staunch the flow of blood. He blocked out what was happening in front of him, and didn’t even flinch when the front door was kicked open. He heard gunshots, but his sole focus was on Spencer.

“Spence, you can’t do this to me, you hear? I’m not letting you go anywhere.” The tears that he had been holding back fell down, and he didn’t even care to stop them.

“Not...going...anywhere…” Spencer lost consciousness, and Jimmy didn’t even realize he was yelling. It was a jumble of bodies, noise and confusion. He was being pulled off of his lover as he tried to fight off whoever it was that had a hold of him. Blood rushed in his ears as he kept reaching for Spencer. EMT’s were there, working on him, but Jimmy was near panic mode.

“...Palmer, calm down kid. Come on, you have to calm down.” Jimmy’s awareness slammed into him at the sound of Gibbs voice.

“Spencer,” he called out as he tried to get out of Gibbs tight hold on him.

“He’s being taken care of, Jimmy, I promise.”

“Let me go, Gibbs.”

“Only if you’ve calmed down.”

“I have to go with him. You have to let me go.”

“Jethro, let him go. I’ll take him to the hospital.” Hotch was standing there in front of them, and Jimmy saw the pain in his eyes. “Come on, James.” Gibbs let him go, and Jimmy stood on very shaky legs. He looked down at the blood on his hands and his breath whooshed out of him as his legs buckled. He was lucky Hotch was there to catch him, or he would have hit the floor hard.

“I, I’m used to blood, why? Why?” Jimmy looked up at Hotch, and shook his head. “Tell me he’s going to be alright? Please?” His breath hitched as more tears pricked the corners of his eyes. “He...he...he said he loved me, just last night.”
“James, Spencer will be fine. You’ve been so strong, he’s going to need you. Come on, let me get you to the hospital and we’ll find out what’s going on, okay?” James knew in the back of his mind that Hotch was placating him, trying to calm him, but the panic bubbled up inside of him. He only calmed down when strong arms bandied around him, and held him for a moment.

Jimmy closed his eyes and nodded. He couldn’t speak, afraid that he was going to break down right there and then. Hotch kept his arms around him, but tucked him against into his side leading him out to one of the SUV’s scattered on the street. Jimmy wasn’t even paying attention to where they were going as Hotch drove. His mind was blank, even though he had a lot of questions about what the hell happened. The only thing on his mind at the moment was Spencer, and getting to him. He was grateful that Hotch wasn’t talking to him, asking him questions, he didn’t think he would be able to answer. He just wanted to get to Spencer. Then and only then would he be willing to answer any questions Gibbs, Hotch or anyone else had.

Part Six:

Jimmy was pacing the waiting room of the hospital. He had allowed himself to be cleaned-up and checked over by a nurse, but he was anxious the whole time. Finally, the nurse let him go, and he rushed over to see that more people had arrived. He was thankful that Hotch was wrangling everyone.

“Hey, Jimmy.” He looked up to see who was calling his name, and saw Tony practically running over to him. “You okay? No one’s telling us what happened. You don’t have to tell me, but you know I’m here.”

“Spencer was stabbed, I...I did my best, but I don’t know…” Jimmy tried to swallow past the lump that had formed in his throat. He tried to hold it together till they heard from the doctors. When he felt arms come around him in a tight hug, he took a deep breath to try to steady himself.

“Jimmy, everything will be fine.” Jimmy clutched at Tony’s shirt thankful for his friend. He knew he had to stay strong, he didn’t want to breakdown in the middle of the waiting room. He pulled away after a moment, and wiped his face, straightened his back, and squared his shoulders. Spencer didn’t need him breaking down. He needed him to stand up and be there for him.

The time ticked by slowly, and Jimmy just couldn’t sit. So, he paced. JJ brought him a cup of coffee, and he could see the worry in her eyes. He knew how close the two of them were, and because of this, knew that she was worried for him as he was. He reached out a hand, and gently squeezed hers, hoping to lend comfort. Jimmy looked around for the first time, and noticed just how many people were there. Hotch had been right. Hurting Spencer caused maximum damage to not just Hotch, but the whole team. He didn’t want to think about what it would do to everyone if Spencer died. He especially didn’t want to think about what it would do to him if Spencer died.

Jimmy was just about at loose ends when a doctor finally approached them.

