

Summary:

Tony is forced into having a child. Can Gibbs make it right?

Categories: [Television](#), [NCIS](#) Characters: DiNozzo/OMC, Gibbs/DiNozzo

Genres: Slash

Warnings: Abuse, Anal Sex, Angst, Birth, H/C, m/m, Marriage, Non- Con, Rape, Violence

Challenges: None

Series: None

Chapters: 18 Completed: Yes Word count: 109800 Read: 7806 Published: 06/25/2011 Updated: 01/05/2012

Story Notes:

Disclaimer: These folks don't belong to me, unfortunately, and no infringement is intended. I also don't know the folks they do belong to but if I did, I'd tell them they don't play with them nearly enough. They certainly don't play with them in the way that I do. More's the pity. At any rate, no coin is made off this little bit of self-indulgence. My only hope is that some pleasure is obtained by those choosing to read.

1. [Chapter 1](#) by cernicalo
2. [Chapter 2](#) by cernicalo
3. [Chapter 3](#) by cernicalo
4. [Chapter 4](#) by cernicalo
5. [Chapter 5](#) by cernicalo
6. [Chapters 6 - 9](#) by cernicalo
7. [Chapter 10](#) by cernicalo
8. [Chapters 11 - 15](#) by cernicalo
9. [Chapters 16 - 19](#) by cernicalo
10. [Chapter 20](#) by cernicalo
11. [Chapters 21 - 23](#) by cernicalo
12. [Chapter 24 - 25](#) by cernicalo
13. [Chapters 26 - 29](#) by cernicalo
14. [Chapter 30](#) by cernicalo
15. [Chapters 31 - 35](#) by cernicalo
16. [Chapters 36 - 38](#) by cernicalo
17. [Chapters 39 - 40](#) by cernicalo
18. [Chapters 41 - 43](#) by cernicalo

Chapter 1 by cernicalo

## Chapter 1

Gibbs put down the cup and picked up the sander from his workbench and turned to survey the boat he was building in his basement. He was angry and frustrated. He contemplated putting the sander back down and reaching again for his bourbon-filled cup but decided against it. He needed the movement of working on his boat, slowly sanding the wood and letting his tension fall away like the sawdust he created. He knew he shouldn't let Jenny get to him like this. It had only been a dinner invitation, one of many, all of which he'd turned down. The plain fact was that he didn't want to be with her and he couldn't get her to see that. What he really wanted was six foot two inch bundle of playful energy with a mile-a-minute mouth that made him feel alive. Shoving down the memories that assaulted him, he stepped towards the boat and began sanding. He hadn't worked on this particular spot for quite awhile, not since that night. He groaned and stood straight for a moment but with typical determination forced himself to resume the slow methodical movement knowing that he wouldn't be able to stop the memories.

*Tony was leaning against the rib adjacent to the one I was working on. As usual, he was running at the mouth and I was letting his voice wash over me as I sanded. He was laughing, talking about some sappy movie that supposedly had great boatbuilding scenes. But the movie wasn't about boatbuilding.*

*"So, what's your point, DiNozzo?" I said as I straightened from my work.*

*"The point, Boss, is that every movie with a boat building scene has the guys building the boat... now, get this...outside." He smirked. "Or at least in some type of workroom with doors that open out..."*

*He laughed again, that beautiful mouth stretched wide over a bright grin that made me want to just grab his head and kiss that smiling mouth. So I did. And it was just as incredible as I thought it would be. Tony's lips were soft and his sweet, sweet mouth opened up immediately despite the shock he was no doubt feeling. I ran my tongue over his and heard a soft sigh just before he ran his hands around my back and pulled me in tighter. I twisted us so that he was against the rib I had been working on. He returned my kiss, hungry and sweet at the same time and it took my breath away. We'd been heading this way for a while now, some quiet dinners and watching some movies but by some unspoken agreement we hadn't made any moves on one another, sort of like we still weren't sure if this was friendship or something more. I'd say this is definitely something more.*

*Tony pulled back but left our foreheads touching. He was panting slightly and I realized that I needed to breathe, too. "Boss..."*

*"Jethro..." I corrected him as I moved my hands to his shoulders and began kneading lightly. I had him pinned against the boat and I wasn't about to let him slip away. This is what I wanted and I hoped he did, too.*

*A quick smile, "Okay, Jethro...I need to know what you're looking for here."*

*His eyes were wary but hopeful. It was that second bit that cemented it for me.*

*"You, Tony, here with me every day and every night. I don't want casual. Not with you."*

*The look in his eyes and his brilliant smile were everything I wanted and I moved in for another kiss. He was mine, now, and I wasn't ever going to let him go. And from the passion in his returned kiss I knew he felt the same way. It didn't take long before we were making our way upstairs and Tony, God, Tony was everything I thought he'd be. Playful, passionate and so damn open, every emotion was right there in his eyes and in his moans as I pushed my way into him and in that moment I knew I'd been blessed for the second time in my life...*

Gibbs suddenly spun and threw the sander against the wall. *Tony is gone, damnit, get it through your thick skull...* In that moment of silence, as he stared at the pieces lying on the floor he heard glass breaking and the creak as someone walked across the floor upstairs. It took only moments before he was making his way upstairs, his sig secure in his hand. He'd taken to locking his doors shortly after Tony had begun bringing some of his things over, including that ridiculously large TV that still sat in the living room, so anyone coming in at this point was definitely unwelcome.

He scanned the dark kitchen, seeing the broken glass reflecting moonlight from the floor near the rear door but everything was quiet. He moved silently through to the dining room and saw the light from a single table lamp shining in the living room. He hadn't left it on so someone was there, waiting for him. He scanned the living room and saw that the lamp had been placed on the floor throwing the corners of the room into shadow. Still, he caught a slight movement and then leveled his gun at the figure sitting in the dark.

"Hi, Boss."

The voice was slurred but unmistakable.

"Tony?" Gibbs immediately pointed his gun down and took a deep breath. "You'd better have a damn good explanation for being here, DiNozzo."

Gibbs heard a hitch in breath as he thumbed the safety and reached for the ceiling light switch.

"Don't!"

Gibbs froze.

"I, uh, I need to tell you some things before you hit the light, Boss."

"Don't call me Boss. I haven't been your boss since you sent in your resignation to the Director and walked away from NCIS."

"Okay, Jethro...I..."

"Don't call me that either, DiNozzo. You lost that right when you walked away from me without a word..."

Gibbs paused at the sob that came from the corner and felt his gut clench. He couldn't bear it when Tony cried. He heard a shaky in-drawn breath.

"Gibbs, okay...you're right. About everything. I shouldn't have come here."

He saw the shadow stand up very slowly. The slurred words...

"Sorry about the door, I'll pay you back..."

"Sit down, DiNozzo. You're not going anywhere until I get an explanation. You owe me that much." He saw the shadow freeze and then shift slightly, as though undecided as to what to do. "Tell me what's wrong with you."

"Got myself beat up, Gibbs. You know me, I never could keep my mouth shut..."

"Yeah, ya got that right." Gibbs lifted his arm and hit the light switch and then felt like someone had just belted him. "Tony..." he gasped as he got his first look at his ex-lover but what he saw

made no immediate sense and then he felt the world shift at Tony's next words.

"Not just beat up, Gibbs. Got myself knocked up, too..."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 2 by cernicalo

Chapter 2

Gibbs lightly dabbed at the tear dripping from the left eye that was swollen shut. Even though Tony was no longer crying, he'd told him that it continually leaked.

"The doctor said it would stop when the swelling went down."

Tony's words were slurred as much from his swollen lip as from the fact that his jaw was wired shut. Gibbs still didn't have the whole story, but apparently Tony was able to get away from his abusive lover, his husband, after this last beating that closed his eye and busted his lip. The fractured jaw had come from a previous beating. They were waiting for Ducky to arrive. Gibbs wanted to know the full extent of Tony's injuries not to mention the fact that he wanted to know just how Tony had become pregnant. He again dabbed at Tony's eye but pulled his hand away when Tony gently took the tissue from him. He couldn't help it as his eyes were drawn to the swelling under Tony's zippered sweatshirt which looked to be about two sizes too small. It just couldn't be real, he thought.

Later Gibbs watched from the other side of the bed as Ducky spoke soft, comforting words while he treated Tony with his gentle touch. Gibbs knew it was that gentle touch that got to Tony. It always did. He'd never known much gentleness in his life and he didn't look like he'd known any gentleness in quite awhile...at least not since he left.

"It's quite alright, my boy." Ducky crooned as Tony again began to cry softly. "You've been through so much..." Ducky applied a cooling salve to Tony's bruises. "I don't see any deeper damage beyond the swelling and bruising...yes, and no additional damage to your poor jaw. It does seem to be healing nicely despite this latest offense." Ducky gently probed along Tony's neck. "There seems to be some quite serious chaffing here along your neck. I'll just put some of this on you, Tony, and wrap it..."

"No! No, Ducky..." Tony said as he pushed Ducky's hands away before he could bandage Tony's neck. "I...I don't...like anything around my neck..." he began nervously but he looked away refusing to meet Ducky's eyes.

Ducky eyed Tony carefully. If he suspected anything he refused to say so. Instead he patted Tony's uninjured cheek slightly. "That's no problem at all, Tony; the salve is the main thing. May I examine the rest of you? I'd like to make sure your injuries don't endanger your child..." He paused at the color that suffused the face before him and he glanced over his shoulder at Gibbs. "Do you want Jethro to leave...?"

Tony closed his eyes for a moment but then shook his head and chuckled humorlessly.

"No, he may as well get the full picture..."

Gibbs had to force himself to stay where he was when what had been done to Tony was revealed. He wanted to run from the room and either empty his stomach or grab his gun and go shoot the bastard that did this. But he did neither. He knew that if he left now Tony would feel that it was because he was disgusted by what he saw. And that was so far from the truth. The multiple bruises that marked Tony's body attested to hands forcibly holding him down, fists and possibly feet leaving their mark on the body that Gibbs had worshipped and he was filled by a murderous rage that anyone could do this to his Tony, that another man had touched his Tony. And not just

touched...hurt.

"It seems, my dear, that you are approximately five months along. Is that correct?"

Tony smiled slightly but Gibbs saw the sorrow in his eyes as he blushed. He figured it was because Ducky had called him 'my dear'. Generally, Ducky only used that phrase with women, both alive and not. It seems that Tony's pregnancy may have thrown the older man for a loop. It sure as hell threw Gibbs for a loop.

"Yeah, five months on the tenth. Is the baby alright?"

"As far as I can tell, Anthony, yes, though I believe an ultrasound would not be amiss. Have you felt movement?"

"Yes," Tony sighed slightly in relief at Ducky's smile.

"Very good, my dear. Now, you did bleed a bit from your most recent mistreatment. I have some salve that will help that considerably."

Gibbs listened with only half an ear while Ducky continued chatting lightly as he applied the salve to Tony's rectum. He said the tears were superficial. Tears... Tony had been forcefully penetrated...raped...and Gibbs guessed it wasn't the first time. Where in the hell had he been? His attention was drawn back to the two men when Ducky's voice changed from soothing to curiosity.

"Yes, well, you know I'd read something to this effect very nearly a year ago, very close to the time you decided to leave us. It was a Dr. Thuergenson, I believe, that developed this procedure..." Ducky looked at Tony and saw him nod. "I wish you'd spoken to me before you'd decided to do this Tony, I would have been most interested to follow your case from the very beginning..."

"It wasn't my choice, Ducky. Nothing I've done lately has been my choice..."

"I see. I take it the father took it upon himself to..."

"Please, Ducky, don't..." Tony took a deep breath but directed his next statement to both Gibbs and Ducky. "I didn't go into this willingly, but here it is." Tony suddenly stopped and drew a shuddering breath as he covered his eyes with his hands. "Oh, God...I don't know what I was thinking...I shouldn't have come here...put you in danger..."

He dropped his arms and wrapped them protectively around his stomach and Gibbs figured he probably did that instinctively, especially when he was getting beaten, otherwise Tony would have gotten in a few good punches of his own. His arms showed all the signs of defensive wounds, but his hands didn't show any sign of hitting back.

"Tony, whose baby is this?" Gibbs demanded, every bit of protectiveness rising up in him.

"This baby is mine and mine alone. He's got the DiNozzo genes regardless of who his...his father is..." Tony's voice caught as he fought back more tears.

"Tony, it's okay." Remorseful, Gibbs moved to run a hand over Tony's surprisingly long hair. It was just as soft as Gibbs remembered. He didn't want Tony to think he'd turn him away because he carried another man's baby. "It doesn't matter who the father is...but you gotta tell me, is he after you? Are you in danger?"

Gibbs continued to stroke Tony's hair, running his hands over the shaking shoulders as he broke down. Tony said nothing he'd done lately had been his choice. He hoped that included walking away...walking away from him. So Gibbs made a decision. Tony was here now and here he was going to stay. And despite what Tony may think, Gibbs found the swelling of his belly and small breasts incredibly beautiful and, much to his chagrin, very erotic. He was going to protect both Tony and his baby no matter what.

"Yes. He wants what he thinks is his. But I'm not going back, whether you help me or not, Gibbs. I'm not going back...but I had to warn you, the team..."

"Shhh, it's alright. You're not going back, you got that? You're staying here with me, where you belong."

Gibbs moved his hand and brought his arm around Tony's shoulders pulling him close. He saw Ducky preparing an injection. He figured it was a mild sedative.

"Now this will help you relax, my dear. All of this turmoil is not good for your baby."

"No, Ducky, I can't...I have to go..." Tony began to struggle in earnest but Gibbs held him still.

Ducky gave him the injection and watched as it took effect. It wasn't long before Tony's eyes began to droop but then forced his eyes open. With a hand fisted in Gibbs shirt he looked straight into his eyes.

"Warn everyone... Gianni Constantino...he'll figure it out...come looking..."

"Okay, Tony. Shh now, I'll take care of it..."

Tony slowly nodded believing that Gibbs was the only man who could take care of things and then the sedative finally took effect. With Ducky's help they laid the young man back into bed.

Ducky gathered his things, watching as Jethro gently tucked the covers over the sleeping form, bringing the covers up over the arms still protectively wrapped around that most miraculous swelling. He'd been one of the few people whom Jethro had felt safe in telling of his new relationship with Tony. His heart had been gratified to see how well the two men fit together. Much better than Jethro had with any of the wives he had known which was why he was at such a loss to understand why Tony would leave like he did and why he had done everything in his power to keep Jethro from falling apart after Tony left.

He waited for a moment while Jethro gently placed a kiss on Tony's brow and then the two men went downstairs. Jethro immediately moved to the cabinet where he kept his bottle. With two glasses in hand he sat down at the kitchen table across from Ducky.

While Ducky poured Gibbs pulled out his phone and made calls to each member of his team, telling them of an unspecified threat to them personally and to look into whatever they could find on Constantino. He wasn't worried about Ziva who would soon be there to help keep watch, but Abby would need more protection. He knew that she'd be moving in with Tim for the duration. As for Ducky, not many people knew what Gibbs knew about his good friend Ducky, but the fact is that he was more than capable of taking care of himself and his mother. Finally, he made a call to Jenny and asked to be placed on leave status. He could tell she was curious as hell, but she didn't have a need to know at this point. Once that was done Gibbs grabbed his glass and took a healthy drink. He knew he wouldn't be doing much of this in the days to come, but he sure needed it now. He took a deep breath and looked at his friend.

"How is he?"

“Well, apart from the obvious injuries he is also somewhat malnourished and underweight.”

“They’ve been starving him?” Gibbs demanded in a furious growl and Ducky raised his hand in a placating gesture.

“Not necessarily starving the boy, Jethro, but I suspect that he is unable to get all of the nourishment he requires due to his poor jaw. Whatever he’s been drinking obviously does not meet his caloric requirements on a normal basis, let alone with his pregnancy. I’ll bring by some supplements along with a nutrient drink that should help but what the dear boy truly needs is to rest in a safe location so that he may heal and eventually deliver a healthy baby.”

“I’ll make sure of that, Ducky. He’s here now and I’m not letting him go again. But you gotta tell me. How can he be pregnant, Duck?”

Ducky smiled. Jethro was never one to beat about the bush, as they say.

“Several months ago there were several articles that came out regarding an extraordinary breakthrough by Dr. Thuergenson. You may not be aware of his work, Jethro, but he had perfected a process whereby he was able to replace the DNA within an ovum which he then implanted within an artificial womb in a male body. It is absolutely astounding, Jethro. He’d just finished clinical trials where he was able to assist several men in giving birth to infants that are the product of two sets of male DNA.” Ducky sat back with a look that was equally fascinated and astounded and shook his slightly as though still finding the entire situation unbelievable.

“Duck?” Jethro prompted when Ducky remained quiet in his fascination. That in itself spoke to what level of fascination this process had for Ducky. Normally he’d of rambled on about similar cases he’d come across but this, Gibbs knew, was completely new. With a small start Ducky brought himself back to the conversation at hand.

“Forgive me, Jethro. It is still so amazing to me and to think there is an example of that very miracle asleep upstairs. At any rate, it was that breakthrough that finally prompted the nationwide legalization of marriage between same sex couples. Up until then it had been left to the discretion of the individual states. Surely you remember, Jethro? There was quite a bit of joshing over the span of several days between young Timothy and Tony about what it would take for either of them to even consider marrying another man, let alone giving birth to another man’s child .”

“I remember it was in the middle of the Loren case...I came in the middle of one conversation that didn’t make any sense at the time...”

Gibbs remembered walking in and slapping both agents on the back of the head and demanding an update on their case. He remembered Tony having a strange look on his face at the time, just before he head-slapped him, but pushed it away as irrelevant. He thought about that expression. It had been...thoughtful. And it had seemed that Tony had something on his mind for a few days after that. Gibbs had wanted to ask but it had taken a back seat to the case they were working. He rubbed a hand over his face. It wasn’t the first time he’d let a relationship take a back seat to his work. And he’d begun doing that to Tony. But Tony had understood, hadn’t he? That wasn’t why he’d left, was it?

Gibbs mentally head-slapped himself. No. Tony said that he hadn’t had any choice in what had happened to him. That had to include leaving like he did, he told himself again trying to believe it. But he needed to hear it from Tony. There was a lot more going on than he knew right now and the only person who could tell him was asleep upstairs.

“So men can now have babies with other men.”

Ducky nodded, knowing that Gibbs was putting all of his facts together. "A donated egg must still be obtained from a female, but the gist of it is that yes, men can have babies with their husbands or significant others, so to speak." He quieted for a bit, watching his friend's mind work.

"And Tony was forced into this by the baby's father. His resignation letter said he had to leave due to family concerns, but he didn't say anything about his family to me. In fact, everything was normal until that day. I checked his apartment right after the director told me the news. It was empty and being cleaned for renting which meant that Tony had moved out before he officially resigned. Tony wouldn't have had time to do that on his own. He was working right up until he left..."

"What happened that afternoon, Jethro, before he walked out?"

"I remember he got a phone call. I thought it had something to do with the case. He was on the phone when I went downstairs to talk to Abby. It was McGee who told me later that Tony had stood up and asked where Ziva was. McGee didn't know so Tony just grabbed his bag and put his stuff into it and then handed him a locked metal box and asking him to hold on to it for him. Then he walked out saying he had a lead to follow-up on. McGee offered to go with him but Tony said that McGee wouldn't want to go where he was going. Ziva showed up a bit later from a coffee run."

"What was in the locked metal box, Jethro?"

"My medals. He always kept all those stupid awards because I would have thrown them out. But he kept them in his desk in that box."

"They were important to him, Jethro. Perhaps that's why he gave them to Timothy. He asked Timothy to hold them. He did not tell him to give them to you...you would have known then that he was gone and you would have followed. And for whatever it was he needed to do, he didn't want you to follow too soon... Where are the medals now?"

"McGee still has them. He said that Tony asked him to hold on to them and so that's what he was going to do."

"Very loyal, our Timothy. Perhaps he feels that as long as he holds on to them, then there was a chance that Tony would return for them. Perhaps Tony knew that and one day hoped to return to claim them."

Gibbs took another sip of his drink. There was so much he didn't know...but he was damn sure going to find out.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 3 by cernicalo

Chapter 3

While the two spoke downstairs Tony moaned again as he tossed his head, deep in the nightmare's grip.

*"You were always worthless, Anthony, and here's my chance to finally be rid of you!" Michael DiNozzo Sr. growled as he let go of the fistful of Tony's hair he'd held tight.*

*Tony saw the usual disgust in his father's eyes as he looked him over. Tony struggled against the restraints securing him to the bed but they held firmly. He looked away from the raw hatred in those dark brown eyes to see the hospital bed he was lying in. He was still in his father's house but the room had been filled with medical equipment. Oh, God, what were they going to do to*



him? He moaned, the only sound he could make behind the gag in his mouth. If his father just wanted to kill him he could have put a bullet in his head and gotten rid of the body so obviously he had something else planned and Tony was very sure he wasn't going to like it. His father turned away as the door opened and Tony saw Michael come in with another man. The new guy was a head shorter than Michael but had the same coloring as his brother and father, dark brown hair and eyes, swarthy skin. The only difference was that the new guy had really curly hair cut close to his scalp. Both men wore the expensive suits typical of the crowd his family moved in. They walked up to the bed and Tony saw the new man briefly eye him like a starving man at a feast before the expression slid into one showing only mild interest. Tony quickly glanced at his father to see if he'd noted the look but his father was a master at hiding his thoughts and his face showed no expression. It was too bad. Tony would have liked to have seen that look of disgust pointed at someone other than himself for once.

"Hello, Gianni," his father began so that they could get this over with. He knew neither man would say anything until he spoke first. That was his right as the head of the Family.

"Hello, Mr. DiNozzo. Please allow me to again tell you that I'm very grateful for this opportunity to join your Family in this ground-breaking manner. This will bring all the Families into the 21st century."

Tony was shocked. Did this Gianni even realize that he'd just insulted his father by intimating the Family was not up with the times? His father didn't answer, he just nodded his head as though in agreement but Tony knew better. That head nod was more an affirmation of his own thoughts, however dark they may be, which didn't bode well for Gianni. And now Tony had a sinking feeling that he was somehow going to be tied to Gianni in a way that definitely didn't bode well for him, either. He again struggled as panic began to filter through him.

Gianni Constantino was aware that DiNozzo didn't respond to his opening and he felt a tendril of nervousness. Had he miss-stepped? He felt the need to fill the lengthening silence of the other two men.

"I didn't know that your son was so pretty. He'll make you a beautiful grandson."

DiNozzo and Michael looked at one another without expression and Gianni had the horrible feeling that he'd somehow fucked up again. When would he learn to keep his mouth shut? He was fine when he was dealing with business, but this Family protocol thing was killing him. And now Anthony was fighting like mad. He didn't know what to do or say so he remained quiet.

Tony was now in a full-fledged panic attack. He could see what Gianni was thinking and he knew his family well enough to fully understand now what they had planned. They were going to fix him so that he could have a baby. Gianni's baby, if he read things correctly. And knowing his father and how he felt about anything even related to homosexuality, he now doubted if any of them would survive once his father got whatever it was he wanted out of this fucked up situation. You stupid fuck, Gianni! You have no idea what you've done to yourself...to ME! And he couldn't believe his family would get involved in anything like this at all. Oh, this was bad, so very bad. He moaned and shook his head. He didn't want to be part of this. Please, Father, don't do this to me! Father, please...DON'T...HURT...ME!

Tony moaned again as he struggled against the nightmare restraints. He rolled over keeping his arms wrapped around himself and settled back into sleep until a sharp pain quickly brought him to awareness.

"Unnhaaaaaaggh!" Tony yelled as he struggled to sit up and reach for his calf at the same time. He felt grateful that he could at least reach his lower leg to massage the suddenly rock-hard muscle this time. He didn't want to think about those other times when all he could do was writhe in pain until the cramp released itself. Just then the door burst open admitting Gibbs with gun in

hand as he swept the room.

At the sound of a muffled groan Gibbs was up the stairs in a flash. Sig in hand he opened the door and checked the room. In a heartbeat he realized what the problem was even though Tony hadn't said a word. He could tell from the grimace of pain just what was happening having massaged numerous severe muscle cramps out of Shannon's legs through her pregnancy. Holstering his weapon he crossed the room to sit on the bed. Gently, he took over for Tony who immediately leaned back onto the bed with a groan. Gibbs felt the cramped muscle and then with firm fingers dug in and kneaded until he felt the cramp ease. Looking at Tony he saw the tracks of tears running down his cheeks and his stomach roiled although he didn't know if it had been caused by the cramp or, judging from Tony's appearance, a nightmare. Tony probably had a shitload more reasons for nightmares now. He wondered when it had happened and he kicked himself for not being able to spend every minute at Tony's side. Gibbs felt the cramp ease but he continued to massage it for a bit longer.

"Thanks, Gibbs, its okay now." Tony said tiredly. Now that the cramp was gone exhaustion was again pulling him down. He looked around, wondering what time it was but saw that it was still dark out. He saw that Gibbs was still dressed, no doubt keeping watch. He wondered briefly who was spelling Ziva. Probably McGee which means that Abby is either with Ducky or maybe even downstairs.... No! If she had been anywhere near the house she'd be right in the room with him curled up next to him and talking his ear off and although he missed his little sister desperately he knew he really couldn't handle that right now. Really couldn't handle her or McGee or even Ziva seeing him as he was right now. No, he didn't want to think about any of that. He just needed to sleep a bit more and then he could make some plans. Just a bit more sleep and then he'd leave...

Gibbs saw the distant look in the shadowed eyes and wondered what Tony was thinking about. But then he saw the eyes slide shut for a moment before opening again to slits.

"Go back to sleep, Tony. I've got your six." He murmured to the exhausted man as he pulled the blankets up and over the still form. In moments he knew Tony was again asleep. He indulged himself for a few moments more as he stroked gentle fingers through Tony's hair and then bent over to place a whisper-soft kiss on Tony's forehead before stepping silently from the room.

-----

The next morning Gibbs went out to check the mail, scanning his neighborhood as he did so. He'd already checked with Ziva who was again watching from down the street after a break from McGee. She hadn't seen anything suspicious. He wanted to know if anyone was following Tony when he came in the night before. Satisfied that there weren't any new vehicles in the area, he returned to the house. He'd just spent the last several hours reviewing everything McGee and Abby had come up with on Constantino, which wasn't a lot. There was only slightly more on Tony's father. He'd been under scrutiny for years but nothing concrete had ever been found. By most accounts Tony's father appeared to be exactly what he portrayed himself as...a very wealthy businessman.

He dropped the teabag into the cup of hot water and put it on the tray. He remembered from Shannon's pregnancy that Tony shouldn't be drinking any coffee right now. Well, he guessed at any rate, assuming that just because Tony was a man that the pregnancy wouldn't be all that different. He smirked. Yeah, fat lot he knew. He was still trying to wrap his head around the whole thing to begin with and also how it affected him. He hadn't slept the night before, finding himself just sitting by the bed and watching Tony sleep, watching as pained dreams made Tony's brow furrow. Fear, pain, sorrow, all the bad emotions seemed to chase their way across the beautiful features and he found himself stroking Tony's hair and whispering soft assurances of his safety. He'd even told Tony that he still loved him. And it was true although he realized while he sat in the dark room watching over Tony that he'd never said the words out loud when Tony could hear

them. He was such an idiot.

Gibbs took another sip of his coffee and topped it off. He'd drink it while Tony ate, or rather, drank his breakfast. Ducky said he'd drop off some nutrition drinks later, but for now Gibbs hoped the fruit smoothie would be okay. He dug a straw out of a drawer, unsure of where it had come from but glad he remembered its presence. No, he'd never stopped loving Tony but the pain of his leaving had nearly torn him apart. And now he needed an outlet for all of that hurt, both Tony's and his. He was going to find out who'd done this and he would make him pay.

Gibbs looked at Tony when he entered and saw that he was waking up on his own. He looked more closely and saw shadows still darkening the skin below tired looking eyes. Tony needed a hell of a lot more rest. Hopefully he'd be able to sleep more after he'd eaten.

"Hey, Tony...you awake?"

Tony jerked at his voice and opened his good eye, although the swelling of his other eye had gone down considerably. He visibly relaxed when he identified Gibbs.

"Yeah, Je...Gibbs. I'm awake." Tony smiled and then winced slightly. His mouth was obviously still pretty sore.

"Got you some breakfast, if you're ready. Ducky will be by in a little while to check up on you."

"Okay, uh, thanks. I, uh, need to use the bathroom first. Can't seem to stay out of it lately..."

Gibbs chuckled as he placed the tray on the nightstand and helped Tony stand. "Yeah, I remember that part. Shannon used to bitch up a storm..." His voice trailed off and the two men looked at one another. Tony broke contact first as a blush worked its way up his neck.

"I'll just be a minute..."

Gibbs nodded and pulled up the chair he'd spent the night in. He was sipping his coffee when Tony came back out. He was still moving very stiffly and Jethro helped him back into bed. Once he was settled he placed the tray across Tony's lap. Tony just stared at it.

"You need to eat, Tony. I'm sure you know that."

Tony looked at him briefly but his eyes slipped away. He was trying to decide how much to tell Gibbs. His stomach started to hurt at the thought of revealing anything about his recent past, but maybe if Gibbs knew the truth...? He picked up the straw but instead of opening it to put in his drink, he began to tear the paper covering into small pieces. Gibbs reached out and placed his hand on Tony's.

"Stop...please, Tony. Talk to me."

Tony gave him a bemused look and then turned away again. Gibbs chuckled lightly. Yeah, he was a big one for talking... But surprisingly, Tony did begin speaking, the words still slightly slurred, his voice soft but unmistakable. It sent a pang of longing through Gibbs. Tony usually talked quietly in the dark while they relaxed after making love, his long arms and legs wrapped around Gibbs, his head tucked securely into Gibb's shoulder. Now, although the timbre was the same, the words sent very different emotions burning through Gibbs' heart.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 4 by cernicalo

Author's Notes:

This chapter contains references to suicidal thoughts.

## Chapter 4

Tony kept his face turned away while he began his story. He knew he couldn't maintain eye contact with Gibbs and say what he needed to.

"It was about two days before we caught a break in our last case. You were still out at Annapolis with McGee so Ziva and I called it a night. We were going to meet with you in the morning and then I was late and you got pissed and all I could think about was what my father's response would be." Tony stopped and looked at Gibbs. "See, my father had sent his goons with a message. I woke up with those bastards standing around my bed and I never even heard them come in. They said my father wanted to see me, that I needed to go with them because there was something that had to be done and that I was the only one who could do it. Well, you can imagine how that went over, right? I told you that my father disowned me when I was 12? So I told them to go to hell and when they finally left I got ready and came into work. But I knew, I knew it wasn't over."

Tony paused and took a sip of his tea but Gibbs doubted that he was even aware of what it was he was drinking.

'I got a call the day I left. It was my father and he asked if I knew where my pretty little coworker was and wouldn't it be a shame if I didn't grab my things and meet him at my place. When I got there I saw movers packing up all my stuff. My father was sitting at my dining table looking at pictures of Ziva and Abby and I knew then and there that my life was over."

Tony stopped for a bit to wipe at his swollen eye, but Gibbs knew he needed to wipe both. He wasn't going to push him. Gibbs knew he'd tell him what he needed to. As it turned out, they both needed some breaks in the telling of his story. After a sip of his smoothie, Tony continued.

"Just before we left my apartment he had me sign my resignation, said he'd have his lawyers deliver it to Jenny. Then we left my place, or what used to be my place, and drove to the airport. My father had his jet waiting to take us out to his place in the Hamptons. He never said a word the whole way. I tried to ask but he kept putting me off saying my brother needed to be there. God he pissed me off. He'd just turned my life upside down, threatened my friends and he wasn't telling me why. He just did what he'd done to me my whole life when he wasn't hitting me, he ignored me. No matter what I said it was like I didn't even exist."

Tony's voice had gone quiet as he tried to deal with that pain. Gibbs was busy trying to calm myself. DiNozzo Sr. had kidnapped *his* Senior Agent, threatened *his* team. He was livid.

"Tony?"

"No, Gibbs, let me get through this."

After a few more deep breaths Gibbs nodded. "Okay."

"When we got back to the house we went into the study. My brother was already there, waiting. I never told you about Michael, I guess I never really considered him my brother. It's obvious he never considered me his." Tony stopped for a moment as though considering how much to say. He turned his face further away from Gibbs and began talking to the dresser.

"You should probably know a little bit about my history to fully understand how this could happen, I guess. He's older than me, from my father's first marriage. Michael was ten when I was born. I suppose my father figured he needed a mother around after his first wife died, but that never seemed to work. He didn't exactly choose a motherly type. Mom was pretty much ignored as long as the house ran smoothly. I suppose you could say that she had me so that she wouldn't be ignored anymore. But it didn't work out that way and we both learned how much we didn't matter. It was alright for awhile. It was just Mom and me but then Mom took up drinking and *that* my father wouldn't ignore and I took up hiding out with the staff because Mom got mean when she drank and my father was just plain mean all the time but no one seemed to notice that except me. Our housekeeper, Rosario, was good at bandaging me up, taking me to the doctor when she couldn't fix me up herself but no one ever said anything about it.

"God, Tony... "

His hand went up, forestalling anything Gibbs might say. He just needed to get this out. Gibbs had to let him.

"I tried to get a hold of my medical records, told my family that I needed it for the sports physical in college. But there weren't any records except those that could be explained away like the broken arm from falling off my bike, or the concussion from falling out of my tree house."

"You told me once you never had a tree house."

"I didn't." Tony's voice was flat, Gibbs couldn't see his eyes and that bothered him but he couldn't change it.

"Michael had just graduated from college when my mother died. I'd just turned twelve. He stood next to me at the funeral, he even patted my head. He left the next day and I got sent to boarding school once Dad let me know how things were going to be from then on. I never saw him again until that day in the library. He never said a word when I walked in. Michael just handed my father and me a drink and they toasted. "DiNozzo" was all they said and we all drank. "God!" Tony barked out a laugh but there was nothing of humor in it. He continued speaking but his voice began climbing and his breathing got faster.

"You'd think I'd learn that you never to take anything from the hand of an enemy." He turned tear-filled eyes to Gibbs and gestured down with a wave of his hand, his breaths speeding up. "I woke up weeks later only to find myself pregnant and no longer Anthony Dante DiNozzo, but Anthony Dante Constantino." Tony turned a bright smile to Gibbs which almost looked real if you didn't see the nearly manic glint in his eyes. "Can you believe it? I slept through both my marriage and impregnation. *Although why I still had my cock I didn't learn until much later...*

That last thought brought about a mirthless bark of laughter that degenerated into pained gasps as he began to hyperventilate and Gibbs grabbed him by the shoulders, the breakfast tray went crashing to the floor. "Tony! Take it easy, I've got you, breathe slowly, come on..." It was then that Gibbs heard Ducky call up the stairs. A moment later he hurried into the room.

"Oh dear, oh dear, my poor boy!"

Gibbs was on the bed holding Tony down while he fought the panic attack. He looked into his eyes and ordered him to breathe more slowly. Tony stared back, in the morning light his eyes were an impossible green and glittered with tears as they locked onto Gibbs.

"It's going to be alright, you hear me? It. Will. Be. Alright."

Ducky didn't say anything as he prepared another injection. Tony saw the needle and pulled away with a moaned *nooo* but Gibbs held him securely, shushing quietly into his ear.

"Now this won't put you to sleep, Tony. It's merely to help you relax.

Gibbs didn't need to see the needle go into his arm to know he'd been sedated. Those long lashes fluttered a couple of times and then the eyes closed forcing more tears to drip into Tony's hair.

"It's going to be alright, baby. I promise." Gibbs used his thumb to wipe the tears from his face and then settled him down onto the bed.

"God, Ducky, his family did this to him, his father..." And at that moment Gibbs swore he would kill Michael DiNozzo Sr. and quite probably Michael Jr. as well. Tony never spoke much about his family but Gibbs knew that the blame for all of his insecurities could be laid right at his father's door.



Ducky pulled out a blood pressure cuff and a stethoscope as he looked Tony over. "Jethro, I would dearly love a cup of tea. Would you be so kind?"

"Sure, Duck. I'll be back in a bit." Gibbs was grateful that Ducky knew him so well. He really needed to step away for a minute before he exploded. But even Gibbs knew he shouldn't do that in front of Tony. He was worked up enough as it is. Gibbs could feel two sets of eyes on him as he left the room and he knew that Tony knew how angry he was.

When Gibbs got back with the tea he was a bit more in control. And he needed to hear the rest of the story.

"I'm sorry, Gibbs, the hormones have got me all messed up." Tony's eyes were half-closed while Gibbs put the tea down on the nightstand near Ducky.

"Never say you're sorry," he began but stopped at Tony's smile. He knew all of Gibbs' rules backwards and forwards.

Gibbs sat back in the chair and watched Tony for a moment, knowing he needed to gather himself to finish saying what he wanted to say.

"Do you need me to leave, Tony?" Ducky asked quietly.

Gibbs was concentrating so much on Tony's face that Ducky's words surprised him a bit. He'd almost forgotten he was there.

"No, you can stay." Tony took a deep breath and continued his story.

"Like I said, I woke up like this and I was confused and sore and angry as hell. It was Michael who came by later. Said he figured I needed at least a little bit of information but mostly I think he wanted to rub it in. Anyway, it turns out there was an up and coming face in my father's dark world and Michael implied that a connection with this guy would be beneficial to the Family. Now I don't know any specifics about what my father's into so don't ask. Up until he showed up that day, I hadn't spoken with him since I was 12 and all I knew then was that I wasn't supposed to ask any questions. It was a lesson I learned really well."

The pain and bitterness was obvious even though Gibbs knew Tony was trying to relay his story as unemotionally as possible.

"Anyway, Michael said that Gianni Constantino wanted in on the business but that he'd come to my father and offered a deal. He wanted what my father had, he wanted to be connected by both Family and business to help him become legit. In return he'd fund some negotiations my father was working. Only I know how these guys think. Gianni wanted in on the family itself figuring if he had a personal tie to the DiNozzos that my father wouldn't act against him. So he wanted to marry into the family. The only problem is that there aren't any females. Actually, Michael and I are the last and Michael hasn't married. But he knew that, you see? Somehow he learned I existed and he went to my father with a proposal. You get the throw-away son, fix him up so that he can have babies, and there's the answer: a baby who actually has both DiNozzo and Constantino genes and everybody's happy. Well, everyone except me, of course, the throw-away son who I find out later is slated to mysteriously die in childbirth."

Tony dropped his head down, the telling of his story through a clenched jaw taking more out of him than he thought but he had to finish. He figured Gibbs deserved the whole sordid story so that he could see how lucky he actually was that Tony had left.

"God, I never knew he outright hated me that much. I always knew I was a disappointment to him. 'A worthless waste of breath' was his favorite way to refer to me."

Tony closed his eyes and Gibbs thought he was done but then he began to speak again, very softly.

"I found out that my father had told Thuergenson to do a whole lot more than just fixing me up so that I could get pregnant, you know, cut it all off since he pretty much figured that since I liked to spread my legs for men's cocks that I didn't need one of my own." Then Tony seemed to find a bit more strength and he turned to Gibbs only now he had a huge fake grin plastered across his face that hurt Gibbs to see.

"Only it turns out that Gianni had a different idea because, get this, he's gay, too! He never wanted a wife, just a son and a way into the DiNozzo world. Then I come along and he figures he has the best of both worlds. After all, it's not like I'm going to be appearing at his side at parties or anything. So, on the sly he makes sure Thuergenson doesn't remove anything he isn't supposed to and supposedly everything is great. Well, up until my belly started to get bigger and I started growing tits. But really, that was actually a good thing, me looking like a pregnant female ape."

That's what Gianni said he looked like and that it disgusted him. Tony figured it probably disgusted Gibbs, too. Again Tony looked away but he picked up the edge of the sheet and started to worry it between his fingers. He had to finish this. He had to make it so that Gibbs wouldn't look for him, that he'd know Tony just wasn't worth it. He ignored the startled gasps that the other men made and continued speaking.

"You see, Gianni was fucking me pretty regularly until that point." Tony knew better than to use the word rape, that would have Gibbs trying to protect him rather than let him go. "But like I said, Gibbs, you know I was never one to keep my mouth shut. God, I learned really quickly about which buttons to push and Gianni's got a hell of a temper. So when the doc told him that his brand of penetrative sex was endangering the baby, he started beating on me instead although he never hit my stomach. He wanted the baby too much."

Gibbs was struck dumb. He couldn't comprehend how DiNozzo could have given Tony to that bastard, how he could do something like this to his own child at all. Ducky, on the other hand, was immediately struck by Tony's description of himself. Were those Constantino's words or his own?

"Tony, why'd you push him? He was only going to hurt you." Gibbs asked even though he knew the answer. Tony had no doubt found a chink in Constantino's armor and he had exploited it, even if it had been to his own detriment. Gibbs, too, would have looked for any weakness to use against his captor.

Tony just shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. He wanted so badly to tell Gibbs that he'd done it deliberately as a means towards one specific type of escape. He was hoping Gianni would kill him. But he didn't want Gibbs to think he was still suicidal. No way would Gibbs let him go if he thought Tony would endanger an unborn child. In reality, those thoughts had been fleeting at best whenever he contemplated bringing another baby into his family's fucked up world. And, as crazy as it sounded, up until that point he was sure there was an alien of some type growing inside of him just like in a movie. But then something happened to change his plans. He caught a glimpse of the ultrasound that he'd been avoiding like mad. And at that moment, when he saw a real baby growing inside of him, it had all changed.

Tony stopped for a bit and looked down at his belly, stroking it softly. "Because I was done with him touching me like that, I'm done with men," he lied and looked straight at Gibbs. "I'd rather have him hitting me except that it might have hurt the baby. Everybody wants this baby, but especially me, Gibbs. Because I'm going to make sure that no matter what he's like, he's going to know that I love him, that I want him, and not just because of his genes or anything else. But I couldn't run the risk of Gianni hurting the baby, Gibbs. He was getting more vicious every time he beat me regardless of whether or not I opened my mouth. So I ran. But I know Gianni's looking for me. I had to warn everyone."

Gibbs guts twisted in anguish not only at Tony's story but at his assertion that he was done with men, done with him. But those hazel green eyes were swimming in tears and Gibbs didn't hesitate to move to the bed and put his arms around him. He patted Tony in a gentle way, he could do friendship if that's all Tony wanted despite how much it hurt.

"I've warned everyone, Tony. Does Constantino know you'd come here?"

"No. He didn't know much about me personally, just knew that I'd been a cop, but I'm sure he'll figure it out soon if he hasn't already."

Tony dropped his head down onto Gibbs' shoulder, allowing himself that small bit of comfort. Comfort would be hard to find in the coming months.

Gibbs knew Tony was exhausted and he couldn't blame him. He'd been in hell for months but that was over. He needed to make sure of that.

"Wouldn't DiNozzo tell him where to look?"

That earned Gibbs a small smile but he didn't know why.

"Gianni won't go to my father over this. It would hurt his pride to say that he couldn't keep me under control. Not to mention the fact that Gianni's not too pleased that my father tried to have me fixed, so to speak. As far as my father's concerned he'd figure this probably wouldn't have happened if they'd cut my balls off to begin with." Tony leaned back out of Gibbs' arms with his eyes closed, almost too tired to continue. "But chances are that my father already knows. I'm sure he's got a set of eyes in Gianni's house. Like I said, I don't have any specifics but I think that my leaving messed up a timetable for a deal so they'll probably come to heads over that and Gianni will lose. Gibbs, you should probably give Fornell a head's up that something's going down with the Families, probably soon." There, he told himself. Now Gibbs knew about his family and he could concentrate on that end. And eventually Gibbs would understand why he had to go, why he needed to let him go. He was used goods.

"Okay, Tony, that's enough for now. You need to get some sleep." Gibbs patted Tony's hair once more and then helped him settle back on the bed. It took only moments before Tony settled back into sleep. With a glance at Ducky who just nodded and then settled into his chair, Gibbs moved downstairs to make a couple of calls.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 5 by cernicalo

Chapter 5

While Tony slept Gibbs again called Ziva. His earlier calls ensured that McGee was with Abby and he wanted to leave them alone but he needed some backup, not to mention groceries. Ziva fit that bill nicely. She didn't need to know all of the details of Tony's condition unless Tony wanted to tell her. In the meantime, though, she'd be invaluable should push come to shove. He

paused a bit before making the next call. Tony probably wouldn't appreciate more people knowing about this but Gibbs knew he'd need backup if he was going to take DiNozzo and Constantino down. Besides, with Tony's resignation on the books it was more of an FBI case than an NCIS one. Fortunately Fornell was one of the few people that Gibbs could trust to help him with this. Gibbs surveyed the area around his house once more and, satisfied that nothing was different, went back upstairs to check on Tony and Ducky. Tony was sound asleep so Gibbs waved Ducky into the hallway.

"I appreciate you staying here, Ducky, but you probably need to be with your mother, don't you?"

Gibbs wanted to be alone for a bit to process Tony's words, but then he knew if he was that he wouldn't be able to stay away from his bottle. He really couldn't blame Tony but his words had hit him hard.

"Well, Jethro, I decided to call in a favor from an old friend. He's staying with Mother until our business here is done. She's rather taken with him despite the fact that she can't seem to recall his name. All she knows is that he is Italian so therefore he must be the same gigolo who stayed with her before."

"Gigolo?"

"Yes. That was Tony, you see. I'm afraid my Mother suffers from the belief that all Italians are gigolos. Fortunately, in this case, she is unable to tell one from another. She thinks Marco is Tony so she is quite content at the moment."

Gibbs chuckled at that and wondered, just briefly, how Ducky came to know Marco and then dropped that line of thought. Sometimes it just didn't pay to delve too deeply into his friend's past. With a last glance at Tony both Gibbs and Ducky moved downstairs.

"Jethro, I know you and I know you're in the midst of plans. Plans not only to take care of Tony but to mete out justice to the animals to whom poor Tony is most unfortunately genetically linked. I do have some contacts that could assist you in your endeavors should you decide you require it."

Jethro smiled at his long-time friend. "Thanks, Ducky, I'll keep it in mind but just so you know, I called Fornell."

"Ah, of course," Ducky smiled knowing what a formidable team the FBI agent and Jethro made. Without a doubt there were already some plans in motion.

They walked into the kitchen and Gibbs pulled some steaks out of the freezer and then decided against them. There was no way Tony could eat them so instead grabbed some chicken and decided to make some soup. His own eating habits were pretty dismal if you listened to Ducky, but he knew Tony needed to eat well, especially right now. Ziva had picked up a good assortment of vegetables while at the store and Gibbs figured it would be alright if he cooked them real soft and threw them into the blender. Gibbs scanned his back yard again while he chopped vegetables. Ziva had dropped off the groceries and was again out there keeping watch, but it was something he did out of habit anyway. Ducky was again having some tea and Gibbs knew he was watching him quietly but he was sure Duck wouldn't be quiet for long.

"What do you know of Tony's father, Jethro?"

"I know he's a compete bastard that deserves to be shot among other things." Gibbs had a sudden wish that it was DiNozzo Senior's throat under his knife instead of a poor defenseless carrot. There was a bit more he knew about Tony's past, but it wasn't his place to tell. "He's hurt Tony in so many ways. And now there's Constantino." Gibbs stopped speaking for a moment

until he could again get his rage under control. He took a deep breath before continuing. "Hopefully Tony will be able to tell us more soon. Will you stay when I talk to him again? I need him to tell me everything he can but he's right on the edge."

"Of course I will, Jethro. I can give him a little something to keep him calm without putting him to sleep although the poor boy does need his rest."

Nodding his head Gibbs dropped the last of the veggies into the pot and watched them come to a boil before he dropped the temperature and covered them. They made their way back upstairs.

Tony always looked so beautiful while he slept. Watching him had been a favorite pastime of Gibbs. He would never have believed it possible but Tony was even more beautiful now. Although still strained by exhaustion and poor nourishment, Tony's face had softened with the pregnancy. Gibbs suddenly had the desperate wish that it was his baby making him look like that and the thought shocked him. He never thought he wanted to be a father again, kind of thought it was a betrayal to Kelly somehow, but seeing Tony like this brought all those feelings back to fore. It didn't matter that he wasn't the biological father of Tony's baby. He decided then and there that he'd be the father that counted whether or not Tony let him back into his bed. But for damn sure he'd do everything in his power to protect them.

Deciding that Tony was fine for now, Gibbs and Ducky again left him alone. Once they were gone Tony lifted his head. He'd heard Gibbs talking earlier about Ziva and he knew she'd be a hard one to get around, but he wasn't without resources and the greatest thing in his favor was the he knew his partners. Ziva would be watching from down the street where she had the best view of the front, left and back. Gibbs would be watching from the kitchen so he'd have a view of the back and right sides of the house. Tony moved to the hallway. He just needed a diversion and to get to the bedroom at the rear right of the house, the room that used to belong to Gibbs' daughter. He was pretty sure that he could make it out of the bedroom window to the tree. He laughed to himself. He would be a really pretty sight, belly hanging out as he shimmied down the tree. That is if he could still shimmy. Still, it was his only chance. Ziva would be watching for someone breaking in, not someone breaking out. And he had to go. There was no way he was going to continue to risk everyone by staying. He picked up the phone in Gibbs bedroom and started dialing.

-----  
Michael quietly entered the room and walked over to the bar to pour two drinks. His father sat quietly at his desk, staring out of the window. Without a word Michael placed the drink next to him and turned to look out of the window and waited for his father to speak.

"It's done?"

"Yes. Everything is in place. Constantino won't know about his men until the deal goes down."

"What about Turelo?" DiNozzo Sr asked. Turelo was a key player in Constantino's gang. DiNozzo smirked as he considered the "gang". He wouldn't deign to call that motley group a family or even an organization. Yes, they were strong and cunning, vicious in a way that DiNozzo somewhat admired, but they had no class and no loyalty. Constantino had screwed with an associate of DiNozzo's to get where he was as well as using some good street smarts. But he didn't have what it took to carry him all the way. And he knew it. That was why he had tried to buy his way into the DiNozzo circle. But little did the bastard upstart know that DiNozzo was fully aware of who was behind that latest shipment of guns that had gone astray. And then he had the gall to come to DiNozzo claiming that wasn't it just lucky he happened to be able to help DiNozzo out by fulfilling the contract. Just lucky indeed. That bastard was going to learn about messing with the Family. DiNozzo took another sip of his drink.



“He was greedy but amenable. Constantino’s men will follow him when the time is right. And when it’s over Turelo and his boys will get a little surprise of their own.”

DiNozzo looked at his son and heir with a slight smile. He knew what was coming and he was proud of his boy. It’s what he would have done. Who needed a man whose loyalty could be bought so easily? He had enough men of his own and he didn’t want to bring in any unknown variables.

Michael saw his father’s smile and felt a rush of satisfaction. He and his father thought a lot alike, not like Anthony, that little bastard. He felt the same disgust his father did when he thought of him. The brat had always hung around him when he was little, trying to get his attention when he wasn’t trying to get Michael’s father’s attention. God, he’d never been so happy as when the kid had figured out his life was a lot better, and less painful, when he just stayed in his room and watched TV. But now, finally, the kid was going to be of some use. And he was really looking forward to seeing Anthony’s face when his father finally told him the truth. Now *that* will be satisfying. And now one more little tidbit which should really get his father worked up. There were times when that was just so much fun.

“Constantino asked me when I thought you would be introducing him to the rest of the Family. He was even wondering if I could look over the list of people he has to give birth announcements to, to make sure everyone is included who is supposed to be...”

“What!” His father yelled as he jumped out of his chair, planting his fists on his antique desk. “Sweet Mother of God, tell me you’re joking Michael!”

Michael knew better than to laugh but he was sure his father saw the mirth dancing in his eyes.

“You put a stop to that right now, Michael. I don’t care what you tell that bastard, but you make sure he doesn’t speak to any of our associates in any way, shape or form, understand?”

DiNozzo ran a hand down his face. He had to get rid of Constantino as soon as possible. DiNozzo had absolutely no intention of bringing him into the fold and there is no way in hell he would let it be known that he had let anyone even associated with him become mixed up in this type of perverted mess. Hell, none of his Family even knew that Anthony was still alive. He’d made sure of it. Anthony had dropped off of their radar when he’d been disowned at age 12 and very soon he’d make sure that there’d never be a reference to one Anthony Dante DiNozzo ever again.

-----  
“Gibbs!”

Ducky decided to stir the soup while Jethro answered his phone.

“Damnit...no, I do not need you to come in...never mind, they’re here. You keep an eye out...”

Ducky turned to see Gibbs slam his phone shut as he left the kitchen. Ducky followed quickly and saw Jethro start up the stairs but he paused at sudden pounding at the front door and repeated ringing of the doorbell. This was accompanied by a strident voice demanding to be let in.

“Ducky, that’s McGee and Abby. Let them in. I’m checking on Tony...” he called as he took the steps two at a time to get upstairs.

Ducky moved quickly to the door and found that yes indeed it was both Abby and McGee.

“Ducky, Ducky, Ducky where is he? Where’s Tony? He said he was back and to come right over to Gibbs’ house and to call Ziva and I told Timmy but he didn’t believe me but I held the phone

out and he heard Tony's voice, too, and so we came right over but where is he Ducky? Where's Tony and why did he leave like that?"

Abby never took a breath as she held onto Ducky's shoulders but then she began to look around the house when she heard Gibbs coming back down the stairs. She went to him to begin the same shoulder-grabbing litany but stopped at the glare on Gibbs' face as he tried gently but quickly to disengage her hands and push her aside. Gibbs never looked at her like that! What happened?

"Gibbs?" she asked tentatively, fear forming a sudden ball in her stomach.

"He's gone." He said as he rushed out of the house to look around even as he dialed Ziva's cell.

"Did you see Tony leave?"

"No, Gibbs. I called you as soon as Abby and McGee arrived and they told me that you wanted us in the house. I am canvassing the neighborhood now but I do not see anyone, no movement."

"Keep looking!" Gibbs snapped as he closed his phone. He turned to see McGee getting into his car. He'd put two and two together and realized that they'd been used as a diversion to allow Tony to run away. Why he'd run he didn't venture to guess, but he'd do everything he could to find him and then kick his ass for putting him and Abby into this position. That was bad enough but he sure didn't want to go back to his Boss admitting failure on top of that. Not when it came to a team member, but especially not Tony. He'd been aware of what Tony and Gibbs meant to one another for quite awhile. And anyone could see what Tony's leaving had done to Gibbs.

"I'll take the right and meet up with Ziva. We'll find him, Boss."

Gibbs nodded and started around the side of the house. There were some openings along the fence line to some of his neighbors' houses and he was sure Tony knew about them. They'd jogged along these streets together several times back when Tony practically lived with him.

"Stay in contact, Jethro!" Ducky called as he moved. He nodded back only to see a sobbing Abby wrapped in Ducky's arms. He'd deal with her later. Right now he had to find Tony before Constantino did.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 6 - 9 by cernicalo

## Chapter 6

Tony gasped and limped his way around to the far side of the garbage dumpster and huddled down. He'd been kicking himself ever since leaving Gibbs' house for not taking his current physical condition into *complete* consideration.

"Sorry, pumpkin...thought I could handle that little trapeze act with a bit more finesse..." he whispered to his belly as he rubbed it gently. He had a serious side stitch and wondered if he'd pulled something. It didn't feel any more serious than a pulled muscle but he wasn't sure if he'd know if he'd done anything worse or not. After all, he was sporting a few extras nowadays. He'd also scraped a nice gouge along his side when he'd slipped on that one branch and it was bleeding a bit but it seemed to be slowing down. Who would have thought he'd lost that much muscle tone in a few short months? Of course he did weigh a bit more than before not to mention the fact that his sense of balance was totally out of whack. Still, he had made it out of the window and away from Gibbs' place without anyone seeing him so that had to count for something. But he wondered if it wouldn't have been easier to sneak up on Gibbs, wrestle him to the ground and cuff him and then take his gun and his car... Okay, shimmying down a tree with a five-month

pregnant belly was definitely easier. God, his back ached. He could only guess how wonderful he was going to feel in four more months. He dropped his head back against the brick wall behind him and then knocked it again a couple of times for good measure. Why was nothing in his life ever easy? He kept his eyes closed for another moment but knew he'd had enough of a break. It was time to move.

-----  
"Are you sure he'd head over to his old supervisor's house?"

"Yes, Mr. Constantino. According to the super DiNozzo's been known to stay there whenever there's a problem with his apartment..."

"His name is Constantino, damnit! Never forget that!" Gianni ran a frustrated hand over his short, wiry hair. He was going to kill Anthony himself right after that baby was born. One kid was enough.

"Yes, sir. Forgive me. Anyway, we've got guys headed out there now."

"How many? I've got to meet with Michael DiNozzo in less than five hours and I can't go to him with less than the full crew. And on top of that the DiNozzos absolutely cannot find out that Anthony's gone missing...make sure everyone knows that!" Jesus, what fucked up timing and just before the one deal that would cement him in DiNozzo's organization.

There was no way Gianni was going to admit to Mr. DiNozzo that he couldn't keep his own house in order, couldn't control one wayward man. Fuck! How in the hell did a pregnant man get away from his men in the first place? He turned and eyed Turelo. The man had a lump on the side of his head from his run-in with Anthony. Idiot deserved whatever he got for letting Anthony slip away. And yeah, he should have been stricter with him, kept him secured all the time and not just as punishment for that smart mouth of his. Gianni knew Anthony had been a cop, but he really didn't figure the guy had it in him to get away from his men. If he wasn't so pissed off he might have been more impressed.

"Bring him back to the house as soon as you find him."

"What do you want me to do if he's not alone? Mr. uhh...your...*spouse*...doesn't work anymore, but his supervisor is still a Fed. We don't need that kind of attention, Mr. Constantino."

Gianni agreed.

"Bring them both back but keep them separated. I'm just going to have to make sure Anthony convinces his old boss that he's happy where he is and doesn't want help. And then we can finish the deal with the Family."

Turelo eyed his employer skeptically. The fucker was obviously crazy and this situation was going to blow sky high. He was glad his ties to Constantino would soon be broken. The DiNozzos were well-respected and he'd do a hell of a lot better with a more traditional type of Family regardless of how successful he'd been with Constantino. For now, though, he'd make sure he got *Mrs. Constantino* under control. And then he'd pay him back for his damaged reputation as well as the painful lump he now sported.

-----  
Gibbs ran on following instinct more than any trail. Tony was too good for that. He knew that Tony would be heading into the more populated parts of town because it would be easier to get lost in a crowd. Gibbs knew he would still blend in despite his condition. He'd been wearing a loose hooded sweatshirt when he'd arrived at Gibbs' house but he'd left it behind and Gibbs cursed himself for not planting the locator on Tony's shoes. His phone rang and he answered it

as he moved.

"Yeah...you and McGee take Saunders St. downtown. I'm sure that's where he's headed. I've got the south side...keep in touch." He closed the phone and put it in his pocket just as he rounded the corner of an alley behind a grocery store. And there he was.

