

Summary: New killings alert the CSIs to a copycat roaming the streets of Vegas, until the FBI shed light on the matter. As new facts come to play an old secret causes havoc, causing suspension and tension.

Categories: [CSI](#) Characters: Emmet Saunders (OC), Gil Grissom, Greg Sanders, Grissom/Millander, Jim Brass, Nicholas "Nick" Stokes, Nigel Frederick Millander (OC), OMC/OFC, Original Character(s), Paul Millander, Rod Drake (OC), Sara Sidle, Warrick Brown
Genres: Slash

Warnings: Adult Situations, Angst, Brain-Insane, Coercion, Complete, Drama, Dubious Consent, Extreme Dark Themes, Intolerance towards Religion, Mention of Rape, Mpreg Implied, Murder, Past Mpreg, Rape off scene, Slash, Stalker, Transexual/Transgender, Violence

Challenges: None

Series: None

Chapters: 2 Completed: No Word count: 45295 Read: 4 Published: 11/19/2018 Updated: 11/19/2018

1. [Chapter 1](#) by elwhis

2. [Chapter 2](#) by elwhis

Chapter 1 by elwhis

Author's Notes:

Warnings: Mature themes, slight violence, language. Nothing worse than you'd see on the show...okay, something a little worse than you'd see on the show, but that's just because they'd be afraid of the ratings suffering. (Not that they can, right now...CSI is in its "Captain Fantastic"/"Led Zeppelin 4" period right now.) The only NC-17 scene is not in the story, but available separately. Read at your own risk💎💎"this isn't a buggle gum ferry ride for our team.

Disclaimer: I don't own CSI, if I did this would be on screen instead of hidden on the net. And CSI probably wouldn't be as popular...anyway, comments can be sent to elwhis@yahoo.co.uk.
"Just when you finally thought you'd never see another dead man in a tub💎💎"

"You find two," Grissom answered, rhetorical.

"Of all the serials to copycat," Brass said, watching as Grissom proceeded into the hotel bathroom.
"This isn't good."

Grissom picked up the mini-recorder. "He knows the message to the letter, he has one of those rubber hands...."

Brass frowned. "Someone who had access to the case file. Someone in the department? Someone who knew what happened?"

"Or someone who knew Milander."

"Did you find something?"

Grissom held up a hair in his tweezers. "Long blond hair."

"Planted? Left by the killer?"

Grissom shrugged, putting the hair in a clear plastic bag and labelling it. "The other scene only had planted prints. Milander planted his own hair to tell a story...either this killer is reckless or trying to tell us something."

"Dammit," Brass muttered under his breath. "We set up forensics to catch killers and thieves and other types, and we end up breeding a few that just want to have a good time outsmarting us."

Grissom said nothing, hitting the button on the recorder.

"...My name is George Bennett. I reside at 5723 Catalina River Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada. I am 42 years of age, and I'm going to kill myself. I just can't do it anymore. I want to say 'I love you, mom'...."

And there was a gunshot, making both Brass and Grissom jump.

Grissom put the recorder in another bag. "We'll print this...not that it really matters." He frowned. "Prints will belong to Paul Millander Sr., of two Ls, and he's dead so they can't help but be plants."

"This a private investigation?"

"Hey, Sara," Grissom said, on his hands and knees, checking around with his flashlight. "Copycat victim number two. Could you print around the tub?"

"Sure," she said, moving in on the job. "Wow," she said.

"What?" Grissom asked, perking up and questioning.

"Bruising around the temples. Makes Rampler's muzzle stamp pale compared to this WWE Extreme action." Sara pulled out the camera. "This guy seems a little more violent and hands-on than Milander."

"Copy cats don't copy so much as emulate, Sara," Grissom said, returning to his search under the tub, combing the carpet. "Swab the bruises. It's a shot in the dark but maybe we can get a hit off the sweat. Violence and adrenaline up the body's sweat production."

"How long has he been dead?"

"Under a day," Brass said immediately. "Front desk said he last checked his mail and phone calls yesterday evening."

"Where's Warrick?" Grissom asked, unseen behind the tub.

"Paged," Sara replied. "He's on his way."

"Good." Grissom stood, holding a tweezed purple fiber. "I want him to pull the security cameras around the room. See if that'll give us anything, beyond the last victim's tapes of the maintenance guy in the pulled down hat." Another little clear bag opened and the fiber was dropped inside. He regarded the bag.

"Maybe this will help us find why the copy cat in the hat came back."

Grissom sat with his team, an array of evidence bags and papers littering the table.

"Jordan Foster, born August 17, 1965. George Bennett, born August 17, 1964." Catherine looked at the paper. "At least it'll take this guy a lot longer to get to you, Grissom."

"Funny." Grissom picked up another page of stats. "Do they have anything else in common?"

Nick shook his head. "Nothing so far, boss. Check for parking tickets, only one for Foster, none for Bennett. Foster lived in a different part of town, as an insurance broker; Bennett was a security

guard at Caesar's. Both Caucasian males, same DOB...." Nick checked his own lists. "Still looking into it."

"Ran the prints on the mini recorder," Sara said. "Any guesses?"

"Right." Grissom looked at the rubber hand in the middle of the table. "I don't think we can get a warrant to arrest Mr. Millander, Sr."

"Your fiber came back chenille," Greg piped up, pushing the little evidence bag back. "As in chenille sweaters, socks, shirts...that colour was used in a run of department store winter wear in Canada and northern states...so, my best guess would be that it's been there a while, from another traveler who stayed in that room. Killer seems local, and male." Greg shrugged. "Sorry."

Grissom looked at Sara. "Any DNA hit from the forehead swab?"

Greg answered, shaking his head. "Just your vic." Greg was nearly cut off, but he found a way to continue. "And, I've got to say, this running back between the lab and full-time field agent isn't really working well for my

"Not now, Greg," Grissom said firmly and quickly. "I'm sorry your replacement didn't work out. But right now, I need focus on this."

"Right," Greg conceded.

"We're crashing your party," came an outside voice and then a knock on the door.

"And you are...?" Grissom asked.

"Emmett Sanders," replied the taller one of the two intruders. "FBI. This is Rod Drake. We were assigned to...help your investigation."

"I've got my whole team on this," Grissom replied. "We don't need help."

"It wasn't a request or suggestion," said Sanders, walking further in the room with a folder in his hand. "We were assigned. You didn't ask for help; we didn't volunteer. Our office has been working the same case from a different angle." Sanders took a seat at the opposite end of the table from Grissom, where there was still room, and his partner sat behind. "You're not looking for a copy cat," the agent said. "You're looking for Paul Milander."

Nick was the first to laugh and respond. "He's dead. Grissom saw 'em with his own two eyes and these murders aren't really him anyway. Too much aggression and attention."

Sanders pulled out a piece of paper. "Crime report, from a bar half an hour from Reno. An assault turned homicide, with several eyewitnesses. Outside of your jurisdiction, it came to our labs. The blood lifted from his jacket came back Paul Milander."

"That guy forged documents and faked tests left and right," Warrick countered. "Used his father's prints as his own. Probably had a buddy give a DNA sample for him."

The agent shook his head. "We thought that. If it weren't for a particularly odd witness report, we would still think that, and we wouldn't be here talking."

"Being?" asked Catherine.

Sanders scanned down, looking for that account on his report. "...she dropped the pipe and ran. I remember her from inside the bar, drinking bottled water, because she was pregnant and she

looked like a man, or a really ugly woman. That was the waitress' account."

Nick raised an eyebrow. "So he fakes his death and dresses in drag and beats a guy? I don't know""

"It wasn't a drag act," Sanders replied, pulling out another report. "He really was Milander, and he really was pregnant."

Warrick was the voice of reason next. "Pregnant. Your proof that this is Milander is because he was pregnant? Weird and twisted, sure, but pregnant? He was a dude, come on""

"No, he wasn't, not exactly," Grissom said suddenly, in a hushed tone. "Paul Milander was...a transsexual. Born Pauline Millander," he said, looking down at a folder.

"Creepy," Nick said.

Grissom snapped out of his thoughts long enough to give Nick a quick glare, but said nothing.

"Even still, can transsexuals have children?" Catherine asked.

Sanders replied. "It depends on the operations they have and the hormones they receive, and their individual body conditions. It's not incredibly likely, but it's not impossible."

"So," Sara began, "you're saying Milander is still alive."

"And a woman," added Nick.

"And pregnant?" asked Warrick.

Greg sat back in his chair, gesturing. "You guys are saying that Paul Milander is alive, pregnant, in Reno and killing again? How do you know for sure?"

Sanders read from the report he held. "Proof of live birth, Northeastern Nevada Regional. Nigel Frederick Millander, five pounds, two ounces; born to Pauline Millander."

"Northeastern...that's in Elko."

Catherine looked to Grissom, concerned for him. "Hey, Gris, you okay?"

Grissom looked up, startled. "When?"

"Right now."

"No, when was the...that hospital report taken?"

Sanders passed Grissom a copy. "A little over two years ago. That puts Paul Milander at five months pregnant when he killed Mr. Jaruso."

Catherine looked to the FBI, puzzled. "Why would Milander, on the run and obviously concerned enough to have the baby, jeopardize his thinly guarded freedom to kill someone? It's no where near his MO."

"It wasn't a planned attack. Waitress says that Jaruso insulted and egged Milander on all night. Concerned, she watched when Milander left, and Jaruso followed after. She says Jaruso attacked him after he reached the parking lot. She was about to call for help when Milander found a metal pipe or rod and beat Jaruso to death."

"Serves you right for beating a pregnant serial killer," Nick muttered under his breath, perusing through the reports Sanders handed to the group.

"This is still your investigation, but we're staying involved. Paul Milander at large is no one's idea of justice or safety. We're catching him, and he's a hard case to break, so I want everything documented and recorded to the letter. Even serials need a solid case to be brought down. To the letter," he repeated, stern.

Catherine nodded. "We always do." Not hearing an affirmation, she turned to Grissom and found him looking at reports, staring at them as though they were a door for the eyes. "Hey, you awake?"

"Yeah. Just...shaken."

Sara munched on a sandwich, the first thing she'd eaten in day--all right, not exactly, but it felt like that sometimes. "They both had hazel eyes," she said, looking at compared stats of both victims.

"Unless there's a convention for hazel eyed people," Warrick began, "I'm doubting that's how our killer finds his victims."

"You never know. This is Vegas. I still have nightmares about that whole PAFCON thing."

"You weren't there," he said, shifting through pictures and forms.

"Thank God," she said with the last bite of her sandwich. "The report was bad enough." She tossed the wrappers in the trash, careful not to lean back too far in her chair. "Well, their cars are both white. Is there a white car convention?"

"Yeah," Warrick started. "It's called the Interstate."

"Hey, here's something," Sara said, sitting up suddenly. "Gregory Morris High...they both attended, Foster from '79 to '83, Bennett from '80 to '85."

"Failed some courses?"

"Apparently...that's three years attendance in common."

"A teacher? Someone on administrative staff?"

"Or just a student...birthdates are usually printed in yearbooks."

Warrick frowned. "Then it could be anyone who attended even one of those three years."

Sara studied the paper. "I had a friend whose dad went to the same high school she did. They were selling old yearbooks and he just walked in and bought one because he'd lost his. It could be anyone, then."

Warrick nodded, disappointed. "If they're giving these out to just anyone, we should get ourselves some copies. See if the birthdates are on there."

"I'll drive."

Behind a curtain of intrigue, Grissom toyed with a half full water tank, coloured pieces of paper and a fan.

"What are you doing?" asked Catherine, intruding in on this scientific sanctuary.

"Testing the effects of oil in water as related to blowing confetti," he answered, matter-of-factly.

"And this has to do with dead guys in bathtubs how?"

"It doesn't. Different case."

"We've got a serial come back and you're playing with sparkly bits of paper and an aquarium?" she retorted, about to put a folder on his desk.

But he caught it. "Whoa!" he said, indicating the new desk ornament, making Catherine jump back. "First, this is a copycat, not Milander. And second, please be careful. You'll hurt Ziggy."

"Ziggy?"

"You know, Ziggy Stardust and the--"

--Spiders From Mars, yeah, yeah, I know. Can't you keep your...pets in their boxes?"

"This," Grissom indicated the tank, "was his home. I'm borrowing it, so he gets the desk."

"Well, sorry I almost squished your tarantula."

"He's not a tarantula, but I'm sure he'd be honoured by the mistake. Beyond that, you wouldn't have squished him, but he'd probably be a little mad if you dropped this," he said, taking the file, "on his head." Grissom put his glasses back on, reading over the pages. "Autopsy report," he read, "Paul Milander."

"Yeah, notice anything funny about it?"

Grissom read, reaching over absently to touch 'Ziggy'.

"What are you doing?" Catherine asked.

"Reading. Well, skimming, actually, to find what you--"

"No, no, with the spider."

"Oh," Grissom glanced to Ziggy momentarily, before returning to his reading. "Scratching."

"Scratching?"

"Ziggy is just as lovable as your average tomcat--this is odd," he said suddenly, starting a new thought, holding the file closer and pulling his other hand away from Ziggy.

"Yeah," Catherine said, shuddering and looking at the spider.

"Gunshot wound, self inflicted, that part is fine. But no tests, no tox reports, no photos...and gender simply stated as male. Even if he'd had the most radical sex change procedures available, and a pregnancy would suggest he didn't, the abbreviated autopsy would have notes about a hysterectomy, mastectomy...and since he didn't his gender couldn't be stated as male."

Grissom looked up, concerned. "And no one noticed this?"

"Only you, myself, Sara and Greg knew he was ever a woman at all. So, if none of us ever had to glance at the report, no one had need to notice."

Grissom frowned, shutting the file and handing it back.

"I'll take Nick," Catherine began, " and go check out the crematorium the report says he was sent to."

"He was never given an autopsy. Go to the coroner that conducted it and--" Grissom looked back. "Tell me it wasn't Robbins."

Catherine shook her head. "Different shift. Body came in on days."

"Count on Ecklie," Grissom said under his breath. "Talk to the cut-rate coroner that filled that report first."

"I would, but he transferred. We're looking into where he is now; it seems he's transferred a few times," Catherine remarked with obvious disapproval. "Wonder why. We'll check the crematorium first. Just to be sure he was never sent there while we're waiting for Doctor Do-Nothing to turn up in our records." Catherine turned away, about to leave. "Why are you so sure that Milander hasn't come back? Just because you saw him 'dead' doesn't mean in the face of all this evidence you should ignore--"

Grissom shook his head. "I believe he's probably still alive somewhere. He tricked us enough times. But these killings..." Grissom shook his head. "They don't seem...him."

Catherine shrugged. "Okay, boss," she said, leaving him to play with his toys and give Ziggy a proper scratching.

Which he was more than happy to do, of course.

Finally free of the lab, Greg Sanders jumped into his car and flew out of the parking lot in seek of the nearest interstate--and one that would take him to Elko.

Take the I-15, then to Route 93...then I-80. Well, it'd be a bit of a double back but that just meant more time away from the lab. Northeastern Nevada Regional, get ready for Greggo!

He stopped for a BrainFreezer and chili dog, letting his CD player blast as he did so. It was about a five hour drive, and five hour drives required snacks.

"It will never be same again, and I know I don't have any time to burn!" he yowled with his stereo, in tune...mostly. Tapping his steering wheel with furry, he almost missed the turn...almost.

"Leave it all behind! Cross the borderline; face the truth; don't have any time to--"

Miraculously, he could hear his cellphone ring over his self-induced racket. In a feat of acrobatics he turned down the radio, pulled over and flipped open his cellphone before it could ring again.

"Greggo's House of Pancakes," he answered. "Your wish is what we dish, in chocolate, maple or mullberry."

"House of Pancakes?" said the voice on the other end, unimpressed.

"Oh...hey," Greg said, defeated with a little embarrassed chuckle. "Hey, boss."

"Yeah, anyway, we've got a steady pile of evidence that needs to be run through a mass spec, and this DNA isn't going to match itself."

"Which is probably why it hasn't gotten laid in years," he quipped.

"Greg."

"I'm following up on a lead," he said, knowing he was cooked. Only a half an hour out--dammit, why couldn't he have called an hour later? The point of no return?

"Being?"

"Well, Catherine was supervising at the time, and she approved."

"All right, and your lead is?"

"Well, Milander had a baby, right?"

"Presumably."

"Hospitals take records, make notes. Even though Milander was careful, he put his real name on the records. There's got to be something on that end that'll help us find him," he said, trying to keep the desperation out of his voice--anything but the lab....

There was a short pause. "Okay," Grissom said finally.

"Okay?" Greg repeated, astonishment shining through his tone.

"Okay. See what you can find. See you tomorrow, bring everything you find to the meeting."

"Tomorrow?"

"By the time you get to Elko, wait for records, come back and file everything, you'll be burned out if you start in the lab after that. I'll see if the person on days wants some overtime."

"Really?"

"Really."

Greg's smile split his face. "Thanks! I'll get everything I can to that meeting."

"Don't have your hopes too high," Grissom warned. "He had a baby...I doubt there'll be a lot there."

"Okay. See you all to-morrow."

"To-morrow."

Also with little hope of finding anything, Nick and Catherine pulled up to Silver Meadows, Funeral Home and Crematorium.

"How do you lose the body of a serial killer?" Nick asked, and not for the first time.

"Case wasn't publicized; he didn't have 'serial killer' written on his face; morgues lose bodies," Catherine replied, also not for the first time.

"Lose bodies. I know it happens, but it just doesn't seem possible that a morgue could lose a body."

Catherine shrugged. "I'm just wondering why the coroner put down this crematorium, specifically. It's not a well known one, a rather small operation...why not put down a name of a different one that processes more bodies? Blame it on the paper."

"If this guy was stupid enough to fake an autopsy report," Nick said, "then maybe he was stupid enough to not try and hide it."

"He might have gotten away with it. If we didn't think Milander was still alive, no one would have double checked the reports."

"And if he hadn't been a woman, no one would have seen anything fishy."

The pair exited the SUV, walking up the path to the main building. "Let's see if anybody's home," Catherine said, pushing the door open slowly.

"Hello," said a somewhat smarmy man in a suit, who resembled a very tall mouse of some kind. "Andrew Canneviola," he said, keeping both hands behind his back, "I'm the director and manager of this facility. Can I help you? What are you two looking for today?"

"I'm Catherine Willows," she said, pulling out her ID. "This is Nick Stokes...we're with the Las Vegas crime lab."

The mousy man looked a tad confused, but didn't miss a beat. "A professional visit? Come this way, come this way," he said, leading them to the office. "Now, what can I help you with?"

Catherine was a little off put by the uppity funeral home director, but made sure not to miss any of her own beats. "We were following up case leads and were wondering if you processed any bodies by the name of Milander?"

Canneviola sat behind his desk and started typing, looking from the screen to the keys at a hectic pace. "Please, sit down, sit down," he offered, indicating the short but proud black leather chairs. "Now, Milander...one L or two?"

"We've seen it written both ways, so both."

He nodded. "Well, with two--" he sat up suddenly. "Wait, don't you need a-a-a...a warrant or something to have access to my files?"

"If you don't volunteer the information," Catherine explained, "yes. But if you want us to come back with a warrant we'd have to close you down until we find what we want."

"Oh, not good, not good," he said, returned to his typing and staring to close to the screen. "There was an Isabelle Millander cremated...almost three years ago. Would you like the details of that processing?"

"No--" Catherine started.

"Yes, actually we would." Nick turned to Catherine, and continued quietly. "Wasn't that his

mother's name?"

Catherine nodded. "Good ears." She turned back to the manic director. "We'd appreciate what you have on that cremation."

The director nodded, pulling a piece of paper fresh off his printer. "There you are." He glanced back to the screen in front of him. "That's the only Millander we have on file here."

"Who collected her ashes?" Catherine asked.

The director flipped through a few more screens. "No record."

"No record? Are they still here?"

He shook his head. "No. They were received by a family member...if it's not recorded, then it was the person who brought her in."

"Well, who gives out the urns around here?" Nick asked.

"I have employees, but matters like that I handle myself."

"Do you remember that case?"

He shook his head. "No, sorry. Like I said, if I remember the person bringing the body in, then I'll give them the urn. I have a great memory for faces...as long as it hasn't been too long."

Catherine nodded, sighing with some disappointment. "Thank you, Mr--"

"Canneviola, and thank you." He shook their hands. "Good luck with your case."

"Thanks."

Buried in paper, Grissom scanned papers.

"Busy?" asked Brass, entering.

Grissom looked up for a moment, watching as his guest took a seat before glancing back to his search. "Not incredibly."

"What are...what are you looking for?" he asked in an odd tone.

"Looking over the list of people who checked out Milander's case file."

"So you don't think these new murders were him."

I'm not saying it isn't, but...no. It doesn't feel right. I'm not ready to rule out a copy cat just yet."

"Anything flag your attention?" Brass asked, indicating the record he held.

"No one really checked out his file. Except, oddly enough, the coroner who did his 'autopsy'," he said with finger quotes.

"I heard about that. Of all the bodies to lose."

"Apparently there wasn't a body to lose in the first place."

"Didn't tell anyone...gives Milander a free run for three years."

Grissom nodded. "No one else checked out the file. Case wasn't made public, beyond the community being noted of apparent suicide victims. Unless our coroner is the copy cat, this isn't going to help us," he said, putting the paper on his desk. "What can I do for you?" he asked, giving Brass his full attention.

"Gil, are you all right? You seem...distant."

"I'm fine. Maybe a little tired, but that will go away."

"Not if you don't sleep, it won't. But there's something else...this whole Milander back from the dead business is really disturbing you."

Grissom shrugged. "It's not really surprising. He staged suicides, eluded capture, hid more than we'll ever know...why not fake his death. We wouldn't have caught him at all if he hadn't left us breadcrumbs to his courtroom," Grissom finished, a bitter defeat in his eyes.

"Is this another one of those 'I don't want to fight because he might just be smarter than me' scenarios?"

Grissom tapped his desk impatiently. "It was before. It is now. Nothing different."

"You sure?"

Grissom was quiet, and only shrugged.

"Take care of yourself. Get some sleep. Don't stay here overnight...take a break."

"I don't seem to be getting anywhere anyway."

Brass sat down. "This isn't the Gil I know. What's on your mind?"

"I had him, dammit! He lead us through hoops; he left treasure maps and riddles and when we finally get him he sets up his last puzzle and then makes it look like he killed himself?" Grissom's fists striking the table caused the papers atop it to bounce and scatter. "Is that how it's supposed to be? Is this how we play the games? I saw his body; I assumed he was dead...I put too much faith in science...I believe that no one could fake a death..." he gestured with an open palm, almost hopeless, "...like that."

"I should be able to tell you not to make it personal, but, since it is, I'm going to tell you to make it impersonal. And fast."

His face in his hands, Grissom shuddered, forcing himself back to a calm plateau of indifference. "I...easier said," he remarked, muffled.

Brass frowned. "Take care of yourself. Go home, get some sleep, do something to get this off your mind."

Grissom looked up, red and overheated from the outburst. "I'll clock out in three hours," he said. "I've got some work to--"

"Two hours," Brass said firmly.

Grissom paused, then nodded. "Two hours," he agreed.

Refreshed to a degree and ready to snare the bad guys in their rabbit traps of science, the CSIs sat around the table, comparing notes and hunting.

"We've got," Grissom checked his watch, "twenty minutes before our federal shadows come to crash the party, so I want everything on the table before that. Catherine?"

"We've gotten a hold of the phantom coroner; he's in your old haunt--L.A. They're sending him over to-morrow for an interview."

