

The genius:

I'm a child psychiatrist and there's something profoundly unusual about the child I'm treating everyday – Ethan.

To say, Ethan was the smartest twelve-year-old I've ever met in Hughson Middle School, is an understatement. His first stroke of genius hit around the time he was in the second grade when he effortlessly multiplied three-digit numbers in his head, leaving the other kids struggling with basic addition. His fascination with math, particularly probability, set him apart. His teacher immediately requested Ethan's parents to consider him skipping some grades, maybe even take a few tests, to see if he was actually an outstanding kid. However, the Joneses were completely against the idea; they thought it would be too much work in their already hectic life.

I delved into his past, uncovering the early signs of his exceptional abilities. Ethan was an intelligent kid. Yet, the Joneses decision to dismiss the notion of accelerate learning dawns in comparison to the emotional void that Ethan slowly navigates within his life daily. His parents' lack of attention or love seems inconsequential to him, a fact that both intrigues and concerns me.

But that's not the point here either.

Ethan had been sent to me because he was the only one present at the crime scene when his 19-year-old babysitter, Kristin, was brutally murdered by the serial killer who had escaped from jail a couple of weeks ago and was on a killing spree.

Well, he wasn't exactly a witness because while Kristin's head was being badgered with a hammer, Ethan was too busy counting the tiles on the bathroom floor. It was a tragic turn of events. But fate would have it that Kristin fit the pattern of this rogue killer's previous victims. The Joneses returned home to a bloody corpse in the middle of their living room, and their young boy seated on a chair in the dining hall, playing on his iPad.

It was Mrs. Jones that believed her son required a psychiatrist, given, God knows, what he might have witnessed that evening, and wanted to ensure if he was still normal.

My sessions, to be honest, with Ethan haven't really been all that fruitful.

I tried many times to keep the conversation going, but all I'd get in return were a few shrugs and a half-hearted "Yes" now and then.

Today though, my session with Ethan began to yield.

"It was a dark time for the entire town you know," I spoke with an understanding smile. "The police didn't see it coming. No one did. What were the chances?"

"I did."

A voice – A sentence! That was a breakthrough for me.

"What's that?" I probed, encouraged, hitting my pen onto the paper-board multiple times.

"I had seen that man come to our house and stare every evening for a week," Ethan confessed, his eyes fixed onto the muttering movements of his fidgeting hands.

"Who?" I pressed, with anticipation.

"The bad man who killed Kristin. I would see him from the bedroom window, I knew the police were looking, I saw the news, and I knew he was going to do something bad."

He took a breath.

"I also knew he would've done it on a Tuesday or Wednesday because that's when mom and dad don't come home for a long while." Ethan continued, "The chances were two out of a seven."

A chill ran down my spine, I began to press further. It wasn't usual to see a child talk about such a gruesome event with not even a hint of remorse. As he casually dissected the probabilities and rationalized his silence, the extent of his eerie detachment became painfully evident.

"Why—" I began, clearing my throat. "Why didn't you say anything? You could've saved her life."

"Kristin never liked when I spoke about math, she called it boring and a waste of time to spend your life." He replied. "Besides, I wanted to see if I was right."

I leaned forward, attempting to connect with whatever was behind those psychopathically charged eyes. "Ethan, it's not just about being right or wrong. A person's life was at stake. Do

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you understand the intensity of the situation you are in now? You could be arrested for being accomplice to the killer.

He looked at me, his eyes void of anything but remorse. "You don't understand. Math makes sense. Math is what controls us and the universe. People, emotions – they're unpredictable but with math, we can prove the science behind all of this."

I sighed, leaning back, and realizing that this child may need some serious mental help. "Ethan, there's more to life than numbers and calculations. Understanding people, their feelings, is more important than math."

Ethan smirked, his face trailing up to my eyesight. "Feelings cloud judgement. Math is objective, predictable."

I sighed once again, this time looking at him with a concerning look. "Listen Ethan, life isn't about probability. It's about empathy and love. It's how you save a life."

But before I could react, Ethan lunged at me with a box cutter in his hands. "You were too slow to predict this, were you not?"