Tony turned and saw Gibbs just as he turned the corner so he began to run despite his fatigue and the stitch in his side. Tony didn't move nearly as fast as he used to and Gibbs caught up quickly.

"Tony, what are you doing?" Gibbs said as he grabbed Tony's shoulders from behind. He was ready for the punch when it came and he dodged it easily and then wrapped his arms around Tony and held him tightly. He knew that Tony would fight being taken back.

"Let go, Gibbs! I can't stay with you...its too risky. I'm better on my own and I can take care of myself."

"Right. That's why I caught up with you so quick. Tony, you can barely move..."

"Look, just because I'm pregnant..."

"No, Tony...not just because you're pregnant, but you've been hurt! Hell, Ducky says you're malnourished and underweight. The baby..."

"What? He said I was doing alright...? What's wrong with the baby?" Tony gasped out as he fisted his hands into Gibbs shirt.

Gibbs put his hands on Tony's shoulders to still the fear he saw in the hazel-green eyes.

"Calm down, Tony. He just said that you need rest and better nourishment than what you've been getting. Whatever they've been giving isn't enough for you and the baby. Tony, come back with me." Gibbs looked around quickly and sighed. "Look Tony, I know you don't want me in your life, but you need help...at least right now. Let me take care of you."

Tony wanted with everything in him to just tell Gibbs that having him in his life was *all* he wanted. And yes, he desperately wanted to let Gibbs take over but he couldn't do that. He couldn't put Gibbs or anyone else at risk and he just plain wasn't good enough for Gibbs. With a deep breath he pulled himself together and straightened up as he stepped back despite the pain it caused in his side and then he looked Gibbs in the eye.

"No, I don't want or need you to take care of me, Gibbs. I only came to your place to warn you...call it the last vestige of loyalty to an old supervisor if you want. But the fact is that I don't want to go back with you. I don't want *you*. I can and will take care of myself and my baby."

Gibbs felt like he'd been punched but only for a moment. He stared at Tony and then understanding gelled in him. He recognized some very subtle body signals and if he hadn't known Tony so well he could have almost believed that Tony was telling the truth about not wanting or needing Gibbs. But then, that's what made Tony so incredibly good at undercover work.

"Cut the crap, Tony." He stepped closer and his voice dropped into a deep register that sent a shiver down Tony's back. "You can't do this on your own."

It was very nearly the voice Gibbs used when he was thrusting deeply into his body and Tony suddenly felt pinned by those intense blue eyes even as his knees weakened.

"You and I both know the truth about what you really want...and need."

Gibbs stepped even closer and Tony could feel his breath ghosting across his cheek as Gibbs leaned in closer to his ear.

"You walked away from me once. It won't happen again, understand?"

For the first time in what seemed like forever, Tony felt that ball of fear ease in his belly.

"Yes, Boss." He responded automatically and saw Gibbs nod. "But once this is all over I'll go..."

He was stopped by the hand that slapped the back of his head. But he couldn't stay...not after what had been done to him.

"Boss, I'm not good e.... Owwww!" Tony grimaced and this time rubbed the back of his head.

"Don't *ever* say that, Tony. Ya got that? None of this was your fault. But I do blame your father and I'll make sure he pays for what he's done to you...and not just with Constantino. You're mine and I take care of what's mine."

"Yours, Boss?"

Tony had tried to do what he thought was right, but Gibbs was offering everything he wanted on a silver platter. Could he do this? Would Gibbs regret it later?

"Jethro."

Yes, he thought to himself and he knew he had to at least try no matter how it might turn out. Tony smiled.

"Yours, Jethro."

And with those two words Tony felt as though his world had righted and he sagged in relief. Yes, he still needed a doctor to make sure the baby was alright and they were still in a lot of danger, but Gibbs said he had his six, regardless of what he'd been through, what he'd become. He dropped his head onto Gibbs shoulder and felt those strong arms pull him in close. Gibbs said he wanted to take care of him. If it had been anyone else saying that he'd of punched him in the face but this was Gibbs and Gibbs wasn't like any other man and he *never* said anything he didn't mean. Tony lifted his head and looked into those blue eyes he still loved and couldn't think of anything he wanted more than to let Gibbs take care of him right now. He was so tired and scared and he knew deep down that Gibbs was right...he couldn't fight off Gianni's men if they did find him.

"Okay, but only if we can go somewhere else. Gianni will find us eventually if we stay at your place."

"Yeah, I figured that. Don't worry. I'll explain when we get home..."

Just then Gibbs spun around and pulled his weapon. Tony became aware of several men around them and he realized with a sinking feeling in his stomach that he had fucked it all up and it was too late for whatever Gibbs had planned.

## Chapter 7

Gibbs woke up secured to a chair in what he assumed was Constantino's study. He tugged at his arms but wasn't surprised to find cuffs securing his hands behind his back. He remembered finding Tony in the alley and being surrounded. He winced slightly as he turned feeling his head swim a bit which made him slightly nauseous and he hoped he wouldn't vomit with the gag in his

mouth. He relaxed a bit taking shallow breaths until his head settled down and his stomach calmed. He remembered seeing one man making a phone call just before a blinding pain burst out across the back of his head. The last thing he remembered was Tony yelling *no*. He took a deep breath and inventoried the rest of his body. It didn't feel as though they'd done anything else to him after knocking him out. But what had they done to Tony? He worried about Tony as he tugged at the cuffs but they were on too damned tight. He looked down and took inventory of his clothing. It seemed everything was there. Good. There were two heavies watching the door, one of them had a black eye. They turned to watch him stonily but he ignored them as he inventoried his surroundings.

Gibbs didn't know how much time had passed before the door opened and in walked a woman. She was holding a chain. Tony walked in behind her with another man at his side. Gibbs could see that he'd been cleaned up and had gotten a change of clothes. He now wore some type of soft shirt that flowed around his hips. It reminded him of some of tops Shannon had worn during her pregnancy. They'd laughed at how loose they were but then she'd grown to fill them. Kelly had weighed nearly nine pounds at birth. But what Shannon had never worn was the wide belt that was secured just under Tony's small breasts. Tony's hands were cuffed to the belt. It was in that instant that a red haze covered Gibbs vision as he realized just why it was that Tony had only defensive injuries to his arms. He'd been beaten while chained. He'd never been given the opportunity to fight back. And then Gibbs finally had to focus on the last item...the collar Tony had around his neck. And attached to the collar was a chain leash which was held by the woman. With a sickening twist to his stomach Gibbs realized that this was the reason Tony couldn't stand having anything around his neck...he'd been collared for who knows how long.

Gibbs watched as Tony was led to a bench by the wall. He didn't fight, didn't struggle, just sat down with his eyes on the floor while she secured the chain to a metal loop attached high overhead. With his hands secured as they were there was no way for Tony to reach it. Gibbs watched, hoping Tony would look up but he wouldn't. The woman murmured something to him but he didn't respond. Then she slapped him across the face.

Tony moaned as pain radiated from his jaw to his temple. He tried to pull away and hoped the bitch would leave him alone. He needed to find a way to get Gibbs out of there but he wouldn't be able to do anything if Gianni and his thugs beat the crap out of him. He just needed to lay low for a bit and...*aaaagh...fuck! Not again!*

Again, Gibbs fought against his bonds but it was futile. Tony tried to move away after the slap, sliding across the bench but then he stopped as another groan was ripped out of him. He lifted his leg and struggled to reach his calf and Gibbs realized that he had another cramp. The woman stepped back laughing slightly as Tony tried to lift his leg closer to his hands and bend over sideways at the same time to reach it. The two men at the door joined in her laughter as they watched Tony writhe in pain.

Just then the door opened and another man entered the room staring straight at Tony and ignoring everything else.

"He giving you problems already?" The man said and then watched for a bit. "What's wrong with him?"

"No problems, yet, Sir. Just a leg cramp...pregnant women get them all the time."

"Hmmmph. Okay, get out of here, Cavuto, I've got him."

The woman nodded her head and with a final disgusted look at Tony turned and left the room. Tony struggled for a bit more but gave up and leaned back against the wall, his chest heaving as he worked through the pain. It didn't take long for the pain to ease enough for Tony to open his eyes and struggle to his feet. He was obviously still hurting because Gibbs could see him favoring his right leg. Despite that, though, he stepped towards the man as far as the chain let

him. Gibbs saw the anger on his face and guessed that the newcomer was Constantino.

Constantino's eyes locked onto Tony the moment he walked into the room. He was so pissed off he wanted to just beat the hell out of him but that wouldn't serve any purpose at this point. He watched Cavuto leave and then turned back to Tony, spying Gibbs in the process.

"What the fuck! I told Turelo to keep them apart..." He turned to one of the men at the door.  
"Where the fuck is Turelo?"

"I'm not sure, Sir...but he said something about double checking the guns before the DiNozzos get here..."

"Shut the fuck up, you moron!" Constantino screamed at the man and then ran a hand over his head. Gibbs could see that he was nervous. Tony was right when he said that his leaving was throwing off some kind of timetable. *Good job, Tony*, he told himself.

Tony shifted, easing his weight off his right leg bringing Constantino's attention back to him.

"You've got me, Gianni. Finish your deal with my father. Just let Gibbs go. He doesn't know anything...why keep him?" Tony started, gesturing to Gibbs with his head. "He'll only bring you trouble."

"Naw, Anthony. Thanks to Einstein over there," he gestured to the moron at the door, "he knows about the deal now. But he won't be any trouble. I'll make sure of that. No, you're the one who brought me trouble." Gianni said as he stepped closer to Tony. "Instead of a nice little family and a profitable deal with your father I've got my men running around chasing you nearly blowing all my hard work *TO HELL!*" He finished with a yell in Tony's face as he stepped into him causing him to stumble back. He kept pushing Tony until he had him up against the wall near the bench. He grabbed Tony's bicep and shoved his face into Tony's. Tony turned away as Gianni continued in a growl. "You know, your father told me you were worthless and that if I wanted to continue with this idea of a baby that I should just scramble your brains like they do to frogs in a high school science class and then just pull the plug when my son is born. I should have listened. But I guess I was too busy looking at your pretty face and sweet ass to see that."

Tony looked back at Gianni as he tried again. "I swear I won't be any more trouble, Gianni, and I'll give you that family you want. Just let him go, okay?" Tony turned the charm up all the way, promising everything he could with his eyes as he stroked Gianni's chest as far as he could reach.

Gianni smiled but it was a cold smile. "You're damn right you'll give me what I want because this is mine," he said as he fondled Tony's belly. "And this is mine," he said fondling Tony's cock. "And I don't want no brain-dead fuck, understand?" He growled into Tony's face and then claimed Tony's mouth.

Gibbs could feel the blood dripping off his hands as he fought the cuffs. *Come on, Tobias...come ON!*

Gianni shoved his tongue inside Tony's mouth but growled when he was thwarted by the wires. Instead he smashed his mouth even harder against Tony's and reveled in the moan he heard. All of the frustration and anger from the last two days boiled up and spilled over into a raging lust. In a flash he had Tony turned around and bent over the bench. With a hand at Tony's nape to hold him in place he used his other to rip Tony's pants down. The stray thought went through his mind that he really liked the elastic-waisted pants...made it easier to get at what he wanted. But Tony's shirt had ridden up and there was no way he could get passed that big belly even if it was his son in there.

"Get that blanket!" he yelled over his shoulder to the men watching avidly from the door. Black Eye jumped forward and brought it over but stood there watching Tony with a smirk on his face

that seemed too personal for just the eyeful he was getting. Gibbs wondered if Tony had given him the shiner.

"Jesus, do I have to tell you everything? Cover his belly with it. I don't want to be seeing that while I fuck him."

Black Eye draped it over Tony's back and belly as Tony struggled pushing up from the bench as much as the chains would let him. But between the baby weight and his own upper body weight his balance was thrown completely off. Without leverage Gianni's hand at his nape prevented him from moving at all. His only thought was that Gibbs was about to see him get raped.

Gibbs saw Tony close his eyes and turn away in resignation, shame and misery evident in every line of his body. How many times had Tony been through this? Gibbs kept working at his cuffs hoping that the blood would work as a lubricant to help get his hands out as he contemplated the various ways he would kill Constantino when he got his hands around his neck. Suddenly the door burst open.

"What the hell? What is it, Turelo?"

"Sir, its Mr. DiNozzo and his son. They're here."

Constantino muttered a curse as he fastened his clothes and then he turned to the black-eyed heavy.

"Get him dressed!" He turned back to Turelo and then glanced at his watch. "What happened? We were supposed to meet them at the warehouse!"

"Mr. DiNozzo changed his mind. He said he wanted to see you and his son."

"Did he say why?"

"No, Sir, Mr. Constantino. All I know is that they're moving the guns to one of his warehouses right now..."

"Moving the guns? And you let him? What the fuck were you thinking? You knew how I had the deal set up...DiNozzo was just a face to show I'm connected and that the Family is backing this."

Turelo eyed his former employer. "The Family *is* backing this, Mr. Constantino, just not with you in charge."

Comprehension dawned on Gianni's face. "How long have you been in their pocket, Turelo?"

"Ever since you turned fag and brought that bastard," he gestured at Tony, "into this house. He's a cop for chrissakes! There was no way you were going to have whatever fucked-up fantasy you dreamed about, and especially not in this sick way. Me and the boys have had enough of it."

"So you help DiNozzo with the shipment and then what, you gonna take me out for him, too?"

Turelo straightened up a bit and nodded. "Yeah, if that's what Mr. DiNozzo wants."

Gianni spun away and began laughing humorlessly and muttering. "Godamnit, God-fucking-damnit! I should have seen this coming...fuck!"

"Should have seen what coming, Gianni?" Michael DiNozzo Sr. said from the doorway, Michael standing silently behind him.



Gianni turned to face him his face grim but DiNozzo ignored him and coolly walked in, looking around the room as though taking inventory. He noted Tony sitting on a bench being held in place by a guard with a black eye and he sneered when he saw the collar and chains. He also saw Gibbs tied to a chair across the room. He frowned a bit and then he turned away, promptly forgetting about them both.

"That this was all a set-up. You never planned on letting me in." Gianni stated.

"Of course not, Gianni, be realistic. Everyone is very upset with you, do you understand? No? Fine, I'll explain," DiNozzo began in a smooth baritone.

Gibbs listened closely while he took in the self-assured man whom he hated on sight. So this, then, was Tony's father. Gibbs was surprised. There was no physical resemblance between the two men at all but it was obvious where Tony had picked up some of his more serious mannerisms. Then Gibbs made a mental note to never mention that to Tony. Michael DiNozzo Sr. was poised and oozed class and respect. But where Tony could produce a hard edge in his eyes that he was proud to say was damn close to his own, this man's eyes showed a truly lethal potential, they were the eyes of a man who didn't care what he had to do to get what he wanted. Gibbs' gut twisted at the thought of those eyes pointed at a little boy...and the actions that had accompanied the looks. But now those eyes were pointed at Gianni and Gibbs knew it was going to go very bad very quickly.

"It all starts with that shipment you stole from Petruccio. But what you may not have realized is that the original shipment actually belonged to me, not Petruccio, you see? And now Petruccio is upset because he owes me for the shipment that you stole. Your buyer is upset because he won't be getting the guns you promised, although I'm sure I can assuage his anger. But I'm upset, too, Gianni. Do you want to know why I'm upset? I'm upset because you tried to use my own guns to get into my good graces. And not only that, you've now gotten the Feds involved. That is bringing far too much attention to our little business dealings. It is unacceptable and I am going to have to clean up your mess. And finally, you nosed around into my personal business and learned about Anthony. But not only that, you came to me in the belief that I would welcome a fag into my family. I am not talking about Anthony. You are that fag, Gianni, and you thought you could bring a perversion of nature and that abomination he carries with you. Well, I'm here to tell you that it will not happen. You aimed too high, Gianni. You thought you could worm your way into our organization, into my Family, but you were wrong..."

DiNozzo was interrupted by a sharp bark of laughter. He turned to see Tony sitting on the bench holding his side while he laughed. The guard next to him shook him a bit and told him to shut up, but he didn't. Instead he turned to Gianni.

"Don't you get it, Gianni? My father used you to get rid of a thorn that's been in his side for years. Killing two birds with one stone, right, Dad?"

"I've told you never to call me that." Although there was no change in inflection or tone, DiNozzo's voice seemed to drop several degrees.

"Yes, you have and I never listened. But it doesn't matter anymore, does it? You're going to get everything you want in one fell swoop. Get rid of the newcomer, take over his business and get rid of your worthless son. Well congratulations, Dad. You're one hell of a planner."

Gianni couldn't believe what he'd heard. That DiNozzo had screwed him over so royally did come as a surprise but, really, their business was cutthroat and he did have some backup plans in case it all went south. But to hear what DiNozzo thought of his own son shocked him. Family was everything to them. That is why he wanted in on it so badly. With Family there was protection and safety...well, as much as their business allowed for it.

"DiNozzo," Gianni began. Gone were the pretenses of respect and formality. "He's still carrying

your grandson..."

"Don't you dare say that!" DiNozzo spit out quietly. "You don't know what the fuck you're talking about. Thought you had it all figured out when you found out about Anthony. Well you don't know shit, understand? That thing in him isn't my grandson."

Finally, Gibbs heard real emotion in DiNozzo's voice. It was filled with loathing and disgust.

"What's the matter, Dad? Can't bear the thought that your fag son is pregnant? Well, thanks to modern technology and to *you*, I am! And it's a real baby...your grandson..."

Tony was interrupted by another bark of laughter. Turning he saw Michael bent over in mirth but his attention was brought back to his father who now stood in front of him. He stood up, refusing to let his father try to intimidate him the way he had when he was a child.

"You don't get it, do you, you stupid cunt!" Still DiNozzo never raised his voice and Gibbs realized that the foul language was the true indicator of DiNozzo's rage. "I fucked Gianni over by giving you to him. Sure, he has that abomination inside of you and it might be a Constantino but it's sure as hell *not* a DiNozzo because *you're* not a DiNozzo."

Tony stared at him, shocked pain and confusion plain on his face.

"Your mother was a whore." He stated as a matter of fact. "I hadn't touched her in months when she suddenly tells me she's pregnant...pregnant with you. But I have a reputation so I let you be born and I gave you my name but once she got herself killed that was it, I was done with you except for one thing...you still had my name. And what did you do with it, you worthless piece of fag meat? You decide to become a cop and on the side you keep spreading your legs just like your mother..."

Tony reeled, his stomach twisting at the vile words he father so calmly delivered. No, not his father...he wasn't a DiNozzo! So that's why he'd been hated his entire life, why he'd been considered so worthless.

"But then you find yourself a place, whored yourself off to that man," DiNozzo said pointing at Gibbs. "Finally found someone to keep you, right? Well all that's going to end. I'm going to kill him while you watch and then I'm going to kill you and finally be done with you..."

The shot took DiNozzo by surprise and he whirled around. He turned to see Turelo falling backwards, blood from the back of his head spraying all over Michael. Michael pulled his gun but Gianni already had him in his sight.

Gibbs had seen Gianni reach for his gun and watched while he shot Turelo and then pointed his gun at Michael. He clearly heard Gianni say that if DiNozzo was going to kill his son then he'd do the same and he fired. The idiot at the door didn't seem to know who to point his gun at, but Gibbs' attention was drawn back to Tony and he thanked every God he'd ever heard of that despite his shock Tony was still able to react to the situation at hand. He'd elbowed the guy behind him and was able to grab his gun. But Gibbs was helpless as he watched Black Eye reach for it. The two men struggled and he screamed into his gag when he heard another shot and nearly passed out in relief when Black Eye fell backwards, blood spreading from the hole in his chest. Shots were being exchanged by the door guy and Gianni. DiNozzo had taken cover behind a desk just as Tony took cover behind the bench. He quickly frisked Black Eye's pockets, probably searching for the cuff keys. Gibbs rocked at his chair until he was able to fall over to one side. More men had begun shooting into the room and there were several down. He saw DiNozzo firing from behind the desk. Gibbs didn't know where he'd gotten a gun from. If he'd had it sooner he was sure he would have prevented Gianni from shooting Michael. He tried to see if Tony was alright but he couldn't from his position and then he heard the sound of a bullhorn. Fornell had finally arrived.

When all was said and done, DiNozzo was in custody, Michael, Turelo and three others were dead, two wounded, one of whom was Tony who'd taken a slight graze across the top of his shoulder and had some bleeding at his side. The worst, though, was that somehow in the melee Constantino had disappeared.

Gibbs walked over to DiNozzo as the FBI agents were reading him his rights. The two men stared at one another, neither giving an inch but both understanding that if the chance ever came up, one of them would die. Gibbs nodded first with a slight smile. DiNozzo just nodded as the agent pulled him away.

Gibbs returned to watch while Tony was treated. Fornell came to stand beside him.

"What took you so long?"

Fornell looked at Gibbs and shrugged. "Well, since you failed to get the locator on Tony we had to resort to looking at the list of known properties belonging to both DiNozzo and Constantino. We had to check them all out. Plus we needed time for recorded evidence linking DiNozzo to Constantino..."

"Tobias..." Gibbs warned in a low growl. He was tired of the tap-dancing.

Fornell gave Gibbs one disgusted humph and turned away. "It wasn't until Agent McGee and Ms. Sciuto decided to scan cell phone calls through the nearest tower in the vicinity where you found Tony that they were able to start tracing whichever thug it was that called Constantino to tell him they'd located you and then we worked it from there. Happy?"

Gibbs gave a satisfied snort as he waited for more.

"When we got the location we found DiNozzo's men taking the guns to one of their own warehouses. Very sloppy...we've never been able to link any shipments directly to DiNozzo before. Then we got one of Constantino's men to tell us where they were holding you and Tony."

Fornell stopped at Gibbs nod. *If the man wants more details he'll just have to get it from my report later*, he told himself testily.

"Oh, and by the way, Director Shepherd called. Seems she is a bit put out that NCIS agents were involved in an FBI case without her knowledge. I told her you would be glad to explain everything as soon as possible. She's waiting for your call."

"What do you mean 'agents'? I'm on leave."

"Yes and it seems that the rest of your team also put themselves on leave but their presence was noted doing the background checks and cell phone searches."

"And you know this because?"

"Because my people were with your people when Director Shepherd found them, okay?"

"Guess we'll both be talking to her, then."

Fornell snorted and looked back towards the medics. He stood next to Gibbs a short distance away from where Tony was being treated. They had automatically gone to Gibbs having seen the blood all over his hands but he'd waved them off and told them to see to Tony first and so he and Gibbs were waiting until they finished. He was still amazed at what he saw but with the changing times knew that this wouldn't be the last time he'd see a pregnant man. He couldn't imagine what Tony was going through mentally with all of this. He glanced at the intense look of the man beside him and then decided that Tony would probably be alright no matter what.

"Yours, huh Jethro?"

Gibbs turned that intense look onto Fornell. He hadn't been thinking about both NCIS and the FBI listening in on the wire he wore but in a split moment realized that he really didn't give a damn.

"Got a problem with that?"

"No, no problem...just wondered if I was going to be invited to the wedding. You know, when we finally find Constantino and either the annulment or divorce comes through..."

"Wedding..." Gibbs said the word to himself as he looked over at Anthony Dante DiNozzo Constantino. It wasn't anything he would ever have considered before, but then so much had happened that he would never have imagined. With a last look at Fornell he turned and strode back to Tony's side leaving Fornell laughing quietly behind him.

FBI Agent Sacks was ostensibly overseeing the removal of the bodies but in reality he was watching DiNozzo being treated. DiNozzo, or Constantino now he reminded himself with a sneer, had been kidnapped and surgically altered so he could have a mobster's baby. And now they had the proof that his own father was a mobster as well. Okay, maybe not his biological father, but he was tied to the man nevertheless. All of it just served to sicken him even more than usual when he thought about the arrogant, overgrown brat of an NCIS agent. This whole male pregnancy thing was a complete aberration to begin with and now it involved the one man that Sacks had the most difficulty dealing with above all others. So what if he wasn't an NCIS agent anymore, from the looks of concern both Gibbs and Fornell were heaping on him he had the feeling he still wasn't going to be rid of the man (man?) any time soon. He turned away in disgust and saw one of the coroner's people looking at him oddly so he relaxed his expression and stared at the man until he looked away and went back to his job. Sacks determinedly kept his back to the others in the room for the rest of the day.

Gibbs walked up to Tony who was sitting back on the bench staring silently at the movement around him. Gibbs didn't like what he saw. Tony was pale and uncommunicative and looked slightly shocky. He heard the paramedics trying to talk him into letting the doctor see him but he just shook his head. Gibbs had always known how Tony felt about hospitals and he couldn't blame him for not wanting to go. Still, though, he needed to make sure everything was alright with both of them.

"Tony, let them check you out. It won't take long and I'll be right there with you."

"Jethro, I'm fine. You're the one who needs to see the doctor. You're dripping on the floor." Tony said dully as he gestured to Gibbs' wrists. As soon as he said that another paramedic immediately took Gibbs by the arm and sat him down next to Tony.

Gibbs shot Tony a look that screamed "Thanks a lot!" which Tony read loud and clear and Gibbs was rewarded by a slight smile. "But you're still going. You're bleeding from your side and your shoulder and you look like hell and I need to make damn sure you're alright."

Tony's eyes widened and he nodded his head but still he remained quiet and then his eyes slid away from Gibbs. That action more than anything sent warning bells ringing in Gibbs' head but now wasn't the time to question him. He'd try later when things settled down.

## Chapter 9

Gibbs watched Tony's eyes slide shut again but he made no move to shut the TV off. Hospitals were noisy places anyway, but the TV seemed to keep the sound to a steady drone and Tony seemed to sleep better with the background noise. Hopefully, he'd still be asleep when Fornell

came by. Gibbs glanced at his watch wishing he had more coffee and then turned towards the door when it opened quietly. Fornell stuck his head in, glanced at Tony and saw that he was asleep and then motioned for Gibbs to come out. Gibbs silently left the room but remained in the doorway in case Tony needed him.

Fornell saw the look on Gibbs face as he stepped out and quickly explained that he'd sent the guards to go get coffee. Gibbs sighed but nodded and Fornell handed him one of the cups in his hand. Gibbs took a sip and closed his eyes for a second. Fornell guessed he'd probably been awake ever since Tony had shown up at his place two nights before. Fornell gestured to the chairs in the hallway but Gibbs shook his head. Tony had been plagued by nightmares every time he slept and Gibbs was determined never to leave him alone.

"How is he?"

"Sleeping finally. Looks like they want to keep him here for a couple of days. They've been talking to Dr. Theurgenson and they decided that they're not happy with his blood work...he's anemic and undernourished plus he's exhausted."

"Is the baby alright?" Fornell could see the worry in Gibbs eyes.

"They think so. They'll be doing an ultrasound this afternoon but they seem pretty optimistic." Gibbs rolled his shoulders a bit and glanced down at his empty cup. He needed some more coffee but he wanted answers more.

"How's the investigation going? Any word on Constantino?"

"No, he's gone to ground but we'll find him Jethro."

"What about Smithson?"

Fornell shook his head. Dr. Alan Smithson was one of Dr. Theurgenson's colleagues. He had been forced to perform the surgery on Tony and had been treating him. He disappeared just before Tony escaped.

"We found him. He's dead, Jethro. He killed himself. Apparently he couldn't live with what he did to Tony. We found his notes and they're filled with remorse. He really believed in what he was doing with Theurgenson, actually seemed like a good guy."

"They why'd he do this? What did they have on him?"

"The man liked to gamble. He was in to Constantino for nearly a quarter of a million dollars. So when he was approached with an offer to wipe his debt clean, he caved but he couldn't deal with it afterwards. Dr. Theurgenson said he was fully qualified to perform the required procedures so he's sure there's no problem there. I understand that he's going to see Tony today?"

Gibbs nodded. He'd spoken with Theurgenson and found he actually liked the man. He was glad he'd be taking over Tony's case.

"Yeah, he'll be here this afternoon along with Ducky." Gibbs phone rang and he grimaced when he saw who it was from but he answered it anyway despite hospital policy.

Fornell stepped away for a bit and looked up and down the hallways. The two guards reappeared and one of them had an extra cup of coffee. Fornell took the cup as they resumed their place at the door. Fornell turned at the loud irritated snap from Gibbs closing his phone. He wondered idly how many cell phones Gibbs went through in a year. He handed Gibbs the new cup.

"Problems?"

"Jenny. Since I won't go to her, she's coming here."

"I thought you were still on leave?"

"I am, but she wants a sitrep so you should probably hang around."

"No problem. I'd planned on visiting her later today anyway. I believe my director will also be calling her to thank her for your team's assistance blah, blah, blah. But come to think of it, I hope he doesn't decide to call before she gets here. It'd put her in a great frame of mind to be thanked before she even has the details." Fornell took a thoughtful sip of his still hot coffee and wondered how in the hell Gibbs and finished his already. "This is going to be fun." He threw out there.

"Ya think?" Gibbs snorted as he turned to go back into the room.

-----

Tony kept his eyes closed as he absentmindedly stroked his belly. He was alone for a bit while Gibbs stepped out to speak with someone. He knew there were guards at his door but he refused to think about that now. He should be making plans for when he got out of the hospital but it was so hard to think. He needed to look at his finances to see how long he and the baby could be on their own before he absolutely had to find work. He knew they were calling in Dr. Thuergenson and he was glad for that, but the end result would be a pile of medical bills that weren't going to be paid off any time soon. He had no insurance since he quit NCIS so maybe a job was going to be necessary sooner than he thought. He wondered if he could apply for assistance as a single mother... His thoughts skittered away like fall leaves and he made no real effort to try and concentrate. He sighed deeply and concentrated instead on the butterfly flutter he felt on his lower left side. That brought a smile to his face despite the tears that were slowly sliding into his hair.

The door opened quietly and he knew that Gibbs had returned. He spoke briefly with someone at the door and then Tony felt a gentle thumb wipe the side of his face.

"Hey, Tony...what are these for?"

Tony opened his eyes to see the man who hadn't left his side since the shootout but he closed them again because it hurt too much to see the concern in those blue eyes. He refused to think about the love he saw there. It was going to be so hard to leave him but he had to. Whatever Gibbs thought he felt for him right now would fade. Tony knew that because it always did.

Gibbs was at a loss as he tried to understand what was going on in Tony's mind. It seemed as though he just couldn't reach Tony right now, that for some reason the understanding that had been between them had eroded during Tony's absence. He was honest enough with himself to admit that it scared him. Right now Tony wasn't speaking with him and had barely said two words to Ducky. Plus he refused to see any other members of the team which was something Abby was taking really badly. But he wouldn't push him. He was just too fragile right now. He knew that Tony's world had been thrown off kilter with his father's words. On a good day Tony hid his insecurities very well although he'd been able to see through to the vulnerable man underneath almost from the start. But his father handing him over to be used by that abusive bastard in a manner that DiNozzo found the most base and disgusting was a betrayal he doubted Tony would get over easily, if at all.

How was it possible that Tony had grown into the fine man that he is today with the complete lack of emotional or moral support that a family would normally provide? The mere fact that Tony maintained his bisexual identity despite his upbringing was a testament to his resiliency and ability to stay true to himself which had left Gibbs in awe on more than one occasion when he'd learned some new tidbit of Tony's past.

He'd spoken at length with Ducky that next day after hearing Tony's story. Gibbs could tell that Ducky was trying to give him information without going into too much detail which he probably felt would be a betrayal towards a friend. *Help in the form of counseling might very well be called for considering his family's horrid betrayal and abuse*, he'd said. Gibbs thought that he might be right.

Gibbs moved his hand to lightly stroke through Tony's hair over and over. It was something that had always relaxed Tony in the past and it seemed to work now as Gibbs noticed the tension leaving the tight shoulders and Tony relaxed again. Gibbs relaxed only when he noted that Tony was once again asleep.

-----  
"Mr. Constantino?" The small man asked as he entered pushing a cart ahead of him. "I'm Dr. Theurgenson."

Tony opened his eyes at the new presence. He didn't need to look to know that Gibbs was still in the room. He could feel him hovering near his right shoulder plus Ducky was waiting by the window.

"Please call me Tony. Where's Dr. Smithson?"

"I'm afraid he, uhh, passed away suddenly. I'm going to see to your care personally, Tony, if that's all right."

Tony looked at him for a moment but nodded. Smithson had praised this man to high heaven even as he apologized for what he was doing. Tony figured that DiNozzo, his ex-father, was probably the one who saw to Dr. Smithson's disposal. He might have figured that without care both Tony and the baby would die saving him the trouble of having them killed. He turned away from Dr. Theurgenson for a moment as a wash of despair rolled over him but then he felt a warm and familiar hand on his shoulder.

Dr. Stan Theurgenson looked at the young man on the bed and noted his pained expression. The withdrawal was not unexpected considering what he'd been through and it bothered Stan deeply that his procedure had been so misused.

"I'm so very sorry that my process was used against you in this manner. I'd intended it to bring joy to couples who wanted children of their own, not this. Tony, I'll do everything in my power to get you through this. I can even help with the adoption process if you find that you can't keep the child..."

"No!" Seemed to explode from both Tony and Gibbs simultaneously and then they looked at one another. Tony was shocked. Could this mean that Gibbs wanted the baby? Tony saw the intense Gibbs look he was accustomed to but was surprised to note the slight blush that crept up the older man's neck. Gibbs refused to look away and something in his eyes said that they would talk later. Tony nodded and even felt a tiny inkling of hope which he promptly squashed. Ever since his father's disclosure he found himself unable to believe that there would ever be a chance for them again. *Yours, Jethro, at least the baby will be, but what about me?* Tony turned back to the doctor.

"Dr. Smithson did what he had to and I understand that. I want this baby now although I can't say that I was in a very receptive frame of mind in the beginning."

*Tony remembered waking up to see a slender older man standing at his bedside. The man looked like a doctor and it wasn't until looked around a bit that he realized that the man was lightly palpating his lower belly and then it hit him. This was the doctor that would change him, make it so that he could get pregnant.*

*"Please don't do this..." Tony begged. The doctor paled and dropped his head. Then he gently laid his hand on Tony's lower abdomen. It was a strangely intimate and yet almost comforting at the same time. Still Tony felt his stomach clench.*

*The doctor took a deep breath. "I'm so sorry but...it's already done. You're already pregnant, Mr. Constantino."*

*Tony couldn't breathe. He looked down and saw the shaved area where the incision was and he began to scream.*

Tony was brought back from his memories by the doctor's voice.

"I can understand that, but we're here now so let's see where we're at, okay?"

Tony snorted at the 'we' bit but nodded. "Okay, Dr. Theurgenson."

"Call me Stan, Tony." He understood the snort. Tony felt all alone and he couldn't blame him, although he did seem to have support from both Mr. Gibbs and Dr. Mallard whom he'd spoken with earlier. He truly hoped that Tony would come to see him in that light as well. "I'm going to be with you every step of the way, alright? So we're going to get to know one another very well." Stan said as he pulled the cart forward.

"Okay, then, Stan," Tony began a bit nervously. He recognized the ultrasound and his concern for the baby came to fore. Again he felt that warm hand on his shoulder and he looked up at Gibbs and then over at Ducky and felt a thousand times better.

Gibbs was glad to hear Tony talking even if it wasn't directly to him. He'd been very worried about Tony's silence correctly identifying the depression and worry in the young man's eyes.

"Do you want me to leave, Tony?" Gibbs asked. He kept his face neutral letting Tony make his own decision.

"No. I'd like you to stay if you don't mind." *God, I wish this baby was yours but it isn't, but please, Jethro, please stay so you can be sure this is what you want to do...*

*"Couldn't get me out of here with a Marine battalion." By your side, Tony. Forever, if you'll let me...*

Tony heard the words and read the sentiment in Gibbs' eyes and felt tears gather in his eyes and he wanted to believe it so damn much and yet...

"And what about me, Tony?" Ducky asked as he moved forward.

"Baby's going to need a grandfather. Are you up for that, Ducky?"

"Absolutely, my dear, dear boy. I'd be most honored." Ducky replied with a warm smile.

"Well, alrighty, then. Let's get this show on the road!" Stan said as he fired up his machine. Things were going to be just fine. He could feel it and it eased the tightness he'd felt in his chest ever since he'd learned of the situation. He pulled out the warmed gel and began the ultrasound.

Later, Stan considered the three men he'd left talking amongst themselves after he'd examined Tony. He hoped the wires in Tony's mouth would come out soon. He wasn't pleased with Tony's weight gain or the anemia and made the appropriate orders for meds and nutrition in Tony's records. *Oh, Alan*, he thought to himself as he recalled Alan Smithson. Neither Tony nor Gibbs had wanted verification of the sex of the child although Tony said that Alan claimed the child to be a boy and that Constantino had crowed that he'd known it all along. Dr. Mallard had merely smiled. Stan lamented the loss of his colleague and friend and regretted that he'd felt so



powerless and without hope that he took his own life. But he did appreciate Alan's final 'fuck you' and he mentally saluted his friend and smiled.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 10 by cernicalo

Chapter 10

"Have you thought of any names for the child, Tony?" Ducky asked. He and Tony were alone for a moment since he'd successfully convinced Jethro to shower and change into the clean clothes he'd brought. He'd also told him to go for a walk and find some coffee. Gibbs been reluctant, of course, but Ducky gently reminded him that they weren't alone. There were still Federal agents in place outside of the door. Gibbs still tried to argue but then Tony got to see Ducky pull rank and Gibbs had acquiesced although grumpily. This, then, was Ducky's opportunity to engage Tony. The ultrasound seemed to have opened a rift within Tony's self-imposed silence and Ducky was determined to get the young man to talk.

Ducky knew the poor lad had always hidden his insecurities behind a robust and rather loud personality. But it truly was only a small portion of what made up this complicated man. His true self was much more vulnerable and Ducky was sure that no one outside of Gibbs was allowed to see that. Oh, he had surmised how truly complex Tony was but it wasn't anything Tony had allowed him to see. It was a picture that Ducky had put together over the last several years. But one of the main facets was Tony's preoccupation with his place in their little family. He'd heard Timothy refer to Tony as an arrogant peacock, but Ducky knew the issue was not merely conceit. Tony's poor and yet deeply-ingrained self-image required that he constantly prove to the world that he was attractive (hence the high-quality clothing, expensive hair styles and reports of sexual escapades), a top NCIS agent (based on his constant reminders to his co-workers to that effect and his belittling of Timothy's educational merits) but mostly, he needed to prove (most notably to himself) that he was wanted and needed by both the team and particularly Jethro. It was his antics to obtain attention regardless of whether or not it was positive that screamed this need within him.

Fortunately Ducky knew that Jethro had understood his senior agent well enough to provide the stable environment Tony needed. In fact Tony had, during the course of his association with Jethro, finally succeeded in shedding many of the self-protective masks he wore.

"No, actually, I didn't have any say in it at the time but you can be sure he won't be Gianni Jr."

"No, of course not, Tony."

"I, uh, really don't know what his name will be. First names aside, I'm not even sure of his last name. I know Jethro told you what DiNozzo said. Hell, probably everyone in both the FBI and NCIS know that by now. But it won't be Constantino or DiNozzo. I'm just not sure about any names right now, first or last."

"Well you do have time, my boy, so it isn't a pressing issue."

"Yeah," Tony responded vaguely so Ducky decided to delve a bit deeper.

"I want to thank you again for allowing me to be present during your ultrasound. I found the experience very moving. And again I thank you for allowing me to be a part of your child's upbringing."

That brought Tony's attention back to Ducky and he gave him a bright smile. "I'm really glad you agreed. It means a lot to me."

Ducky smiled back and lightly patted Tony's hand. "But you must tell me, Tony, if you have any concerns regarding the information Dr. Theurgenson provided regarding the rest of your pregnancy or the actual birth event."

Tony took a deep breath. Stan had given him a lot of information which Dr. Smithson, whether through circumstances or design, hadn't imparted. But it wasn't anything he had to make decisions about. His pregnancy should continue like a normal female pregnancy and would conclude with his possibly having contractions (which still made him shudder to think about) leading to a caesarian section. Stan had explained that it was better to remove his womb later because to do so during birth led to hormonal imbalances that could be dangerous. As an aside he'd added that it also gave him time to think about having more children later which was something that Tony highly doubted he would want.

"No, not really. But I was kind of wondering..." Tony paused to glance at Ducky. His gentle and interested expression allowed him to continue. "Well, I guess I kind of wondered about this procedure when I first heard about it. McGee and I joked about it for a bit but I couldn't really wrap my head around being a man and wanting to get pregnant, you know? And here I wasn't given any choice and, well, I was mad...really furious and horrified. I kind of," Tony looked down at the sheet that had again found its way into his twisting fingers.

"Yes, Tony?"

"Ducky, please swear you'll never tell Gibbs, okay?" At Ducky's nod Tony decided to tell him everything, knowing he could always trust him. "I wanted to kill myself, or at least provoke Gianni into doing it."

"Oh, Tony, my poor boy," Ducky's compassion was so obvious that Tony felt tears come to his eyes.

"But I changed my mind, Ducky, when I saw the ultrasound for the first time. It wasn't until that moment that I realized that there really was a baby growing inside of me and that I had a responsibility to him. That no matter what Gianni did to me, I had to make sure the baby was alright because he's mine and he's part of me, no matter who or what I am, you see?"

"Of course, Tony, your child is completely innocent of how he came to be...and is an entity unto himself, with his own personality and needs apart from those of his parents', biological or otherwise."

"Yes," Tony nodded his understanding of just what it was Ducky was saying. Gratitude flooded through him. "He is. And he's my responsibility so I have to do it right, or at least as right as I can. I'm going to do my best to be a good father...or mother, I guess," Tony blushed slightly and his eyes danced away for a moment before again lighting on Ducky's kindly blue eyes. "Which pretty much brings me to the next thing I need to ask you."

Tony again paused and Ducky watched the color rise up into his cheeks.

"Ducky, you know me...a definite hit with the ladies...well, before Jethro, anyway... But I'm Jethro's senior field agent, McGee looks up to me, Palmer...hell, Palmer wants to be me, well, the me I was before this..." Tony took a deep breath. "I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm a guy, a man with a man's identity. Sure I'm bisexual but that's just because I really like sex and it's all great no matter who you're with...except Gianni, of course, but never mind that. What I'm trying to say is..."

“Tony, my boy,” Ducky interrupted with a slight squeeze to Tony’s hand. “Calm down. You are sounding remarkably like Abigail which I’m sure is exactly opposite of what you are trying to convey.”

“Oh, God, yes, Ducky. I’m a man...”

“Yes, you are, Tony...”

“But what really has me confused is the fact that I like being pregnant. I like the thought that there’s a little Tony or maybe even an Antonia in there. And I really love feeling him move. What does that say about me, Ducky?”

And there it was, all of the vulnerability shining in the hazel green eyes that Ducky had up until then only seen in flashes.

“Oh, my dear boy, it says that you are open enough to understand how remarkable your situation truly is. It says that you are generous enough to accept and nurture the life within you regardless of the source. Tony, you are experiencing the most miraculous of life events from a viewpoint that has, up until now, been denied to men as a whole. You have every right to enjoy this incredible experience as it unfolds and it does not in any way diminish that fact that you are a man, in every sense of the word. I would dare say that it shows a remarkable amount of inner strength to embark on such a journey. The fact that you were forced into it and are still able to find positive reasons for continuing shows a level of strength and resiliency than many men of my acquaintance could only hope to achieve.”

Ducky took a moment to breathe, something he rarely needed being well accustomed to long-winded monologues. But this was such an emotionally charged discussion he felt the need to re-group a bit.

“Ducky, thanks...I really needed that.”

“Oh, you’re quite welcome, my boy, but I also truly feel the need to tell you just how much I admire you. In fact, I must admit to a bit of envy. If this procedure had been available when I was younger, perhaps my mother would have had the grandchildren she still insists I should be providing even now...”

And for the first time in quite awhile Tony actually laughed. It wasn’t a deep, hard laugh but it certainly was enough to lighten the pain in his beautiful eyes. And to Ducky’s great relief, Jethro took that moment to walk in giving him the opportunity to see the lightened countenance of the man he so loved. Ducky felt it was, all in all, a job well done.

-----

Gibbs had just finished getting a new cup of coffee. He felt better than he had in a while and mentally thanked Ducky for his thoughtfulness in providing clean clothing. He was just about to enter the elevator when his cell phone rang. He felt a momentary dread because he knew who was calling and his gut proved to be right yet again.

“Jethro, what’s your location?”

“Lobby, getting some coffee.”

“I’ll be there in two. No cream, please.”

“Yeah,” Gibbs replied before ending the connection and turning to order another cup.

A short while later Jenny felt the need to pull Gibbs out of the lobby and into the parking lot. Their

heated discussion was beginning to cause concern among the pink ladies working the information desk.

“Jethro, you should have kept me in the loop. Instead I’m getting phone calls from the Assistant Director of the FBI asking about Tony and his involvement with his Family. They’re the ones telling me that my male ex-agent is now pregnant with a known mobster’s child from whom he ran away and that you are harboring him. They even tell me that you’re the one who called them in with tips about possible deals. At what point did you decide I didn’t need to know!”

“Jenny, I never made a conscious decision not to inform you. The simple fact is that things were moving too fast. By the time I got key players involved Tony had run again and I needed to find him. We were caught by Constantino’s men almost immediately after my locating Tony.”

“Well, it was fortunate that you were wearing a locator, then, wasn’t it? Or I might have lost another agent...oh wait, I forgot about McGee and Ziva who were also in the field looking for Tony.”

“I’m not going to apologize for using my assets as necessary.”

“Of course. You never apologize, but you totally disregard the fact that they’re MY assets.”

Jenny turned away for a moment. She needed to calm down just a bit because there was no way that she was going to let Gibbs know that this was far more than his failure to keep her in the loop or his misuse of her agents. There was no way she wanted him to know that her anger stemmed from the fact that everything that had happened was pointing to there being a more intimate relationship between Gibbs and DiNozzo than she was aware of, that Gibbs had done everything in his power to help a man who’d walked away nearly a year ago and who was no longer a part of their agency. Gibbs was loyal, she’d give him that, but it galled her that his loyalty seemed to be stronger towards DiNozzo than to her.

“Ah, here you are.”

Jenny turned to see Gibbs smirking at Agent Fornell as he approached.

“I heard that there was a commotion in the lobby and I made a quick assumption that Gibbs was somehow involved so I came right down. It’s good to see you again Director Shepherd.” He ignored the loud snort coming from Gibbs’ direction.

“Agent Fornell. I was told by your Assistant Director that you’ve been involved in this...situation... very nearly from the beginning.”

“Yes, Director, I was and I have to apologize for not notifying you of our request for assistance sooner. I’m afraid things snowballed rather quickly and I had to scramble to keep even my superiors aware of what was happening.”

“Your request for assistance?” Jenny eyed him skeptically and glanced at Jethro. To his credit Jethro kept his face completely neutral.

“Yes, Ma’am. When Agent Gibbs became aware of the potential situation he called me immediately knowing it fell within our jurisdiction. Since he had Tony Constantino sequestered I asked that he keep an eye on him until I could provide FBI coverage. Unfortunately, Tony chose that moment to depart the secure location with Agent Gibbs following. Both he and Agent Gibbs were subsequently captured by Gianni Constantino, Tony’s husband and an up and coming face in the mob world. We were forced to move up our plan to compensate. Fortunately, it worked out in that we were able to obtain enough evidence to charge Michael DiNozzo Sr. with illegal gun smuggling as well as attempted murder of both a civilian and a Federal Agent. Michael DiNozzo

Jr. was killed at the scene, murdered by Gianni Constantino who, very unfortunately, escaped during the shootout. At this time we still have Tony in protective custody pending apprehension of his husband."

God, it pissed her off when Jethro and Fornell teamed up together, unless it benefited her, of course. But now, because of his well-thought out brief, there wasn't much she could do about it except to save face gracefully.

"Thank you, Agent Fornell, for the brief. Jethro, I expect to see a full report detailing my agency's involvement by tomorrow." And with a sharp look at both agents, Jenny Shepherd turned on her heel and walked to her car.

Both agents watched her leave and then Tobias turned to Jethro.

"A fifth of bourbon...good bourbon. Not that rot-gut you drink."

Jethro just smiled and then turned to go back to Tony's room. He was still pissed off but it melted away in a heartbeat when he saw Tony's face as he walked into the room and he felt a bit of hope that things would be okay.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 11 - 15 by cernicalo

## Chapter 11

Tony released the seat belt and un-tucked it from under his belly as Jethro spoke briefly with the FBI agents watching his home before he made his way around the car to Tony's side. He smiled at him when he opened the door and put out his hands to help Tony get out. Tony wondered why he didn't feel any offense at the over-solicitous behavior. Not only was it out of character for Gibbs, it was out of character for him to accept it. He normally didn't want anyone's help unless he could play with his coworkers and get some fun out of it. But he couldn't do that with Gibbs. This was too real and he couldn't find it in him to make light of it in any way. Gibbs hand felt warm and strong on his lower back as Gibbs walked him to the door. He was mildly surprised that Gibbs had to unlock it. He never locked his door. And then he remembered. Jethro had started soon after Tony had begun to move his stuff in last year.

Gibbs noted the surprised look on Tony's face and smiled.

"All your stuff is still here, Tony. Didn't want anyone to just walk in and take it."

Jethro helped him into the house and settled him on the couch.

"Do you have the rest of your stuff somewhere I can get to it and bring it here?"

Tony looked at him with a slightly bemused expression. It seems Jethro had made up his mind about how things were going to be. He'd already said that he along with several FBI agents would be Tony's guard until Constantino was caught but his words now seemed to imply much longer ranged plans for Tony himself. *I take care of what's mine...* But who, specifically, had he been talking about?

"The important stuff is already here," Tony said as he settled further into the couch.

Gibbs gave a satisfied nod. "I'm making coffee and lunch. I'll bring your meds with it." Gibbs pulled the afghan off the back of the couch and tucked it around Tony. No one had been in the house since Tony had taken off and they'd been caught by Constantino so it had a slight chill to it. He handed Tony the remote and then moved to the thermostat putting the temperature up a bit

to combat the chilly late October weather. It seemed like the house had been cold a long time. It had been cold and rainy that day in April when Tony had left and Gibbs doubted he'd felt warm since then.

Tony smiled and pulled the afghan up higher on his shoulders and started flipping through channels. The one still ached a bit but it was getting better. *My meds*, Tony laughed to himself. It was just pre-natal vitamins and iron as well as some nutritional supplements but as far as Gibbs was concerned it was his medication and he would make sure Tony took it as required. He yawned and luxuriated in his ability to open his mouth wide. While he'd been hospitalized they'd examined his jaw and decided that the wires could come off. It had been over two months since Gianni had taken that seven iron to his face. Tony smiled bitterly. He'd joined Gibbs in the 'attacked by spouse with a golf club' club but he knew for a fact that Gibbs hadn't been chained nor did he have anyone holding him down while he was beaten. He pushed those thoughts away and yawned again for good measure just to enjoy the experience. He still needed to eat soft foods but that he could deal with easily.

Although he'd missed his pizza and Chinese food, the first thing he'd asked for had been a tooth brush. He ran his tongue over the outside of his teeth and smirked. He didn't think he'd ever get tired of doing that. When they were together before Jethro used to say that Tony had a definite oral fixation, usually after waking up to find Tony attached to his cock like a limpet. Tony flicked through another couple of channels but never saw what was on the screen. Instead he was picturing Jethro's beautiful cock shiny wet from his saliva. He remembered the bittersweet taste and he ached to taste him again but doubted he'd ever have the chance. Jethro was with him until Gianni could be caught and maybe he'd still be with him until the baby was born. Tony was sure Jethro would actually maintain a steady presence in the baby's life if he let him. Jethro said that he takes care of what was his but Tony's own insecurities had twisted that to mean that Jethro was interested only in the welfare of the baby. He couldn't possibly want Tony himself. Not after what Gianni had done to him.

Losing interest in the TV Tony lay back with his eyes closed. It was only a few moments later that Jethro returned with a tray.

"Nothing good on TV?" Jethro asked as he set the tray down.

Tony saw a bowl of chicken soup that looked pretty good, maybe even homemade. There were also crackers and there was some tea. Next to the tea was a glass of juice he knew contained the supplements he'd been given. He smiled faintly but shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"I could have moved to the table..."

"Nah, I can cut you some slack on your first day out of the hospital. Tomorrow you pull your weight."

Tony looked down and then back at Jethro with a raised eyebrow. "Not sure I can..."

Jethro snorted. "You'd be surprised, DiNozzo," he said as he returned to the kitchen for his own lunch not fully aware of the frown he left behind him.

Tony watched him leave. That had been the first time anyone had called him by that name since he'd left. The sound of it sent a coil of rage rushing through him that left him feeling slightly ill. He took a deep breath to calm himself and schooled his face. He was going to have to deal with the issue later. Just how he wasn't sure, but he swore to himself that he'd never answer to DiNozzo again.

Gibbs returned with his lunch and sat down with Tony to eat. Tony was quiet and he attributed it at first to Tony's ability to eat real food but after a moment he realized that there was more to it.

"What?" he asked.

"Not sure I'm ready to face the others after all..."

"I can call...tell them later if you want. It's up to you."

The rest of the team, and especially Abby, had asked to visit while Tony had been in the hospital but at the time he didn't want to see anyone. He'd told them he'd see them when he was out of the hospital. Gibbs had explained what had happened at Tony's request. He thought back to that day. To say they were shocked was putting it mildly but they reiterated that they still wanted to visit if Tony would let them. He trusted his team and knew they cared about Tony. He was sure they wouldn't think less of him for what had happened so the issue was more with Tony.

"You've got no reason to be ashamed, Tony."

Tony barked out a laugh.

"Look at me, Gibbs! I'm pregnant, for Gods' sake! I used to be your Senior Field Agent, you told me that I wouldn't have been if I hadn't earned it. But what kind of Senior Field Agent...no, what kind of *man* gets himself into a situation like this?"

"The kind of man who gives himself up to an unknown situation because he thought his partner was in danger. What they did to you was not your fault so quit taking the blame."

"But I should have tried to get away sooner, maybe stop this..."

Gibbs eyes narrowed and Tony was pinned by their intensity. He suddenly knew firsthand what it felt like to be on the other side of an interrogation table from Gibbs.

"You saying you ignored opportunities to escape?"

"No! But maybe..."

"Damn it! There's no maybe about it. It may have taken awhile but when the opportunity came you took it and you got away." Gibbs moved to sit next to Tony on the couch, his eyes never leaving Tony's for an instant. "And in the process you helped take down DiNozzo's organization. You got Cosntantino on the 10 Most Wanted List."

"Not me, Jethro. I'm a civilian. You were the one wearing the wire."

"Fact is, Tony, we did it together. Like always."

Tony stopped and looked down. Together...like always. God, he wanted to believe that. He took a deep breath. "What was their reaction when you told them?"

"I think you should see that for yourself."

"Right, their reaction to the reality is much more telling..."

"Do you trust them with your six?"

"I..."

"Stop. Don't think about it...do you trust them to watch your back?"

"Yes."

"Then trust them with this and with us. Trust me."

And again Gibbs pinned him with those intense blue eyes that made his heart flip. Tony knew that he had to let go of his own insecurities. He had to trust Jethro, which wasn't hard. He'd always trusted him. But this was a lot. Trust the team not to turn their backs on him, or as Gibbs was saying, on *them*. But in the end he *did* trust Jethro.

"Okay," he whispered and was rewarded by the smile that had always melted his heart. Then he felt Gibbs' hand slip through his hair to clasp his nape warmly and he felt those lips he'd missed brush lightly across his own. "Gibbs?"

"Jethro. Told you that."

Gibbs had learned early on in his relationship with Tony that sometimes he needed to reaffirm what Tony meant to him and after everything he'd been through Gibbs figured he'd need to be doing that a *lot*. It was so hard for Tony to believe that anyone could care for him, that no matter what, Gibbs' feelings weren't going to suddenly change. Gibbs would just have to make him believe.

"Yeah."

"Also told you that I protect what's mine."

Tony looked down with suddenly tear-filled eyes and stroked his belly. "The baby, right?"

Gibbs wanted to kill the bastards that had so damaged Tony's psyche. He looked down and placed his hand over Tony's. "Meant you. The baby's a bonus."

Tony closed his eyes tightly and felt the tears run freely down his cheeks.

"Both of us? A bonus, not...freaks?"

"God, no, Tony! You're beautiful. This," Jethro held Tony's hand and together they stroked Tony's belly. "This is beautiful."

Tony looked into the intense blue eyes, heard the declaration that was as effective as any head slap, and he did believe. He nodded, his throat too tight to speak as he lifted Jethro's hand and placed it over his heart.

"Yours," he croaked and then replaced Jethro's hand on his belly. "Yours," he said again and he saw Jethro's wet eyes. Gibbs never cried...

Gibbs, his own throat tight, brought his arms around Tony and pulled him close.

"Mine," he confirmed as his own tears dripped into Tony's hair.

## Chapter 12

Later Tony sat quietly but started when he heard a car door slam. They were here. He took a deep breath. Yes, he trusted Jethro but he was still so damned nervous. God, he should have told Jethro to bring them in one at a time... No, prolonging it like that would have killed him. *Trust Jethro, trust Jethro...* Should he stand up? No, too obvious. He panicked for a moment and considered grabbing the afghan to throw over his lap but then he'd look like an old man and he envisioned one of the old hearing horn things you always see in the cartoons and he mentally slapped his own head. *The team's got your six, the team's got your six...* He kept up the litany while subconsciously registering the approaching footsteps. He was startled by the warm hand on his shoulder and a whisper of warm breath near his ear.



"It'll be fine, sweetheart," which was followed by a kiss to his temple.

And just like that Tony felt his apprehension begin to melt away. A split second later he heard Abby calling his name over and over and he was engulfed in her embrace and God it felt good. He felt tears stinging his eyes but he quickly blinked them away and turned to see McGoofy with the appropriate grin on his face and a shy but smiling Ziva behind him. Ducky brought up the rear. *In case I need another sedative*, he told himself.

"Tony!" Abby yanked his attention back with a wallop on his good left arm. Gibbs must have told her about his right and then she was in his arms giving him the hug of his life.

"Tony I missed you! Gibbs told us why you left but you should have known that we love you and miss you and it doesn't matter what anyone did to you 'cos you're still you and you're having a baby and ooh! Can I feel your tummy? Do you feel the baby moving? You're going to be a great Dad, you know! You should have at least called...!" she wailed but was finally silenced when Tony cupped her face with one hand and took her other and placed it on his belly and said "shhh".

And she did. Then her eyes widened and her mouth opened into a silent *ooooh* as she felt a little flutter kick against her palm. Her eyes filled with tears and she looked at Tony and saw the amusement and apprehension in equal measures in his hazel green eyes and she blinked them away.

"Is it really okay, Tony? Gibbs said you're keeping the baby but is it really okay?"

Abby's eyes searched his and Tony saw all the love and fear and hope bound together in her eyes and he smiled.

"It's really okay, Abs, really more than okay. It wasn't at first, but it is now...with Gibbs..."

And she smiled back at him as she again brought her arms around him and hugged him.