"Ring his neck," Grissom replied quickly. "And find out anything you can about...how Milander faked his death." He took a copy of Catherine's notes, turning to Warrick. "And you two found?"

"Our vics went to the same high school--Gregory Morris. We picked up yearbooks from the three years they attended and records of birthdates for all attendees." Warrick took some print outs and added it to the growing pile of evidence. "No one was born on August 17, 1963 and went to that school, no one male, but there is one on August 17, 1962...so he's going to have find a new method of selecting them after this."

"All the other details our vics had in common wouldn't have helped our killer," Sara added.

"Being?" Grissom asked.

"White car, green eyes, that kind of thing."

Grissom nodded. "The blood evidence taken from Milander's tub just returned from Quantico; Greg," he addressed, "could you please find out whose blood it is? Maybe some clues on how he got away."

"Right-o. Priority."

"No," Grissom shook his head. "I want to concentrate on finding out where our--"

Catherine cut him off. "Do we even know, for certain, that Paul Milander is alive? Before we chase him instead of a copycat, shouldn't we try to confirm he is alive? Bodies get switched, reports get switched, DNA can be, rarely, faked."

"At this point," Grissom started, disquiet, "we can't be sure if...."

"Actually, we can," Greg piped up. "I went to the hospital, and they put Nigel Milander in one of those child find initiatives."

"Fingerprints?" Nick said. "That doesn't exactly prove that Milander is alive."

"Better. DNA." Greg shrugged. "Well, and fingerprints. I ran the DNA from Nigel Milander against the hair from Pauline's childhood bedroom. With eight alleles in common," Greg passed the DNA match report to Grissom, "guess who's a mommy!"

"Thanks, Greg," Grissom said with a frown.

"I'm also going to see if I can find the father."

"Why?" Grissom asked, looking up from the DNA analysis.

Greg shrugged. "It's hard to run it through the computer, because it's not looking for an exact match, but I figure the father's someone helping Milander, or helped him at some point. If we find him, then maybe we'll get a lead. It's not much, but it might help."

Grissom nodded absently. "Any DNA match found on the hair?"

"Hair?"

"The blonde hair we found in Bennett's tub."

"Nope."

Grissom shook his head. "We need to move the focus away from finding Milander. If he's the killer, the evidence from the new crimes will lead us to him. If not, then we need to find the larger threat." Grissom turned to Catherine. "After you interview that coroner, look over the scene reports from the last two vics. Anything on how he got away, how he got in--"

"We already checked--"

"Check again. Greg, after you give the computer a once through on a father, move on to the hair. Try matching it to our vic. A daughter, sister, what have you. You only have one chance to find a father. After that, no more. Sara, Warrick, go back to the hotel Bennett was killed at and find anything you can." Grissom checked his watch again. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to fill in our reluctant partners." He stood. "Did anyone have anything else?"

There was a chorus of shaking heads.

"Thank you," he said in an almost thankless tone, leaving out the door.

"Yo," Greg greeted, with accompanying finger-guns gesture.

"Hey, Greg," Catherine replied shutting the lab door.

"What can I do ya for?"

"Not now, Greg."

With a shrug, Greg nodded and went back to his test tubes and jars. "Then how can I help you, m'lady?"

Her eyebrows went up, and laughed a bit, finally appreciating a little light mood.

"Just...recouping."

"From...."

Catherine looked at some papers she held. "From that interview. God, that coroner was such an idiot. Tried to blame the body loss on the crematorium."

"Shocking," Greg said, pushing some buttons.

She rubbed her eyes, leaning against a bare patch of wall. "Insisted he did an autopsy, tried to bluff details." She laughed a little, brightening her features in the process. "You should have seen his face when Nick told him Milander was a woman."

Greg's voice was muffled, as he checked a connection in his machines, wondering why his bottom printer wasn't working. "He wasn't technically a woman."

"I know." Catherine chuckled a little more, perhaps a little giddy with the stress. "But it was a whole lot more fun that way."

Greg stood, having solved the mystery of the non-functioning printer: it wasn't plugged in. "Technically he was an intersexed transsexual."

"Technically he is an intersexed transsexual."

"Touch💎," Greg replied, admitting defeat in the game of semantics.

Catherine rubbed her forehead. "I need coffee," she said with a moan.

"Where's Nicky boy?"

"Hmm?"

"Nicky boy. He's been running around with you on this, right?"

"Oh, right. Grissom sent him off to work a robbery."

"Lucky Nicky boy."

"Can't have everyone on the same case when there's other scenes to be worked...especially since we've got a killer or two who are just making us wait in anticipation."

"Fun." Greg held up a printout in triumph. "Ha ha! We have print-off."

"Is that the hair in the tub?"

"Nope. Warrick's dumpster DB. From my stack of work from before."

"If it doesn't have the name Milander on it," Catherine started, "I'm not interested."

"That computer over there is working your case," Greg said with a point. "But I'm not holding out much hope."

"Why not?"

"I couldn't think of anyone who could do the nasty with Milander...and I doubt my computer will either." He regarded the monitor and its rapidly flickering displays, and, as supervised by the God of Perfect Timing, it beeped. "Apparently, my computer begs to differ, and believes there is enough beer in the world," he said, walking over to the machine.

"That's for me," Catherine said.

"Yeah. Lessee what--hello!" he interjected, looking at the monitor.

"What's wrong?"

"Bad. Very bad." Greg looked up, genuinely concerned and worried. "The c-word."

"Cu--"

"Compliance."

"Compliance? But that means...."

Greg shook a little, looking at the printer with dread. "Someone in the department." He swallowed. "The last time a compliance turned up in a Milander case...."

"Prints are one thing," Catherine said. "It's probably a mistake. And maybe it's not even--"

Greg picked up the sheet, turning green as he skimmed it. He shook his head, biting his lip. "Eleven alleles in common. And it...is."

"Oh, God..." Catherine took the paper, reluctantly looking over it. "Oh, God."

"Remember how moody he was before?"

"I'm not even going to think about it."

Greg turned away, desperately involving himself in work. "Have fun telling him."

"What? No, I don't think so. These are your results. It was your idea to look for a father."

"I'm not going to tell him. Nada. No chance. I'll be stuck in my lab for months if I deliver this one!"

Catherine looked at the paper again, turning a little green herself. "How did this happen, anyway?"

"I'm sure Gris'll be asking himself the same thing when you tell him about...this."

Catherine huffed, and rolled her eyes. "You owe me, Greg."

"Okay," he agreed.

Gathering her courage and eloquence, Catherine turned and left out the lab's door.

What the Hell, exactly, was she going to say?

With heavy feet, Catherine stepped into Grissom's office. He was drawing lines on paper, apparently a graph, and was suddenly not very sure she should interrupt his doodling.

"Gris?"

He looked up, questioning through glasses. "Yes?"

"Greg wanted me to come here and proclaim his genius."

Grissom laughed a little, returning to his chart and making a solid red line along it. "Tell him he staying in the lab today anyway."

"He found a way to narrow the search for Nigel's father."

Grissom looked back up. "How?"

She shrugged, sitting down. "He didn't say. One of his Gregorian Theorems."

"I'm sure the maths professor at UNLV would love to hear it." Grissom picked up his ruler again. "Did his theorem manage to narrow the possibilities from 3 billion?"

"Yeah." Catherine leaned over, placing the paper in front of Grissom's chart. "To one." With a choked swallow she managed, "Compliance."

Grissom looked up, deathly alarmed. "Compliance," he repeated.

"Yeah," she said, feeling a weight on her stomach. "Eleven alleles in common."

Grissom picked up the paper, a blank expression covering his features.

Shit, Catherine cursed inwardly. He was doing better; he had been less moody....more relaxed.

Grissom put the paper aside, saying nothing about it. "Thank you."

"I'm going to have to put this in my report. Tell the others...."

Grissom only nodded, not looking up from his work.

"I'm sorry--"

"It's not your fault," Grissom said in a tone she couldn't place. Catherine waited, but there was no more words from her distant friend.

"See you later," she said, hurrying out, concerned.

Warrick strode into Greg's lab, receiving a page from "Dr. Livingston." He pushed open the door with little ceremony, finding Greg looking out across the hall, into Grissom's office. Spying--the nervous man's eavesdropping.

"Dr. Livingston, I presume?"

Greg jumped, dropping the blind cord and spinning around with Mortal Combat speed. "Uh, yeah, I guess...Hi, Warrick."

Warrick nodded. "Right. So what is it?"

"Uh...what...oh, right," Greg said, shaking a little and returning to his pile of papers. "I found something...much like Mr. Livingston." He handed a paper and an evidence bag containing a watch. "Your watch has DNA from two people, your vic and another. Not a relative, so I ran it through CODIS--and, wouldn't you know it." Greg handed Warrick another analysis, complete with jazz hands. "Match."

"Marshall Derringer." Warrick nodded. "Local, record for fraud, aggravated assault--and theft." With a pat on the back, Warrick smiled broadly. "I owe you, man."

"Yeah," Greg said, shaky.

"Dude, what's wrong? You're all on edge," Warrick said, a little theatric.

"I...nothing." Greg glanced over his shoulder, and quickly back.

"Did Gris say something to you? Waiting for something."

Greg swallowed. "No."

Warrick. "Sure. Anyway, thanks again."

On his way to his car, Warrick stopped by the break room, having been informed from reliable sources, that there were, indeed, doughnuts present there.

"Are you sure? But how can--" Sara said, cut off, in the middle of a conversation with Nick and Catherine.

Warrick grabbed a chocolate cake Krispy Kreme, seeing as someone hoodwinked all his favourite ones. "Am I interrupting something?"

"Sit down," Catherine commanded.

"Okay," Warrick said, sitting near the group. "This sounds pretty serious."

Catherine nodded. "Yeah. And it doesn't leave this room. Not yet, anyway. Don't tell anyone on day shift, no one in the labs--no one besides us, Greg and Brass. That's it."

"We're keeping something from Gris?" Warrick started. "I don't think I like the sound of that."

"He's already...been told," Nick explained, looking away with a weirded look on his face.

"Okay. What then?"

"It's about Grissom. Greg managed to...figure out the paternity of Nigel Milander."

Warrick looked first to Nick, then back to Catherine. "I don't like the sound of this."

Catherine frowned. "No...Grissom is the father."

Warrick's eyes widened. "That's impossible! How can that be?"

Catherine shrugged; Sara shook her head.

"He got a hold of Grissom's prints--" Nick said, taking a glance at his neglected coffee and snack.

"Prints is one thing," Warrick replied. "Wow." He put the doughnut back. He didn't feel hungry anymore. "How did that happen?"

"That's what we were trying to figure out," Sara replied.

"Did anyone ask him?"

Catherine raised an eyebrow. "You want to be the one to ask?"

"Point."

"Greg just found out about ten minutes ago," Nick said.

Warrick nodded. "Explains why he was antsy."

"Antsy?" Catherine inquired.

"I went to his lab for results, and he was jumpy...trying to look into Grissom's office." Warrick shook his head again. "Man, how'd he take it? Did Greg tell him?"

"I did...how would you take it?"

"What a creep," Nick said, cutting in. "Plants Grissom's prints, leaves planted evidence, leads him right to his creepy little world...and then he...." Nick shuddered. "Obsession. I thought I was violated with all that Nigel Crane business."

"So what," Sara started, "Milander found some way to get some of...and had a baby with it?"

"Why would he even want to?" Catherine asked them. "He tries to live as a man as best he can, and then he plots to have Grissom's baby?"

Nick shrugged. "You want to try and comprehend that guy? Good luck."

"Best plan of action is just not to talk about," Warrick said, a defeated tone to his voice.

"Good plan."

A muted squeal indicated the door was being opened, and they looked up to see Grissom enter, the picture of disquiet and looking at his pager.

"What is everyone doing?" Grissom asked, still staring at the pager, or rather, staring through the pager.

"We were..." Catherine started.

"...talking," Sara finished.

Grissom flinched subtly, exhaling with butterflies. "I meant case wise."

"Working my DB from the dumpster," Warrick explained.

"Waiting for my prints to be traced from the robbery," Nick said.

"Nothing pressing? Good," Grissom said, less on power than usual. He sighed deeply. "419 on Drummond Hill Road. Apparent suicide, in a bathtub and a mini recorder." He turned around. "You're all with me. Let's go."

"Patrick Stargsbridge," Brass started, already at the scene. "Found by his wife. She's outside." He leaned in frowning. "She touched the recorder," he said, pointing to it on the floor."

Grissom rolled his eyes, photographing it anyway. "Coroner pronounce?"

"Not yet. He should be here any minute."

Grissom nodded, turning his attention to the body. "Gun shot wound, non-self inflicted. Homicide..." Grissom trailed off, pulling out his print powder, setting aside until the body was inspected by the coroner. Not that it mattered, Grissom thought, with a wounded and depressed

sigh.

"Sorry I'm late," David said by way of a greeting. "Mess of cameras outside."

"Already?" asked Grissom, exasperated.

"Sorry," he replied with a shrug. David leaned over the tub, pulling out his thermometer. "Liver temp puts the body dead for four hours."

"Wife said she's only been here ten, came home from a seven hour shift at a diner." Brass pulled out his notes. "Mi Casa Diner, to be exact."

"I doubt it was her anyway." Grissom watched as David looked over the wound.

"That's really all I can do before an autopsy," David said. "All yours," he stood, collecting his thermometer and moving back, waiting for the gurney to arrive.

"Thanks."

"Drake and Sanders are going to be all over this," Brass said, standing loyally by the door, avoiding eye contact with the late Mr. Stargsbridge.

"They have been about everything else. They'll get my notes and photos." Grissom surveyed the area around the tub. "Killer knew his wife would be at work...had at least a seven hour window."

"That's not all they'll be over," Brass commented heavily.

"Worrying about it isn't going to help me," Grissom almost snapped.

"But it's obviously bothering you."

Grissom exhaled deeply, trying in vain to relieve the pressure on his chest. "Of course it bothers me. I'm doing the best I can not to care."

"What are you going to tell them?"

Using his tweezers, Grissom found a purple fiber, similar to the one found at the previous victim's murder scene. "I don't know." He put it in an evidence bag. "There's not really anything I can tell them."

David slouched against the wall, trying to seem invisible in the midst of this obviously private conversation.

"Sorry, David," Brass apologized. "This is the only time I get to talk to him tonight so--"

"I'll leave--"

"No, it's okay, David. We're not talking about this anymore."

"Okay." David peered out in the hallway, sighing in relief as the gurney was slowly approaching. "If this is about," he started, absent and stammering, "the, uh, baby, I already know anyway--"

"How the hell did you find out?" Grissom snapped, turning off his flashlight and spinning, aggressive.

David's mouth fell open, frightened by the outburst. "I-I...the...uniforms downstairs were talking

about it..."

Putting his flashlight and kit down, Grissom buried his face in his hands, trying to steady himself. He'd have to change his gloves. He didn't care.

David coughed, trying to relieve his own pressure, walking over to the body as he helped them get it onto the gurney and take it away. "Grissom," he said hesitantly.

Grissom looked up slowly, cooling down.

"In the tub." David walked away, adding, "Sorry," before leaving with the body.

Picking up his flashlight and removing his gloves, Grissom crawled over to the tub. "Shut the door, would you?"

Brass leaned over to reach the handle. "Do you want to be alone?"

"No."

"All right, then," he said, closing it lightly.

Putting on new gloves, Grissom photographed the tub. Underneath the body and on top of the sleeping bag, oddly, was a Barbie-like doll in a vinyl mini skirt and what appeared to be a tube of lipstick. He photographed them. "Planted," he said quietly.

"Well, I really don't think his wife was sleeping in here and left them there before work."

He bagged them, careful not to disturb possible prints. "Does he have a daughter?"

"Doesn't look like it. Not from this marriage that I can see, anyway. Aren't you going to listen to that?" he asked, indicating the recorder.

"Why? I know what it's going to say." Grissom took out his print powder, handing his evidence bags to Brass. "Give these to Nick, would you? Have him fume them at the lab."

"Sure thing, boss. Not in the mood to delegate and authorize tonight?"

Grissom relaxed a little, now calm. "I...I don't want to look at..."

"All right." Brass left, shutting the door and leaving Grissom alone with his tub, to dust for prints.

"Right-o," Nick said, taking the evidence bags and starting for the car. He passed Sara and Warrick along the way, looking for signs of entry and fleeing the scene.

"Don't page Grissom until you're finished both," Brass called after him.

"Sure thing."

"Where's Grissom?" came a voice from behind Brass.

"You'll get his notes and photos," Brass said, turning to find Agent Sanders. "He's already ordered copies for you," he finished with a shit-eating grin.

"I'm not here about that."

"Lost your shadow?"

"Drake's away, on another matter. Where's Grissom?"

"Busy, investigating a crime scene."

"He shouldn't be on it."

Brass cocked his head. "And why is that?"

"Suspect is possibly Paul Milander. And, as I'm sure you're aware, it was recently found that Grissom fathered Nigel Milander."

Brass shrugged. "So?"

"That puts him a position to compromise the investigation."

"Just because some wacko got his hands on his juice doesn't mean he has any reason to leave this scene."

"Did anyone bother to ask how that happened?"

"We just got word on a 419...now a homicide. He's got work to do. We'll bother with that matter later."

"Of course you will," Sanders said, pushing past and entering the house.

"Have fun with the hurricane," Brass muttered to himself. "Bad idea."

"I'm Sara Sidle, one of the investigators looking into your husband's death," was her introduction. "We need to know, what did you touch in your bathroom?"

Mrs. Stargsbridge, looking about ten years younger than her late husband and very distraught, wiped away a tear. "I...just the...the tape player," she said between sniffles. She lifted her hand, which had little smudges of blood on it, causing another torrent of tears. "Oh, God...and...and I touched him." She used her other hand to put against her face as Sara swabbed the blood and cleaned it from her other. "I touched him...but...but only a little, oh, God.... I'm so sorry.... I didn't think...didn't think that--"

"It's all right, Mrs. Stargsbridge. By any chance, was your husband's birthdate...August 17, 1963?"

She looked up through her tears, trying to choke them away. "Yes..." she said. "Is that a problem?"

Sara shook her head. "What high school did he go to?"

"Umm... I can't remember."

"Gregory Morris?"

She shook her head. "No...something...something Gate Centennial." She shook her head again, the rest of her shaking as well. Brass stepped behind her, offering her support.

"Did you know a George Bennett?"

She thought a moment. "No...I don't think so."

"What about Jordan Foster?"

She shook her head again. "I don't think we do."

Sara nodded her head. "All right. We're doing all we can here...is there somewhere you'll be staying? Where we can reach you if we need to ask you a few more questions?"

She shook her head. "I don't know...I don't know. I could call my sister; but I hate to impose and she's got two jobs...but...but," she shook more intensely.

"Shh, shh," Brass said, "calm down. It's all right. We'll call your sister, all right?"

"Oh...okay," she said with a snuffle. "Oh, God...."

"Do you have something for me?" Grissom asked.

Nick looked up from his computer screen. "Fumed the doll and the lipstick. Got a print from the doll's skirt and a partial from the lipstick. Partial looks planted...too clear, sent a swab to trace for synthetic or animal oils. The print on the doll looks functional, though. Like someone grabbed it."

"Our killer?"

The technician, standing nearby, shook her head. "Print is from a child. Running it now."

Grissom turned back to Nick. "And the partial? Millander Sr?"

"Nope. They came up earlier." Nick held up the printout. "Judge Douglas Mason. A.K.A...you know," he said with a shrug.

"Milander?" he said, taking the sheet. "The killer planted Milander's prints? Not his father's?"

Nick took another piece of paper from the steadily growing pile. "Your tub tap prints, possibly also plants, came back Sr."

"He's planting Milander's prints? And his father's?"

"I guess, unless it is Milander."

"If they're clear and there's some kind of vegetable oil, they're plants no matter whose prints they are or who planted them. And that can make all the difference."

Nick shrugged. "I guess."

"Anything else?"

"Just waiting for a hit on the doll prints."

"Good. Where is the lipstick?"

Nick picked up the evidence bag. "Here, but why?"

Grissom took it. "Mrs. Stargsbridge is coming in for an interview...I'll need it for that."

Nick nodded. "I'll page you if we get a hit."

"When. When, Nick."

Grissom walked into the interview room, Mrs. Stargsbridge already there and being asked countless questions by Brass, Sara and the FBI. Feeling a twang of pity, he took a seat in front of her.

"May I?"

Brass nodded. "Sure."

"Ma'am, I'm sure you're very busy," he started, "and this is a horrible time for you." He pulled out the bag, not beating around the bush. "I only have one question, is this yours?" He held the bag out for her, displaying the lipstick.

She held her hand out for it, moving the bag around. "Can I take it out?"

Grissom put on a pair of gloves, and withdrew it. "I'm sorry, I can't let you touch it."

She shook her head. "I don't think so...could you pop it? You know, let me see the colour?"

Grissom nodded, twisting it a little. To his surprise, it was forest green.

She laughed a little, shaking her head with a sad smile. "No...no, that's not mine."

"Thank you," Grissom said, putting it back in the evidence bag. "One more question, if that's all right, before I leave."

She shrugged, non-committal. "I suppose."

"Was Patrick married before?"

She nodded, closing her eyes momentarily. "We've been married three years...his first marriage was about ten years ago, I think. He never talked about it much."

"Any children?"

"No...they were only married for a few months. She died...like I said, he never talked about it much." She looked up at Grissom, expression changing completely. "Do you think that has something to do with this?"

"At this point...we're still collecting evidence."

She nodded, accepting. "All right. Will you tell me when you know what happened?"

"I will."

"Will you tell me when you know what happened?"

Mrs. Starsbridge's voice ran through Grissom's head as he walked through the hall to his office. When he looked up he felt dread in the pit of his stomach, and another voice in his head, snippets from past conversations.

"Then he was murdered? ...he was such a good man.... I thought you were going to tell me you found him.... "

"Paige Harmon," Grissom said to himself, under his breath.

"Mr. Grissom!" she called, walking up to him. "Mr. Grissom...it is Mr. Grissom, isn't it? It's been some time since I've seen you."

"Mrs. Harmon...I...."

"I was watching the news, and I heard they'd found another 'staged suicide' as you said?"

"I...it appears that way."

"So, you never caught him?"

Grissom exhaled, collecting his thoughts. "It's complicated, Mrs. Harmon. We...all I can tell you right now is that this is either the original killer returned or a copycat. It's...it's never easy to tell."

"A serial killer? Is that who killed Royce?"

"I'm sorry, I can't tell you anything more--"

"He was such a good man...why?" she asked, the pain of old wounds opening putting an edge of hysteria to her voice.

"Mrs. Harmon, we're doing everything we can to catch him."

Her lower lip trembled, distraught, until she calmed herself with visible effort and nodded. "All right...I'm sorry I troubled you, Mr. Grissom."

"It's no trouble." He put a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

"Grissom, would you come in here a moment?" Drake asked, peeking his head out the interview room door.

"I already talked to the wife--"

"Just for a minute?"

Grissom shrugged, walking in. As he made the final step across the threshold, Drake shut the door behind him and stood dutifully at it. Grissom turned around, suddenly feeling trapped.

"Sit down," Sanders said, seated at the blocky table.

Grissom turned back, and noted the absence of life beyond he and the two agents. Oh, shit....

"Have a seat."

He walked over, pulling out the chair and sitting heavily, throwing his clipboard on the table. "We can't talk in my office?"

"No." Sanders leaned in, pushing the 'on' button of a voice recorder with a silver pen. "Atmosphere."

"Power," Grissom corrected.

"Something like that," Sanders agreed, leaning back in his chair.

"I won't be your mouse," Grissom said, moving to stand.

