“Serial killers use three names.”

Anderson’s Pontiac pulled up on the quiet Kalorama street, looking out of place amongst the Mercedes and Lincoln Towncars. He decided not to honk the horn, which was a good idea. Surely it would’ve gotten him dirty looks by the suits and dog walkers littering the neighborhood on an early Saturday afternoon. This little enclave was like an oasis in the middle of the nation’s capital.

Home to many embassies, government movers and shakers, it was also home to Spencer Reid. Reid and his mother were waiting in the middle of their walkway when Anderson pulled up. He put the car in park, turned on the blinkers, and opened his window. Then he sat up on the driver’s side door Dukes of Hazzard style.

“Dr. Reid, I have to say you’re looking lovely today. Exquisite, actually.”

“Hello, Grant.” Diana Reid managed a small smile while paying no attention to his compliment. “I trust you’ll put driving safety first with my only precious child in the car.”

“Oh yes ma’am.” Anderson smiled. “I have no intention of driving above 55…Scout’s honor.” He smiled.

“Now you're messing with me.”

“Totally.” He nodded.
Amanda rolled down the window and smiled at Spencer and his mom.

“Hey Dr. Reid, Anderson was right, you do look great.”

Diana Reid’s clothes were a bit crumpled and so was her hair. While she suffered from schizophrenia, she was also a nerd. And crumpled clothes weren’t that out of character for a nerd. Spencer often dressed in the same way.

He looked uncomfortable today in his overly pressed gray slacks and black button down shirt. Even his shoes looked spit shined. Everyone in the car was sure he wore mismatched socks, even if they couldn’t see them. Spencer Reid’s socks hadn’t matched since elementary school. He told Amanda once that his mother always put them together wrong so he just wore them that way so she wouldn’t feel she was failing as a parent.

“Thank you Amanda. How are you, sweetheart?”

“I’m good. One day closer in my plan to become goddess of the universe.”

“Don’t forget the little people when you do.” Diana said.

“Oh ma’am, your literature and critiques will be required reading when my takeover is complete.”

Diana smiled. She kissed Spencer’s cheek, absently wiping it off even though she wasn’t wearing lipstick.

“When is Dad coming home?” he asked her as she shuffled him toward the back of the car. She wasn’t pleased he had to get in on the street side but she also was well aware that she was slightly overprotective.

“He should be back in a few hours. Don’t worry, I took my meds. I’m just going to enjoy some reading and relaxing.”

“I made your lunch; it’s in the fridge.” Spencer said. “You only have to microwave it.”

“Is that a polite way of telling me not to use the stove?” She smiled, caressing his face.

“It’s probably for the best.”

He never gave her a flat out yes; never told his mother what to do. But Spencer had probably been making gentle suggestions since he was five or six years old. And Diana always listened to him. Except those few times she didn’t.

They both knew he was only looking out for her. His father was a busy man, couldn’t do it all on his own. Sometimes Spencer swore William Reid worked so much just to escape. But his love for Diana was obvious. The teenager was sure he loved his wife more than his son.

“Aye, aye Captain.”

“Mom, if you need anything just called me.” Spencer opened the door and got in the car. “All the numbers are on the fridge.”

“You go, Spencer. Go and have a good time with your friends. I will see you later. Maybe we’ll finish discussing Edith Wharton when you get back.”

“If you’re not too tired.”

Diana went back to the curb. She waved as the car drove away. Spencer seemed to relax a little as
they headed back toward DuPont Circle. He only looked out of the back window once.

“No BS Spencer,” Anderson said from the driver’s seat. “Your mom looks good.”

“She’s on a new medication in her cocktail.” He said. “We don’t want to get too hopeful but it’s been five months without a major incident. We’re lucky in the sense that mom isn’t one of those patients who thinks she’s magically cured when the medicine works. But it’s hard to find a combination that’s just right for her. There have been some struggles with side effects.”

“What's wrong with your mom?” Hotch asked.

He’d been sitting in the passenger seat the whole time. He felt guilty for not speaking to Mrs. Reid, who he now knew was Dr. Reid, but the two had never been formally introduced. While he and Spencer were acquaintances they weren’t quite friends. They communicated in school and of course in a group but rarely just chatted or hung out. Hotch knew the boy was a super genius who was just 16 and about to graduate from high school. Apparently smarts ran in his family.

“Oh um…”

“You don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to Spencer.” Hotch quickly changed his tune. The truth was that it was none of his business. Anderson and Amanda seemed to know but they were also close to him. If sharing it with others made Spencer uncomfortable Hotch didn’t want to do that to him.

“It’s OK.” Spencer didn’t quite sound as if it was OK but getting out of it would be nothing short of extremely awkward. He was awkward enough as it was. At least hearing it from him meant Hotch wouldn’t hear cruel things from someone else. “She has schizophrenia. She was diagnosed when she was 25. She still managed to get her PhD and teach at George Washington University for years. She also lectured on literature all over the country. She’s quite brilliant but has this illness. It’s rarely easy to control.”

“I’m sorry. My mother has episodes, as she calls them, and takes medications for her problems.” Hotch said. “She drank a lot when I was younger; probably to numb her numbness. She’s better now but we all know it’s a daily battle.”

Anderson glanced at him. Hotch had never told him that about his mother. Looking at Amelia Preston one would never guess that she had a problem in the world. Everyone in that car knew that looks were incredibly deceiving.