"And I get to be an Auntie! Auntie Abs! Do you know if it's a boy or a girl? A boy that looks like you would be so cool or better yet, a girl with your eyes. I'm not even gonna talk about that sperm donor, not that I don't know what he looks like 'cos I do but there's no way if there's anything fair in this world that the baby will look anything like him..."

A hand suddenly wrapped around Abby's head to clamp over her mouth.

"Enough," Gibbs said gently and Abby froze and really looked at Tony and suddenly saw the slightly pale cast to his skin. Her eyes filled again and she pulled away from Gibbs to curl up into Tony's arms.

"I'm so sorry, Tony, my mouth got loose again..." she said in a pained whisper.

"Abby, little sis, its okay. It's a lot to take in but everything is going to be fine." Tony smiled, his composure returning as he slipped back into his role as big brother to Abby. He really had missed her.

Ziva took that moment to slip in on Tony's other side.

"I am happy to see you are looking well, Tony," Ziva said as Abby moved over to hug Gibbs. "I am sorry I was not allowed to accompany Agent Fornell to retrieve you. I would have enjoyed killing your father."

Tony chuckled seeing the honesty in her eyes after her straightforward statement. "I wish you could have. It seems he always finds some way to land on his feet. His lawyers are no doubt working to get him released even now," he finished bitterly.

"I do not think so, Tony. Agent Fornell seemed far too happy when he was last at NCIS."

Ziva fell silent and Tony could see her fascination as well as her wariness. He wondered how her Moussad training had addressed this issue because, generally speaking, she would have been much more likely to have found herself in this position than he would have. When things settled down a bit he just might have to ask her.

"Your condition is fascinating. I would be interested in discussing it sometime," she said as she sat primly next to him on the couch. "I know of many men for whom this would be a viable torture technique," Ziva said matter-of-factly. She heard the shocked repetitions of her name but continued on. "But not for you, obviously. You are made of much stronger things, yes?"

And Tony laughed at Ziva's awkward compliment. "Stuff, Ziva, stronger stuff. And thank you. I guess I am more like the willow than the oak, grasshopper."

"I do not understand the reference to an insect."

"Well later on while you're visiting your niece or nephew we'll have a long talk about Kwai Chang Caine and you can critique his technique..."

"Who?"

"A television character, Ziva," Tim broke in with a grin.

"I am so far behind on learning about Tony's movie references. I will never understand the television ones as well," she commented with complete exasperation causing both men to laugh.

"Would anyone care for something to drink?" Ducky called out from the kitchen.

"Yes, I would," Ziva called. "I will help." And she got up leaving McGee and Tony in a slightly awkward silence.

Tim glanced over at Abby to see her talking quietly with Gibbs.

"Have a seat, McNervous. The doctor said it wasn't contagious."

Tim rolled his eyes and sat down next to Tony. He wasn't quite sure what to say and his mind kept jumping back to that time during the Loren case when they'd had several discussions about male pregnancy and marriage.

Tony had been his usual joking self saying that he'd only ever have Probie's baby but only if McGee made an honest man of him. Tim had bitten his tongue to avoid asking about Gibbs. He kind of knew that Tony and Gibbs had something special going on but unless they came out and said something, he wasn't going to be the first to broach the subject. But he did care about Tony, their friendship growing despite the sometimes nerve-wracking relationship they had at the office. To find out that something like this had happened to him against his will almost made him sick. That Tony was dealing with it in what appeared to be a really positive manner impressed the hell out of him. He wasn't sure he'd be able to deal with anything even remotely this extreme without losing it completely. But then, Tony had always had a hidden well of strength that seemed to get him intact out of situations that made Tim doubt his own ability to ever be a good field agent.

"You're incredible, Tony," Tim said not realizing at first that he'd spoken aloud.

"What?" Tony asked. It wasn't what he was expecting Tim to say and it took him completely by surprise.

Tim turned and really looked at Tony. "I said you're incredible, Tony," he repeated with

conviction. "You constantly amaze me with your ability to deal with whatever life throws at you. I really admire you, Tony. And you look really *good*..."

Tim would never have thought that a pregnant man would look anything but odd, but Tony carried it well. Heck, Tim thought to himself almost enviously, when *doesn't* Tony look good?

Tony, blushing and uncomfortable with the praise McGee was heaping on him, resorted to his usual coping methods and turned it back around.

"Are you coming on to me, Probie?"

"He better not be..." growled Gibbs from the corner and Abby giggled.

McGee sent Gibbs a frightened look and shook his head wordlessly. "Ah, ah..." he stumbled. Oh, he was in such deep shit...

"...because my guy is off limits." And with that one statement Gibbs outed them to the entire team.

"Your guy, Gibbs?" Tony questioned, surprised at Gibbs' sudden declaration and secretly grateful he hadn't said 'my boy' the way he used to. That would have been giving away a bit too much information. Peripherally he saw Abby bouncing up and down clapping her hands.

"Yup, gotta problem with that?" Gibbs asked as his eyes drilled into Tony.

"Nope, never did, never will." And Tony gave him a brilliant smile that encompassed everyone in the room.

"Well, it's about time," Ducky said from near the kitchen and both Tony and Gibbs turned to see Ducky and Ziva entering the room sporting equally large smiles. It seemed they had the support of the entire team, no not team...*family*. A real family. Tony felt tears threatening and he quickly blinked them back.

"Hey, McUncle, give me your hand," Tony said as he grabbed Tim's hand to place on his belly.

"Nononono, th-that's okay, I-I'll pass..." Tim stammered as he sent panicked looks in Gibbs' direction.

But Tony wouldn't let go and forced Tim to feel the movement. He was rewarded by Tim's already wide eyes getting even wider along with his mouth. Tony couldn't help it. He laughed long and hard bringing everyone along with him and he knew that everything really was alright.

They ended up ordering pizza although Gibbs limited Tony to only one slice of his favorite sausage, pepperoni and extra cheese and then he insisted that Tony eat at least two slices of veggie pizza. Tony pouted and Gibbs leaned in and gave him a quick peck on the cheek guaranteeing his acquiescence. If either of them noticed the sudden silence after that they gave no indication of it although Gibbs did look around only to note the bright smiles of everyone else in the room.

"What?" he asked receiving only laughter in return.

Abby was fidgeting which wasn't unusual for her but then a decision seemed to be made and she sat up and looked at Tony. "You can come back now, can't you? Director Shepherd has to know that you didn't resign on your own. You were forced!"

Tony looked down. Could he come back? God knows he needed the job. Would Jenny let him work for Gibbs again? He turned to look at Gibbs.

Gibbs saw the flash of hope in Tony's eyes. Maybe he could talk to Jenny.

"You'd have to be cleared of this mess with DiNozzo and Constantino and then there'll be psych evals you'll have to pass. No way you'd be cleared for field duty until you pass a physical but if this is what you want, I can talk to Jenny."

Tony nodded. It would be awhile but if there was a chance he could get back in he'd make damn sure he passed all of the tests. With a smile he looked at Gibbs and nodded.

"Yeah, Boss. This is what I want."

"Alright." Gibbs nodded and smiled.

-----

"He resigned under duress!" Gibbs spat out.

"That has yet to be proven and until it is I can't reinstate him." Jenny said standing behind her desk with her arms crossed.

"Can't or won't?"

"Are you implying that I have a personal reason for not bringing him back in?"

"I'm not implying anything...I'm saying it! You're pissed at me because I didn't tell you what was happening."

Jenny uncrossed her arms and leaned forward on her desk, her eyes hard and her lips thinned in anger.

"I am the director of this agency, Jethro. Of course I'm angry about being left out of the loop despite what Fornell said."

Gibbs blew out an exasperated breath. Looks like he needed to massage that situation a little bit more.

"Okay, I was wrong to not make the time to call you. But Tony didn't have anything to do with it. Don't take the fact that you're pissed at me out on DiNozzo."

"Don't you mean Constantino?"

"That's going to change. You know that."

"Which brings me back to my original point. I can't hire him back until he's been cleared of any charges."

"So you're saying he can't come back until after the trial?"

Jenny considered screaming yes but she knew that wouldn't get her anywhere.

"No, once the FBI has cleared him I will reinstate him with some conditions."

Gibbs hackles rose but he remained silent. Jenny pictured a snake just before it strikes.

"He can come back on someone else's team."

"What! Why?"

"Do you need me to spell it out, Jethro? Your actions throughout this situation have screamed of

your personal involvement with Tony beyond that of a team leader and supervisor. And now he's pregnant and living in your home."

"He's under Federal protection and he just got out of the hospital. Should I have dumped him off at some hotel alone?"

"He's under FBI protection but if he needed assistance there was always McGee and any number of other agents who might have volunteered. We both know how *popular* Tony is."

Gibbs eyes narrowed as he gauged just what her real meaning was.

"So that's the real reason, isn't it? Hell, Jenny, you're pissed that Tony is such an important part of my life and you aren't."

Jenny's eyes flashed but she wasn't going to rise to the bait.

"Get over yourself, Jethro. What happened in France was a long time ago. It's forgotten and I've moved on...just as you obviously have. Forming a public relationship with Tony isn't against regulations but forming one with your subordinate is. So if Tony comes back, he will not be working on your team."

Gibbs nodded. It hadn't been unexpected and Tony would be disappointed but at least he'd be at work where Gibbs could keep an eye on him. And hell, it wasn't as though Tony would be going out in the field any time soon...not with the baby.

"What else is involved in your 'if'?"

"First, he'll need a full psychological evaluation. He's been through a great deal of trauma. I'm sure you won't argue that point. Assuming he passes that he can come back as long as he's physically fit enough to pull desk duty. After the baby is born he'll need to pass the physical and re-qualify on the range."

"Fine."

"Fine. So when do you plan on returning to work?" Jenny knew she couldn't deny him taking more leave even if she desperately wanted to. The fact was that she'd have to justify her denial in writing and there simply weren't any cases ongoing at this time.

"When Tony passes his psych eval." Gibbs stated just before turning and leaving the office.

Once he left Jenny sat back down behind her desk and contemplated her next action. Regardless of whether or not Tony passed the eval he was back in Jethro's life, only now instead of Jethro just shacking up with Tony there'd be a child. There was no way Jethro would walk away from his second chance at having a family. So, the question was: what would make Tony walk away from Jethro?

Chapter 13 Here there be sex.

Jethro approached his home and noted the presence of the FBI personnel and nodded to himself. He hadn't wanted to leave Tony at home alone but he needed to talk to Jenny and he didn't want to do it over the phone.

He spoke briefly with the agent at the door and was told Tony was lying down upstairs. He jogged up but slowed down as he approached the master bedroom. He really didn't care that the agents knew Tony was staying in his room but he'd had to convince Tony of that fact. Quietly he approached and noted with approval that Tony seemed to be asleep. He stayed watching for a

moment but then saw that Tony seemed to be waking. Gibbs was standing by the bed and looking down when Tony finally opened his eyes.

"Didn't mean to wake you. Sleep alright?"

Tony smiled up at Jethro.

"You didn't and yes, I slept good." He rolled over onto his back and then patted the bed beside him. "How'd it go at the office?"

Jethro eased himself onto the bed and Tony immediately curled into his side. Gibbs took a deep breath of the soft hair letting Tony's scent engulf and soothe him. It seemed he was always agitated whenever he spoke with Jenny nowadays. It didn't used to be that way and he hoped it would ease soon. He didn't need the hassle.

"Looks like you can't get out of the psych evals. But once you're done you can go on desk duty until after the baby's born. Field duty once you pass the physical and re-qualify."

Tony gave him a brief hug. "Thanks. Otherwise I'll go crazy being here alone when you go back to work..." Tony paused as he sensed something more. "What else did she say? It was something you didn't like..."

Gibbs snorted and tightened his arm around Tony's shoulder in a quick squeeze.

"The fraternization policy."

"Shit. Does that mean I'm kicked off your team?" A hole seemed to open up under Tony. Not work with Gibbs? He could do it...had done it, but he sure as hell didn't want to.

"Not kicked off, Tony. Don't think that way," Gibbs said as he stroked a finger down Tony's cheek and then he sighed. "Cold cases until after the baby and then on another team. Maybe even your own team. That'll be my recommendation."

"Jethro..." Tony began but couldn't get passed the lump in his throat. Somehow, despite how Gibbs said he felt about him personally, he'd had the idea that he'd lost his respect as an agent. Guess not. But still...

"Damn it! Maybe we shouldn't have told anyone...kept it quiet..."

"No. It was right to tell the team, Tony, and I know they haven't said anything. I'm not sure how she found out so soon but it doesn't matter. I'm not hiding you or what we have. Not bringing a kid into the world who'll think I'm ashamed of him."

Gibbs again stroked Tony's cheek and then brought his hand up to bury it in Tony's hair. He felt Tony tremble slightly against him and he knew he needed a moment. He stroked the silky strands for a bit and then cupped Tony's cheek bringing his face up. Gibbs gently placed his lips over Tony's in a gentle kiss.

"Okay?"

Tony smiled and nodded. "Okay," before he claimed Gibbs' mouth this time.

It didn't take long for the kisses to become heated, for tongues to dance and taste and for hands to roam, stroking and pressing. Tony moaned into Gibbs' mouth as he pushed his hard cock into the firm hand at his groin. God, he wanted Jethro, needed to have him and all they'd done up till now was kiss. But had been so long since Jethro had claimed him, been so long since he'd wanted any intimacy with anyone at all.

He wasn't surprised when Jethro pulled back to ask if he was sure. He smiled and continued kissing and licking his way across Gibbs' jaw.

"Yes. I'm sure. I want you...please." He whispered into Gibbs' ear and then sucked Gibbs' earlobe into his mouth.

Gibbs groaned and then pushed Tony back onto the bed. In a heartbeat he had his clothes off and then he was back, kissing and stroking as he pulled Tony's clothes away. He paused for a moment once he had Tony naked in front of him. Tony blushed at the intense scrutiny and almost brought his hands up over his stomach, his chest.

"Easy, baby...no, Tony. You are so beautiful."

Gibbs kept whispering soft endearments as he kissed Tony's chest, first sucking one nipple into his mouth and then the other. Tony had always had sensitive nipples but with the pregnancy they were more so. He licked and sucked as gently as possible, nipping lightly when Tony gave him a moaned yess!

Tony arched into him and wondered at this new Gibbs. They'd been lovers before and it had been fantastic. Sure they kissed and touched, but most of the time it had been intense, driven always by passion but sometimes by anger and hurt when the job became too much. It had also been lusty and joyful. Yes, he'd definitely say they made love to one another but this was different, almost worshipful and tender in a way he was unaccustomed to and Tony wasn't sure how he felt about that. Was it just because he was pregnant? Was he now feminine in Gibbs' eyes? Or was it a kink for Gibbs? He looked into the deep blue eyes and saw love, a healthy dose of lust and maybe just a little bit of worry. Tony knew then that Gibbs was afraid to hurt him, maybe afraid that he'd remind Tony of Gianni which, as far as Tony was concerned, simply couldn't happen.

"You won't hurt me, Jethro. But I need to feel you love me...please."

Gibbs nodded and then reached into the nightstand. This was Tony and despite being pregnant, he was still a man with a man's need which showed in his straining muscles and the hard cock that was painting the underside of his belly with pre-come. In a few moments he had his fingers coated and was busy stretching Tony. God, how he'd missed the tight heat of Tony's ass. He added another finger as he stroked and pulled at Tony's cock.

"Gonna fill you up, boy...been missing you so long."

"God, Jethro, yes." Tony moaned as he arched into the hand stroking him and then pushed into the hand impaling him. "Come on, I need you..."

"Shh, my sweet boy...easy..."

Gibbs rolled on the condom and positioned himself. Tony lifted his legs and wrapped them around Gibbs glad that he could still do that comfortably. Later Jethro would have to fuck him from behind and the mental picture made him groan again. He loved it when Jethro covered him.

Gibbs pushed his way in savoring each millimeter of heat as it closed around his cock and he heard those soft little moans Tony made as he stretched around Gibbs. In a moment he was fully sheathed and he stilled, watching Tony's face and relishing every little twitch as he adjusted to the hard length inside of him. Beautiful...so beautiful...

Tony sighed and nodded giving Jethro a little squeeze to prompt his movement.

"God, no, baby...won't last if you do that again..."

"Come on, then and fuck me..."

"Yeah," Jethro groaned as he began pumping in and out slowly at first but then faster at Tony's insistence. He wanted to lean down to kiss Tony so bad but couldn't because the baby bump got in the way and he smiled. *Our baby...*

Soon, too soon, he felt it building and his balls drew impossibly tight. He grabbed Tony's cock and pumped it harder, rubbing the head just the way he knew Tony liked it and felt that squeeze again. It was too much and it all came rushing forward at once and the world exploded.

A few moments later Gibbs became aware of leaning over on one arm, his other wrapped around Tony's thigh. Tony's legs had dropped and his feet rested on the bed on either side of Gibbs. He looked at Tony who seemed to be unconscious.

"Baby?" He asked in an uncharacteristic moment of panic but then relaxed when Tony smiled. He eased himself over to lie next to Tony and grabbed his undershirt to wipe them both down and then he pulled Tony into his arms.

"So...pregnant bellies a thing for you, Jethro?" Tony asked, his eyes opening to green slits.

"Only when I'm in love with the person who has one," Gibbs answered and then froze when Tony's eyes popped completely open.

"You love me?" he squeaked and Gibbs suffered a second bout of fear but he forced it down. He'd set the course and now he had to see it through.

"Yeah...should've said it before now. Tony, I've loved you for a long time."

"Since I've been back..."

"No, Tony. Since before you left. You worked your way under my skin years ago but I was too damned stubborn to admit it to myself. It wasn't until you came back and I knew that nothing had changed for me. I realized I'd never said the words...so I'm saying them."

Tony leaned back and pulled one hand up to touch Gibbs' cheek. "And I'm saying them, too. I love you, Jethro."

And Gibbs gave him one of those brilliant smiles that made his heart skip a beat just before he kissed him and then he settled in to snuggle which was one of Tony's favorite things to do. Tony sighed, happy and full of hope for the first time since that day he'd left. It couldn't get any better.

After cuddling for awhile Tony realized he was hungry. His gurgling stomach confirmed it but he didn't necessarily want to go downstairs. He wasn't a coward, but the agents watching him gave him the creeps. It seemed that they were constantly staring at him. He'd had too much of being looked at with disapproval in his life to not know when it was happening and he really didn't need the aggravation.

Gibbs heard Tony's stomach and had gotten up to get a wet towel for them both. He got dressed but noted Tony's hesitation and wondered at the cause.

"Everything alright?" he asked.

Tony looked over at him and smiled. He had Gibbs with him. Who cares what anyone else thought about him? So he nodded and slipped on his shoes and they went downstairs.

## Chapter 14

Tony fidgeted slightly as his therapist reviewed some notes. He'd been coming to the sessions



three times a week to begin with and had recently dropped his visits to two.

"I think you've done remarkably well so far, Tony."

"So is there a chance you'll clear me sometime soon?" Tony asked Dr. Garcia. It still tickled Tony that the new NCIS psychiatrist was named Gerry Garcia and Tony refused to allow for the slight difference in spelling. He'd even called him Cherry on a couple of occasions.

"There are still a few issues that I think we need to discuss before we can talk about clearing you. I'm not quite sure that you are prepared for the various reactions your pregnancy will have on your co-workers."

"We've already told my co-workers...they're all fine with it."

"I was thinking more of your co-workers at large...the other agents and personnel at NCIS."

Tony was quiet for a moment. He hadn't really thought about how his pregnancy would go over with the rest of NCIS. Even if they didn't approve it wouldn't make that much difference, would it? He could deal with the looks like the FBI agents had given him. After all, he had Jethro and the rest of his family beside him. He was sure he could handle it.

Gerry watched him consider his words. Tony had self-image issues which he compensated for by taking extra care with his wardrobe and ensuring he remained at the top of his game in his profession. Gerry knew that Tony would often go into work at night and he suspected it was due both to the nightmares he'd always suffered from as well as to appear ahead of his teammates at work. There was nothing wrong with any of that, but it did make Gerry think that Tony will have more problems that he suspects with negative reactions to his pregnancy.

"I don't think it will be that bad, Gerry. I know that most people don't have any experience with people like me but they're going to have to get used to it, right? More and more men are choosing to do this...there's even more clinics opening up. I'm sure it'll be fine," he finished on a bright note.

Gerry nodded. "Okay, but you have to promise me that if things start to get tough you'll call, right?"

"Right. So what's the other issue?"

"The second one is one that still has you very conflicted."

"Yeah, my name." Tony responded glumly. He hadn't come to any consensus knowing only that there was no way he'd go back to DiNozzo. Michael Sr. wasn't his father. Michael Jr. was dead. He had very few fond memories of his mother so he really didn't want Paddington although his Uncle Clive hadn't been too bad...he did have some good memories of that one summer in England. But it all seemed so alien and none of the names were ones he was interested in passing on to his child.

"I haven't made any decisions, yet."

"Why not go with something completely different? You can change any part or even your entire name. Are you letting this decision delay your request for an annulment?"

Tony sat back and shook his head. "No way...that paperwork has already been filed. I'm just waiting on a decision. With Gianni's history and the details of what happened to me, my lawyer said that the only way the annulment would be denied would be if the judge *wanted* the world to know he was in the mob's pocket."

Tony looked out of the window and sighed. "My name will automatically revert to DiNozzo as

much as that sickens me, but by then maybe I'll have figured something out."

Later Tony waited by the guard's desk along with his two escorts for someone to escort them upstairs to the bullpen. The guard today was one Tony didn't know but he seemed like an okay guy. He'd even asked some shy questions about how Tony was doing. Tony went easy on him. Not everyone who saw him reacted positively. Case in point, when McGee escorted him upstairs because Gibbs was in MTAC they met up with a couple of agents upon exiting the elevator.

"Woah, DiNozzo, is that you behind that thing?" Perkins asked with a laugh.

"Yeah, it's me. Get used to it, Perkins. I'll be coming back to work soon and you'll have to come up with better one-liners than that." He'd always hated Perkins. The guy was a decent agent but he was a jerk.

"You mean they're actually going to let you come back looking like that?" Perkins rolled his eyes and looked at his partner who had the grace to blush and look away obviously embarrassed by Perkins behavior.

"That's enough, Perkins. Go on back to whatever it was you were doing." McGee broke in surprising Tony a bit with his assertion.

"Thanks, Probie, but not to worry. I think I saw his name on the roster at the clinic so Perkins is probably concerned about his own job when he goes and has the procedure done." Tony addressed the last part of his comment to two ladies out of records who happened to be walking by. They giggled. Perkins was not well-liked.

"That's a damn lie, DiNozzo!" Perkins hissed while McGee laughed outright and Perkins' partner snorted (what was his name...Joliss?). The two agents escorting Tony moved forward to move Perkins along but Tony waved them back.

"Whatever, Perkins, but if you decide to go ahead with it I can tell you where to shop for maternity clothes. Yeah, they're a little high end, but trust me, you'll want to look your best..." Tony called out louder to Perkins' retreating back.

McGee was still laughing as he gave Tony a high-five. They turned to see Gibbs and they sobered at once.

"Boss, I was just bringing..."

"...was wondering if you could do lunch..."

Gibbs snorted as both men tried to talk over one another. He just waved them over and they all walked back into the bullpen. He grabbed his coat deciding that he'd have to keep an eye on Perkins from now on.

"Going to lunch. You coming with us, McGee? Ziva?"

"Thank you, Gibbs, but Abby and I are having lunch in a short while." Ziva explained.

McGee was still stammering slightly not yet over the encounter in the hallway or Gibbs' sudden appearance, although by now you'd think he'd be used to it. What he wasn't yet used to was how nice Gibbs was being now that Tony was back. The lunch invitation was just an example of that.

"Th-thanks, Boss, yeah...I'll come with you."

"Great, McKnight in Shining Armor. Did you hear him, Gibbs? I had to hold him back from slashing Perkins to bits!" Tony wiped an imaginary tear from his eye. "My little Probie's all grown up..."

McGee rolled his eyes as he grabbed his coat and followed Gibbs and Tony over to the elevator. But the truth was, he would defend Tony and his right to have a baby to anyone who said otherwise. That's what families did.

## Chapter 15

Gibbs put the last dish away while Tony finished wiping down the sink. They'd parted after lunch and Tony had come home to rest for awhile before Gibbs got off work. He'd had dinner ready when Gibbs walked in the door.

Since McGee and the FBI watchdogs had been with them at lunch Gibbs hadn't been able to ask Tony how his session had gone but now that they were done for the day and were alone inside of the house they would have some time to talk.

They settled in their usual places on the couch with Tony's head resting in Gibbs' lap while they decided what to watch on TV.

"Not working on the boat tonight, Jethro?"

"Nope. Wanna know how your session went." Gibbs never asked for details. He just wanted to know how Tony felt after each session.

Tony smiled. Gibbs still hovered like a mother hen but Tony didn't mind. He really rather liked it. There hadn't been too many people in his life that actually cared enough to want to take care of him.

"It was good. I think Gerry's close to clearing me. "

"Close?"

"Yeah, there are still a couple of issues but I think...no, I know it'll be soon. And I forgot to tell you, Steve called...looks like the annulment will be final on the 30th."

"That's great, honey." Gibbs said as he stroked Tony's hair and then he leaned over to kiss Tony's forehead. Gibbs had been waiting for the moment when Tony's ties to Constantino would be severed. He'd made a couple of plans but, if he was honest with himself, he was a bit nervous. Maybe Tony wouldn't be ready?

He listened with half an ear to the radio on the end table while he thought about it. The guards had just completed a perimeter check and he looked at his watch. Right on time. Constantino was still at large and until he could be found Tony remained under protection. He let that thought slide into his subconscious as he contemplated his plans. He still had a bit of time until the 30th. He just needed to talk to Ducky and Abby.

"Fornell called today." Gibbs said and he felt Tony stiffen.

"Yeah?"

"DiNozzo's trial is going to start."

"Will I have to testify?"

"Tobias said he'd try to keep you out of it but he wasn't positive he'd be able to. They have enough on DiNozzo to put him away for a long time but with what he did to you they could get him for the rest of his life. As it is, they've seized all of his assets as well as some incriminating documentation on a couple of other mob members."

Tony had his eyes closed but he remained very still. Gibbs just kept up a light scalp massage until Tony was ready to talk.

"I'll testify or whatever else they want."

"You sure, sweetheart?"

"Yeah. No way is he getting away with what's he's done to me. I'll leave whatever else he's guilty of up to Fornell."

"Alright. I'll be with you all the way, you know that."

Tony gave a little satisfied sigh. "Yeah. I know that."

-----  
The 30th had come and gone. Tony was no longer a Constantino, but he was still Tony DiNozzo despite what he'd sworn to himself. He'd given a long monologue on the various names he was considering since his own ex-family names were so unacceptable.

Gibbs examined the area he was sanding and reiterated his opinion one more time.

"I don't want to be calling you 'Stringfellow' in bed, Tony."

"You never use my name in bed anyway, Jethro. You always call me 'my boy' or 'baby' or 'sweetheart' or...."

"Okay, enough. You saying you don't like what I call you?"

"No, that's NOT what I'm saying. All I'm saying is that maybe I don't want to be Anthony anymore. Maybe I'll just shorten my name legally to Tony..."

Now Gibbs was a bit more confused. He'd lost track of the many name combinations Tony had been considering but had called a halt at that last one.

"So where in the hell did 'Stringfellow' come from?"

Tony gave an exasperated sigh but then smiled. He really couldn't blame Jethro. He'd been pacing and ranting for awhile and he knew he hadn't been making sense the entire time, just voicing thoughts as they popped into his head.

"It's a name from a character in a TV show. It was also my alias during the Voss case," and then he visibly shuddered. "Okay, forget about that one."

Gibbs watched in amusement as Tony plopped himself carefully into his chair. Maybe it was time. He'd considered doing it more romantically after a nice dinner but somehow now felt right.

"I've got something for you."

"Really?"

He nearly laughed at the undisguised glee on that beautiful face. There were times when Tony was just like a little kid and he imagined a second smaller version with the same expression. He couldn't wait.

Gibbs turned and reached behind a stack of wood to pull out a gift-wrapped package. With a deep breath he handed it to Tony who was practically bouncing.

"Wow, what is it?" He asked as he began tearing off the paper.

"Something I hope you'll consider...but if not, I've got more wood to make whatever you want..."

Tony paused for a moment and then opened the box more slowly. What it revealed was an exquisitely hand-crafted wooden nameplate, the type you place on your desk. It said:

"Anthony D. Gibbs" and had the NCIS emblem made of inlaid wood.

Tony was speechless. Not only was the nameplate beautiful (he hadn't even known Jethro knew how to inlay wood), but the intent was obvious. Gibbs was asking him to marry him. He looked up and saw Gibbs staring at him with that intense blue gaze. Then Gibbs stepped forward and dropped to one knee.

"I hope you don't mind if I do this...only ever proposed to Shannon on one knee..."

"Jethro," Tony breathed. Here was the answer. One he never had the nerve to voice even to himself.

"Look, if you need to think about it, that's..." Gibbs was stopped by Tony's hand on his mouth.

"The answer is yes, Jethro. Yes, I'll marry you."

And Gibbs smiled and grabbed Tony's head in a fierce kiss.

"I love you, Tony...or whatever you decide to name yourself."

And Tony laughed.

"I love you, too, Jethro. And yeah, it'll be Anthony Dante Gibbs." Tony liked the way the name sounded on his lips.

"Good, now give me a quick hand up. There's a reason I never proposed to any of the others on my knees, hell, wife #2 proposed to me."

And Tony laughed again. "Come on, Jethro...you know I'm worth it..." he said as he stood and gave a hand to his future husband.

And this time Gibbs laughed. It made him feel good to hear Tony joke about himself.

"Damn right you are, worth every bit." Then Jethro gathered his future into his arms and laid claim to what would be his forever.

-----

Tony smiled at the world as he walked out of Gerry's office. He'd finally been cleared to return to duty. He couldn't wait to tell Jethro. At seven months he felt good and it showed. He'd had his hair cut although it was a bit longer than normal, more like when he'd first started at NCIS several years before. He ran his hand over the back of his head remembering the 'ooohs' and 'aaaahs' of his stylist when she'd shown up at Gibbs' house and saw him. It had been alright and he found himself answering all her questions while she cut and he was glad the agents had talked him out of going to the salon. That might have been too much with all of the stylists bearing down on him at once. He'd been surprised at the longer style but she said it suited his face better. It had given him a momentary pang of doubt thinking that she'd gone for a more feminine look but it was dispelled as soon as he saw the gleam in Jethro's eyes which was followed by a calloused hand running through his hair.

"Looks good," was Gibbs' only comment but Tony was more than appeased.

Tony also wore one of his new maternity suits which, he had to say, looked pretty slick despite

his initial shock. All that time with Gianni and at Gibbs' home he hadn't really looked at himself except to look down. At the shop they'd taken him into the back room for measurements and he'd had his first look at himself in a full-length mirror. He wasn't quite sure how to react to it at first and he felt himself blush furiously, so much so that the tailor had asked if he was alright. He'd assured the man he was but found himself having to fight back tears until he became used to his appearance.

He walked down the breezeway in between buildings on his way to the bullpen knowing his shadows could easily keep up. This was a good day despite the fact that his sessions with Gerry weren't over but they involved his other issues and had no bearing on his fitness for duty.

"Come on, guys, the coffee's on me..."

"You know you can't have coffee, Tony." Tyler said.

Tony rolled his eyes at one of his favorite watchdogs. "I know, I know...its tea for me but I'm still buying."

"Good news?"

"Yup, been cleared for duty. You are looking at soon-to-be Anthony Gibbs, NCIS Special Agent."

Tyler looked at Paul and smiled. They both liked Tony, unlike some of their co-workers who held his pregnancy against him. But they, at least, were happy for him.

"Gibbs, huh? So you've set a date?"

"Yeah, about two weeks from now. You guys will have to make sure you're on duty, but you're still invited even if you're not."

"I'll be there," Tyler confirmed and Paul echoed the statement.

Tony was beaming as he entered the bullpen and his attitude was contagious to everyone around him except one set of eyes that watched from the top of the landing. Almost immediately the slight headache she'd had all morning blossomed into full blown migraine. Her eyes narrowed fractionally. The headaches were coming more often and with greater severity. She'd already seen a doctor and now had confirmation from Ducky. But amazingly, that issue wasn't foremost in her mind. She was thinking about the Fitness for Duty report on DiNozzo. As a highly intelligent woman she understood much more than what Dr. Garcia had actually put in the report and she knew how to use it to her advantage. Without further expression, Director Jenny Shepherd returned to her office, her mind working furiously on the steps needed to put her plan in motion.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 16 - 19 by cernicalo

## Chapter 16

Gibbs gave Tony a quick peck on the cheek just before the elevator doors opened. Tony had been back to work for a couple of weeks now and since there'd been no sign of Constantino his protection detail had diminished to a nighttime watch only and they no longer had the FBI escorts once they were within NCIS headquarters. A lot of it had to do with the fact that Tony had

testified against his father about his abduction and subsequent maltreatment and hadn't been needed for testimony against Gianni. They had plenty of taped evidence against both men threatening both Tony and Gibbs and the guns that had been recovered were found in DiNozzo's possession. Constantino was wanted for murdering Michael DiNozzo. Gibbs had corroborated what was clearly heard on the tape and so he, too, was done but it would be weeks, yet, before the trial was over.

Tony gave Gibbs a bright smile and they left the elevator and went their separate ways, Tony's smile fading slightly as he approached his desk. Tony was still miffed that he didn't even have a desk near Gibbs and his team but he was getting used to it. And although he didn't really like working cold cases he understood that he didn't have much choice since he wasn't cleared for field duty. The hardest part of returning to the fold, though, was the odd looks he got from most of his co-workers. The women didn't seem to feel comfortable around him and God knows the men didn't. He found himself expending a lot of energy at being his most charming and friendly, working hard at letting everyone know that he was still the same guy they used to joke and flirt with. But it didn't work with everyone and had, on a couple of occasions, gotten ugly. It was a topic that was getting a lot of discussion with Gerry with no real solution in sight since Tony refused to report the incidents.

By mid-morning Tony felt worn out and decided he needed an Abby break. Besides, he wanted to go over some forensics studies he'd found in the case file he was reviewing. He got up and buttoned his suit coat over his expanding waistline to make his way downstairs when his phone rang. Cynthia, the director's secretary, said she had some documents he needed to sign so he made his way upstairs keeping his eyes straight ahead and a slight smile on his face portraying to the world that Anthony DiNozzo was perfectly at peace with himself and the world around him. He just wished it was really true. The only place he felt he could truly say that was at home in Jethro's arms. But he was a man of many talents, one of which was his ability to slip completely into whatever role he needed to get his job done and the role du jour was that of a completely happy man.

"Hey, pretty lady, how are you today?" Tony smiled as he walked into the office. Cynthia was a real sweetheart and he considered her a friend even if their relationship seemed a bit stilted lately.

"Hi, Tony. Thanks for coming up. I hope it's not too hard on you, yet..." She gave him an uncertain smile as her voice faded away.

Tony felt a little flip in his stomach. This was just too much. He'd had a pretty good relationship with her before and he had trouble accepting that his pregnancy would change everything so completely. Maybe they'd never been the friends he thought they were and although that wasn't the first time that thought had crossed his mind, he decided that this time he needed to find out if it was true. Like Gerry said, there was no point in guessing. He needed to find out what his friend was really thinking.

"Is the director in today?" he asked as a prelude to the discussion he'd like to have with her if she had time.

"She's in MTAC for the next few hours. What's up?"

Tony pulled up the extra chair and sat down near her, resting his forearm on her desk.

"I needed to ask you something and I didn't want either of us to get into trouble with the director. It seems she, like everyone else, is really uncomfortable around me now."

"Uncomfortable?"

"Well, yeah Cynthia, uncomfortable...the way you are now." He gave her his best smile. "You know, I really thought we were friends..." he let his sentence drop off to give her an opening.

"Oh, Tony...of course we're friends." She said with a sigh. But Tony was right, of course. She had been uncomfortable around him since his return and she hadn't really been able to put her finger on why.

"I don't know what's changed...well, besides this..." she said pointing at his stomach and was rewarded by a light chuckle which relaxed her.

She looked into the sexy hazel green eyes and it suddenly struck her. Although she was married and had a child of her own, she'd always enjoyed the light flirtatious bantering they shared but for some reason whenever Tony had tried that with her now it seemed strange to her, almost as though it was all playacting...

That was it, she realized. Before it was as though there was still a possibility that there could be something between them and it was fun to play that way even if it really was impossible. The fact remained that they were still each a man and a woman but now that differentiation had blurred for her.

And then she kicked herself. Tony had been in a relationship with Gibbs even before he'd left. And Lord knows that she was aware of his various escapades with his women. The fact is that Tony is bisexual...which had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that he was pregnant now. He was still a man...a very attractive, playful and fun-loving man who was adapting to a difficult situation. One made more so by her.

"Oh, Tony...I'm so sorry," she said with true regret in her eyes. "I guess I let your pregnancy change what I knew about you...Tony, the man."

"That's okay, Cyn, you aren't the only one. It just hurt a bit more from you and I really wanted to make it right."

"It's me that should have made it right before now, Tony." She patted his forearm. "I'm really sorry to hear that it's been rough for you out there," she said gesturing to the offices around her.

"Yeah, I used to be able to play a bit, get the ladies to blush a little, maybe giggle sometimes. It was light and fun for everyone, but now it seems everyone's reaction is kind of stilted and confused."

"Like I was..."

"Sweetheart, you were never as bad as some of the others out there. Now it seems that they either joke with me as though I'm one of their girlfriends which is awkward 'cos I'm a *guy* and I sure as hell don't know how to respond, or worse, they react with hostility which I really don't understand..."

"Tony, honey, don't you see the jealousy?"

"Okay, I'd have to say no to that one..."

"Pregnancy was the last bastion of the feminine world that men hadn't taken over. Up until now, only women could give a man a child. It's left a lot of women feeling very insecure."

"*They're* insecure?" he asked with incredulity. "The percentage of men who would voluntarily choose to do this is extremely low. There's no way that male pregnancy could threaten the number of female pregnancies and besides, the men who get involved in this are usually gay with the exception of those who want a kid without dealing with a wife and that percentage is even lower so they'd never had a chance with them anyway. Why feel threatened?" Tony asked now truly confused.



*And if she wanted insecure, how about questioning everything you ever knew about yourself...*

"Tony, its human nature to blame someone else for your inability to get what you want. You have what a lot of women in this agency wish they had...Leroy Jethro Gibbs, who is one fine, sexy man. And then you go and take yourself off the market, too. A loss to women everywhere..."

And with that statement she got the response she was looking for...a bright laugh from a man who'd had too much pain in his life lately and oh, was this man beautiful when he smiled. She really envied Gibbs for a bit.

Tony quieted and looked at Cynthia with that little boy expression that could get him just about anything in this world and she knew his child would have everyone eating out of his hand.

"So, are we okay now, Cyn?"

"Oh, yeah, baby...we're okay."

Cynthia rolled her chair over to Tony and threw her arms around him. He returned her hug enthusiastically feeling better than he had in awhile.

"My, my, what would Gibbs say, Tony?"

The voice dripped ice from the doorway and the two friends broke apart guiltily to see Director Shepherd standing there with a very severe expression. Tony jumped to his feet.

"I take it I'm not giving you enough to keep you busy, Cynthia?" she asked with disdain ignoring Tony's presence completely.

"Forgive me, Director, I do have plenty to do and just needed some signatures from Agent DiNozzo. But is there something you need?"

Cynthia looked closely at the Director and noted the telltale signs of strain around her eyes. She was obviously having another bad day and also had another headache. They were coming pretty frequently now but what Cynthia had noted most was the change in her behavior. She seemed to obsess every now and then and was no longer the kind supervisor she'd known before. She wondered if there was more going on in the job than she was aware of.

"The files transmitted this morning," The Director said in clipped tones.

Cynthia immediately pulled the files from her drawer and handed them to the Director. Only then did the Director turn to Tony keeping her eyes strictly on his own.

"Director Shepherd, it's lovely to see you today," Tony said in his usual friendly manner but noted no lightening of her demeanor and although her expression never wavered, he could feel her distaste at his presence. It was remarkably similar to his ex-father's reaction to his presence. Suddenly all of the good feelings he had seemed to slip away.

"I would ask, Tony, that you get your business with Cynthia taken care of so that she can return to her duties and you to yours. This agency has too heavy a workload to be wasting manhours in personal pursuits."

"Of course, Director Shepherd," he said, his own expression settling into polite lines. He glanced at the forms that Cynthia pushed towards him and he bent slightly to see where he needed to sign. He never even read what the documents were about, but figured it had to do with his pay. Finished, he straightened to note that the Director had remained in place apparently waiting for him to leave.

"Thanks, Cynthia," he said then gave the Director a polite nod on his way out. He closed the

door on what sounded like some stern words which, in his opinion, Cynthia really didn't deserve. She was the best secretary to ever fill that position and it was his fault that they'd gotten into a personal discussion on duty time. He decided to send her some flowers later as an apology and decided that he should probably stay out of the Director's way for now. It seemed that she was one of those that definitely fell into the 'hostile' category of women he encountered nowadays.

Now verging on thoroughly depressed he decided to continue on his way to see Abby. She was always good for him when he was down. He waited for the elevator and saw Agent Lee from legal. She was with Sandra from HR and they were chatting as they approached.

"Tony, hi! How are you?" opened Sandra.

She'd recently had a baby and seemed pretty open to Tony being pregnant. Agent Lee gave him a shy greeting as usual.

"Ladies," he greeted them with his usual smile.

"Tony, you are looking pretty smart in that suit. Is it specially tailored or is there somewhere you can buy maternity clothes for men?" Sandra asked curiously.

"There's a shop, actually. It carries a small selection currently but they are expanding their line..."

"Well you look great. Are you doing anything special for the stretch marks? I know of this great cream, you can buy it at that new shop in the mall...what is it, Harris something?" Sandra looked at Lee for confirmation and didn't notice the blush creeping up Tony's neck.

This was another aspect of being pregnant he was having a hard time with. For some reason women felt they could ask all kinds of personal questions about his body and the pregnancy. He just didn't get it and really didn't know how to answer without being incredibly rude. Did all women share this type of personal information? It was completely out of his realm of experience. Men don't get that personal with one another. He saw Lee staring at his belly. He needed to get away from them before they decided they wanted to feel it which had already happened before and had left him speechless with shock.

"Oh, I forgot some papers. Ladies, it was nice speaking with you. Have a good day..." he said quickly as he backed away. He threw them a smile over his shoulder as he made his escape around the corner.

He quickly breathed a sigh of relief but then the anger started. He wasn't sure he could handle another three months of this. What the hell? Did everyone see him as some kind of woman, now? Well, he wasn't, damnit! He was a man despite what was happening. But he felt sick as a wave of insecurity washed over him which in turn fueled his anger.

"Hey, Tony...you okay?"

Tony opened his eyes to see Palmer with a look of concern on his face. It pissed him off even more.

"I'm fine, Palmer," he growled.

"Are you sure, because if you need some help I can call Dr. Mallard..."

"I said I was fine, got it? Why don't you go find some of your gremlin friends and do whatever it is autopsy gremlins do and leave me alone."

"Sh-sh-sure, Tony...sorry..." Jimmy stuttered as he backed away, the flash of hurt across his face like a blow to Tony's chest.

He scurried away before Tony could apologize and Tony slammed his head back against the wall a couple of times. "Fuck, fuck, fuck...stupid fuck...always screwing things up..." he muttered to himself.

It took him awhile to calm down and then he tried to figure out how he would apologize to Palmer. God, could this day get any worse?

## Chapter 17

A little while later Tony finally made it back to his desk. He'd decided to forego a visit to Abby. He was just in too bad a mood. Rounding the corner he spied the bag on his desk. Somehow he should have anticipated this happening today. It seemed par for the course.

He hadn't told Gibbs but he'd been receiving little joke gifts or notes at his desk two or three times a week. At first it had just been curious little things like one pink and one blue bootie but then the items began to become obscene. He'd really hated the lace covered jock strap and the nipple cream which had been accompanied by a picture of a woman nursing with Tony's picture overlaying the face of the mother. The worst one had been the reconstructed stress doll. He'd seen them sold in novelty stores. They were made of cloth and had all the body parts held together with Velcro so that you could rip them apart when the need arose. His had the male and female parts intermixed with crude drawings of a fetus on the stomach and male genitalia between the legs. It had sickened him. So, rather than make his day worse he just grabbed the bag and threw it in the trash without opening it and sat down to continue his work.

He'd been working steadily for about an hour when Jethro rounded the corner. Tony looked up and really had to restrain himself from running into his arms so he tamped down on his emotions. The last thing he needed was Gibbs worrying about him, too.

"Hey, Tony, you interested in lunch?"

Tony looked down. He really wasn't hungry, the tension of the day like a hard stone in his stomach.

"No, not really, Jethro, but I could use a walk."

"Sounds good. How was that muffin I left on your desk?"

Tony nearly groaned. He really should have looked in the bag before throwing it away, but then he probably would have been suspicious of it and tossed it anyway. He really couldn't win here.

"It was great...probably why I'm not really hungry, yet," he lied but then added a sincere "Thanks for thinking about me."

"Always doing that. Come on, you look like you could use a stretch of the legs."

Tony didn't ask what he meant by that because it irritated him even though he had said he could use a walk so he stayed quiet. They grabbed their coats and left the building and began walking towards the water. The mid-November breeze was cool and Tony buttoned the top of his collar. He had his gloves but he'd forgotten his scarf. He started slightly as Gibbs wrapped his own scarf around Tony's neck. That simple gesture nearly brought tears to his eyes but he blinked them away.

Gibbs wondered at Tony's uncharacteristic silence. He also didn't like the small lines of stress he saw around Tony's eyes. Plus he knew about Tony's little talk with Palmer.

"Everything okay, honey?" he asked.

Tony felt a flash of exasperation as much at Jethro's question as at his own seesawing emotions. He was tired of everyone asking if he was okay, but then this was Gibbs, his future husband. He had a right to ask so he forced it down. He put a smile on his face and turned towards Gibbs.

"Fine, just a little tired."

Gibbs could almost buy that knowing that Tony hadn't been sleeping that well lately, but he saw the flash of annoyance and recognized the slightly too bright smile that said Tony didn't want to talk about it. Okay. Gibbs knew not to push. Tony would talk when he was ready and not before so he let the answer go for now.

"How're the plans coming along? Need any help?"

Tony took a deep breath of the slightly salty air grateful to be talking of something other than himself.

"Talked to the caterer, they said no problem with the seating. They were happy with the kitchen layout, too. It's really great of Ducky to let us have our wedding at his house."

"Like he said, it's a huge place and it's just him since his mother went into the nursing home. I really think he's looking forward to it."

Tony smiled. He was looking forward to it, too. Not to mention the short trip they'd planned afterwards. It wouldn't be their real honeymoon. They decided to wait on that until after the baby was born but it would be great to get away. God, he wished they could get away right now.

He must have frowned or something because again Gibbs asked what was wrong. It was at that moment that Tony became positive that Gibbs already knew about Palmer.

"Aw, hell..."

"Tell me what happened."

"He caught me at a bad time...I just don't handle a lot of the pregnancy issues really well and I'd just been cornered." Tony dropped his head and sighed. "I owe him an apology."

Gibbs could understand that. He'd often wondered at the conversations Shannon would get into that were sometimes so personal he'd had to leave the room, often to the sound of soft feminine laughter. Tony already had enough self-image issues so this much focus was probably too intense at times. He knew it was a topic during Tony's sessions with Gerry but he'd hoped that by now Tony would have a better handle on coping mechanisms. After all, Gibbs thought he was the most beautiful thing around.

"Yeah..." Gibbs agreed. He really hoped everything would settle down soon.

Tony shot him a rueful look and then smiled slightly hoping to ease Jethro's concerns. Together the men decided to return to work but neither man was completely at ease.

As soon as they exited the elevator McGee practically ran up to them to say that Gibbs was wanted in MTAC. With a quick squeeze to Tony's arm Gibbs turned and strode away. Tony watched him go for a moment and then turned back to McGee who seemed jumpy, but then that wasn't unusual for a Probie.

"What's got you so nervous, McMexican jumping bean?"

"SecNav wanted to talk to Gibbs and the Director has been calling every five minutes since he left. Gibbs had his phone turned off..."

"Which is against his own rules about never being out of touch..." Tony said with exasperation. So not only was Gibbs breaking his own rules but Tony's little emotional outburst had kept him from doing his job. That's just great. He turned back to McGee.

"Well, he's there now and everything will be just fine," he said with a bright smile wanting nothing more than to go and punch something. "Well, gotta go...know what I mean, McGiggles? Catcha later..."

Tim watched him walk towards the men's room, something tickling at the back of his brain but he couldn't quite put his finger on it. He turned to go back to the bullpen with a frown on his face.

-----  
"You'll meet up with Colonel Ramirez. He'll be the Ranger liaison. He'll fill you in on the specifics for the mission which you'll also take part in. Any questions?"

"Details on the initial Joint Task Force meeting?" Gibbs asked as he made notes in his handbook.

"Next Thursday at Fort Benning. You'll need to be in place two days prior. The meetings are scheduled for a week." Gibbs head shot up at that and SecNav noted it.

"Problems?"

Gibbs had never been one to put his personal life before duty, but that would completely screw up the wedding. Since it was already Friday they wouldn't even have time for the blood work or license in order to get married before he had to leave. For the first time ever he almost said he couldn't perform the duty required of him. Then Jenny jumped in before he could say anything.

"There's no problem, Sir. Anything Agent Gibbs has on his calendar can be rescheduled, isn't that right, Agent Gibbs?"

Jenny stared pointedly at Gibbs. This tasking was extremely important and she'd made sure Gibbs was fully aware of that. There was no way he'd let something like a simple ceremony interfere with that.

Gibbs threw Jenny a brief look of hatred which did shock her a bit but she recovered quickly. Gibbs turned back to the screen.

"No, Sir. No problems."

Jenny hid her feelings of triumph. She'd worked hard to get Gibbs assigned to this tasking. He actually was one of the best choices for the job, but as an NCIS agent rather than an active duty member she'd had to do some serious talking. But it had been expected that she'd want her agency involved. Politically, it was a great coup.

They discussed a few more things before the SecNav signed off. Gibbs ripped off his headset and turned to Jenny.

"You set this up deliberately, didn't you?"

"It seems, Jethro, that you give me a lot more credit than I deserve. I couldn't possibly have set up the JTF meetings," she said innocently.

"Damn it, you know what I mean. There're others out there who could do the job just as well but you had to have your name on this somehow and you fully intended to drag me along with you regardless of my personal plans."

Jenny raised her eyebrows. It wasn't often that she heard such long sentences from her best agent and the fact that she had told her how much he'd been affected by her little surprise. But her plan was progressing and with Gibbs out of the way she could work on Tony. She made sure no hint of her satisfaction showed on her face.

"Well regardless of what you think, Jethro, this tasking is good for the agency and for you professionally no matter how much you don't care about that aspect. It's my job to look at those things and this is the way it is. I suggest you and Tony leave for the day so that you can prepare for next week. Have a good weekend Jethro."

Gibbs stared at her for a moment longer but then turned, refusing to waste any more time that could be better spent with Tony even if he wasn't looking forward to what would happen.

Jenny felt triumphant. Getting rid of Jethro was the hardest part of her plan and had taken quite a bit of maneuvering but she'd succeeded and now had unimpeded access to Tony. Her hand automatically moved up to massage her temple as the pain began to pulse. Damn it, her pills were in her office. She began to walk in that direction as she thought about Tony but the pain was becoming too intense. Things were going according to plan so why was her head aching so? She'd begun to associate the pain with stress over *not* getting what she wanted, not the other way around. Ducky said he had the test results but she'd put off seeing him. Now that Jethro was on his way she could go down and speak with him but she would take her pills first and rest her eyes and then she'd see what Ducky had to say.

Gibbs swept into the office and grabbed his things. He decided that his whole team could have an extended weekend if he had one and said so to both McGee and David. They wasted no time in getting out. Then he went and found Tony who was hunched over a file.

"Let's go..." he said without preamble.

Tony looked up with a curious expression but grabbed his coat.

"Where're we going, Boss?" It came out so naturally that neither man felt a need to correct the use of the name even though Gibbs was no longer Tony's supervisor.

"Home," was the terse reply but Tony could see that Gibbs was pissed. This was not good.

Later that night Gibbs held Tony in his arms as they lay on the couch. Gibbs had let Tony know exactly what was going on immediately upon arriving at home and, predictably, Tony had taken it poorly.

"So maybe I can re-schedule for the week after we'd planned?" Tony asked quietly as he lifted his eyes from his position on Jethro's shoulder.

Gibbs sighed. Running his fingers through Tony's hair again and noting the pale, strained features and the red-rimmed eyes. Again he had the feeling that there was more going on than Tony was letting on.

"I'm sorry, honey. At this point all I can do is promise to call you as soon as I know anything more definite."

Tony nodded and got the feeling that this is what it must have been like for Shannon whenever they'd tried to make family plans. The only good thing was that Jethro wasn't active duty anymore. This kind of thing was rare for civilians and there was no way in hell he'd keep Jethro from doing his job. Besides, he was used to disappointment. He'd handle it, no problem. It would just take some phone calls, maybe the loss of a deposit or two, but those were the breaks.

"Okay, I'll make some phone calls and take care of it," he said sitting up.

Jethro showed no surprise at the sudden change in attitude. If there was one thing he knew about Tony, it was that the man was resilient.

"So, how about we make the most of the time we have left," Tony said with a wiggle of his eyebrows and was rewarded with an intense, lust-filled gaze.

"Works for me..." Gibbs said in that deep sexy voice Tony loved and both men moved upstairs.

## Chapter 18

The following Monday they returned to work and Gibbs left him right away to go work out his orders and travel arrangements. Despite the impending separation the weekend had been a good one and Tony could almost forget the mostly hostile work environment to which he had to return. Fortunately his family helped ease the pain and disappointment of Jethro's leaving and the postponed wedding plans and by mid-morning Tony was engrossed in the cold case he was working on. He'd been waiting on a call from Abby to say that she'd finished the reviews he needed and he wasn't disappointed when she called just before noon to say that she was done. They also decided to have lunch together since Jethro wasn't going to be available.

He headed towards the elevator only to see that it was on hold. Tony smiled figuring Gibbs was probably having a conversation with someone in his favorite meeting place. He decided to take the stairs. He was walking down the hallway towards Abby's lab when multiple sets of hands reached out and pulled him into a dark utility closet. He couldn't see anything anyway but his assailants, at least three from the number of hands, blindfolded and gagged him. His arms had been pulled behind him and he felt something being tied around his wrists. He struggled as hard as he could, at one point bumping his stomach against the wall.

"Keep that up and you'll hurt more than just yourself," a voice growled into his ear.

Knowing they were right Tony stilled although he trembled in anger and fear. He was at NCIS! How could something like this happen here? Was it Gianni? Various questions shot through his brain while he tried to gather as much information as he could. Scents, possible heights, voices...he tried desperately to categorize everything around him until he could find out who had him.

"You need to leave," the voice came back a second time. "No one wants you and your kind here, understand? You're a freak, a pretend woman, and everyone who looks at you feels nothing but disgust."

Tony felt his stomach turn. It wasn't Gianni. It was someone who worked here, alongside him in the building and who hated him so much they felt they could do this and get away with it. Well, they were wrong, he told himself. He struggled a bit more thinking that the more he struggled the more evidence would wind up on his clothing but their next words chilled him.

"Fight all you want, there won't be any evidence. We've made sure of it."

Tony felt hands moving over him, unfastening his clothing, fondling him. He could smell the latex of their gloves as his nipples were pinched and squeezed and he thought he would throw up. These were other NCIS agents.

"What does a man like Gibbs see in a freak like you?"

Tony felt fingers slid into his crevice while others tugged at his genitals. He struggled harder as he fought to get away from the violation but only received a low chuckle in response.

"Is that what you like, fag? You want my fingers up your ass or would you prefer my cock? Well

you won't get that from me. You listen and you listen good...we don't want you here. You're an embarrassment to the agency and to Gibbs himself. Do you have any idea how much you'll drag his career down? Probably not, you selfish bitch, but take this as a friendly warning. Leave now. Go somewhere else and have that freak of a baby and let Gibbs have the life he deserves...one without you in it."

One by one he felt the men slip away from him leaving him sitting on the floor. He pulled and tugged until he was able to get his hands free and then he pulled off the blindfold and gag. He stood and his fingers found the light switch. Blinking a few times he began to straighten his clothes, shaking and furious and unsure what to do. He believed that there wasn't any evidence to give Abby and he knew that he really couldn't face her right now feeling so dirty and used. Instead he made his way to the men's room. He washed his hands and face and then retreated to a stall until he felt more composed.

-----  
"There you are!" Abby said as she trotted over in those ridiculously high platform boots to give him a big hug. "I was getting worried when you didn't show and no one knew where you were but I figured you got busy like you always do so I went ahead and got us some sandwiches..." she continued without noticing that Tony was blinking back tears that her heartfelt hug had induced. By the time she settled down to ask how he was, he was more in control.

"But you look kind of pale. You sure you feel alright?" She asked with a slight frown.

"Yeah, Abs, just tired. You don't know what a load this is," he said gesturing to his stomach. *In so many ways...*

"Well if you want to lay down a bit you know you can always use the futon. My bed is your bed, only don't tell Gibbs I said that. God, I thought he was going to eat Timmy alive that night at his place," she said with a giggle.

Tony smiled faintly as he picked at his sandwich. His stomach was still doing somersaults and he didn't think he could eat a thing. Just something else Stan could yell at him over, his weight as well as his stress levels.

When they were done Tony decided to take her up on her offer. He was still laying down when Gibbs came looking for him. He would be leaving directly from the office to go to the airport but there was no way he'd leave without saying goodbye.

"You sure you're okay, Tony?" Gibbs asked with a frown as he contemplated moving his flight reservation back.

"I'm fine, Jethro...really," Tony said brightly and then yawned widely to prove that he was just sleepy.

"Okay, then. I'll call you when I get in," he said wondering at Tony's easy acceptance of his departure. It hurt that Tony didn't seem more upset but then he kicked himself. It's not like he *wanted* Tony to be upset...he just seemed awfully complacent, almost as though he wanted him to go. He searched Tony's eyes to be sure.

Tony knew he would have to pull the acting job of his life for Gibbs to leave without worry so he put every bit of effort he had into relaxing his muscles and smiling with just enough sadness to be believable and appease the concern in Jethro's eyes. It worked.

With a final kiss and a hug, Gibbs left knowing the FBI agents still on duty would get Tony home safely. Still, he knew, he'd call as soon as he got to his quarters at Fort Benning.

-----



Days turned into first one week and then two with no word from Jethro after the first two days. Tony had even gone to Jenny to find out his status but she completely stonewalled him and had actually come out and said that he was being selfish, that Gibbs was doing an important job and couldn't be bothered just to soothe Tony's insecurities. *She was right*, he told himself and then he returned to work.