"Wait, wait," Sanders said quickly. "This is just a friendly conversation."

"Friendly conversation." Grissom rested his chin on his fist with raised eyebrows. "Recorded in an interrogation room?"

"Interview room," Drake corrected from the door.

Grissom laughed darkly. "Right."

"Look, we do it this way or we make it a hearing."

"A hearing?"

"Yeah." Sanders took his pen and tapped his own clipboard. "To see whether you keep your job or not."

"What is this about?"

"You know what this is about," Sanders said.

"Nigel Milander," came the helpful voice from the door.

"Thank you, Drake."

Grissom frowned deeply. "I really can't help you with that. No one told me I was going to lose my job when he planted my fingerprints," he countered.

Sanders laughed. "Fingerprints." He flipped through a few pages, tucking them under the board and crossed his legs. "Fingerprints," he repeated. "I can see the similarity between a killer planting the mislaid fingerprints of an investigator and a killer giving birth to an investigator's baby."

"If you're determined enough, anything is possible."

Sanders leaned forward. "Well, we're doing our investigation. This is part of it. I'd just like to make note that, to maintain your level of authority in the building the outside speakers have been shut off, so no one can hear this besides us." Sanders turned to his lackey at the door. "Shut the blinds, would you?"

"Maintain my authority," Grissom said with a smile. "After passers by in the hall were already witness to your dragging me in here."

"We didn't drag you," Sanders countered. "We asked nicely."

Grissom frowned, giving in a little. "Thank you for closing the blinds."

"You're welcome. Give a little, get a little, you know."

Grissom sighed. Bite the bullet. "What do you want to know? Not that I really have a lot a can tell you."

Sanders looked at his page, a list of questions. "Where do you masturbate?"

Laughing a tad, he replied, "Excuse me?"

"You heard the question. Don't try to tell me you're the least bit modest."

"In my townhouse."

"That's it?"

"That's it."

"You're sure?"

Grissom waved his hand. "I can't think of anywhere else, really."

"Have you ever donated to a sperm bank?"

"No."

"Are any samples of your sperm kept anywhere?"

"No."

"Did you ever suspect someone had broken in to your...townhouse, was it?"

Grissom shrugged. "Not that I know of. Not that it mattered; Milander's broken into everything from barns to hotel rooms."

"Do you suspect he broke into your townhouse?"

"Not that I can tell...I suppose..." Grissom looked a little ill. "I suppose it's possible."

"Right." As indicated by his tone, Sanders swerved quickly off the subject. He looked down his list, and rolled his eyes at the next question. "When you interviewed Milander about..." he flipped another page, "...credit card receipts for rubber hands, after the second victim, you interviewed him at his place of work."

"I did," Grissom agreed.

"Was that any help?"

"No. He didn't keep books or records of transactions. Artists often don't."

"And yet," Sanders said, checking the logs, "you record that you stayed there for at least an hour."

Pausing, and looking at his hands, Grissom answered. "He wasn't a suspect at that time."

"Did you have sex with him then?"

Grissom looked up. "No," he responded flatly.

"It took an hour for him to tell you that he didn't keep books and records?"

"No."

"Then what did you do for an hour?" Sanders checked the book. "...interviewed Paul Milander, former suspect from the Harmon homicide, cleared, re: credit card receipts for purchasers of rubber hands.... And, looking a little further, the next record in your time log was you taking a five minute break to get coffee before returning to the lab. That was an hour and twenty minutes later you returned."

"If I'd had sex with him, I would have known he was transgendered and the case details on the third murder would have fallen in to place after that," Grissom reasoned.

"Unless you just hid it. Made it look like you didn't sleep with a serial killer."

"We were at his warehouse. It was an interview."

"For an hour?"

"I wanted to get a feel for him as a person," he replied.

"Did you do anything sexual with him? Then you wouldn't have known he was woman at all."

"He wasn't a woman," piped up Drake from the doorway.

"It doesn't matter--"

"Never state that a fact doesn't matter," Grissom countered. "Milander is transgendered--not a woman."

"Fine." Sanders returned to the question list. "Did you do anything sexual with him?" he repeated.

"No," Grissom affirmed.

"Ever?"

"No."

"What did you do for an hour, then?"

"We...talked."

"That's funny. Where I'm from that's a euphemism."

"Where I'm from it means we talked." Grissom leaned back, gathering his calm.

"About?"

Shrugging, Grissom recalled what he could. "Art, the rubber hands, the types of people he sold them to...his working environment. Things like that."

"And about the--"

They were interrupted by Grissom's pager beeping. He checked it, complete with a smile. "That's for me." He stood, putting the pager back in his pocket. "Nice chatting."

Sanders frowned. "We'll be talking to you again."

"Of course you will."

"Sorry to bother you boss--" started Nick.

Grissom frowned. "You pulled me away from a very intriguing conversation," he warned.

"Sorry." Nick handed Grissom the fingerprint analysis. "Your doll's print came back Angela Gething."

"She's only eight," Grissom said, glancing at the stats. "Any connection to the victims?"

"No...but I found a possibly useful connection."

"Being?"

"Angela Gething is, like you said, an eight year old girl, who happens to live in Mulberry County."

"Mulberry County..." Grissom folded the paper. "Where's Sara?"

"I thought you were supposed to know where everyone was."

"I was detained by our federal friends," he explained. "Wasn't she working on processing footprints found at the scene?"

"As far as I know," Nick replied.

"Thanks."

"Sara?"

Beleaguered, Sara looked up from the books. "Gris, hi..." she motioned pulling her hair out. "Someone should really put all these shoe treads in a computer."

"Road trip?" Grissom asked.

Sara brightened. "Sure. Where to?"

"Mulberry. To interview the source of our doll's print."

"I'm with you," Sara said, leaping up and grabbing her jacket.

Grissom eyed the piles of open and scattered binders. "You're just going to leave it like that?"

"Sure." Sara shrugged. "Why not?"

With its prim gables and neat paint job, the Gething house had character and fit in with the houses on the block. A little old fashioned, but inviting. Some of the houses had gardens, flush with colour, others had porches with quaint little swings. Grissom smiled at the happy, bright and country feel the sitting row of homes emitted.

After a knock, they were admitted to the house, and this changed.

The furniture was immaculate. There were books on shelves. Shoes lined up neatly in their matching shoe rack. A slew of coats, dusted and tucked neatly in a closet, proudly and stiffly waited to be protectors against a cold that Nevada simply never had. Not even on the coldest nights.

The kitchen, visible from the doorway, was neat and tidy, ready to serve a meal. The air was musty, stale, contradicting the bright atmosphere of everything it permeated. Crimsons splashed with ivory...a television stoically out of place on the bookshelf, the only hint of a modern era.

If the house had been old and creaky and a little bigger, it would have been the residence of Judge Douglas Mason...a.k.a. Paul Milander.

And then there were the Gethings.

"Hello! Nice to see you," said the lady with the cheery smile and the equally cheery dress. "You're new to the neighbourhood, aren't you?" She extended her hand. "That's lovely to meet you! I'm--"

"Leena Gething," Grissom answered for her.

She shook his hand, smiling and surprised. "Yes! How did you know that? You were at the Reilly's house, weren't you?" She giggled, straight out of a bad 50s sitcom. "They're always talking about us. Good things, of course."

"Ma'am, we're with the Las Vegas crime lab," Grissom started, pulling his ID. "I'm Gil Grissom, this is Sara Sidle. May we come in? We'd just like to ask a few questions."

"Well, sure!" Leena gestured exuberantly and led them to the sitting room. "Just make yourselves all comfortable, and I'll be right back. I've got a plate of cookies that--"

"That's all right, ma'am, we'll only be--"

"Nonsense. I'll only be a minute." She scampered off to the kitchen. "Just have a seat and be comfortable," she called from the kitchen.

Grissom sat and turned to Sara, who looked like she's just made her own personal Casper friend and it wasn't turning out so well. "Are you okay?"

"I think I'm going to be sick," she said quietly. "It's like...wow, is everyone in this area like this?"

Grissom shrugged, now able to enjoy the surreal and creepy atmosphere of the tight knit Mulberry community. "From what it looks like. Milander's house was almost the same."

She shivered. "You know, I saw the Stepford Wives? It just got a whole lot creepier. Do you think if I bashed her in with a hammer there'd be wires?"

Grissom raised his eyebrow, appreciating the morbid humour.

"Here we are," Leena said, bustling back. "Here are the cookies," she said, putting the tray on the table in front of them. "Help yourselves!"

Sara smiled, trying to seem genuine, which was near impossible.

"Mrs. Gething," Grissom started, "would it be possible to speak to your daughter Angela?"

"Angela? Well, sure. She's," Leena checked the clock. "She's at a friend's house, that little Alice girl's house. Well, actually, her name is Alicia, but everyone here calls her Alice. Angela will be back in about fifteen minutes, to wash up for supper."

"We have some questions for you as well," Grissom said.

"Sure, whatever you need to know." Leena suddenly looked very worried. "Has there been an accident? Is Angela in trouble?"

"No, ma'am. We're just looking into leads we have on a rather peculiar case."

Leena nodded, again bright and cheery. "Sure. What would you like to know, then?"

Grissom sat back, pulling a pen out to take some notes. "Did you know a Paul Milander?"

"Milander...no, I don't think so. There's a lot of people in Mulberry, though, so he might just be around and I've never heard of him."

"What about Judge Douglas Mason?"

Leena lit up, like a Christmas tree on fire. "Doug? Oh," she laughed, "everyone knew Doug."

"Doug?" Sara asked, a little incredulous.

"Sure," she said, waving her hand. "Dougie, as the kids called him. The kids loved him...shame he left. He used to coach the baseball and soccer. Taught an art class, too." She smiled, remembering. "Shame about his leaving. He was great with kids. Too bad he couldn't have any of his own, how unfortunate about that. But all the other kids got to play with him, so it all works out that way, I guess."

"Wait," Sara said. "He told you about that?"

"About what?"

"About why he couldn't have kids?"

Leena shrugged, still with that face-splitting smile that was natural on no planet. "Well, we never talked about it. You don't really talk about, you know," Leena pointed to her waist, "things down there, you know. Someone said he was in an accident, and someone else said it was some kind of genetic disorder. But that doesn't really matter, does it."

"Right," Sara said.

"You said he left?" Grissom asked.

"Yes."

"With his family?"

"Ah, yes, Shelley and Craig. They were lovely. Shame about them leaving too."

"Why did they leave?" Grissom asked.

"Oh, I don't know for sure...lots of people said Doug got a new job, as a higher judge somewhere else, but my Leonard insists that they were going through a divorce and trying to hide it from the adoption agency. They can get pretty strict there, you know."

"Leonard?"

"My husband. He knew Doug all right. Most people did. He was such a nice man, you know. Took care of things, gave legal advice...went to church, that kind of thing."

Sara's eyebrows shot to her hairline. "Church?"

"Of course. Lead the fellowship breakfasts three years in a row."

Sara nodded, a little dumbstruck.

"Mrs. Gething," Grissom began again, "where did they move to?"

"The Masons? Well, I know it was California...either Los Angeles or Los something..." she tapped her lips. "Or maybe it was one of the M ones. You know, like Monterey or Modesto."

"Monterey is in Mexico," Grissom explained.

"Is it? Well, they didn't move to Mexico!"

Grissom nodded. "Do you have a forwarding address for the family?"

Leena shook her head. "Sorry."

The door opened.

"Oh! There's Angela now!" Leena leaped up, going to the door to greet her daughter and usher her over to the visitors on the couch. "Honey-bunches, this is Miss Sidle and...I'm sorry, what did you say your name was?"

"Gil Grissom."

She smiled again. "Miss Sidle and Mr. Grissom. They're from Las Vegas."

"Hello," Angela said, shying behind her mother.

"They want to ask you some questions, all right?"

"Okay."

Grissom took an evidence bag from his large front pocket, leaning towards the girl. As he did so, Sara stood, reluctantly looking around the plastic house.

"Do you recognise this doll?"

Angela looked up, reaching for the bag, but Grissom held it from her at a comfortable distance.

"It's mine," she said simply, with some authority.

"Do you know how it got out of your house?"

Angela stepped forward, closer to the doll, but her mother pulled her back. With a stern warning, she sat on the couch across.

"It was probably Vickie," she said with a sour face. She draped her skirt modestly over her knees, noticing that it had ridden up a little when she sat down. "I don't like her--"

"Now, Angela, it's not nice to say things like that."

"Well," Angela began again, "she's okay. But I think she took it. She was at my birthday party last week." Angela frowned and crossed her arms. "I saw her pulling it by the hair."

Grissom looked up to Mrs. Gething. "Do you think she took this doll?"

Leena shrugged. "It's possible," she laughed, "kids with their sticky fingers, you know. Angela did have a party last week, and I don't know anyone who takes better care of their toys than my Angel!"

"We'll need to talk to her." Grissom put the doll back in his pocket, to Angela's severe disappointment. "We need her address, and a last name."

"I want my doll," Angela said quickly, leaping off the couch.

Before Leena could scold her, Grissom soothed her. "Right now your doll is helping us do something very important. I promise that when we're finished we'll get her back to you. Good as new."

Angela didn't seem completely satisfied, but she retreated and sat back on the couch.

"Well, Vickie is Victoria Henley. They live right across the street, in the blue house with the red door. I'm sorry, I don't know their address," Leena said.

Grissom nodded. "Thank you for your help."

"Ugh..." Sara shuddered. "That was creepy."

Grissom shrugged. "Different people, different traditions."

"She was wearing a dress...they both were! Since when do little girls go out to play in dresses?" Sara asked, standing next to the Tahoe.

"Different traditions," he repeated. "I think it's...refreshing to see something different."

"Refreshing?" Sara was aghast. "You call this refreshing?"

"Something out of the usual is always refreshing, Sara."

"Yeah, unless it's creepy," she replied, watching Grissom as he walked down the driveway and started across the street. "What? We're not taking the Tahoe?"

"It's just across the street, Sara."

"You mean we have to talk to more of these people?" With a begrudged first step, she started to follow. "Creepy."

Any hope Sara had of the Henleys being at all removed from the Gethings was zapped when she stepped in the door. The same cheery plastic house was swirling with the same musty air that just didn't fit.

"Mr. Henley? I'm Gil Grissom, and this is Sara Sidle. We're with the Las Vegas crime lab. We'd just like to ask a few questions, if that's all right."

Mr. Henley smiled, more pleasant and sincere than Mrs. Gething. "Sure thing, come on in."

Slightly more at ease, Grissom and Sara made their way to a sitting room. There was no television, however, in the Henley household from what they could gather.

"Now, what can I help you with?"

"You have a daughter, Victoria?"

"Vickie? Sure," he said. "Why?"

"If we could, we'd just like to ask her a question?"

Mr. Henley nodded, leaving shortly to go up the stairs.

"At least this one is less chilly," Sara said by way of comment. "No TV. What do these people do?"

"Go outside, spend time with each other...."

"Can people really still do that?"

"Some people have it in them," Grissom assured her.

"This is my daughter Vickie," Mr. Henley said, returning to the room. "What do you need to know?"

As the pair entered the room, a small-ish woman walked in behind them.

Grissom again with drew the doll from his pockets. "Does this look familiar?"

Vickie looked at it, and shrugged shyly.

"Answer them, honey."

Looking to her father with wide eyes, Vickie shook her head, finishing with "No."

"Are you sure?"

Vickie took another look. "Yes."

Grissom nodded, knowing it was a weak lead anyway. "Mr. Henley, if I could ask you a question."

"Sure."

"Did you know a Paul Milander?"

He thought a moment. "No."

Sara leaned in. "What about Judge Douglas Mason?"

"Doug?" Henley smiled a little. "Sure. At least, I did know him...is he in trouble?"

"We were wondering what you know about his leaving the area?"

"They moved to Modesto," Henley said with confidence. "They didn't say much about why, so the rumours started flying. The only two that really meant anything were that he'd gotten a better job or they were divorcing." Mr. Henley frowned. "Divorce doesn't go over well here."

Grissom nodded in non-committal agreement. "Was he close to anyone here?"

Mr. Henley shrugged, having lost the smile from before and now appeared tired. The unIntroduced woman still stood soundlessly at the doorway. "As close as anyone. He liked to peachtree everyone, you know. That type."

"I'm sorry," Sara said. "Peachtree?"

Mr. Henley shrugged. "I suppose it's just a local expression. Like a brownoser, but more well-intentioned. Like he did want to help but it got over bearing at times. Peachtree."

Sara nodded. "All right. What else can you tell us?"

Mr. Henley shrugged again, looking to his wife and daughter shortly, indicating a euphemism upcoming. "If you're asking who his special friend," he said with raised eyebrows, "was, I don't know. I never could figure out."

"Special friend?" Sara asked.

Mr. Henley frowned. "Mason...he hid it well...but it was the little things."

"You think he was homosexual?" Sara asked.

Henley immediately covered his little girl's ears, and she didn't react. "Do you mind?"

"Sorry," Sara said, a little shaken.

"Is he dead?"

"Why do you ask that?" asked Grissom.

"She said," Henley started, pointing to Sara, "was. Not is...as if he were still alive."

"We can't discuss case details Mr. Henley, but from what we can tell Mr. Mason is still alive."

"Did you suspect anyone of being his...special friend?" Sara asked.

Henley shrugged. "Not really. But he spent a lot of time away from the community." Henley smirked. "Shopping, people said. Who knows what he got up to."

"Did he spend a lot of time with anyone in particular?" Grissom asked.

"No one more than anyone else, and believe me, I looked."

"Then what lead you to believe he was...of a different persuasion?" asked Grissom delicately.

"He was oddly feminine. Barely noticeable. Just little quirks...and that really got to me. I can't believe no one else noticed--"

"He was just a nice man," said the woman finally, breaking her silence. "He wasn't gay, he was just a--"

"Gloria," Henley said, firm and strict. "Anyway, it was that...and his art. He liked to paint, and he wrote poems. There was also a recital, and he played a...showtune," Henley said with a hidden glare.

"Barry, it was a revue recital, the songs have to be from--"

"Thank you, Gloria." Henley leaned down to Victoria, whispering into her ear, and she scampered off. "There was also--"

"Wait," Grissom interjected. "If I could...you said, a recital?"

"For show tunes."

"What did he play?"

"Piano," Henley answered. "Half decent, I guess, but never played anything good. Used to give lessons before they adopted Craig. When he was a lawyer."

Grissom nodded. "Thank you for your help."

Henley nodded. "He spent too much time with the kids. Never anything good about a man who spends too much time with other people's kids."

"Thank you," Grissom repeated, heading with Sara and Henley to the door.

Upon returning to the lab, Grissom found Nick and Greg eagerly awaiting his arrival.

"Happy to see me or is that evidence in your pocket?"

"Heh, heh," Greg said, pulling a roll of papers from his inside coat pocket. "Nickie and I found something our vics have in common."

"All of them?"

"Well, not exactly," Nick said. "Nothing besides the birthdate."

"Bennett and Foster both went to Gregory Morris. Our third vic, Stargsbridge, went to Lion's Gate Centennial, one of those private religion school dealies."

"And?" Grissom asked.

"But...Stargsbridge and Foster," Greg started, inserting dramatic pauses for effect, "both worked

at the Nevada Parks and Tourism Commission offices."

"NPTC? So our killer is someone who could have gone to Gregory Morris and worked at the NPTC."

"Not exactly again," Greg said. "Anyone has access to high school yearbooks, as Warrick and Sara found on their visit to GM High. But employment records are probably a little harder to get a hold of," Greg said with a smile.

"We were just about to leave when we heard you were coming back," Nick explained. "Off to the NPTC, now...just wanted to fill you in."

"Thanks, guys," Grissom said, smiling proud. "Good luck, and bring back everything you can."

"Sure thing, boss."

Pride and relief were short lived, however, as Grissom found himself again dragged into an interrogation room with his favourite agents, Drake and Sanders.

"We're recording this of course," Sanders said indicating the recorder after Grissom seated himself with a huff. "And again we've allowed the blinds to be shut and the outside speakers turned off."

Grissom frowned. "How kind of you."

Sanders sat down, pulling out his notes. "Now, we left off last time where you said you never had sex with Milander and spent an hour simply talking to him, correct?"

Grissom nodded. "Yes."

"All right, clearing that up, in the time from when you first met Milander to the time he faked his death, who did you have sex with?"

"Why does that matter?"

"Because perhaps one of them was a trick, to get at you for Milander. Or maybe you discarded a condom. We're trying to cover the bases, Grissom. Find out what happened so we can let you continue on here." Sanders put down his clipboard and folded his hands. "I'd hate to see a good man get shot down here, but I've got to see you are a good man. I've heard volumes about your integrity and talent, but those are just the eyewitness reports," Sanders said with a knowing smile. "I still need evidence."

"Of course."

"Now, in that...approximate year and a half time line, who did you have intercourse with?" Sanders waved his hand. "Or do something that involved ejaculating."

Grissom sighed heavily tapping his fingers. "I'd really rather not answer that--"

"And we'd really rather not ask it, but we have to. Now, please answer the question."

Grissom looked up, biting his lip. "Catherine," he answered.

"Catherine...Willows?" Sanders completed.

Grissom nodded. "Yes."

Sanders raised an eyebrow, making a note of that.

"Are you going to accuse her of passing it off to Milander?"

"No, no...how many times?"

"Once," Grissom replied. "It was...a friendly thing. Never happened before, never happened since," he said, antsy on the subject.

"Where?"

"My townhouse."

"You used a condom?"

"Yes," he replied simply.

"What did you do with it?"

"I threw it in the garbage," Grissom said, impressing himself with his maintained calm.

"How often do you throw out your garbage?"

"By the time it got anywhere outside my building it wouldn't have been possible to...use it," he said, swallowing through a constricted and dry throat.

"All right." Sanders wrote down some more things in his notes. "Who else?"

Grissom bit his lip again, tapping the table with agitation.

"Well? I don't want to drag this on. Someone else on your team, perhaps?"

"No," Grissom answered quietly.

"Then who else?"

Grissom crossed his arms, and with shifty eyes looked around the room. "No one," he replied finally.

"No one."

"Yes."

"In a two year period--"

"Year and a half," Grissom corrected.

"Fine, in a year and a half you only slept with Catherine Willows."

"Yes," he replied firmly.

"And nothing sexual? No sexual favours, no...messaging around besides that?"

"No."

"In a year and a half."

"No."

Sanders wrote that down. "All right, then. Now, In that same period, were you ever on anything, controlled or otherwise, drugs, alcohol or anything that made you black out?"

Grissom shook his head. "I...I spend most nights at home. I go out to eat sometimes...but I never noticed any unexplained lapse of time. Otherwise I'm at work...and I would have noticed gaps in my logs or hours."

Sanders nodded. "I also have some questions about Milander. You knew him the best, after all. You were the only one who really had any contact with him."

"My contact with him was minimal."

"And yet he shared so much with you. About his childhood, about his sex change...things he'd never told anyone. About his motivations, about his murders--"

"He never confessed," Grissom said. "Even if we caught him you'd be hard pressed to pin any case on him."

"Are you saying he was innocent?" Sanders asked with an accusing stare.

"No," Grissom replied coolly, "I'm saying he covered his tracks exceptionally well. Even with the evidence we have--"

Sanders stopped him. "That's the other reason we're here." With heavy motions, Sanders dropped what looked to be a transcript on the table. "Do you know what happens to cases that are closed, Grissom?"

"They no longer need to be investigated," he stated simply.

"And what happens to the evidence?"

Grissom sat up. "It is destroyed."