“Yes, I’d like to speak with an Aaron Hotchner?” Jimmy stood, and Hotch motioned to him to approach the doctor with him.

“I’m Aaron Hotchner. This is James Palmer, he’s Dr. Reid’s partner. Anything you say to me, you can say to him as well.”

“I’ll make this quick. He’s a very lucky man. Both wounds avoided any vital organs. We were mostly worried that a lung may have been damaged. While there was a small nick to his left lung, we were able to repair it, and if he rests and follows orders, he’ll be fine in no time. We didn’t find any other damage, and both wounds were clean. He’s been stitched-up, and is resting. I wanted to
assure you both that we have followed his strict instructions that he not be put on any narcotic painkillers. We have upped the doses of naproxen. He seems to be responding to that even though he will feel the pain more acutely than if he was on something stronger.”

“Thank you, doctor. When can we see him?”

“He’s being transferred to a room as we speak. Give us a little while to get him comfortable. Then he can have limited visitors.”

“I understand. Again, thank you.”

The Doctor nodded, and left the two men alone. They now had to go and deal with the rest of the group. Jimmy was grateful that Hotch took the lead, and kept everyone calm. He was able to also keep them from overreacting. He saw out of the corner of his eye that Gibbs wanted to talk to him, but Jimmy was ignoring him. He was too angry with the man at the moment. Whatever his reason for waiting so long, Jimmy didn’t want to hear it, not yet at least. For now, he just wanted to be told he could go in the room to be with Spencer.

Jimmy, thankfully, didn’t have to wait long for a nurse to tell him it was okay to go into Spencer’s room. His heart was pounding fast at seeing his lover on the bed, hooked up to machines, and a bruise on his face where Foyet had hit him. But, he was alive, and he was going to be fine, even if Jimmy had to bully him to take care of himself. He lowered himself into a chair, and grabbed Spencer’s hand. Closing his eyes, he sent up a little prayer of thanks as he watched the rise and fall of his lover’s breathing.

A short-while later Jimmy was being gently wakened. He hadn’t realized he had fallen asleep. He looked-up, and saw that it was Morgan. He smiled shyly, and let out a shaky breath.

“Why don’t you go get some coffee kid. I’ll sit here with him. If he wakes, I’ll tell him where yer at.”

Reluctantly, Jimmy stood, and let Morgan have the chair he had fallen asleep in.

“Thank you, Derek.”

Morgan patted him on the shoulder, before he moved to the chair to take up Jimmy’s vigil. Making his way down to the cafeteria his thoughts were a jumbled mess. He went straight for the coffee, then grabbed a sandwich. He wasn’t sure he could actually eat or not, but he wanted to try. Settling himself at a corner table, he was thankful for the quiet that surrounded him. He did not want to give in to the fear that he had welled-up inside him while Foyet had them. Scrubbing his face, he took a long sip of the hot coffee, and settled back against the seat he was in.

“Hey.” Jimmy looked up at the voice, and was grateful that it was Tony.

“Hey.”

“Look, I know what it’s like to be in that situation. There wasn’t anything you could have done, Jimmy. Activating your panic button was the smartest thing for you to do. You kept your head long enough to remember to use it.” Tony reached across the table, and gripped Jimmy’s wrist, forcing him to look at him, again. “This is not your fault, Palmer. Foyet was a dangerous man. You did what was right.”

Jimmy frowned as he gripped the cup in front of him. He took a few moments before he said anything, not trusting his voice. Finally after taking another drink and clearing his throat, he knew he wasn’t going to give into the storm of emotions that threatened to break just yet. He knew he wasn’t going to last holding on so tight.
“I feel like I should have tried something. At least when we were in the command center. I froze, Tony. All that time with Gibbs learning to shoot, and I froze.”

Tony took a sip of his coffee, but didn’t take his eyes off of Jimmy. The look that came over his face was full of understanding and compassion.

“Jimmy, even Spencer, a seasoned agent, knew that he couldn’t take the shot. Foyet would have hurt one of you, and he was trying to protect both of you. Don’t do this to yourself. Don’t question your decisions, because it will make you crazy. I know you’re going to, and I know you’ll have nightmares. We all have them, but if you need to talk, I’m here.”

Jimmy rubbed at his eyes and took a shuddering breath. Right at this moment, he was never more grateful for his friend.