On his way back he decided he needed a drink of water. As he approached he couldn't help but overhear his name. He paused as he tried to identify the speakers. One was male and the other female.

"Did you see the suit DiNozzo wore today?" the woman asked.

"Yeah...didn't know they made men's suits in extra large blimp sizes..."

The comment was followed by a female giggle.

Tony felt himself blushing and unconsciously ran a hand over his stomach and tugged at his jacket.

"Tony's a good looking guy but he always knew it, you know? How can he not know how...*ridiculous*...he looks now?" asked the woman snidely.

"He probably thinks its normal. Yeah, normal for people like him. Did you see the way the Director was looking at him yesterday? If she can't stand looking at him, what's he doing here?"

"I don't know but you'd think he'd get a clue and quit."

"Yeah. Anyway, did you see last night's *Survivor*...?"

Tony quit listening but remained frozen until he heard the voices move away. Woodenly, he turned and went to his desk, his mind in turmoil and his stomach twisting with humiliation. He remembered all those boys pointing and laughing at his white sailor's suit and he wanted to run and hide like he had so many years ago. But he couldn't so he took a deep breath and forced his mind back onto his work.

-----  
"Hey, Tony," Abby said as she cheerfully greeted him. "Timmy and I are going to lunch, wanna come with?"

Tony's stomach twisted at the thought of walking through the building where everyone could see him. He put a disappointed look on his face as he turned towards her.

"Aw, sorry, Abs but I just ate. Doc's got me on kind of a strict diet and I've been bringing my own lunch."

"Oh, okay...but if you tell me what you can have maybe we can find a good place for you, like an organic health food place..."

"Yeah, I'll let you know. So you kids run along now, be good..."

Abby giggled and turned when McGee rushed up behind her while pulling his coat on. "You coming, Tony?"

But Abby answered for him. "No, he said next time," then she turned back to Tony. "I'm holding you to that, mister!" she said with a pointed finger and narrowed eyes which immediately lightened as she laughed and Tony waved as they left. He hadn't eaten but also knew that he couldn't. Instead he lost himself in typing up the review notes in the file was working.

A short while later the Director walked up to him. She looked at him closely and liked what she saw. She'd been furious with those idiots when they'd attacked Tony before Gibbs left...it was supposed to have happened afterwards. But Tony really was a good undercover agent and he'd proved it. Gibbs had departed without a word. She'd been banking on his refusal to let anyone know about that humiliation...it was part of his psychological make-up but she'd been lucky that Tony had been able to snow Gibbs. Now she needed to make sure he continued to keep his distance from the others.

"Tony," she said as she approached.

Tony looked up and his stomach clenched although no expression showed on his face. He stood up politely. "Director," he said.

"I have a task for you. The evidence cases associated with the files you're reviewing have to be re-inventoried and identified for further testing depending on their age."

Tony nodded. This meant he'd be down in the basement storage area. He'd be alone and away from everyone else. It sounded good right now.

"Because of your...delicate condition...I'm assigned Mr. Watts to assist you in moving the evidence cases. You have strict lifting restrictions and of course you won't be able to climb the ladder. We wouldn't want you hurting yourself, would we?"

Jenny was rewarded by a blush that crept up Tony's neck and colored his face.

Tony nearly groaned. Watts was the mailroom guy who'd made no effort to conceal how he felt about Tony. But after his last request to Jenny had been shot down so spectacularly, Tony didn't even consider asking for someone other than Watts.

"Thank you, ma'am," was his only reply. He watched as she nodded and then left. He thought about the storage area. There was a lot he could do without Watts; maybe he could just call him if he needed him? With that thought he straightened his desk and took what he knew he'd need and headed downstairs.

## Chapter 19

"Tell you what, why don't I call you if I need you to get something, okay?" Tony said through gritted teeth. Watts had shown up minutes after Tony had started, sniping about the fact that he hadn't been notified to start and that he had so much mail yet to process and not only that, the basement was damned *cold*.

"No way, the Director told me specifically to come down here because you couldn't do the job yourself so here I am until she says otherwise."

"Fine," Tony said and pointed to a chair at the corner of the caged area. "Sit over there and I'll call you if I need you."

"Naw, I wanna see what you're doing, Mr. Special Agent, and I wanna know what you needed help with."

Tony refused to say that Watts' presence was required to move boxes that were too bulky or heavy for Tony and to fetch the stuff he couldn't reach. Instead he brought out the first three boxes and began processing the first.

"As I finish with each box, you put it back and bring the next so that I'll always have a couple on the table."

"That's it?" he asked in surprise.

"Yeah, that's it." Tony confirmed and got busy.

Watts was quiet for awhile and then he started chuckling.

"So are the big, bad boxes too heavy for the poor little Special Agent? Or is his belly so big that it gets in the way?"

Tony refused to answer. He refused to talk at all and tried desperately to ignore the running commentary on male pregnancy in general and, more specifically, Tony's pregnancy. But he was quickly approaching his melting point.

"What I don't get is why the agency's top Special Agent would hook up with another man at all, let alone you. I mean, it's going to hurt his career, right? It's not like he can take you to any agency functions so he can't network. And we work with the military, for chrissakes. No way will they accept you...that's probably why you're not out in the field, huh? What Marine would talk to a pregnant guy? I'll bet the Secretary of the Navy doesn't know about you or he wouldn't have picked Agent Gibbs for the special job he's on. Yeah, you're one major drawback to Gibbs' life. Either that or he's just stupid enough to fall for your sob sto...unhhh!"

Watts gurgled a bit as Tony's hand tightened around his throat. Tony had had enough of the crap Watts had been spewing. It was bad enough when it was about him but now he was bad talking Jethro. He never heard anyone come up from behind him until he felt an arm come around his neck.

"*That...is a very bad idea, DiNozzo,*" he heard whispered into his ear and Tony felt a shiver go down his back. It wasn't the voice of the man that had been holding him from behind that day, but it was one of the men that had been there, touching him... He let go of Watts and the arm around his neck released him, too. He turned around and somehow wasn't surprised to see Perkins. He moved away from both men keeping his eyes on Perkins and ignoring Watts who was bent over coughing.

Watts straightened and moved to get to Tony but Perkins arm held him back.

"It was you...you were one of them," Tony said as he looked at Perkins but he only smiled back.

"What are you talking about, Agent DiNozzo?" he replied smoothly. "All I know is that I came down to review some evidence and I saw you attacking Ron Watts. I'm sure the Director won't be very pleased with that, but maybe there's an explanation like, oh I don't know...hormones?"

Watts was still rubbing his neck but he began to laugh at Perkins comments and then Perkins joined in. Tony backed away from them both until he had the chain link side of the cage at his back. He was in shock, reacting to both the realization of who'd molested him as well as the potentially dangerous situation he was currently in. He didn't even have his gun since he hadn't qualified yet. Perkins stepped towards him.

"The best thing for you to do now is to resign, DiNozzo. No one wants you here. You're an embarrassment to this agency and to Gibbs himself." He began to walk out, Watts at his heels, but then turned.

"I wouldn't go running to any of your friends if I were you. The Director is already looking into their work and she isn't happy with what she's finding. You don't want to add to their problems, do you *Mr. DiNozzo.*"

Tony stood there as they walked away. The threat to the others was plain. He wrapped his arms around himself and realized he was shivering although he didn't know if it was from the cold or

his thoughts.

-----

Ducky watched Tony work from several feet away. He'd been spending nearly all of his time working in the basement but, fortunately, it seemed that his duties kept him at his desk for the moment. Ducky had been growing more and more concerned with Tony's behavior in the past week. Both Abby and Timothy had come to him as well since Tony continually refused their company. He looked him over and noted that he was a bit pale and that he did, indeed, look tired. With Tony's history of nightmares that in itself wasn't surprising. What he didn't care for, however, was Tony's uncustomary quiet. It was as though happiness itself was being slowly leached from the boy. Much of that could be attributed to Jethro's absence. The two men shared a very deep relationship made more so by Tony's recent tribulations. And although he, too, had been rebuffed by Tony recently he was determined to try again.

"Hello, Tony," he said cheerfully.

Tony was not unaware that he was being watched. He seemed to be hyperaware of it lately. He did his best to ignore it unless someone came up into his face like now. He heard the footsteps approach and steeled himself for another confrontation or at the very least, a walk-by death by disgust. When he realized it was Ducky he was only mildly relieved.

"Hi, Ducky," he said casually. He wanted desperately to put on a happy face for his friend, or at least an expression that would ward off the worry he could see in the kind blue eyes but he just didn't have the energy. A little voice at the back of his head was telling him to just spill everything to Ducky but his tongue was stilled by his shame at what was happening and the threat to his friends. Besides, he should be able to handle it. And, as embarrassing as it was to admit it to himself, Jethro would be home soon and he'd be able to help.

"You haven't come to see me in a while, Tony. I was wondering if anything is amiss." Ducky opened gently hoping Tony would let him in.

"I've just been busy, Ducky...you know, lots of open cases and I'm helping out some of the other teams." Tony said despite the disbelieving look in Ducky's eyes. "I'm fine, Ducky...really. I've just been busy."

"No, I don't think so, Tony. I'm very worried about you. In fact, the entire team is..."

"Ducky, I said I'm fine." Tony said more forcefully. He didn't need the entire team worried about him and there was no way in hell he would tell them about what was happening...about what had happened. He needed to get away. He grabbed some papers and stood up.

"I've got to go, Ducky. I'll call you about dinner." Then he turned and walked away without another word.

Ducky watched him leave with a worried look on his face. "Oh, dear," was all he said.

And all the while Tony withdrew more and more as the harassment continued. He'd even gone so far as to report it to Jenny thinking she'd have to respond because of her position if nothing else, but nothing had come of it. It became clear why when the harassment became more overt and from more than the unknown source, it was from Jenny herself.

In his worry and declining condition, Tony had begun finding small errors in his work that he didn't remember making. The bad thing was that Jenny was now scrutinizing him and his work very closely. She lost no opportunity to let him know her opinion of the quality of his work and that she considered him worthless as an agent. Her disparaging comments and blistering looks shook what was left of Tony's confidence in himself, especially since she didn't hesitate to state her opinion in front of other workers.

Tony was screwing up badly and he knew it, he didn't need Jenny shoving that fact in his face. He had enough of that from Perkins and then you could throw the FBI into the mix when you considered Sacks. That scumbag Sacks came by with Fornell who'd gone to speak with the Director. Sacks decided to hang around Tony's area all the while giving him evil looks and saying crude things under his breath. Tony was so pissed off he was seeing red. Tony could only assume that it had been that distraction that caused him to make the worst mistake of his career.

Since Jenny was so unhappy with the quality of work she was seeing with the cold cases, she'd assigned him to work solely with another team. While working their case the Team Lead asked Tony to help log some evidence and then take it to Abby. Somehow, while he was getting the paperwork ready the evidence disappeared. It caused quite an uproar with the Team Lead and rightfully so. Tony decided to resign saving Jenny the trouble of firing him.

But before he could do that the Director made the announcement about the successful completion of the JTF. Tony gave a heartfelt sigh at the thought of Jethro coming home but then he began to think about having to tell Jethro of his fuck-ups. But he'd understand, wouldn't he? Wait, what was he thinking? Had Jethro ever allowed for a fuck-up on his team? No. He went through agents like cups of coffee.

He was just over eight months along and had secretly been worrying about Jethro not being home for the birth. And not just that, he really wanted to be married when he had the baby. But with his record in life so far, both personally and in his career, there was no way all of those hopes he'd stupidly allowed himself to have would pan out. And the thought of the censure in those blue eyes made him sick. He thought it couldn't get any worse. Until Jenny took him aside.

"They're returning to DC, Tony. There'll be a recognition ceremony but Jethro asked me to tell you that he doesn't want you to attend."

Tony felt like his world had completely collapsed. In their time apart Jethro had obviously decided that Tony was the detriment that everyone here had been saying he was. Plus he didn't want to be seen with Tony, not in a politically charged atmosphere that the ceremony represented, probably not in public at all. *You knew it wouldn't last, idiot*, he told himself. But somehow he'd held on to the hope that it would despite all of his experience.

Numb, Tony nodded. It was time for him to leave and not just for the day. He'd already been placed on half-days, Stan being very unhappy with Tony's blood pressure and sleep habits and he'd even threatened him with complete bedrest for the remainder of his pregnancy if he didn't pull himself out of the stressful situation he was in. Right now he couldn't even face Gerry and had canceled his last two appointments. So that made the decision for Tony. He'd obviously been wrong about coming back to work. He should have seen it coming and maybe that notice he'd received from his lawyer had been a sign, like an omen. He nodded to himself and left the Director, going back to his desk.

Jenny watched him walk away noting the rounded shoulders and halting step. She'd done it, she was sure of it. Tony would leave and Jethro would be back soon and then it would be just the two of them, the way it was before. She raised her hand to her temple and felt the tic beginning in her eye. She refused to believe what her doctor had told her, what Ducky had confirmed. It wasn't right, it couldn't be...not after everything she'd planned, everything she'd put in motion so that she and Jethro could be together. No, she refused to accept it but she did need another pill for the pain even if she'd taken one only two hours earlier. It was all right, she told herself, everything would be alright...

In a few minutes Tony had his second resignation typed up and sent out to the Director. He'd leave now and go to the bank and he was set. He didn't even need to worry about finding a job. How perfect was that? He told himself almost manically. Although his father's trial had yet to be

finished, Tony's part was done. The one good thing that had come out of the trial so far was that he found out that there was a trust fund left to him by his mother that had nothing to do with DiNozzo's money, which was good since all of both DiNozzo's and Gianni's assets had been seized. His lawyer had told him that if he didn't choose to claim it then it would revert to Clive Paddington's descendents. It had shocked him to learn of it but it couldn't have come at a better time. He accepted it and then found out later that he now had nearly 5 million to his name. It was just a drop in the bucket when compared to the DiNozzo fortune but more than enough for him and his baby to find another life together. Without a word to anyone else, Tony left.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 20 by cernicalo

Chapter 20

"McGee, where's Tony?" Gibbs barked out as soon as McGee answered.

"Boss, are you back? We heard the news...congratulations!" Tim said enthusiastically.

"Yeah...where's Tony? He's not answering his phone."

"We-well, I don't know, Boss. He was at his desk earlier..." his voice faded off as he tried to look over the partitions to Tony's desk.

"Find him and have him call me back. I'm getting out of here earlier than I thought, wanted to let Tony know."

"Sure, Boss, I'll find him. Glad to hear you're coming back soon...Tony's been...uhh," McGee paused unsure whether or not to tell Gibbs about his worry. Tony had been looking worse and worse lately but he wasn't talking, not to Ducky or anyone and they'd all tried contacting Gibbs but there'd been a block on all communications. They'd even gone to the Director who said she'd take care of it but nothing had changed as far as Tim could see.

"Spit it out, McGee! What's wrong?" Tim was sure that Gibbs was probably near to breaking whatever phone he was on.

"Boss, he's not looking too good and he's not talking, won't let us close. He's been going home every afternoon and the Director is really angry..."

"Goddamnit! You find him, McGee! Now! I'll get there as soon as I can."

"Yes, Bo..." but the line had gone dead. Tim ran a hand over his face. They'd been trying to find out what was wrong but had gotten nowhere. Tony refused to see Ducky or Abby and he wouldn't even let them in the house. But at least Gibbs was on his way and he'd be able to get some answers. Tim just hoped it wasn't too late although he couldn't really say why he felt that way.

-----  
Tony went home and packed what few things he thought he'd need and then he slipped away from the lone agent watching him. It had been a piece of cake and he didn't worry at all about the ramifications to that particular agent. He was one of the assholes who constantly gave him problems.

He got into Gibbs' car (Gibbs, not Jethro, he reminded himself) knowing exactly where he would

abandon it. He arranged for a taxi to pick him up two blocks away from that spot at a café he knew about and from there he'd go to a used car dealer. Cash in hand he moved mechanically following his quickly thought-out plan. He wouldn't need a cell phone for awhile, he could pick one up when he figured out where he was going.

Tony drove for what seemed like hours, his mind numb. He'd find a place and then contact Stan. He knew there were two other clinics in the US that had opened making Stan a very wealthy man. He was glad for him but mostly he was glad that he'd have the care he needed to have his baby, although he wished it was Stan doing the delivery. He just hadn't decided which of the two cities he'd go to. The one in San Francisco was probably out since Tony couldn't fly in his current condition. That left Boston. Maybe he could convince Stan to come to him?

Deciding he couldn't make the full eight-hour-plus drive in one go, he pulled over at the nearest hotel. Paying cash to a weaselly little man who gave him dirty looks which he ignored, he settled into a non-descript room and laid down refusing to think about what he'd left behind and then exhaustion overtook him.

It didn't take long for the nightmare to begin. Tony moaned and rolled his head.

"Mama, why do I have to wear this? The other boys have long pants and sweaters..." Tony complained quietly. He didn't want to upset his mother even if she was just sipping tea but he knew what would happen when he went down stairs. It would start with surprised looks that would turn into smirks and then outright laughter when they saw his white sailor suit. He looked down miserably and noticed that one of his knee-high socks had sagged just a bit. He fixed it and then tugged his shorts down a bit to make them look longer.

"Stop that!" his mother warned, that mean look coming into her eyes. She was just drinking tea, wasn't she?

The boys laughed and pointed, practically falling on the ground as they caught sight of him. Tony self-consciously tugged at his sleeves, fingering the gold braid and stars sewn into the white cloth. He could feel his stomach churning and his face turning red. He wanted to go to the bathroom but Mama was up there, he could see that she had that look was in her eyes and her hand was raised. He wanted to run somewhere, anywhere...so he did. And found himself in his father's study.

"Worthless, you stupid bastard. You are totally worthless. I told you to stay in your room when my business associates were here but you couldn't even do that, could you?" And Tony saw the disgust in his eyes as he raised his fist. A sudden pain blossomed across the side of his head.

The fist raised again and struck him across the face but he couldn't stop it, his hands were chained to the belt around his chest, crushing the white material of his sailor suit. Only he wasn't a little boy, he was tall, he was a man...

Tony looked around the bullpen and saw Ziva and McGee laughing at his suit and then Ducky and Abby joined in. He looked behind them and saw Palmer shaking his head with a broad smile on his face. No, no, this can't be happening...

"Your father said you were worthless, I should have listened," Gianni growled in his ear. "The only thing you're good for is a fuck, so turn around..."

Gianni pushed him forward until his was leaning over his desk, his pants fell around his ankles and he heard Gianni tell someone to cover him up because he looked like a pregnant female ape.

Tony turned and saw Jenny draping a blanket over his now-big belly. "At least he thinks you're

good for this because we all know you're a lousy agent, Tony. Gibbs told me you're a lousy lover, worthless as a partner..."

"Grab your gear, there's a dead sailor..."

Jethro! Tony struggled against the hand at his nape but Gianni was still fucking him.

"Grab your gear, we've got a dead Marine..."

"Boss, boss...take me with you!"

"Forget it DiNozzo, you're worthless to me..."

And Tony saw the disgust in his eyes that shifted between the brown of his father and Gibbs' own blue.

"I can't take you looking like that..." he said as he gestured to Tony's stomach.

"Grab your gear, there's a dead petty officer..."

"Jethro...boss! Please take me with you...don't leave me, please...!" Tony cried out to a retreating Gibbs but he kept walking and Tony kept screaming...

And Tony woke with tears streaming down his face, lost and confused until he remembered where he was and why and he curled down around the pillow that was clutched in his hands and sobbed while his heart broke.

-----

Gibbs stalked into the bullpen furious beyond belief. He looked around seeing only Ziva and his fury increased.

"Status!" he barked.

"We are unable to locate Tony. He slipped away despite the FBI agent watching the house. McGee is downstairs with Abby attempting to find any trace of him through his or...your credit cards, bank accounts and cell phone. There is a BOLO out on his, or rather, your car."

"He's too smart to leave any obvious trails," Gibbs said as he moved to his desk and retrieved his phone, badge and gun. He'd been told to leave the phone behind and had been issued a temporary one while on his mission but all comm. had been limited to local, mission-essential only. He'd sent messages through Jenny and had been told that Tony was doing well. It all had to have been lies, but why would she lie about that? Turning on the phone he saw message after message from Gerry, Tony's therapist.  
Damn it!

Ziva turned when her phone rang and she snapped it up.

"The local police have found your car..."

"Let's go. You drive."

Ziva only raised her eyebrows in surprise but noted that Gibbs was busy retrieving his messages.

Gibbs stomach twisted in knots. Not only were there very concerned messages from Gerry, Stan had also left some messages. They said they'd try the office. Why hadn't he been contacted?



Damnit, Jenny, what the fuck are you up to?

“Did any of you get the messages I sent through Jenny?”

Ziva shot him a surprised look and Gibbs decided then and there he was going to kick Jenny’s ass.

“We did not receive any messages. We tried but were unable to reach you. The Director said there was a communications blackout at your location. We also told her that Tony’s doctor was trying very hard to reach you and she said that she would handle it...”

There’d been no communications blackout, all comm. just had to go through MTAC over secure lines. Gibbs slammed his hand on the dash. Jenny...it had all been Jenny.

Sometime later they’d ascertained that Tony had abandoned the car and a man of his description had taken a cab to a local used car dealership where a small sedan had been purchased with cash. Where had Tony gotten the money? Gibbs wondered. All of his own accounts had been closed by DiNozzo. He had no money of his own except for what Gibbs had given him and his recent paychecks. He’d already spoken with Gerry who couldn’t tell Gibbs where Tony might have gone but he did tell him that Tony was under extraordinary pressures at work. Gerry had been so concerned when Tony canceled his appointments that he tried to contact Gibbs regardless of patient confidentiality. His worry increased when he was unable to reach Gibbs as well.

Stan wasn’t able to say much regarding Tony’s plans either but he did let Gibbs know how serious he considered Tony’s physical state. The half-day restriction explained where Tony was going everyday but why wasn’t it in his records? And why would Jenny not know that he was on restricted duty? Gibbs was coming up with far too many questions, but it did seem that most of them involved Jenny somehow. He would get to her as soon as he spoke with Tony’s doctors.

“Stan, it’s physically impossible for Tony to have this baby on his own. Who else is capable of helping him?”

“Any one of the doctor’s in either of my two clinics besides this one.” Stan replied. “But I don’t think he would try to make it to San Francisco...his physical state wouldn’t have allowed for it and he would have known that. Above all else, Tony would not endanger his child so he’d have to go to Boston...”

Gibbs was on his cell updating the BOLO information before Stan could even finish his sentence. With a final request that the clinic in Boston contact him should Tony arrive there, Gibbs left to go see Jenny.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 21 - 23 by cernicalo

## Chapter 21

Jenny paused to rub her hand over her eyes. Her head was hurting so badly she was having trouble seeing. *You've been on the computer for hours...of course your head hurts!* She pulled out the pill bottle and took two more pills doubling the dosage and ignoring her shaking hands. Damn! They were nearly gone...it was supposed to last thirty days, but it hadn’t been that long since she’d seen her oncologist, had it? She closed her eyes again. She needed to finish this but it was taking her longer than she thought to change the data on the digital recorders in the office. She smiled slightly knowing that everyone thought McGee was the only computer wizard around. She knew a thing or two and had changed those moments when Perkins or Watts had been caught on film leaving things on Tony’s desk. Fortunately it wasn’t too much, she knew

exactly where the camera angles were and had placed Tony at one of the few spots where his desk wouldn't be completely within frame. She'd also doctored the film from the hallway where Tony had been pulled into the utility closet. It really helped to have not only her knowledge but her security clearance. McGee simply didn't have the access and wouldn't unless she specifically granted it to him.

She again rubbed her head not knowing that those same areas were reddened and inflamed from her constant rubbing. Weeks before her oncologist had recommended several treatments for her tumor but his prognosis had been so bad that she'd found no reason to put herself through the hardship. She had, literally, fucked herself over yet again. In her more lucid moments, like now, she acknowledged where she'd screwed up her life and also acknowledged her hatred for one Anthony D. DiNozzo who had what she desperately wanted, namely Leroy Jethro Gibbs, and had decided that if she couldn't have him than neither would Tony.

And now that Tony was gone she could finish documenting Tony's record of failure. She'd never filed his duty restriction paperwork and instead had documented his absenteeism along with all of the errors he'd made in his work. The disappearing evidence had been the coup de grace. She'd had Walker, the Team Lead whose evidence was now missing, prepare his statement that had effectively crucified Tony. And now she had at least two days to finish getting everything set to her satisfaction. So, saying that, she got back to work.

She finished the last recording and then reviewed her "Record of Counseling" notes that she, as a supervisor, would keep in Tony's personnel file. On those files she'd documented Tony's unhappiness with his current situation and their mutual agreement that he would benefit from his resignation. It was all a fabrication, of course, but the very real resignation that Tony had sent from his computer confirmed the supporting documentation. She smiled. Who knew that Agent Sacks was so adept at forgery? Tony's signature on the counseling forms looked very good to her practiced eye. She wondered if Fornell knew of Sacks ability and if he'd made use of that fact. She doubted it. He wasn't the leader Jethro was.

Thoughts of Jethro made her flash back to the time when she worked with him and again she kicked herself for what she'd done with her life. First it was by letting Jethro go in place of her grand scheme to rise through the ranks. It was years later that she'd begun to regret not having the family she'd wanted in her younger years. A family that she'd sometimes fantasized having with Jethro. When everything had fallen apart between them due to her own ambition she'd pushed all thoughts of a normal life to the back burner and concentrated on her career. Then she received an appointment that brought so many possibilities. She became the Director of NCIS and had Jethro working for her. Suddenly many of those old dreams had begun to reemerge. So she watched Jethro daily, watched the interaction of his team and watched while he occasionally dated some women but never for long. It gave her hope. She'd learned of his failed marriages and decided that there was still a place for her with their past history and her hair color, if nothing else. Until the day that she realized how happy Jethro was. Then she became obsessed with finding out why only to determine that there was someone new in Jethro's life.

It wasn't until Tony had left that she'd finally figured it out and then she rejoiced at her dumb luck. Here was the opportunity she needed to get closer to Jethro and she was determined to make the most of it. She began to insinuate herself into his personal life, ignoring his gentle rebuffs at her suggestions. Yes, his rejection became more pointed later on, but she was sure of her eventual success. So involved was she in her campaign to secure Jethro's affections she'd ignored many subtle signs that said she should seek medical attention. It wasn't until they became impossible to ignore that she finally sought medical help. But by then it was too late and she realized that she had thereby fucked herself over in the worst and most final of ways. The tumor they'd found was inoperable and by waiting so long her chances with chemotherapy or radiation were nil. She had only to wait until the inevitable occurred, taking medications to ease her pain along the way.

Bullshit. She had plans for her end but not before she could finish what she'd started here. If she

couldn't have Paris than neither could Jethro or Tony, if he even knew what it meant.

Paris...ah, Paris...the romantic dinners, the moments of lovemaking, the memory of which still having the power to take her breath away. Who would have known that a lowly Marine from Stillwater, PA could have achieved so much? Jethro was not only a decorated Marine, top-notch sniper and a superior investigator, but he was also superlative as a lover, a man whose intensity and stamina was beyond anything she'd ever experienced before or since. God, she wanted him and could feel herself getting moist at her memories. The throbbing in her pussy suddenly matched the pounding in her head and she grimaced but she couldn't stop thinking about Jethro and she again rubbed her head.

*I can't have him but neither will Tony...no one will have him...no one...I can make sure of that.* Without further thought she stood up and suddenly realized that she was cradling her gun in her hands. *Maybe this is the answer...no one would have Jethro except me. I could find Tony...kill him...or maybe take Jethro with me...* The erratic thoughts clamored in her brain and she was unaware of Cynthia walking into her office and quickly departing as she remained locked in her mental loop all the while staring at the gun she held in her shaking hands.

-----

Gibbs stormed back into NCIS, his long coat flapping around him as he charged up the stairs with murder in his eyes. He was waylaid by Ducky at the top of the stairs.

"Not now, Duck..." he growled in warning but Ducky knew him far too well to be dissuaded.

"Jethro, you must know something before you go up...please listen to me for just a moment..."

Gibbs gave him an infuriated look but nodded and Ducky pulled him aside. With extreme apologies for not realizing how far Jenny's disease had progressed, Ducky decided to break patient/doctor confidentiality and tell Jethro just what was wrong with Jenny and what he suspected Jenny had done.

"So you see, Jethro, her illness has no doubt completely changed her personality, affecting her behavior to the point where she will not stop until she has that over which she is obsessing...you, Jethro. From what we've learned here recently all of her efforts have been geared towards eliminating Tony from your life. I suppose we're lucky she didn't choose to just kill the poor boy."

*Oh, God,* Gibbs thought. She may not have killed him physically, but who knows what emotional state he must be in... His chest ached with the thought of the pain he had gone through all alone. It was Gibbs job to protect him and he had failed and the knowledge tore him apart. He didn't know if he could ever make Tony believe in them again but he knew he would die trying.

"Okay, Ducky, you're with me..."

Together the two men went upstairs but not before Gibbs, now in a more controlled state of mind, contacted McGee. As it turned out McGee was busy sitting on Abby to keep her from killing Jenny herself while Ziva continued the search. Gibbs had half a mind to let her, but he really wanted that pleasure for himself. It was through Ziva's efforts that he found out about the trust fund which answered the question about where Tony had gotten the money.

Once Abby realized that Gibbs was taking on the Director she calmed down enough help McGee and Ziva find Tony and then to find out what, exactly, she'd done to him.

Cynthia stood nervously as they marched into the office. Gibbs could see that she, too, was under a lot of strain. Why the hell didn't anyone question any of this? Gibbs gestured towards Jenny's office with his head.

"Yes, but it's not good," she answered quietly, accustomed to Gibbs' mannerisms. Then she

turned to Ducky. "Dr. Mallard, I've been trying to reach you...I'm really worried. She's talking to herself and rubbing her head...before I left the office she, uhh, pulled out her gun..."

Gibbs put his hands on her shoulders as he calmed her. "Get security up here and then get SecNav on the line. This isn't going to be pretty..."

He turned to hear Ducky telling Palmer to bring his medical bag. Gibbs knew he kept sedatives in there...he'd used them on Tony before. But Sweet God above, he wanted to kill her. The desire to crush the life out of her churned in his stomach and he seriously regretted Ducky waylaid him. He didn't want to know that she was sick, damnit! She was the reason Tony had left him...again. God only knows what shape he and the baby were in. He ran a hand over his face. He needed to push all this aside...he needed to deal with a sick woman...an armed sick woman. Fuck! And with a determination that physically hurt he pushed his emotions down as deeply as he could to allow himself to deal with the situation and then he could concentrate on finding Tony.

He succeeded. But only because both Stan and Gerry were positive that Tony wouldn't hurt himself... he wouldn't put the baby at risk.

Security arrived a moment later and he told them to wait outside the door while he and Ducky went in. They nodded, their weapons in hand. And with the emotionless clarity his training allowed him, Gibbs opened the door enough to see what was happening. He saw her standing beside her desk staring at her weapon which she held across both of her palms, not as though she were ready to use it but as though she were contemplating the weapon itself. With his body turned so that Jenny wouldn't immediately see his arm down holding his weapon ready, he entered slowly.

"Hi, Jenny..."

At his entrance she looked up. Gibbs saw a strained and confused look on her face.

"Jethro, what are you doing here? You weren't due back for two days..."

Jenny was pale with a fine sheen of sweat on her forehead. He noted her dilated pupils and slightly wavering stance. Gibbs moved further into the office leaving the door open. He moved over to the couch taking her attention with him but keeping his gun hand behind him.

"Yeah...decided to cut out as soon as I could..." He saw her eyes narrow.

"Missing Tony?" she asked pointedly.

"Actually wanted to talk to you, Jen. I've been doing a lot of thinking, a lot of remembering..." he trailed off and shrugged his shoulders.

Jenny's eyes lit up. "About Paris?"

Gibbs nodded.

She closed her eyes with a slight smile on her face as though remembering their time there. Gibbs took that moment to put his gun in his coat pocket, deciding in that split second that he wanted her alive.

"Yeah, among other things..." He needed to get close enough to get the gun away from her.

"You mean Tony..."

Gibbs saw her hand tighten around the grip. He moved closer and noted the tic in her eye and the lines of pain across her forehead and around her mouth. She must be in agony, he thought.

He looked down and saw an empty pill bottle. How could this thing have progressed so far without anyone knowing it, without anyone questioning her actions?

"I just don't know what to do, Jen. I've made promises to him, promises I've been thinking about..."

"What is it you want, Jethro?" she asked suddenly suspicious.

Gibbs looked at her with all the longing he could. "Paris," he said.

Jenny was amazed. Could it be this easy? God, she could have done this so long ago...so much time wasted. She looked deeply into the blue eyes she loved and saw hope and she smiled, again getting lost in her fantasy.

"Yes...Paris. I've been working on getting that back for us."

"Yeah? How?" he asked as he moved closer still.

"I've taken care of him for you...he's gone now..."

Gibbs was close enough now and he smiled at her. "It can be just like it was..." he began and he opened his arms.

Jenny couldn't believe it, everything she wanted was right here. She didn't really notice as her shaking hands were emptied. All she knew was that those strong arms she'd remembered were wrapped around her, Gibbs' scent filled her nostrils and she closed her eyes as the pain faded slightly. She jumped slightly at the pinprick in her arm but she was where she was meant to be and she closed her eyes in happiness as the pain faded away, as the light faded away...

Jethro held onto Jenny as she slumped in his arms, his heart and mind in turmoil. It was then that he felt how much weight she'd lost. How did things get so messed up?

-----

"Gibbs, law enforcement has located Tony's car," Ziva said as soon as she found Gibbs exiting MTAC. He'd just explained the situation to SecNav who was sending someone out to take over the investigation which was fine with him. Gibbs just wanted to get to Tony.

"Where?" Gibbs barked as he ran downstairs with Ziva hot on his heels.

"A hotel three hours from here," she said as she handed him a slip of paper. She turned to grab her bag but Gibbs stopped her. He saw McGee come up behind her so he included him in his instructions.

"I go alone. You two stay here and dig through everything Jenny has. I want to know exactly what she did and who helped her. She couldn't have done this alone. Call me on my cell when you've got something. Until then go to Ducky. Questions?"

Both agents shook their heads but McGee hesitated.

"You sure, Boss? Well of course you're sure, but..."

"Spit it out, McGee..." Gibbs said as he threw his coat on.

McGee straightened before speaking. "Maybe Ducky should go with you. Tony really didn't look good and it's our fault that it went so far."

There, he'd said it and remained nearly at attention waiting to be razed to the ground for their failure to watch over Tony.

Gibbs stopped although every fiber of his being was urging him to ignore the words and just go but McGee and Ziva were part of his family, too. He controlled his voice as best he could but it still came out as a near-growl.

"A lot happened while I was gone. I don't know what you should have known or not...both Jenny and Tony are good at hiding things. Just dig through everything and we'll figure it all out together, got that?" He turned to go but turned and pointed at both agents. "You call me!" he ordered as he left taking the stairs rather than wait for the elevator.

"Yes, Boss..."

"Of course, Gibbs..."

Ziva and Tim answered simultaneously to the rapidly departing Gibbs. With a final look at one another they broke apart, Tim to his computer to begin an electronic search of Jenny's files and Ziva to do an office search. They would not fail Gibbs and Tony again, they each swore to themselves.

## Chapter 22

Gibbs drove through the early evening. As he drove he muttered imprecations and occasionally slammed his hands on the wheel completely ignoring the honking of horns and squeal of tires as usual.

Jenny was sedated and being transported to Bethesda. He was torn. God, he wanted to kill her and at the same time he grieved for the loss of the woman he used to consider a friend. But she was beyond his help right now. His priority was Tony. First he had to find him and then he had to convince him that none of what happened was his fault. It had all been Jenny. He damned her under his breath again.

Two hours later his cell phone rang and he answered. The fact that it was Ducky calling told him that neither Ziva nor McGee wanted to be the ones to relay what they'd found. He listened for a bit and then suddenly slammed on his brakes and pulled to the side of the road amidst the sound of angry horns. There was no way he could drive with what he was hearing.

"You tell them to hold Perkins and Watts. I'll question them when I get back, understand?" he yelled but then stopped to continue to listen. He ran his hand over his face. What Ducky told him made him want to vomit. The day he left was when Tony had been molested right there at NCIS and Tony had hid it from him. He'd hid everything he'd been going through although he had reported it...to Jenny. They found his reports in her desk and Cynthia had confirmed that nothing had been done with them.

He wondered how they'd found Perkins and Watts but then Ducky filled him in. They'd found personnel files for Perkins and Watts, a mailroom employee, in her desk. Although it wasn't inconceivable for her to have Perkins' file despite the fact that his direct supervisor was another Team Lead, there really was no reason for her to have Watts' file. Reading both they found similarities in their backgrounds and evaluations, similarities indicating severe homophobia, something Jenny knew she could exploit.

"It seems, Jethro, that Jenny did quite a bit of background research to have found these two individuals."

"Yeah, she was always good at that," Gibbs sighed, again feeling remorse for the loss of someone who used to be a good agent.

Ducky continued with a detailed account of what McGee had found out so far in interrogation. At the back of his head Gibbs was proud that McGee had taken it upon himself to begin the interrogation but what he had found out had Gibbs' face pale with rage. Ducky finished with some more along the lines of being calm enough to drive and deal with Tony without causing further stress. Gibbs was breathing heavily but he listened and he forced himself to settle down. He ended the call and got back on the road driving even faster than before. He had a local LEO tailing him with lights once but a quick radio call had the officer halt his pursuit and veer off. There were no further problems.

While he drove he considered what Ducky had told him. From what they knew so far it was obvious that Jenny had used the report given to her by Dr. Garcia to form her plan. He didn't blame the doctor. As Director, Jenny had access to quite a bit of personal information and not just for the agents...she could access any NCIS employee file. The information was just never intended to be used like this. And if her plan was as thorough as he thought it was considering her abilities, he had a rough job ahead of him. And then he damned himself for not killing her when he had the chance.

Gibbs pulled into the parking lot of a chain hotel and met with the two local officers who'd responded to the BOLO.

"We can back you up, Agent Gibbs or if you need more officers I can radio that in..." he offered.

"No, thanks. I have to do this alone."

The two officers looked at one another. They didn't know who the fugitive was but no law officer should go into any situation without backup. "Agent Gibbs..."

Gibbs raised his hand. "This man isn't a felon. He has vital information and...he's ill," he lied. Well, partially at any rate. After another token protest the officers left and Gibbs turned to the desk clerk.

"I want a key."

"Ill, huh?" the clerk smirked as he grabbed master key card. "He's one of those perverts who got himself pregnant..."

His words were stopped by Gibbs' fists in his shirt. "What room?" he growled at the now frightened man.

"Uhh, 242...go left and then up the stairs and right at the ice..." the clerk nearly pissed himself at the sight of those blue eyes boring holes in his head. When would he learn to shut his trap like his wife always told him?

"Show me!" Gibbs barked as he pulled the man out from behind his desk.

"Yes, sir...this way, sir," the man babbled as he ran with Gibbs' hold on his bicep pushing him along.

When they got to the room Gibbs growled 'leave' and the man vanished. He used the key card and slowly opened the door to the dim room. He stepped closer, closing the door behind him. His sharp eyes took in the scene before him and what he saw made his chest ache with remorse and sorrow.

Tony lay on the bed curled around a pillow but the anguish he was feeling was obvious on his face. Dried tear tracks and deep lines carved into the smooth brow and around the down-turned mouth testified to the torment he'd suffered. Gibbs could see slight tremors shaking the beloved body as Tony drew in a hitched breath.

The sight brought Gibbs physical pain. "Tony..." he choked out from deep in his body.

The tortured sound was enough to rouse Tony from his sleep. He opened reddened eyes but upon seeing Jethro he shook his head, "No!" His face contorted in a grimace and he crawled backwards on the bed until his back was to the headboard. He kept the pillow in front of him as though it was a shield against the pain that seeing Jethro brought him.

"Gibbs, you have to let me go...it won't work..."

Tony's initial reaction to his presence sent glass-like shards of pain slicing through Gibbs' chest and tears filled his eyes.

"Tony, you have to listen...it was Jenny. She did this to get you away from me. Please, baby, please...I'm begging you to listen to me..."

Tony's eyes widened in shock. Gibbs *never* said please...and he'd never beg. Oh, God...were those *tears* in his eyes? He shook his head, this wasn't real...he was still dreaming. But regardless of whether or not this was a dream, Gibbs wanted him to listen so he did.

He nodded his head slowly and Gibbs took a step forward with his hands out in a calming gesture. Tony nearly laughed at the textbook move he'd also been trained in...only this time *he* was the distraught individual in the scenario. *I'm losing it*, he thought to himself.

"Jenny did this...she set everything up to hurt you, to get you to quit."

Tony's eyes narrowed in confusion, "Why?" This made no sense.

"She's sick...brain tumor. I swear it's true, Tony. She's at Bethesda now."

Gibbs took another step towards the bed but Tony pulled away a bit. That slight movement hurt Gibbs more than he could express. He had to make Tony understand.

"Jenny had Gerry's report, Tony. She knew exactly what buttons to push to accomplish her mission...and that's exactly what this was. A mission to get you to leave me."

Tony looked up into the fathomless eyes, dark in the dim room yet still burning with an intensity that made his heart race. God, he wanted to reach out to Jethro, to feel those arms around him making him feel safe, secure. But he fucked up everything he touched. He looked down at the pillow in his hands and watched as a fat tear dripped from his face to soak into the coarse cloth.

"If I hadn't been so weak, so fucked up..."

"No!" Gibbs nearly shouted but then stopped and took a deep breath. "No," he repeated more softly. "Tony, you can't blame yourself or call it weakness...she pinpointed you. You never stood a chance. If she'd decided to stage her campaign against McGee or Ziva or even Ducky, she still would have succeeded."

"A campaign?" Tony asked. "But why? Why me?"

"Years ago, that thing in Paris I told you about...she fixated on that, wanted it back."

Tony looked down at the pillow he was mutilating. The whole sordid mess was obviously being investigated. That's it, then. Gibbs would learn everything, every fuck-up, the humiliation, every degrading touch and look. Might as well get it over with...

"It wasn't just her..."

"I know about Perkins and Watts, sweetheart. They're in custody right now..."



"There's a third one...I...I don't know wh-who..." Tony choked on that last bit. God, just telling Gibbs made him feel just as dirty as when it had happened.

"I'll find him, Tony. I swear it but you have to believe me...this wasn't your fault. I'm so sorry I wasn't here. God, Tony...can you forgive me?"

Everything he'd ever wanted was right there in the arms that were held open in supplication. But at what point would Gibbs figure he just wasn't worth it? He took a shuddering breath and turned away but this was Gibbs. The man didn't put up with fools and fuck-ups, but Gibbs had never lied to him, had never gone back on his word. Gibbs said he was *his* boy and he would never have said that if he didn't mean it. He would never say that if he was ashamed of him. He had to trust that there was an explanation for everything. He had to trust Gibbs...*had* to...

"Never say you're sorry..." he choked out and in two steps Gibbs had his arms around him, desperately kissing him and holding him as he sobbed out his anguish.

"God, Jethro...oh, God...it was worse...than with Gianni..." Tony gasped out as he cried.

Gibbs could understand that...this betrayal was worse than his father's, the molestation worse than Gianni's rape. He'd never trusted his father to watch his back, not like he would another NCIS agent and he never expected anything else from an animal like Gianni. But to have something like this happen at a location where you took your safety for granted, a location filled with people who put their lives on the line to protect others... That betrayal made Gibbs sick to his stomach.

He ran his hands over Tony's back and through his hair murmuring encouragement and soft endearments while he rocked him, the action soothing his own agitation as much as Tony's.

Later, when he'd calmed a bit, Tony lifted his head from Gibbs' shoulder. Gibbs was still running his hand through his hair but paused when Tony looked at him. Tony could see the silvery trails of tears down Gibbs face and he brought his hand up in wonder. Cupping Jethro's face he pulled him down to lick and kiss away the salty evidence of Jethro's remorse.

"It's not your fault, either, Jethro. You can't hold my hand for the rest of my life. I have to be strong...I have to be able to take care of myself."

Jethro caught Tony's hand in his and held it.

"Tony, listen to me, okay? You *are* strong...no, I said listen to me," he reiterated when Tony turned away. He didn't continue until Tony was again looking at him. "Right or wrong, you made a decision that I would be better off without you. You made your plans to leave and have your baby by yourself despite the pain it caused you. You are strong, Tony, and you were trying to protect *me*. You didn't just give up."

"I was running away! Everything I touched was so fucked up and I couldn't do that to you, too. God, I want you to be happy, Jethro, I need you to have a good life..."

"That'd be impossible if you leave. I have no life without you, Tony."

"So many people are against me...against us, Jethro..."

Gibbs held Tony's head in his hands as he tried to make Tony believe what he was saying.

"First of all, Jenny only made it seem that way. It was part of her plan. Tell me...when she was bad-mouthing you...us...were you alone? Or did she do that in front of others?"

"She never hid how she felt about me...not her words or her looks..."

"She was the Director...the highest level of supervision. If she made it plain that she felt that way, of course anyone else who had any problems with us would feel free to express it. Think about it...most people don't express their bias openly because it's not accepted. But she let it happen...she encouraged it!"

"It doesn't change how they feel..."

"Yeah, but who gives a damn? I don't. I only care about you and about our friends. With her illness she lost all sense of professionalism...she let her personal desires dictate her behavior regardless of whether or not it was real. She didn't just hurt you, Tony...she hurt the agency. And she dragged others into it who'll lose their jobs, maybe jail time..."

Gibbs moved his hands down to massage Tony's shoulders. "The point is that she did a lot of damage. SecNav is sending in someone to investigate. This won't be ignored. But if you want to leave, fine, we both leave. I could have retired years ago but a certain fella showed up that made life interesting," he said with a smile at Tony. "Got some land coming to me back in Stillwater, there's a cabin...I could call Jackson, get it fixed up..."

Tony looked at Gibbs to see if he was joking but the intense look was completely serious.

"You'd leave NCIS...retire...for me?"

Gibbs only response was a light smack to the back of his head which made Tony smile. Then Gibbs took his hand in his own and wrapped their fingers together.

"I've already sent in my resignation..." Tony said.

"McGee found it...told him to trash it."

"Trashed...?"

"Yeah, that whole duress thing again. Besides, it never went beyond Jenny but if that's what you want..."

"No! No, I can do this. I want to go back. Besides, I'm getting Perkins and Watts for what they've done. But there's one thing I need to know," Tony said but he looked down at their still entwined hands. "I need to know exactly what you told Jenny to tell me..."

"Which time? All those messages I gave her never made it to you."

"About the ceremony...about my attending."

Jethro stared at him for a moment wondering how Jenny had twisted the message to hurt Tony. He decided to just repeat what he'd said to her.

"I told her to tell you not to worry about it. I never go to those things...you know that. The brass was making a big deal about it but I didn't want you to think it was required. Hell, I left early just to get home to you..." *And if I hadn't I might never have found you...* And that thought made him tighten his arms around Tony who buried his face in his neck. "What did she say...?"

Tony shook his head not wanting to admit to how he'd taken it. But Jethro was waiting quietly. "That you didn't want me to attend."

Understanding lit Jethro's eyes even as his mouth thinned in anger. "Tony, I'll walk by your side up to the President himself. I am not now and never will be ashamed of you, you got that?"

"Got it, Boss."

"And I'm saying the words, Tony, now and forever until you believe that you're my boy. I love you, Tony. Now and forever." He repeated and felt Tony nodding his head.

"Yours, Jethro...always. I love you."

Jethro held Tony, rocking him softly while he placed small kisses on Tony's hair and against his brow until he felt his body relaxing against him and he knew he'd fallen asleep. He moved slowly until he had his cell phone and he hit the speed dial for Ducky. Whispering, he let Ducky know that all was well and that they'd be back in the morning. Then he moved and shifted until he was comfortable and knew that Tony was, too, and tried to get some sleep.

He'd been running on coffee ever since he'd been given the green light to come home only to find this fucked up situation. And it wasn't over, yet. He needed to get Tony back to see his doctors and also to find out Jenny's status. He should get some sleep. He should, but found himself unable to shut off his brain. He was still silently raging over his inability to protect Tony...twice now.

He could feel the tension building inside of him and knew that deep down he still wanted revenge...revenge for Tony and for himself. But the fact remained that the revenge he wanted so badly was out of his reach. DiNozzo Sr. was sitting in jail probably for the rest of his life but everything in Gibbs screamed that it was too good for him. He smirked at the thought that DiNozzo got what the law decreed but in his heart it wasn't enough despite the fact that he's an officer of the law.

And Jenny was in the hospital. Yes, she's going to die but he didn't think he could find it in himself to forgive her actions. Or to forgive himself. He knew he needed to find some way to deal with the impotent rage and guilt that was eating at him. Bourbon was out but the boat was still there. And of course there's Tony and the baby. But he knew that nothing would be settled until all the bastards that helped Jenny were dealt with as well as Constantino.

He again thought about that moment when he pulled the trigger killing the drug dealer who'd taken Shannon and Kelly from him. It hadn't eased the pain or the loss. It hadn't stopped him from contemplating eating his own gun on more than one occasion. The only thing that had done that had come in a tall, hazel-green-eyed package. The same one he now felt blessed to be holding after the fear of losing him...them...again. It would just take time, he knew. Time they now had and he forced himself to accept that. He had no other choice. He sighed deeply and closed his eyes which were burning from fatigue and forced his body to relax a bit more. He wasn't aware of the moment when sleep claimed him.

## Chapter 23

At some point during the night Gibbs got up and undressed before sliding back under the covers and snuggling up to Tony's back. Tony never really woke up but he did push his butt backwards until he was spooned tightly against Gibbs. Gibbs tightened his arms around his lover, cupping one small breast in his hand and whispered 'my boy' into Tony's nape before sleep again claimed him.

The next morning Gibbs woke up in keeping with his internal alarm clock. Tony was still sound asleep but he looked so fragile, so vulnerable. Gibbs wanted to slide back into bed and wrap him in his arms but he also needed to find some coffee and they needed to get on the road. Gibbs knew he wouldn't be able to relax until Stan had seen Tony. Gerry needed to see him, too. He thought about the night before momentarily reliving that moment when he'd first laid eyes on Tony and he again felt that pain in his chest. Never again, he swore to himself. Never again would Tony go through something like that alone. He was too much of a realist to think that Tony would never again be exposed to narrow-minded people, but he'd make sure that Tony knew he

was loved and supported no matter what.

He quickly showered and got dressed and only then did he rouse Tony with a gentle kiss to his temple. Tony rolled over and opened bleary eyes.

"Don' wanna get up..." he murmured sleepily which brought a smile to Gibbs' face.

"I know, sweetheart, but we need to get back. You need to see Stan plus you need some food. When did you eat last?"

Tony had his eyes closed but the small frown told Gibbs he was still awake and thinking.

"Don't remember..."

"That's it then, baby. Get up and jump in the shower. Plenty of hot water if nothing else in this dump, and then food."

Tony dragged himself out of bed. "Too fat to jump anywhere..." he mumbled but made his way into the bathroom.

The comment would have been funny if not for Tony's mental state. "But we're going to fix that," Gibbs said quietly to the empty room. He heard the shower start and decided to go to the lobby for some coffee.

A short while later Gibbs was driving down the street and spotted a café. They'd get breakfast and then hit the road.

Tony eyed the small establishment but shied away from going inside where there'd be people to stare and laugh.

"Can't we just find a drive-through somewhere? It'd be faster," he said in an effort to avoid being in public.

"Nope, nothing but grease in that stuff. You need real food and this is the closest we're going to get until I get you home."

Gibbs parked the car and then leaned over, putting a hand on Tony's shoulder. He knew what Tony was feeling.

"You're not alone, Tony. Never again, got that?"

Tony looked into the determined blue eyes. Eyes that said that not only did Tony need food but that he'd kill anyone who'd prevent that. And this was Gibbs, it wasn't like Tony had a choice here. Besides, he was right.

"Okay," he said with a sigh and a nod and then steeled himself. He reached for the door handle.

"That's my boy," Gibbs said with a smile.

They were seated by a smiling young girl who wore her surprise openly on her face but nowhere did it hold any hint of disgust or disapproval. Gibbs nodded at her and decided she could live.

Next their waitress came to the table. Her nameplate said 'Sue' and she was a bit older but just as smiley as the young girl had been.

"Oh my, aren't you a sight, honey!" she said while Tony blushed lightly and Gibbs felt his muscles tense. He kept an eye on her ready to jump on her if she said anything at all to upset Tony.

"Let me get your drink order," she continued without realizing how tense her customers had just become.

"Coffee, black," Gibbs said tersely.

She smiled and turned to Tony. "Well, I've got some tea for you, hun. Can you drink black or is herbal better? I've got both, and then maybe some milk or juice?"

She waited expectantly for about one second before she continued talking. Gibbs wondered if she ever kept quiet. He wished she would now although she hadn't said anything to sign her death warrant just yet.

"I'm guessing eight months, is that right?" the waitress beamed happily when Tony nodded. "Oh, I just love babies...and if your little one has your eyes, well he'll just be a sight. What can I get you, hun?"

"Herbal tea, please," Tony said quietly, still blushing lightly. "And juice, orange, please."

"Coming right up while you look at the menu. Be back in a flash!" she tossed out over her shoulder. Another customer called out for some more coffee. "Back in a flash, hun!" she answered.

"You okay so far?" Gibbs asked. Although he liked the look of the blush on Tony's face he wasn't too thrilled about the reason for it.

"Yeah," Tony said. "I'm just glad I'm not the only 'hun' in this place, though," he said with a hint of a smile and Gibbs relaxed slightly.

True to her word Sue was back almost immediately with their drinks. She pulled out her notepad and asked for their order. Gibbs ordered bacon and eggs. Tony hesitated a bit still not feeling very hungry. But he knew he needed to eat so he ordered some oatmeal.

"How about some toast, hun? Wheat would be good for you, more fiber...and how about a side of fresh fruit. You look like you need to be eating a bit more..." she continued while shooting Gibbs a dirty look after her last comment.

Gibbs was mildly offended that she blamed him, but she was right. Tony didn't look too good and who was to blame? He accepted the blame readily even if not appropriately.

Tony accepted her gentle scolding and ordered the wheat toast and fruit. Sue left again promising a flash return.

Tony kept his eyes glued to the table and began worrying at the edge of his napkin. He froze when he felt a warm hand cover his. Wide eyes shot up at Gibbs and then scanned the rest of the café. The hand on his squeezed him gently and then released him.

"Its okay, Tony, I've got your six. You're getting interested looks but nothing negative," Gibbs said quietly.

Of course Gibbs would be keeping an eye out. Hell, Tony should have known that, too, and would have if he hadn't been so screwed up. *I need him on my six*, Tony thought. *I can't take care of myself...*

"Stop thinking so hard, Tony. Relax," Gibbs said not liking the frown he saw on Tony's face. He really needed to get him back and not just to see Stan but to see Gerry as well.

While the cook prepared breakfast for her customers, Sue took a large plate and began arranging fruit. She'd taken one look at that young man and her heart had gone out to him. She understood

the need to have children and to her it didn't matter if you're a man or woman but it sure seemed like he'd been having some trouble. *Poor thing*, she thought.

"What're ya doin', Sue? That's enough fruit for three side orders...it'll come out of your tips!" the cook warned all the while frying and flipping other food orders.

"Don't you worry I'll pay for it...this boy needs it," she said testily but still with a laughing gleam in her eye.

The cook eyed her and smiled back. Seems his wife had found someone else to mother. *Pity we only had five kids, but then Sue adopted everyone who came her way*, he thought idly. The cook shrugged and called out another order. Whatever makes her happy, he told himself.

"Here you go, hun," Sue said happily as she laid plates on the table. She set the fruit place down and turned it so that it set right and faced the young man properly. She continued talking while she put catsup and hot sauce on the table along with their toast.

"I'm off the clock here in a minute so Sally'll finish you up if you need anything. There's just one more thing I want to say before I go, though, if you don't mind."

Gibbs turned to look warily at her but she was facing Tony.

"Hun, you look like you're having a tough time of it. I had five of my own so I know what I'm talking about here. Just remember this...no matter what happens, the minute you hold your little one in your arms all that hurtful stuff you've known will just fade away. Trust me...that baby will be worth everything you've gone through and more. Now, you'll be in my prayers tonight. Take care of yourself and that precious baby," she said with a smile that encompassed both Tony and Gibbs although Gibbs was sure she meant he'd better pick up whatever slack there'd been so far. With a final pat on Tony's shoulder she turned and walked away.

Tony remained silent and Gibbs was growing concerned until he saw Tony begin to smile. With a quick move he turned the plate so that Gibbs could see the smiley face Sue had made of the fruit. Banana and strawberry 'hair' crowned a face made up of grape eyes, a half-strawberry nose and a cantaloupe smile.

Sue watched from the kitchen and saw both men smile at her creation. *Lord, that boy is beautiful when he smiles*, she thought, *that baby will be quite a looker if he has half his mama's looks*. And with that she gave her husband a quick peck on the cheek before she slipped out to see to her own brood who should almost be ready for school. She'd take them in, get some cleaning done and then be back in time for the lunch crowd. She left with a smile on her face.

When they'd finished breakfast, which Tony had completely devoured, and Gibbs had paid leaving a huge tip, they hit the road. Almost immediately Tony fell back asleep and stayed that way for the entire trip home.

Later that day, three of the four men in the house walked down the stairs of Gibb's home. Ducky separated from them stating that he'd make tea and coffee.

"Preeclampsia?" Gibbs asked Stan as he gathered his things.

"I'm going to test for it but what I really suspect is that his high blood pressure is stress-induced. Ducky will be keeping an eye on it but I believe that what he needs most right now is rest and some good food. I'll write out a prescription for the same nutrient supplements I gave him last time and possibly some HPB meds if it doesn't come down on its own now that he's home. But it's important, Jethro, that he stay in bed. When I say bedrest for the next two weeks, I mean it. No getting up except to go to the bathroom."

"I'll make sure of it," Gibbs stated.

Stan looked at him and smiled. Gibbs reminded him of some of the nurses he'd worked with in the past. He was sure Tony was in good hands.

"If things look good he should be up and around for the last couple of weeks in case you have anything important planned..." he left off with questioning eyebrows. He'd known of the aborted wedding plans.

"I'll let you know, Stan," Gibbs said with a smile and put his hand out to shake Stan's and then walked him to the door but Stan turned around with one more thing.

"Oh and, before you call me later to ask, other activities are permitted. It is a known medical fact that stress and blood pressure levels drop several points afterwards. I'll be seeing you soon. Bye."

And with that he left Jethro standing at the door with a bemused expression on his face. His reverie was broken, though, by the ringing of his cell phone. He returned to the living room still on the phone. Ducky had just walked in with a tray but paused at the threshold when he saw Gibbs on his cell.

"I've got to go, Duck," he said without preamble. "Can you stay awhile?"

Tony was asleep and they suspected he would be for some time so Gibbs should be fine going to the office.

