

“Spencer”
By
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A young girl walks along the sidewalk, her eyes set on the distance. School is finished and people are returning home from work; the sun is still hot. The girl's orange hair falls around her face, pink and green clips, drag her hair back as it droops just below her shoulder blades. A hooded blazer wraps tightly around her chest, the college emblem, just above her heart. A short plaid skirt sways around her thighs. Baggy socks fold around her ankles like loose bandages, autumn leaves float by with the clip-clopping sound of her platform, Gucci, mules.

Her fingers run down an iron fence, stopping at a pair of gates. She swings them open and continues down a skinny cobble pathway that leads to a shady spot under two concrete pillars. A white English manor stands before her, its balcony looms above. To her left sleeps a black BMW. Various pollens, elms and vines arch over the driveway, mounds of moss colonise at its edges. She brushes some grass from her knees and places her hands on the brass handle of the manor, yanking it downwards. The door opens and she steps inside. The door closes behind her, its latch springing back into place, in the foyer chandelier trembles.

A voice calls out, 'Is that you Alisha?'

With a black coat in one arm and a black case in the other, Larry hurries across the marble foyer towards an adjacent mirror. He places the case on the marble and looks into the mirror, shifting his bow tie from side to side.

'Why are you so late...I am going out soon, dinner is ready,' says Larry.

He moves into the next room. Alisha follows behind him. They sit at opposite ends of a twenty seat long table, soup steams before them. Larry, Alisha's father, is retired. Still a highly respected physician in Toorak, he is kept busy with committees, conferences and lectures.

Larry's lanky frame towers over the table. Miss Ellis fills his glass. He glances over at the picture frame that sits idle on the table, Larry's wife looks back from behind the glass.

'Why don't we get rid of her?' says Alisha, referring to the photo.

Larry looks towards Alisha, puzzled for a moment. With a sarcastic voice he says,

'Are you going to cook?'

Larry begins to talk about his night and all the important people he will meet.

'As joint president of the largest medical laboratory in Australia I . . .'

Alisha's knuckles rest against her cheek as she looks down into her tomato soup, herbs and spices tingle her nose; she begins steering the leek towards the plates' edge. Her fingers slip and the spoon falls onto the china. A silence fills the room and she looks up. Larry takes the napkin from around his neck, throws it on the table and gets up from his chair. Miss Ellis swoops in handing him his coat. Alisha sighs, as they exit the room.

It is morning and Alisha awakes to the sound of violins, clarinets and horns. She stretches her arms into the air, something jabs her side she cries ‘Ouch!’ She reaches under the sheets revealing a fluffy toy, to her left the clock strikes the hour as the toy flies across the room. Alisha wanders down the hall to the bathroom. Her balance is skewed as she makes her way across the frosted tiles. She runs the tap and wets her face, rubbing her eyes until they appear red.

Larry circles around the stairs bellow, glancing at his watch, a mobile rings and he takes the call.

‘Hello...yes...not today.’

Larry looks up as Alisha starts down the stairs. She straightens her uniform and approaches Larry; her angelic eyes, disarming. Larry draws his attention to Alisha, and asks,

‘What’s wrong?’

Alisha looks down at her feet replies,

“I don’t feel well”.

He places a hand on her forehead and says,

‘You seem ok, you look tired more than anything?’ paralysed by the words she stares, quickly she pulls his hand away, in desperation she replies,

‘I am, I don’t want to go to school!’

Larry with a tone of urgency, ‘I think you’re fine...run along’.

Larry continues his phone conversation and apologises for the interruption.

Alisha walks outside and looks back over her shoulder, her arm extends and she strikes the door bell, a chime begins to play and Larry lowers his brow, she takes-off down the path, towards school. Miss Ellis enters the foyer.

‘Cancel my lectures and take my calls, I’m going out,’ he says.

Larry pulls up outside the cemetery. A group of teenagers dance and giggle around the cemetery entrance, all *high*. Larry approaches trying to avoid eye contact. He squeezes between them and continues up the pathway that leads to a high point, looking out towards the neighbouring suburbs and city buildings in the distance. He kneels down, brushing the grass away from Louise’s gravestone, the hair from her face. Her gravestone reads, *‘In loving memory of Louise Spencer wife of Larry Spencer and Mother of Alisha Spencer. Departed this life April 4 2004 aged 44 years.’* A tear runs down his face.

Alisha moves towards class, weaving between the crowds, accidentally bumping into Tanya and Brandy. Definition: The Britney clones, a pair of the most stuck up, bling branding, backstabbing teenie-bopping bitches that you’ll ever meet. Alisha freezes dropping her books as she backs against the lockers. The crowd quickly disappears into the class-rooms. Tanya yells out.