Sanders smiled bitterly. "Milander's case evidence was destroyed, returned or put into criminology archives when the case was closed." Pointing to the transcript, he continued. "If it wasn't for the research being done on the mind of a killer, specifically serials or psychological compulsions to become so, we would have nothing. This is the transcript from your last interview with Milander, a.k.a. Douglas Mason. Besides that and the hair evidence stored in your lab's cold storage and autopsy photos, we have no evidence."

Grissom looked at the transcript, picking it up and looking at in horror. "That's why you never put out an arrest warrant..."

"You can't arrest if you can't prove to the point of suspicion," Sanders added with a sigh.

Grissom put the report down.

"We arrest Milander, the judge will laugh us out of court. All we have is what's on these pages and in your head. Your credibility might have been enough at least to hold him if we found him, but," Sanders frowned deeply. "Nigel Milander."

Grissom shrugged. "I don't know how that happened...I wish I did."

Bumping fists in what could be mistaken for an impressive secret handshake, Nick and Warrick headed in to the NTPC building.

"Ooh..." Warrick said, glancing around the entrance, noticing the not very subtle gardens and waterfalls inside the building. "Think Grissom could get someone to spring for one of these?" he asked, indicating the impressive fountain.

"I think we could qualify for a kiddie pool and a palm tree...granted they took it from the yard," he replied, headed for the front desk.

"Excuse me, miss," Nick said, getting the young woman's attention, ID in hand. "We're from the Las Vegas crime lab and we need to talk to someone in your administration. Someone with access to personnel files and records."

She checked her computer. "Uh...you should probably talk to Mr. Nielson. He runs our human resources department." She automatically hit a hold button on phone that started ringing. "It's in the basement."

"And how do we get to the basement?"

"Through that elevator there," she said pointing down a hall to an elevator that didn't fit the cleaned glass and tropical atmosphere of the rest of the building. "Push the button that says B. Just don't go to the sub basements," she warned, "they're nasty." She picked up a phone. "Nevada Tourism and Parks Commission, how can I help you?" she greeted, apparently done with talking to the investigators.

"Right-o," Warrick said, starting down the hall. "Hey, you comin'?"

Nick turned suddenly. "Yeah, yeah, I'm coming."

The human resources department was a sweat shop compared to the rest of the building. There were cubicles, few windows, white walls and obnoxious lighting.

"What is this? The corporate twilight zone?"

Nick shrugged. "It can be anything it wants as long as we find this Nielson guy."

Warrick approached the nearest cubicle. "Excuse me, do you know where we can find Mr. Nielson?"

The man looked up from his computer, at these odd elements from above. "He's in the office."

"And which office is that?"

"The office," he said, pointing to the opposite wall. Sure enough, there was a little door there that almost vanished in the identically painted wall. "There's only one."

"Thank you," Warrick said, starting off and through the rows of cubicles. When they reached the end, a polite knock was followed by a gruff "Come in," and they admitted themselves.

"Phil Nielsen," he said, standing and holding out his hand. He sat down. "Now...something tells me you boys aren't here looking for a job."

"Sir," Nick started, "we're with the Las Vegas crime lab and we'd like to--"

"I'm not in trouble, am I?"

"No, no, sir," Nick assured him, "we just have a few questions about employees and the records you keep."

"I'm sorry, but employee information is extremely confidential. Our policies state you'll need a warrant."

Warrick smiled. "We're glad to hear that. Extremely glad. We just want to know who has access to employee records...specifically dates of birth."

Neilson leaned back in his chair. "Now that I can tell you." He leaned forward, employing his computer. "I have access, the secretaries that file reports and anyone sending people out or doing background checks...which are the various heads of each department here at the NPTC would have access."

"Can we have a list of those people?"

"Printing it off--"

Neilson was cut off by the sounds of his printer in operation. "Now," he finished, pulling the sheet off the printer. "Here you are. Names, departments and office numbers. Like I said, anything else and you'll need a warrant."

"Thank you very much," Warrick said with a bright smile. "Now, are you sure no one else has access to employee information."

"No one."

Warrick and Nick turned to each other, nodding smugly. "Choice," they chorused, heading out the door.

Leaving and doing a victory dance, a secretary with copious amounts of brown curly hair stopped them.

"I heard you guys talkin' to 'im," she said, standing up and whispering. "Walls are thin, here," she explained.

"And you are?"

"Candy Bell," she replied.

"That..." Nick started, "that doesn't sound like your real name, if you don't mind," he said.

"I used to be a..." she paused, "dancer, but then Danny told me to get a more 'respectable' job. Anyway, yous are with the police?"

"Crime lab," Warrick corrected.

"Like in the TV shows?"

"Similar."

"Cool," she said, nodding.

"Great to meet you," Warrick said, trying to bow out gracefully, "but we're really very busy and need to--"

"No, no, wait," she said, her voice going up in volume slightly. "I heard you asking about records and birth dates."

"We already have a list of people with access--"

"No you don't," she smiled, making eyes at Nick.

"Do you know of someone else with access, ma'am?" Warrick asked.

"Sure do."

"And who would that be?"

She smiled knowingly. "Everyone."

Nick laughed. "Come on, you can't possibly tell me everyone has access to confidential records--"

"You asked for records. Not birth dates."

"That information is available somewhere else?"

She picked up a piece of paper from her desk. "If you know where to look."

Nick read the paper. "NTPC Weekly Update, your voice in the community." He looked to Warrick. "Newsletter."

"Check page three," she suggested.

Nick flipped the pages, reading again. "Birthdays for this week," Nick rolled his eyes and dropped his arms. "Dammit," he muttered.

"Ma'am, does your company keep copies of that newsletter?" Warrick asked.

"Sure do," she said, tapping her filing cabinet. "Right here."

"Could we have copies of all the newsletters that published birthdays for August 17?"

She shrugged and winked. "That depends...you want to go to dinner?"

Nick smiled weakly. "I'd love to...but I'm taken. Very flattered though," he said, flashing his trademark smile.

"Oh well. Can't say I didn't try," she said with a sigh, looking through the cabinet. "I can mail them to you--"

"We'll wait," Nick said. "If that's all right."

She winked again. "You can wait here all you want."

Brass sat, a guest in Grissom's office, thankful that the fairly lethal looking and rather big bug was still in its box, even if it was on the desk.

"You wanted to talk to me, Gil?"

Grissom nodded, signing a form and throwing it in his out-box. "Done," he said with a relieved sigh. Brass smiled, recalling the time Grissom had put his wastepaper basket on top on his desk and labelled it 'In-Box'.

"Is this about the case or...."

"It's...complicated," Grissom said, folding his fingers together and assuming a different mood and bearing--from paper pushing Grissom to nervous Grissom. It was really quite a switch. "Drake and Sanders pulled me back into their friendly interview room again," he said with a disapproving frown.

"Again?"

"Again."

"I don't see what else they could have asked you...." Brass scratched his head. "From what you told me it sounded like they did a thorough job of putting you under their microscope."

Nodding, Grissom picked up a pen and tapped it repeatedly on the desk. "They did."

"So, what did they say this time?"

"Everything they had before."

"Then what do you need to talk about?"

"It's not what they were saying," Grissom tried to explained, "but how they were, which was--"

Grissom's office door opened, cutting him off. Catherine entered, standing at the doorway.

"Hey, I'm leaving now," she said, glancing at her watch. "I just wanted to remind you to fill out that form for the EHIC Conference in Houston." She gave him a pointed look. "It has to be faxed today."

Grissom smiled and held up a paper from his out box.

"Thanks," she said, turning and leaving.

"All right, then how were they saying it?"

He shrugged, returning to nervous Grissom mode, picking up the pen again. "Aggressive, watchdog..." he tapped the pen faster. "I don't know how to explain it."

"Standard interrogation procedures," Brass said lightly. "You've seen it thousands of times. Hell, you've been a part of it."

"It doesn't..." Grissom stopped his pen tapping, thinking, then started up with greater fury. "It doesn't help you prepare for the other side."

"There's nothing else you can tell them." Brass leaned back. "You've answered everything and I don't see what else they can possibly ask--"

The door opened again, and this time Warrick and Nick entered.

"Hey, boss, we're back from the NTPC," Nick said. "Wanted to fill you in before clocking out."

Warrick stepped forward and put a pile of photocopies on Grissom's desk. "Found something a little disappointing."

Grissom glanced at the papers and then back up at them, authority back in his eyes and face. "Too many with access to records?"

"Not exactly," Nick started.

"They swear that their records are confidential," Warrick said, "and maybe they are." Tapping the papers, he brought Grissom's attention back to them. "But this is the problem." Warrick opened up the top one, and pointed.

"Birthdays for the week of August 15 to 21...August 17, Jordan Foster," Grissom read with dismay. "Newsletters."

"Given to anyone in the company," Warrick explained. "And anyone off the streets with determination."

"It's the yearbooks all over again," Nick finished.

Grissom nodded. "Thank you. Just finish your time reports and any other unfinished reports and you can leave."

Warrick and Nick smiled and hi-fived. "Sweet," they chorused, filing out. When they were gone, Grissom stood, locking his door and shutting his blinds. He returned to his chair and, for added measure, shut off his cell and threw it in a drawer.

"They'll all still find a way to interrupt you," Brass warned.

Grissom picked up the pen again and shrugged. "Probably."

"What's getting at you? Are you afraid they're going to find some magical question they haven't asked you yet? You know that never happens. They've shown all their cards by now."

The pen went faster. "I'm...I might...tell them," he said looking away.

"Tell them what?" Brass crossed his arms. "And put that pen down. You're driving me nuts."

Grissom all but threw the pen, dragging his palms roughly down his face and breathing deeply. "Tell them...."

"What haven't you told them?"

He frowned deeply, making eye contact only with the exotic six-legged creature in the breathable container on his desk. "An estimated sixty percent of cases go unreported...."

Brass looked at him for a minute. "Rape?" he said quietly.

Grissom looked back up him shortly. "Sort of."

"Then you do know what happened."

He nodded. "If I don't tell you, I might tell...them."

"All right, all right," Brass said, leaning forward and lowering his tone of voice. "If you have to tell someone...."

"If I don't," Grissom began, "I might end up telling someone who shouldn't hear it. Like our friends, Drake and Sanders."

"Even if you did, rape isn't something they'll blame you for." Brass frowned, a little awkwardly. "You'd have to tell them, but it'd clear your name and it'd be confidential."

Grissom shook his head. "No, I'm not telling them."

"I could understand why you wouldn't, but this is important--you know that. You tell them, clear your name, swallow your pride. Just talk them through it once and you'll never have to worry about them again--"

"No," Grissom interrupted. "That's...that's not everything."

Brass looked confused. "All right."

"I...I don't know," Grissom continued. "I don't know if I could convince anyone that...it was."

"You might not want to talk about this," Brass started, "but if you're going to tell me, tell me. Even being a detective, you know I'm no match for your word games. Tell me once then never again."

Grissom inhaled deeply and jagged, biting his lip. "I was alone one night, at home, and there was a knock. I knew it was odd, because I never get unannounced visitors...I answered it anyway, in case it was one of the neighbours."

"Milander just walked up to your door and knocked?"

Grissom nodded.

"Now that's arrogance."

He shrugged, commenting, "maybe."

"All right, so he forced his way in."

"Not...exactly."

"You let him in?"

"Not that either." Grissom shrugged, looking around for his pen but coming up fruitless in his search. "It's all a haze," he tried to explain. "I remember him walking in; I remember him talking."

"What else do you remember? Were you drunk? On something?"

"Nothing besides caffeine withdrawal," he answered. "I remember talking to him...he was telling me about...what he'd done, and why...a little bit of how," Grissom explained.

"Did you try to contact anyone?"

"I couldn't think," Grissom said. "I remember wanting to do something...but...I don't know."

"All right, then what happened?"

"He asked me some questions...I don't remember them. He pulled a gun." Grissom flinched subtly. "He asked where my bedroom was...forced me inside."

Momentarily Brass looked ill, but he hid it quickly. Before he said anything, Grissom continued.

"I fought him...I don't know how long. I remember his putting the gun down...I think he threw it. Maybe not. I relaxed for a second, and then...then he strangled me." Grissom shrugged at the irony he felt, and corrected himself. "Well, not strangled. I'm still breathing."

"He tried to choke you."

Grissom nodded. "He stopped, I think...I think he picked up the gun again." Grissom swallowed heavily. "That's when he...."

"Okay, I get it. Look, tell them. Even if they tried to argue that you let him in or anything like that, he had a gun and--"

"No...that's...it's...." Grissom shook his head. "I have to tell someone, and telling someone half a truth isn't going to help me."

"Something else happened?"

He opened a drawer, and found no pens. "Afterwards, he sat next to me. I...I wasn't fully cognitive," he continued, despite his lack of writing utensils to annoyingly hit against his desk. "He was talking to me again...I remember answering his questions."

"Answering questions, foggy or otherwise, isn't something you need to clear your conscience for."

"No...but...but something else is."

"Then what?"

"I don't know how long he was there, but...after a while I..." Grissom shrugged and looked away.

"I appreciate this is hard," Brass said, "but you're never going to tell me if you keep trailing off."

"I consented," Grissom said, quietly and firmly.

"Consent? What you just said doesn't sound like--"

"Not that part. The part after that."

"And what part was that?" Brass lowered his voice some more. "And just come out and tell me because my mind's racing."

"I...I had sex with him," he answered bluntly. "Consensual," he affirmed.

"No matter what you did or even if you said yes it's still rape...he had a gun and you know that consent with threat of bodily harm is still--"

"I don't know where the gun was at that point," Grissom explained, shaking his head and looking distant. "I don't think it was rape...it didn't feel like it..."

"You knew he had a gun. No matter where he was hiding it, he still had it and no matter what he did to you--"

"That's the problem," Grissom said, looking at the wall and appearing distant.

"Oh?"

"I screwed him."

Brass looked shocked, to say the least. "Milander."

Grissom nodded.

"Paul Milander," Brass said.

He nodded again, daring not give eye contact.

"They'll fry you for that. Even if he pointed a gun to your temple--"

"I know." Grissom sighed. "Even if he had a gun...."

"Paul Milander," Brass repeated, astonished.

"Yes," Grissom said, a bare hint of irritation to his voice.

Brass laughed darkly. "They'll fry you," he repeated. "Were you out of your mind? Suspect or no," Brass said sharply. "Paul Milander?" he repeated for the hat trick. "Gil, I thought you were going deaf, not blind."

Grissom didn't react to the last comment.

"Look, you tell Sanders. Leave out that whole last part. Tell them he raped you, which is close enough to the truth, it sounds. Even that last part is shady enough to pass for rape." Brass shrugged. "Definition is broad anyway. Don't guilt yourself into thinking it wasn't...it wasn't your fault. They'll have a real problem with you not acting like a victim."

"I...I don't know if I am one."

"Just tell them," Brass repeated. "Keep telling them he had a gun, and that's rape."

Grissom shrugged. "I...I don't know if I can tell them."

"Well," Brass checked his watch. "It's quitting time. Go home, rest on it, and tell them tomorrow."

Grissom nodded, absent.

"I did some compiling," Sara said, back to work with the team in the late evening--the graveyard shift version of bright and early. "Assuming our killer found his victims in yearbooks from Gregory Morris and the newsletters from NTPC," she said, filling Grissom in, "I made a list of all possible victims, using the criteria of white males born on August 17, between the years 1955 and 1970."

Grissom took the list. "At least there's not that many names on the list."

"There's enough for him to work his way back to at least 57, from what I saw."

Grissom frowned. "It might help us...thank you." He put the papers into a folder.

Nick also walked beside them. "Just as a follow up, Warrick and I were planning to run background checks on anyone with access to employee records. Just because their date of births were listed in the newsletter doesn't mean their home addresses were...it still could be someone on both staffs."

Grissom nodded. "Have Greg run a test on--"

"Grissom!"

He stopped, turning in his tracks, to see Drake and Sanders looking very grim and unamused.

"We faxed you everything last night," Grissom said with a somewhat sincere smile.

"That's not what we're here about." They walked forward, and Grissom could see Brass trailing behind, and he felt his stomach sink.

"You're lucky we don't fire you," Drake said, uppity. "Or arrest you and fire you by default."

"That's enough, Rod," Sanders said, silencing his lackey. Behind them, Brass looked clearly dismayed and concerned.

"What are you talking about?" Grissom asked them, feeling his question point itself to Brass.

Sanders laughed a little, almost bitter and acidic. "He didn't tell us, Grissom. And unfortunately it's not enough to get him on." Before there were any further reactions, he held up a small recorder, and hit the play button.

"That's the problem," said the voice on the tape recorder--his own.

"Oh?" which was Brass's voice.

"I screwed him."

Nick and Sara looked very confused.

"Milander. Paul Milander." There was a pause. "They'll fry you for that. Even if he pointed a gun at your temple--"

"I know...even if he had a gun..."

Sanders shut off the tape. "Care to explain that?"

Grissom, a healthy shade of red, looked angry and horrified. "You bugged my office."

"And with good reason." Sanders held up the tape player. "You hid something from us, and now

we know what. You're off the case," he said firmly.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Sara cut in. "What's going on?" She turned to Grissom. "That is not your voice."

Grissom only shook his head. "I..." he choked out.

"You're off this case," Sanders repeated. "We're making a note of this in our log, and giving a report to your boss, Ecklie. Until then, you're off the case...and every other case too. You're suspended. Effective immediately."

Grissom swallowed, putting on his best poker face and handing his notes and files to Sara. "Right," he said darkly.

Before anyone else could respond, he left.

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Chapter 2 by elwhis

Pacing and fretting, Catherine tried in vain to collect her thoughts.

"I...how can...?" Sara started and trailed off, looking forlornly at her pile of case work. "How can they just suspend him?"

Nick shook his head. "Was that tape...real?"

"I don't know," Catherine said quickly, throwing up her arms in frustration and bringing them down hard on the table. "We've got an influx of cases, one, possibly two killers on the loose and they just let go our supervisor." She breathed in, calming herself and taking charge. "Okay, okay, we can do this--I mean, we have to."

"Can they do that?" Nick asked. "I mean, suspend him just like that? Without...enough proof? I don't think they have enough."

"They do want they want," Catherine said with annoyance. "That's their job." She looked through the assignment slips. "Okay...everything from our serial is still in processing, so we'll have to move on to other things for now." She walked over to Nick. "You and Sara, a 407, shots fired. Called in twenty minutes ago. Restaurant off the strip."

"Robbery at a restaurant," Nick remarked. "Something at least a little interesting."

"Sara, you're with Nick...I'll take the 419A, and when Warrick gets here he gets his own--"

"He's late? That's not like him," Sara remarked.

Catherine shook her head. "He requested coming in half an hour later today...some appointment or personal matter." She shook her head, overwhelmed and desperately staving off frustration. "I didn't check closely."

Greg popped in, evidence bags and paper in hand.

"Anyone seen Gris? He's not in his office--"

Catherine sighed. "What do you need to tell him?"

"Well, it's nothing too important...just that his two purple fibers are a match." Greg looked at the distraught faces of his colleagues. "I can wait...is there something wrong?"

"I'm leading the suicide serial case now," Catherine explained. "Grissom was suspended."

"What?" Greg exclaimed. "Suspended? How? I mean, how could...why? When?"

"Ten minutes ago." Catherine took the fibers and the analysis sheets. "So, I'm supervising this shift and taking all his cases."

Greg's face was a mess of questions. "But...what happened? Why?"

"It's confidential," Catherine explained. "Not that that seems to mean anything around here...I'm sure you'll find out soon enough."

Greg looked to the other two. "What happened?"

Nick shook his head. "Buddy, you don't want to know."

"Well, yes I do."

"No," Nick repeated, "you don't."

"I'll need you in the lab tonight," Catherine said, cutting in, "we've got cases backed up and two dead bodies."

Greg nodded. "All right...I guess I'll be in my lab, then," he said, turning, still considerably spaced from the suspension issue.

Nick and Sara stood. "You and me tonight, then," Sara said, shaking her head. "Wow...that couldn't have been Grissom on that tape. Did you hear what he said?"

"Sanders played it for me when he informed me," Catherine said with a bite, "that I'd be in charge of the shift to-night."

"And?"

"And what?" Catherine said. "I'm going to even think about that..."

"Hell of a visual," Sara commented darkly with a shudder.

Nick shook his head. "No. No visual."

"Hey guys, where's Gris?"

They turned, seeing Warrick at the doorway.

"Hey buddy," Nick said, scooting past and out the door. "Bye, buddy." Sara trailed behind.

Warrick watched them leave, a little confused. He looked to Catherine. "You seen Gris?"

Cameras and kits in hand, Sara and Nick arrived at their 407: shots fired after a very quiet drive.

"You know, when I heard 'restaurant off the strip' I pictured something a little more classy," Nick said. "Who'd rob a cut-rate motel diner?"

Sara shrugged, taking out her camera. "Someone with a low self confidence, I guess." Finding a

few dirty footprints, she immediately began with the pictures.

"I'll take the counter," Nick said, "see what I can find there."

"Knock yourself out."

"So, the officer said," Nick said, inspecting the register, "that the cash was taken and the back was broken into."

"That's what he said."

Nick laughed. "What, looking for a safe in this joint? Lucky if this place pulls in enough to make a cash grab worth it."

"Maybe the back was just a get away route." Sara took some more pictures. "I'll check for shoe and tire treads. I found some pieces of glass around--"

"Whoa--hold up." Nick's camera clicked and flashed. "I think we have more than a 407."

Sara got up from her knees and walked over to him. "What is it?"

Nick pointed to a dark corner, behind the counter and near the register. "Blood pool."

Warrick, also after a very quiet drive, pulled up to the dark and empty highway. Well, dark and empty save for the squad car's flashing lights and the officer beside it.

"Evening, officer," Warrick greeted simply.

"Hey there." The officer stood from his kneeling position. "Coroner's been paged. Someone driving by called it in...anonymous tip."

Warrick nodded, pulling out his camera. "ID?"

"Didn't check." The officer shrugged. "Thought that was your guy's job."

Warrick put down his camera. "Did you touch the body at all?"

"Nope." The officer walked back to his car. "Not a thing."

Warrick patted the body's jacket pockets after photographing them. "Nothing...no wallet. Looks like a robbery..." he leaned over to the victim's head. "Lack of blood, looks like a body drop," he said to himself, talking it through.

"Coroner's here," the officer said.

Warrick nodded. "There's a small pooling of blood, from what looks to be a deep head wound..." he leaned over further, nearing the ditch and trees not far from the road. "Bleeding out slowly from a head wound?" he asked himself quietly.

"Hi, Warrick."

"David, hey," Warrick said, turning to him. "What do you make of this? There's a deep head wound," he said, pointing to the matting of blood in the hair, "but only a little pool of blood. A wound that deep would have bled out quickly where he died...there shouldn't be any blood here."

"Not from him, anyway."

Warrick swabbed the small blood pool. "And if it is his? How is that possible?"

David shrugged. "That's your job," he said, sticking his thermometer in the body with ease. "He's been dead...three and a half hours."

Warrick made a note. "Thanks." He looked back at the body.

"All yours."

He took out his tweezers, pulling out some odd fibers trapped in the matting of hair. "What do you think that is?"

David looked closer. "It's blood soaked, sure...but generally things blood soaked are almost black red."

"This is too light," Warrick finished.

"Ketchup?" David postulated.

Warrick swabbed the fiber and tested it. "It's blood all right."

"Well, good luck to you, Warrick," David said. "Looks like you've got a real puzzler...funny they'd suspend Grissom on a night with two DBs, not to mention the robbery and the serials at large."

"Do you find out everything?" Warrick asked.

David shrugged. "Enough."