"Of course, Jethro. I've no intention of leaving for some time, at least not until I'm assured of Tony's lowered blood pressure readings."

Gibbs nodded. He relayed that the call had been from McGee giving him more information about what they'd found in Jenny's files and also to say that both Watts and Perkins were in interrogation waiting for him. He paused for a moment and made a decision. They could wait and the coffee smelled good. Besides, he wanted to wait for a bit in case Tony had a nightmare.

"Let's drink what you've got there first." He said and was rewarded with a smile from Ducky as he sat down.

"A very good choice, Jethro, and I believe those two scoundrels can wait in interrogation until hell freezes over," he said in his amiable way that made Gibbs laugh. He agreed.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 24 - 25 by cernicalo

Chapter 24

Gibbs left Tony still asleep with Ducky watching over him and another agent outside of the house. He'd gotten a message from Tobias to say he'd meet him at NCIS. He wasn't sure what that was about but he'd learn soon.

He entered NCIS and headed straight for interrogation. He'd just rounded the corner when McGee caught up with him.

"Boss, we know who the third assailant was..."

Gibbs turned away because he heard someone approaching interrogation from the other direction.

“It was FBI Agent Sacks...”

Just then Gibbs saw Tobias and two other agents escorting Sacks down the hall. Without thought he was suddenly in Sacks' face pinning him against the wall, his forearm pressing against Sacks' throat. Tobias, McGee and the other two agents were trying to pry him off, succeeding after nearly a minute.

The next thing Gibbs knew was that he was being held by McGee and the two agents while Tobias was down on one knee checking Sacks. Sacks was coughing but otherwise appeared to be alright.

“Okay...OKAY!” Gibbs practically yelled. He was slowly released but he could see the wary looks of the agents who were watching him closely in case he tried to kill Sacks a second time.

“Does he need a medic?” he growled at Tobias who shook his head. “Then get him into interrogation!” he spit out with a nearly violent gesture of his arm indicating the room. Tobias nodded his head at his two agents who moved to help Sacks into interrogation but he walked up to Gibbs.

“I can't let you go in there, Jethro, you are not a part of this investigation.” Tobias said with one hand on Gibbs' chest.

“The hell I'm not...” growled Gibbs.

“He's right,” came a new voice from behind them both.

Gibbs turned to see Leon Vance standing there one hand in his pants pocket the other holding on to a toothpick he'd obviously just plucked from his mouth.

Leon sauntered over to the two men but his eyes stayed on Gibbs.

“You're too close. In fact, even Agent McGee and Officer David are too close but since they've begun the investigation I'll let them continue unless I feel a need to pull them.”

“SecNav sent you to handle the investigation.” It was a statement. “What else?”

“In charge until further notice,” Leon replied.

Gibbs could see that he wasn't exactly happy about it, either. It didn't surprise him. It was close to Christmas and who knew how long the investigation would take, let alone finding a replacement for Jenny. He didn't envy the man.

“I still want in on the interrogations, Leon.” Gibbs demanded. He wanted to know firsthand just what Sacks and the others had done.

“Can't happen,” Leon stated unequivocally. “This is going to go by the books and from what I just saw I doubt any of these men would survive to see their trials if you were involved.”

“Damn it, Leon!” Gibbs knew he was right but he needed to be in on it, needed to do something to assuage his anger and guilt.

Leon looked at the furious man before him but he couldn't do anything about that. He had to make sure it was done right not only for Tony but for NCIS. The whole issue was already raising holy hell with two agencies because an FBI agent was involved but with the sensitive issue of male pregnancy it was a complete powder keg.



"I'm sorry, Jethro...really. If something like this had happened to my wife I don't know if I could stand back, either...order or not. But I'm not just ordering you to do that...I'm asking you to. Let Agent Fornell and I handle this for you."

Leon watched Jethro looking for some sign of acquiescence. He didn't want to take any drastic measures to keep Jethro away but he would, for both his and DiNozzo's sake. Gibbs eyes were boring holes through his head but he stared right back. After a moment Gibbs did give one single nod. He let out a tiny exhalation of relief, which was all that he would allow himself when facing Leroy Jethro Gibbs in attack mode, and then he nodded back.

"I wanna watch," Jethro tried again and Leon snorted. He knew Gibbs wouldn't just walk away, but this he would allow.

"Alright, and then you go take care of Tony," he said not unkindly.

Gibbs nodded back and his eyes defrosted a bit which was as close as he'd come to a thank you. Tobias also let out a sigh of relief. He wasn't sure if they'd be able to get Gibbs to back off without cuffing him, not after that murderous intent he'd seen in Jethro's eyes, a look which he hoped to God he'd never again see on his friend's face.

"Let's do this, then," Tobias said.

"You going in alone?" Gibbs asked.

"No, I've got McGee backing me up. I was pretty impressed when I saw him interrogating Perkins and Watts. That boy's been taking lessons from you, Jethro. He had Perkins shaking and Watts did, in fact, piss his pants."

Jethro smiled broadly, his first in far too long, and gave a quick nod. "This I've gotta see," he said.

-----  
Tobias walked into the room and sat across the table from Sacks and just looked at him without expression. After a few moments Agent McGee also entered. He moved to the back of the room and leaned against the wall nonchalantly and staring at Sacks. Sacks stared back sullen and angry and refusing to speak. Sacks was used to this interrogation technique although he'd always been on the other side of the table in McGee's position backing up Fornell. But he could do this. He was a trained interrogator, too. He didn't have to admit to anything. All he had to do was stay quiet until Director Shepherd showed up. Just let Fornell lead the questions and then he'd know what they had on him, he'd know what had been said. He just had to let Fornell spill the information. It should be easy. He'd done this a hundred times to other suspects. He eyed the cool man sitting opposite of him and he felt a twinge in his stomach. Damn! What did Fornell know?

They sat that way for awhile in a well-known standoff each waiting for the other to break, Sacks occasionally rubbing a hand over his bruised neck. He kept all expression off of his face which was proving harder to do than he thought as his mind worked furiously to figure out his options. He again rubbed his neck. Where the hell did that bastard Gibbs get off treating him like that? He was doing him a favor by getting rid of DiNozzo. Sacks looked at Fornell and then looked at the mirror behind him and wondered who was watching this. Was Director Shepherd there? What had she said about his involvement? This was never supposed to come back on him...she'd promised that. He looked at the mirror again and told himself to remain calm. Yeah, he told himself that but tiny doubts worked their way into his thoughts. Shepherd was a powerful woman. He'd trusted in that power but what if she turned her back on him? And what had Perkins and Watts said? He never knew what it felt like to be on this side of the table opposite Fornell and

he'd never really thought about it before. But it was tough, hard to believe with someone as initially unimposing as Fornell, but there was something in his eyes, eyes he'd watched for several years that made him itch to learn more about the man. He readjusted his chair to be more comfortable.

Fornell looked through his papers a bit longer. Sacks was fidgeting. Always a good sign. But Fornell was disappointed. He'd of thought Sacks would do better than this, but then you really don't know what it felt like to be in the hot chair until you were there. He'd been in Sacks' position, too, but he'd been innocent. Sacks wasn't and you could see his nervousness in his darting eyes and slight movement. He waited a bit more.

Sacks looked up at the camera. The red light was on so they were recording this. God, it was never supposed to have gotten to this point and he resented Fornell being the one to question him about it. They were a team, not enemies. This was all DiNozzo's fault, if he hadn't caught Fornell's eye none of this would have happened. Where was Gibbs? He was the exalted one at NCIS...or was he out of it because of his personal involvement with DiNozzo? He gritted his teeth at the thought of the perverted bastard and he blamed him for the entire mess. Why hadn't he been killed along with his supposed brother? It would have saved everyone a lot of grief. He ran his hand over the back of his neck and finally blurted the question that had been plaguing him.

"Where is Director Shepherd?"

"She is unavailable," Fornell said and resumed his review of the file in his hands.

Sacks blew out a lungful of air in exasperation. "When will she be available?" he asked and then kicked himself.

Fornell looked at Sacks over the top of his glasses. He'd honestly hoped that Sacks would last longer. But guilt did that to a man if he had any bit of conscience at all. Guilt and fear. He wondered when he would ask for a lawyer.

"What did Director Shepherd promise you?" Fornell asked curiously as he looked at the younger man he'd been mentoring as an agent. Why had he never seen the level of antipathy Sacks held for DiNozzo? He'd reviewed Sacks psych eval to see what they had missed that Jenny had obviously picked up on in order to recruit him for her plan. But maybe it all boiled down to his hatred of DiNozzo. He'd known men to kill for less.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Sacks replied as he again glanced at the mirror behind Fornell.

"Well, why don't I enlighten you?" Fornell began.

"According to some statements I have here it says that you were the ring-leader in your little Get Rid of DiNozzo plan. It was your idea to attack Agent DiNozzo on NCIS premises and that you were the one to take the evidence bag from his desk."

"Those are lies..."

"Okay, I was just trying to clarify some things from these other statements but if you know the truth, why don't you tell me. Then you can explain the video evidence from the surveillance cameras in the bullpen and in the hallway where you attacked Agent DiNozzo," Fornell said as he watched Sacks eyes.

Surveillance cameras? The Director had never said anything about that...

Fornell saw the surprise widen his ex-agent's eyes slightly before they narrowed again. Gotcha, he thought. But it was the truth. Abby and McGee had worked their magic once they'd gone

through Jenny's computer and saw that she'd been accessing the digital recordings.

Unfortunately she'd been good. They couldn't recover what she'd deleted but they could prove that the recordings had been altered and by whom. It had been an educated guess on McGee's part that it had been Sacks who'd taken the evidence. Fornell had gotten lost in his explanation about data this and sequence that and instead found himself watching Abby's pigtailed bounces as she nodded furiously at McGee's side. God, what he wouldn't give to have those two on his team. He decided to play his next card.

"We also have evidence linking you to the utility closet," he said.

"That's not possible," Sacks said as he stared into Fornell's face. They'd made sure that they didn't leave any trace on DiNozzo... He knew that he hadn't gone crying to that freaky lab tech so how could they have gotten anything? He thought back. Yeah, DiNozzo had fought, slammed Watts across the face with his knee once when he bent down. He himself had gotten head-butted...could it have been a hair, some spit? Jesus, she must have searched millimeter by millimeter...

"I want a lawyer."

"The Bureau's Legal Advocate is on his way here now."

Fornell watched as Sacks closed his eyes. Didn't think about evidence at the location, did you? he thought to himself. Tony must have struggled pretty good to have dislodged trace from Sacks and Watts, the two they were able to identify through DNA. It was through Watts' statement that they were able to place Perkins there as well.

"What I don't understand, Ron, is why? What would make you get involved with Shepherd on this?"

Sacks looked at Fornell. He knew he should just be quiet but the anger and indignation was churning inside of him.

"She wanted DiNozzo out of the agency," he blurted. "...she said he made her look bad..."

"And you didn't question this?"

"She's the Director of NCIS..."

McGee moved over to the table and leaned down, one hand on the table the other on the back of the chair Sacks sat in.

"She's not the Director anymore..." he said quietly.

Fornell could see the fury in McGee's eyes and he approved.

"Do you want to know where she is?" he asked in the same quiet voice. "She's in the hospital. She's got a brain tumor. It completely affected her behavior, made her do things she normally wouldn't. But you didn't question that, did you? You followed along with her plans without batting an eye. The question is why? Why you?"

Sacks turned to look at McGee. She's sick? No, that's not possible... Fuck, fuck, fuck... Oh, he was so screwed and he blamed DiNozzo. That guy caused him nothing but grief, the golden boy that Gibbs wanted so bad...that Fornell wanted...

"She knew I hated him..." he said suddenly tired of the bullshit and not caring whether or not his

lawyer was present. "...always joking, disregarding procedure...policy...his absence would be better for both agencies...perverted bastard..." Sacks spit out at McGee.

"So all of this was just because of his personality? His sexuality?" McGee yelled as he slapped the table with the flat of his hand.

"No, that's not all..." Sacks yelled back.

"He's an excellent agent...one of the best..." Fornell said sincerely playing perfectly off of McGee's Gibbs imitation.

"The best! He's an overgrown, arrogant brat!" Sacks nearly yelled at Fornell. "One you kept asking to switch over to us! All you ever talked about was how good he was at undercover work, how well he read people...well, what about me? You don't know half of what I'm capable of... undercover work, forgery..."

"You signed the counseling forms," McGee suddenly said. He knew as soon as he saw what was written that Tony would never have said half of that stuff...especially not to the Director.

"Yes! I wanted DiNozzo gone as much as the Director did so I did everything she said, even planned some of it myself to get that bastard out of our lives..." Sacks declared furious beyond all sense. He looked at Fornell with a look of supplication in his eyes. "You didn't need him...we didn't..." his voice trailed off at the look of revulsion in Fornell's eyes and suddenly understanding that he'd lost everything.

So this was all driven by jealousy, both Jenny's and Sacks', Gibbs thought as he watched through the mirror, half of him proud of McGee the other half ready to run in there and kill Sacks.

"Our lives, Ron? There is no 'we' here," Fornell stated in disgust. He didn't know where Sacks was coming from, either seeing him as a father figure or whether or not he had sexual feelings for him but it was immaterial. What he'd done in the name of unreasoning hatred for DiNozzo was beyond intolerable.

"How long are we talking here, Agent McGee?"

"Sexual Harassment, Assault on a Federal Officer, Tampering with Evidence, Hampering a Federal Investigation, that's a start so I'd say maybe two years...18 months if you consider Sacks' record..."

"Eighteen months...not that long. But you won't be alone, Perkins and Watts will be right there with you, although most of the evidence charges will go against you and not Perkins. And then you get out, but to what, Ron?"

Sacks just shook his head resigned to how fucked up everything was. "Look, I took the bag off of DiNozzo's desk but I passed it on to Perkins. What he did with it was all his idea."

Fornell nodded, done with the whole thing. Perkins had already admitted to handling the evidence bag but he, at least, had been smart enough to lawyer up during his first interrogation. They hadn't gotten much more out of him after that. Fornell was still amazed at what Ron had admitted to and he knew he'd be thinking about it and the unknowing role he'd played for a long time to come.

Later, when they had full confessions as well as another name, a woman who worked in the evidence room that Ziva would interrogate next, Jethro stepped out of the viewing room to see McGee handing Perkins off to go back to holding. He walked up to his newest Senior Field Agent and patted him on the back.

McGee turned quickly with a bit of surprise on his face. "Boss...?"

"Just wanted to tell you that you did good in there, Tim...real good," Jethro said.

Ziva and Tobias had walked up also but remained standing quietly a few feet away.

"Proud of you, Senior Field Agent McGee," Gibbs continued with a glint in his eye and a slight smile on his lips which broadened when McGee's mouth fell open.

"Bu-but what about Tony?" he asked, shocked at Gibbs' pronouncement.

"We can't be on the same team, especially after we're married. Need a new Senior Agent. You're it."

"Th-thank you, Boss...you won't regret it," McGee stammered out.

"It's up to you to make sure I don't...but you might," he said with a smile and then turned. With a nod to both Tobias and Ziva he left to go home to see Tony. He needed nothing more after hearing everything Tony had been through than to hold him in his arms. He practically flew out of the building with only that goal in mind.

-----  
Gibbs flew up the stairs but then slowed to quietly open the door to the bedroom. He saw Ducky reading in silence by Tony's bedside. He looked up when Gibbs opened the door.

Gibbs never said a word, his eyes solely on the lone occupant of the bed. He began to remove his clothes laying them neatly on the chair near Ducky.

Ducky watched the man he'd known and called friend for very many years. He could see how very agitated he was, the anger boiling just below the surface but blazing out of his eyes. He considered asking but immediately discarded the thought. What Jethro now needed was curled up asleep in the bed. He gathered up his book and walked out of the room and went home.

Gibbs finished undressing. Nude, he slipped under the covers and pulled Tony close. Tony mumbled once but curled up to Gibbs with a small sigh. Gibbs could feel the warmth of Tony's body slowly seeping into him and only then did he realize he was cold, cold inside so deep that he felt frozen. Tony's warm breath ghosted across his chest where he'd curled up next to him and Gibbs slowly, almost woodenly, began to stroke the soft hair.

Eventually, it was as though the ice in his veins began to melt and the soothing movements of running his fingers through the silk became easy and smooth, no longer stiff with rage and pain. The fury and hatred that had stiffened his jaw and kept his muscles tight faded away allowing him to breathe deeply of Tony's scent, letting it fill him and ease the pain.

In his sleep Tony curled closer, one large warm hand stroking the soft skin under it. He pulled a leg up and threw it over Gibbs' to tuck himself tighter to the form that eased his own painful dreams. The feeling of security and safety washed over him as easily as the scent of sawdust and coffee and he slipped deeper into sleep.

Together the two men found what they needed in each other's arms, healing one another by their presence and closeness. They found peace and slept.

For three days Tony had slept almost continuously with Stan, Ducky or Jethro in attendance, rousing only to drink water or broth or to use the bathroom. Since he was sleeping easily they opted not to disturb him. Jethro had worried at first but both Stan and Ducky agreed that he would fully awaken on his own when he was ready. In the meantime Jethro started some projects as both a surprise for Tony and to keep his hands and mind occupied...and away from the dark thoughts that still plagued him. He began by emptying the two other bedrooms in the house. The bedroom across the hall used to be the spare bedroom but now contained all of the things from his marriage with Shannon. After his family's death he was unable to look at the home they'd created together, so he packed everything into boxes and shoved them into the room and closed the door. He hadn't been in there in years but now he finally acknowledged that he had to deal with it and whatever emotions the memories dredged up. It had been long enough.

So he looked through everything and decided what he wanted to keep. He had no intention of trying to forget the life they had, but he didn't need to keep every little knickknack she'd collected in their short time together, either. A lot of it got donated, some thrown away, and some would be moved back into the living room downstairs.

Tony had asked once, way back before he'd left that first time, why Jethro didn't keep a photo of his family out. In his own way, Gibbs knew that Tony was trying to mesh their lives together but he'd resisted. Happy times should be remembered, he'd said and Jethro had wondered at that. Tony had no mementos of his own childhood, just things from his college days and a few photos of friends from his previous jobs in Peoria and Baltimore. With a pang Jethro had realized that there were no happy memories for Tony back then, nothing worth remembering. That wasn't the case for Jethro. And as he sorted through the boxes he smiled and remembered and finally understood that he no longer needed to shut Shannon and Kelly away in his heart. Being with Tony had healed much of the pain he'd known. So he placed those things he wanted to put out in a box and set them aside to share with Tony and to get his input as to their placement. It was time to mesh together their pasts, their present and their future.

The room finally cleaned he turned to the next part...Kelly's bedroom. For years Gibbs had refused to go in there as well, but this room he'd left untouched since his return from seeking his revenge and after awhile it was as though it didn't exist. The only person to have gone in was Tony when he'd left the second time. Jethro still couldn't believe that Tony had managed to climb down the tree in his condition and he smiled. His boy was definitely spunky but then he grimaced at the memory of the long gash down Tony's side. He still deserved a head slap for that stunt.

Not one to put something off just because it would be unpleasant, Gibbs opened the door and was transported back through the years. Dusty stuffed animals and pictures drawn by a childish hand adorned the shelves he'd built so many years before and he felt the familiar pang in his heart. Choosing some items that he specially remembered as keepsakes, he again boxed up everything else and sent it out.

He'd just begun cleaning and re-painting that third day when McGee had shown up. He wasn't surprised to learn that Tony was resting. He noted the splatter of paint on Gibbs' hands and asked where he was working.

"Spare bedroom," Gibbs replied but didn't question McGee when he took his jacket off and rolled up his sleeves. Together they went upstairs and they continued the job working silently but efficiently. The room was done in no time.

"What's on the agenda for tomorrow?" McGee asked as he gathered his coat.

"Move furniture, paint the nursery," Gibbs said with a slight smile.

"Fine. See you tomorrow," McGee said with a nod and then he left.

The next day both Abby and McGee had shown up and they started, Abby keeping

uncharacteristically quiet and not asking to see Tony. Gibbs let it slide not sure if Abby was angry or afraid. She'd only asked what theme Gibbs was going with for the nursery. He'd just shrugged his shoulders, at a loss beyond painting the room a light shade of green with white trim. Abby nodded and made a phone call and then sent McGee out for some more paint. Ziva showed up later with a wallpaper border that showed scenes from fairy tales, princesses and knights, smiling dragons and unicorns. She'd also brought matching curtains for the window. McGee returned with green paint a few shades darker than the rest of the room. They painted the bottom half the darker green and then Gibbs ordered pizza for lunch.

Gibbs peeked in on Tony who woke up enough to munch on some vegetarian pizza and drink some juice. He did ask what smelled funny, sort of like paint, but Gibbs brushed away his questions by stroking Tony's hair until he fell asleep again.

The girls put the border up where the two shades of green met while Tim helped Gibbs put the crib together. It was brand new and had been delivered just that morning. There was also a matching dresser and changing table. The four of them stood admiring their handiwork when Gibbs tapped McGee on the shoulder and they left. They returned a few moments later with a wooden rocking chair and a cradle. It was obvious both had been hand-made.

"Oh, they're beautiful, Gibbs!" Abby said softly and she lightly clapped her hands together.

"You made these, yes?" Ziva asked. She'd known of Gibbs' previous family long before the others knew having profiled the team before her arrival.

Gibbs nodded his throat tight with emotion that didn't show on his face and yet everyone there knew what he was feeling and what it meant to him.

After a bit they moved downstairs once Gibbs had checked in on Tony once more.

"When do you think he'll see us?" Abby asked once Gibbs had rejoined them.

He could hear the pain in her voice and he brought her into his arms.

"Soon," he whispered and pulled back to see the tears in her eyes. She nodded and he looked at them all, his team...no, he corrected...his family.

"Thank you..." he said and was rewarded by three surprised looks. "I do say it every now and then, don't I?" he asked and then saw three equally dubious looks and he laughed. "I mean it, though. Thanks...for all your work, for helping find Tony..."

"Boss," Tim interrupted. He still didn't feel they deserved thanks. They'd let Tony down.

"No, Tim," Gibbs said knowing what he was going to say.

"Tony didn't let you in...I know how good he is at that," he said remembering Tony's cover-up on the day he left. "Jenny's good, too. She fooled everyone...including me," he looked at each of them in turn. "I don't blame any of you." But I do blame myself, he thought with a pang of self-recrimination.

He saw the easing of tension in the young people around him and relaxed slightly.

"What can we do to make this better?" Abby asked, still not mollified with the situation.

"Well, there is something I was going to ask for your help with..."

"Anything, Gibbs..."

“Name it, Bossman...”

Ziva merely nodded her head with a smile and Gibbs nodded once in acknowledgment before telling them of his plan. Their response was enthusiastic and it eased some of the tension in his shoulders he hadn't realized he was still carrying. Then they all sat down to work out the details.

-----

Tony tossed the magazine, throwing it actually, across the room to land in a pile with the other magazines in the corner. He'd been fretting not only over his inactivity and boredom but over the fact that he needed to get things done for the baby. He thought about Sue and smiled. Her sweet support for a total stranger had really touched him. And he was sure she was right about that moment when he held his baby in his arms...he just couldn't really imagine that level of peace just yet. But soon he would know which brought him back to the things he needed to get. Clothes, a crib, diapers, blankets...he wracked his brain, his thoughts filled with all of the stuff in the catalogs he'd seen but it seemed like an insurmountable task to figure it all out. He did order some stuff using Gibbs' credit card...he had money but no cards, yet...but he didn't think it was enough plus it was almost Christmas.....

“aaaagh!”

Gibbs walked in with a lunch tray in time to see the periodical sail across the room and to hear his frustration. He smiled. Tony was bored. He was finally really awake after having slept for nearly three solid days and most of the next. After that, although he was awake, he was so tired he spent the next couple of days just watching the TV Gibbs had brought into the bedroom. Jethro brought him a laptop with his favorite games and he seemed content. He wasn't speaking very much and Gibbs didn't push him. They spoke quietly together when they weren't just holding one another but Gibbs knew it wouldn't last.

Now, after nearly five days at home, Tony was chafing at the bit and displaying his boredom and frustration by pitching the magazines across the room. He nearly laughed out loud at the grumpy pout on the beautiful face. And God, did he look beautiful. The shadows were gone from his eyes and his hair was a mess. He was ruffled and wrinkled and needed a shave but he was the best looking thing Gibbs had seen in what seemed like forever and he had the deepest urge for a repeat of their early morning together. A sense memory of the taste of Tony's skin assailed him and he felt a familiar rush to his groin.

“I'm not hungry,” he said and Gibbs did laugh out loud when that gorgeous bottom lip stuck out.

“Doctor's orders,” he said setting the tray on the nightstand. Then he leaned down and pulled Tony's head in for a kiss. He sucked that pouty bottom lip into his mouth and nibbled lightly until he heard Tony moan. He sat down next to him on the bed.

“If you're a good boy and eat everything I brought you can have some dessert.”

“I thought dessert came after dinner?”

“If you're a good boy we can make an exception,” Gibbs said before leaning in for another kiss.

“Mmm, I can be very good...very, very good...”

“Prove it...”

Tony smiled broadly as he reached for Jethro and brought him closer but Gibbs only gave him one more quick kiss. “...after you eat.”



Tony dropped his head onto Jethro's shoulder with another strangled "aarrgh!" but complied. Besides, the grilled cheese sandwich and tomato soup looked pretty good which meant that he'd get his dessert easily. He smiled and lifted his head.

Gibbs looked at his smiling face and dropped another quick kiss on Tony's lips but that's all he'd allow himself. He stood up and put the tray across Tony's lap and waited until he began eating before stepping towards the door. He had to get out of there now or Ducky might find an eyeful.

"You're not eating with me?"

"Not hungry...had that late breakfast with you," he said. "Besides, I'm working on some stuff."

Tony pouted again and Gibbs smiled. "Ducky will be over after lunch. The team will be by to see you this afternoon."

Gibbs saw Tony drop his head. Shortly after waking up Tony had made his formal statement to Acting Director Vance so that the investigation could continue but he hadn't made any move towards seeing his team mates. Gibbs knew he was embarrassed about seeing everyone he'd walked away from, but the fact was that they had to talk this thing out. Tony couldn't avoid them forever.

"You can clean up after lunch. Ducky'll be here by one," Jethro said gently. Tony lifted his head and nodded. "Holler if you need anything."

"What are you working on?"

"Surprise," Gibbs said easily hoping to get Tony's mind on something other than the impending visit.

"Really?" Tony said with a bright and eager grin and Jethro nodded.

"Eat," he ordered and watched Tony dig into his sandwich. With a nod he left him to eat while he continued with another one of his plans.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 26 - 29 by cernicalo

## Chapter 26

"Very good, dear boy, very good indeed," Ducky pronounced with a smile as he put away his cuff and stethoscope.

"Do you think Stan will let me out of bed, soon?" Tony asked hopefully. He was so tired of being in bed and it had only been a few days. He didn't know if he would survive the full two weeks.

"Oh, no, I should think not, Tony. You do not have preeclampsia right now but it is a very real possibility if you don't take care of yourself."

Tony sighed but nodded. He was definitely going crazy but the health of his baby was his priority which meant, then, that he was stuck in bed until Stan was satisfied. He leaned back and closed his eyes.

"What is it, Tony?" Ducky asked concerned.

"The team is coming over this afternoon. I'm not sure if I'm ready to face them...they're probably really angry with me," Tony said and then opened his eyes. "Why aren't you angry with me?"

"Tony, I was never angry so much as concerned and, quite honestly, hurt," Ducky began.

"Ducky..." Tony started but Ducky raised his hand to forestall his apology.

"Tony, you have to understand how very much you mean to me...all of you do, you know. You are my family. To know that you were hurting was bad enough, but to learn that it was due to mistaken beliefs on your part and malice on the part of another old friend was very difficult to take."

"I am sorry, Ducky. All I can do is promise to try and not let it happen again," Tony said sincerely and Ducky nodded with a smile and a pat to his hand.

"How is she, Ducky?" Tony asked. He'd asked Jethro but he'd clammed up tight with anger in his eyes that had surprised Tony with its depth. He'd spoken with Gerry about it and was coming to terms with the intensity of Jethro's feelings for him as well as learning to accept that maybe he really was worthy of it.

"She's not doing well at all, I'm afraid. And there's not much the doctors can do except to try and lessen her pain." Ducky looked down for a moment and made a decision to confide in Tony. "She has asked to see Jethro but to date he has refused."

Tony's initial reaction was *good*, but then he thought about it. How much could he blame her for her actions? She might always have hated Tony for having what she wanted, but would she have acted on those feelings if it hadn't been for the tumor? There was no way to know.

"Is she lucid? I mean, is she the Jenny we used to know or does she still think she has a chance with Jethro?"

"She has moments where she is not in touch with reality, but generally, she is fully aware of what she has done as well as what her current condition is. I do believe she is seeking some form of closure before she succumbs to her illness."

Tony thought about it and as much as he wanted to say screw her he found that he couldn't. Jethro had cared for her once, had used that to get her to surrender. Would he really be at peace if he didn't close this door for good?

"I'll talk to him," he said without making any promises and Ducky accepted that.

They remained chatting awhile until they were interrupted by a quiet knock at the door. Tony looked up and saw Abby peaking into the room. He took a deep breath and gave her one of his best patented Tony DiNozzo smiles. In a heartbeat she was sitting on the bed and holding him.

"I'm so sorry, Abs...really," Tony whispered into her hair.

"You should be," Abby said with no hint of a smile. "We're a family and family members help each other! God, Tony, you know about the shovel talk...it applies to you, too! Timmy and I'd have happily beaten her with a shovel but you gotta let us know when we need to."

"That's right, Tony," came a deeper voice from the doorway and Tony looked up to see McGee closely followed by Ziva.

"I know you're all mad at me...I'm really sorry, guys. I guess I was pretty messed up..."

"Knock it off, Tony!" McGee interrupted. "We don't want you to feel bad...just try and promise never to do it again. We are a family but we can't be a family if you're going to keep secrets."

"Yes, Tony. McGee is right," Ziva piped in. "There was no need to feel ashamed. I have first-hand experience with agents of Jenny's caliber. Her intent was to single you out and demoralize you. She only succeeded because you forgot that we are stronger as a team."

Tony nodded and looked around him. "Please forgive me..."

"Oh, Toneee..." Abby said as she crawled up next to Tony and curled into him. "Of course we forgive you...that's what families do, too!"

Tony wrapped his arms around her feeling incredibly foolish and blessed at the same time. And although he had to force the self-deprecating thoughts away that automatically clamored in his brain, he looked around at the smiling faces and felt glad that he really did belong to a great family.

Later all three filled Tony in on everything that had happened with the interrogations. He was still stunned to find out that the third assailant had been Sacks, or Slacks as he called him.

"So who was the girl I heard talking?"

"Lisa Adkins from Evidence."

Tony looked down and frowned. "She never did like me..."

"Well, she was dating Perkins..." Tim explained to resounding 'ewwws' from both Abby and Ziva. "And although she went along with some of it, mostly Perkins just used her."

"But how did they know I was going to be at that spot at that time?" Tony wondered. It had been incredible timing.

Abby and Ziva giggled while Tim blushed. "Well, they knew that, uh, you go, you know..."

"You go to the bathroom every hour on the hour, Tony," Abby piped in with a smirk.

Now it was Tony's turn to blush. "Well, missy, just you wait until *you* have a future football player practicing field goals on *your* bladder..." at which point everyone dissolved into fits of laughter.

Tony turned back to Ziva, "so Lisa had the evidence?"

"Yes. Agent Sacks removed it from your desk and gave it to Agent Perkins who in turn gave it to Lisa..."

"But get this," McGee added. "She made Perkins sign the evidence log to preserve the chain..."

"You're kidding!" Tony exclaimed.

"It is true," Ziva continued. "She did not want to hinder Agent Walker's investigation and neither did Perkins."

"Yeah," Tony concluded. "They just wanted to hurt me..."

"But we got them, Tony, all four of them...five, if you count the Director," Abby added.

"I guess I just don't understand why." Tony said with a frown.

"Jealousy, Tony. Pure jealousy." At Tony's frown Tim continued. "Fornell asked you to transfer to the FBI more than once, right?" He saw Tony nod.

"But he didn't mean it...besides, he knew I'd never leave Gibbs..."

"Well, you and Fornell might have known that but Sacks didn't."

"That almost sounds like...no! You mean he wanted in Fornell's pants?" Tony asked incredulously.

"Or he wanted Fornell in his...I'm not sure how all that's decided..."

Tony snorted. "Well, Mr. Mc Bi-curious, when two guys get together..."

"Whoa," Tim interrupted. "TMI, Tony." And again they all broke out into laughter.

"So what about the rest?"

"She promised Watts money and education...I think he thought that if he finished college he could become an agent as well. And Perkins wanted in on Gibbs team. Jenny promised him your position," Tim said with a smirk and Tony saw everyone else with the same expression. Perkins wouldn't have lasted a day with Gibbs.

"So, how'd you finally break them, McMaster Interrogator?"

"I just told them the truth about Jenny and their part in this mess..."

"That's not all, Timmy..." Abby said with glee and Tony looked back to Tim expectantly.

"I, uh, did a little research..." he paused but then looked around at Abby and Ziva's smiling faces and Tony's curious one and then continued. "I told them the background on a couple of inmates they'd be doing time with. Douglas Pearson is in solitary accused of assault on another inmate...an ex-federal officer doing time for embezzling. Do you remember Raymond Weiss?" Tony nodded. "Well, he's still in the infirmary with a colostomy bag after being brutally raped. I made sure that Perkins and Watts knew that Pearson hates Feds and then I promised that he'd know who they were."

"Yes!" Abby crowed. "You should have seen our Timmy, Tony...he had Perkins all pale and shaking in fear," she finished triumphantly.

"And," Ziva piped in with a smile, "Watts pissed off his pants..."

"Pissed *in* his pants, Ziva," Tim corrected as Ziva rolled her eyes.

Tony looked from one to the other in astonishment and began laughing loud and hard. They continued laughing while Gibbs and Ducky stayed out in the hallway with smiles on their faces.

"Excellent, isn't it Jethro?" Ducky said with a proud paternal smile. "Now why don't you tell me about the baby shower our girls have planned over a cup of tea?"

Jethro smiled and led the way to the kitchen.

## Chapter 27

The following week Tony was allowed out of bed to go downstairs. He was lying on the couch his eyes alight with the glittering colors of the Christmas tree Jethro had placed in the living room and still smiling from Jethro's surprise. Again he felt the need to fight back tears to match the ones he'd shed when he saw the nursery. It was beautiful and to think he'd slept through most of the transformation of not only the nursery but Kelly's room. He still wasn't sure how he felt about that but he trusted Jethro to do what felt right for him. And to think that Abby had been in the house without trouncing on him while he slept! Her determination not to bother him while he

recovered both astounded and touched him. He knew how hard that must have been for her and figured Tim had probably helped by sitting on her a bit.

Yes, he was as happy as he could be given the current situation but he was really sorry that he couldn't get out to do any Christmas shopping and he sighed. He wasn't without resources and the internet had been his savior but the forced inactivity was getting him down. Not to mention the fact that he'd hoped to be married at this point. He couldn't even begin to start the process again between his condition and the holidays. He sighed again.

Jethro watched from the kitchen as he prepared another tray of food. He knew how depressed Tony was becoming but he hoped that tonight would help. Just as that thought crossed his mind the doorbell rang. He crossed the room and opened the door to Ducky, Abby, Tim and Ziva, plus Cynthia, Agent Lee and several others from the agency including Leon Vance, all laden with packages.

Abby raced across the room to throw her arms around Tony. "Happy baby shower, Tony!" she squealed and giggled at his shocked expression.

Tony looked around the room at all of the smiling faces and then back to Jethro who looked at him intently. He read the concern that maybe it hadn't been a good idea but it was. God, it really was! And he smiled just before everyone descended on him with their well wishes. It was great.

The highlight of the evening, though, came about an hour later when Tony looked up from the package he was opening at the sound of the doorbell. Jethro had gone to answer it and then returned with someone Tony truly hadn't expected to see, Jethro's father, Jackson.

"Am I too late?" the older man asked with a smile and then he laughed when Abby ran to throw her arms around him.

"Never too late!" she declared and led him over to Tony.

Tony was astonished and pleased beyond words. Jethro hadn't said anything about telling his father about them, especially now. But it meant the world to him. He really liked Jackson and wanted desperately for them all to be a family. He turned shining wet eyes to Jackson and put his hand out. Jethro came up behind him and squeezed his shoulder.

Jackson clasped the proffered hand in his, "Welcome back, son," he said and smiled gently at the tear that rolled down Tony's face. Squeezing the hand in his once more he turned slightly and asked, "Any more room on this couch for an old man?"

Tony smiled and brought his legs up and reached up to his shoulder to squeeze Jethro's hand while Jackson settled in.

"So, everybody, don't let me stop you...let's continue this party!" he said and everyone laughed.

He motioned Abby over and asked her to get a box out of his bag that had been left by the door. She did. After Tony finished with his current gift, several tiny onesy outfits that Leon declared were the best things ever because the snaps down the front prevented you from having to pull soiled outfits over tiny baby heads, Abby handed Jackson's gift over to be opened.

Tony thanked Jackson and then gleefully ripped into the package to find an ancient and well-used teddy bear.

"It was Leroy's," he said and then looked up to see Jethro's astonished face. "Came across that a few years ago and regretted never bringing it over before." When Kelly was alive, when we were still talking, his regretful eyes said.

Jethro just nodded understanding his father's message. He looked down to see Tony staring

fixedly at the toy.

"Does he have a name?" Tony asked in a tremulous voice. He was trying desperately not to lose it completely in front of their family and friends.

Jethro bent down and gave Tony a kiss on the side of his head. "Bear," Jethro said quietly into his ear and Tony gave a shaky laugh.

Tony nodded and turned very shiny green eyes to Jackson. "Thank you," he said and Jackson nodded.

"This one's next," Abby said deciding that the men needed a break and put another gift on Tony's lap although she noticed that he kept Bear tucked under one arm and then she realized that Bear might never get to the baby...or at least not for a very long time.

Later, while everyone mingled and ate, Tony looked up at Jethro with a smile. Jethro sat next to him on a chair from the kitchen while he drank the ubiquitous cup of coffee.

"When did you tell Jack?" he asked.

"Told him about us early last spring. He wanted to visit but," Gibbs shrugged off the rest.

*Yeah, I left before he could,* Tony mused. "I'm glad he's good this us...with this," he said gesturing to his belly.

"Told him that if he couldn't accept it then we had no more to say to one another," Gibbs said flatly.

"Jethro..." Tony began, shock on his face at Jethro's ultimatum to his father.

Jack, who'd been chatting lightly with Tim, turned at that last surprised statement from Tony and then excused himself from Tim who nodded with complete understanding in his eyes.

"No, Tony," Jackson interrupted. "He's right. He found someone to love again. It's right that he make his stand by your side and I respect that...hell, I applaud it. Life's too short and happiness too brief to quibble over the package it comes in."

He smiled at Tony's surprise. "Son, I knew back when you came to Stillwater that first time that there was something between the two of you. I just waited until Leroy decided to tell me about it himself. He finally did. I was planning on coming over to visit during the summer but, well, things happened," he said not wanting to bring up Tony's departure.

"And then he called me to say you were back...he told me a little of what went on," Jackson paused at Tony's blush. He patted him on the hand but decided he needed to continue. "I'll tell you what I told him. What matters is that you're both together again. And now I've got a grandson on the way. I couldn't be happier...except for waiting for him to do right by you..." he finished looking up to see Gibbs rolling his eyes and then back to Tony to see him blush yet again. Tony sure was a good looking boy with his color high, he thought.

"Dad..." Jethro complained but with a warning glint in his eye.

"Well, be that as it may, welcome to the family, Son," he finished with another pat to Tony's hand.

Tony leaned back with a bright smile on his face. He loved it when Jackson called him son and felt a sudden pang for his lack of a father while growing up, but he knew having Jackson in his life would go a very long way towards making up for that lack. He was content. Well, except for the fact that Gerry had broached the subject of his visiting DiNozzo in prison. He hadn't even come close to mentioning that to Jethro knowing exactly what he'd say. So far he'd flat out

refused but Gerry did finally get him to say he'd think about it. And he would. Just not yet.

-----

Christmas morning was bright and clear, the weak winter sun shimmering off the newly fallen snow in a glittering display of light. Inside the house Jackson sat in the kitchen sipping some coffee waiting for his boys to come downstairs. They tended to tarry in the mornings but he didn't mind, gave him some quiet time to reflect on the changes in his life, in Leroy's life. But he was happy. How could he not be? His relationship with Leroy, while still not perfect, was better than it had been in years. His son was happy, something he never thought he'd see again after that last day they'd spoken at Shannon and Kelly's memorial. They hadn't spoken for years after that, not until a case brought his son home. But it was better now, and would get better still.

He chuckled to himself as he recalled last night's events. Tony had told him that he'd be at 38 weeks on January 10th. He'd questioned the timing, asking Tony why he didn't count up to 40 weeks like he'd always heard. Tony had blushed again and explained that 40 weeks were based on a woman's menstrual period. It didn't count for men. Well, that makes sense, he'd told him and watched with fascination as Leroy zeroed in on the color coming up again on Tony's face, that boy certainly blushed a lot, and he'd realized with some embarrassment that Leroy was getting hot and bothered, too. Well, that knowledge was a little too close for comfort and he'd had to excuse himself. When he'd returned he found his boys clenched up tight which wasn't unexpected. What had been unexpected was the fact that they looked so right together and he'd realized that up until that moment he'd still had some reservations about their relationship. Not anymore.

He took another sip of coffee and glanced at the kitchen clock. Where were those boys of his? He'd of thought Tony would be one of those folks who'd be down first thing Christmas morning ready to rip into every package under the tree. Yeah, and maybe there was something else more interesting up stairs, he told himself. You're not too old to understand that one, Jackson Gibbs. And he chuckled again.

Upstairs Jethro pushed Tony's thigh just a bit higher as he pushed in deeper. Tony's moan told him he'd hit the right spot and Tony reached down to hold his leg in that position. They lay on their sides with Jethro spooned up tightly behind Tony as he thrust himself in as deeply as he could. God, it was incredible. Tony was so hot, so tight. He skimmed his hand over Tony's belly, loving the feeling of silky skin over the taut swelling. He kept up the steady pace and Tony moaned again. He reached around Tony's thigh to run his hand over Tony's balls but he really couldn't reach his cock. Tony lifted his thigh opening his legs more allowing Jethro to reach his goal and he began stroking. Tony's panting breaths told him how close his lover was and he increased his pace. A moment later he felt Tony stiffen and tighten around him. He felt Tony spew over his fingers and he thrust a few more times and then filled Tony with his seed.

They lay together without moving for a bit and then Jethro began stroking Tony's skin again beginning at his thigh and slowly moving up to Tony's hip and back. Light strokes over Tony's belly that moved up to Tony's chest to stroke lovingly over Tony's breasts, lightly rubbing and pinching Tony's nipples. He felt Tony shiver and he stopped to pull the blankets back over them both. Under the blanket he rubbed his hand up and down Tony's arm loving the feeling of the soft hair and silky skin as he warmed his lover up again.

"Merry Christmas, sweetheart," he whispered.

"Mmm," Tony responded and Jethro chuckled. He rolled over a bit and Jethro shifted to allow him to lie on his back. "Merry Christmas to you, too," he said with a smile which brightened up considerably as his brain kicked in and his eyes opened wide. "It's Christmas!"

"Yeah, said that," Jethro said laconically but Tony was already waddling towards the bathroom and Jethro laughed getting up to follow him knowing that cleaning up was only in deference to

his Dad being there. That's alright, though, a slight delay wouldn't hamper Tony's enjoyment of the holiday. Celebrating Christmas was too new to him to let anything do that, he thought with a pang, but he didn't stop to dwell. There was too much to do today. He waited for Tony to finish his shower. They would have showered together except that there wasn't enough room for the two of them anymore and he smiled. Tony shut off the water and Gibbs opened the curtain to hand him a towel and help him out of the shower. He constantly worried about Tony slipping so he stayed close. Once he knew Tony was set in the bedroom he took his own shower, his mind going over what he needed to do.

The team would be over to exchange gifts a bit later and he needed an update on how the rest of his surprise was going. There was still a lot to do and he was glad he was now on leave until after the baby was born. He'd been surprised when Leon had agreed to that just before he left town to celebrate the holiday with his family. But, he realized that Leon knew him too well. There was no way he'd keep his nose out of the investigation if he was going to the office not to mention the fact that one FBI agent wasn't enough to make him feel secure about Tony's safety.

Tobias said that Constantino had disappeared without a trace which pissed Gibbs off to no end. He'd also said that his boss was grouching about keeping Tony under protective custody. He wasn't convinced that Constantino really posed a threat. Gibbs didn't give a damn what the Assistant Director of the FBI thought, there was no way Tony would be without some protection until Constantino was in custody. Even if it was only him.

A few minutes later Jethro took Tony's arm as they descended the stairs even though Tony held on to the rail. Tony rolled his eyes at him but then he smiled fully accepting Jethro's hovering and Jethro realized that at that moment, he was very happy. Yes, there were still issues to worry about but they seemed very far away. Right now, his father waited for them downstairs and he had Tony back in his life. Soon they would have a child together. And it was Christmas. He was happy and excited and in love and he wasn't going to waste a minute more thinking about bad stuff...at least not for now because there were presents for Tony to open.

And open them he did. Jethro laughed at the pieces of wrapping paper scattered around the living room. Tony smiled and laughed, ooh'd and aah'd at each gift, his own and everyone else's which made Gibbs glad that he'd asked Abby where Tony did his clothes shopping. It had cost quite a bit but his boy was worth every penny he'd spent trying to get replacements for the wardrobe that had been seized along with all of Constantino's property. Jack had even replaced the sweater he'd given Tony during that case that had taken them back to Stillwater. Jethro could see how touched Tony had been that Jack had done that. His eyes actually glowed as he reached over to embrace Jack and Jethro knew he'd cherish that moment for the rest of his life.

Of course Tony wouldn't be wearing any of his new wardrobe for awhile, but he seemed alright with that saying it would give him more incentive towards losing the weight he'd gained, weight that made Stan happy and him horny, but that made Tony worry. He just wished he could convince Tony that he really was beautiful.

He looked at his watch, his present from Tony, and noted the time with surprise. Since they'd come downstairs late and had immediately begun opening presents, the morning had swiftly disappeared and it was now time for lunch. He set aside the woodcarving set he'd gotten from his father and moved to the kitchen. He made a swift perimeter check and verified the presence of the agent before he began pulling out ingredients for sandwiches.

-----

Later that day Tony sat on the couch with Abby, Tim and Ziva were on opposite chairs and all were munching on popcorn while they watched *It's a Wonderful Life*. Jethro was in the kitchen with Jackson and Ducky as they discussed some more details.

"It's a smaller company, Jethro, but they provide a beautiful table. I'm sure you won't be



disappointed."

"I trust you, Duck," Gibbs said as he poured some more coffee. Ducky had pulled some strings with friends to get their preparations together on such short notice, but it sounded as though everything was going well.

"So what can I do to help?" Jackson asked.

"You are going to help me keep Tony entertained while I help Ducky and everyone get all the last minute details taken care of," Jethro said with a smirk.

"No problem, son," Jackson replied, "I've got just the thing. Brought the old photo album. Thought Tony'd like seeing you as a baby."

Gibbs dropped his head with a sigh and Ducky chuckled.

"That will dispel the rumors, I'm afraid," Ducky said smiling.

Gibbs looked at him with a narrowed-eyed gaze. "Rumors?"

"Yes, dear boy...the rumors indicating your origin...what was it...oh yes, springing full-grown from the head of Zeus was one. Or was it that you were molded from clay and had life breathed into you by a group of mystics?"

Jack burst out laughing. "Is that why you make them call you boss? You have some kind of super powers?"

Gibbs just rolled his eyes and turned back to Ducky.

"My favorite, however, lent you qualities very much like those of a well-known superhero...the one that said you fell to earth in a capsule after your home planet exploded..."

At that point Gibbs turned to leave.

"Where you going?" Jack asked still laughing.

"To head-slap my team for spreading rumors..." Gibbs said over his shoulder to the sound of more laughter.

## Chapter 28

That night Jethro pulled Tony into his arms and claimed that mouth he loved so well. He ran his hands over Tony, relishing the feel of his warm skin and now generous curves.

"Good Christmas?" he asked hoping Tony was happy. It was all he wanted.

Tony smiled up at Jethro loving the feeling of those calloused hands running over his body. He could see the love and desire in his eyes but he could see the darkness there, too, and he worried. He knew that Jethro was concerned about Gianni but there wasn't anything he could do about that. And maybe the FBI was right and Gianni wasn't a threat. They did, after all, pull the security team. Fornell had called Jethro at shift change but Tony had already figured it out from watching his expression while he talked on the phone. That little bit of warm relaxed feeling Jethro had allowed himself had suddenly disappeared and Jethro had gotten that dark look in his eyes, the one that said he was fully on alert. That wasn't all that showed in his eyes, though. He also knew that Jenny lurked in that darkness. And that was something he could work with.

"Yup, got almost everything I wanted..." he said with a smirk and then smiled broadly when

Jethro lifted an eyebrow.

"Almost?"

"Yeah," Tony said smiling gently. This was going to be hard but he'd been thinking about it for awhile now. It had to be done and now that he was off of bed rest he could be there...for himself as much as for Jethro. But for a fleeting moment he wished that Gerry wasn't right about this one, then maybe he wouldn't be right about his father, too. "And if wishes were horses..." Tony mused not realizing he'd spoken out loud.

"...beggars would ride...?" Jethro finished for him wondering what it was Tony wished for.

"Actually, I was going to finish it with '...there would be an easy explanation for all this horseshit...'"

Jethro stared at Tony wondering, yet again, just how his mind worked.

"What is it you want, Tony?" he asked, exasperation and confusion fighting for dominance.

"I want us to go and visit Jenny."

"Aw, hell..." Jethro said as he rolled out of bed. He stood staring blindly at the wall next to the bed for a moment before turning and staring at Tony. "Why?"

"I need to face her...and so do you."

"She's dying, Tony. Ducky says it won't be long...she's sedated all the time because of the pain..." he said staring at Tony who remained silent.

"Then we need to go right away," Tony said quietly but with conviction.

Jethro sighed knowing Tony was right. "Okay," he said, "tomorrow. I'll get McGee and Ziva to back us up."

Tony nodded. He hadn't been out of the house since his return, both Gerry and Stan coming to see him rather than the other way around. He accepted that. As far as Jethro was concerned, he would remain in protective custody until Gianni was caught. And although Tony accepted that right now since he was so ungainly, they were going to have to discuss it after the baby was born. Jethro couldn't protect him like this forever. But for now, with a nod and a smile for the man he loved more than life itself, he held out his hand inviting Jethro back into their warm bed.

-----  
"You're running a fever again," Gina said as she wrung out the cloth once more. She lightly stroked it across the ailing man's brow noting the pale skin and deep lines in the gaunt face. He'd been sick for weeks and she knew that the threat of infection had become real. "I've got to get you to a doctor, a real one."

Gianni Constantino stared hard at Gina's face. Yes, he knew he needed a doctor but doctors cost money and the only way he could get cash was if he sent Cavuto with instructions on how to get to his stash. He wasn't sure just how much to trust her. Sure she'd helped him get away that day, him with his gut shot up and another hit in his shoulder, and she'd been with him all along while that drunken ex-Army medic cousin of hers had patched him up, but he still wasn't sure why. And not knowing pissed him off. But not nearly as much as Anthony had. He shut his eyes as a wave of fury rushed over him leaving him shaky and panting from the pain in his gut.

"Are you alright?" Gina asked timidly. She never knew what Gianni was thinking now. Not ever since that bastard Anthony had come into their lives. She felt disgust churn her stomach when

she thought about him, unaware that her reaction was very close to what Gianni was feeling but for a very different reason. She was in love with Gianni, had been for a long time. Ever since he'd pulled her from that strip club she'd been dancing in at the age of 18. He'd needed someone to provide cover for him and she'd proved amenable. He treated her well and had given her the occasional trinket when she'd pleased him. Sex played a very small part in their relationship and she found that she didn't mind that. But deep inside she felt that if he ever really gave her a chance he'd learn just what a woman could really do for him. And it wouldn't be a knife in the back like that bastard Anthony had given him. All he'd been was a way into the DiNozzo Family and even that had turned out to be a lie.

"No, damnit," Gianni said through his grimace. He had no choice now. He had to trust Cavuto. "Listen up," he said and gave Gina the instructions she needed to access the funds he'd set aside as a safety net. She'd be able to get the doctor he knew about. Then, when he was better, he'd be able to get back at those fuckers who'd betrayed him. DiNozzo was on that list but Anthony was at the top. Yes, he'd get both Anthony and his son back and then he'd teach Anthony what it meant to cross Gianni Constantino.

-----

The next morning Tim and Ziva met with Gibbs while Tony finished getting dressed. Gibbs was directing them to follow in a separate car when he heard Tony begin to come downstairs. He threw a finger up in a 'just a minute' gesture and jogged out of the room.

Tony saw him coming up the stairs before he'd even taken a step to go down.

"How do you do that?" he asked with a grin as Jethro took hold of the arm that wasn't holding on to the handrail.

"What?"

"Know exactly when I'm coming downstairs, it's like you have ESP or something," Tony joked.

"Or something," Jethro agreed as they made their way down. In reality, Jethro did constantly listen for Tony's whereabouts and ever since that one time he'd overbalanced on the steps and had nearly fallen, Jethro wouldn't let him go downstairs by himself. Tony greeted everyone as they met at the bottom of the stairs. They said their goodbyes to Jack and then they gathered their things to leave.

Tim moved ahead of Gibbs and Tony down the hallway and checked out Jenny's room while Ziva remained outside. Once he was satisfied the room was clear he and Ziva stationed themselves at opposite ends of the hallway. They'd remain in place until Gibbs and Tony were done having already said their goodbyes to Jenny during a previous visit. Today they were here on business. Gibbs gave them each a nod and walked up to the room, his arm around Tony's waist. They were met by her doctor who told them that he had reduced her medication enough for her to be lucid but he asked that they make their visit short. He explained about the amount of pain she was in and that he couldn't, in conscience, allow her to remain like that for long. Gibbs nodded. He and Tony turned seeing Ducky standing near the door.

"I'm very glad you came, Jethro," he said solemnly.

"Still don't think it'll do her any good. You heard the doctor; our being here will cause her a lot of pain."

*More than one kind of pain, no doubt,* Ducky thought. "Yes, but it *is* necessary"

"For her?"

"For all of you, Jethro. You and Tony need to confront her for your own sakes."

Gibbs turned away, the muscles in his jaw working hard which Tony saw and he wondered at his reluctance. Jethro wasn't a man to shy away from a tough situation. There was more to it than that. But Tony still believed it had to be done. He reached out to squeeze his hand and Jethro looked back at him and then gave him a nod that said 'let's do this'.

Together they walked into the quiet room, the only sound being that of the monitors and her panting breaths. At their entrance she turned her head but her face held no expression save for the lines across her forehead that gave testimony to the pain she was in. Her eyes narrowed when she saw them, noted the still clasped hands and the size of Tony's lush roundness.

"So," she said through a grimace, "are you here to gloat?" she asked looking at Tony.

"No, Jenny," Tony said as he released Jethro's hand and moved closer to the bed. "I just wanted to say goodbye."

"Goodbye and good riddance, no doubt," she said with a slight sneer. "So say it and go, be happy in your little world with everything that I wanted, everything that you took from me."

Tony just shook his head, still amazed at her mistaken beliefs, knowing that she would go to her grave blaming him for having what she wanted. But the fact was, she'd given it all up of her own free will. He'd had nothing to do with it. He looked at Jenny sadly, remembering her intelligence, strength and determination. It had gotten her what she thought she wanted which was to be the first female director of a Federal agency. And she'd done it, giving up whatever secret desires she'd had along the way. But now, due to her own actions and the deadly happenstance of fate, it was all gone leaving her a bitter and withered woman, worn away by disappointment, regrets and pain with one exception...the hatred that still burned in her eyes.

"I'm sorry Jenny but the truth is you never had him," Tony said. He didn't want to hurt her but she'd screwed him over badly and he wasn't about to let her off the hook easily. "You set up a pretty good plan, but you made one major mistake. You didn't take Leroy Jethro Gibbs fully into account. I, for one, should have known he wouldn't let me just walk away," Tony said looking at Jethro with warmth in his eyes that was easily returned.

Jenny looked at them and she knew he was right, she hadn't taken into account what, or who, Jethro truly wanted. *No, he didn't let you walk away, not like he did me...* And the reality of the situation finally sunk in at that moment. He let her walk away. Tenacious, stubborn, never-give-up-as-long-as-there's-breath-in-my-body Leroy Jethro Gibbs had let her walk away, which meant that he'd never meant to keep her. And, subsequently, that she'd never really had him, either, except for that all too brief moment in Paris. She closed her eyes as the pain of the realization superseded that of her illness for a brief moment. And when it subsided she nearly laughed out loud despite her agony at her own stupidity. And now what was she left with? She nodded as the anger drained away from her leaving her with nothing, an empty shell. Physically, she even looked more shrunken than before. But she wasn't done, yet. Her father said never let them see you beaten and she'd always believed everything her father had ever told her. So she may have lost just about everything else but she still had her pride and she lifted her chin.

"Goodbye, Tony," she said in dismissal. "Go and have a healthy baby."

Tony looked hard at her, seeing the resignation and the absence of anger. Whatever was going through her head she was done with him, just as he was done with her. With a final nod he whispered "goodbye," and then turned and walked out of the door.

When he left Jenny turned to look at Jethro who still watched as Tony quietly closed the door.

"You lied to me, told me you wanted Paris," she said sounding like the old Jenny, full of indignant pride.

"Had to get the gun out of your hands," he said unapologetically and she nodded. It had worked. They remained silent for a moment.

"You hurt what's mine, Jenny, and for that I won't forgive you," he added with a hard edge to his voice.

"I'm not going to say I'm sorry, Jethro. I had to try," she said with that same lifted chin. *Besides, apologizing is a sign of weakness and I'll be damned if I give you that now*, she told herself. Jethro wouldn't want it and she didn't know if she wouldn't have done it again, tumor or no.

"Yeah," Jethro acknowledged. She'd always been a determined bitch

"You really love him," she said as a statement.

"Yeah," he said again, the answer simple. "But I still wouldn't have wanted it to end this way."

"Nor I, Jethro. Is there a chance you'd do something for me, for old times' sake?"

Jethro looked at her with narrowed eyes. How could she possibly ask anything of him at this point?

"There's a limiter on the morphine pump, keeps me from overdosing."

"You not getting enough?" He knew she was hurting.

"Not for what I want. Never wanted to go out this way."

"You were content to let Tony live out his life in pain. Me, too." Memories of Tony curled around that pillow, telling him about the assault, all the lies... The images played through his mind and his eyes hardened.

Jenny looked at him and then closed her eyes. Jethro was the only other person who might have done this for her.

