

Despite his unique name, Anson McBride was anything but. His parents may have blessed him with a distinctive name, but they also cursed him with mediocrity in every form. Anson was an average man with the sort of face a person forgets instantly. Rapt in a typical five foot eight physique, he was handsomless with brown hair, brown eyes, and glasses. After his eight hour workday as a toll booth collector, Anson rarely interacted with his colleagues, but rather drove his tan Camry to his one bedroom apartment to enjoy his own company.

Tired of living this way, Anson debated seeing a doctor. His boss referred him to Michael Curtis, the best psychiatrist in Ohio. Dr. Curtis was an attractive middle aged man with slightly graying black hair. He was tall with kind, perceptive blue eyes. Curtis' office was immaculate, professional, and the phone was constantly ringing in the background. The cliché chaise was burgundy red and a plant with a gold pot stood next to it. The setting unnerved Anson. But on his third meeting with Dr. Curtis he opened up...

“It’s not that I’m shy—I like people. Connecting with individuals is my problem. I just feel a space between me and the rest of the world. I’m on the outside looking in.”

Dr. Curtis replied, “That type of existence, you can’t call it living. It comes from a deep loss. Not just a physical loss, but spiritual, romantic, and emotional too. Becoming how you are now does not happen over night. It’s like a house of

cards crumbling down. I know you haven't always resided in such an isolated world. Tell me about your childhood."

Anson was one of the most popular boys in Easton. Easton was the kind of town where you know everyone and everyone knows you. It's small enough to be quaint New England town, but large enough to have its own shopping district and slums. Anson McBride was the star of the Eastoners—adults adored him, girls loved him and guys wanted to be him. Like most golden boys, Anson had his cliché group of athletic friends and essentially disregarded the rest of the population (except for the popular girls of course).

All of that changed on October 22 of his senior year in high school. The day Anson would refer to as the best in his life. "I remember everything about the day I saw her. It was 7:50 AM and homeroom just started. The room smelled like chalk and pancakes. The teacher was dozing behind his desk. The classroom was alive with excitement but when she walked in...it was as if the world came to a stop. Her name was Maria Ngu and she was absolute beautiful. She was Brazilian and Chinese and transferred to Easton High from Washington DC. Maria was a military brat. She was sophisticated in a quiet, unassuming way. Plus she was smart; our whole grade knew she'd be valedictorian.

"I think what attracted me most to her was her lack of interest in me. Ha-ha. Until Maria, I was never rejected by a girl. She was so indifferent, so nonchalant towards me. It was like my popularity meant nothing to her. I first asked her out during lunch in front of my friends."

‘So Maria. You just moved here right? We should hang out this weekend I can show you around.’

‘Thanks, but no thanks. I can find my way around fine.’ Maria replied.

“Wow! That was a complete slap in the face. “Anson chuckled sheepishly to the good doctor.

Michael Curtis smiled. “Please continue the story.”

Anson’s demeanor shifted ever-so-slightly as he proceeded. “Maria’s refusal made me even more determined to get with her. I was a stubborn kid, plus there was my reputation to uphold. I followed her around persistently.”

‘What’s the matter Maria? Why won’t you go out with me? I know I intimidate some people, but I promise I’ll be real nice to you.’

Maria fumed, ‘You know why I won’t go out with you Anson McBride?’ You are everything I hate condensed in one person. You’re loud, arrogant, self-centered, superficial and insensitive. So I have pass on the whole hanging out thing.’

Anson grinned at the memory and sat up. “She was a real sweetheart wasn’t she doc? I think it was that moment I wanted to be with her forever. But I memorized her schedule and pursued incessantly. Maria finally succumbed to me and we began dating.”

Dr. Curtis shifted in his seat uncomfortably and lifted his eyebrows.

“Anson, it’s, er, interesting how you imply that Maria was just something to be conquered. Do you really think of her like that?”

“Well, yeah.” Anson added, “But I really loved her. We were made for each other. God meant us to be together. Maria never realized it until it was too late.”

“What do you mean? Did Maria end the relationship?” Asked Curtis.

“In a way. We dated until April. Until Maria was accepted into Princeton. And she wanted go! She wanted to leave me! The conversation went like this:”

‘Anson! Anson! Guess what, honey? I got into Princeton! Can you believe it? Honey, aren’t you excited?’

‘Maria, you never told me you were applying to Princeton.’

‘Well I didn’t think I’d get in. I didn’t want to get excited over nothing.’

‘Are you trying to leave Maria? Is that it? You don’t want us to be together. Admit it. There’s someone else.’

‘No, that’s not it at all. Going to Princeton has nothing to do with you. It’s what I’ve wanted since seventh grade. Why aren’t you happy for me?’

I replied, ‘Why would I be happy about you leaving me?’

‘That’s the problem Anson. You’re too needy and too serious about us. I like you a lot but I don’t know if I’m ready to commit the rest of my life to you. You know I dream about becoming a lawyer. I’m sorry. I think we should break up.’

“I was devastated when she said that. I locked myself in my room for days. I couldn’t eat or sleep. All I could thought or cared about was Maria.”

“So how did you eventually get over Maria?” Quipped Curtis.

Anson said, "Get over her? I guess you could say I never moved on after Maria Ngu. But in a way she never got over me either."

"What exactly are you saying Anson?" Michael Curtis grew more uneasy by the minute.

"I told you. Maria couldn't leave me. And know she never can." Anson looked out the window, smiled, and pulled a small canister out of his pocket."

The doctor looked extremely nervous and frightened at this point.
"What.Is.That."

"For someone so smart, you're kinda stupid Curtis. We both know what it is. Or should I say, who it is."

"Oh my God!" Curtis screamed.

"Very good. You know what Curtis? Out of all the people who found out, you've handled it best. You should be proud of yourself. Really, you should. But I can't risk you reporting me. No one understands how much Maria and I love each other."

In a perfect world, Maria and I would've gotten married and grown old together, Anson thought. There isn't a perfect world. Only a perfect murder.

Anson McBride wiped the floor one last time. He glimpsed around the room, searching for any hint of a struggle. Anson grabbed the plant in the gold pot and closed the door behind him.

The phone began to ring.

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