"I don't think they picked a day to suspend him." Warrick looked up from the body and back to David. "Hey," he started, lowering his voice, "so what do you think of that?"

"Of what?"

"Them suspending Grissom?"

David shrugged again. "Their prerogative."

"And what about why?"

"What about it?"

"Well, what do you think about it?"

"I think it could be a good enough reason, if it turns out that way."

Warrick frowned. "Do you think he did it?"

"Did what?"

Warrick rolled his eyes, and David laughed.

"You know what I think about what happened?" David asked.

"What?"

"I think you don't know what happened."

Warrick frowned. "Everyone seems to know but me," he said with a resigned sigh.

David looked at the officer. "Well, better you find out from me than a rumour," he acquiesced. "But you should really sit down for this one."

Meanwhile, Catherine's print powder and camera were busy at work at her 419A--a floater at Lake Mead.

"Checked for vitals," the paramedic explained. "Someone called after seeing her wash up on shore...besides that no one's touched her," he assured her.

"Two piece bathing suit," Catherine said, snapping a picture. "No chance of keeping an ID in that top." She took another shot. "If you can call it a top."

"How long do you think she's been out here?" he asked.

Catherine shrugged. "Long enough. Water's going to make time of death a little harder to pin point...also washed away any evidence of a killer."

"You think she was murdered?"

"Can't say at this point." Catherine looked through the soaked hair with careful gloved fingers. "No apparent trauma to the head...not a diving accident in that case. Bruising around the hands and stomach...."

"Did she drown?"

"Can't tell until an autopsy," Catherine said.

"Coroner's on his way."

"He might be a little bit...he's at another body right now." Catherine took pictures of the bruises. "And I can't turn her over until he gets here," she said with a sigh.

"Well, we either have a dead body somewhere or a shooting victim," Nick said from the behind the counter. He held up his tweezers. "Through and through," he said, "looks like a .45." Nick looked down to the blood pool. "Explains the blood."

"So, robber or robbers come in, grab the cash, shoot up the place and take the body or the victim with them?"

"Unless one of the robbers was behind the counter, grabbing the cash when he was shot."

Sara looked out the window to where an officer was consoling a waitress, the only witness. She looked shaky. "She didn't mention anything about shooting anyone."

Nick laughed. "She didn't mention anything. Paramedics says she's in shock...has a scrape on her arm and some bruising to her legs. Swears she doesn't remember anything...can you believe

that?"

"You don't forget shooting a gun."

Filming a trail of footprints, Warrick watched the coroner's van take off with the body. "Tracks to the drop site," he said to himself, "from the road to the body, ballpark size 11." He put down some more of his yellow number markers. "Same depth as the tracks leading away...meaning the body carried itself here?" Warrick looked at his scene in frustration. "So a body dumps itself here, pools a little from a deep head wound that should have already bled out, and someone pulls up and walks to the guy to watch?" Warrick dropped his camera, letting it fall against his chest. "Damn."

With David's help, Catherine turned the body over.

"Homicide," she said, finding two entry wounds in the back of her victim. "Bullets didn't exit...so either a low caliber or far distance."

"I'll get the bullets to you," David said, packing up his equipment. "If they are bullets, of course."

"You thinking a weapon of some other kind? With an entry that smooth?"

David shrugged. "Like I said to Warrick, that's your job."

"How is Warrick doing, by the way?" Catherine asked, looking around the body for more evidence of the killer.

"Had a little mystery going around his body drop..." David helped lift the body on the gurney. "It'll keep him occupied."

"Send my love to Doc Robbins," Catherine said, turning away and walking along the beach, searching.

"Will do."

One by one, each of his colleagues filed in his lab, said hello, then made their escape leaving him to mix, match and process.

Oh well, Greg reasoned, at least he could listen to his tunes while doing it. Dogs Die In Hot Cars, the top CD in his mix. Killer.

He sorted his piles, keeping each of the cases separate. With a possible victim wandering around the streets of Vegas Nick and Sara's case had priority. Greg danced on over to his test tubes, but went back to his stereo, deciding he was in the mood for something heavier...Rammstein. Sweet.

He'd barely turned away to start up on the robbery DNA when someone shut it off. He hated when people did that--couldn't they just hit pause?

"Hey!" came the somewhat familiar and the somewhat unfamiliar voice from behind. "Keep it down."

Greg spun around, finding Ecklie. "Uh...hi, sir." He looked puzzled, the pentultimate quixotical scientist. "Aren't you...isn't your shift over?"

"My shifts are when I say they are," Ecklie replied. "And since they offed your super from the shift, I had to come back and sort out the mess. I'm missing my daughter's recital, and the last thing I need is this white noise pouring in through my office."

"Sorry," Greg said sheepishly, sinking into his work and hoping to disappear.

Ecklie started going through Greg's CD collection. "Don't you have anything good? Like the Carpenters or Simon and Garfunkel?"

"Uh..." Greg stammered. "I had a Who CD that Gris gave me...but I left it at home."

Ecklie put down the stack. "Right, well, just keep it down." He turned to leave.

"Uh, sir," Greg started, "I wanted to ask..."

"Yeah?"

"Uh...when's Grissom coming back? I mean, he couldn't have done anything that bad, come on--"

"That bad?" Ecklie replied, incredulous. "That bad? He compromised an investigation; he withheld information and let a killer go free, and that's not that bad?"

Greg looked even more puzzled. "That doesn't sound like Gris," he replied.

"Well it is. He might never come back. It might not be my decision...it wasn't in the first place."

"Who suspended him, then?" Greg answered himself before Ecklie could. "Sanders and Drake," he said, starting his appliances a-whirring with some expert button pushing. "You don't think they'll never let him come back? I mean...what was so bad? He's the best...the best entomologist here," he said at the last second.

"You don't have to cover, Greg. His team looks up to him, mine looks up to me. You're supposed to think he's the best."

"So...what did he do? No one's talking about it."

"No one's told you yet?" Ecklie asked, astonished. That's all people were talking about, after all.

Greg shook his head. "I've been couped up in here, preparing for my shift and now starting up all the swabs."

Ecklie rolled his eyes. "If you listen to the scuttlebutt, you'll hear the 'harbouring a fugitive' version. But, honestly, it's a little less than that." Ecklie made a sour frown. "Not that it's any better."

"So what did he do?" Greg asked with exasperation.

"He...he slept with Paul Milander," Ecklie explained.

Greg made a 'processing the information' face. "Really," was all he said.

"You're not surprised?" Ecklie asked, more than a little accusatory.

Greg shrugged. "I...I guess. I don't know."

"Did you know anything before?"

Shaking his head with fury, Greg stepped back a bit, feeling nervousness start to choke him. "No. No I didn't...I just meant that...that Gris is...odd, you know?" Greg shrugged, trying to get rid of his butterflies. "I just...it's...I don't know."

Ecklie frowned again, uncertain this time. "All right. Keep up the good work and keep down the volume," he said, leaving.

"Right-o."

Warrick was the first to answer Greg's pages.

"What have you got for me, Greggo?"

"Your blood pool is definitely your vic's," Greg answered, passing off the sheet.

"How can that be? His head wound would have bled out long before he was dumped at the scene."

Greg shrugged. "Maybe he was killed in a car and dumped there...what makes you think he was dumped at all?"

"There was only a small pooling of blood near the wound...if it had been the murder scene there'd have been a lot more blood."

"And I was able to get DNA from your vic's fingernail scrapings," Greg explained, "but no hit off CODIS yet..if there isn't you'll need to get me something to compare it to."

Warrick nodded, "Thanks, Greggo man."

"No probs...hey, what's up with Ecklie?"

"What do you mean, what's up with Ecklie?"

Greg shrugged, shuddering a little. "He gives me the creeps."

Laughing a little, Warrick replied, "I think you're just overly used to Gris."

"Yeah," Greg agreed. "Maybe that's it. You don't think they'll keep him away forever, do you?"

Warrick's previously thoughtful expression turned into one of hidden disappointment and sorrow. "I don't know, man. I...it's really sketchy. I mean, I hope not."

"I heard he slept with--"

"Yeah, we've all heard what happened," Warrick said, cutting him off. "Not that anyone wanted to hear about it," he added.

"Do they have any proof?"

Warrick's tone was distant. "Only his voice on a tape recorder admitting it, according to David, anyway."

"They got him to confess? I wouldn't trust that," Greg suggested. "You know those FBI, and their sneaky interrogation techniques, they could have--"

"David said that they bugged his office."

"David's not always right," Greg replied. "And what, was he talking to himself about it? In his office?"

"Look, Greg," Warrick said, anger seeping into his tone but kept to a minimum. "You're asking the wrong guy, and if I were you I wouldn't talk about it. No one wants to hear it."

Greg nodded, watching Warrick leave.

Catherine, after having checked the progress of her team, sat in her office checking through reports and photos. Progress had been made on each case through the shift, sure, but no cases could have that lovely word 'solved' put atop them. There was still half an hour left...and thankfully only one other major case had been called in...another robbery, which had been taken care of rather quickly.

As acting supervisor she had more paper work to do than usual, but at least she could sit and unwind before returning home to her slippers and cushy bed. Ecklie had gone home hours ago-- a relief, she had to admit, and no labs had blown up or angry DAs had come breathing down their necks in fury. The shift from Hell was turning out to be not all that bad.

"Cath," called Brass from the doorway unexpectedly, making her jump.

"Oh, you...it's you. Hi...it's quiet around here."

"Bit of bad news," he reported.

"Ugh..." Catherine frowned. "Don't tell me...another robbery or body dump?"

"Much better," Brass said, looking at his scribbled notes. "420...at first reported as a 405, until the officer noted a body in a bath tub, complete with open windows and a mini-recorder," he said with a forceful sigh.

"No, no, no," Catherine said, shaking her head. "That's a joke. We're laughing, right?"

"Nope."

Moaning, Catherine stood. "So much for going home."

As Catherine inspected the floor of the musty bathroom Sara dusted for prints as the body had just been removed.

"Purple fiber," Catherine remarked, pulling a piece what was probably chenille wool from the bottom of the tub and putting it in a little bag. "More planted evidence?"

"Purple fibers," Sara repeated, "Interesting choice. There wasn't anything found like that at the

first murder."

"Maybe that was a trail run," Catherine remarked, humourless. "Oh, God," she complained, leaning against a wall carefully. "I need a bed, a Valium, four consecutive days off and a hug," she said.

Sara stood, putting down her brush and walked over to deliver the requested hug. "Sorry I can't do the rest."

"Engh," Catherine shrugged, getting back up to inspect the rest of the floor. "That's okay."

"Prints on the taps again...they look like Milander's father's." Sara lifted them. "You know it's wrong when you can identify a print without even tracing it."

"I could draw those prints in my sleep," Catherine agreed, "and I'm a horrible artist."

"Hold up," Sara said, leaning over the tub and taking a photo of the ledge beside it. She picked up a little green object, holding it up for Catherine. "Check it out."

Catherine looked up. "Army men," she said. "I used to play with those when I was a kid."

"You did?" Sara asked, smiling.

"Sure...happens when you have a brother."

"Were his covered with blood?" Sara turned it around, showing smears of blood on the other side.

Catherine got up and inspected them. "Well, not that much anyway. He stuck enough of them up his nose, though."

"Vic had a kid, right?"

"Yeah...away with his mother. Parents were divorced."

"Do you think these are plants or just lying around?"

Catherine took the little army man. "The blood smear has little...brush strokes, it looks like. Like it was painted on."

"There's two more here," Sara said, picking them up. "Blood on them too."

Catherine bagged them. "One can be a coincidence. Three..." she labeled the bag accordingly. "Three isn't."

"Found something else," Sara said, photographing and then picking up for inspection. "Baseball card." Sara flipped it over. "With...a paper clip, and a hair."

"Hair?"

"Definitely planted. Dark blonde. A match to the hair from the first tub?"

"Never know."

Sara dusted the card for prints, finding one. "Looks like a kid," she said. "The vic's son?"

"Maybe...maybe not. Between the hair and the paper clip...who knows."

"Odd thing to plant, really."

Catherine was about to pull her hair out. "Why, why, why," she said. "Why are there people who kill just to plant evidence for fun? At least kill someone because you have a good reason," she commented in frustration.

"Four people dead just because of their birthdates," Sara said in disquiet.

"Sickening, really."

"Yeah...yeah, it just really hit me. What a stupid reason to kill. Taking a life...for what?"

"Protecting your kids, yourself, hell, at least passionate anger might make it understandable."

Sara just shook her head at the scene.

Catherine walked to the window, looking in on Warrick and Nick's progress outside the house. "I don't care what he did," she said to herself but loud enough for Sara to hear. "We've got two 419s we've gotten no where on, a robbery with a missing victim and now this. I don't care what he did," Catherine repeated. "Grissom better be on next shift because I'll add a few more to the homicide tally if he isn't."

With heavy feet and boundless determination, Grissom stepped through the hallways that had never before seemed so cold, foreign and hostile. Even when no one was around to stare accusingly or make a rude remark the walls themselves seemed to shrink in and suffocate him.

His first line of duty was to go talk to Ecklie, who was waiting for him, but he stopped by his office first and dropped off his things. Ecklie. Great. Brass had called him back--a relief and a burden--and told him he wouldn't be supervising. He'd be on probation. He said he'd didn't care. At least he'd be working, after all. And that's when he was informed he'd have to report to Ecklie and hear an earful of that wrath.

Not so relieving, that.

Biting the proverbial bullet, Grissom started off for Ecklie's office, pushing away the walls and the pressure.

At least he was working.

Grissom pushed the ajar door open slightly, perhaps hoping it wouldn't open at all. But it did, and he walked inside, announcing himself with a small cough that sounded much too timid for his liking.

Ecklie looked up. "I was wondering when you'd come by."

Grissom checked his watch. "I'm early," he said in defense of himself.

"Have a seat," Ecklie offered.

Grissom shook his head. "I'll stand."

"I want you to know that you're not back here because we think you should be, but because we need you here." Ecklie stood, walking over to the wall and picked up the white cardboard boxes that held stored evidence. He placed the stack of three on his desk. "You'll be working these," Ecklie said, handing Grissom three assignment sheets.

"All three," Grissom replied, deadpan in astonishment. "Three cases." He got the distinct feeling he was being punished.

"I've got Warrick on a 420 called in an hour ago and everyone else is at your boyfriend's latest hit."

Grissom swallowed, saliva along with his building ire. "You don't need three people there," he replied.

"Four," Ecklie replied. "Sophie's with them." He gave Grissom a pointed look. "Are you telling me how many people I should have at a scene?"

Grissom didn't reply, glancing at his assignments. Picking up where others left off. Always the worst cases. The most likely to go cold; the least likely to have co-operation. Two dead bodies and a robbery with a possible homicide. Great.

"Sit down."

"I'm fine--"

"I need to have a talk with you," Ecklie replied, standing by his window holding a clip board, "so sit down."

Begrudgingly, he did.

"Before I can let you back on the shift, I need your version of the events."

He wasn't giving into this that easily. "What events?" he asked sweetly.

"The events that might get you fired."

Grissom flinched. "Is this my hearing?"

"No," Ecklie said, "this is the first in many interviews that will definitely lead to a hearing. I don't want to know what happened any more than you want to tell it, but I have to." Ecklie pointed to his clipboard. "This is Sanders' decision. Not mine."

"And why can't he grill me about it? Too busy second guessing your team?"

"He's not here; he's in Virginia. So, like I said, start talking and get it over with. Few details, basic ideas and I want to know what you were on." Ecklie sat on his desk. "I mean, I saw pictures of the guy."

Grissom shook his head. "I was at home, listening to--"

"When?"

"I don't know...about three years ago, maybe less or so. I didn't mark it on my calendar-- November. It was November," Grissom said, looking away.

"Continue."

"It's all foggy; I don't know why. I was sitting at home and Milander knocked on my door. I can't remember if he pushed his way in...maybe I was stunned and let him in. I can't remember."

"Did you try to tell anyone?"

Grissom shook his head. "No...I think I wanted to, but I didn't."

"And then what?"

He shook his head again, his breathing becoming irregular as he lowered his head. "I remember he had a gun," he reiterated, "he pulled it on me, told me to go into my room..." Grissom shuddered. "I remember him choking me...I remember the gun...I can't recall..." he trailed off, putting his face in his hands.

Ecklie lowered the clipboard, halfway through scribbling something down. There was a guilty expression on his face. "He...raped you?"

Grissom nodded looking at the floor.

He set the clipboard in his lap. "That's not what you said on Sanders' tape," he said quietly.

Grissom shrugged. "I told Brass because I was feeling guilty," he explained, a forced tone to his voice. "I can't remember what I did, or why, or if it even happened at all," he finished with a hopeless gesture.

Ecklie finished his scribbles, soundlessly putting down his clipboard. "That's enough," he said under his breath. "I'll pass my recommendations on to Sanders...good luck with your cases."

Grissom nodded, picking up the boxes, and left without another word.

Grissom dropped the boxes off and headed to the autopsy theatre. If he couldn't have the rush of a fresh case he'd stimulate himself by going in blind. He put the assignment slips in his pocket, reading nothing beyond the code.

"Good to see you," greeted Robbins. "I knew they wouldn't keep you away long."

"Warrick's body drop?"

"Your body drop now, from what I'm told." Robbins picked up a scapel. Pointing with it, he continued. "Blunt force trauma to the head. From what it looks like on the outside, that's what killed him."

Grissom leaned over the wound. "It wasn't a bullet."

"Warrick recovered some blood soaked fibers from the wound. They're being processed to see what they are."

Nodding, Grissom stood back up, scanning over the body. "Bruising to the wrists, cuts on the hands. Defensive injuries."

"He didn't go down without a fight." Robbins started the V incision. "Bruising on his legs too," he said without looking.

Grissom scanned down to the legs. "Odd configuration." Tentatively he touched the snowflake like patterns. "He was kicked or hit with something with a narrow point. Rounded," he reasoned, "Otherwise that force would have broken the skin."

"There was hair found in his clothes," Robbins said. "Warrick sent it to DNA."

Grissom didn't respond. "Shoe."

"Shoe?"

He nodded. "A shoe with a rounded point." He stood up and walked back to where Robbins continued with the autopsy. "If the hair is his own, it could have been pulled, while the killer kicked him." Grissom processed the information. "Hair pulling, rounded pointy shoe...female killer," he postulated. "Only one set of prints," he recalled. "But high heeled shoes may have been missed."

"Planning a road trip?" Robbins asked in jest in an absent tone.

Grissom sighed heavily. "I have to visit my robbery scene first. See what I can get on that."

"You're on these two cases and the floater?" he asked, not looking up from his delicate slicing and dicing.

"Ecklie's idea of being resourceful," Grissom said sourly. "He's got everyone at the copycat murders...there's no point."

"There isn't?"

"He's planting evidence all over the scene. Impossible to tell between the killer and the games." Grissom shook his head. "And meanwhile there are other scenes growing cold and stale."

Ducking out of the autopsy and feeling rushed in that non invigorating way, Grissom headed for the robbery.

He found exactly what he had in pictures, good to know that nothing had been moved. Contamination threats got worse with time.

The blood pool was exactly where they said it'd be; and there was no victim where one ought to be. Grissom frowned. A body with out blood; blood with out a body. He took out his cell.

"Greg?"

"Welcome home, my liege," Greg answered. "What can I do ya for?"

Grissom frowned more deeply. Apparently Ecklie wasn't the only one who noticed he wasn't supervising anymore. "Greg, run a test on the blood pool DNA from the robbery and the pooling at Warrick's body drop."

"Sure...it'll be a little bit, though. I'm processing stuff from the copycat scene...but I'll keep it in the dock."

"Thanks, Greg."

Warrick, hastled away from his homicide, arrived at the scene. They already had four overly competent CSIs there...he never should have told them he found a wife standing over a dead cheating husband with a gun. Apparently open and shut cases didn't need to be documented anymore.

"Nick," Warrick greeted, putting his kit down. "Hey, find anything?"

Nick looked up from his bent over position on the lawn. "Man, we've been going along the fence with ALS, Luminol, magnifying glasses and combs. The killer wasn't even out here."

"So, found nothing, then?"

"Sara did find a dirt bike." Nick went back to searching. "If our killer was twelve that would mean something."

"Where's Catherine?" Warrick asked. "I've got to find out what I'm supposed to be doing here. Not that you need my help."

"Tell me about it. Having one person here is overkill," he muttered. "Catherine's upstairs, probably in the bedroom."

"Thanks, buddy."

"Anytime, bro."

Greg handed analysis sheets to Catherine. "Your army men came back no match, nothing on CODIS, not your vic's and not his son. Well, not his biological son, anyway. Male, but that's about all I can tell you. Now, the hair we got a hit on."

"Match to the hair in the second victim's tub?"

"Nope," Greg said, handing over yet another sheet. "Court clerk from California. And that's where it gets interesting." Greg smiled, smugly continuing. "Shelley Mason, from Modesto."

Catherine looked up. "Shelley Mason? Milander's wife?"

"Ex-wife." Greg looked to one of his monitors and called up a screen. "According to this, she filed for divorce two months after he 'committed suicide'," he said with finger quotes.

"So Milander plants her hair--"

"Or the copycat--"

"Someone planted her hair with a baseball card?"

"I think your print was processed," Greg looked at another monitor. "They should be done."

"I'm gone...page me if you find anything else."

"Will do."

Back at the autopsy theatre, Grissom stood beside the waiting body of Norman Byrant and the equally as waiting David.

"Your floater was shot with these," Robbins said, handing Grissom two bullets. "First one killed her. Entered the back, clipped an artery. She was dead in seconds."

Grissom walked over to the body. "If ballistics can't get a match, I'll have to put that case aside," he said with obvious remorse. He shook his head, looking at the bullets. "I can't chase three rabbits."

"You could if you wanted to come up with nothing and run yourself haggard," Robbins said, returning to Byrant and David. "You could always try and get Catherine to--"

Grissom's pager went off.

He lifted it to his line of sight, and rolled his eyes. "This is insane!" he exclaimed. "419 in a hotel room. Been there awhile...they need a 'bug check'." Grissom frowned. "Whatever that's supposed to mean." He hurried out, none the least thrilled.

"Can they legally do that to him?" David asked, rather rhetorically.

"Probably not," Robbins replied. "But as long as he gets to work, he'll probably put up with just about anything." Robbins looked at the entry wound on Mr. Bryant. "Now this is odd," he said, pushing the wound delicately with a finger.

"The wound is different."

Robbins nodded. "Here's our bullet hole," he traced in the air, "and here's something else...another shot, to the side?"

"There was only one exit wound."

"Which means," Robbins picked up his tweezers and fished into the angled track. He baited a winner, and pulled out the bullet.

"There were no bullets recovered in any of the other cases."

"Our copycat is getting sloppy," he commented, putting the bullet aside carefully.

"How do you know it's a copycat? Milander's still alive."

"Gil says that it's a copycat. I trust his judgment." Robbins picked up his scalpel and set to work. "Shame what they're doing to him."

"They're trying to prove it wasn't rape." David moved away, to give him room. "After everything Grissom's said I don't see how it couldn't be. I mean, between who it was and the breaking--"

He was cut off by the sound of Robbins laughing lightly.

"What? You said you know Grissom. You said you trust him. Don't you think it was rape?"

Robbins shook his head. "No. I know it wasn't."

"But you said you trust him and you know--"

"I trust him not to tell something like that to the FBI." Robbins put down his scalpel, pulling back the skin. "And I know him well enough to know what's he's not telling."

"Are you saying he's lying?"

Robbins shook his head. "No."

David looked very puzzled.

Robbins laughed again, reaching into the exposed innards of the late Mr. Byrant. "He knows what to say, to make people think what he wants without telling a lie. He's too smart to need to."