Opening her eyes she decided to try again. "Please, Jethro," she begged.

"No, Jenny. I won't jeopardize anything for you." And he wouldn't. Just as he'd told McGee that time when he was chasing down the suspect who'd shot his girlfriend, he'd lost his chance to shoot him once he had him down and there were witnesses to his actions. Well, he'd lost his chance to kill Jenny when he'd decided to disarm her and now was no different. There were no laws supporting euthanasia in this state.

"Then go be with him," she said as she closed her eyes once more, all of the pain, both physical and emotional, becoming too much to handle.

"Goodbye, Jenny," he said turning his back on her and walking out.

Her doctor was waiting outside and he entered as soon as Jethro left the room. He said nothing as he increased her morphine. He checked her vital signs and quietly took a tissue to wipe the tears sliding slowly into her hair. He noted with approval the easing of his patient's physical discomfort as she slid into unconsciousness but knew it wouldn't be much longer. He looked up as Dr. Mallard re-entered the room.

"It will be soon, Doctor," he said.

Ducky merely nodded. He would sit by her side until she was gone out of respect for the woman she'd once been. He saw the dosage of morphine she was receiving and knew that she would never again regain consciousness. It was a very sad way to die, he thought, alone and in pain.

She had asked him if he would facilitate her eventual demise, but he'd refused on moral grounds. He wondered briefly if she'd asked Jethro as well. With a sigh acknowledging the fact that he'd never ask, he settled down to wait.

Both Tony and Gibbs were silent as they left the hospital hand in hand. Ziva and Tim again followed separately. Again, and without a word, they checked out the house finding Jack watching TV quietly in the living room. They gave the all clear and, by unspoken agreement, they left Gibbs and Tony to enter their home on their own. Gibbs and Tony gave Jack a brief greeting and then went upstairs where they lay down together and held one another silently for a very long time.

## Chapter 29 *Second Chance* by Trisha Yearwood, *At Last* by Etta James

New Year's Day dawned bright and clear and Tony rolled over, reaching out with one hand to find the bed empty and cold.

"Jethro?" he called, wondering if his lover was in the bathroom but received no answer. Rubbing his eyes he struggled to sit up and wondered if he looked as much like one of those big walruses as he felt. With one hand rubbing his belly he reached for his watch and blinked his eyes. Then he turned to look at Jethro's nightstand to confirm what he'd seen. Yes, it was after 10AM. Why had Jethro let him sleep so long? But, more importantly, why didn't he wake him up in his usual fashion? With either his fingers or his cock buried inside of him? Then he remembered the night before and decided that Jethro had just let him sleep in because of their late night.

He ran a hand over his hair to smooth it down and smiled slightly as he recalled the night before. It had been the quietest but most heartfelt New Year's Eve he'd ever had. The team had again come over and Tony had been wowed at the glamorous outfits both Abby and Ziva were wearing. And even his Probie was dressed to the nines looking good in a new Versace suit that had made Tony pretty envious. He figured Tim's latest book was probably doing pretty well. Ducky had also been there but had declined accompanying the three who said that they were going clubbing after midnight. Tony had pouted for a bit wishing that he could go too, but it was all a show. He was tired and wanted nothing more than to crawl into bed with Jethro. So that's what they did once the kids left to go play. And now here Tony sat wondering where his lover was. Probably down in the basement, he thought but then looked up when Jethro walked into the room.

"Good morning, sleepyhead," Jethro said as he leaned in to give Tony a kiss. "Ready to shower?"

Tony looked at him with a smile. "Actually, I'm more ready for my usual wake-up..." he said with a wiggle of his eyebrows.

Jethro laughed. He *laughed*. And Tony eyed him suspiciously. He could tell that Jethro was in a good mood, but he was a little surprised at that reaction.

Jethro noted Tony's confusion and he realized that he needed to tone his mood down a bit. But it would be hard. Tony needed to get a bite to eat and then Tim would be over later to pick both Tony and Jack up to go to Ducky's house. He, on the other hand, needed to get to Ducky's house now to finalize the arrangements.

"Ducky asked me to come over to help him move some of his mother's furniture, remember? We talked about it last night and I figured I'd let you sleep in a bit more but I need to get moving," he said very logically.

Tony nodded. He did remember the request and so, with a sigh, he levered himself out of bed and made his way into the bathroom. Jethro, as usual, hovered outside until he was done and

then helped him out of the shower. Once he was done shaving he went into the bedroom to get dressed. They went downstairs to find Tim already there.

"Hey, Probilicious, you're up and about early...what, not get the action you and that lovely pair of ladies expected last night?"

"Oh, we got plenty of action, Tony. Action that would make your jaw fall to the floor..." Tim said teasingly.

"Oooh, do tell, Mc Party Monster, and don't spare the details..." Tony said with a laugh and then Jethro gave him a quick kiss on the cheek as a goodbye. Tony waved and then followed Tim into the kitchen.

Jack joined Jethro a moment later. "Everything all set?" he asked quietly.

"Just about. There's a few more details. I'm headed over there right now," Jethro responded just as quietly.

Jack just smiled and nodded. "Then I'll go do my part. See ya later, son," he said with a squeeze to Jethro's arm and a broad smile. Jethro nodded and left.

An hour later while the three men poured over Jack's photo album and they'd secured promises from Tim to get copies of quite a few, Tim's cell phone rang.

"Alright, see you in a bit," he said and then hung up. "We're invited over to Ducky's for lunch, Gibbs said he'd wait for us there," he responded to Tony's questioning look. Tony smiled and Jack said he could use a bite so they left a few minutes later.

It wasn't until they'd arrived at Ducky's that Tony began to get a clue.

"Why are there so many people here?" he asked suspiciously but Tim only smiled and they made their way inside. They were met at the door by a very hyper Abby and a broadly smiling Ziva, something suspicious in itself, both dressed in silver sheaths with metallic silver shawls in a spider web pattern.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"It's our wedding day," Jethro said as he joined them.

Tony's eyes opened wide, shock evident in every feature. He looked at Jethro who smiled gently as Tony's eyes filled with tears. He pulled an unresisting Tony into his arms.

"We're getting married, baby, so you need to go upstairs and get ready," he whispered into Tony's ear.

"I love you, Jethro," he said tremulously when Jethro stepped back.

"I love you, too, sweetheart," he said and then gestured up the stairs. "Now go on..."

And Abby and Ziva took him by the arms and helped him go upstairs.

"Wait a second, are you like my maids of honor or something?" Tony asked in confusion, unsure of just how it was all going to work. His original arrangements had only Jethro and him standing in front of a justice of the peace.

"Gibbs said to arrange it however we wanted, so Ducky is Gibbs' best man, Tim is yours and Ziva and I are grooms' women, Ziva for Gibbs and me for you!" she replied happily.

They moved a stunned Tony into what used to be Mrs. Mallard's bedroom when she lived

upstairs. Hanging by the armoire was Tony's suit. Made by Versace, it was a silvery grey and had a shirt hanging next to it in a lighter shade of grey. His tie was dark charcoal and grey stripe and his grey Dolce and Gabbana shoes sat neatly on the floor beneath the suit. He sighed happily when he saw it but a small frown suddenly formed between his eyes.

"What's the matter, Tony?" Abby asked when she saw the frown.

"I was supposed to have it fitted before the wedding...that was a few weeks ago and since then..." he trailed off as he rubbed his tummy lightly.

"We got your latest measurements from Stan when he examined you last week," she explained.

Tony suddenly understood the different measurements Stan had taken and he smiled. Instead of the usual one from his pubic bone to his belly button Stan had also had him stand up and he'd measured him around his waist...well, if you could consider him actually having a waist right now.

"Well, alright!" he exclaimed and moved to get dressed taking the slacks and shirt into the bathroom. The girls would have to help him put his shoes on, but that was okay. Nothing could dim his spirits right now. He was getting married!

A short while later Abby and Ziva again helped Tony down the stairs. Tim met him at the door to the library. He was again wearing his sharp suit and Tony thought he looked great and told him so.

"Thanks, Tony, that means a lot coming from you," Tim said sincerely.

Just then Tony's eyes opened wide. "What about the rings...I never picked them up!" he said in a mild panic.

"Not to worry, Tony," Tim said patting his side pocket. "I've got Gibbs' ring for you right here."

Tony visibly relaxed.

"And I have yours for Jethro, Tony," Ducky added.

Tony turned to greet Ducky but his eyes were caught as he got his first glimpse of Jethro. He'd walked up beside Ducky wearing a black Armani suit, crisp white shirt and a tie that matched Tony's only in a black and silver-grey stripe. Tony found himself getting literally weak in the knees at the sight of Jethro looking so handsome. He belatedly became aware of Tim's hand on his arm so he must of swayed a bit and suddenly Jethro was at his side.

"You okay, Tony?" he asked in concern.

"You look so damn good, Jethro," Tony said, his heart bursting inside of him as he threw his arms around Jethro.

"Maybe I should wear suits more often if this is your reaction," he teased gently and Tony laughed a little self-consciously while wiping at his eyes.

"Come on, boy," Gibbs said quietly into Tony's ear and then more loudly said, "Let's do this."

And they did. Ducky placed himself at Ziva's right and put his arm out for Ziva to take. Tim lined up behind him with Abby at his side. Behind them Gibbs stood and took Tony's right hand in his. At Ducky's signal music began to play then two men appeared magically from somewhere to open the double doors. As Ducky and Ziva walked majestically down the aisle between chairs filled with NCIS personnel, Tony saw the library transformed into a Christmas wonderland, festooned with bright decorations and a huge tree covered in gorgeous ornaments that Tony was sure were priceless family heirlooms. Next to the tree was an arbor covered in white poinsettia in



front of which stood man in a dark suit holding a book in his hands.

Tim and Abby had nearly reached the end of the aisle and they turned and walked up to stand on the man's right, opposite Ducky and Ziva who stood to the man's left. Gibbs was walking at Tony's side when he finally realized that the man ahead of them was Judge Morella, the same judge who had presided over his father's trial and who had put him away for life and he nearly laughed. Ducky said that he knew the man and that he was a good and fair judge, but they must be very good friends if Ducky was able to get him to preside over their wedding on short notice and on New Year's Day. He remembered the kindness of the judge while he gave his testimony. He'd been so gentle that he'd helped immensely in putting Tony at ease during that stressful time. He smiled at Tony as he walked down the aisle at Gibbs' side. They were nearly to the front when Tony saw Jack sitting in the first chair on the right. He had a huge smile on his face which both Tony and Jethro returned as they passed. Cynthia and Jimmy sat opposite Jack on Tony's side.

The wedding itself went without a hitch and Tony was captivated by the beauty of the simple ceremony. Jethro's kiss at the end was sweet but his eyes held a possessive gleam that made Tony's heart do a somersault in his chest. At the end of the kiss they turned to face the audience.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, may I present Leroy Jethro and Anthony Dante Gibbs," Judge Morella intoned to hearty applause.

The rest of the time passed in a glorious haze for Tony. There was a beautiful meal of prime rib served on china with rivers of champagne in crystal flutes for all the guests. Both Ducky and Tim gave wonderful and mercifully short toasts. Later, in what used to be Mrs. Mallard's bedroom downstairs, they danced to a DJ amid Ducky's apologies for not being able to acquire the string quartet he'd wanted. Secretly Tony was glad. There was a song he had in mind that he wanted to dance to with Jethro. But before he could approach the DJ Jethro led him out to the dance floor and the heartfelt voice of Trisha Yearwood filled the room singing about second chances. Tony felt his heart clench as he heard the lyrics to the song Jethro had chosen for them.

What do you do when love comes along  
And offers your heart a chance to move on  
With no guarantees, no safety net  
You trust what you feel, you take that first step

Just close your eyes  
Reach for the moment  
Before it slips by  
Here is your second chance  
Take it and fly

The weight of the world, the need to survive  
Has made you believe, that you've got no right  
Then out of the blue, you meet someone  
Who offers a place, warm as the sun

Just close your eyes  
Reach for the moment  
Before it slips by  
Here is your second chance  
Take it and fly

Just when you think love is a distant dream  
Oh, fate give you wings

Just close your eyes

Reach for the moment  
Before it slips by  
Here is your second chance  
Take it and fly

The song ended and they pulled apart but Jethro brought Tony back into his arms when he saw the tears in his eyes.

"Thank you, Tony," he whispered, "for the second chance..."

"Yours always, Jethro," Tony whispered back. At that point more dancers took to the floor. Tony thought Jethro was done but he kept his arms around Tony and they danced for quite awhile, sometimes changing partners with Abby and Ziva.

Later Tony did get to dance with Jethro to the song he'd picked out. He had played this song for Jethro while they went through his jazz collection one night a long time ago. This time Tony led while the soulful voice of Etta James filled the room with 'At Last'.

"Liked this one when you played it for me, baby, knew then it would always be special," Jethro whispered. Tony just pulled him in closer unable to voice anything through the lump in his throat.

The only dark moment came a bit later. Tony smiled and thanked yet another well wisher from NCIS and he wondered not for the first time, where all these people were when he thought the entire agency against them. He found out later that many of them had been told that Tony was having some mental issues with his pregnancy and needed to be left in peace. Since no one wanted to upset Tony and since he *did* look as though he wasn't doing well, they followed the Director's orders and gave Tony his space. Tony just shook his head at Jenny's plan. *Well done, Jenny*, he thought bitterly. She'd read him perfectly and organized her campaign just right.

"Hey, son," Jack said gently breaking into Tony's dark thoughts. He'd listened in on the conversation, well, apology mostly, from another one of those folks that worked with Leroy. He sat next to Tony at the head table while all of the other young folks danced. "This is no place for thoughts of her. She failed, Leroy made sure of that. And besides, she's gone now and can't hurt anyone anymore, okay?" he said squeezing Tony's shoulder gently with one hand.

"You're right, Jack," Tony said as he blinked away the ever-present moisture.

"And one other thing, son. I'd be proud if you'd call me Dad the way Leroy does, if you're of a mind to," Jack asked somewhat tentatively. He knew of Tony's issues with his own father and he wasn't sure if his request wouldn't bring up more bad thoughts. His concerns, though, were allayed by the bright smile he received in response.

"Really?" Tony asked like a little kid being offered the best thing in the world.

"Wouldn't have said it otherwise," he responded with a smile and then a laugh when Tony threw his arms around Jack much as he had during Christmas.

Gibbs was making his way back over to Tony having seen the sad look pass his husband's face while he spoke with Leon Vance but he paused when he saw Tony reacting so well to whatever his father had said and he relaxed. He got to the table just in time to hear his father's next words.

"So tell me, son," Jack asked curiously. "Am I supposed to ask you to dance, too? I mean you're married to my son, now, but I'm not sure of the protocol here..." He smiled when Tony laughed heartily.

"You can if you want to, Dad," Tony answered, "but it's not necessary."

Jethro laughed, too, when he got to the table. "Mom always did say that you had two left feet,

Dad."

"That she did, son that she did. So, if it's not required of me I think I'll just sit here, if you don't mind," he said. "Besides, I see Ducky making his way over here so you two go on out there and keep dancing. 'Specially since you both look like you know what you're doing," he said amiably, proud that both of his boys looked so good out there.

"That they do, indeed," Ducky added as he joined them. "But Stan was just saying that you must take care not to overdo it, Tony, as you do fatigue quite easily nowadays."

"Don't worry, Duck. I'll take care of him," Gibbs said assuredly as he placed a gentle finger over Tony's lips to hush his argument and then he pulled Tony out onto the dance floor.

Tony gave in gracefully as he placed his left hand on Jethro's shoulder. He'd never known Jethro liked to dance so much. The fact that he danced so well wasn't much of a shock, though. Tony didn't know of anything Jethro did poorly...well, except for having long conversations, maybe.

"Mmm, I could dance with you forever," Tony said dreamily into Jethro's ear. "But I wish I could hold you a little closer," he said ruefully as he looked down at his belly. He heard Jethro chuckle.

"Soon, sweetheart, very soon," Jethro whispered back and swept his husband away into the night.

Later that night as they lay together in bed after Jethro had loved Tony so often he'd lost count, Tony was drifting off but glanced yet again at their intertwined fingers and the gleam of his wedding ring. The inscription said 'My Boy Forever' and Tony knew he had everything he ever wanted right here, right now. And Jethro wore his ring with its own inscription that read 'Yours Always'.

"Absolutely," Tony whispered to the dark as he listened to the steady sound of his husband's breathing and slowly drifted off to sleep.

At Last

Lyrics by Etta James

At last, my love has come along  
My lonely days are over  
And life is like a song  
Oh, yeah, at last  
The skies above are blue  
My heart was wrapped up in clovers  
The night I looked at you  
I found a dream that I could speak to  
A dream that I can call my own  
I found a thrill to rest my cheek to  
A thrill that I have never known  
Oh, yeah when you smile, you smile  
Oh, and then the spell was cast  
And here we are in heaven  
For you are mine  
At last

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 30 by cernicalo

Chapter 30

Gina looked up at the house where she knew Anthony lived with that other man. Gianni had asked her to check out the house for him because he was too sick to do it himself. She promised she would mainly because she couldn't bear to be in that house with him a moment longer. She really just needed a break from his constant moaning and the sick smell coming off of him as he fought the infection. The doctor had come and looked him over shaking his head the entire time. He knocked Gianni out and did some cutting away of dead tissue and general cleaning up of his wound and then he'd started an IV. There were several medicines he pumped into the thin plastic tube running into Gianni as he mumbled but he stayed by Gianni's side for a long time. He'd demanded a lot of money for his services, but since Gianni's fever seemed to come down she figured he probably was worth it after all.

Still, Gianni kept mumbling about getting Anthony for taking his son and swearing that he'd get DiNozzo back for ruining everything. She wasn't very sure of the details of what happened that day. She'd heard the gunshots coming from the library and had eventually peeked out to see what was happening. She saw Gianni stumbling down the hallway and she'd run to him. Together they'd made their way out of the house through that door in the basement. There'd been a car at the end of a tunnel near the underground garage and she'd driven him to the little house near the cement plant out in the country. And that's where they still were weeks later and Gianni so sick he sometimes didn't even know who she was. But she'd stayed by him because she loved him and someday she'd get him to understand that she could give him the babies he wanted. He didn't need Anthony any more.

So here she stood in the bushes next to a neighbor's house waiting to see if she could catch a glimpse of that whore Anthony and getting more and more pissed off the colder she got. The neighbors were gone, she'd seen them leave so she made her way through the already churned snow in their backyard to the bushes near the fence to wait and watch while she thought about Anthony. So what was it about that bastard that had two men wanting him? She knew he was good looking but he had a smart mouth which made Gianni slap him around a lot and then Gianni would turn around and yell at her. God, it pissed her off.

She watched as that old guy brought out a bag of trash. He stopped by the trash can and scanned the area around him and she froze, afraid that he'd see her even though she knew she was well hidden. After a bit he finished with the trash and went back inside. She let out the breath she was holding and eased back through the neighbor's backyard to her car in the alley. She left as silently as she'd come deciding to buy a few more supplies before heading back to listen to Gianni rant some more about the son that had been stolen from him. It would also give her a bit more time to think about finding some way to get rid of Tony and keep the kid. That's all Gianni really needed...the kid and her. She just needed to make him understand that.

-----  
Tony looked at the calendar. January 18th and he was officially at 39 weeks as of yesterday.

"Come on, little guy...it's nice out here. Don't you want to come out and meet your parents?" he asked his belly plaintively. He heard Jethro chuckle behind him and groaned. "Go ahead, laugh all you like. Let's just see you carry this medicine ball around for nine months and see if you don't get tired..."

"Not laughing at you, sweet boy, just love looking at you and listening to you talk to our baby," Jethro said as he pressed up against Tony's back and began massaging the tired muscles there.

“Mmm, that goes a long way towards making me feel better...but not as much as actually having this baby would...”

“So why not come and lie down a bit and I’ll finish the massage.”

“Can’t. Have to finish re-arranging the drawers in the nursery,” Tony said with regret.

Jethro stared at him for a bit. Tony had re-arranged those same drawers three times already. And what made it critical that he finish it today? He wracked his brain as he tried to remember if anything like this had happened with Shannon. Then it suddenly hit him. She’d asked him to re-arrange the furniture in the nursery twice in one day and then she wanted him to vacuum and dust again. Yeah, it had been a few days before she’d gone into labor. He’d thought her desire to clean was kind of strange so he asked his father about it. His Dad had called it the nesting instinct. Said some women needed to make sure everything was in order when they were close to having their babies. He went on to say that Jethro’s Mom had insisted he wash every linen in the house. Said he felt like he worked in a Chinese laundry.

Jethro wrapped his arms around Tony and kissed his neck. “How about you lay down and I’ll massage your back right now and then I’ll help you finish the nursery a little later, okay?”

Tony dropped his head back onto Jethro’s shoulder. His back really was bothering him quite a bit and his stomach muscles had been tightening across his belly pretty uncomfortably for awhile now. Yes, lying down sounded really good right now.

“Okay,” he said simply and went to lie down on his side while Jethro rubbed and kneaded his lower back. It didn’t take long for him to fall asleep.

Jethro went downstairs and dialed Stan’s number to let him know what was happening. He got the answering service who said they’d relay the message. He decided to pick up a little, take out the trash. He wanted to be ready to leave at a moment’s notice. He double-checked Tony’s fly-away kit and let his Dad know what it was he suspected.

“You mean he has to go into labor? I thought he’d get a caesarian and wouldn’t have to go through all that?” Jack asked in surprise.

“Stan says he believes it’s better to wait until the baby wants to be born rather than just take it whenever the calendar says so,” Jethro explained. It made sense to him. But the problem was that Tony would have to be in pain and he wasn’t looking forward to that. He’d hated seeing Shannon go through it, but then women tended to look at things like that a bit different than men did. But he guessed the waitress, Sue, had summed it up...having that baby in your arms makes everything worth it.

He grabbed up the trash and walked it out. Suddenly he had a tingling sense of being watched. He paused by the trash can and looked around. He didn’t see anything out of place but he trusted his gut. He turned around and went back inside and called McGee. He wasn’t about to take any chances.

“All is clear, Gibbs,” Ziva reported but she did say that there had been a car in the alley behind his neighbor’s house. “Your neighbors are not home and they keep their car in their garage. I have taken casts of the tire prints and we are running them now.”

Gibbs nodded. Tony was still resting upstairs and he didn’t want to say anything until he knew what was going on.

“Let me know when you have something,” he said and Ziva nodded and then gave Jackson a

quick hug before leaving.

"Ya gonna tell Tony?" Jack asked.

"Tell him what? That my gut's tingling?" Gibbs retorted.

"I think that'd be enough, he's a smart boy and knows you pretty well. He'll take it for what it's worth," Jack added.

Gibbs nodded and then walked upstairs. He knew his Dad was right and Tony had gotten angry at him before for keeping too much to himself. Tony wouldn't appreciate being protected like this, either. But, damnit, Tony would soon have enough on his mind...he didn't need this, too. His cell phone rang. It was Stan. He explained what was going on and Stan called it Braxton Hicks or something like that but that it could be a pre-cursor to labor. He told Jethro to watch for regular pains that would become stronger. When that happened he was to take Tony to the hospital. Jethro said he understood and hung up. Maybe that's what his gut was telling him...that Tony would be going into labor soon, but somehow he didn't think so.

He looked in on Tony and saw that he was stirring. He sat on the bed and ran his hand lovingly down Tony's side and hip. He saw Tony smile although his eyes stayed closed.

"Hey, you interested in some lunch?" Jethro asked quietly.

"Interested in eating something, but I'm not thinking of a sandwich..." Tony replied with a chuckle.

Gibbs smiled back at his husband. "Don't think Dad put that on the menu, but I can ask..."

"Don't you dare," Tony laughed as he opened his eyes and got a good look at Jethro. "What's wrong?"

"What makes you think something is wrong?" Jethro asked in surprise.

"I can tell. What is it?"

"Guts tingling," he said and Tony nodded.

"Then we figure out what's going on, right?"

Jethro smiled at Tony's optimism and trust. "Right," he answered back and helped Tony get up so that they could go downstairs.

-----  
Gina listened to Gianni moan again. It was driving her nuts. A car pulled up to the house and she went to the window to peek out. Somebody dropped her cousin off and she got angry. No one else was supposed to know they were here. She went to the door and opened it before Carlo could knock.

"You're not supposed to let anyone know we're here, you idiot!" she hissed.

"Aw, it was just a ride from a stranger...I thumbed it 'cos you got my car, remember?" Carlo answered in a snarl.

"So he doesn't know you?" she asked to make sure.

"Naw, just told him my car died," he answered. He gestured to the bedroom with his head. "How is he?"

“Better but real sick. He got an infection in his stomach real bad. But the doctor gave him some medicine and I think he’ll be better. It’ll just take a long time,” she explained.

“He make that noise all the time?” Carlo asked as Gianni moaned again.

“Yeah,” Gina said with disgust.

Carlo looked at her, they’d been tight when they were younger before he went into the Army. She’d even let him fool around a little bit but not all the way. He still liked what he saw so maybe she’d think about old times if he could help her relax...

“Got some Wild Turkey, want some?” he asked.

Gina eyed him for a bit. Getting drunk sounded pretty good right now and it wasn’t like Gianni needed her. The doc was still here. She nodded.

A while later she pointed at the house from down the street.

“Tha’s the one...lights on,” she mumbled. She’d been so angry that when the bourbon had started to flow she’d told Carlo all about Anthony. And he was drunk enough to want to see a pregnant guy.

They’d piled into the car and driven out to Gibbs’ house. It was dark now but the car was warm and they still had some left in the bottle. Along the way Carlo had been sneaking little touches that Gina didn’t seem to mind. He was becoming bolder so he reached out to grab her breast and she just leaned back and let him. He took another drink and gave her some more and they began to fool around.

-----  
“We’ll be fine, Jethro,” Tony said for the third time. Not much had changed with the tightening across his belly and his back was feeling better. Abby had called to say that they’d been unable to match the tire prints. She knew the brand but they were very generic and old and belonged to a sedan, but that’s about all she could get. Right now Tony could see the tension mounting in Jethro’s shoulders. Tony thought that he’d benefit from working on his boat but he hadn’t wanted to leave Tony’s side. Tony and Jack were watching a movie but Jethro hadn’t been able to concentrate on it. He kept walking back and forth checking out the perimeter of the house. It was driving Tony crazy. Finally he gave in.

“You call me if anything happens, got that?” Jethro demanded in his usual way.

“Got it, Boss,” Tony answered without thought and Jethro gave him a faint smile as he leaned forward and kissed Tony on the cheek. With a nod he went downstairs.

“Whew,” Jack said. “Thought he’d never leave.”

Tony chuckled and then tightened his jaw as another band of pressure squeezed his stomach. Maybe that one was a bit stronger, but they weren’t regular. And he sure as hell didn’t want to go to the hospital too early only to have to sit around and wait. No, he’d just sit here and watch TV where he was at least comfortable until he was sure they needed to go.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 31 - 35 by cernicalo

"I wanna see what he looks like," Carlo whispered as he tried to rise up on his toes to look in the window. He swayed and Gina steadied him with a little giggle.

"OH MY GOD! GODDAMN, HE'S HUGE!" Carlo said when he finally saw Tony stand up to move into the kitchen.

Carlo slipped back down and dropped his bottle spilling some of the precious contents onto the snow.

"Jesus, what'd make a man do that!" he asked in a shocked voice.

"Tol' you...Gianni did it to 'em. I coulda given him a baby...din' need no whore boy..."

Gina thought about Tony and thought about Gianni and got furious all over again. She leaned against Carlo's shoulders and saw Tony returning to his seat. That bastard...had what she wanted. She looked around and noticed some rock near the neighbor's yard; she went over and picked one up.

"Hold it, Gina, hold it...lemme...electric switch...yeah, you throw that through the window and I'll hit the power. Let's give them a little scare, huh?" Carlo said with glee. He pulled a gun from his pocket and he was sure he could hit the streetlight. He laughed to himself. This should be fun and then they can get away back to the warm car and maybe Gina'll let him get at her some more.

Gina nodded and hefted the rock in her gloved hand. At Carlo's nod she pitched the rock through the window. She heard someone say something inside and then Carlo hit the lights and took two shots at the streetlight, hitting it on the second shot while Gina pitched more rocks through some windows. Carlo threw some, too.

"What the..." Jack yelled as a rock sailed through the living room window. He struggled to get up just as Tony was rolling off the couch to the side. The rock was followed by gunshots.

"Get down, Dad!" Tony hissed and Jack ducked down behind the couch.

Tony couldn't see if Jack was down or not because another rock sailed through the window spraying shards of glass all over him. Just at that moment he felt a massive tightening across his belly and he groaned.

Jethro had been sanding his boat when he heard the sound of breaking glass. He was two steps from the staircase when he heard the first gunshot and he pulled his weapon. He'd started carrying it at all times as soon as the agents had been pulled. It felt good in his hand as he slipped up the stairs just as the lights went out.

"Tony, you hit?" Jack asked from somewhere behind the couch.

Tony panted through the pain cursing himself for not going to the hospital.

"I'm okay, the baby..." Tony ducked as more glass sprayed over him.

"Stay down," Jethro growled from somewhere behind Tony and he suddenly felt relief flood through him. A hand touched his shoulder and he felt small bits of glass rain down around him. "Cell phone," he heard and felt something touch his hand but then the comforting presence moved away and he suddenly felt all of the cold air rushing in from the broken windows. He quickly dialed for help while in the background he heard Jethro asking his dad if he was okay.

"Fine, son...but Tony...the baby..." Jack said and Gibbs answered 'yeah' before moving from one window to another but saw no movement outside.



Just then Tony felt another pain grip him and he groaned.

"Tony!" Jethro called from somewhere to Tony's left.

"Help's coming, I'm okay...go..." Tony gasped.

Jethro took a deep breath and moved towards the front door and slowly opened it. He heard a car start up in the distance cautiously moved through the door. Everything was dark outside, lit only by a sliver moon and the neighbors' lights. Jethro cautiously moved outside and heard sirens coming in the distance. It didn't take long to learn that whoever had been there was now gone. Moving carefully so as not to disturb more of the area around his house, Jethro made his way to the side of the house and found the electrical panel. A second later lights flooded the house just as a police unit arrived.

He holstered his weapon and called to the officers. He came around the corner with his hands up and identified himself. A second later McGee jumped out of his car.

"That's Special Agent Gibbs, officers," he called to the LEOs as he pulled his own badge and they dropped their weapons.

Gibbs lost no time and ran back into the house to see Tony curled up on the floor clutching his stomach. He had small trails of blood dripping down his face as did Jack who was rubbing his shoulders and whispering for him to breathe through the pain.

Gibbs was at Tony's side in an instant, carefully brushing away the broken glass.

"Ambulance is on the way..." McGee said as he entered. "Is he shot?" he asked in wide-eyed fear.

"No...labor," Gibbs answered as he too coached Tony through the breathing exercises they'd talked about. Tony hadn't taken them seriously never believing he'd be in labor long enough to worry about it. But it was a good thing that Gibbs knew what to do as they sped through the night to the hospital with the paramedics cleaning up the small wounds but being unable to do anything else for Tony. Only Stan could help, now.

Once at the hospital things moved very quickly. Stan was there having been called by the hospital when the paramedics had radioed in. Within moments Tony was whisked away and prepared for surgery. Stan went to check on Jethro who was putting his own surgical greens on.

"Tony's doing fine. Looks like it'll be quick, Jethro," Stan said. "What happened at your house?"

"Someone broke in the windows, fired a couple of shots. I've got my team checking it out," he said as he fiddled with the drawstring on his pants. "Didn't think it would go this fast," he said.

"Normally it wouldn't. I'm guessing the sudden influx of adrenaline speeded everything up, but everything is fine so don't worry. Tony just found out what real labor is like but he's here in plenty of time. The contractions are still seven to eight minutes apart although they are strong. There's need to wait, though, so we'll take him in as soon as the room is ready," Stan said knowing that Jethro liked having all of the information right up front.

"Tony's belly will be draped and you'll be stationed at his head," he continued. "He'll be awake for the entire procedure but you'll have the option to leave if you have to," Stan said with a smile.

Gibbs gave him a narrowed-eyed look. Nothing was going to drag him away from Tony's side and Stan read that in his expression and chuckled.

"Yeah, didn't think it would be an issue. Anyway, when I've taken the baby you have the option to cut the cord yourself, if you want it," he said.

Gibbs thought for a split moment and then nodded. "Yeah. I'd like that."

"Good, then, if you're ready let's do this," Stan said and left with Gibbs following right behind him.

-----  
"Your contractions should ease up a bit now, Tony," the anesthesiologist said and Tony nodded but he was still nervous as hell. This whole situation was so weird but then he felt Jethro's hand on his forehead and he turned and saw Jethro wearing one of those blue hair things with those intense blue eyes looking at him over the surgical mask and he smiled.

"You're doing great, baby, I'm so proud of you," Jethro said. His voice was tight with emotion he couldn't control.

"I love you, Jethro," Tony said and then he looked down when he heard Stan say that he'd made the first incision. After that it went very quickly and then Stan spoke again.

"Here is your daughter, gentlemen," he said and lifted a now squalling baby covered in messy white stuff and guck with the umbilical cord still hanging down between her legs. Both men laughed in joy and Jethro bent down to rub his forehead against Tony's as tears dripped down his face.

"Come on over here, Daddy, and cut this cord," Stan said and Jethro moved over. Once it was done they handed the baby straight over to Jethro who carried his daughter over to Tony and laid her on his chest.

"Jethro, she's beautiful..." Tony said through his sobs.

Jethro pulled down his mask and placed his hand over her tiny head while he kissed Tony over and over.

"She's gorgeous, sweet boy. You did so good, Tony," he choked out.

The moment was broken by the nurse who came to take the baby to clean her up and weigh her.

"I'll bring her back in a little bit, don't worry," she said with a big smile and then carried her away.

After that things moved along and Tony was taken to recovery. He made Jethro go to the nursery to keep an eye on their daughter until they could be together again and Jethro agreed after several more deep kisses.

He got to the nursery to find his Dad and the whole team there waiting for him. Abby jumped into his arms and then he was given several more hugs by everyone else. After a bit the nurse brought the baby to the window so that they could see her.

"What's her name, Gibbs?" Abby asked as she tapped the glass with a big smile.

"Don't know, yet," Gibbs answered. He and Tony had discussed some names but hadn't come to any consensus. "But part of it is definitely Gibbs," he said and everyone laughed.

"So what've you guys got so far?" he asked the inevitable question.

McGee sighed. He wasn't happy with having to relay this part.

"Nothing, Boss," he said steeling himself for the expected reaction.

"Explain," was all Gibbs said and McGee filled him in.

"The snow was too churned up around your house to get any viable footprints. We believe there were two people, one possibly a woman or a younger person by the size of the prints. Down the street we found tire tracks that matched the ones we took from the alleyway behind your neighbor's house but we still don't have anything conclusive on those. They're just too generic. There were no prints on the electrical panel nor on any of the rocks thrown into your house. We did find a spot where what appears to be some type of alcohol was spilled, but no bottle..."

"It was bourbon, Gibbs," Abby added. "I'm still testing for traces of DNA in what we recovered."

"We found two shell casings from a 9 mm handgun," Ziva added. "There were no prints on them but Abby is checking the databases for any ballistic matches."

"Boss, local LEOs think it looks like a couple of drunks might have just targeted your house for some fun..." McGee said although he didn't believe it.

"Is that what you think, McGee?" Gibbs asked his Second.

"No, I don't," McGee responded. "There were no indications that the couple had looked at any other house on the street. That coupled with the fact that the same vehicle was in the area earlier in the day makes me believe that this was pointed directly at you. I've...uh...called Fornell," McGee finished and waited for the next outburst but was surprised that he didn't get one.

"Good job, McGee," he said. "This was a malicious attack but not intended as a lethal one. They shot out the streetlight so that they wouldn't be seen but never fired into my house. But whoever did this knows about us, knows about Tony. Check out any hate groups in the area targeting male pregnancy issues and let Fornell know I want to talk to him."

Gibbs cell phone had been left at the scene after Tony had called for help and they said they'd get it to him. They also let Gibbs know that his windows were being fixed.

"I'll swing by the house and get you some clothing, Jethro," Ducky offered knowing that Gibbs wouldn't be leaving the hospital any time soon.

"Thanks, Duck," Jethro said.

"I'll go with him, son, and make sure those windows are fixed before I come back tomorrow. Can't bring a baby home to that mess," he said.

Gibbs smiled and squeezed his father's shoulder. "Thanks, Dad."

A nurse came into the waiting room at that point to tell Gibbs that Tony was being moved to his room but that he wouldn't be allowed any visitors until the next day except for Gibbs. Their daughter would be brought to them in a short while, she said with a smile and then left them after giving Gibbs the room number.

Since they couldn't see Tony, yet, the rest of the team decided to return the following day, so with another round of hugs and congratulations they left. Since the nurse had taken his daughter away from the window he decided to go up stairs to wait with Tony for their daughter.

## Chapter 32

Gibbs waited quietly with Tony while he dozed, his mind working over who had attacked them. He believed too much in Abby's capabilities to think that they'd missed any evidence and he was too experienced to think it was random. His gut was telling him that it was Constantino. He felt the anger building up inside of him and he had to force it away. There was no outlet for it here and besides, he needed to be concentrating on his new family. Still, he subconsciously fingered

the sig tucked into his holster and settled in to wait, absentmindedly fingering the little pink plastic band he now wore around his left wrist.

It didn't take long for the door to open and the same nurse who'd called him back to the nursery after everyone had left walked in pushing a little cart with a wrapped bundle. The tiny baby had a little pink knit hat on and the nurse carefully checked both the baby's ankle band and compared it to Tony's wrist band. She also checked Jethro's band. All three were pink and Jethro assumed it signified the fact that they had a little girl. All three bands said 'Gibbs, Anthony D.' and 'Gibbs, Baby Girl' along with their patient numbers. It left Jethro with a very satisfied feeling.

Jethro touched Tony lightly and he immediately opened his eyes and then smiled broadly. Jethro pushed the button raising the head of the bed while the nurse brought their baby to them. She talked quietly with Tony about feeding and Jethro smiled gently at Tony's blush when they discussed breast feeding. He thought it was the best thing to do but he wouldn't push Tony one way or the other. If it had been him in this situation he wasn't sure if he'd want do it. But then he looked at Tony in awe when he agreed to try.

Tony was very shy and embarrassed about the whole situation but he forged ahead bravely with a permanent blush on his face. The change he underwent, though, when the baby finally latched on and he felt her sucking was amazing. He seemed to be in bliss and again Jethro felt moved to tears at the sight. He put his hand around Tony's nape and brought his lips to his ear.

"You're amazing, baby. God, Tony, I love you so damn much," he said and Tony looked at him with tears in his eyes.

"Sue was right...she's worth it...everything..." Tony choked out and Jethro nodded in agreement.

After a moment Tony looked up from the small face sucking furiously and smiled at Jethro.

"I have a name for her...well, if you don't mind..." Tony said tentatively.

Jethro just looked at him curiously.

"I'd like to call her Shelly...for Shannon and Kelly. Shelly Caitlin Gibbs..." he said and then his voice trailed off at Jethro's intense look.

Jethro had paled slightly and then flushed as his eyes filled with emotion. "I think that sounds beautiful," he said in a tight voice and then brought his arms around his little family barely able to breathe from the emotion he felt. They stayed that way while Shelly nursed for quite awhile.

-----  
"Congratulations, Jethro," Tobias said as he spoke with Gibbs in the hallway outside of Tony's room. His color was almost back to normal and Gibbs smirked. Tobias had looked in after a quick knock and had caught a glimpse of Tony breastfeeding. Blushing, he said he'd speak with Gibbs outside and had stammered a quick congratulations to Tony before backing out of the room.

"Didn't know he'd decided to...uh...oh, hell," Tobias said after a moment and Gibbs chuckled.

"Tony's a surprising guy. It's best for Shelly and he knows it," Gibbs stated.

"Shelly, huh?"

"Yeah, Shelly Caitlin Gibbs," Jethro said with pride and Tobias slapped him on the shoulder.

"You're a lucky man, Jethro," Tobias said sincerely. "Anyway, I have my people looking into the incident at your house. I'm very sorry about that," he said although he didn't have any choice in

the matter.

"Don't apologize..." Gibbs started but Tobias finished the statement for him.

"Yeah, it's a sign of weakness, heard it before, Jethro. But, damnit, if we'd still had men there it wouldn't have happened!"

Gibbs looked at him for a bit and waited. "What? You think I'm going to argue with ya?" He blew out a deep breath of exasperation. "So what do you know?"

It was Fornell's turn to blow out a breath. "Nothing at this point. We still don't have a line on Constantino. It's like he fell off the face of the earth. We do have one idea, though..."

"Well, spit it out, Tobias," Gibbs said.

"We've accounted for everything at Constantino's home except for one thing, some blood that was found in a hallway. It doesn't match anything in the databases but it could indicate that Constantino was shot that day. If it was bad then maybe he's dead," he finished.

"Or he's just holed up until he heals. You've got no leads at all?"

"Well, one thing we can do is confirm who the blood belongs to, but it's up to you and Tony," Tobias said.

Gibbs looked at Tobias for a bit. "You want to match Shelly's DNA with the blood you found."

Tobias just nodded. It felt too much like he was rubbing in the fact that Gibbs wasn't Shelly's biological father but there was nothing he could do about that.

Gibbs looked away for a moment. Something inside of him didn't want any confirmation of Constantino's role in Shelly's life, but the investigator in him said that it would help to know if Constantino had been shot.

"You couldn't just go to Theurgenson?"

"Already tried. He didn't keep anything from Constantino...dumped it all when he found out what had happened. Said that as far as he's concerned, you're Shelly's father."

Gibbs smiled a bit. Stan was right, damnit. "Okay, I'll talk to Tony. He'll probably agree even if he won't be happy to think about Constantino right now."

"Thanks, Jethro. Our lab tech will be by for a swab and then I'll let you know when we find out," Tobias turned to leave and then paused. "This might help your frame of mind," he said with a slight smile as Gibbs raised one eyebrow in question. "Word has it that the Families have pulled their protection off of one Michael DiNozzo, Sr. They're apparently pissed that incriminating evidence against other Family members was found in his possession. They hate sloppiness."

"He having a rough time of it?" Gibbs asked, his eyes unreadable.

Tobias looked at him for a moment and wondered if the news was all that surprising. But then, did it really matter?

"Oh, yeah. Seems lots of guys want a piece of an ex-Family man. Your call if you want to tell Tony," he saw Gibbs' mouth turn up in a slight smile. He nodded slightly to himself and then left.

-----

Weeks passed and life settled down in the Gibbs household. The blood found at Constantino's did belong to him and the FBI surmised from the quantity that Constantino was probably dead.

For all intents and purposes, the issue was considered closed except for locating the body. But Gibbs didn't believe that for a moment. He was still convinced that the attack the night of Shelly's birth was related to Constantino and so refused to drop his vigilance.

Shelly quickly grew under the watchful eye of her two fathers and her grandfather. But unfortunately, despite how much Jackson enjoyed being around her he felt that he had to return to Stillwater. It was the hardest thing he'd ever decided to do but promised to return soon to see his granddaughter. He smiled as he thought of her. She was the spitting image of Tony, with his eyes and coloring. The only thing different were the wispy curls growing all over her head. He'd never ask, but he figured that it might be the only thing she got from her biological father. Well, he had plenty of pictures to show the folks at home and he was already planning his next trip. In fact, depending on how well his trip home went, he might have some news to share with Leroy his next time out. Time to just wait and see...

Jethro trotted down the stairs to find Tony doing pushups over the baby. He was caught for a moment by the sight of muscles moving smoothly under glistening skin but then he took in the rest of the picture. Shelly was on a blanket and every time Tony dropped down he placed a kiss on her belly. She was now nearly eight weeks old and was kicking and swinging her arms as she enjoyed the face of her father coming close enough for her to coo at.

"Tony, what are you doing?" he asked in exasperation when he saw Tony working out instead of getting ready.

"Entertaining our daughter with feats of physical prowess," he said in between pushups and kisses.

"I can see that. The question is why aren't you getting ready for work?"

"Because I'm not working," push up, pant, "We are hanging around NCIS until it's time to go home," he said reasonably.

Gibbs shook his head. They'd gone round and around with this conversation and he thought the discussion was over. After all, Tony and Shelly had come to work with him for two days already, why was he starting it again now?

"Tony..."

Tony lay down on his side facing Gibbs and began to tickle Shelly's stomach. "Jethro, please listen to me, okay?"

Jethro blew out a breath but nodded.

"I know you're worried about leaving us alone but the fact is that you can't be at our sides 24 hours a day and still get your work done. And we can't hang around NCIS for hours at a time with nothing to do. We've already visited everyone in the building, I've worked out at the NCIS gym, we've checked out the day care center, especially since that's the only place I can get some privacy to feed Shelly and our presence does disrupt the work going on," Tony said and then sat up crossing his legs under him. "Jethro, you know I love you, but I get the feeling that you don't think I'm capable of protecting our daughter. So tell me the truth. Is that how you feel?"

Gibbs dropped his head and shook it. "No, that's NOT how I feel. I guess the issue is me...I don't want to be apart from you. I like knowing where you're at and that you're both safe..." His voice trailed off and he looked into the distance. "I wasn't around when Shannon and Kelly needed me. I can't make that mistake again..."

Tony got up and went to his husband. He put his hands on Jethro's biceps and bent down until Jethro looked up.

"It's not as though you were off fooling around, Jethro. You were deployed, doing your job protecting our Marines, our soldiers. I know Shannon and Kelly understood that. But you couldn't have prevented what happened. It was a random chance. You said that they were out shopping when Shannon saw that murder. Are you saying for certain that you would have been with them that day? Then you would have been a witness, too. Or maybe you would have been in that car when the driver was shot, or that driver could have been you..."

Gibbs forcibly pulled away. "Don't you think I've thought about all of that a thousand times? Knowing that I probably couldn't change the outcome of those events doesn't change the fact that at that time I would have been happier if I'd of died right along with them, hell I almost ate my gun enough times that I might as well have..."

"But you didn't, Jethro. You hung on for whatever reason and gave yourself a second chance..."

"No," Jethro said. "You're the one who gave me the second chance..."

Tony moved forward again and brought his arms around Jethro. "The point is that we can't predict anything and you can't be prepared for every eventuality. Jethro, go to work and do what you have to do. Let me do what I have to do. And in two weeks we will go back with you, when I start working again."

Tony waited. He understood Jethro's feelings but being glued at the hip simply wasn't the answer, not for either of them.

Jethro nodded after a moment and then pulled Tony in for a kiss. "You call me if you decide to leave the house," he ordered.

Tony smiled and leaned back in for a kiss. "Promise, Boss," he answered.

And with a nod, Jethro left for work.

-----  
"So you'll be back on Monday," Tim asked for the third time.

"Yes, McScardy cat, I'll be there to protect you from the mean old Gibbs," Tony partially joked. This wasn't the first time that he'd heard about Jethro's vile temper. Normally he would have been the one to bear the brunt of Jethro's displeasure but he was no longer Jethro's Second. He wasn't even on the team. He'd be back to working cold cases. And although it hadn't been his favorite thing to do, there were a couple of ideas he'd had but never had a chance to run down. Nevertheless, maybe his presence in the building would be enough to soothe the savage beast. If nothing else, Tony could drag Jethro down to the daycare to play with Shelly if he became too unbearable.

The situation worried Tony but he wasn't sure what to do about it. Everything was great at home. It seemed that as soon as Jethro walked through the door it was as though he were entering a safe haven. And although that was a good analogy in itself, it didn't bode well for their friends at work...or the suspects. Well, at least not the one where Ziva had felt the need to step in and stop Jethro. Tim had told him that he'd been frozen, unsure what to do. This was Gibbs they were talking about. But that hadn't stopped Ziva. She'd stepped into his backswing and used her body weight to stop it. Tony shook his head. He'd seen Jethro obsessed and furious but he'd never seen him out of control. Well, okay, maybe he still hadn't been out of control because then maybe even Ziva wouldn't have been able to stop him. But he'd gone further than he ever had before and that's what worried Tony. Hopefully, things would settle down once Tony was near to hand. At least that's what Tony hoped for.

Tony finished feeding Shelly so he put her down for a nap. It was Saturday but Jethro was working on a case so Tony knew he wouldn't see him until it was done. He'd never dealt with Jethro's work habits from this perspective before and he was learning to deal with it but the long hours of quiet when things were hopping at work made him itch to get involved. Although he loved being home with Shelly, she didn't require too much care at this age so he found himself watching a lot of his old movies again but he was getting a little claustrophobic and he'd been thinking about returning to work for a while now. Besides, even cold cases could be interesting. And Shelly would be right there in the building with him so he could continue to breastfeed her for the six months he'd told himself he would.

He cleaned himself and buttoned his shirt but turned when he heard her coughing a bit. She stopped and he resumed tidying up the living room only to hear her cough again. Worried he went over and checked on her only to see her scrunching up her face as she coughed. Worried that she'd somehow gotten something caught in her throat he checked her over but didn't see anything in her mouth and yet she continued to gag. When she gagged and threw up he called Ducky.

"She does seem to have something...just...here..." Ducky said as he examined the squirming baby. Tony was helping hold her head still and was near tears at her crying and struggling.

"There we are..." Ducky said as he held something up to the light. It was a hair.

"A single hair was irritating her throat, Tony," Ducky said as he showed Tony the small perpetrator of his daughter's distress as Tony grabbed up his crying baby and tried to calm her down.

Tony looked at it and saw that it was one of his chest hairs. *Do ape babies get hairs caught in their throats from their hairy mothers?* he questioned himself, *because that's what I am...a hairy ape like Gianni said...*

Ducky looked at Tony in concern when he saw the frown and angry blush staining his cheeks as Tony buried his face in his daughter's neck.

"Tony, it is a small thing, I assure you. Shelly will be fine," he said gently.

"Yeah, until the next time she sucks in something..." Tony said and he softly patted her back, his gentle actions a total opposite to the expression on his face.

"Tony, I'm sure it was a one-time thing, please don't be concerned about a recurrence..."

But Tony cut off his reassurances with a smile as he forced away his true feelings.

"You're right, Ducky. I'll just be more careful when I feed her from now on," he said with a smile as he fought to portray a calmness he didn't feel.

Ducky eyed him critically but nodded just the same. He left shortly afterwards.

Once he was gone Tony packed up a diaper bag and bundled up Shelly. This was never going to happen again, he promised her.

-----  
Gibbs arrived at home and immediately heard Tony in the kitchen. From the enticing smells he figured it was Italian food which Tony prepared extremely well. He also knew that it was something Tony could fix quickly since he kept packages of sauce he'd prepared ahead of time frozen in small containers.



"Hi, honey," he said as he walked up to Shelly and gave her a quick kiss on the forehead. She was sucking contentedly on a teething ring she held tightly in her little fist while she swayed lightly in the bouncer on the table.

"Hi," Tony said as he gave Jethro a quick glance and then resumed chopping vegetables for a salad.

Jethro eyed him as he walked over and gave Tony a kiss on his slightly reddened cheek. Tony barely looked up as he quietly resumed chopping and Jethro looked him over again. He was curious about Tony's faint blush but what really intrigued him was the half-boner his husband was sporting.

"Have a good day, today?" he asked Tony and watched mesmerized as Tony's blush deepened. God, he was so beautiful and he was getting Jethro very turned on with the shy little boy act.

Suddenly Tony put the knife down and looked at Jethro. "Ducky called you didn't he?" he asked.

"Yeah, said Shelly got a hair stuck in her throat but that she was fine. He wasn't too sure about you, though," he finished letting his eyes trail over Tony's body once again. He took a step closer and cupped his hand around Tony's erection which hardened against his palm as Tony let out a deep groan.

"I don't think this is the result of your reaction to what happened here today," he said softly into Tony's ear.

That low voice and warm breath against his ear sent a shiver down Tony's back and made him harden even more and he quickly forgot the minor annoyance he felt at Ducky's call to Jethro. He gave a little whimper when Jethro tightened his grasp on Tony's now hard cock. He nodded shakily to the unspoken request and turned to shut the oven off.

Jethro picked Shelly up out of the bouncer and he followed a now-hurrying Tony up the stairs. He turned into the nursery and placed Shelly into her crib and turned on the mobile to keep her entertained hoping it would work for awhile. He was damn well going to find out what was up with Tony...or at least find out what was causing Tony to be up...

He walked back into the bedroom to find Tony standing by the bed. He was still fully dressed but he was panting lightly and still blushing and sporting a large bulge in his now tight pants. Jethro was sure his panting was not due to his quick trip up the stairs. He stepped forward and again placed his hand on Tony's cock and reveled in the low moan he heard. God, this was turning him on. He leaned forward and kissed Tony lightly on the lips and then raised his hand to run his finger down the open collar of Tony's shirt, lightly brushing the warm skin there. Tony trembled and Gibbs placed one arm around his waist and pulled him closer. He again ran his finger across the exposed skin at the opening of Tony's shirt to feel the silky skin and then he paused. It was silky, hairless skin.

Tony was making little hitching breaths as Jethro unbuttoned the first button to find even more silky skin and he moaned lightly as he reached into the now-open shirt to cup Tony's breast, lightly rubbing his calloused thumb over Tony's hardened nipple still encased in the man-bra as he called it. It was a t-shirt with built in support for nursing men. It had a low-cut neck and Jethro could see an expanse of hairless swelling disappearing into the t-shirt. God, it made him ache to see the rest.

Not wasting any time he had Tony's shirt and t-shirt off, both sailing across the room as he looked at Tony's upper torso, beautiful skin completely denuded of hair and he understood. He reached out again and ran his calloused hands over Tony's chest and arms, raising them to see smooth pits.

Tony dropped his head back in response as he moaned again at the feel of those hands running over his overly-sensitive skin. Jesus, he'd been fighting a permanent hard-on ever since they'd finished with him. It was like he could feel every current of air caressing his body. Then, when it had been time to get dressed, he'd barely made it out to the car, every square inch of his body sending tingling sensations directly to his groin as his skin made contact with his clothes. His only thought was to wonder what his silk boxers would feel like but then it had changed to Jethro's fingers, his mouth... He'd barely (snicker) made it home without coming in his pants. He wanted to explore but then Shelly let out a wail of hunger and then there was no time and all the while he was thinking of Jethro. He wondered if he'd explode before he got home.

He brought his head forward and opened his eyes to see Jethro looking at him as though he was a feast for a starving man. He was grabbed and kissed so hard he couldn't breathe as Jethro laid claim to every inch of his mouth and then his jaw, neck, chest. Little kisses and light flicking of Jethro's tongue all across his skin, his breasts and down to his navel, made him grind himself against Jethro.

"God, Tony...how far down..." Jethro panted out the words against Tony's skin as he undid Tony's belt buckle.

It took Tony a moment to realize that Jethro had spoken actual words. "Started with my chest...and stomach..." he panted with slight trepidation. It had seemed like a good idea at the time regardless of the pain involved. And so far Jethro seemed to like it...

"Decided on my back...and arms...Ziva called me her hairy butt..."

Tony's pants were around his ankles and Jethro had bent down to remove his shoes and socks all the while running his calloused hands up and down Tony's hairless legs. Tony was holding onto Jethro's shoulders for dear life as he knees threatened to buckle. God, this was so much better than anything he'd been imagining all afternoon long... "Please, Jethro, please..."

"Easy, boy, easy...so you telling me you did everything?" Jethro asked as he laid his cheek against the large wet spot in Tony's boxers. He breathed in the musky scent of Tony's arousal knowing that Tony had been hard all afternoon and he reached out with his tongue to caress the bulge and taste the essence seeping through Tony's shorts, putting light pressure against the head of Tony's cock with his tongue making Tony gasp and shake. "Answer me, boy..."

"Yes, damnit...yes! The all-over body w-waxing was actually ch-cheaper..." Tony stuttered as he explained, the heat from Jethro's mouth against his cock making it nearly impossible to think.

"Oh, come here, baby..." Jethro said in a soothing voice as he pushed Tony down onto the bed. "Lift for me," he ordered quietly and slowly slipped Tony's boxers down and away. His eyes narrowed and he was mesmerized by the miles and miles of soft skin stained a light pink over Tony's entire body. He lightly stroked the silky soft skin of Tony's belly as it was being painted with pre-come as his incredibly hard cock bounced against his slightly rounded abdomen. Although Tony wasn't yet targeting his abs in his workouts, Jethro could already see the return of hardening muscle around the faint surgical scar but for now it was still soft to the touch and it turned him on as much as Tony's six-pack had all those months ago.

He continued to caress the soft skin where there had once been a thick bush of soft curls. He lightly stroked and played with the hairless balls, the velvety skin pulled up tight with Tony's arousal. "So beautiful...so beautiful..." he murmured softly.

Quickly he stood straight and dropped all of his clothes. In a moment he was back, kneeling between Tony's parted legs as he continued his exploration of this newly-exposed virgin territory. Tony squirmed and moaned under his hands and again Jethro soothed him with murmured endearments and soft touches.

He had Tony's legs opened wide as he examined the clean soft pucker he knew so well. Only

now it was fully exposed and Jethro ran his tongue over it, noting the taste was slightly different, lighter and not so musky and yet still completely Tony. He pushed his tongue into the tight hole and felt more than heard Tony gasp which was followed by unintelligible mumbling. Tony wiggled in his grasp and Jethro tightened his hold on Tony's hips. He grinned evilly at the thought of Tony being on edge all afternoon. The idea of it pleased him and he knew that today would not be a one-time occurrence. But for now he would ease his lover's distress and his own. Quite frankly, he wasn't sure he would be able to last much longer so he quickly grabbed the lube and added a healthy amount to his hand and began to stretch the tiny hole to the symphony of Tony's moaning.

Tony gave those little gasping hitches that Jethro loved so well as he pushed into the tight opening, pausing once he was fully seated to luxuriate in the tight heat. He drank in the sight of Tony's pained pleasure as he waited for Tony to let him know that burning stretch had eased. And after a moment, he did. He began to thrust deeply and slowly, loving every moment of being buried so deeply inside of his lover. He bent forward to lap at the small leaking breasts, savoring the sweet essence that their daughter enjoyed so well. He thrust in again and wanted to suck and nibble but he would never take anything that belonged to his daughter. Later, though, when Tony was beginning to wean her, there would be nothing holding him back from taking everything Tony had to offer.

Jethro pushed in again unable to hold back as Tony reached forward to grasp his biceps and wrap his strong legs around Jethro's waist. Jethro grabbed Tony's cock in his hand and began to stroke in time with his thrusts. He took a deep pleasure in every gasp knowing he was hitting Tony's prostate. Then he heard a deeply groaned *oh* and felt Tony's come cover his hand as Tony's ass clamped down around him and Jethro felt the blinding rush of love and passion surge up and out of him to shoot deeply into Tony as darkness claimed him.

Later, after Jethro had risen and brought a cloth to wipe them both down, they lay together kissing softly and touching one another. Jethro rubbed his chest against Tony's and laughed lightly at the soft groan that action elicited.