‘Where are you going princess, going to buy another boyfriend...mine?’

Brandy collects a paper from the floor and hands it to Tanya, she screams,
'Toby, letter to Toby!'

Alisha tenses, trying to find some rational words.

Bandy pushes her to the ground. Quickly they surround her, kicking her repeatedly.

The girls suddenly notice the short blond hair and cocky stride of Toby Baxter approaching. Tanya and Brandy flock around him blocking his view of Alisha. He is chauffeured away unawares. The hall-way becomes empty. She lays curled up, legs together, hands clenched catching her tears.

Larry sits on the park bench, his head buried in his hands.

He looks up. A black bird bounds along the grass, it pokes its beak into the soft ground and reveals a worm. It returns back to its family in the tree where its younglings are crying for attention. He flicks his phone on, at that moment it rings, he answers the call, it's Miss Croft, Alisha's co-ordinator from school.

After the call he grabs his tie and rips it from his neck, he gets up, and throws it into a nearby bin. He leaves the cemetery giggles can be heard behind him. He turns to the youths and with a voice of a thousand tenors he yells, 'This is a place of peace not a fucking arcade!' Their jaws drop, as if it was death itself, minus his scythe. A silence comes over them, the clouds rumble above.

Alisha sits in the hallway outside the schools' medical room.

It's lunchtime and the teachers begin to flood the corridors.

Mr Salinger, the school's PR walks by and hands Alisha an orange.

She takes the orange and begins to inspect it; likely poisonous, sent to finish the job.

Alisha yells out 'I don't need your pity!'

Looking back at the orange she thinks. When was the last time someone gave her something, other than money? If only everyone was this kind. She should take a bite to say thankyou, even if it meant sacrificing herself.

The doors burst open and Larry runs up to her, kneels down and holds her bandaged ankle.

'Are you alright, what happened?' Miss Croft walks up to Larry.

He starts pushing his fingers against Alisha's ribs.

Alisha cries out, 'I'm alright, stop!'

Miss Croft places her hand on Larry's shoulder and says,

'Sir, everything is ok, nothing is broken...please I need to speak with you in private.'

He is directed into her office. Alisha looks at him and begins making faces. Disgruntled, he looks back through the glass partitions. She falls over herself, in hysterics.

Shortly after he yells out 'Suspended!' and storms out of the office, Alisha gathers her crutches and limps over to him. She smiles. 'Get away from me!' he pushes her away. She almost falls, balancing gingerly on her sprained ankle, 'Fuck you too!'

Larry continues towards the door unshaken. He calls out 'Are you coming or are you walking home?'

She replies with a spiteful tone, 'Like I have a choice!'

Miss Croft looks on in horror from her office.

The trip home is nothing unusual, Alisha sits in silence arms crossed. The warmth of the trim leather seats against her thighs and red glow from the dashboard lights just adds to her frustration. The rain streaks across the window and people run for cover. It's only a short trip but for some reason she wishes that it would last longer, that they had something to say to each other. Once they get home, the chance will be lost.

She can sense his eyes on her and she turns towards him, he quickly looks back at the road, she sighs. She composes herself and they begin a sentence together.

They hesitate, quickly she says, 'I'm sorry.' He smiles to himself.

At this point she wants to jump from the car, waiting for him to burst with joy or slap her across the face, it's hard to tell, either way she would prefer the latter. He turns the car around and heads towards the esplanade. With a sarcastic voice she asks,

'Are you going to kill me and dump my body in the sea?'

He doesn't say a word. She looks towards the door handle, considering the option. He pulls out front of a Café over looking the shore, they get out and they take cover at a nearby table with a broly. She can taste the salt on her lips. He waves towards a young man and says, 'Orlando a coffee and something special.' She begins tapping her nails on the table and stares into his eyes, looking for some hint to what he is going to say. He grabs a rectangular case from inside his jacket and places it on the table.

Alisha smiles and says, 'you're proposing to me?'

Larry begins, '24 years ago, on that beach I proposed to your mother.'

Alisha turns away.

'Somehow we have to move forward. And I think together we could be okay.'

His hands begin to shake.

'Louise would have wanted you to have this'. He slides the case towards her.

She places her hands over it and moves it towards her. She opens it.

A silver necklace lies inside with crucifix pendant and small ruby centre. The swirl breaks behind her and a tear runs down her cheek. She gets up and throws her arms around him. He takes the necklace from her and connects it around her neck.

The End

Words = 1,800