"I don't get it." David leaned in, over the body on the slab. "He said he...said he screwed him. Is that what you mean? He could have just been feeling guilty."

"I'll bet he was. But that wasn't his only slip."

"Okay?"

"According to what I've heard more than a few people say, Gil said Milander strangled him."

"Yeah, it was on Sanders' tape." David smiled wryly. "They probably have copies in the break room. So? He said he strangled him."

Robbins looked up, giving a thoughtful look. "He never said he didn't like it."

Catherine headed to the print lab, hopeful for her baseball card. "Find anything?" she asked.

The lab tech stood, putting her sandwich down hurriedly. "Yeah, I did," she said, trying to swallow all of her food at once.

"Don't choke...come on, be careful."

The lab tech nodded, heading over to her computer screen. "Your taps print came back Paul Millander, Sr., and the tub prints came back Paul--"

"Okay, how about people not named Paul? Then I'm interested."

She nodded, pointing to a monitor with a flickering print display. "Your baseball card came back Craig Mason."

"Craig Mason?" Catherine looked closer. "Milander plants a baseball card with his son's--his adopted son's print with a hair from his ex-wife?" She looked at the sheet, searching for an answer. "What does it mean?"

And the screen continued to flicker, monotonous, yielding nothing more.

Grissom, well into his second shift and overtime on steroids, headed back to the lab after doing his 'bug check.' He checked his watch...Catherine had clocked out and Ecklie wasn't in for another few hours. That begged the question, who was supervising? He frowned. That would be either Nick or Warrick, depending who had stayed.

And they'd have to have stayed because he wasn't allowed to supervise. That was definitely new.

"Hey, boss," Nick said, approaching Grissom in the halls and walking with him to the break room. "How's it coming?"

Answering to Nick. Hopefully this wouldn't be painful. "I..." Grissom checked his notes. "I'm..." he swallowed, trying to remember what he was going to say. Dammit, it was painful. Very painful. "I'm going to check up on my fibers," he managed to choke out, "then visit the site of my dump. I'm interviewing the waitress and then I have to check on a match from the robbery bullet."

"And the floater?" Nick said with faltering confidence, making the awkward situation mutual.

"I..." Grissom sighed. "I've put that case on hold. I've got a better chance of solving the other two."

Nick nodded, accepting. "Cool," he said, "I...I wouldn't ask, but..."

"Yeah," Grissom said, "I know."

Reaching the break room, Nick went immediately for the apples, shining one on his shirt before taking a bite. "So, do I get to use your office?" he quipped.

Grissom gave him a firm glance, indicating it wasn't funny.

"Sorry, sorry," Nick said munching on his apple and shrugging. "You don't think they'll demote you, do you?"

Grissom smirked darkly. "Right. Demote me. Ecklie's out to fire me." He sat in one of the scattered chairs, looking over his dumb site's photos, hoping to find something--anything.

"But he can't, right?"

"It's not up to him, Nick," Grissom replied. "But to answer your real question, no, I doubt they'll let me go."

Nick nodded. "I mean...they can't do anything if you didn't do anything wrong," Nick said, working through his apple.

Grissom was busy sorting his photos. "No, so they're working to prove I did." Even Grissom wasn't sure if he actually needed to sort the photos. It was a good excuse not to make eye contact, though.

"But...did you?"

"Did I what?" he asked, in a wandering tone that warned and tempted.

"Did you...do anything wrong?"

Grissom looked up, giving a thinking pout. "Define wrong, Nick."

Nick shrugged. "Compromising an investigation, for example," he said, pirouetting through the delicate subject.

Grissom looked back to his photos. "The case was closed. His case evidence had been destroyed. Any move I could have made to alert anyone would have only been a threat to my own life," Grissom explained, clinical. "Self preservation," he finished.

Nick nodded. "But...why?"

Grissom looked up. "Why what?"

With flutters and shifty eyes, Nick shrugged again. "You're arguing...that...you...didn't have to alert anyone."

He thought about that. "I suppose I am." He shrugged and lowered his tone. "But I really don't know what I'm arguing...half the time," Grissom sighed, wishing himself out of this dangerous territory. "Half the time I don't even know if it even happened at all."

"But...why?" Nick repeated. He tossed the apple core into the trash can. "I mean...why? Why do..anything?"

Grissom looked away, taking control of his thoughts on the situation. "I don't know." Grissom stood, noting the dissatisfied look on Nick's face and the similar tone in his voice.

"That's not going to fly with Ecklie."

"It doesn't even 'fly' with me, Nick." Grissom tried to sink into his photo sorting. "I don't have an explanation, not for you and not for Ecklie."

"But," Nick shook his head, "how could he force you? Milander's just...just a little guy, really." Nick spread his hands, "I could take him, you could take him; hell, I think Hodges could take him."

Grissom's tone was low. "Appearances can be deceiving."

"So, what, he's stronger than he looks?"

Sighing, Grissom looked up. "It's not..." he frowned, thinking, "it's not about strength."

"Then what it is about?"

Grissom stood, off put at losing any remnants of authority. "I'm not sure you'd understand." He set about making coffee, his back to Nick.

"Oh, come on," Nick stood himself, walking closer to Grissom. "What wouldn't I understand? Is it because...because he's a man? I mean, I'm a little more...understanding than that, boss."

Grissom turned, giving Nick a forcefully despondent look. "I know." He stirred his coffee, putting any resentment aside. This was Nick, not Ecklie or Sanders. He was reaching, trying to grasp what had happened, and Grissom couldn't let himself get angry in the face of that. "I was...surprised."

"Surprised?"

Taking a sip of his coffee, Grissom moved away, feeling boxed in. "Surprised and...and conflicted," he replied. "That's...why."

Nick still looked puzzled, trying desperately to fit this in logic. "He surprised you," Nick replied, leaning against the wall.

"Easiest explanation," Grissom answered.

"So he didn't...attack you?" Nick asked slowly.

Grissom shrugged. "Not physically," he admitted. Grissom looked around the breakroom walls suspiciously. "I wonder if Big Brother is listening."

"What, did he talk you into it?" Nick said with a laugh.

With an intensely serious look, Grissom looked directly at Nick. "Yes."

That answer only brought more questions, but Nick couldn't ask any of them.

"And no," Grissom continued, and the tense moment vanished. "It's a complicated situation with few answers," he finished in a drifting tone.

"Because he surprised you," Nick said, hearing his words and berating himself for them.

Grissom laughed a little, feeling oddly relieved. "You could say that."

"But why?" he asked again. "I mean, if a guy surprised me, and did...well, anything, I'd...I wouldn't let him. Then on top of that there's...all that other stuff. I mean, surprise? Come on, Gris," Nick said, "I can't slate it just to that--I wouldn't have let anything happen."

"Really," Grissom said without expression.

Nick raised an eyebrow. "Uh...yeah."

Before he knew exactly what had happened, Grissom slammed Nick against a wall, hands firmly against his shoulders and head tilted at just the right angle of attack. Eyes wide in surprise and his hands in the air in shock, Nick jumped at the subtle hint of a tongue entering his mouth.

Grissom stepped back, finishing his quick display with a smug smile. He picked up his photos, preparing to leave. "Really."

Nick called after him as he left. "That's sexual harassment, you know."

"Write me up, boss."

There was no police tape, but Grissom found his dump site easily enough. There wasn't much light, but it was enough.

There had been some wind, but the tracks had not been completely obliterated. Searching around, he couldn't find the triangular impressions indicating a high shoe.

Frowning, he took out his cell phone.

"Greg?" he said after dialing.

"What?" said the sleepy, deep voice on the other end.

"Did you run the dump blood against the robbery blood?" Grissom continued scanning the ground. "Like I asked?"

"What...oh, right." There was a pause, some shuffling and moving, and then the voice came back, empty as ever. "No match."

"No match," Grissom replied with chagrin. "Are you sure?"

"Did the test twice."

"Yeah." Grissom's flashlight trolled the dirt. "Did the trace come back on my fibers?"

"Which ones?"

"From the dump vic's head wound."

"Just a sec." There was more shuffling, more moving and then an answer. "Oh, yeah, that. Cotton, rayon, polyester and polyethylene."

"So, some sort of clothing?"

"Well, I'd say something fleecy, but the dried blood made it impossible to say what. Soft and fluffy, I'm guessing."

Grissom spotted a reflective metal behind a bush. He started walking over.

"I also found a little fleck of paper."

"Paper?"

"One of your flakes was a thin paper. Soaked in blood, so beyond that it's not going to be much help."

Grissom leaned over, and plucked the shiny piece of metal. Lipstick. Checking his photos, it hadn't fallen far from the vic's head. He made a sour thinking face.

"That's all I found. Sorry your crimes don't tie in."

"So I've got a body without enough blood...Greg, you said polyethylene, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, why would that be in clothing meant to be fluffy?"

Greg audibly shrugged and yawned. "I don't know."

Grissom smiled. "Go have some coffee."

Greg, browbeaten and exhausted, stirred a cup of coffee.

"Sanders!" came a dreaded call from the door.

He turned to Ecklie. "Hi," he replied innocent and sweet.

"I need you to do another shift."

Greg groaned and stomped his feet. "I don't wanna," he whined playfully, miming pulling out his hair. Seeing Ecklie not amused, he went back to a serious mode. "What's wrong with your lab guy?"

"She's fine," he corrected. "I don't need you in the lab, I want you to go with Sara to Modesto."

Greg brightened immediately, his exhausting melting out of his features. "Field work?"

"Yes," Ecklie replied with confidence. He passed Greg a file. "Give this to Sara. She's waiting for you in the car."

Greg grinned ear to ear. "Now that's what I'm talking about."

Returning to the lab in short order, Grissom put his findings in the lab freezer. He could have the girl on days process it, but he'd much rather have Greg do it. He checked his watch. Not that it mattered, he reasoned, heading to his office, he wasn't going home soon anyway.

He reached his door when he heard it.

"Grissom!"

Why couldn't it have been Ecklie? He shook his head. Ecklie he could chase around word game bushes for ages.

"We need to talk."

He turned to agent Sanders. "I thought you were in Virginia," he said simply.

"I was." Sanders waved his hand, indicating the hallway. "This way."

Grissom entered his office as if he hadn't heard, putting his things on his desk.

"I said--"

"I heard you." He started down the hall.

In the friendly interrogation room, Grissom was subjected to his first unofficial hearing.

"I just want to state, for the record," Sanders spoke clearly into the recorder, "that you were brought back against my advice." Sanders took his seat. "We have you on tape admitting it," he said, taking out another tape recorder. "We don't need anything else."

"Does the world revolve around magnetic strips of trivial information?" he postulated eloquently.

"Trivial? You think this is trivial?"

"Everything is trivial, and nothing is trivial."

Sanders smirked. "You think you're going to win this by getting philosophical?"

"I'm not out to win anything," Grissom replied.

"Of course you're not." Sanders put his tape player on the table. "Let's recap, shall we?" He hit the play button.

"I screwed him."

"Interesting choice of words for a supposed rape victim, don't you think?"

Grissom leaned back in his chair, appearing very observant. "Rape victims often feel guilty, in that they may feel they deserved what happened or that they brought it upon themselves," he stated, a walking text book.

Sanders didn't look satisfied or interested. "How very detached of you," he replied.

"I have my ways of dealing with things," he replied coolly.

"It sounds to me like you've had time to think about your answers."

"Then it's your fault for not interrogating me earlier."

Sanders smirked. "You seem to like interrogation."

"You seem to like listening to that tape."

Unamused, Sanders shifted. He took out his ever present clipboard. "Was your sexual encounter," he said with scorn, "consented to?"

"No," Grissom replied flatly.

"Did you allow Paul Milander in your home?"

"No," he repeated.

"Then how did he get in?"

"He forced his way in."

"How?"

"He pushed past me," Grissom said, holding his expression.

"And yet you told Captain Brass that you didn't remember how he actually got in to your apartment." Sanders leaned forward. "But now you remember that he pushed past you."

Grissom didn't look as confident as his tone. "Yes."

Sanders didn't look happy with that response, but he continued on. "After he entered your apartment, what happened?"

"He pulled a gun on me."

"Right away?"

"Yes," Grissom replied with strength.

"And then what?"

"He asked where my bedroom was."

"And you told him?"

"Yes."

"What kind of gun was it?"

Grissom thought a moment. "9mm...it had a silencer."

"And after you were in your bedroom what happened?"

Grissom swallowed. "He...he pushed me."

"On your bed?"

"Yes."

"And then what?"

"He raped me," Grissom stated simply.

"Really," Sanders said, unimpressed. "Is that when you screwed him?"

Grissom frowned deeply, unable to answer the question.

Greg piled into the car, chipper and excited. Pulling on his seatbelt he flung the file into the back seat. "Let's roll!" he said, flipping the radio. The car didn't start, so he turned to Sara. "Well?"

Sara looked as tired as Greg had felt moments before. "I hate you. You're awake."

"No I'm not," Greg denied, full of cheer as he did so. "I'm high on coffee!"

"Great."

In retreat, Grissom put a hand on his office door, ready to enter and feel a little slice of--

"Gil!"

--solitude.

He turned to Ecklie. "Hello," he said simply and entered his office.

Ecklie followed him inside, not waiting for an invitation. "You busy?"

"It matters?" Grissom asked, sitting at his desk.

"I'd...like you to take a little road trip with me."

"Followed by a long walk in the desert with a shovel?"

"Funny," Ecklie replied, sitting in the unoffered chair. "I want you to come with me to the crime scene. Norman Bryant's murder scene."

Grissom looked up. "Really."

"I've got the sheriff breathing down my neck, Sanders and Drake are driving everyone bonkers...you know Milander the best." Ecklie leaned in, surprisingly sincere. "I want to see what you can find."

Grissom leaned back in his chair, playing with a Rubik's cube. "Knowing Milander isn't going to help."

"Why not? Another set of eyes...a knowing set of eyes can only help."

"It isn't Milander," Grissom said. "That's how my knowing will help you: stop looking for Milander. He'll only turn up if he wants."

"You found the parking tickets. You traced them back to him."

"Nick found the parking ticket. Brass and I linked them. They didn't need me for that."

"You still found him."

"He was waiting for us." Grissom regarded the completed cube. "We were his mice."

Ecklie sat up. "I get it," he said, "I get it."

Grissom's look was questioning.

"You don't know anything about Milander." Ecklie crossed his arms, nodding. "He's the one that's got you wrapped around his little finger."

Grissom shook his head. "No one's got anyone wrapped around any of their fingers. I understand him warily," he said with a faint shudder, "and it's mutual."

"What makes you so sure it's not him?"

"Simple. He's dramatic. Everything's a stage. He was a judge and a lawyer--both require showmanship to be successful. He's an artist and a pianist, so he's very expressive. But he's detached. He can't say things, he has to show them."

"Did you figure this out before or after you slept with him?" Ecklie said with venom.

Grissom turned away, looking at the beetle chart on his wall. "It helps."

"So? He's showy," Ecklie said, getting away from the argumentative subject. "What's that got to do with him not committing these murders?"

"He told a story with his evidence." Grissom counted off on his fingers. "Planted prints, planted hairs, recorded notes, dates...everything planned and meaning something." Grissom turned back to Ecklie. "Your killer is just having fun, really. Someone younger than Milander. Less focused. You found lipstick, army men, hair, a baseball card." Grissom shrugged. "What does it mean?"

Ecklie frowned. "That's why I'm here, asking you for help."

"The lipstick was green."

"So?"

"Everything that's planted has a reason. Green has to be the least popular lipstick colour--why

not plant red or pink or black? Something more accessible."

"Envy," Ecklie replied.

Grissom smiled and nodded. "But it's not organized. Lipstick to point fun at Milander for what he'll never be. Army men and a baseball card, symbols of masculinity. Evidence of his family."

Grissom shrugged. "None of it ties anything together except that it's got Milander at the center of it." Grissom looked at Ecklie intensely. "Your killer knew Milander, knows how many X chromosomes he has and both respects and looks down on him. He's probably in his thirties or forties, detached and getting sloppy."

"You see, I knew I talked to you for a reason," Ecklie replied.

"I'm not all bad," Grissom said, opting to play with his cube again.

"What's the significance of the blood on the army men? Death?"

Grissom shook his head. "Almost...slaughter. The blood of the lamb. I'd say...it's not just about the blood. It's whose blood. Since it's Craig Mason's...he's probably dead." Grissom put the cube down, saddened. "And if Mrs. Mason's hair is there as well...."

"She's likely dead, too."

"You know, this would be a lot easier if there was actually a somewhat direct route."

Greg shrugged, sucking Pepsi through his straw with vigour. "Hey, we get to be out of the building!" Devil horn gesture. "Rockin'!"

Sara rolled her eyes. "It'll take us at least six hours to get there. And then another six hours to get back."

"That's six hours of roadway freedom, baby."

"Don't call me baby," Sara warned sternly.

"Whatever." Greg opened his fast food bag, pulling out a burger.

"You're having another one? That's what, five?"

"Three," he corrected. "I'm hungry."

"Uck," she groaned. "How can you eat that at all?"

"Dunno," he said, with some food still in his mouth. He flipped around the radio stations, nodding enthusiastically when he found a station playing 'Enter Sandman'. "Metallica," he said. "Sweet."

"Right."

"What's got you in a bunch?" he asked.

"Me? In a bunch?" Sara asked incredulously. "What's got me in a bunch?"

"This wouldn't have anything to do with Gris--"

"Oh no, no," Sara said, gripping the wheel with unnecessary force. "No, it has nothing to do with Grissom at all."

Greg started on some fries that had fallen to the bottom of the brown paper bag. "I detect some sarcasm," he said dryly.

"Really."

He held up a fry and admired it for a minute before chowing down. "If you don't want to talk about it, that's cool--"

"Talk about it? What's there to talk about?" she said, occasionally paying attention to the road. "There's nothing to talk about. Whatever Grissom wants to do in his time is his business, right?"

Greg rolled his eyes. He had to ask....

"I mean, if he wants to compromise an investigation, that's his choice, right?"

"He didn't compromise the--"

"He didn't? If we're investigating a killer and our supervisor who's leading the case does...stuff with him, that's not compromising the case?"

"We had been investigating the case--"

"You weren't."

"Hey, hey," Greg put his fast food on the floor, putting his attention in his conversation. "I was on that too. Just because I was in the lab doesn't mean I wasn't working that case. And there wasn't a case--not by that point--it was closed and he was supposedly dead."

"So, what," Sara said, looking to Greg momentarily with exasperation. "You like what he did?"

"I never said that," Greg turned the radio down. "I just don't think he could have done anything. What could anyone have done?"

"All right, put it that way. What would you have done? Would you have slept with Milander?" Before Greg could answer, Sara continued. "I mean, dammit. Paul Milander." Sara shuddered. "That's disgusting."

"Serial killers are people too," he replied in an innocent tone.

Sara shuddered again. "So, what, you're rooting for him now? The oppressed minority of transgendered serial murderers with kids?"

"Hey, I'm just saying that he's human." Greg shrugged. "He had a family, a job, a life...someone had to like him."

"You're just like Grissom."

Greg beamed, but his smile was short lived.

"You probably would have slept with Milander," Sara said with venting scorn.

"He's not my type," Greg said quietly.

"No one thought he was Grissom's type..." Sara grimaced. "But hey. Apparently there was a lot we didn't know about him. If he wants to fuck over a case and go against everything everyone thought he stood for--"

"Hey, at least he got laid," Greg interjected.

Sara froze and paused. "I'm going to forget you said that."

"Hey, don't you think this is overkill?" Brass asked, watching the trio approach the house.

Grissom smiled, taking off his shades. "I do. They don't."

"Hey, Brass," Catherine greeted, walking up to him. "Just one more look around before we take the tape down."

"About time...his sister is screaming bloody murder to get back in the house."

Grissom walked past, up to the door and inside without pause or hesitation.

"Uh, should he be here?" Brass asked. "Those FBI guys said..."

Ecklie, bringing up the rear, frowned. "Last resort," he admitted. Following after, he left Catherine and Brass on the lawn to go and watch Grissom.

"Find anything yet?"

Grissom turned around, shining his flashlight in Ecklie's eyes. "No," he replied with ease. He turned back to where he was looking. "How many people have been in the house?"

"My team, your...former team, a few detectives, the coroner...no one who shouldn't have been."

"To your knowledge," Grissom said, starting up the stairs. "Where was the body found?"

"In the bathroom."

Grissom sighed with waning contempt.

"It's to your left," Ecklie finished, climbing the stairs behind him. "My people have been over every inch of this bathroom. And that was after your guys were over every inch of this bathroom."

"And what about between those inches?" Grissom asked.

Ecklie frowned, leaning against the doorway. "You're not going to find anything."

"Then why do you want me to look?"

Saying nothing more, Ecklie watched as Grissom peered into corners and behind doors, then left to explore other rooms.

"The killer wasn't in here," Ecklie said.

"Maybe not," Grissom replied, moving out of the bedroom and down the stairs. Peering over bookcases and under tables, he continued through the house, Ecklie standing watch dutifully. Telling him he wouldn't find anything was a moot point, after all.

"Hmm."

Ecklie walked over to where Grissom had stopped, in front of the mantel. "Hmm?"

"Hmm," Grissom re-affirmed. His flashlight pointed directly at a small statuette.

"What is it?"

"It's a figurine. A black ghost."

"I figured that," Ecklie said. "I meant, what is it? Who cares?"

Grissom pointed his flashlight to the other items on the mantel in succession. "It doesn't fit." A picture, a clock, a portrait. "It doesn't belong here...Hallowe'en was months ago." He picked up his camera and took a picture before picking it up. "A black ghost...clever." He turned it around in his hands, using his flashlight to peer into the edges and corners. "A ghost in a black robe," he corrected, pointing to the tie of said robe. "Milander," he said quietly, between shock and awe.

"So does this exonerate or implicate Milander?"

"Neither." Grissom regarded the statue quietly. "It might just be something completely unrelated...or the killer saying he knew about Milander's night job."

"I can't believe this!" Sara slammed her hands against the wheel. "Six hours turns to seven and a half and now the uniform who was sent to meet us is late."

Greg took the opportunity for another meal break.

"How can you keep eating like that and stay a rail?"

Greg grinned. "I have a great metabolism."

"Right," she said with a frown.

"Hey, it's a nice little break. Just relax, okay?"

"I don't want to relax." Sara looked at the house with yearning. "I want to solve this case."

"Mmm," Greg said, munching on a bag of potato chips. "This is going straight to my thighs," he said dryly.

"Shut up."

Greg had a split-second taken aback look, but snapped out of it and pointed. "There's the uniform."

"Let's roll."

Catherine entered the small house, walking over to Ecklie and Grissom by the fireplace.

"Sanders and Drake are here," she informed them. "Did you find something?"

"Just a ghost," Grissom replied, dropping the small figure into an evidence bag. Both and Ecklie and Grissom started walking for the door but only Ecklie stopped there.

"Hey, where are you going?"

"There's a garage, isn't there?" Grissom said before leaving out the side door.

"I don't think he should be here," Catherine said to Ecklie, after Grissom was well out of earshot.

"He's not going to be here long...won't be a crime scene to process here much longer anyway."

Catherine frowned, and the door rustled and opened behind her.

"Willows, Ecklie," Sanders greeted. "I've been informed Grissom is here?"

"Yeah," Ecklie replied.

"Why?" It wasn't really a question, it was an accusation.

Ecklie shrugged. "Just exhausting our last resource before we cleaned up moved on."

"Did he find anything?"

Ecklie held up the evidence bag. "Statue."

"Excuse me?"