"Like that?" Jethro asked with a smile.

"God...I'm still so sensitive and I love your chest hair," Tony said as he combed his fingers through the silvery grey and black expanse. "So you like it? Should I stay this way?"

"You're massively sexy and a turn on with or without body hair. I just love you, Tony. But the choice is yours...as long as you're doing it for you and Shelly, not for any other reason," Jethro said as he nuzzled Tony's neck.

Tony looked down at Jethro as he worked his way down his neck and chest. He'd told him what Gianni had said and then Jethro had proceeded to let him know just how wrong he felt Gianni was and Tony had been satisfied. Well, at least up until Shelly had gagged on a hair. And now, as he felt Jethro playing lightly with the skin around his twitching cock, he felt secure in staying this way until he was done breastfeeding. He closed his eyes, effectively shutting down his thoughts as a hot mouth sucked him inside and it felt so good to feel those fingers stroking his balls as that talented tongue brought him back to life and he vowed then and there that the pain of waxing was definitely worth the end result as Jethro's tongue once again breached him. Yes, definitely worth it.

-----  
Gianni groaned as he struggled to grab the bottle of water off of the nightstand. He failed.

"Gina!" he called gruffly. She appeared a few moments later.

"Why the hell do you have to put my drinks so far away," he complained.

Gina remained quiet as she picked up the bottle and handed it to Gianni. She wouldn't tell him that he'd been the one to place the bottle on the nightstand after his last drink. No, it was just easier to accept the blame and then do whatever was necessary to fix the situation.

She watched as he struggled to drink and eyed him critically. The infection had nearly killed him but he'd managed to survive although he was still incredibly weak and terribly thin. It had been over five months since he'd been shot. Five very long months and although Gianni was in no danger of dying since his wounds were all healed even if they hadn't healed well, he was still almost completely incapacitated. They'd been so focused on the grievous abdominal damage that they hadn't paid too much attention to Gianni's shoulder so now his left arm had completely atrophied and his legs were not much better. The doctor had said that he needed physical therapy to help him get stronger but how were they supposed to get that? So she got Carlo to build a bar over the bed so Gianni could work on pulling himself up. Now Carlo was building some parallel bars so that he could strengthen his legs. She'd been surprised at what Carlo knew about physical therapy but he had worked in an Army hospital for awhile so he had some ideas. And it was working even if it was really slow. Still, she could see the man he was returning day by day.

"I've made some soup if you're hungry..." she offered tentatively. She was never sure when his temper would flare so she spoke very little. That on top of the fact that she'd been terrified for weeks now kept her wary and silent. She'd been afraid that her stupid drunken foray would come back and bite her in the ass, but it seemed that luck smiled on her and nothing had come of it. Still, she wouldn't breathe easy until Gianni was back on his feet and taking care of things...or she found some way to either kill Anthony or steal the baby. She was still working on that. Her thoughts were interrupted by Gianni's complaint.

"I'm fucking sick and tired of soup..." he grouched but he knew as well as she did that the doctor told him to stay on mostly liquids and extremely soft foods. "Yeah, bring me some soup...and open the window shade. I wanna look out," he ordered.

Gina did as she was told and then left the room, but not quickly enough as Gianni again began his tirade.

"Fucking end of March, already. My son is out there with that whore. Bastard's keeping my son from me. I haven't even seen him and he's already two months old! And DiNozzo sitting warm and safe in jail while I freeze my ass off in this dump...Gina!" he called again. She re-appeared with a bowl of soup in her hands.

"Gina, get me the balance in that account...and I want you to do the same with this other one," he ordered as he handed her some written instructions. "But first I want a haircut and a bath."

Later, as Gina used the clippers to expertly trim the curly hair close to Gianni's scalp she tried to guess what Gianni was planning now. She couldn't so after the haircut she helped him into the bath, her eyes as usual noting the ugly puckered scars and depressions from flesh the doctor had cut away across his entire stomach and into his right side. He was still in a lot of pain and he barked and cursed her as she washed him as carefully as she could all the while blaming Anthony for his current state. Soon she knew he would tell her what he wanted and she would work her plans around that. Once he was back in bed and dozing, she took the paper he'd given her and did what he ordered.

## Chapter 34

Tony's phone rang and he welcomed the break from the file he was looking through. It was the last of the cold cases that needed review and then he knew he would be at loose ends. He felt good about having solved two of the cases, but the others were still at a dead end. With a sigh

he pushed the thoughts away as he brought the phone to his ear."

"Hi, Tony," Cynthia's sweet tones greeted him as he answered.

"Hey, pretty lady, how are you today?" he asked with a big smile.

"Just fine, thanks...and how's your sweet baby?"

"Five months old and growing like a weed. She's rolling all around the floor like a little basketball," he said with a laugh.

"Well, that's good to hear. Are you going to go feed her anytime soon?"

"Yeah, she's due in an hour unless they call me and tell me she's fussing sooner than that..." Tony trailed off as he wondered what she needed.

"Well, when you're done with that but before you take that handsome hunk of a husband of yours out to lunch can you please stop by and see Director Vance? He's not in any hurry but he wanted to speak with you before lunch today."

"Sure thing, Cyn...thanks," Tony answered and hung up wondering what the Director needed from him. It made him a bit anxious based on all his past experiences with Jenny. Jethro got on alright with him and he trusted Jethro so maybe it wasn't anything he needed to worry about but still, ever since his permanent appointment as Director Tony had kept an eye on him. Vance was different but he hadn't quite got a handle on the man, yet. He'd just have to wait and see.

It was nearly lunchtime when Tony walked back to his desk. He was elated but worried slightly about what Jethro would think...or more importantly, how he'd react. Even Tony's presence in the building wasn't enough to soothe Jethro's temper some times. His fixation on trying to find some evidence that Gianni was out there was as bad or maybe worse than it had been when he'd been looking for Ari. None of them had been able to prevent Ari from killing Cait and now Jethro saw that same threat from Gianni, only this time the threat was to his family. And it was far too similar to what happened to Jethro's first family. Tony found he really couldn't blame Jethro. And although he was sure Gianni was still alive out there, he personally didn't feel a mortal threat from him against either himself or Shelly...he felt Gianni was more of a threat to Jethro for having what he thought of as his. And there was no way he'd let anything happen to Jethro.

Tony did a quick review of his own searches for Gianni. He, too, was coming up empty as he tried every one of his old mob informants from his old jobs. Everyone believed Gianni was either dead or out of the country, neither of which Tony believed any more than Jethro did. He hadn't let Jethro know he'd been doing this. One of them seemingly obsessed was enough.

Fortunately Jethro had gotten a bit more control of himself and hadn't taken his anger and frustration out on any other unfortunate suspects that just happened to piss him off. He thanked God again for Ziva being there that day and he'd had a quiet but intense aside with Tim about it, too. No matter how in awe Tim was of Jethro, he couldn't let it freeze him. He was Jethro's Second and it was up to him to help keep things in line, to not only back Jethro up but to stand up to him as well. It wasn't an easy job but it was essential and Tony knew Tim was capable of it. Tim just had to believe it.

No, things were getting better although Jethro's wariness hadn't subsided. He shouldn't have too many issues with this change...Tony hoped.

Shelly was nearly six months old now and Tony was beginning to wean her from his breast. And with what Vance had just offered him, it couldn't be a better time. He was being given his own team and it was what he wanted. Now he just had to tell Jethro.

Later Jethro stood by Tony as they watched the river flow passed.

"So you won't officially take your team over for another two weeks?"

Tony watched Jethro stare out at the water. Initially, he hadn't been happy about Tony's news but it was something he'd apparently expected. Vance had specifically said he hadn't told Jethro anything and Tony had been relieved. He'd hate to think that Vance felt he had to ask Jethro first before offering him the job. He knew Vance wouldn't belittle him that way. Still, it hadn't been that much of a surprise to Jethro. Maybe he'd known it was inevitable?

"Yeah, I've got to interview some agents to fill an empty slot and make sure everyone's qualified. By then Shelly should be weaned and I can really run the team and be out in the field," Tony said quietly as he waited for some reaction from Jethro. He hadn't said much any time Tony went out investigating leads on cold cases probably knowing he couldn't keep Tony out of the field.

Jethro nodded. As much as he'd like to wrap Tony in cotton he knew that he couldn't. Tony was a damned fine agent and deserved his own team. He'd just have to make sure Tony didn't get so involved in his cases that he'd drop his vigilance in regards to Constantino. With that thought he turned to his husband.

"It's past due, Tony. You deserve your own team," he said and watched Tony lift his chin at the praise. "You'll do fine," he said as he slapped Tony on the shoulder and Tony gave him one of those brilliant smiles he loved so much. God, if only they weren't at work...

And with that the two men turned to go back into the office. Gibbs checked his watch and noted he still had a bit of time. Without a word they turned as one to head to the daycare center. A few minutes with their favorite girl, other than Abby of course, would be just perfect.

-----  
Tony walked slowly as he left Gerry's office. Tony was only seeing him occasionally now and he felt good about that. Well, except for the fact that Gerry had again brought up his visiting DiNozzo. He knew he was right. It had been right to see Jenny one more time and he knew he should do this. Yet he hesitated. All of the old anger and hate welled up inside of him just at the thought of the old bastard but then Tony took a deep breath. *And that is why you have to confront him*, he told himself. With a nod he decided to talk to Jethro about it that night.

"Are you sure about this?" Jethro asked when Tony had told him his plans after dinner.

"I have to, Jethro, you know that," Tony said.

Jethro just looked at him and although he knew he was right, he felt it was also right for him to come clean about something, too.

"I'll be with you if you want, you know that," Jethro stated.

Tony just smiled and pulled Jethro in for a hug. "I was hoping you'd say that. I've already asked Abby to watch Shelly," he said with a smile as Jethro's arms tightened around him.

"Okay, but there's something I want to tell you," Jethro said and he stepped back. Tony eyed him curiously but didn't say anything.

"How much do you know about DiNozzo's sentence?"

"Nothing. I gave my testimony and then walked out. After that there was too much going on for me to care about him or the trial," Tony said quietly. It had been a dark time while Jethro was gone and he didn't like to talk about it.

"He made a deal for the information they got from him on other mob members. He got life with a chance of parole and the FBI didn't leak where they got their information."

Tony just cocked his head, waiting.

"Know some people who had some more information. I made sure it got to the FBI. Through some connections I let it be known that DiNozzo was the source of everything the FBI has."

There was no way that he'd tell Tony that it had actually been Ducky's connections that had allowed the information to get to the proper parties. He recalled Ducky's words that day. *'If something like this had occurred earlier in my life I could have easily handled the problem for you in a very final manner, Jethro, but as it is I have my oath as a doctor to consider. So, I'll just put a little bug in certain ears in order to make DiNozzo understand the gravity of his actions. Anything that occurs as a result of that is purely on the shoulders of individuals other than you and I'*, he'd said with a smile that had given Jethro pause. He was damn glad Ducky was on his side.

Tony was shocked. Gibbs had released information regarding the FBI's investigation? Did Fornell know?

"Why?" he asked, still trusting in Jethro's judgment.

"It was a preemptive strike," he stated firmly. "I didn't want DiNozzo to be able to gain a foothold in the hierarchy of the prison. It would give him a position of authority there and also give him access to outside sources. I wanted him to be alone...and powerless," Jethro said. He rarely felt the need to explain his actions to anyone, but Tony deserved to know it all. It involved him and he was Jethro's husband.

Tony just stared at his husband. Jethro had enacted vengeance on DiNozzo the only way he could...by making him weak in a place where only the strong survive.

"So he doesn't have any Family backing?"

Jethro shook his head. "They pulled all semblance of protection from him. Tobias said he's not having a good time of it right now."

There, it was said and now it was up to Tony to decide how he felt about it.

Tony just nodded his head and remained quiet for a moment as he contemplated just what his father had experienced once he no longer had his protective cloak around him. Beatings definitely, and probably rapes which were an issue of power and control more than sex. He found that he felt no remorse, just gratitude that Jethro had his six.

"I wish I could have been a part of that," he said quietly and then Jethro pulled him into his arms.

"Was hoping you'd feel that way, but I was ready to take the brunt of whatever you felt if you didn't," he whispered. "Can't let him get away with hurting what's mine, Tony. You're my boy, now and forever," he swore yet again.

"Yours, always," Tony said, returning the promise as they held each other tightly.

-----  
Tony ran a hand down the back of his head as he waited. He tugged at his sleeves of the expensive suit he wore and smoothed the lines as it hung over his taut belly. He acknowledged the fact that he was nervous as he moved to stand by Jethro, who in pure contrast, waited with his hands clasped lightly behind his back in a picture of total calm. Tony envied him his composure. So, not to be outdone, he pulled on all his reserves of acting ability to portray the same calm composure as his husband. His shoulders remained straight but the tension eased out of them. Jethro turned to him and nodded in approval. After a few more moments the door was opened by a guard and his father was led in. Show time.

Tony looked DiNozzo over and was shocked at what he saw. DiNozzo looked like hell. His cheek was bruised and he had a bloodied scab on his lip. There were shadows under his eyes and he looked like he'd aged twenty years. He even looked as though he's shrunk but Tony knew he hadn't although it was obvious he'd lost weight. The few steps he took to enter the room were stiff and obviously painful. Tony examined every part of the man with whom he'd shared a name for the first 34 years of his life, who'd disowned him, and who had essentially sold him into an abusive marriage. He felt the anger well up inside of him but just as quickly felt it drain away. It was useless, as useless as the broken man before him. He had everything in his life: a husband he loved, a beautiful baby girl and a name he was finally proud of. He had a great job and the respect of his co-workers. And in that moment he again kicked himself for ever doubting his friends and family...and himself. Never again, DiNozzo, he thought and he smiled. You lose.

DiNozzo's flat brown eyes examined Tony just as thoroughly as he himself was being examined. It was plainly obvious which of them had fared better since their last meeting. DiNozzo stared at the good looking, confident man before him and felt regret...but not regret for the manner in which he'd treated him. No, the only regret he felt was for the loss of his son...his real son, Michael. That Anthony could stand there in front of him in such obviously good health and prosperity disgusted him. But then it was all his own fault, he reminded himself. The Turterro Family lawyer had explained just how he had been to blame for everything that had occurred to him. And with the loss of his family, meaning Michael, his wealth and now his freedom, he was finally beginning to understand that it was true. It had been his own hubris that led to his downfall, his pride in the DiNozzo name and in his planning that resulted in all those lucrative business dealings. Until he'd tried for too much...in trying to get rid of both Anthony and Constantino together he'd lost it all. And now he has paid the ultimate price, losing first his son and namesake so that, with his own death, the world will see the end of the DiNozzo Family forever. He saw Anthony smile and he turned his eyes away.

"What do you want, Anthony?" He said to the wall beside him.

"Nothing, anymore. I've gotten what I came for."

"What? A chance to gloat?"

"No. Confirmation for myself that you don't matter. Not to me or to my family. You never did and you never will because I survived everything you did to me and it's over. Hell, I won the best prize in the *world*. I have a great husband and a beautiful daughter. And she will grow up never knowing about you or what you were."

Tony felt as though a huge weight had dropped from his shoulders. He was finally free. He turned to again smile at Jethro, in his mind, the source of all things good.

DiNozzo looked at Anthony, saw him turn and smile at the man with him, the Fed who'd been at the house that day. He looked at them both, noted the way they looked at one another and only then did he see the matching wedding bands. So Anthony had either divorced or annulled his marriage to Gianni. That was fine with him. He hoped Gianni was rotting in hell from that shot he'd put in his gut. But here was Anthony. With his husband and they had a daughter who would never know about her real father or the man who, at one time, held the power of life and death over them all. He wondered who she looked like. The desire to see her suddenly over-whelmed him.

"Do you have a picture?"

Both Jethro and Tony turned to stare at DiNozzo neither of them understanding why he would want to see Shelly's picture. Tony stared but then moved to pull out his wallet but his hand was stopped by Jethro.

"Don't Tony...he doesn't deserve it..." Jethro began as thoughts of all the hurtful things DiNozzo



could say to Tony rushed through his mind. He'd be damned if he'd let that old bastard hurt Tony ever again.

Tony looked at Jethro and looked at DiNozzo and knew he would show the photo. Let DiNozzo know what it was he was missing out on. And if he said anything, well, it just didn't matter anymore and Tony felt that certainty all the way to his core. DiNozzo just didn't matter anymore.

"It's okay, Jethro," he said with a confident smile as he raised his other hand to squeeze the hand still preventing him from pulling his wallet from his breast pocket.

Jethro searched Tony's eyes and saw complete certainty there. He nodded and dropped his hand.

Tony pulled the picture he carried and looked down at it. They'd taken Shelly to the park that day and Jethro had been tickling her nose with some cherry blossoms. She'd reached out and grabbed them, crushing the pink blooms in her tiny fist as she let out a chortle of laughter. Tony had snapped the picture at that moment and it was beautiful. You could see her eyes looking very green against the pink flowers and she had little golden-brown curls framing her face. You could just see the glint of the gold earrings she wore and he flashed back on the small argument he and Jethro had when he said he wanted to get her ears pierced and then Jethro's smile later when he saw how pretty they looked. Abby, of course, had been thrilled. All of those things he knew and remembered when he saw the pictu

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 36 - 38 by cernicalo

## Chapter 36

"And the doctor said he'd be alright?" Tony asked again. Jethro had called late that night to say he was now in Stillwater and that Dad was doing fine. He'd suffered a heart attack but the doctor felt confident that he'd recover fully if he took care of himself. Tony gave a sigh of relief and turned and gave a thumbs up to Tim and Leanna.

Both Tim and Leanna gave equal sighs of relief and Tim immediately pulled out his phone to notify Abby and the others.

"We're leaving in the morning...yes, cleared it for Tim, Abby and Ducky to go with us. Ziva and my team will hold down the fort here...great. Yes, we'll be careful...promise, Boss," Tony said with a smile and then spoke more quietly into the phone. "Give Dad a hug for me... Love you, too... Yours, always...goodnight..." Tony whispered quietly and hung up. He turned to see Tim and Leanna giving him broad smiles.

"What?" he asked with a grin and then returned to their card game.

-----  
"I was planning it as a surprise, son," Jack said for the third time to anyone who would listen. He'd been cleaning out his attic when he'd had his heart attack and was being scolded yet again by Leroy for taking on too much without enough help. It was fortunate that a neighbor he did have helping had come back for another load and found him unconscious and half out of the ceiling entryway. He'd called the ambulance that had taken Jack to the hospital. Jack knew better, of course, than to be doing any heavy lifting alone, especially with his bum leg, but he'd been looking for some more stuff that he thought Leroy would like to have. Stuff like his grandfather's civil war collection or his mother's china. It was all right there in the attic but it needed to be moved in keeping with his surprise. But his surprise wasn't the only one. It looked like there were surprises all around.

Tony put a hand on Jethro's shoulder when he looked like he was going to say something else. It was enough to settle him down.

"Well, I think it's great, Dad. I can't wait for you to come out and live with us," Tony said with a smile as he moved to sit in the chair next to Jackson's bed. He had Shelly with him and he began to bounce her a bit.

Jack smiled and reached out with his hand to touch the soft curls that had escaped from the two tiny pigtails Tony had put her hair in that morning. Jack wasn't the only one who loved her hair, Tony constantly fussed with it not only to keep it neat since the curls all had a mind of their own, but just because he loved to feel the soft embrace of the silken strands as they wrapped around his finger in tight pin curls. And Jethro, being the extremely tactile man he was, seemed to lose himself in the softness as he walked her through his basement explaining all of his tools to the fascinated little girl.

"Knew as soon as I saw her that I couldn't keep away. Thought I'd rent an apartment or something nearby so I could watch her grow up. And now you can't keep me away...twins, huh? God Almighty, that's wonderful news and a hell of a surprise. Beats mine hands down..." Jack said with a laugh.

Jethro watched his father with Shelly and he knew it would be good to have him close. Only he felt he needed to be closer still. He looked at Tony and got a nod.

"Dad, Tony and I don't want you to rent an apartment," he started but then reached out with a hand to touch his father's leg when he saw the flash of hurt. "Dad, we want you to live with us," he amended quickly.

"Live with you? You don't have room for me let alone all my junk..." Jack argued.

"We're looking for a larger house, Dad," Tony said gently. "We need it for the kids anyway and I would really be happier if you weren't alone. So will you?" Tony asked in his best wheedling tone and puppy dog eyes.

Jack looked at Tony and his eyes narrowed. Then he turned to Leroy. "Is there anything you ever say no to when he looks at you like that?"

Jethro grinned and glanced away for a bit but then looked at his Dad again. "Nope," was all he said.

Jack turned back to Tony. "Alright. I'd like to move in with you on one condition..." he said with a raised finger. "I get to pay for part of it."

Tony and Jethro looked at one another for a moment. It really wasn't necessary considering the huge pot of money they had just sitting there, but they also knew that Jack would consider anything less than paying his way to be charity and he'd want none of it.

"Done," Jethro said with a nod and with smiles all around they began to make plans. First and foremost was moving Jack to their current house in time for Shelly's first birthday party the following month. They were all really looking forward to it and Jack laughed heartily to the mild argument over the pony Tony wanted. He finally agreed to the logic of her being too young, the lack of other children and the fact that it was still the middle of winter.

"There'll be plenty of other birthday parties where ponies will be a given, baby," Jethro said soothingly to Tony's pout, "even if we have to put the pony in the garage." He was rewarded by that brilliant smile he loved. Jack just soaked it all in and relaxed a bit more with his boys as he healed.

-----

Tony rubbed his lower back and picked up a small container before he turned off the light in Dad's bedroom where Shelly, Jethro and he would be sleeping. Shelly was finally asleep in the travel crib and he hoped they'd be able to settle in later without waking her. It had been a long day between the travel to Stillwater and the visit to Dad at the hospital and he was tired. He made his way downstairs where Jethro, Ducky, Abby and Tim sat chatting around the kitchen table. Jethro looked up at him with a raised eyebrow which was his way of asking if Shelly had gone down alright. Tony smiled slightly and nodded. Jethro pulled out a chair and grabbed a cup to pour Tony some of the hot chocolate Abby had made. Tony sat down gratefully and placed the container on the floor then sat back and sipped the sweet hot brew with a sigh.

Jethro looked at Tony with a critical eye. His boy was tired but he knew the day wasn't over yet. After he'd made sure for himself that Dad was okay Tony had given Jethro a look that said they were definitely talking tonight. Jethro sighed. He'd been waiting for this conversation but he sure as hell didn't need it on top of everything else, but he'd made the conscious decision to keep the information from Tony and now it was time to pay the piper.

The five chatted a bit more with Ducky relating some of the stories Jackson had shared with him about life in Stillwater and the early years of Leroy Jethro Gibbs. It was a relaxing conversation with a lot of laughter and some narrowed eyed looks at Ducky who blithely ignored each and every one. It didn't take long, though, before everyone admitted fatigue and they slipped off to the various rooms where they'd chosen to sleep. Abby felt that she'd struck the jackpot when she'd gotten Jethro's old room and Jethro worried slightly over what childhood memorabilia he might have left up there that would come back to haunt him. It really didn't matter, though, since they were his family and they'd already seen Bear.

When the door to the den finally closed which meant Tim had settled in for the night and Jethro had finished putting away the last freshly washed cup he turned from the cabinet to see Tony looking at him with his arms crossed.

"What?"

"You know what," Tony replied with a serious look and Jethro rolled his eyes. "I want to know everything you know and then I want to know why."

Jethro ran a hand over his face and wished at that moment he had a sanding block in his hands. It always seemed easier to form personal thoughts when his hands were occupied.

Without a word Tony bent down and grabbed the container he'd brought with him. He knew Jethro was under a lot of stress and since he couldn't bring Jethro's boat with him on this trip, the container of play doh seemed like an acceptable substitute. He opened it up and pulled out a bright orange blob. He tore off a piece and began to knead and roll out small sections. He looked up when Jethro had yet to start talking only to find those blue eyes staring at him in wonder.

He picked up the main blob and tore it in half and offered it to Jethro. After a moment Jethro took it from his hand, sat down and began to dig his thumbnail into it over and over and then he smoothed out all of the little curved indentations. He rolled it in between his palms as he explored it's texture and elasticity.

"Fornell came to tell me about DiNozzo..." he began as he formed a small shape that looked something like a canoe. Slowly everything he knew and felt came out with small pauses in between as they questioned one another on their creations. Jethro eventually confided his worries about Tony's health and the health of their babies if Tony was under too much stress.

"It's more stressful to think you feel you need to protect me. Jethro, I'm an adult. Yeah, I'm pregnant but I'm still a man and a trained Federal Agent to boot. I can't be effective if you

withhold information, *all* information...even if it's only your gut giving it to you. I've worked with you long enough to trust your gut as much as my own. And I need you to trust *me*."

"I do trust you, Tony," Jethro said. "But I do feel the need to protect you, too. I can't help that and I *do* recall a time when you tried to protect me," Jethro paused as Tony looked away. He reached over and pulled Tony's face back to his own. "It's how we feel about each other and it's good. But you're right, Tony, you deserve to know. I was going to tell you everything after your appointment with Stan but I had no proof other than my gut and then I got the call about Dad. I'm sorry..."

Tony began the usual response about apologizing but Jethro placed a finger over his lips.

"It's not a sign of weakness between family and friends. I *am* sorry," Jethro said and Tony nodded then leaned in for a gentle kiss.

Jethro pulled back and looked down at a couple of pieces lined up in front of Tony. "What's that?" he asked pointing to one.

"It's a banana, and this is an apple," Tony said pointing to a little orange ball shape. "I'm trying to make a pineapple right now but I can't get the leaves right..."

"Why not make an orange...it's the right color," Jethro added.

"Nah, too obvious. You've got to work your way around things."

"Like your husband's inability to communicate?"

"Yeah, like that," Tony said with a smile and just like that Jethro knew he'd been forgiven and he realized he'd needed it. He'd spent far too many years with his thoughts locked in his head and he was realizing how good it felt to be able to share them.

Tony yawned so, in an unspoken mutual decision, they destroyed all of their creations while Tony muttered lines from old Godzilla movies and then they quietly went to bed.

-----

Gianni lowered his binoculars and leaned his head back. This trip to see Anthony and his son was exhausting him but he'd caught a glimpse of them both and he was furious. That bastard Anthony had his son looking like a girl! He had watched as Anthony, who fucking looked like he was pregnant again, pulled a cake-covered shirt over his son's head and then started to rub a cloth over his face to clean up whatever mess there was. But all those curls...damnit! What the fuck was he thinking? And he didn't even want to think about the fact that Anthony had gotten an annulment. What had Gina said? Because he was a fugitive from the law and there was a history of abuse he had ample grounds for the judge to approve it. Fucking bullshit!

Tony laughed at the huge mess Shelly'd made of the table and herself when she'd dug into her first birthday cake. He actually had bought a really pretty little green dress with tiny yellow rosebuds sewn into it for the occasion but Jethro had talked him out of letting her wear it and now he realized how right Jethro had been. The frosting alone would have completely ruined it. So instead he'd put her in his second favorite outfit, tiny little jeans with the little red Levi's tag at the back pocket that just cracked him up every time he saw it and the grey sweatshirt with bright red Ohio State emblazoned across the front. Now, though, he was going to give her a quick bath and then she could wear her new dress. He took her upstairs while Jethro finished the clean-up in the dining room.

Gina looked at Gianni and saw how upset he was. She knew she shouldn't have brought him here...he wasn't strong enough, yet. But he was making all the decisions now. She knew he was also back in business even if she wasn't involved in that in any way. They were still keeping a

very low profile and she knew that he was keeping his name out of everything he did. So she just kept her head down did what she was told. She'd made all of the arrangements for the money drop to pay for DiNozzo's hit along with several other drops whose purpose she was ignorant of and Gianni had been really happy for awhile. But then she had to tell him that Anthony had not only terminated their marriage (which made *her* really happy), but that he had re-married which had again infuriated Gianni. To come here and find that whore pregnant again disgusted her and made Gianni even angrier. She wondered briefly if he was so pissed off he'd give himself a stroke. She had to get a hold of Carlo but he wasn't answering the cell phone she'd given him. Maybe he was too busy finding out about NCSI for Gianni. He said it was like CID but that hadn't made any sense to her either. But the information had made Gianni thoughtful and probably helped his plan but not hers. She wanted Anthony dead *now*. She looked over not realizing that every bit of longing for Gianni was right there in her eyes, but he didn't see it being focused instead on the people inside of the house. She dropped her eyes but saw Gianni's hand motion for her to drive, so she pulled out and turned left at the next corner to go back to their house.

Ziva laughed again at the mess. She pulled Damon by the hand towards the front of the house. She'd been watching out of the windows to the rear of the house out of habit noting that McGee and Gonzales were also keeping watch in between enjoying the festivities. Her lover (she was too uncomfortable to use 'boyfriend' which to her sounded very juvenile), Damon Worth, was with her but he seemed to only have eyes for her instead of helping her watch. She smiled at that. It was working well between them, especially since he'd found another security position with much fewer travel requirements which suited them both.

"McGee," she said quietly as she approached the front window. There was a car pulling out and driving down the street. She watched as it turned left at the corner.

Tim heard his name being called and got off the phone. He saw the tail end of the car leaving and turned to Ziva.

"Got the plate number, running it now. There were two individuals inside, pretty bundled up so I don't know their genders. Too far to see what they were doing but they were only there for a couple of minutes before they pulled out."

"It is a sedan, possibly the one that was here before. Damon and I will see if there are any impressions but it is doubtful with the flush on the ground."

Damon smiled down at the little wildcat he was in love with. Everything about her turned him on, even her problems with English. "Slush, honey," he said with a smile.

Ziva rolled her eyes and looked up into Damon's smiling blue eyes and couldn't help but smile back. Then she pulled him by the hand to go out and investigate.

-----  
Later that day while those that remained after the party socialized, Jethro and Tim sat in the kitchen reviewing the information they'd gotten off the plate number. As Ziva had predicted, the ground was too slushy for imprints.

"Evan Godwin...registration's expired on the car. Let's look at him...Godwin is ex-Army, less than exemplary service record...he was a medic. Nothing since he separated. Picked up twice in the last six months for starting bar fights...some history of drug use but it looks like his problems stem more from alcohol. Address listed is probably old but we'll check it out. Don't see much else on him, Boss," Tim concluded as he looked back at Gibbs who was still reading over his shoulder. "I've put a BOLO out on the car."

"Name doesn't mean anything to me..." Tony said as he walked into the kitchen with some empty glasses. Jethro had told him what was happening and Tony had been listening in while keeping

an eye on Shelly although she was perfectly at home in her 'amPa's' lap.

"You going to go check out that address?" Tony asked wanting desperately to go along but also knowing that Jethro would, quite rightly, put his foot down at that. Whoever had attacked their house that night had been armed. And even though Tony understood it intellectually, the fact that he couldn't go still pissed him off.

Jethro looked at Tony and knew exactly what he was feeling but there was nothing for it right now. He could send Tim and Ziva but he knew he wouldn't. "Tim and I'll go. Ziva stays here," he said leveling firm eyes at Tony.

Tony stared right back for a moment and then dropped his eyes with a small nod. Just because Jethro was right, it didn't mean he had to like it.

Tim and Jethro left after a couple of whispered conversations. Jethro kissed Tony on the cheek and gently caressed his stomach, then moved over to Shelly and kissed her on the head before he left. Tony watched them leave, blew out a quick breath and then turned back to the others.

Ziva now stood by the front window but Tony knew she and Damon would again perform another perimeter check. 'Bee' (Abby) sat on the floor playing with her niece and Tony smiled. Shelly was learning names for things as she babbled away in her own little language. Dad was 'amPa, and Abby was Bee. Tim still didn't have a name no matter how much Tony tried to get her to say Probie. Maybe it was too much like Abby's name, he wondered. At any rate, Jethro was Da'ee and so far Tony was a variation of Papa or Pop, both of which Tony could live with, although he had on more than one occasion caught Abby trying to teach Shelly to call him Mama.

Noting that Damon had gone outside to walk around Tony reached behind him to double check his own weapon wishing yet again that he could have been on Jethro's six. He sighed and returned to their guests.

-----  
Jethro walked back into the house hours later and Tony could see that he was pissed. He found out that the address was no longer any good and they hadn't been able to locate him at all. He was still giving Tim and Ziva instructions as he kissed Tony and Shelly.

"Check every dumpster if you have to. I want Godwin found..."

"Yes, Boss," Tim answered as Ziva nodded. They left shortly after that.

Jack eyed his son and didn't like what he saw.

"What?" Jethro said in exasperation when he caught his father looking at him again.

"How do you know that fella's even involved? He was just sittin' outside of your house, wasn't he?"

"Dad, someone was watching us the morning we were attacked. It could have been the same car. There's no reason for anyone to just be sitting there," he said firmly. "I'm not taking any chances."

"Just seems you're sending those kids out to do the impossible. How are they going to find this fella?"

Jethro smiled. Yeah, sometimes he did expect the impossible. And more often than not, his team came through. But his Dad didn't know that. It used to be that his Dad just pissed him off no matter what he said. Now Jethro found himself working to actually say what he was thinking. He knew his Dad hadn't changed...it had to be him. And the only reason for that change in him

was sitting on the couch holding their daughter's hand while she practiced walking.

"Dad, they're trained investigators. They'll talk to anyone in the last area Godwin was known to be, they'll check out the bars where he got into trouble. There are lots of ways to find leads. They're good at what they do. They'll find something."

"Well I hope so, for all our sakes," Jack said with a harrumph and Jethro agreed.

## Chapter 37

Two days later Gina sat in the tiny living room while yet another man she'd never seen before talked privately with Gianni in the bedroom. He'd shown up shortly after she'd given Gianni yet another pre-paid cell phone she'd bought and he'd told her to get out. She sipped some coffee while she waited and played with one of the phones. She was surprised to see some games loaded even if they were just demos. She was considering downloading one when she heard another car off in the distance. She moved to the window and recognized the sedan. It was Carlo.

Carlo saw the black SUV parked out in front and decided he didn't need to meet the owner. He saw Gina come outside so he waited for her to come to him.

"What're you doing here, Carlo?" she whispered anxiously as she approached Carlo.

"Wanted to talk to you about those plans..."

"Shh!" Gina hissed. "Not here...come on..."

Gina pulled Carlo by the hand until they were at the side of the house. The man who'd come in had marched directly into the back bedroom as if he owned the place so she figured he'd been there before. He hadn't said anything to her then so she doubted he would look for her when he left. She just needed to be within ear shot if Gianni called for her. She paused outside of the kitchen window figuring that she'd be able to hear if Gianni wanted her.

With a finger to her lips she listened for a bit and not hearing anything, decided it was alright. She didn't want Gianni to know Carlo was there. She never knew what would set him off anymore. She fingered the slight bruise that was still on her cheek. Just seeing Anthony the other day had pissed Gianni off so much he'd slapped her a couple of times once they were back at the house. Like she had any control over what that bastard did! It was after that that she'd called Carlo and told him that she wanted him to help her kill Anthony and take the baby. She figured Gianni was planning on killing Anthony himself, but she wanted it done sooner. Carlo might not have all the brains he used to before he joined the Army, but he had learned a thing or two and she figured she could get him to help her with this. And then, once she had the baby, she was sure her and Gianni could start a new life somewhere. She just couldn't get the information she needed to make her plans while Gianni kept her so close so she called Carlo for help.

They discussed their options without coming to any real consensus. They just didn't know enough about Anthony's schedule to determine when the best time would be to kill him and take the baby. Carlo said he knew a couple of people that worked in that area, maybe they could give him some more information. Gina thought about the pre-paid cell phones she'd bought. She'd picked up some extras and had been playing with one Carlo drove up. She reached into her pocket and pulled it out. Fortunately, Carlo had a pen in her pocket so she wrote down the phone number on her hand and then handed it to Carlo. That way she could contact him if she needed him.

Carlo smiled at the phone. Even if he didn't have anyone to call other than Gina, it was just a

cool thing to have in his pocket, made him kind of feel as though he were like everyone else in the world with cell phones and money in their pocket, sort of like when he was still in the Army. He fit in. With a smile he told Gina he'd have something by the next time Gina needed supplies. Carlo left, walking quietly away feeling good but wondering what Constantino was up to.

Constantino had paid Carlo pretty good for the therapy stuff he'd built but he kept borrowing Carlo's car. Carlo knew he was back in business somehow so why didn't he buy his own car? Carlo hadn't said anything but he knew it was only a matter of time before he was stopped for expired tags. He scratched his head. He really needed to find Godwin but the fucker was usually drunk off his ass somewhere. Yeah, he told himself, he could find him and then maybe get him to sign over the car. And then he could use this place as an address and get the car in his name, real legitimate. Yeah, he was tired of living like this but he had money now. He could fix things so that he was like a regular person again. But he needed to find Godwin first. Oh well, even if the cops did stop him what's the worst that could happen? Probably just tow the piece of shit away...

Dan eased back from the kitchen window when it looked like the bitch's boyfriend was leaving. He'd heard her walk out the front door and had reported it to Mr. Constantino. He was told to find out what she was up to and he had, reporting everything he'd heard. He saw the anger flare in the dark eyes of the man he'd performed several special jobs for over the years. But one thing he'd learned on that very first job was that it wasn't good to be on the wrong end of Mr. Constantino's anger. Fingering the heavy gold ring he wore on his left hand he wondered if he'd kill her and her boyfriend before or after he did the other job. It didn't matter but it would be nice to play with that pretty little piece a bit before he got rid of her. It all depended on what Mr. Constantino wanted.

Gianni eased himself back onto the bed with a hand holding the deep depression in his stomach and side. He breathed through the pain and then forced himself to focus more on what Dan had said. So Gina thought she could take things into her own hands, huh? Planning to kill Anthony and take the baby, start a new life with him. Only problem was that she didn't take a couple of things into consideration. One was that seeing Anthony, no matter what condition he was in, had made Gianni want him again. He was a damn good looking man and he belonged to Gianni regardless of what some asshole judge had said. The second little thing Gina seemed to have overlooked was that Gianni was gay. And no matter what Gina wanted, fact was that Gianni did not want her. So now Gianni had to figure out what to do about her. She was still of use so killing her was out for now, but later it could be easily accomplished. He just had to be patient. And as for that idiot cousin of hers, he'd leave it up to Dan to make use of him. He motioned Dan closer and outlined what he wanted.

-----

Fornell looked at the latest report and shook his head. Another bombing killing selected businessmen with no apparent connection except that several of them were under suspicion of having mob ties. Two of them had been under investigation based on information found at DiNozzo's home as well as the anonymous package they'd received shortly after DiNozzo's imprisonment. He thought about his conversation with Jethro in the elevator. He'd denied having anything to do with DiNozzo's murder but Fornell had still gotten the impression that Jethro knew more than he was telling. But bombing? Fornell knew that Jethro couldn't have had anything to do with the latest incidents. No, Jethro was much more likely to shoot someone, not blow them to bits. But Fornell's gut was telling him that there was a connection here somewhere. He just needed to find it.

-----

"Gibbs, we have Godwin..." Ziva said as Tim drove her and Godwin back to NCIS for questioning.



"Get him here!" Gibbs ordered and then hung up. Ziva shrugged since there wasn't going to be much they could get out of him for awhile. Hopefully, he'll be able to sober up enough to take a bath before they had to interrogate him.

They'd found him dead drunk in an alley behind a dive so disgusting neither Tim nor Ziva even wanted to set foot in it. But they did and finally found someone who could tell them about Godwin. The bartender really didn't know much beyond Godwin's name but he'd pointed towards the back door and that's where they'd found him, unconscious under some cardboard. Ziva had laughed as Tim put on a latex glove to go through the man's pockets. He was so filthy they didn't even want to put him in the car but they had to find out what Godwin was doing at Gibbs' house.

"Where is he?" Gibbs demanded as soon as they got back.

"Tim is processing him into holding...he is unconscious..."

"He resist?" Gibbs asked with a raised eyebrow. Ziva got the impression he wished he'd been the one to put him in that state.

"No, he is intoxicated. We cannot question him until he is sober."

"Hell, just as well, we've got a case. Marine spouse was murdered. Grab your gear and get McGee. I'll call Ducky," he said and they each left.

-----  
A few hours later Gibbs called holding only to be told Godwin was still sleeping. Good, he thought, thankful for the small reprieve. He wasn't ready to delve into Godwin's interview with this murder investigation in progress. The victim had been badly beaten and had bled to death. From what he saw it looked as though the victim's assailants had concentrated on his stomach and genitals. It had been very disturbing to all of them as they processed the scene. Knowing what they knew of the victim it had obviously been a hate crime and Gibbs was burning to find out who was responsible.

Gibbs was about to enter interrogation when he got a phone call from Ducky. If anyone else had been in the corridor they would have been surprised to see the normally pale man pale even further. His gut had been screaming at him that the man in the next room had nothing to do with David Timmon's murder. But he knew who, or at least knew a general profile of, the ones that did. And now, after speaking with Ducky, he was sure of it.

He entered the interrogation room and quietly sat across the table from the stiff man in uniform. He'd been found with the deceased's blood on his hands and on his uniform but had refused to speak from the moment he'd been picked up.

"Why don't you tell me about your relationship with David Timmons."

The Marine remained stoic, sitting ramrod straight in his chair and refusing to speak but a few moments under Gibbs' implacable stare changed that.

"You wouldn't understand, Sir."

"Why don't you try me?"

The Marine stubbornly repeated, "You wouldn't understand, Sir."

"Quit calling me 'sir'. I was a Gunnery Sergeant."

That earned Gibbs a pained expression.

"No disrespect intended, Gunny, but I still don't believe you would understand."

Gibbs sat back for a moment. Corporal Derek Stevens had just lost his spouse who'd been beaten to death in a parking lot. Although he'd been found with Timmon's blood all over him, he bore no marks to indicate he'd been involved in a fight with the victim. Gibbs was trying to be gentle but he was sure that Stevens knew who had killed ex-Marine Lance Corporal David Timmons, Stevens' husband. Abby was still processing the evidence so they didn't have any suspects yet. His stomach churned and it was telling Gibbs that this was a hate crime but not only that...he believed that the suspects were not other civilians but Marines.

Recent changes to the nation's laws legalized marriage between two men. Gone was the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy and subsequently, all of the military branches now had to accept same-sex marriages within their ranks. But, like all of the branches, the Marines were also scrambling to establish how they would deal with married males when both members were assigned to infantry, artillery and armor units, assignments normally prohibited to women. With the new policy allowing men to marry and especially with the possibility that one or even both members possibly choosing to have children, the brass was pulling their hair out trying to establish a whole new set of rules. But policy and actuality were two very different things.

Just as it was when women were first allowed to fill positions normally held in reserve for men, life for these pioneers was not easy. So, to avoid many of the complications, Stevens and Timmons had made a personal choice as several others before them had where one of them would separate from the Marines. In this case, it was David Timmons who elected to separate.

Gibbs watched the grieving man across from him and made a decision. Pulling out his phone he quickly speed-dialed a number. After a few moments the door to interrogation opened and Tony walked in, closing the door behind him. He remained standing near the door. He'd stopped by Jethro's desk to ask if he wanted to go to lunch and McGee had filled him in on the case. Then he'd gotten a phone call from Ducky to give him a head's up regarding what he'd just told Gibbs a few moments before knowing it would affect them both. Tony felt a pang of horror go through him. And Jethro was in talking to the husband. So when his cell phone rang it wasn't really a surprise to know his presence was needed. In fact, he was positive he didn't need to say anything at all but he was still sorry for what was about to happen.

"Derek, I want you to meet Special Agent Tony Gibbs, my husband."

Derek looked at Tony with such grief in his eyes that Tony almost ran over to him. Instead he tried to convey as much support and understanding as he possibly could.

"Corporal Stevens, I'm very sorry for your loss. You can be assured that Special Agent Gibbs will do everything in his power to find the men who did this."

"Derek, I wanted to make sure that you realize that I really do understand and, like Tony said, I *will* find the men responsible."

Throughout both Tony's and Gibbs' statements Derek never took his eyes off of Tony's belly although tears were now coursing down the grief-stricken man's face.

"Davey was only seven weeks along...he had a doctor's appointment at the clinic. I was supposed to go with him but I got hit with some extra duty so he went and called me to say he decided to do some more shopping for the baby on his own..."

"What duty were you assigned?"

Derek dragged his eyes away from Tony and wiped his face with a tissue from the box Gibbs wordlessly held out.

"I was told at the end of the day that there was a possibility of an inspection coming up from supply the next morning...I'm the unit's supply officer," he explained. "I was told to be ready for the inspection so I stayed to make sure."

"Who gave you the notice?"

"Sergeant Mullins, Gunny."

Behind the glass mirror Special Agent McGee left to look into that statement leaving Ziva to watch the rest of the interrogation.

"Derek, now I just need you to be honest with me here. Have you ever felt that you were pinpointed for additional duties? More so than any other guys in your unit?"

"Gunny, are you asking me if I felt I was being harassed for being gay?"

"Yes, I am."

"Of course I was, Gunny. But it wasn't unexpected. I was breaking all the old rules. I understood that and I accepted it."

"Did you ever report any of it?"

"Some questions were asked of me but no, I never stepped forward to report anything."

"That would be on the two occasions when you were sent for medical care. Why didn't you report it?"

Derek looked down and shook his head.

"I thought I could handle it, you know? I'm a Marine, Gunny, and I knew I was among the first to break tradition."

"But this went beyond harassment for breaking tradition. This is murder, Derek, and I believe you know who's involved."

"I know that, Gunny, but you need to understand something about me first. There are three things I loved in my life: my country, the Corps and Davey. Of the three I lost one and was betrayed by the other. But I will not return that betrayal."

"Derek, what you've got to understand is that the individuals who did this do NOT represent the Corps."

Derek looked around the room with a slightly wild look.

"All I have are suspicions...no proof!"

"Getting the proof is my job. I need those names."

"I'm not real sure about anything right now, Gunny. Let me think about it." Derek asked.  
"Please."

Gibbs stared at the man long and hard but all he saw was a grieving young man. "Alright," Gibbs agreed despite the fact that his gut was again twinging. "I'll have an agent take you home. Ya got someone to stay with you?"

"Yes, Gunny, my cousin lives here."

Gibbs nodded and both men stood. Tony straightened from the wall.

"Excuse me, Agent Gibbs...uh, Tony...?" Derek asked uncertainly when both Gibbs and Tony turned.

"Would you mind telling me how far along you are?"

"Three months on the eighteenth," Tony answered smiling gently with a glance at Gibbs. But with the twins he looked much further along. It was a running joke between them that it was getting harder and harder for Tony to pull his weight.

"Thanks," Derek said nodding and then he straightened. Together the three left the room.

"Boss," McGee said looking up from his terminal when Gibbs and Tony walked into the bullpen. "Two things. First David Timmons recently inherited a substantial amount of money from his late grandfather so the payments to Dr. Theurgenson's clinic are legitimate. The second thing is that there's nothing to indicate that any supply inspections were scheduled, either notice or no-notice," he said when Gibbs looked at him.

Gibbs nodded as though he'd expected that answer. "Bring Mullins in."

"On it, Boss," McGee replied as he grabbed his gun.

"I'm going to talk to his co-workers and commander." Gibbs said as he, too, grabbed his service revolver and badge. Although nothing said that Stevens still couldn't be behind the murder considering the amount of Timmons' inheritance and as Timmons' legal spouse he would get everything, but Gibbs gut told him that was wrong. He'd seen the way Stevens had looked at Tony and that grief in his eyes was real. Gibbs would stake his career on it. He gave Tony a squeeze to his arm and then left.

## Chapter 38

Colonel Bill Jameson eyed NCIS Supervisory Special Agent Gibbs as he sat in front of his desk. He could tell that Gibbs was a man who'd seen a lot during his career, probably most of it unpleasant, too. This case could be no different. But he could also tell just how angry the man before him was. He could almost see it seething beneath the surface and he wondered if Gibbs was the right person for this investigation, fearing it just might be too personal. Nothing Gibbs had said or done indicated that he wasn't fully in control, it just seemed he was like an explosive, primed and ready to go, so Jameson watched him closely.

He hadn't been personally pleased with the passage of the recent law but only because he knew just how painful it was going to be to put it into practice, but he'd spent his life protecting the rights of his countrymen and he wasn't about to stop now. He'd been in service when women began taking on jobs that had previously been held only by men and a few incidents had been bad. But because of the negative press it would have engendered, it was kept pretty quiet. But this...this involved murder. He wasn't a fool and as disgusted as it made him feel, he knew that this case would not be the only one. He was just sickened that it had happened under his watch.

"I'm at your disposal, Agent Gibbs."

Gibbs thanked the Colonel as he sized him up. He needed to check out Mullins but he also wanted to know just how much the command structure of the unit had known about the harassment. He wanted...no, he needed...to know how widespread the hatred had been although he could guess. At the back of his mind he kept thinking about the hard road Tony had to travel to work in this world...hell, to just live in this world, and he had the sudden desire to try and talk Tony out of it. He wanted to gather him close and keep him somewhere safe. But he

never would because it would seriously damage them both, possibly irreparably. He'd just have to make sure he was there beside him when it got rough because no matter what, he'd never fail him again.

By the end of all the interviews Gibbs' gut was telling him that the brass was clear, that the disgruntled Marines who'd harassed first Timmons and then Stevens had been limited to three. He was closing out the interview with Col Jameson when his cell phone rang. Gibbs excused himself and answered. In a heartbeat he was up and telling the colonel that he should come with him. Derek Stevens had taken Mullins as hostage. Ziva and McGee were on sight at one of the unit's storage facilities.

"Let's go, Gibbs," the Colonel said as he grabbed his hat.

"Derek, don't do this," Gibbs called from outside of the doorway. Derek Stevens held the gun to Mullins' forehead which was bleeding badly from the battering he'd received.

"Sorry, Gunny, but I have to. The Corps doesn't need animals like this and Davey and our baby didn't deserve what happened to them. Rogers and Stuart have paid for their actions...their betrayal...and now it's Mullins' turn."

"But *you* don't have to pay any more than you have already, Derek...you'll go to prison for this and isn't that a betrayal of Davey's memory? Of your child's?"

Gibbs saw Ziva moving into position at a side window. McGee was already in position near the interior door.

"Derek?" He called again as he leaned in to look, telling him that even if he didn't believe him at this moment that his life wasn't over, that there was always a second chance...

"There are no second chances! They took everything, Gunny. Everything..." and then the world exploded as several shots were fired seemingly at once.

Later it was determined that the first shot had been Ziva's when she'd seen Stevens push the barrel against Mullins' head. She hit him center chest but he was still able to pull his own trigger killing Mullins instantly. McGee shot a split moment later also hitting Stevens in the chest but to the left of Ziva's shot. Gibbs never fired his weapon.

Rogers and Stuart were later found sitting in a vehicle near the firing range with gunshot wounds to their heads.

Tony watched as Gibbs sanded a crosspiece later that night. He hadn't spoken very much and Tony knew that he was kicking himself for not holding Stevens in interrogation longer, maybe thinking that he could have talked him out of his final actions. But they both knew that Derek had set a course for himself from which he wasn't going to deviate. All Tony could do was what he'd done when he heard what had happened. He met Gibbs at the elevator and then pushed him back inside. Alone and with the stop on he had gathered his husband into his arms and just held him. As fucked up as it was, Tony knew that being a pregnant man made you a target for so many sick and demented people. Their family was, in fact, still a target if you thought about Gianni Constantino. He knew Gibbs still kept that thought at the back of his mind and had yet to let his guard down. Their lives were already dangerous because of their jobs and their personal choices had made it more so, but there was no other choice for them. Their answer, then, was to hold on to all of their precious moments together because you never knew when it would be suddenly taken away. As it had with Jethro's first family. As it had for Derek Stevens.

Tony flipped through another couple of pages of the magazine he held while he sat in the recliner Gibbs had brought down for him. He listened to the quiet hiss of the receiver in case Shelly woke up while he was in the basement with Gibbs but she slept quietly on. Dad was upstairs watching TV. He'd wait until Gibbs was ready to talk or just hold him if that was what he needed. Either

way this, too, was a precious moment together and was not to be wasted with them apart wondering about what ifs.

Gibbs glanced over at Tony and his heart flipped again. It often did whenever he caught a glimpse of the man he loved more than life itself. Tony had known exactly what he needed when he'd returned to the office after the mess with Derek Stevens had been finished. His only regret was that he couldn't immediately take his husband and daughter home and show them how precious they were, how loved Tony and all the babies were. That had had to wait until the end of the day, after briefs had been given and reports had been completed. Director Vance had questioned why Ziva had aimed at Stevens' chest rather than take a head shot, one she could have made easily and might have precluded his shooting Mullins, but Gibbs shrugged and stated that she made a split moment decision and had shot at center mass rather than try for a trickier head shot. Gibbs stated that he'd of done the same thing. Leon had looked at him knowing that he was lying but not wanting to call him on it. He let it go and Gibbs knew that he'd made the smart decision. It would have turned ugly.

Then Gibbs had released his team and gathered up Tony. Within moments of stepping into their home they were together, breathing life into each other's hearts as they reaffirmed their love until Shelly loudly proclaimed her hunger. Later, after putting Shelly down and relaxing and eating a bit they'd gravitated towards the basement, Tony knowing and understanding Gibbs' need to continue healing in a way that only working on his boat could accomplish.

But what Tony didn't know and Gibbs was not sure if he'd ever bring up was that he was remembering the moments when he'd shot the drug dealer responsible for Shannon and Kelly's deaths. He'd been living for that moment but once it was done a numbness seemed to envelope him that lasted long after he saw that bastard's head fly backwards in a cloud of red. And he remembered the moment when he'd held the gun in his hand and he'd emotionlessly contemplated ending his own life. The only thing that had stopped him was the errant thought that it would be hard for his Dad to claim his body from the Mexican government. So he waited. Later, the numbness eased but the god awful pain returned and he wanted his gun to just end it as he tried to deal with the loss of everything in his life but it wasn't an option while he was in custody and that pain-in-the-ass Lieutenant investigated him. When it was over Mike Franks came to him with a job offer and he took it until he could figure out what he was going to do. Yeah, he'd contemplated it more than once afterwards, but he realized he'd lost the chance when he failed to pull the trigger in Mexico. He still isn't sure if he'll ever tell his Dad that he was the reason he'd stopped that day but he thanked God that he had.

Oh, yes, he understood completely what Derek had been going through and to be honest, if anyone had tried to tell him then that he'd find love again, that he'd have another family that gave him a reason to live like he tried to with Derek, he wouldn't have believed it either. But its true, while there's life there are possibilities. He glanced over at his second chance and smiled as he pushed the sanding block along the grain and then followed it with his hand feeling the smoothness of the wood under his fingers. He suddenly had the urge to feel the smoothness of Tony's skin once again. He'd had enough. Setting the block aside he walked over to Tony and put out his hand. Tony looked up and smiled. Together they ascended the steps.

-----

Gibbs sat across the table from a very hung over but thankfully clean Evan Godwin. So far he hadn't been able to get anything even remotely useful from the man who'd been living on the street for months. He'd denied knowing Gibbs, and Gibbs believed this since he had no recollection of ever coming across Godwin either, and it was the same for Tony. So why had he been driving down Gibbs' street?

"Wasn't me, told you that. Think I'd be sleeping under cardboard if I still had a car?" he asked plaintively. "Can I have some more coffee?"

Gibbs ran a hand over his face and then slammed it down on the table. "I'll get you some more coffee if you can tell me what happened to your car!"

Godwin jumped and stared at the mean old bastard who was now standing in front of him. "I don't know!" he wailed. "Somebody borrowed it, maybe stole it...I don't remember!"

"So are you in the habit of just giving away your possessions? Are you that much of a Good Samaritan?"

"No...I knew him, I think. I think we served together," Godwin said into his shaking hands.

"Was he a medic like you?" Gibbs questioned further.

"Yeah, but there are a couple of us in this area, we served together..."

"Can you describe the man you gave your car to?" Gibbs asked knowing that McGee and David were taking all of this down.

"Dark...Was it Carlo? Or Jessie? One of those guys, they kinda looked the same...God, I just don't remember..."

Gibbs stood up knowing Godwin was useless for anything else at this point. He waved at the mirror and a moment later Ziva and McGee entered.

"Ziva, take him back to holding...get him some coffee and food and then you and McGee get me everything you can on everyone who served with him."

-----

Dan waited for Carlo about a mile out from the warehouse. He wondered slightly why Mr. Constantino had Carlo working for him. Carlo's brain had about turned to mush because of all the booze and drugs he did. He never even figured out that Dan had stolen that piece he kept under the seat of that shit car he drove. Maybe Carlo was there as a package deal with Gina. She ran all of Mr. Constantino's errands and probably knew about his deals but other than that he didn't know why Constantino kept her around, either. He knew for a fact that Constantino wasn't fucking her although she was a fine piece of meat. She wasn't his *type*, he thought with a sneer, so she must have some other use. He shrugged his beefy shoulders. It really wasn't his concern, wondering about it just passed the time until Carlo showed up. Then he'd set into motion the final job Constantino had for him.

He thought about the kid he'd shot with Carlo's gun. He usually enjoyed his line of work but the random killing of a sailor or Marine that Constantino ordered wasn't his style. But it was a means to an end. He did have fun with the earlier jobs he'd done for Constantino, though. Killing all of those mob guys had left the Families running around in circles with the FBI on their tails. And he'd been careful just like always. There was no way they could trace those jobs to him. But it wasn't the FBI he worried about, it was the Families that would come after him if they knew and he simply was not going to put himself in that position.

He looked at his watch again. Soon he'd finish up here and disappear for awhile. Constantino had paid very well for his work and he figured that since Constantino had his organization back on line there might be more jobs for him further down the road. And if Gina was still around he might have that chance to get at her after all. And with that pleasant fantasy he continued his wait.

Carlo finally arrived and he walked over and got into the car with him. Carlo seemed nervous but Dan ignored that as he directed him over to the warehouse he'd selected. Pointing off to the side he had Carlo park the car.

Carlo looked at the man he was sure was doing some dirty stuff for Constantino. He'd seen killers before while he hung around in the streets and this guy was definitely one of those. What were they doing out here in the middle of nowhere? He looked at the row of storage buildings and something clicked in his head. This wasn't good. It wasn't good for *him*. Did Gianni learn about Gina's plan? But he was going to kill Anthony anyway, wasn't he? But maybe not and now he was going to get rid of him and probably Gina, too. He began to panic. He needed to get away, just get away. He parked the car where Dan told him and then immediately jumped out. The guy, Dan, yelled 'hey' but he walked around to the back and kept walking, his gut telling him this wasn't good and then he remembered having the gun under the seat. Why didn't he grab it? What the fuck was wrong with him? Carlo turned as though wanting to go back for it but Dan was getting out of the car so he started to run the other way. What was he going to do? He had his hand in his pocket and he felt the cell phone. He could get away, call Gina. She could talk to Constantino, talk him into stopping whatever it was that Dan was going to do.

