



Part I

SECRETS



WHENEVER MY FATHER WENT OUT OF TOWN, HE HAD THE MAIL STOPPED. IT DIDN'T MATTER IF HE WAS GONE FOR ONE, TWO, OR TEN DAYS — IF MY FATHER WASN'T HOME, THE MAIL DIDN'T COME.



I WONDERED WHAT MADE HIM GUARD THE MAIL SO JEALOUSLY. HIS EXPLANATIONS DIDN'T MAKE SENSE.

ACH, IT'S ALL JUNK MAIL, SEE?

STONEMAN COLLEGE BOOKSTORE

BUT THERE **IS** NO "STONEMAN COLLEGE."

A-HA! I KNOW THAT, AND YOU KNOW THAT, BUT **THEY** DON'T KNOW THAT.

THE FEW TIMES I MANAGED TO INTERCEPT THE MAIL, I FOUND THAT EVERY LETTER IN THE PILE WAS ADDRESSED TO A DIFFERENT NAME.



EVERY NOW AND THEN, THESE STRANGE NAMES WOULD POP UP ON THE OTHER END OF THE PHONE.



LATER THAT NIGHT...



AFTER THAT, WHATEVER NAME THEY GAVE, I JUST YELLED FOR MY DAD.



I GREW UP IN CALIFORNIA IN A HOUSE AT THE END OF A CUL-DE-SAC ON A WIDE, SMOOTH STREET. I WAS THE OLDEST OF THREE GIRLS.



FROM THE OUTSIDE, OUR HOUSE LOOKED PRETTY MUNDANE.



NOT SO ON THE INSIDE.



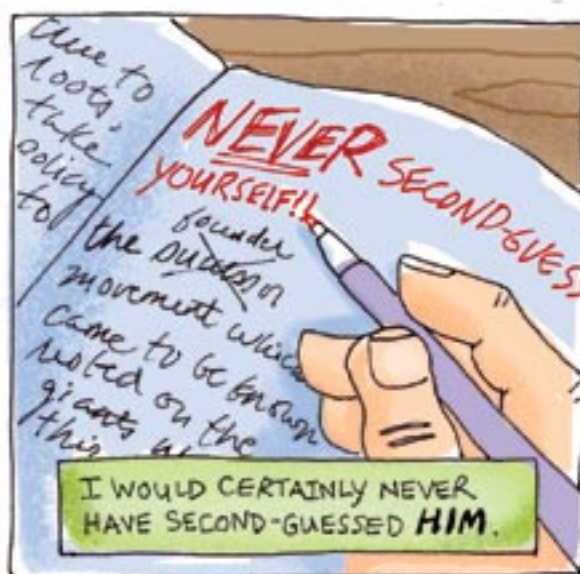
MY FATHER WAS A PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC IN STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA. I WOULD GO TO CLASS WITH HIM ON OCCASION AND SIT IN THE BACK ROW WHILE HE PACED IN FRONT OF THE LECTERN, STOPPING EVERY FEW MINUTES TO WIPE HIS SWEATY FOREHEAD WITH A FOLDED HANDKERCHIEF.



HIS STUDENTS SEEMED TERRIFIED OF HIM, BUT TO ME HE JUST LOOKED STRONG AND HANDSOME—LIKE AN ITALIAN TENOR—WITH HIS GENEROUS GUT AND HIS THICK BLACK HAIR SWEEPED INTO A POMPADOUR.



DURING MIDTERMS, I KEPT MY FATHER COMPANY AT THE KITCHEN TABLE WHILE HE GRADED EXAMS.



HE MAINTAINED A LIBRARY OF ELEVEN THOUSAND BOOKS. HE'D READ THEM ALL. ANYTHING I WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT, HE SIMPLY WALKED OVER TO A SHELF, PULLED A BOOK DOWN, THEN FLIPPED IT OPEN TO THE EXACT PAGE THAT SHOWED HIS POINT.



BUT HE WASN'T JUST BOOK SMART. HE WAS A BONA FIDE GENIUS.

IT'S AN ORGANIZATION CALLED MENSA, AND YES, YOUR FATHER IS A MEMBER. BY QUITE A FEW POINTS.



HE'D GRADUATED NUMBER ONE IN HIS CLASS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES.

THE STUPIDEST THING I EVER DID WAS SELL THAT MEDAL. IT WAS SOLID GOLD.

IF YOU EVER GET IT BACK, CAN I HAVE IT?



HE'D GOTTEN A LAW DEGREE FROM NYU, A PHD FROM COLUMBIA,
AND HAD TAUGHT AT STANFORD.



WRITTEN POSITION PAPERS FOR
KISSINGER.



SAT ON THE NATIONAL SECURITY
COUNCIL.



HE COULD ALSO IDENTIFY EVERY PIECE OF CLASSICAL MUSIC THAT
EXISTED.



WHERE ALL THIS TALENT CAME FROM, I HAD NO IDEA. MY FATHER WAS ESTRANGED FROM HIS ENTIRE FAMILY. WHEN PRESSED, HE SPOKE OF THEM WITH VENOM—PARTICULARLY HIS STEPSISTER, ELSA, WHOM HIS FATHER ADOPTED AFTER MARRYING HER MOTHER.



THE ONE EXCEPTION WAS HIS LATE FATHER—A STRICT, GERMAN TASKMASTER—WHOM HE WORSHIPPED.

HE WAS A TWENTY-FOUR HOUR TEACHING MACHINE. BY THE TIME I WAS YOUR AGE, I KNEW EVERY CAPITAL OF EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.



WHEN I WAS FIVE I STARTED PIANO LESSONS. MY FATHER OFTEN STOOD IN THE DOORWAY, LISTENING. IF I PLAYED A SCALE PERFECTLY, HIS PRAISE WAS SO EFFUSIVE I WANTED TO TAKE A BATH IN IT.



WHEN HE WAS SIMPLY SILENT,
I KNEW I'D LET HIM DOWN.

POST-PIANO RECITAL

THAT LITTLE
JAPANESE
KID WAS
ABSOLUTELY
BRILLIANT.



HE WAS LIKE ONE OF THOSE AVUN-
CULAR RUSSIAN GYMNASTICS COACHES
I'D SEEN ON TV DURING THE OLYMPICS:



HOISTING THEIR CHARGES
INTO THE AIR WHEN THEY'D
COMPLETED A FEAT OF GYM-
NASTIC PERFECTION.



TURNING AWAY
WHEN THEY'D
FAILED.

MY MOTHER TRIED TO MAKE UP FOR MY FATHER'S JUDGMENTS.

YOU'VE NEVER
PLAYED THE THIRD
MOVEMENT BETTER,
I SWEAR.



BUT HER WORDS MEANT LITTLE TO ME. IT WAS MY FATHER'S PRAISE I CRAVED.

WHATEVER.



THE THING IS, HE DID THINGS BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.

SCHOOL SCIENCE PROJECT



I WANTED TO BE THE BEST TOO. AND WITH HIS HELP, I ALWAYS WAS.

BRAVO!

COUNTY SCIENCE