Ecklie opened the bag and pulled out the black ghost figure. "He says it looks like Milander's art."

Sanders held out a gloved hand for the statue, looking at it. "Peculiar," was his observation.

"We'll talk to the family, see if anyone recognises it."

Sanders handed the statue back absently and looked from side to side. "Where's Grissom now?"

"Garage," Ecklie said, pointing.

Wordlessly, Sanders went off in the indicated direction.

Catherine crossed her arms. "You know, I used to think the world of him."

"Sanders?" Ecklie quipped.

"I never thought I'd say this about anyone, but I hope he was raped." Catherine sighed. "Okay, it's a horrible thing, but then we could all still trust him."

Ecklie raised an eyebrow. "Delightfully morbid," he agreed with edge. "But I doubt it."

"Just because you never liked him--"

"Who said I never liked him? He's a great guy, if you never actually need to talk to him." Ecklie started walking out the door, Catherine following behind. "If we could just set him up somewhere in a little isolated booth with photos, textbooks and call on him everytime we needed him, it'd be perfect. But that's not legal," he finished.

"I'm still giving this rape story a shot." Catherine leaned against the Tahoe. "Milander gave everyone the creeps. Maybe between the gun and being creeped out Grissom thought he didn't have a choice."

"That's reaching," Ecklie replied.

"Why?" Catherine gestured. "Rape doesn't have to be completely physical. Pressure anyone enough and they'll do anything."

"He wasn't raped," Ecklie said firmly.

"Were you there?"

"I didn't have to be." Ecklie spread his palms, emphasizing his questions before he asked them. "I mean, look at the evidence, Catherine. He's as shoddy as the next eyewitness, this gun story goes all over the place. First he says he pulled it after a little while. Then he says it was immediate. He says he doesn't remember how Milander got in. Then he says he was pushed for certain."

"That doesn't mean he's guilty. People have terrible memories and that's not really something anyone would want to remember."

"And then there's the physical evidence."

"Physical? Did you get a warrant to search his apartment?"

"I didn't have to. Milander got pregnant." Speaking with his hands, Ecklie hit the air forcefully. "Pregnant. I mean, it's hard enough to get someone pregnant when you're trying. And here's this person who seems to me like he's taking hormone injections and doing everything he can to stay a man, and somehow he gets pregnant?"

Catherine frowned, not completely convinced. "Technically speaking AIDS is hard to get--but it only takes once."

"I also don't get why Milander would want to rape anyone." Ecklie shrugged. "It doesn't fit any of the psyche profiles."

Catherine looked up. "He kept the baby," she said suddenly with a light bulb immediately shining from her eyes.

"Yeah. So?"

"Why the hell did he keep the baby?" she asked suddenly, with intensity. "You said it yourself...he tries to be a man," Catherine counted on her fingers, "he takes hormone therapies, he's on the run...that baby is a liability, a hypocrisy, a risk and a commitment." She looked at Ecklie, a cocktail of confused emotion. "Why would he keep that baby?"

"Obsession?"

"Obsession? What obsession?"

Ecklie smirked. "It seems, for some reason, the FBI agents think Milander's obsessed with Grissom." He smirked again. "For some reason."

"Obsession. Right."

Greg and Sara entered the house after the uniforms.

"Whoa..." Sara said, stopping in her tracks. Flashlight in hand, she checked out the floor.
"Somebody died in here."

Greg stepped forward. "Craig and--"

"Whoa, whoa," she said, "stop right there." Sara stepped forward, closer to the spatters of blood. She followed them to the end, where they were followed by drag marks. She looked up to the officer. "I take it you didn't find any bodies."

"Not inside. And we cleared the area. You searched outside," he said. "Lots of blood, no bodies."

"Recurring theme," Sara said darkly. "Greg, call CSI. Find someone to look for missing persons reports. See if we can get an idea of how long they've been gone."

"Right-o." Greg stepped outside to make the call.

Sara scanned the scene for evidence, planted or otherwise. "Killer definitely didn't bother cleaning up." She looked back to the officer. "Could you call someone about possible Jane or John Does found in the area, matching the description?" Sara opened her kit, taking out the file, flipping to the specific page. "Here," Sara passed it off, "thanks a lot."

"Sure thing. Nice to see some new faces." The officer talked as he walked away. "Our CSIs tend to be dry and boring," he muttered.

Left alone, Sara began inspecting closets and furniture.

Ecklie and Sanders set themselves to work, releasing the scene. The clean up people were set to arrive shortly, and with heavy regret Ecklie gave it up and started pulling down the tape. Sanders followed behind, with questions.

"You realise this means we're just waiting for him to strike again," Sanders said with spiked annoyance.

"We've got nothing to go on," Ecklie said, rolling up the tape. "Short of putting police escorts on anyone born on August 17th I'm really at an end here."

Sanders followed along. "Your people didn't find anything."

"They found plenty."

"Nothing that got them anywhere." Sanders walked along, strides relaxed and confident. "A few scraps of planted DNA and a baseball card, some toys and a tube of--"

"Are you still on that?" came a yell from the front of the house. The voice was familiar, but Ecklie and Sanders weren't expecting what they saw when they jogged to see.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Grissom retorted.

"No one possibly believes that," Catherine replied with a scrape to her tone. "Trying to make yourself to be the victim. You're so rehearsed."

"I'm not trying to make myself anything," Grissom defended, oddly angered, breaking his usual calm. "I barely remember what happened or if it did at all and being questioned about at every time is bound to make me rehearsed. I don't know what the hell happened."

"Well, you better remember," Catherine said, edging closer to Grissom. "There's a lot of people who respect you and if you can't fill the blanks they'll do it themselves."

"It sounds like you've filled in the blanks for yourself already," Grissom said with scorn.

"You're right, I have." Catherine started up her finger counting again. "Your story changes, you tell Brass you 'screwed' him, exact words, you swear you remember less and less the more anyone asks--and it sounds like you just realise how stupid your rape story is sounding--"

"Stupid?" Appalled, Grissom continued. "Stupid? Look, you can't possibly know what happened so how can you tell me what happened? How can you possibly say that my version of events is--"

"Version of events? Everytime anyone talks to you you're overly clinical. Detached. You show any emotion about it, and people might realise what really happened."

Ecklie started walking over to them at that point, ready to break up the argument, but Sanders stopped him.

"All right, then, Catherine, what really happened?"

"If he tried to strangle you to the point where it meant telling anyone as a defence, you'd be dead. It's hard enough for a man to rape a woman, and you're saying you were raped by a whatever the hell it is and he managed to get pregnant?" Catherine stepped closer. "Tell me right now, Gil, how the hell did he get pregnant?"

Grissom shrugged, arrogant and not lazily. "I don't know, Catherine. I didn't exactly have his internal organs under a microscope."

"Of course not. You were otherwise engaged at the time."

Grissom bit his lip, an obvious look of suppressing rage.

"Do you know how hard it is to get pregnant?"

"For me, I think it'd be pretty difficult," Grissom said, trying to relieve the pressure of the situation. It didn't work, and Catherine was glaring. "Look, teenage girls in the back of cars aren't trying to get pregnant, but enough of them are."

"None of them take hormone injections. None of them try to be men."

"He is a man," Grissom interjected quickly, without thinking by the look of his reaction to hearing his own words.

"And men get pregnant all the time," Catherine snapped back. "You weren't in any danger." She closed the distance between them, her accusing finger directly in his face. "You say he'd have shot you if you tried to warn anyone." She lowered her finger, a bitter look on her features. "Why didn't you just wait until he was asleep?"

Grissom didn't answer.

"You let your personal feelings destroy any case we had against him," Catherine continued in a deep tone. "That man killed three innocent people, and his own mother. And when we ever manage to catch him, he'll walk."

"He won't walk," Grissom said. "I won't let him."

Catherine wasn't impressed. "Really? Can you handle this personal stuff? I mean, having a life and connections, not so easy is it?" Despite being tremendously appalled, Grissom couldn't reply before Catherine continued. "You say you won't let him walk--can you do that to the mother of your child?"

Bitterly, Grissom stalked off.

A day after the confrontation, Catherine sat quietly with Ecklie and Sanders back at the CSI building.

Ecklie looked at Warrick and Nick, set to make a presentation of what they found. "Did you get a lead from that shoe print from the last scene?"

Nick and Warrick looked at each other.

"Define lead," Nick said.

Ecklie frowned.

"None of the shoes at the Bryant house matched. Bryant was a size 12. This one is a size 10," Warrick explained.

"Otherwise," Nick said, passing a sheet of specs, "it's a common department store make. Nothing else on that." Nick continued, not wanting to lose interest of their new boss. "Since we didn't find much at the scene, Warrick and I went back to how he finds his victims."

Warrick walked over to the board where details were posted. "Jordan Foster and George Bennett both went to Gregory Morris High. George Bennett and Patrick Stargsbridge both worked at the NPTC." Warrick pointed to the shot of their last victim. "When we checked, Norman Byrant didn't attend school or work there, or with any other of the victims." He took out the whiteboard marker and started scribbling. "He went to Gen. Eisenhower High and worked as a photographer in a department store." Warrick capped the marker.

"So, you have nothing?" Ecklie asked.

"Not exactly." Nick piped up, reaching into a box and pulling out the small black ghost. "This is the one Gris found at the Byrant scene."

Warrick stepped forward, next to the box. "We talked to the family, and no one remembers seeing it." He pulled out another one. "This one, a little different but the same idea was sitting on the mantel of the Foster house. No one noticed it or remembers seeing it before."

Nick pulled out another. "This one came from Mrs. Stargsbridge. She'd put it in a box, thinking it was something he'd picked up and she hadn't realised." He put it with the other three on the table.

"We couldn't get a warrant to search the hotel room Bennett was killed in," Warrick pulled out a fourth statue. "But you don't need a warrant to look through a lost and found box."

Ecklie looked at the set. "Prints?"

"The one from the hotel just had smudges; the Stargsbridge one just had his widow's prints. Byrant's was clean, as was Foster's." Warrick pulled out a slightly weathered catalogue. "And this is why it's interesting."

"Count Spookular's Halloween Toys, Costumes and Scare-rific Accessories," Ecklie read, accepting the magazine. "Seven years old."

"We matched this stamp on the bottom to a serial number," Warrick said, pointing to one of the statues. "Talking to the company didn't provide us with anything like purchasers, which would have been a shot in the dark anyway." Warrick pulled out another file. "But they did tell us who designed the figures for the company."

"And?" Ecklie asked.

Nick answered. "Robert DiMarco."

"Is this going somewhere?"

Warrick opened the file and read. "Two priors for assault in '78. Arrested, charges dropped. Male Causcasian, 5'10. DOB is April 10, 1957." Warrick handed a photo to Ecklie. "But I think it's the mug shot that will interest you."

"Milander," Ecklie said. "So someone's planting these statues, whether it's him or another--"

"That's not the lead," Nick said, suddenly bright and excited. "We checked records for DiMarco, a.k.a. Paul Milander. No recent credit card purchases, driver's license or other charges." Nick handed a sheet of paper to Ecklie. "But there were property holdings."

Catherine spoke. "It's a copycat," she said. "He's leading us to Milander."

"A house, in Reno," Ecklie said. "And a...why does this address look familiar?"

"It's a warehouse. The one Pete Walker was killed in."

"From the original Milander killings," Catherine filled in.

Ecklie nodded. "He still owns this house?"

Nick smiled. "Mmmhmm."

"Let's go!" Ecklie stood, frowning. "It would have killed him to live closer."

Grissom eyed his gun, which sat on the counter. He hadn't bothered to clean it yet, which was why it sat out. Too irate and explosive to return to work, he had clocked out and spent the day finding more practical expressions for his anger.

Calming down, finally, he sat with a beer and his television remote and his feet on the table. He didn't often take days off, but he was definitely smart enough to know when he wasn't fit to deal with anything.

He looked around his apartment. He was never here, so it was never messy. His current

crossword puzzle book sat on the end table, neglected.

And then there was a knock at the door. He looked at it curiously for a moment, and went to answer it.

"Hi."

Grissom raised an eyebrow, amused.

"How are y-you?"

"Surprised," Grissom replied flatly.

Milander smiled weakly. "I...t-there's someone who wants to meet his Uncle Gil." He turned, reaching behind himself and picking up the previously hidden little boy. "Say hello, Nigel."

Nigel laughed, and pointed at Grissom's glasses. "You have funny glasses," he said in an assured and wandering treble.

Grissom hesitantly took Nigel in his arms, walking into his apartment. Milander followed silently inside, shutting the door.

"The lady at Playtime Day Care has glasses too," Nigel continued, not missing a beat. "But hers are pink. I want glasses too." Nigel turned to Milander shortly, then back to Grissom. "Daddy says I need to wait till I'm older to see if I need glasses."

"Say hello, Nigel," Milander repeated.

Nigel frowned, then put on a polite face. "Hello, Uncle Gil!" he said with immediate exuberance that died as soon as the words were finished.

Fascinated but still a little uncertain about this whole Nigel situation, Grissom plunked Nigel in a chair at his table. Unfortunately, he was too short. He looked curiously at the situation until he felt a gentle tap on shoulder, and turned to find Milander pass him the nearby phone book. "Thanks," he said, using it. Now Nigel was tall enough.

"There's lots of stuff in here," Nigel continued. "There's lots of pictures too. That's a caterpillar," he said, pointing a picture on the wall. "Do you talk?" Nigel asked Grissom, turning around suddenly. "Because you haven't said nothing since we got here."

"Anything," Milander corrected.

"Do you like caterpillars?" Nigel asked, back on the subject of the picture on the wall. "I like caterpillars. Caterpillars become butterflies and butterflies is my favouritest animal."

Milander sighed. "Butterflies are," he corrected. "And just favourite."

"I have a blue and white butterfly," Nigel said as if Milander hadn't spoken. "His name is Christine. Dad says that's a girl's name, so I just call him Chris. Christine is one of the ladies at the Playtime Day Care. She's not the one with the glasses. She wears sunglasses, but not the other kind of glasses, like your glasses Uncle Gil." Nigel bounced a little, looking at the other pictures.

Milander looked at Grissom curiously as Nigel continued to prattle on. Grissom might have noticed, but he was studying Nigel with that same curiosity. "Are you going to s-say anything?" Milander asked quietly. "He won't give you a chance to talk, you have to take it."

Grissom shrugged, sitting next to Nigel.

"...and there's this other room. They don't let us go in there, but once I looked in and there were all these boxes. They say there's just papers but they're big boxes and paper's small, so it can't just be that. I think--"

"Do you like butterflies?" Grissom asked suddenly, deciding to cut off his son.

Nigel looked up, interested and curious. "They're my favourite," he said, with a look at Milander and emphasis on the last syllable.

Grissom stood, putting a hand on Nigel's shoulder. "I'll be right back."

"Okay, Uncle Gil," Nigel replied, bouncing.

Milander smiled, against the wall and a rather casual observer.

Grissom returned, with a thick book and a stack of round, clear disc shaped containers. He took the top one off the stack and put it in front of Nigel. "Basilarchia arthemis astyanax," he said, pointing to the black and faded orange specimen the disk contained.

Nigel looked at Grissom curiously at the gibberish, and then back at the pretty little butterfly. "It looks like the lamp in the sittin' room," Nigel commented.

"You have a butterfly lamp?"

"Nah," Nigel said. "It's the same colour. It's dark but the light is yellow so it looks like that."

Grissom took another one of the disks. "Phocides pygmalion okeechobee."

"It's purple!" Nigel exclaimed, pulling the disk closer. "Sorry," he said, putting disk back where it had been. "Can I look at it?"

Grissom smiled and pushed the disk closer. "It's called a Mangrove Skipper."

"Wow," Nigel said, picking up the disk carefully, with reverence. "It's blue!" He tilted it a little, to see the colours move. "It's all shiny."

"Iridescent," Grissom said, leaning over Nigel protectively. "These are ones I've collected or had given to me," he said, putting the disks in a row in front of Nigel. "Or bought, or acquired."

"Acquired," Milander repeated, "sounds a l-little shady."

Grissom turned to him and gave a mysterious look.

Nigel didn't pay the exchange any mind, instead engrossed in looking at the dead bugs in front of him, occasionally making remarks about colour or other features.

Grissom turned back to Milander, noting the bag he was carrying. He tilted his head curiously, noting the dark auburn hair spilling out of it. He moved away from Nigel, plucking it out of the leather sack.

"A wig," he noted, "I see you noticed the FBI outside the building."

"They're hard to m-miss," Milander replied. "Someone should train them in n-not being obvious."

Grissom stood, walking to his cabinet. "Do you mind if I take a picture of him?" he asked Milander, picking up his camera.

A shrug was the reply. "Sure."

Grissom smiled, leaning next to Nigel, still oohing and awe-ing over the specimens. "Can I take your picture?" he asked nicely.

Nigel beamed. "Okay!"

"Is that your w-work camera?" Milander asked.

Grissom picked up Nigel, who responded with a rather indignant: "I can walk, you know. I'm not a baby."

He plunked Nigel on the counter. "Yeah," he answered, regarding the camera.

"Whoa, careful," Milander said, jumping forward. He picked up the gun still on the counter. It wasn't anywhere near Nigel, really, but much too close for comfort.

"I forgot about that," Grissom said, setting up his camera.

Milander took a towel and then another one, using one to hold the gun.

Grissom watched this curiously. "What are you doing?"

"Wiping my prints off your gun," Milander replied as though this should be obvious. "That wouldn't help either of us."

"No," Grissom agreed, stepping back. "Smile," he commanded, raising the camera.

Happily, Nigel obliged.

Milander put the gun on a high shelf, satisfied it was clean. "H-hold on," he reached into his bag as Grissom stopped taking pictures. With a brush he stepped forward, setting to work on Nigel's moderate mop of dark wavy curls. "C-can't take a picture with messy hair." With a frown, Nigel submitted to the grooming.

"You sound like my mother," Grissom said, fiddling with settings on his camera.

Milander glared.

"Sorry."

When the combing stopped, Nigel brightened again, waiting for his picture to be taken.

After pictures, more displays of butterflies and assorted other dead bugs and Nigel chattering away about his entire two year life, he finally wound down to a manageable point. After a few minutes, he was asleep.

Milander looked at his watch, standing by the kitchenette with Grissom. "It's his bedtime."

Grissom smirked. "This is when I get up."

Milander shrugged. "It's nice b-being able to sleep again. He's just recently settled into a r-regular sleeping pattern."

Grissom walked over to his fridge. "Beer?" he offered.

"No thanks," Milander said, shaking his head. "Just water is good."

Grissom withdrew a beer, and a bottle of water. Suddenly serious and perhaps even a little sullen, he passed the water to Milander. "I...I missed you, you know," he said, quietly.

Taken aback, Milander put the water aside. "I-I don't...." He looked around, appearing lost. He stopped, looking at Nigel, and smiled wryly. "I haven't forgot about you." He picked up his water and opened it.

Grissom looked confused, then to Nigel. "Oh, right. Sorry."

Milander laughed shortly and quietly. "It's all right," he said, taking a sip of the water. "He's...he's the best thing to happen in a long time." Milander looked at Nigel then at Grissom. "He looks like you," he commented.

Grissom nodded, "And you." He opened the beer, swirling it in the bottle before briefly upending it. "So, he likes butterflies," he said.

"You n-noticed," Milander said. "He wants to dress like one for Hallowe'en...I've got an antennae hat and wings m-made, but I have to ask N-Naiya to make the fabric bits." Milander laughed a little. "I've never used a sewing machine in my life."

"Naiya?"

Milander shrugged, a little awkwardness seeping into his movements. "My...g-girlfriend, sort of."

"Sort of?"

"Not really official," Milander explained.

"Oh," Grissom said, drinking a little more of his beer. He put the half-finished drink on the counter. "Your friend's being giving the team a run around," Grissom said, changing the subject.

Milander nodded, sadly. "I know."

"Can you tell me anything about him?"

Milander stifled a shudder. "And spoil your fun," he said darkly, choking a little.

Grissom bit his lip. "Did you go to Modesto?"

"I didn't have t-to," he replied. "That's actually why I came." He walked back to his bag, pulling out a medium sized envelope. "This, and because I wanted you to see Nigel."

"Thank you," he replied, quietly, accepting the envelope. With hesitation, and keeping them out of Milander's sight, he pulled out what felt to be photographs. They were photographs. Of Craig and Shelley Mason, comfirmedly deceased. Grissom winced at the image, putting them back in the envelope, out of sight.

"I fumed them," Milander said in an empty tone. "Nothing as s-sophisticated as your lab

equipment, but there aren't any prints to lift. So I can't help you that way."

"But you know who did this."

"An expert c-con. He taught me some things; I taught him some things." Milander looked at the envelope shortly. "I never trusted h-him."

Grissom frowned. He wasn't going to get a name out of Milander. "What can you tell me about him?" Honestly, a name wouldn't help. He couldn't get a warrant based on the word of Paul Milander.

"He'll get sloppy."

"He already did. They recovered a bullet from the scene."

Milander smiled in irony. "He learned his craft from other cons," he continued, "when he spent a lot of t-time with them."

"Prison."

Milander didn't nod. He didn't need to. He looked at Nigel, almost frightened. "Every morning I wake up and wonder if he's found Nigel too."

Grissom felt a stabbing pain in his chest, and his throat dry up.

"You know about him, the FBI and your department knows about him...r-rest assured he knows about h-him, too."

"Leave him here with me," Grissom started, "I'll find somewhere--"

"No," Milander interrupted firmly. "Most people do a horrible job raising other people's k-kids. Sure, not all of t-them, but...but I couldn't g-give him up. Nigel's...Nigel's precious and I'll protect him the best I can. No one else can afford him that protection."

Grissom nodded, terrified.

"Do you know why I named him Nigel?" Milander started, desperate for the topic change.

"No," Grissom replied.

"I wanted to name him after you...but I couldn't n-name him after you." Milander relaxed against the fridge. "So I settled on Nigel...so I c-could name him after you, without n-naming after you."

Grissom smiled, feeling the fear melt slowly. "I'm honoured."

"He'll be talking about Uncle Gil for months now, you r-realise."

Grissom laughed quietly. "He talks a little bit, I noticed."

Milander rolled his eyes. "He started talking at about a y-year. Then about some months ago he realised the j-joy of stringing w-words together." Milander frowned in humour. "He hasn't shut up since."

Grissom shook his head, smirking, finishing his beer. He put it down, moving closer to the fridge. "It's good to see you again."

Milander looked at odds with himself, and then turned away, nodding.

"You let your hair grow in," Grissom observed, raising a hand to push some stray strands from Milander's eyes.

"Y-yeah," he said, nodding a little, otherwise not moving.

Grissom put his hand on Milander's shoulder. "It's...it's nice," he said finally.

"I'm not a woman," he said, sternly and absently.

"Paul, it was just an observation." Grissom brought his hand away.

"Yeah," Milander said, not making eye contact.

"Look at me?" Grissom asked.

Milander turned, standing up and no longer leaning. "Okay."

Grissom put his hand back near Milander's face, tracing the hair line to cup his palm around the back of his neck. He leaned in, kissing him gently.

Milander broke it off, after a few moments had passed. "I should g-go."

"You'd have to wake Nigel."

Milander looked at Grissom, a little surprised. "They're w-watching your b-building," he reminded.

"Just stay a little while longer," Grissom said.

Milander frowned and nodded. "A little while."

"Dammit," Ecklie exclaimed as they pulled up to the unassuming little house and parked along the sidewalk. "Took long enough to find."

Without exclamations of their own, Catherine, Nick and Warrick left the vehicle. The squad car that had been following them pulled up behind, and the officer exited.