“Thank you, Tony.” Jimmy finished off his coffee, and looked at the sandwich. His stomach flipped, and he knew he wasn’t going to be able to eat it, at least not till he knew for certain that Spencer was going to be okay. “I’m going to go back. Go home, Tony, we’ll be okay.”

“Ah, Gremlin, I already know that.” Jimmy was pulled into an affectionate hug as he stood up. Tony kept an arm around his shoulders as they made their way back to the waiting room. Most everyone had gone home, but he saw that Hotch and Gibbs were still there along with JJ. When they stepped into the waiting room, Gibbs looked towards him, like he wanted to talk, but Tony just shook his head at their boss. Jimmy let go of Tony, and made his way back to Spencer’s room. He wanted to be there when he woke.

“James.” The soft voice startled Jimmy awake, breathing a sigh of relief that Spencer was finally waking up. “How long?”

Jimmy grabbed his phone off the small table next to Spencer’s bed to check the time. “About fourteen hours.” He put his phone down, and took Spencer’s hand in his, needing that connection. Furrowing his brow, emotion and exhaustion were warring within him, but he was determined not to leave Spencer’s side.

“Hey, James, I’m okay.” Spencer let go of Jimmy’s hand and reached out caressing his fingers over his lover’s cheek.

“I know. The Doctor explained, and you are going to take it easy. No arguing.”

“I have a feeling you are going to mother hen me.” Spencer tried to smile, but Jimmy could tell that any movement on his face hurt him.

Jimmy was going to say more when he heard a knock at the door. He turned to look to see Gibbs standing there. The anger he had tamped down welled up in him, and he was ready to say something when strong fingers circled his wrist.

“It’s okay, James.” Spencer turned to look at Gibbs. “Boss, come in.”

“I’ll leave you two alone.” Jimmy stood, and Spencer frowned slightly, “I can’t be here right now. I’ll come back.” Spencer just nodded, and Jimmy walked out of the room leaving Gibbs and Spencer alone.

Jimmy stood outside Spencer’s room, and looked in through the small window. He knew he should try to let what happened go. Foyet was dead, Spencer was alive and he would recover, but as he glared at the back of Gibbs head. He just could not shake the feelings inside him.
“I don’t think he would be upset if you were to go home, James. Jet and I can stay.” Hotch had moved up to the side of him. Jimmy just kept his gaze straight ahead.

“I’m fine.”

“James, I wanted to tell you that what you did, that was a very brave thing.”

“I didn’t do anything, Hotch. I didn’t even try. What kind of person does that make me?” The tears he had been holding onto so hard started to leak.

“It makes you smart. Foyet would not have hesitated to kill you or Spencer if you tried to fight him. Sometimes taking no action is the braver thing to do.”

“How do you do this? How do any of you do this? I’ve seen Tony come back with bruises and scrapes, gunshot wounds, and more, but the mind games, those seem to be the worst. I don’t think I ever truly understood. I stand over a body., I help Dr. Mallard to try to come up with answers as to what happened, but I never look past that. I think if I did…” Jimmy laid a hand on the glass and took a few deep breaths, before he turned a tear stained look towards Hotch. “How does it not break you?”

“Sometimes it does. Canada almost broke all of us. We each have our own coping strategies, but there are cases that are harder than others. The thing that makes it worth it is when the UnSubs are behind bars.” Hotch looked down into his coffee and sighed, before turning his eyes back up to Jimmy. “I don’t have all the answers. I wish I did, then I would know how to help my team more, but that doesn’t matter, James. What matters is what you’ve found with that young man in there. Someone I care about and admire very much. Hold onto it, and don’t ever let go.” Hotch tried to smile as he gripped Jimmy’s shoulder for a moment. Then he moved off to wait in another room.

Jimmy was pacing, wondering how long he should give Spencer and Gibbs, before he went back in Spencer’s room. When the door to the room opened, then closed, Jimmy looked up and let his expression go flat. He watched Gibbs who was looking at him with that look. The one that says he knows what you’re going to say before you say it.

“You got somethin’ to say, Palmer?”

Jimmy always felt nervous around Gibbs. His gruff manner and domineering personality made him a little jumpy around the man. Today, however, he was angry.