Dan got out of the car. He was pissed off. What in the hell was Carlo doing? It didn't matter though, whether he shot him in the car or not he could still make it look like he'd offed himself. He walked around the car and pulled Carlo's gun out of his pocket but the asshole started to run. Shit. Dan took off after him and caught up quickly. He reached out and grabbed Carlo by the collar of that filthy old Army field jacket he wore and spun him around and punched him once.

Carlo's arms flew out when Dan caught him. Neither man noticed the cell phone that was clenched in his fist fly off when Dan punched him. Carlo just crumpled and Dan cursed as he lifted the body up and over his shoulder to carry it back to the car. A few minutes later Carlo was back in the driver's seat only this time he'd never get out again. The gun was in his right hand which lay quietly on the seat next to him. Dan worked around the messy bits of flesh and bone for a bit but he was very quick. He'd had lots of experience at this sort of thing. Then, satisfied with his job, he closed the door one final time and walked back to his SUV.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 39 - 40 by cernicalo

## Chapter 39

"Boss, this is Jesus Morales," McGee said as he brought the picture up on the big screen. Next he brought up another picture. "And this is Carlo Scarpetta. They are the only two who served with Godwin that reside in the local area and match Godwin's description."

Without skipping a beat Ziva continued their brief.

"Morales is working as a paramedic with D.C. Medical Transport. He has a good record with the company, drives a 2004 Toyota Camry and appears to be financially stable. There is no record of his owning any firearms."

"Scarpetta, on the other hand," McGee continued, "is indigent. He's been arrested numerous times for both public intoxication and possession. He lists a P.O. Box as his address but there's no indication that he owns a vehicle or firearms."

"Bring them both in. I've got a hunch you might find out about Scarpetta at the same bar where you found Godwin. I want to know if they've seen Godwin or maybe know where his car is."

"On it, Boss," McGee answered and he and Ziva left deciding on Morales first since he had a valid home address.



-----

Dan finished the last of his preparations. He was looking forward to seeing the report of this on the news later. For now he needed to get out of there so he began to walk away from Carlo's sedan making sure to keep his steps on the gravel that he knew would leave no impressions of his steps. Not that it really mattered, the entire area would be substantially disturbed shortly and he smiled. With that thought in mind he carefully made his way back to his SUV.

-----

Tony got off the phone with Dad. He'd called to check up on him and to tell him that it looked as though they would be home on time. Even though they'd gotten him one of those senior emergency alarms in case he had any problems, Tony still liked to call a couple of times a day to check for himself and Dad had yet to complain about it. Tony kind of figured he was getting lonely being at home all day. They had yet to decide what to do about it.

When he was done he looked at his team. They were all quietly working to complete their reports from the latest case. They'd done a good job and he was going to send them home as soon as they were done. He, on the other hand, was looking at homes that were up for sale. There were a couple that seemed interesting, one in particular having four bedrooms, three and a half baths as well as an in-law suite on the first floor. The cool part, as far as Tony was concerned, was that along with a three-car garage it had a workroom with dimensions that Tony thought would be ample for boat-building. It had a large fenced in yard with mature trees and appeared to be in a good neighborhood. Jethro's team was on call that weekend but he hoped it stayed quiet so that they could see some of these houses. He decided to talk to Jethro that night and together they'd decide which ones to make an appointment to see.

-----

Gianni sat in the rental car with Gina. They listened to the police scanner and waited for the transmission that would signal the start of the final phase of Gianni's grand plan. It had been a long time in coming, mostly because of his own health, but also because he'd had to gather more resources in order to pay back the treatment he'd received from DiNozzo and the Families. Finally, he'd had to make arrangements for his own little family. For that he needed information and that had surprisingly come from Carlo. But it had been Carlo's last and best job. He'd found out that Anthony was working...it seemed like such a joke to learn that pregnant Anthony was again a Fed. But it did add a few more concerns to the overall execution of the plan since there'd be a little more excitement over taking Anthony and his son. But what was kidnapping when compared to the murder of a Federal Agent? Hopefully, they'd be long gone before any connection would be made between taking Anthony and the death of Gibbs. He saw Gina looking through the shopping bag, removing tags and packing all of the contents into the diaper bag she'd bought. She set it down next to the car seat she'd installed. They had another bag with the special items he'd had her get and he relished the thought of using them. Soon, the plan would play out. He leaned back and closed his eyes all the while listening for that one transmission.

-----

It was nearly 5PM when Jethro got a call about a dead sailor. He wasn't sure what was going on. An anonymous 911 call had gone to the local LEOs about a dead body. When they got there they found one of Gibbs' cards on the body so they'd radioed in requesting his presence at the crime scene. This irked Gibbs because that meant that the police officers had disturbed the body and had probably trampled all over the crime scene. With a snarl he picked up his cell phone and called McGee.

"Where are you at? We got a case," he said.

“On our way, Boss,” McGee answered and rolled his eyes. So much for going home at a decent hour tonight.

“What have you got so far?” Gibbs asked.

“Morales hasn’t seen Godwin since he picked him up when someone reported a sick man in an alley. He was drunk. The report checks out with his employer. We looked at his car but the tires don’t match the vehicle that was behind your house, so no switched plates. No trace on Scarpetta, yet, although that bartender at Paulie’s did say he saw him buying drinks for Godwin on a couple of occasions,” McGee said in between gasps. Ziva was driving. “No sign of him lately, though. Bartender figures he got a job since he’s been flashing some money around.”

“Paulie’s the same bar where you found Godwin?”

“Yes...whoa Ziva! Would you slow down?” McGee hissed and Gibbs smirked.

“We’ll be there in five, Boss...but I’m not sure if it’ll be in one piece,” McGee said in exasperation but Gibbs had hung up. McGee put his phone away, closed his eyes and held on.

After hanging up Gibbs went to see Tony. Tony was sitting alone in his area which meant he’d already sent his team home. As soon as Jethro stepped into Tony’s bullpen he looked up.

“You’ve got a case?” he said without preamble.

“Yeah, why don’t you go on home. I’ll be there as soon as I can,” Jethro said as he leaned over Tony’s shoulder to see what was on Tony’s computer screen. He smiled when he saw several inside views of a nice house and he kissed Tony on his temple. “We’ll look at these together then, okay?”

Tony smiled and looked up. “Count on it,” he said with another quick kiss to Jethro’s mouth. “Call me,” Tony said and Jethro nodded. Then he shut everything down and with a quick squeeze to Jethro’s arm left to get Shelly so that they could go home.

-----  
Gianni heard the request for Special Agent Gibbs over the radio and he smiled. Time to get his family.

A short while later Tony walked into the house with Shelly in his arms and the diaper bag over his shoulder. He called out to his Dad while he dropped the diaper bag and removed his and Shelly’s coats in the entryway. There was no answer so he called out again but by then his gut was tingling and he reached for his gun. Shelly had started to walk away and he made a grab for her. She howled in protest but he pulled her behind him and kept his hand clamped on the back of her jumper. Gun up he peered around the corner and saw Jack stretched out and apparently asleep on the couch.

“Jack?” he called again as he scanned the room. Shelly was making a huge fuss and starting to cry but he concentrated on moving forward to check on Jack who hadn’t stirred regardless of the ruckus Shelly was now making. He feared letting go of Shelly so he used his gun hand to check for Jack’s pulse. He’d just felt it when a voice he’d hoped he’d never hear again told him not to move. He froze with his eyes still on Dad and he felt a chill in his heart.

“Drop it and put both of your hands up. He’s not dead yet, Anthony. But make one move and that won’t be the case,” Gianni said.

Tony dropped his gun and raised his gun hand but fear kept his other hand clamped on Shelly.

“Both hands, Anthony,” Gianni warned. “NOW!” he yelled and Tony finally let go of Shelly who ran off crying.

He felt someone feeling him for his weapon. He had a moment of hope but it was dashed as Gianni told Gina to also check his legs. Shit, Cavuto! She did and found his back-up. She also had his cuffs and after a moment, gloved hands placed them securely around Tony’s wrists.

“Gianni, let me see to Jack and then you can have me, okay? Just leave Jack and the baby alone.” Tony still had his back to Gianni and he started to turn around but he was stopped by a hand to his arm.

“Shut up, Anthony. Don’t you dare try to tell me what to do, you faithless bitch,” Gianni growled into his ear.

Then Tony felt a pin prick and his eyes widened. “Nooo!” he managed to cry out but the drug was fast-acting and he slumped. Gina and Gianni held him while he slid soundlessly to the floor. Together they dragged him out to the garage where their car was hidden. Gina ran back into the house and grabbed the baby returning a few moments later. She’d grabbed a bottle out of the other diaper bag and Shelly was finally quiet as she sucked on it while Gina strapped her in the car seat. Gianni smiled as he started the car and calmly drove out of the garage.

-----

Gibbs and his team drove up to the warehouse to find two local police cars with their lights flashing. As they exited their vehicle they noted how close the two police cars were to the body and he cursed again. What the hell happened to standard procedure? Didn’t these idiots know about setting perimeters? He marched up to the first officer and growled his name and then proceeded to order them to move their vehicles back. Then he got his team to set up lighting from their van. It was already cold, wet and would be dark soon and he wanted to get this done as quickly as possible. His gut was tingling again but he didn’t know why.

The officer in charge, Landis, was immediately pissed off at the attitude of the oldest Agent. Yeah, he knew his rookie had parked a little close but that didn’t warrant the arrogant attitude. Still, it was going to be their crime scene. He should just turn it over and get the hell out but then he’d have to go and tell his boss that his golden nephew had messed up the crime scene. He didn’t relish that, either. With a growl he decided it was best to just hang around a bit with the story that he figured it would be a benefit to let the boss’s nephew watch the Feds in action. That should cover his ass at least a little bit. With a hand motion he had the other response car move back and he looked around. Where the hell was Robbie now? The little fucker had wandered off again. Yeah, Landis figured he’d make as fine a police officer as his uncle did. Wonderful. He got in the car and moved it back.

“What’ve you got, Duck?” Gibbs asked as he knelt beside Ducky.

“What appears to be two gunshot wounds to the heart, both well placed, either of them would have killed him instantly,” Ducky said as he watched the temperature gauge he’d slid into the young man’s liver.

“Seaman First Class Andrew McAvoy, Machinist Mate assigned to the USS Potomoc which just arrived in port yesterday,” Ziva reported a little while later. “He failed to report to duty this morning.”

“Which was inevitable as it appears he died nearly eighteen hours ago,” Ducky announced as he peered at his gauge and Gibbs nodded. He looked over and saw McGee snapping photos of the scene as they worked.

“Ziva, spread out. Someone dumped his body out in the open for a reason and then left. See what you can find.”

Ziva immediately began to search in concentric circles away from the body.

Landis watched as the well-oiled team moved about doing their jobs. He envied their professionalism and he scanned the area for Robbie again. What the fuck was he up to? He should be watching this. He thought he saw the kid go over to the other side of the warehouse and started in that direction when he heard a shout. That pretty little agent came running from off to the right and was moving pretty fast but he was closer. He'd just turned the corner when he heard her yelling at Robbie to stop. It was like slow motion in a movie. He saw Robbie reach for the door of the sedan and he caught a glimpse of the body sitting in the driver's seat when suddenly the world disappeared in a flash of blinding light.

## Chapter 40

Tony moaned and tried to lift his arms. He couldn't and he struggled to open his eyes. He saw his hands chained to the belt strapped around his chest and he thought he was back at Gianni's house as fear and confusion coursed through him. He tried to sit up but couldn't. The leash around his neck was too short.

“No, no, no,” he moaned and frantically looked around. He wasn't at Gianni's house. But he was chained again to a bed in a small run-down room. Shelly! Where was Shelly?

“Shelly!” he screamed and the door opened. Gianni walked in.

“Where's my daughter, you bastard? Where's Shelly?” Tony growled as he surged forward against the chains.

Gianni stared at Anthony. What in the hell was he talking about? They had a son. And Gina was making his son presentable. But they had to hurry. They were leaving on a flight in a few hours.

“Gina is cleaning our son up...you had him dressed in a ridiculous outfit. He had earrings! What the fuck were you thinking? My son is no effeminate fag to be parading around in earrings! From now on, Anthony, Gina will care for our son and when your other brat is born I may just keep him as Gianni's companion...if you behave.”

“What? Are you insane...?” Tony couldn't believe what he was hearing. Just then the door opened and in walked Gina carrying Shelly. All of her curls were gone. Instead she had a super short, almost military haircut and she wore little black pants and shoes and a white button down shirt complete with a little tie and vest. She was playing with a little truck.

“You bitch!” Tony screamed when he saw his little girl. These fuckers were completely insane.

“You have to know she's a girl, Gina! What's the matter with you?”

Gina stared at Anthony, every ounce of hatred she was capable of visible in her eyes which Tony saw clearly. Oh, we are so fucked...

Shelly whimpered at Tony's raised voice and Gianni snarled at Tony. “Don't you dare start with your lies, cunt! You deliberately tried to hide my son from me...”

“No, Gianni, please listen...Shelly is a girl. You have a daughter...”

“No!” Gianni said and he took a step towards Tony and viciously backhanded him across the face. Gianni went to Gina and took Shelly from her arms.

Tony's head reeled from the slap that had also split his lip. He saw Gianni cradling Shelly, swaying softly back and forth as he soothed her.

"Lá, lá, il mio figlio caro," Gianni crooned to Shelly as he rocked her back and forth. (There, there, my darling son.) "That's what you have to do to your wife sometimes to keep them in line, but I'll teach you all about that when you're older, caro."

Tony was in shock. Gianni's gone mad, he's insane...

Shelly quieted and stared at Gianni. He patted his chest and said "Papa." Then he repeated himself.

"No, Gianni..." Tony begged quietly, every move Gianni making his chest ache as he protested everything Gianni was doing...had done.

Gianni looked at Tony for a moment and then at Gina. He jerked his head at her and she moved to Tony. She had a rag in her hand and took great pleasure in gagging Tony. Tony fought but there wasn't much he could do because of his restraints. He turned again to Gianni to see him breaking off tiny pieces of chocolate and within moments he had Shelly calling him Papa. It broke Tony's heart.

Then Gianni turned to Tony and continued the lesson. He pointed to Tony and said "Mama."

Tears flooded Tony's eyes when Shelly again repeated the word obediently and earned another sliver of chocolate. Gianni lowered her to Tony.

"Give Mama a kiss," Gianni said and Shelly did. Neither man nor child noticed when Gina slipped from the room.

-----

Gibbs rolled over and in a flash he was checking his people. Ducky, Palmer and McGee were fine having been shielded from most of the blast by the warehouse. Ziva, though, lay in a crumpled heap closer to the now burning car. He reached her side and carefully checked for a pulse. He found one although it was weak. He turned towards the other officers and noted one radioing in for help while the other rushed to Officer Landis. Carefully, Gibbs was checking her over for broken bones when Ducky arrived at his side. After another moment Palmer showed up with Ducky's medical bag. Gibbs moved aside and went to the other officer who was kneeling beside Officer Landis. He was dead. The officer just looked up at Gibbs and then over to the car which was still engulfed in flames. Through the flames Gibbs could just make out the plates. It was Godwin's sedan. Then his eyes took in the bloody dent in the side of the warehouse. At the base of the dent was a burning heap that had been the young rookie. Gibbs reached out to squeeze the shoulder of the kneeling officer. He didn't know his name. Then he moved back to Ziva and told Ducky that the other two were dead. Ducky nodded his head but continued his ministrations without looking up. Gibbs heard the sound of sirens. He saw McGee on the phone, no doubt calling in to NCIS and nodded to himself. McGee was a good agent. He moved back to Ducky but didn't interrupt. Ducky would tell him when he had a moment.

Gibbs sat back and surveyed the scene. The Fire Department was en route and he had to preserve as much as he could before they got there. He ran over to pick up McGee's camera and began clicking away, all the while thinking about what they had. Suddenly he stopped and grabbed his cell phone and called Tony. There was no answer. He was too far out in the country to get home in any decent amount of time but his stomach was churning. He quickly dialed NCIS and had some agents go to his house and then he requested backup at the site but was told they were already en route. Good job, McGee. So what in the hell had happened?

The dead sailor had been a decoy. His card was on the body which ensured local LEOs would

call him. Specifically him. Whether or not he was on call he'd still show up at the site. The car had been hidden behind the warehouse to ensure it wasn't immediately found. It was far enough that it wouldn't be found until NCIS was processing the scene. It had been wired to explode when someone opened the door, probably an NCIS agent. But if it was intended for him how could they be sure he would be close enough? Because somehow the bastard knew how their investigations progressed. Maybe had watched him process other scenes. Gibbs would have been on top of it because he was the Team Lead and he oversaw the entire process and stayed close...he sent his agents to investigate the area but they always called him when they found something. Yes, he would have been at the car when someone opened the door to look closer. If that rookie hadn't gotten there first and, in his excitement and inexperience, opened the door it would have been his team, or most of it, killed in the resulting explosion. He felt a chill run down his spine and he looked at the phone in his hand willing it to ring to tell him that Tony and Shelly were safe at home with Dad.

The Fire Department was now on site and he turned at the touch on his arm. It was Ducky.

"Paramedics are with Ziva. She has a severe concussion and bruising to her face and torso from the blast. I'm going to the hospital with her. Palmer will continue here as he remains unhurt. You will find out who did this, Jethro," Ducky said and then turned and left but Jethro wasn't sure if it was a command or a statement of faith. Either way, it was what he would do.

"McGee!" he called and in a flash he was at Gibbs' side.

"Yeah, Boss," he said and Gibbs saw several scrapes to his face but otherwise his eyes were clear...and angry.

"I think this was a setup aimed at us. I've got agents headed to my place to check on Tony..."

Gibbs was interrupted by his phone and he answered. "Damnit! How is he? Okay, Gonzales, get a team in there and process everything, you got that?"

Gibbs turned to McGee. "Tony and Shelly are gone. My Dad was hit on the head. He's on his way to the hospital with a concussion. I'm headed home. You're in charge here. Find out what you can and meet me back at NCIS," he said as he ran to his car.

McGee was in shock but it only lasted a moment. In a flash he was talking to one of the officers to relate their suspicions and then he moved back to Palmer's side. Ziva and Ducky were already in the back of the ambulance so they were safe for now. He scanned the area around them but the area was pretty open. The officers were calling in a bomb squad. The fire was out but the Fire Department was now pulling back until they were given the all clear from the bomb squad. He knew Gibbs was right. The sailor had been a decoy to get them but they needed to find out why. He helped Jimmy get the body into a body bag and loaded on the gurney. They needed the other body but that would also have to wait until the area was cleared. He wouldn't risk anyone with the possibility of a second bomb. They stayed under cover in the van and McGee kept himself busy first by calling Abby to let her know what was happening. He had to hold the phone away from his ear to keep her wail from piercing his eardrum. After he calmed her down he returned to sketching the crime scene and praying that Tony and Shelly were alright.

-----

Gibbs made it to the hospital in record time. While en route he received calls about the status on both his father and Ziva and also received updates from the team at his house. Dad was stable but still unconscious. Ziva was the same. Gibbs also called Fornell. He wanted the FBI information on the previous bombings. He was sure they were set by the same person who'd rigged the sedan. Fornell said he'd meet him at the hospital Gibbs told himself he wouldn't shoot Fornell on sight although he desperately wanted to shoot someone. Gibbs also suspected the body in the sedan was Carlo Scarpetta and that the sedan was the same one at his house on

both occasions and again he felt unreasoning fury at Fornell because Gibbs knew Constantino was behind everything and the FBI had let him slip through their fingers.

Fornell slowed his steps as he approached the emergency room but Gibbs must have some kind of sixth sense because he came charging through the waiting room as soon as Fornell stepped inside. Immediately Fornell put his hands up. Gibbs marched up to him but stopped inches from his face, fury written in every inch of his body.

“Jethro, we’ve got all our people looking for some sign of Cosntantino...” he began and immediately knew it was the wrong tack to take.

“So now you believe me?! Now that Tony and Shelly are missing, my Dad and Ziva are both hurt and three innocent men are dead?” he barked.

Several heads in the waiting room turned at that last bit and Fornell grabbed Jethro by the arm and dragged him outside. Jethro yanked his arm out of Fornell’s grasp.

“I’ve got my bomb squad working with your men at the site. There were no more explosive devices but they did say the bomber was the same,” Fornell said. From the glare in Jethro’s eyes he figured he’d already deduced that.

“We’ve got every airport, train station and port on the lookout. Your director had the media blocked from releasing the names of the officers that were killed. We agree with you...this was aimed at your team so we want them to think they succeeded...”

“And if Tony hears it, so will he...”

“That can’t be helped and you know it, Jethro,” Fornell said and Gibbs knew he was right. From the sound of things it had already been decided that it would be a joint investigation and he nodded. He wanted every bit of manpower he could get on this.

Gibbs heard his phone ring. It was McGee. He listened for a bit and then said that he was going to stay at the hospital for a bit longer and that then he’d meet them at NCIS.

“Wait,” he spit out before he hung up. “Get Morales back in. I want to talk to him...yeah, I’ll tell them,” he finished and then hung up.

“Bomb squad cleared the site. McGee’s still processing the site and Palmer’s on his way back with the bodies,” Jethro said.

“Who’s Morales?” Fornell wondered.

“He served with Godwin, the guy who owns that sedan that blew up. Godwin’s in custody but he doesn’t know much. I think the body in the sedan is a guy named Scarpetta. He served with the other two. I want to know how he’s linked to Constantino,” Gibbs said.

Fornell was surprised. Jethro rarely shared this much about his cases so he figured Jethro was still in a little bit of shock over his family and Agent David.

“I could talk to Morales...” he began, “let you stay here until your people are more settled...”

Jethro was torn. He needed to be here for Dad and for Ziva, but Tony and Shelly were out there with that bastard. He needed to work the case but Morales was his only lead and it was a slim one at that.

“Go, get started. I’ll be there as soon as I can,” he said trusting in Fornell.

Fornell knew just what it had cost Jethro to say that. He reached out with a squeeze to his arm and left.

Jethro returned to the emergency room and found Ducky on the phone. He listened in and realized Ducky was speaking with Palmer. They made eye contact and then he walked into the treatment room to sit with his father. That's where Ducky found him a few moments later.

"Ziva has awakened, she will be fine. I saw your father's x-rays. He has a skull fracture but there doesn't seem to be any swelling at this point. His doctor feels he should awaken shortly and from what I saw I concur," he paused at the open relief in Jethro's eyes. "I was instructing Palmer to remove the bullets from our sailor so that Abby can begin her work. I understand she is, quite literally, climbing the walls. Jimmy has begun the x-ray of our well-done friend. I just wanted to tell you that I feel I should go back, now that Ziva is awake and you are at your father's side, so that I may begin the autopsies," Ducky concluded to an unusually quiet Jethro.

Jethro nodded and turned back to his father but not before Ducky caught the haunted look in his eyes. Ducky placed a hand on his arm. "We will find them, Jethro, you have to have faith in that."

Knowing there was no more he could say, Ducky left to return to NCIS.

[Back to index](#)

Chapters 41 - 43 by cernicalo

## Chapter 41

Gina sat in the living room as she tried to understand what Gianni had been saying. She'd heard his comments just before entering the room about keeping the other baby as a companion to Gianni Jr. That thought infuriated her, completely overshadowing the fear she'd felt when she'd discovered that the baby was a girl and not the son Gianni thought he had. It was that fear which made her complete the transformation Gianni was expecting not knowing what else to do. She certainly wasn't going to tell Gianni the truth. But all that fear was gone now. Gianni intended to keep Anthony and that was something she simply could not accept. She got up and paced as she tried to think.

In the bedroom Gianni continued to reinforce his lesson with Shelly, plying her with chocolate when she pleased him. Tony watched from the bed. He looked around the room trying to figure out how to get loose so that he could kill Gianni himself. There was no way in hell they were going to go anywhere with the crazy fuck if he had anything to do with it. He tugged again at the hated chains but they were firmly attached to the belt secured below his breasts. His collar was secured up above him to some bar attached to the ceiling. If he hadn't been so desperate Tony might have wondered at the kink that would require such a contraption. As it was he gauged whether or not he could reach the point where his leash was attached. Not without getting up, he realized, but he couldn't do that because his right ankle was secured to the foot of the bed, right at the center. He stopped to wonder at the placement but assumed it was the only attachment point for some reason. Regardless, it looked like he wasn't going to be able to get out of this until someone released him. He heard Gianni tell Shelly that they had to leave soon, that they would get to fly on an airplane and wouldn't that be fun? That thought sent a shard of fear coursing through him and he prayed for Jethro to find them soon.

Gianni looked at his son in pleasure. He was a beautiful child. Almost too beautiful but he pushed away the thought that accompanied that. Anthony was beautiful, too, and very masculine. Gianni Jr. would look just like him and that pleased Gianni. Thinking of Anthony sent a rush of lust through him and he looked at the man laying there struggling against his bonds. God, that was such a turn-on, too, despite the rounded belly and tits. He put Gianni Jr. on the



floor and handed him the bottle Gina had brought in with him and the little truck. It was time to show his son how you handled an errant wife.

Gianni approached the bed and looked down at Tony with a little smile on his face. He ran his hand down Tony's cheek and watched the eyes widen at the comprehension of his desires. Tony struggled more and Gianni laughed. No point in wasting time...there was a plane to catch.

Tony fought with everything in him but Gianni had no trouble as he pulled Tony's pants down. Tony kicked with the one leg but Gianni just used the loose pant leg to secure Tony's ankles together. Without preamble he simply flipped Tony over and Tony immediately brought his legs up as far as he could to help protect his stomach, now understanding why he had only one leg secured as it was. It would make it easier for Gianni to rape him. He couldn't raise his upper body, so he turned his face to the side so that he could breathe and he screamed at Gianni through his gag.

Gianni merely laughed as he pulled the tube of lubricant from his pocket. He had no desire to hurt Tony, at least not right now. It could prove a hassle to get him moving and on to the plane. He reached down and pulled himself out of his pants, stroking his cock as he contemplated sinking into that tight, sweet ass he'd missed. Without even removing his jacket he lubed Tony up well and added some more to his own hard cock and lined himself up to steadily push himself inside.

Again Tony screamed as Gianni raped him in front of Shelly. He could hear her babbling and then start calling to him as Mama and he closed his eyes as tears began to spill over. Shelly obviously figured something was wrong and had moved to the side of the bed and tried to pull herself up. He heard Gianni laugh around the sound of slapping flesh as he called to Shelly, only he called her Gianni, and telling her that this is how you kept your bitch in line. And Shelly began to cry, calling out for Mama over and over.

-----

Jethro took the opportunity to make some phone calls when they moved his Dad upstairs. He also made a quick trip to check on Ziva. She was sleeping but the nurse said she was doing well. He had a sudden flashback to the moment when that bomb had gone off. He saw Ziva blown backwards just before he, too, was hit by the concussive force of the blast. His team had been lucky. Not so the police department. He swore to himself that not only was he going to find and kill Constantino, he'd find out who the bomber was and deal with him as well.

He had just stepped back into his Dad's room and watched while they made the final adjustments to several monitors as he considered the update from McGee. They'd found a cell phone. It had been damaged but Abby was working with it to see if they could get anything. He sat down wondering why Fornell hadn't called and kicking himself for not talking to Morales himself when he heard a slight moan. In a flash he was calling for the nurse and then he returned to his Dad's side. He smiled when he saw the blue eyes so like his own finally open. He was pushed to the side as the nurses and doctor checked him over but he moved closer when he saw his Dad struggling to speak. Despite the doctor's admonition to remain calm Jack looked Leroy straight in the eye and gasped out his message.

"Fine...go find 'em..." he said before closing his eyes with a sigh. Jethro took a single moment to pat his Dad on the hand.

"Love you..." he whispered and then Jethro was gone.

Jack relaxed on the bed despite the fear and slight confusion. He knew that bastard that had shown up was after Tony and Shelly but he wasn't sure what had happened next, only that his family was in trouble. But Leroy was there and he'd make sure it would all work out right. His son had said he loved him. Not often his boy said that but he knew it just the same. Leroy would

make everything all right, he told himself again and with that thought he slipped back into a light, healing sleep.

-----

"Report!" Gibbs barked as soon as he entered the bullpen. Fornell merely turned around and looked at him with a slight smile which broadened when McGee immediately answered.

"Found a cell phone here, Boss," he said indicating a spot on the murder site photo. Abby is working with Troy to retrieve whatever phone calls were placed. The bullets pulled from Seaman McAvoy matched the gun used at your house. Ducky also found a single shot to the right temple of the body burned in the car which also matched the gun. He's running DNA analysis on the remains but we're pretty sure it's Scarpetta. It appears as though Scarpetta killed McAvoy and then shot himself but..." McGee's voice trailed off.

"But what, McGee?"

Fornell decided to jump in. "Your suspect shouldn't have had the skills to do wire his car. He was a medic."

"We know that. What else?" Gibbs said turning to McGee.

"Leanna and Michelle have statements that say Scarpetta was here when those other bombs went off. It's unlikely from the time frame that he could have done it."

Gibbs blew out a breath and turned to Fornell. "Get anything from Morales?"

"Nothing much, he knew Scarpetta but hadn't seen him since he separated. He said that Scarpetta used to mention a cousin but he couldn't recall anything else. He'd only seen Godwin that one time."

"I've checked through Scarpetta's file. I'm running a check on his family. He listed a cousin and I'm running her down now," McGee threw in. He'd done the same with Godwin and Morales and had come up empty.

"What's the cousin's name?" Gibbs asked.

"Regina Cavuto," McGee answered.

*That was her!* Jethro thought as he recalled the woman who'd slapped Tony when they were at Constantino's house. "She worked for Constantino," he growled. "Find her!" he ordered and McGee immediately jumped on his computer to check on the status of his search.

"Shit," Fornell added, suddenly remembering the name from the reports of that day. They hadn't found her in the building and had assumed she was one of the servants who'd fled when the bullets started flying. Checking on them had been a low-priority follow-up. He grabbed his phone and dialed someone.

"Jethro," he said when he hung up. "She's been missing since that day. She's probably the one who got Constantino out of the house and is probably still helping him."

"Damn it, Tobias!" Gibbs yelled.

Fornell said nothing. His agency had screwed up and he knew it. There was probably a warrant out on her since the beginning, but it had been issued only to close out her part in the whole mess. Now it looked as though she'd been a key player. *Fuck!*

Jethro stormed out of the bullpen, his mind in a torrent of rage. That bitch had slapped Tony.

Who knew what she would do to him. Without conscious thought he grabbed a Caf-Pow and headed downstairs.

Abby saw him as soon as he entered the lab and she ran into his arms. "I knew you'd show up right now," she said in between sobs. He held for a bit as he told her Ziva and Jack would be fine and then pulled back.

"Why right now?" he asked.

"Because you always show up when I've got something for you, it's just the way it works," she said with a watery smile.

"What've you got, Abby?" he asked gently.

Abby wiped the tears away from her face and Gibbs saw that she no longer had any eye make-up and her eyes were swollen but she turned in a heartbeat and began reporting. Gibbs felt a surge of pride and he squeezed her shoulder as he looked at her computer screen.

"A really short list of phone numbers, predominantly this one," she said as she pointed to a phone number.

Gibbs looked down at the fried piece of plastic and was amazed that they'd gotten anything at all.

"If it had been any closer it would have fried completely, but we were lucky," she said and then pulled up some more information. "We know it's a pre-paid cell phone and that this other number is also a pre-paid cell phone."

"Probably Cavuto," he mumbled and Abby looked at him. "Keep going," he said.

"Troy and I think that if we call this other phone we can trace where it is. The only problem with that is they'll probably hang up before we can get a trace, so you need to be close before we try. We're looking at the towers starting at the point where the bodies were found because that's where the cell phone was found and it also matched the towers used when the 911 call was placed. We're working backwards from the last phone call made on this cell and checking for matches with other calls made from this other number."

"You can do that?"

"It's all we've got, Gibbs," Abby said looking as though she was near tears again.

Gibbs kissed her temple and leaned in close. "You'll find it," he whispered reassuringly and Abby nodded and got back to work.

-----

Gina paced a bit more as she considered her options. She had to kill Anthony somehow. It was the only choice. She knew where Gianni had placed extra guns in the house as a pre-caution. She thought about it. Maybe she could get Gianni and the baby away long enough to shoot Anthony? But he'd know it...he'd hate her for taking what was his. But he'd still have Gianni Jr., he'd have to see that this was the best way. Her stomach hurt at the thought of incurring Gianni's wrath when she killed Anthony and she hesitated. Instead she moved to the television and turned it on and sat down staring at the image-filled screen while she thought about it. She didn't know how long she'd been staring at the TV when she suddenly realized she was looking at Carlo's car. It had burned to a crisp. Was that why she couldn't get a hold of Carlo? Was he in the car when it burned up? Gianni had sent Carlo to meet up with that man. Oh, God. Gianni had had Carlo killed. And if he was keeping Anthony, was she next? Suddenly she realized that Gianni Jr. was crying in the next room. What was happening? Then she knew. Gianni was too involved with Anthony to pay attention to the baby. That meant...

In a heartbeat she was opening the door to the bedroom. One of Gianni's guns was in her hand as she took in the scene before her. Gianni was pounding into Anthony while the baby cried at the side of the bed. Cheating bastard...Gianni was hers! She slammed the door open.

"Get off of him!" she screamed at Gianni.

Gianni stopped moving when he heard the door slam. He looked over his left shoulder and froze. Gina was pointing a gun at him...at *him!* The bitch.

"Okay, Gina, relax...let me get off of him," he said slowly. He pulled out of Tony and heard him moan. He brought his right hand to rest on Anthony's ass as he turned his upper body to the left. The baby was crying but Gina ignored him, jealousy burning in her eyes as she stared at Gianni.

"You had Carlo killed...he was my family!" she said in a choked voice.

"Carlo was in the way, Gina, in the way of all our plans," Gianni said soothingly all the while moving his hand closer to his gun.

"But they won't let us get away, Gianni, it wasn't just Carlo...you killed three more of those NSCI agents, not just the old man at your house..."

Tony's breath caught in his throat. *She meant NCIS...Jethro was dead? NO! NONonononono...* and he began to scream into his gag and Shelly began to screech.

"Shut up, bitch!" Gianni yelled at Anthony and slapped him hard on the ass but Anthony was sobbing and the baby was screaming. Then Gina started talking again which pissed Gianni off even more...who the fuck did she think she was?

"You don't need him, Gianni," she said through her tears. "I can take care of the baby...I'll give you more sons...real sons..."

Gianni's eyes narrowed. *Real sons...?* He turned his head slightly towards the baby but kept his eyes on Gina.

"Shh, Gianni, shh...it's alright..." he crooned softly at the sobbing baby and he saw Gina look down. In that split second he pulled the 45 from its holster under his left arm and fired at her through his jacket. Her eyes opened wide as she realized what had happened. She tried to pull the trigger but the bullet had shattered her spinal cord and her fingers wouldn't obey the command. She dropped the gun as her arms dropped and she slid to the floor no longer hearing the baby's screams. Gianni got off the bed and walked over to her. With a smile he fired one more round into her forehead.

Shelly was screaming at the top of her lungs now, the gunshots having made her hysterical, and Gianni calmly put his gun back into his holster and turned to pick up the frantic baby.

"Shh, shh, my son. It's alright, caro, I told you ...it's alright," he kept up the endearments for a bit as he tried to calm the baby.

Tony could just see Gina's hand and a part of her upper torso. His view was obscured by Gianni's legs each time he turned as he paced back and forth, rocking and cooing to Shelly who was wailing and hiccupping in distress. Desperate tears of helplessness and rage coursed from his eyes. *Jethro...oh, God, Jethro...* He needed to get to Shelly...she needed him and he was stuck laying there with his ass in the air. He turned so that he tipped to the side but he still couldn't see Shelly. *Gianni, I'll kill you for putting Shelly through this...killing Jethro...Oh, God, please give me my baby...*

## Chapter 42

"Gibbs, Gibbs!" Abby came trotting up excitedly on her six-inch platforms. "We've got an area...but it's large...well, not for a lot of guys but it's still big..."

"Abby!" Gibbs barked. He had no time for this. They already had agents scouring the area around the murder site while Abby, Troy and McGee worked feverishly to try and narrow the search area. He and Fornell had been gearing up additional agents getting them ready to head out at a moment's notice.

"Give me an aerial on the screen!" he ordered and in a flash they looked to see what was out there. A cement plant, a few scattered houses. He pulled out his cell phone and began re-directing the agents towards that area.

"McGee, with me. Abby, when we get close you call McGee and then dial that number, got it?"

"Yes...go!" she shouted and ran to McGee to give him a quick kiss. "Bring them back!"

McGee nodded and ran to catch up to Gibbs who was flying out of the building.

-----

Tony had no choice. It was up to him. *Jethro...* He bit back a sob and held Shelly securely in his arms as he looked around hoping for an opening somewhere but he knew it wouldn't be easy. Even though he was only three months along he wasn't exactly limber and he didn't want to put Shelly down for a moment although she was already getting very heavy.

They got to the car and Gianni gestured to the car seat. "Put him in and then get in the driver's seat. We've got time now that the bastard you were fucking is dead. We'll be long gone by the time they figure anything out."

Tony backed out of the back seat after securing Shelly. As he stepped out he kept his back to Gianni and then suddenly threw himself backwards. He landed on Gianni and heard his oomph which he followed up with an elbow into Gianni's stomach. Gianni screamed in pain and Tony rolled off to the side. He tried to get up but he was too slow and Gianni kicked out hitting him on the hip. He rolled over and then Gianni was back on him, shoving the gun under his jaw.

"I ought to kill you now and just take Gianni, you fucking bitch," he panted into Tony's face. "But I need you to take care of Gianni...at least until the trip is over. Then I'll find someone else to take care of him and you and that bastard you're carrying are dead...you got me?" he growled into Tony's ear. "One more try and you're dead no matter what..." he promised again and he stood and hauled Tony to his feet.

Tony looked at Gianni and nodded. He couldn't leave Shelly alone with him. He was crazy enough to kill her when he found out she wasn't a boy. Gianni shoved him back towards the car and had him get behind the driver's seat. Tony sat back as far as he could to allow for both his legs and his belly but Gianni had refused to remove the chains from his wrists so he ended up pushing the seat forward a bit so that he could reach the steering wheel. He twisted and turned until he was able to secure his seat belt.

Gianni walked around the car and moved into the passenger side holding the gun on Tony the entire time while he held an arm around his stomach. He groaned as he got into the car and Tony hoped he'd really hurt him...but he just couldn't see how with an elbow to the stomach, one that didn't even have full extension behind it because of the chains. There was something wrong with him but then there was no more time to wonder about it as Gianni put the key into the ignition and started the engine. He sat back and Tony saw that he failed to put on his seat belt.

"I can't drive like this, Gianni," Tony said tightly as he tried not to break open the cut in his lip

again, as he tried not to scream. He'd bled a bit, especially after Gianni had slapped him around some more. It seemed Gianni hadn't been quite ready to kill Gina, yet, and took it out on him. But he didn't care. All he cared about was Shelly and the babies he carried. Jethro's babies. He thought about Gina. It was sad really, Gianni had betrayed her, too, but he would have thought that she'd have known Gianni was gay. *She was probably as crazy as Gianni is*, he thought to himself. He tugged his head forward but it didn't move much. He was glad that the gag had been removed but dismayed when Gianni had then wrapped his leash around the head rest. He growled to himself.

"Figure it out, now drive," he ordered. Tony did, driving slowly at first until he figured out how to steer. It was completely dark outside, the moon obscured by clouds. Tony tried to guess the hour but he wasn't sure. He thought that it might be close to midnight. He tried desperately to figure out where they were going. It was all back roads and Gianni gave him directions just prior to the turn required. Housing lights disappeared behind more and more trees and Tony knew they were headed out deeper into the country. He wracked his brain trying to figure out what airstrips would be way out here but he really didn't know. And it didn't matter. It might take some time but somehow, some way, he was going to kill Gianni.

-----

Gibbs drove through the night with McGee riding shotgun and Fornell in the back seat holding on for dear life. They led quite a caravan as they sped through the night with McGee giving Gibbs corrections on their heading via Abby. They'd dialed the phone and were surprised to find that it wasn't being answered. It switched to a voicemail system which Abby let run until it timed out and then she re-dialed. This happened three times until Abby led them to a dark house near the cement plant.

The caravan stopped a ways down the road and both FBI and NCIS agents fanned out around the building. It was pitch dark and appeared uninhabited but they approached cautiously nevertheless. The first ones were the bomb squad and their dogs. Once they cleared it and everyone was in place they breached the front and kitchen doors simultaneously and fanned through the small building. Again the bomb squad went first and Gibbs gut churned at the delay but after that last booby trap there was no way they'd go in fast. Finally they were given the signal and then the rest of the agents moved in with Gibbs leading through the front door and McGee through the kitchen.

Gibbs heard shouts of 'clear' as the first team swept the house. A call went out that a body had been found and Gibbs' gut clenched at the thought that it might be Tony but he blew out a sigh of relief when it was relayed that it was a woman. After the all clear had been given someone called out "Lights!" and the building lit up and Gibbs turned around and found himself looking down at the body of Gina Cavuto.

He looked around and saw the bar over the bed and a discarded tube of lubricant and he growled deep in his throat. He turned back and someone was already photographing the body. After another moment they had her down and were taking a liver temperature reading. Then he heard someone call to him. It was Leanna.

He left the bedroom and turned down the hall to find her looking into a bathroom. He looked in and saw that all over the floor were soft brown curls. He blew out a breath that almost sounded like a sob and he knelt down to pick up one long intact pincurl and he brought it to his nose. Shelly. He felt his chest clench but she was alive. He was sure of it. She was just disguised as a little boy, no doubt. He stood carefully tucking the curl into a pocket of his jacket and called out to McGee.

"What's around here? Any local airstrips, train stations..."

"Checking," McGee said as he pulled out his laptop and got on the phone with Abby.

Fornell walked up to him. "She's been dead less than an hour..."

"There's a small commercial airstrip less than 10 miles from here..." McGee called out.

"Let's move!" Gibbs called and most of the agents piled back into their cars leaving a small contingent to process the house. Fornell had jumped in with his own people and Gibbs briefly noted that Leanna now rode with them. They sped off into the night.

They were nearing the airport but Gibbs noticed the increasing light...too much light. The airport was shut down for the night but it was still well-lit. His gut told him that Constantino would never try to make his getaway with so much scrutiny.

"McGee...what else is around here?"

"Ahh, not much, Boss...wait, looks like there used to be an old airport about five miles further but it's been shut down for years..."

"That's it..." Gibbs muttered as he swung his car 180 degrees and sped down the road passed the FBI vehicles. They all came to a screeching halt. Within seconds Gibbs' phone started ringing and he smirked. He pulled it out.

"Where the hell are you going?" Fornell practically screamed.

"There's another old airport...have some of your folks check this one out and then join us," he said and then closed the phone and kept driving.

Fornell stared at the phone in his hand as the call ended. *Fucking Jethro!* He started dialing and told someone to continue onward and check out the airport. Then he turned to his driver and barked, "Follow him!"

-----

Tony drove down the dark tree-lined road. Occasionally, through some breaks in the trees, he could see flashes of an area that was lighter than the pitch black of the trees but he wasn't sure. After a bit he realized that it was the airstrip. Gianni kept an eye on the road and the other eye on Tony as he looked for the access road he wanted that would take them through the trees and to the small plane that was hiding there.

Tony glanced in his rearview. He could see Shelly sleeping and he tried to formulate a plan but the only thing he could think of scared him because if it didn't go right Shelly could get hurt. He tried to get ready, even speeded up a bit but in the end he couldn't do it, couldn't deliberately run the car into the trees. *I'm sorry, pumpkin...*

"Slow down and turn left up ahead," Gianni instructed and Tony did as he was told. It was just as they passed the tree line that Tony saw what looked like a drainage ditch on the side of the weed-strewn air strip. Without second-guessing himself this time he hit the gas and spun the wheel forcing the car to slide out and tip into the drainage ditch and land on its passenger side.

Gianni, still in pain from the blow to his stomach, was unprepared for the move and without a seatbelt, nothing stopped him from slamming his head against the window when Tony spun the car. He blacked out.

Tony looked around him as soon as the car came to rest. He moved slightly to get the pressure off of his collar which was choking him and saw that Gianni seemed to be unconscious. Shelly was screaming, which at that moment was a great sound, and Tony turned so that he could hold onto the steering wheel. He managed to bring his legs up and he braced his left leg on the dash and brought his right leg down once, twice, three times on Gianni's head and upper torso. Then he braced himself and managed to loosen his leash from the head rest. Standing up on top of

Gianni he leaned over to the back seat and quickly checked Shelly. She seemed to be alright. He moved back to Gianni to check his pockets but couldn't find the damn key nor could he find Gianni's gun in the dark. Growling, he stood on Gianni's seat and pushed against the rear passenger door with all of his strength until he got it open. Then he moved back down and got Shelly out of her seat. Slowly, and with monumental effort, Tony got Shelly and then himself out of the car.

Just as he got them down he heard a moan. Gianni was waking up! He picked up Shelly and started to run.

## Chapter 43

Gianni panted as he pulled himself out of the car. He saw a figure running away and knew it was Anthony with Gianni in his arms and fury engulfed him. Disregarding his own pain he jumped off the car and took off running after Anthony.

Anthony heard someone behind him and he sped up but knew in his heart he was just too slow. It came as no surprise when he felt a hand on his shoulder and then he was hauled backwards by his leash. Tony fell backwards but managed to break his fall with one arm while still holding onto Shelly with the other.

"Bitch!" Gianni screamed. As soon as Anthony was down he started raining blows down on him, mindless fury fueling his fists despite the pain he was in.

Tony just curled himself around Shelly as he tried to shield her and his belly from the blows but he was dazed. He cried out when he felt hands taking Shelly from him. He tried to hold on but another punch to his head rocked him backwards and he spun away into dizzying darkness.

-----

McGee was on the phone with Abby in MTAC. Vance had gotten satellite imagery of the airfield and even though it was dark they'd detected a slight heat signature at one end of the old runway. There was either a small engine running or there was something bigger that was under cover, possibly in a building. They relayed that information to McGee. Gibbs' response was to press harder on the accelerator. They were speeding down a tree-lined road when, without warning, Gibbs hit the brakes and turned suddenly down a gravel access road, tires spinning and car fishtailing. McGee and Leanna held on as the suddenly found themselves at the end of an old cement runway. Again Gibbs hit the gas and McGee had the sudden impression that soon they would lift off. He barely heard Abby when she said that the plane was taxiing down the runway.

-----

"He's my son! Let go of him, you bitch!" Gianni growled as he shoved Tony away. He leaned back and swung, punching Tony on the back of his head and watched as he fell to the ground. He'd seen the flash of headlights coming towards him so, without a backward glance, he had Gianni and was running towards a copse of trees.

Within moments Gibbs noted movement off to the side of the runway. He turned and then his headlights picked up a figure punching someone on the ground. He threw on his brights and saw Constantino running away with something in his arms. He slammed on his brakes at the edge of the runway and was out and running with McGee and Gonzales hot on his heels.

Gibbs got to Tony and dropped, feeling for a pulse. He felt one and then shouted for McGee to take care of him as he followed Constantino towards the trees.

Within moments both McGee and Leanna heard the sound of a small plane approaching.



Leanna immediately jumped up and ran to the car. In seconds she was driving straight into the path of the oncoming aircraft which didn't deviate but continued towards her. She merely leaned out of her window with her weapon in hand and began firing at the cockpit while maintaining her collision course. She emptied her weapon and was rewarded by the sudden banking of the craft to the left. The engine came to a stuttering halt. She got out of the car and knelt beside her open door while she re-loaded and identified herself. There was no sound but the plane was then lit up by the headlights of approaching vehicles. The FBI had arrived.

Gibbs pursued Gianni into the tree line. Gianni turned and saw Gibbs gaining on him. He knew he wouldn't be able to outrun him with Gianni in his arms, so he paused and dropped the baby to the ground and then ran into the dark.

Tony had blacked out for only a moment but he opened his eyes to see McGee releasing the cuffs that were attached to the belt he wore.

"Shelly!" he cried and Tim reached out to help him sit up but instead he struggled to get up.

"Easy, Tony, you're hurt..."

"Go! Go get her..." Tony said desperately and he pushed McGee who didn't argue but did begin running towards the trees. Tony struggled to get up and, although slow and in pain, he followed, too.

Gibbs saw Gianni slip Shelly to the ground as he ran and she screamed as the cold, wet grass surrounded her. Gibbs knelt down beside her but it was so dark he couldn't see much. Her screams reassured him though and he turned back to see McGee running up, a lighter silhouette in the dark of the night. Behind him he could see barely make out another figure limping towards them. *Tony*. But at least he's moving and Constantino was still out there. He heard McGee say 'go' so with a swift hand over his daughter's shorn head he left her and followed Constantino into the dark.

Gianni stumbled on another root and pain shot through his side. It had all gone to hell. Fucking Anthony. He paused to lean against a tree as he tried to catch his breath but then he heard a branch break behind him and he knew that bastard Gibbs was behind him. He began to run again but he'd delayed too long and he felt Gibbs catch him from behind and pull him to the ground. Gianni countered with a kick which landed hard but it didn't stop the man towering over him. He felt a hand grab a hold of his shoulder and then a fist found its way to his stomach. He bent over and felt blood rush into his mouth but strangely, it didn't really hurt. It also didn't stop him and he countered with some well-placed blows of his own but he really wasn't a match for a pissed off Marine, not that he knew Gibbs' history. All he knew was that Gibbs had narrowed his world down into a bright ball of painful fists and kicks as Gibbs beat the shit out of him.

Gibbs fisted his hands in Constantino's fancy shirt and pulled him up off the ground glaring, into the face of the man who had caused so much pain to those he loved and he shoved the muzzle of his gun against Constantino's head.

"You can kill me but my son and my name will live on," Gianni gasped still lost in his make-believe world where Anthony and Gianni were his.

"Your son? Are you really that clueless? Tony and I have a daughter. Her name is Shelly Caitlin Gibbs. My daughter, you bastard...and no one will ever remember your name."

But as he pushed the barrel harder into Gianni's forehead he thought neither of Tony nor of Shelly. He was remembering the other family he couldn't protect. But this time he had. It would only take a small squeeze to be sure of it. The SIG Sauer P220 .45 caliber required only five pounds of pressure to put an end to the bastard and he caressed the trigger slightly.

"Gibbs!" Fornell called but it seemed so far away. All Gibbs could really hear was a loud rush in

his ears as rage flooded through him. He felt the trigger under his finger, the metal warm against his skin and he wanted with everything in him to just end it then and there but again he heard his name called. It was enough to break through his fixation and he took a deep breath regretting instantly that he'd lost the opportunity to kill Constantino. For a split second he contemplated pulling the trigger anyway but if he did, regardless of how satisfying it would be, he would lose everything of importance.

"You're not worth it." He said as he threw Constantino back on the ground. He looked up and saw Fornell and several agents run up. He stood up and turned to go back to Shelly who was sitting on the ground screaming at the top of her lungs although she was cradled up against Tony who was sobbing. Both of them were lit up by the headlights of the various cars giving them a glow that was almost surreal. He rushed up to them and dropped to his knees laying his gun on the ground beside him knowing he wouldn't feel any relief until he had them both safe in his arms, until he was holding tight to the most important people in the world.

"Daa-eee!" Shelly cried as she frantically put one arm around Gibbs while still holding desperately to Tony.

"Jethro..." Tony cried as he pulled him into his arms. McGee had said he was alive but he hadn't believed it until that moment.

Tony didn't know what made him glance up but he saw the agents carry Gianni out of the trees to lay him on the ground but in a flash of movement he saw Gianni push an agent away and lift a gun in their direction, an open cuff dangling from his wrist.

"No!" Tony screamed as he pulled Gibbs and Shelly to the side just as a shot sounded. Gibbs had his arm around Tony and without thought Gibbs' hand found his sig and he had it up and fired.

Peripherally Gibbs saw several agents also raise their weapons but Gibbs was already squeezing off a second round even though he knew the first had found its mark. He watched as Gianni jerked and then fall backwards, his arms outstretched as he hit the ground, his forehead showing the marks where Gibbs had double-tapped him. This time, Gibbs knew he was dead. It seemed distant but Gibbs realized that Shelly was still screaming. Actually, she was screaming in his ear. That had been too damn close and again he regretted not killing him when he'd had the chance.

Leaving the FBI to handle Gianni, Gibbs turned back to Tony and Shelly and brought them closer.

"Shh, baby, it's alright, now. Daddy's got you." He murmured quietly as he placed small kisses over Shelly's face. He placed his Sig on the ground and wrapped his hand around Tony's nape to pull him in closer and then turned his head to claim Tony in a deep kiss. They were safe. His family was safe. He'd been able to stop the bastard this time. He felt tears of joy and gratitude even as he again lamented the family he hadn't been able to protect. This time, though, he'd got it right.

## Epilogue

In the weeks that followed Gibbs watched over his family as they healed. Shelly's sleep had suffered only slightly but mostly she still seemed fearful when out of her family's presence. Gerry was sure that would fade in time. Tony, though, still suffered from his nightmares and Gibbs knew they would never completely go away, just as the memories from the rest of Tony's painful past still came back to haunt him. But they were working on it together, and with Gerry's help. It would just take a bit of time which they now had and he was sure things would just bet better.

-----  
Several months later...

Gibbs walked into the kitchen with his groceries and set them down on the large center island. He immediately alerted to the fact that the house was quiet. With his hand on his sig he peeked into the living room. It was empty. Gun down he moved into the family room and saw his Dad who raised a finger to his lips and then gestured to the couch. Gibbs let his breath out in a soundless sigh as he holstered his gun. He looked at his father and saw sad understanding in his eyes. They all needed more time, but it was getting better. With two more steps he was around the couch and he looked down and saw a heavily pregnant Tony asleep with Shelly curled up next to him, tucked securely in his arms. His heart swelled at the sight and he smiled first at them and then at Dad.

A slight change in breathing let him know that Tony was beginning to stir. He watched with unknowingly bated breath as the gold-tipped eyelashes fluttered and then those beautiful green eyes slipped open and a smile broke out when Tony saw him. That immediate smile never ceased to amaze Gibbs and he bent down to claim it as his own, which it was. With a gentle hand so as not to awaken Shelly, he lightly touched the soft wispy curls that covered her small head. He'd missed them while they were gone. He wondered briefly what his twins would look like. It would be soon but he found it hard to wait. He decided he was lucky, just as Tobias had said.

-----  
Three weeks later...

Gibbs watched as the nurse strapped the second plastic band around his wrist. Two matching blue bands announcing Gibbs Boy #1 and Gibbs Boy #2. He looked over the nurse's shoulder at another nurse who was placing the second baby blue-capped baby into the same type of rolling crib as the first and his chest tightened a fraction more. He thought his heart would burst. Soon the three of them would go to Tony's room together. Then it would be the four of them for a little while and later Dad and the team would bring Shelly. Three children...three beautiful children.

Later, when things settled down and they had more of a routine, Gibbs would tell Tony what it was he was planning. Maybe Tony would be unhappy, but then, maybe not. He was sure he would understand how right it was. But later...that would come later. Right now he just wanted to bask in how his luck had changed because of Tony, his second chance at life.

-----  
Two years later...

Tony hung up the phone. He was beaming and he'd tell Jethro as soon as he got there. Elated, he looked around at his team, or at least those that were there. Tim was his Second and he couldn't ask for a finer one although Leanna had come close. But she had her own team now with Troy as her Second. It had worked out well. Ziva had just gone out on maternity leave so she was at home with Damon and their little boy, Aaron Nathaniel. That just left his Probie, an ex-Marine cop with a lot of common sense but with a bit of a stick up his ass. Good guy, though, and he accepted Tony and his family without any problems. He kind of reminded him of Cait when she'd first gotten there. But between him and Tim, they'd eventually have Special Agent Simon Donovan mellowed out. All in all, life was good and he felt like the luckiest man in the world.

"Hey, McMonster...you going to lunch?"

Tim rolled his eyes at the name but at least it was better than the other name Tony occasionally called him...McFertility God. Just because they figured Abby had gotten pregnant on their

wedding night.

"Yup, as soon as Abby is done feeding Charlie," he answered with a smile as he thought of his five-month old daughter, Charlotte Angelique.

Tony nodded, anxious now for his family to arrive so that they could go to lunch. Jethro had taken the twins to their check-up and they were due to come by any minute. He was startled from his reverie by the shouts of "Mama!" and he jumped a bit, giving Tim a dirty look when he saw him smiling broadly. No doubt he'd seen them approaching and he wondered, yet again, how Jethro had managed to teach their kids to sneak up on him so proficiently. Leave it to a Marine Gunnery Sergeant, he told himself.

Within seconds he had his arms full of two two-year old boys planting sloppy kisses on his cheeks. He looked down at them with a big smile as each boy straddled one of his legs. "And how was your doctor's visit today?" he asked each grinning boy.

"Good!" said Donny showing Tony his lollipop.

"Bad..." said the more serious Jack as he pointed out the band-aid over his latest immunization which Tony bent down and kissed earning him a bright smile.

"Me, too!" said Donny and then he received the same healing benediction.

They weren't identical twins but they looked close enough alike that most people thought they were. They had the same straight, dark hair and fair skin but with a curious shade of bluish-green eyes, Donald James' being slightly greener than his brother Jackson Timothy's. Still, though, both boys were the spitting image of their father who took that opportunity to lean down to kiss his husband hello.

Jethro looked at his husband with a smile. That seems to be all he did ever since he'd decided to retire to look after the kids and his Dad. Tony had argued at first thinking that Jethro would get bored but that had proven to be very far from the truth since the kids kept him extremely busy and he had finally formed a great relationship with his Dad. Truthfully, it had been one of the best decisions they'd ever made.

After the kiss Tony looked over to see that Dad had made it with Shelly holding him by the hand. He'd slowed down a bit but Dad remained in good health overall. He claimed it was the energy he got from the kids and Tony hoped it was true. He called out a greeting to them and Shelly stopped 'helping' Grampa long enough to run over to give Tony a hello kiss and Tony smiled down at her. She wore a pretty little yellow dress with white sunflowers which was complimented by the white and yellow ribbons holding her long curly hair in two pigtails.

"Hi, pumpkin," Tony greeted his oldest child.

"Hi, Mama," Shelly responded.

Try as they might, neither Tony nor Jethro had ever been able to get her to stop calling Tony 'Mama'. And later on the twins had picked it up as well so Tony knew he would forever be Mama, which he accepted since basically that's who he was.

After a few more kisses and some well-placed tickles Tony got the kids off of his lap and told Tim that they were going to lunch. And as he stood he felt Jethro's arm come around his waist and he looked into those blue eyes he loved so well easily reading the question he saw there. He turned and slipped his arms around Jethro with a smile, kissed Jethro once again and then whispered into his husband's ear.

"Stan called and the tests are back...round three's a go."

The End

[Back to index](#)

All publicly recognizable characters and settings are the property of their respective owners. The original characters and plot are the property of the author. No money is being made from this work. No copyright infringement is intended.

This story archived at <http://www.squidge.org/mufa-mpreg/viewstory.php?sid=108>