“So if you ever want to talk or anything…”

“Thanks, Hotch.” Spencer managed a smile.

While his friends had been so cool and comforting about all he had been through where his mom was concerned, Hotch almost knew what it was like. Amanda did as well but she was less likely to talk about it than Spencer was. Maybe someday he would open up about it even more. There was so much stuff going on in his head, there were days Spencer thought he might explode. This was one of the first times he actually contemplated getting it out.

“So,” Amanda put her hand on his arm. It was time to change the subject. “Are you ready for the big day?”

“I don’t know about ready but its time.”

Spencer was headed to a photo studio in Annapolis, Maryland to have his senior pictures taken. He missed the opportunity when photographers came to the school because he’d been at Yale for
his big college interview. Spencer wasn’t going to attend the school…it hadn’t even been his first choice. But when one got an interview at Yale University it was not to be missed.

So he and his father flew to New Haven and Spencer missed picture day. He wasn’t disappointed but his mother was insistent that the pictures be taken. So now he was dressed up and Anderson had volunteered to drive him out there. The less stress on Dr. Reid the better.

“Well you're looking good, kid.” Anderson smiled. “You're going to do great.”

“I don’t know if I should smile or go for a more mature look.” Spencer said. “I've been thinking about it for days.”

“They’ll take several poses.” Amanda said. “You can do both.”

“I look silly when I smile.” He looked down at his lap when he said it. “My mother would love it though.”

“See I think you should go for the more mature look.” Anderson said. “It would match the seriousness of your senior quote.”

“I haven’t even come up with one yet. There are too many to choose from. Asking us to just have one is criminal.”

“I was stuck on two forever.” Amanda said. “But I finally decided.”

“What were you stuck on?” Hotch asked.

“I wasn’t sure if I wanted The Smiths or Eva Marie Saint. I went with The Smiths…Morrissey wins almost every time.”

“You're doing The Smiths?” Anderson looked at her in the rearview mirror. “I was gonna do The Smiths. I’ll change mine now.”

“I’m sure we don’t have the same one, G. I’m doing ‘I would go out tonight but I haven’t got a stitch to wear’.”

“That is so you.” Spencer said.

“I know right.” She nodded, smiling.

“I was going to do the opening line to How Soon is Now but it’s so damn cliché anyway. I bet some butthole in our class, like James Baylor will use it. Oh excuse me, James Colby Baylor…he loves the three name thing.”

“Serial killers use three names.” Hotch said looking at his boyfriend.

“My sentiments exactly.” Anderson nodded. “This kind of thing isn’t going to matter in 20 years, the quote I mean, except it’s totally going to matter. I don’t want to pick the wrong one.”

“My mom and I have been focusing on females in literature lately.” Spencer said. “I'm really starting to love the works of Flannery O’Connor. I may use something she wrote for my quote. What did you pick Hotch?”

“I picked a Stephen King quote, ‘we never know which lives we influence, or when, or why’.”

“I like it.” Amanda said. “Do you read a lot of Stephen King? He creeps me out. Remember when we read It, G?”
“I’ve been trying to forget ever since we did it.” Anderson replied. “I used to put the book in the top of my closet once the sun went down so the damn clown wouldn’t get me.”

“I read some of his stuff.” Hotch replied.

“And by some he means it all.” Anderson said. “He’s got at least two bookshelves of King’s books in his room.”

“He’s more than just a cheap scare.” Hotch said. “There is something much deeper and more human than most people realize. I read my first Stephen King book at 12 and never looked back. It was The Shining.”

“I love that book.” Spencer said. “I had to sneak my copy though; my mom would’ve killed me if she found out.”

“Why, because it was too scary?” Amanda asked.

“Because it isn’t truly literature.” Spencer replied. “No offense, Hotch.”

“None taken.” Hotch shook his head.

“I’m really going to have to put some more thought into this.” Anderson said. “Maybe I’ll consult my Magic 8 Ball. It hasn’t let me down in years.”

“Signs point to no.” Spencer said, a little grin on his face.

“Spencer made a funny!” Amanda exclaimed. “Turn up the radio!”

Anderson turned the knob and Tiny Dancer blasted in the car. He vaguely remembered the first time they’d done that joke. It was Penelope and they were hanging out at a party that Amanda dragged Spencer to. They were all in the tenth grade. When he inadvertently made a rather funny joke, Penelope exclaimed ‘turn up the radio’ and they all danced like crazy. That was the night Spencer became part of their crew. It seemed as if they’d all grown up so much since then and were sometimes playing at being teenagers when they were completely world weary.

But oh how it feels so real
Lying here with no one near
Only you, and you can hear me
When I say softly, slowly

“Hold me closer, tiny dancer.” Spencer sang. “Count the headlights on the highway.”

They all began to sing along; lay me down in sheets of linen, you had a busy day today. It was Saturday and today would be a good day. Spring break was in full bloom; one week away from school and all the insanity that could go with it. Anderson planned on spending plenty of time with his boyfriend, avoiding growing up.

In just five months, friends would be scattered all over the United States moving to the next level in the process of growing up. There wouldn’t always be car rides and Spencer making funnies and thinking about quotes for yearbooks. It was easy to take it all for granted but Anderson was doing his best not to. He knew everyone in the car was doing the same.

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