“You waited. You waited, and Spencer got hurt. You’re always saying to Tony that you have his six, today you didn’t. You were there, you could have…” Jimmy’s grimaced, and held himself around his waist. “I don’t like violence, but you should have taken the shot.”

Gibbs scrunched up his eyes as he watched Jimmy.

“I don’t have to explain my actions, Palmer.”

“Yes, you do,” Jimmy yelled. He didn’t care at that moment that Gibbs was higher on the proverbial food chain than he was. All he cared about was how Spencer got hurt, because the man standing in front of him hesitated.

“Fine. If I had taken the shot, the bullet would have gone through Foyet, and possibly hit Reid or yourself. And, I wasn’t willing to take the risk.”

“But, you took the risk that he would hurt one of us. And, he did. I could...I could have lost him.” Jimmy glared at Gibbs, unmoving. He realized in that moment that he was no longer afraid of the
leader of the MCRT.

“Palmer, you need to back off. I did what was right for the situation. Now, you have every right to be angry, just be sure you know who you’re angry at.” Gibbs stared back at Jimmy who had taken a few steps closer and narrowed his eyes at the man. After a minute of staring each other down, he backed off and went back into Spencer’s room knowing it would be a long time before he forgave Gibbs.

When he entered Spencer’s room, Hotch was there, and they were talking quietly. Jimmy hesitated a moment until Spencer turned to him and smiled. That was all it took for him to take the few steps till he was at Spencer’s bedside.

“Hey.”

“Hey yourself. You should be resting Spencer.”

“Hotch was just saying his goodbye. You should go home too, James, get some sleep. I’ll be okay.”

“Spencer…” The man on the bed held up a hand to stop what Jimmy was going to say.

“I’ll be okay. Go home and rest.”

“It’s just...it won’t be the same, without you.” Jimmy lowered himself in the chair next to Spencer’s bed.

Spencer took a labored breath, and Jimmy remembered the inhaler in his pocket. He grabbed Spencer’s bag with his clothes in it and pulled it out and handed it to Spencer. After taking a dose, Spencer closed his eyes and curled his fingers with Jimmy’s.

“I promise, I’ll be fine for one night.”

Jimmy wanted to protest, but he knew how stubborn Spencer could be. He sighed, and reluctantly agreed to go home. He was tired, mentally, physically, and emotionally. He wanted to stay with Spencer, but he knew the staff was going to kick him out eventually. Getting up, he kissed his lover, a soft slide of lips and a gentle press had him closing his eyes. He felt fingers curl in his short hair, keeping him there for a moment. After pulling back, he cupped Spencer’s cheek then reluctantly broke contact.

“I’ll be back in the morning.”

“Counting on it.” Spencer yawned, and his eyes drooped, and Jimmy could see just how tired he was. He walked towards the door, and looked back once. Saying his goodnights, he left shutting the door behind him.

“James, if you don’t want to be alone, you could come back with me to Jethro’s.”

“Thank you for the offer, Hotch, but I think I just want to be alone.” Jimmy just wanted a shower and to collapse into bed. What he really wanted to do was to crawl onto Spencer’s bed and wrap around him and fall asleep, but he knew he couldn’t. So, he’d rather just be alone.

“James, I know that you’re angry at Jethro, but know that he tried to make the best decision for the situation.”

“I know you mean that, Hotch, but it’s still going to be a while before I forgive him. Thank you for the offer, but I really just wanna go home.”
“Then I’ll drive you. Come on.” Hotch pointed out the way, and Jimmy knew he didn’t have much choice. He didn’t have his car, and as long as Gibbs didn’t go with them, he was fine letting Hotch take him home.

Jimmy found himself almost falling asleep in Hotch’s car, his exhaustion hitting him all at once. When Hotch pulled up in front of his building, he thanked the man, then got out and dragged himself up to his apartment. After taking a quick shower, he crawled into bed hoping he’d be able to sleep. He didn’t want to think about Spencer all alone at the hospital. He pushed those thoughts aside as his eyes closed, and he fell dead asleep. He hoped things were better in the morning.

Final

Morgan was bringing the last of the boxes into Spencer’s apartment, and Jimmy showed him where to put them. Spencer had been out of the hospital for three weeks when he finally talked Jimmy into moving in.

“Thank you, Morgan. We appreciate all of your help.”

“Aw Kid, you know I’ll always be here for you, even if it’s just liftin’ some boxes,” Morgan smiled as he patted Spencer on the back. Jimmy leaned into his lover as he too smiled.

“You two ready to go? After all that movin’ I’m hungry, and Hotch said somethin’ about burgers and barbeque chicken.”

“Yeah, we’re ready. I can unpack later.” The three men piled into Morgan’s truck, and they headed out to Gibbs’ house where a get-together of the two teams was happening. Jimmy wondered how Hotch talked Gibbs into letting it happen. He didn’t often have that many people at his place.

“Hotch bullied him into it I bet,” Spencer mused.

“I still don’t get it.”

“None of us do, but they seem to make it work. Are you going to be okay, James?”

“I’ll be fine, Spencer. I’m still working on trying to let it go.”

“James.” Spencer took his hand, lacing their fingers together. “There isn’t anything to forgive. Foyet would have hurt one of us, possibly killed one of us. Gibbs did what he thought was right.”

Jimmy didn’t say anything, because this was the same conversation they’d had over the last few weeks. He knew he needed to get past this, but Spencer was still recovering from what happened to him, and it was a painful reminder. The bureau assigned counselor told him he had mild PTSD, and some of the anger directed at Gibbs was because he had felt helpless in the situation. Jimmy sighed as the conversation with her went through his head, and he had to concede that she might be right. Gipping Spencer’s hand a little tight, he laid his head on his lover’s shoulder and closed his eyes to settle. He wasn’t going to ruin a good time, because of his feelings towards his boss.

When they arrived, Spencer gently lifted Jimmy’s head, and leaned in to press his lips against the younger man’s.

“I love you, and I know you’ll forgive in time. Let’s just enjoy today.”

“I can do that,” Jimmy said, and he graced Spencer with one of his dimple showing smiles. After a
moment, they got out, and hand-in-hand moved through the house, both of them noticing changes in furniture and decor. Spencer nodded towards Jack’s backpack sitting at the end of the couch. Pictures on the mantel that hadn’t been there before. The house had a more welcoming feeling to it, and Jimmy wondered if that was Hotch’s doing. He shared a smirk with Spencer, both of them not missing the fact that Hotch had moved in.

When they finally made it to the backyard they were greeted warmly, with hugs and pats on the back, smiles all around. Spencer let go of his hand, and made his way towards the grill where Hotch and Morgan looked to be in a heated debate on the best way to barbeque the chicken.

Jimmy shook his head, not paying much attention to anyone else, then a cold drink was being pressed into his hand.

“Hey.” Jimmy looked to the side to see Tony smiling at him.

“Hey. Um, thanks.” He held up the beer bottle in his hand then took a sip.

“Jimmy…”

“It’s okay, Tony. I’m working on letting it go.”

“Good, ‘cause it’s always the quiet ones to look out for.” Tony smirked, as he bumped his shoulder with Jimmy. When he turned his eyes to where Spencer was, he saw Morgan and him teasing each other. He then looked back at Tony, and was grateful he had a friend like him. Most people didn’t get Tony, but Jimmy did. He knew he never wanted Tony out of his life, he was too good of a friend.

“Hey, where’d you go?”

Jimmy lifted a shoulder in a shrug, and the corner of his mouth in a crooked grin, “Just thinking how I’m glad we’re friends.”

“Aww, you’ll always be my friend Jim-Jim.” They moved towards Spencer and Morgan, Jimmy was caught-up in Spencer’s arms while Morgan and Tony talked sports. The four friends had grown closer after everything that had happened. Spencer didn’t seem surprised that Tony and Morgan had hit it off, they had a lot of common interests. Jimmy was happy. Whatever problems were between him and Gibbs could be set aside for the day. He sighed as a hand lazily brushed against his neck and a kiss was placed on his temple. Jimmy blushed., He was getting used to that, and it was no longer quite as embarrassing. He kinda hoped that Spencer would always make him blush a little.

Jimmy was just taking in everything, then he felt a tug on his pants. When he looked down he saw Jack who was smiling up at him. Letting Spencer go, he bent down on one knee so that he was eye-level with Jack.

“Daddy says you helped stop the bad man.” Jimmy took a sharp intake of breath, then placed a hand on Jack’s shoulder.

“I tried Jack. Spencer helped, too. I’m glad you and your Mom are okay.”

Jack flung his arms around Jimmy, giving him a hug. Jimmy was so out of element, but he didn’t hesitate to wrap his arms around the little boy, hugging him back.

“Are you ‘Pencer’s boyfriend?” Jack asked in a whispered voice next to his ear. Jimmy couldn’t stifle the chuckle that came out. He picked Jack up, then wrapped an arm around Spencer.
“I don’t know, let’s ask Spencer.” The man in question turned, and frowned at the two of them.

“Ask me what?” Spencer didn’t even try to hide his confusion.

“Uncle ‘Pencer, are you boyfriends?”

Spencer nearly choked on the water he was sipping when Jack asked the question. Tony and Morgan couldn’t quite stifle the giggles that escaped, as they grinned.

“Well, Jack, Jimmy is now living with me, so I guess that does make us boyfriends.”

“Like Daddy and Uncle Jethro?”

Jimmy heard a choking sound behind them, and turned to look at Hotch and Gibbs who were both blushing slightly. Jimmy almost lost it seeing the gruff exterior of his boss crack just a little.

“Jack, what are you doing?” Hotch turned to look at his son who had the most mischievous look on his face.

“Uncle ‘Pencer and Uncle Jimmy are boyfriends, Daddy. They are living together like you and Uncle Jethro. Does that make you boyfriends, too, Daddy?”

Hotch turned back to the grill trying to regain his composure, and of course Gibbs didn’t make it any easier when he purposefully placed a kiss on Hotch’s cheek.

“Yes, Aaron, does that make us boyfriend's?” Gibbs deadpanned making everyone around them lose it.

“Daddy?” Jack furrowed his brow, as he looked at his father. Hotch had a soft smile on his face as ruffled his son’s hair.

“I guess that does make us boyfriends. Are you okay with that buddy?”

Jack took a moment as he whipped his head back and forth between the four men.

“It’s okay, Daddy, you can be boyfriends.” Haley had come over to see what exactly was going on because Jimmy had to put Jack down, or he was going to topple over with how hard he was laughing.

“What’s going on?”

It took Hotch a couple of minutes to regain his composure before he could speak.

“Haley, we are having a very serious discussion about...boyfriends.” Hotch deadpanned, and Haley just gaped at him.

“Mommy, did you know Daddy and Uncle Jethro are boyfriends?” Haley covered her mouth trying to stifle the chuckle that wanted to escape. She looked up at Jimmy and Spencer, then to Jethro and Hotch.

“Exactly how did this conversation start?” The twinkle in her eye and the smile on her face told everyone there that she was doing okay, that they were all doing okay. Hotch had a fond look on his face, and Jimmy knew that whatever they felt for each other would probably always be there, but they each had moved on.

Hotch patiently explained what was going on, and Haley was doing her level best not to burst out
laughing while Jack waited ever so patiently next to her.

“Honey, I did know, and it’s okay because no matter what, your Daddy loves you.”

“Okay, can we play now, Uncle Derek?” And, just like that the conversation was over, but a
deeper understanding had grown between all of them. Hotch turned back to the grill, and started to
plate up the food. Jimmy seeing him struggling to hold in whatever emotion he was feeling at that
moment.

“Soups on,” Gibbs called out as he grabbed one of the plates, and walked over to one of two
tables that had been set-up for everyone to eat on. Hotch, Tony, Morgan, and Spencer all grabbed
a plate as well.

There was a food table to the side laden with corn on the cob, baked beans, coleslaw, fruit salad,
and a lot of other food. Including all the hamburger fixings and even tortillas if someone wanted to
pull their chicken apart to make tacos.

Spencer settled next to Jimmy, leaning over and kissing him unashamedly. Jimmy smiled as he
curled his fingers around Spencer’s thigh under the table.

“I love you,” Jimmy whispered then pulled back, a smile on his face.

“James,” Spencer bit his lip and blushed, as he ducked his head slightly, “I love you, too.” The
two men didn’t break their gaze for several moments, not till they heard a clearing of a throat.

“You know, there is a guest room…” Tony teased. The two men chuckled then got down to
eating. The happy conversations flowed around the table, and Jimmy thought how very lucky he
was that Spencer walked into Autopsy several months prior. He would cherish all these memories
for the rest of their lives.

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