"Dark," Ecklie observed, peering into the windows. "I don't care how smart this guy is," he said quietly walking back to his team, "there's no way he could have known we were coming."

Nick looked around. "No treads in the driveway." He knelt down. "Doesn't look like anyone's been here in a while."

Ecklie walked over to him. "He could keep his car somewhere else," he postulated. "Less to track."

"Could be parked on the street," Nick agreed, scanning the vehicles.

"You snoop out the perimeter. See what you can find. Anything suspicious, anything to possibly link him to these murders or the original ones."

Nick nodded, standing.

Ecklie walked back to where Catherine and Warrick waited. "Warrick, you check with him. Try to bring me back something to get this guy on."

"Sure thing," Warrick said, starting off with Nick.

"What do you say we try knocking?" Ecklie asked Catherine.

She shrugged. "Worth a shot."

Returning to work, Grissom didn't get a chance to return to his fading cases. As one of the only CSIs not investigating what were quickly dubbed the Suicide Murders, he was called off to a murder suicide of his own. Field kit in hand, he approached the house.

"Two bodies," Brass said, walking with him to the house. "Wife and husband, married eight years." Brass pointed to officers outside the police tape, some neighbours and children. "Three kids. The middle child, the blonde girl in the pink bathrobe says she saw it."

Grissom sighed, entering the house. "Coroner pronounce?"

"Just pronouncing now," Brass said as they walked in the living room, finding David attending to the closest of two bodies.

Grissom knelt next to him. "Time of death?"

"They've both been dead an hour," David explained. "There's a gun in the wife's hand, and no, I didn't touch it."

Walking over, he crouched to photograph and pick up the gun. ".44," he said, sealing it in an evidence bag. "Do we have an ID on the vics?" he asked.

"Cheryl and Elvis Aaron Owens." Brass walked over to the bodies slowly. "What do you want to bet that's not his birth name?"

"That doesn't really matter," Grissom said, testing the dead wife's hands for GSR. "David, could you print the wife and the husband after Doc Robbins gets a look at them?"

"Sure can."

Positive. "She definitely fired a gun," Grissom said, capping the swab. He looked back to the husband. "He was standing by the sofa, so she was over..." Grissom peered over to the hall. "Coming out from the hall?" He looked closer at the wife's hands. "Blood," he noted, swabbing it.

"Classic murder suicide," Brass said.

"Possibly," Grissom replied. "If the blood on her hands and the prints on the gun match up."

Brass nodded. "She probably touched her husband. Bloody hands."

Grissom bit his lip, thinking. "Shoots him, leans over to touch him and see if he's really dead...it hits her he's bleeding out and she realizes what she's done--"

"Pops herself," Brass finished.

"If the evidence matches up, then yes." Grissom started walking around the living room, then to

the back door.

"Looking for signs of forced entry?" Brass asked, watching.

"Can't rule anything out. Suicide isn't always suicide," he said.

"This isn't exactly a Paul Milander job."

Grissom wandered around a bit, making his way back to Brass. "Paul Milander isn't the only one who can stage a suicide." Grissom walked past, and out the front door. No signs of forced entry there either.

Camera in hand he continued, sweeping the perimeter of police tape, his little flashlight making its appearance and trying to be useful.

Crumbs.

His flashlight beam settled inquisitively on the crumbs by the police tape. Slowly, the beam traced up, and shone in the eyes of an officer. Eating a doughnut and standing with another cop, he tried to ward off the evils of the offensive beam of light.

"Do you mind?" Grissom asked. "You're getting crumbs in my crime scene."

The officers stepped back, laughing a little. "Sorry, Clarice," the one said.

The flashlight was back in his eyes.

"Excuse me?"

"Clarice." He laughed, and his partner doubled over, shaking in fits of hilarity. "You know, Clarice Starling," the doughnut wielding crime fighter continued. "From Silence of the Lambs, Anthony Hopkins, Hannibal--"

"Yes, I saw it...is there a reason your wasting my time with this?"

"Clarice," he said again, giggling.

Grissom frowned, turning around and going back to inspecting the lawn.

"For a scientist detective, he's pretty slow," said the other.

Grissom pretended he didn't hear that.

Greg and Sara mulled over their photos and collected evidence.

"Heard you guys found something," Catherine said, entering the room.

"Homicide," Sara said, indicating the photos. "Possibly two," she said, pointing to photos of two separate blood pools. "DNA is processing...seeing if it matches our hair and bloody army men."

"Anything else?"

Greg pointed to some other photos. "Shoe prints." He took out another photo from another file. "Matches the print found at Byrant's house. Size 10."

Nick and Warrick filed in after. "Your pictures from Milander's house."

"Milander's house? In Mulberry?"

"Reno," Catherine said, sitting and going over the pictures."

"Reno?" Sara asked.

"We traced the statues to a company, who told us the designer," Warrick explained. "Name came back Robert DiMarco, and wouldn't you know who Bobby's mug shot looked a lot like."

"Apparently now everyone's got triples, not doubles," Catherine said, flipping through the photos. "Talk about doppelganger syndrome."

"Looked for property tax records, which turned up two hits. A warehouse in Good Springs," Nick said.

"That Pete Walker was killed in," Warrick filled in.

"And a house in Reno," Nick finished.

"Paid him a visit, but it doesn't look like anyone's lived there in a while."

"Bummer," Sara said. "We paid a visit to Shelley and Craig Mason," she picked up one of the photos. "Adding to the blood pools without bodies collection."

Warrick took the photo. "DNA match?"

"Not yet," Sara said. "Working on it."

"Got anything for Ecklie?" Catherine checked her watch. "He'll be here shortly."

"Just the shoe print," Greg replied.

"And photos of all this blood." Sara looked up. "Shelley Mason left her job four months ago. No one filed a missing persons report on her or Craig Mason...we checked the area schools, he was never enrolled in any of them."

"But the blood wasn't that old," Greg continued. "So Milander fakes his death and hides, and so does his family."

"Fear?" Sara postulated. "Maybe she knew Milander wasn't dead."

"Shame," Catherine said. "She was divorced."

"So?" Sara replied. "Plenty of people get divorced, no shame in that."

"Remember that creepy community you were in? Shame."

"Anything's possible."

"Anyone seen Gris?" Greg asked.

"You've been here longer than us," Nick said.

"Why?" Catherine questioned.

Greg shrugged. "Haven't seen him around in a while. It's weird...usually he's just always around."

"He's on probation," Warrick said, "Ecklie's been working him like a dog."

"It's going to take a lot of work for him to earn back all that respect," Catherine said sourly.

"Who doesn't respect him anymore?" Greg asked.

Catherine, Nick, Warrick and Sara all exchanged glances to varying degrees.

"Didn't anyone tell you what happened?" Catherine asked.

"Yeah, the Milander thing." Greg shrugged. "That's not really a big deal," he finished, weakly.

"Not a big deal," Sara replied, incredulous.

"What do you mean, not a big deal?" Catherine said. "He compromised an investigation, he impugned on his own morals, he hid information from the department--"

"I just don't think he really could have done anything," Greg said, feeling small.

"We're just going to say you're right for a minute, Greggo," Nick said, sitting next to Warrick. "It's not bad enough that Milander visits him and he doesn't tell anyone, then he sleeps with him?"

"Well...maybe he was going to tell and that's why he didn't. Whether he was raped or not he was probably feeling guilty about it." Greg shrugged. "So he didn't tell anybody."

"And that makes it all better," Warrick said, sarcastically.

"You have got to get off this Grissom worship thing," Sara said, earning her a few 'excuse me' style glances from the other four.

The main one, of course, came from Greg. "Excuse me? You're accusing me of Grissom worship? You? Accusing me?"

"Yeah," Sara retorted, attitude strengthening her tone. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Well, come on," Greg said, feeling scared and small as the conversation turned debate heading into argument progressed. "Everyone knows about you and Gris--"

"Stop right there," Sara said, "because there's nothing between me and Grissom."

Greg put on a little attitude of his own. "Isn't that the problem?"

Sara glared.

"Look, this isn't the point," Catherine interjected. "Grissom did something that cost him a lot of respect and position, and he'd better find some way to atone for this really good. We're talking lands a damaged 747 with both pilots dead and only one engine carrying two hundred orphans and a handful of nuns without any flight training or casualties good."

"Honestly," Nick said, piping up, "I still respect him. A little disappointed...sure. I've lost respect for him...but that doesn't mean I don't respect him at all."

"Well, you're alone with Greg, then," Sara said, "because Milander is creepy, weird, gross, dangerous and a murderer. The last thing he or anyone should have done is sleep with him." Sara shook her head. "That's so disgusting."

Warrick shuddered. "Please don't help anyone picture that."

"I just don't get why everyone thinks its astonishing or disgusting..." Greg trailed off, his courage dying in the heat of the argument. "I mean, it's Grissom. Who knows what he likes? Milander's not a completely horrible person. He did something wrong and he should go to jail for it, but that doesn't make him subhuman."

"Why don't you go sleep with him," Sara snapped, "if you like him so much."

"Grissom?" Greg asked.

"Milander."

"Oh," Greg said, trying to study his neglected photos.

There was an odd awkward silence in the thickly tense environment, a cause of several sticky and subjects with 'don't mention anything' status being brought up against the silent rules.

"Can't we just forget about this and move on?" Nick said, the first to talk. "Grissom's a good guy who did something wrong and fighting about it is only going to make us all hate each other."

"Grissom lost our respect," Catherine repeated, "and if he ever does come back there's no way anyone's just going to forget about it," she finished, acidic.

"The main point here," Warrick said, directed at Greg, "is that Milander should be behind bars and Grissom helped keep him in front of them."

Nick sat back. "No, no it isn't," he countered. "I mean think about it, man. What if it wasn't Milander, but a woman?"

Sara cut in with the ever useful, "He was close enough, apparently."

"He's a man," Greg retorted.

"Anyway, what if it had been a woman? A real woman with nothing extra? What if it had been Angelina Jolie or someone like that?"

"Then there'd be a lot fewer Tomb Raider sequels," Warrick quipped.

"Beyond that, man. Would we care?" Nick spread his hands. "It'd be like 'who could resist that' no matter what she did."

"Then at least there'd be a reason..." Sara said, trailing off.

"Exactly," Nick said. "But it was Paul Milander, someone who fell from his perch on the gender fence and hit a few branches of the ugly tree on the way down."

"That doesn't make it right," Sara interjected.

"We've all got stuff we're hiding, that we don't want people to know."

"Really," Sara said. "Maybe he's hiding more, then."

"He's human," Greg said, to Sara, "I mean...." Greg's voice faltered, "You drink a bit, and Warrick gambles and Catherine did the whole dancing thing--"

"You want to bring up closet skeletons?" Sara retorted, the aggression of the past returning to her voice. "Then what have you got to hide?"

"What?" Greg asked.

"If everyone's hiding something, then what are you hiding?"

Greg shrugged. "Not much."

"So if you're not hiding anything, I guess that disproves your theory."

Greg swallowed, and continued in the smallest voice he'd sported in a time. "I'm gay," he admitted.

Sara raised an eyebrow. "Sure."

Greg looked up, shaking a little. Not able to look at the others in the room, he paid attention only to Sara. "You don't believe me?"

"Nope." Sara fiddled with a pen, looking the poker player confident of a bluff when they hear it. "I think you're just talking out your ass."

Greg pulled out his wallet, fishing through it. He pulled out a small photograph. "There's me and...and my boyfriend," he indicated, his hand tremouring almost violently.

Sara looked at the photo, as though she were looking for some evidence to prove Greg wrong. "At least he's cuter than Grissom's boyfriend."

"Am I interrupting something?" Ecklie said, coming in through the open door. As he entered, Sanders came in behind him.

"Not really," Catherine said.

Sanders and Ecklie seated themselves. "What have you got?" Sanders asked, peering at the photos across the table. "The sheriff is pressing for answers; my department is pressing for answers."

"Shoe prints," Greg said, with no confidence. "Links the murder of Norman Byrant to the possible murders of Craig and Shelley Mason."

"Possible? When will we know for certain?"

"DNA lab is processing now," Sara said. "We found pools of blood and dragging marks at the Modesto house. No bodies."

"We also found another address for Paul Milander," Ecklie said. "We're trying to get enough to get a warrant."

"We think we have enough of a case to get you that warrant," said Agent Sanders. "As well as an arrest warrant."

Ecklie turned to Greg. "A match on those purple fibers?"

"All the purple fibers collected from the crime scene are from the same wool, but that's all I can tell you about them."

"And the bullet?"

"No hit from ballistics," Catherine said. "They're working on possible partial matches, like say if the killer used parts from different guns."

"Anything else?"

At first there was silence, and then everyone looked to everyone else. "That's all we have?" Catherine asked.

There were shrugs and other non-committal gestures.

"So you've been on this case for how long," Sanders started, "and you've got nothing? There's a killer on the loose and the public's got wind of it. Everyone from here to Washington is screaming at everyone else because no one can find this Milander guy--"

"It isn't Milander," Catherine said, "at least, the evidence doesn't support that it is."

"Evidence? You don't have evidence! What evidence?" Sanders exclaimed in rapid succession.

"These don't fit his psyche profile--"

"So? Maybe he changed it. He outsmarted all of you, now he's outsmarting your psychiatrists." Sanders jabbed a finger down on some of the photos spread across the table. "There is a killer on the loose and you tell me you have nothing--"

"Hey!" Sara interjected, "we've been working our asses off, sometimes around the clock, going everywhere we can and making evidence out of weird little statues and army men and just because someone's out there killing people doesn't mean there's evidence out there that's just going to walk right up to us and say 'Hi, I'm evidence. You deserve to meet me because you've done a lot of hard work.'"

Catherine continued, "If there's nothing to find, there's nothing to find."

"There's always something to find," Sanders retorted.

"Then you get off your ass and find it," Catherine replied.

"Do you know who you're talking to? I'm going to put in a word about you. Find someone who is actually competent enough to do this job."

"And maybe they should find someone competent enough to do yours--"

"Do you mind?" came a small but firm voice from the door.

They turned, finding Grissom.

"I can hear you all down the hall and over 'Ride of the Valkyries.' People are trying to work here."

"Unless you have information," Sanders said coldly, "get out."

Grissom just looked at him blankly for a minute, then walked away. To everyone's surprise, he

returned in short order, with his case.

"What are you still doing here? You're off this case."

"I don't know how much this will help you," he ignored Sanders, opening the case, "but it's something." He pulled out a folder. Exhaling deeply, he gathered his courage. "Milander visited me two nights ago," he admitted quietly. He handed the pictures to Catherine. "The killer sent him these."

Catherine opened the folder as Grissom closed his case.

"Milander visited you?" Ecklie asked.

"Milander didn't visit you," Sanders snapped irately. "Get out of here. You're off this case." Sanders turned to Ecklie. "We have surveillance on his residence. Paul Milander never visited him."

"Then how did he get this?" Catherine said, passing one of the photos to Sanders and putting the others on the table.

"I guess we don't need that DNA back," Greg said.

"I get it," Sanders replied. "You're showing us this, make us think he's helping us, trying to get sympathy for him because this makeshift family of his is dead."

"No family is 'makeshift'," Grissom said with resentment, "Print the envelope," he said, holding it up.

"Prints can be planted," Sanders said, "as this case heartily proves."

"Palm trees...white bricks," Catherine said. She sifted through a few more photos. "Interstate sign...they look like they're near a highway stop."

"Which interstate?" Ecklie asked

"Can't tell from the photo. If we enlarge it, maybe."

"So Milander shows up at your place," Sanders continued, not listening to the exchanges, "and you give up your chance to turn him in? Rectify past mistakes?" Sanders leaned in. "Did you sleep with him again?"

Grissom didn't dignify that with a reply.

Catherine looked to him, questioning but polite. "Why didn't you tell anyone?"

Grissom swallowed. "I...any move I'd have would have suspicious. It...wasn't worth the risk."

"Not worth the risk?" Sanders yelled, "there's a killer on the loose and it's not worth the risk? His life or yours? There's no risk unless he fights and then there's no risk to you. He wasn't even there to begin with and you come up with this 'it's not worth the risk' bullshit. What risk? There's no risk to you, and little to him. Who are you protecting?"

Grissom didn't answer, choosing to hold pointed eye contact instead.

"Nigel," Catherine said. "Nigel was with him."

"Couldn't exactly take him to day care," Grissom replied, quiet.

Sanders cocked his head, still not satisfied with any part of his story. "What colour are Nigel Milander's eyes?"

Grissom thought for a second, and a hint of a smile played on his features. "Blue. Sky blue," he replied. "I'm sorry I didn't fingerprint him for you," he finished wryly.

Sanders folded his arms.

"If you don't believe me there's nothing I can do, really. I know Nigel's eyes are blue. I didn't have to see him."

"Memorized his birth stats? Proud father," he said with a biting tone.

"My eyes are blue, Milander's eyes are blue and both my parents had blue eyes. It'd be odd if he didn't have--" Grissom looked up and laughed a little suddenly, then cracked open his case.

"Catherine, Sara, Nick, Warrick...you've all been to my townhouse."

"Not for dinner," Catherine replied.

Smiling, Grissom pulled out some photos and handed one to Catherine. "Where was that taken?"

"Oh!" Catherine cooed at the picture. "He's cute, and he looks like you. Glad he looks more like you...and look, he's got little dimples."

"Catherine?"

"Yeah?"

"Where was that photo taken?"

"Oh, right, that. Yeah, that's Gil's house."

Catherine spoke to Grissom afterwards.

"Cute kid," she said, handing back the photo of Nigel.

"Yeah," Grissom said with a smile. "He likes butterflies."

Catherine raised her eyebrows. "I'm sure you two had a lot to talk about."

"He fell in love with my Phocides pygmalion okeechobee specimen," he said with what could only be pride.

"What?"

"Mangrove Skipper," he clarified, "a butterfly."

"I see."

"He talks a lot." Grissom started back to his office, and Catherine followed behind. "Talks about everything endlessly."

"You sound like you had a good time."

"I've never had a son before," Grissom replied. "It's...it's kind of interesting," he said.

"Kids are great," Catherine replied. "Worth any trouble." Catherine stopped him, looking at him seriously. "Nigel's in danger. Why didn't you tell anyone he was there? Gil, this is serious."

"Who says Nigel would be in any less danger anywhere else? Take him away from Milander he goes in foster care. Short of putting a police escort on the family," Grissom said, "I don't see how they can protect him. And betting on a cop or Milander as to who would do a better job of protecting Nigel, I'd put my money on Milander."

"Protection is one thing. That child is isolated and left only with a--"

"Isolated? He's not isolated." Grissom cocked his head curiously. "He gets out more than I do. Day care, parks, sports, other little kid things."

"Which day care?" Catherine asked, leaning in.

"You're not using my son to find Milander."

Catherine frowned. "I hate to say it...but I don't think I could use him to find Milander either."

Grissom smiled sincerely, stopping just outside his office door. "Thank you."

"Are you still sticking with this rape story?" Catherine asked. "He shows up, you play with the kid, agree to help him find who killed his family--"

"I never said I'd help. He gave me the photos, said they were sent to him."

"It wasn't rape," Catherine said firmly.

Grissom looked away, unable to talk through a dry throat.

"Why did you do it?" Catherine's voice was trimmed with despair. "I just want to know why, because I can't see what...what or why you'd want to compromise ethics, investigations and...whatever else. I just can't understand."

Suppressing an overwhelming feeling, he stated simply, "It's everything to meet someone as lonely as you are."

The pain in his voice almost broke her, and she could feel the threat of tears in her eyes. Comforting words just weren't possible.

"Catherine!" called a voice approaching. Ecklie. "We've got another 419. William Hall. Dead in his bathtub, etc., etc." Ecklie looked to her then to Grissom. "Is everything all right? Looks like a funeral here."

"It's always a funeral here," Catherine said quietly.

"Right, well, Gil, I'd like you to come along. See what you can find at a fresh scene. No collection."

"Just eyes," he said, his voice dry.

Brass met them immediately as they arrived. "Five of you? Now that's overkill."

"Hey, Jim," Grissom said, with no kit, just a camera around his neck.

Brass smiled, gesturing to indicate there was something good here. "Normally, I know you don't like this, but since all the evidence is planted...."

"What?"

"Witness," Brass said, pointing to a guy who stood with some officers. "Swears he heard a shot, he came running over, knocking over some garbage cans. He got inside the house, to the kitchen where the killer in a ski mask ran past. There was a scuffle, and then he peeled out of here in his get away car. Neighbour ran to his house and called the police."

"Don't get fresher a scene than that," Grissom said.

Brass shrugged. "Can't remember anything about the car, except that it was white, kind of big and had four doors, but he was in a hurry."

"Tire treads," Grissom said with a smile. "Did you hear that?" he asked, turning to Catherine and Ecklie, "there's real evidence this time."

Huddled together on the lab before returning to the lab, Grissom went over what they'd collected so far.

"There's no planted evidence," he said quickly, "our killer was spooked and barely had time to wipe any prints and clean the area. Tire treads in the driveway, eyewitness, no ghost statues, nothing besides our dead body and the accompanying tape recorded message. Check every exit, starting with the one the witness said he used. Print every inch of everything on the way--everything short of fuming the whole house. Find shoe prints, find anything."

Off to the side, Brass stood watching. "Who put him back in charge of this case?"

"I'm asking myself the same question," Ecklie replied.

When a set of prints were found, Sara ran them back to the lab. Playing courier didn't trouble her in the least, being as this just might be the evidence to break the case.

Soon after others filed in, with pictures of tire treads, the bathroom and anything else they felt would help.

"Prints came back Donald Rutherford--a.k.a. Barry Henley," Sara told Ecklie and Catherine, who were working on the treads. "Same guy that little Angela Gething lead us to, saying that his daughter Victoria stole her doll."

"We're gone."

With a brigade and arrest warrant, Ecklie and his crew headed to the sleepy and secretive community of Mulberry.

They surrounded the house, Brass heading up to the door with his men. Gun in hand, he nodded to the heavily armoured man beside him. He entered, kicking in the door.

"L.V.P.D.!" he announced, entering after.

A piercing scream shot through the air, that of a little girl.

"What the hell is going on?"

Another scream, followed by a clamour.

Ecklie and Catherine walked along the wall, keeping their distance.

"Mr. Henley, or Mr. Rutherford, whichever," they could hear Brass say, "you're under arrest of the murder of William Hall."

"What's this?"

There were more screams, but they were muffled.

"Exactly what I said it was." There was a slight pause. "Arrest him."

"What are you doing?" was a woman's voice.

"It's all clear," one of the armed men said, coming out to Ecklie and Catherine.

"I'll check his shoes," Ecklie stated, starting to the door. "You check around for anything that links him." He turned to his left, the driveway. There was no car, but there was a garage. "Pay a visit to the garage, would you? See what kind of wheels Henley is sporting."

"On it."

Amidst the tension, Grissom sulked. Everyone was out having fun, and he was stuck back at CSI. Dammit. Damn Milander and his illicit visits. He frowned. Then he brightened. Well, there was one bit of fun he could have.

He walked to Greg's lab.

"Hello, Greg," he said from the door, smiling perhaps a little too smugly and knowingly.

Greg was wary. "I don't like that look." He turned back to his work. "That's the 'I've got something gross for you to do' look."

The look increased, and Grissom walked over to the fridge, withdrawing his dumpsite evidence, which was in a translucent plastic bag. "Possible murder weapon."

Greg saw a little bit of red through the frosty plastic. "Isn't...what ever that is a little small to be a murder weapon? I mean, where blunt force trauma is concerned."

"Our killer seems to be a woman, and a woman would know how to handle one. There's no prints...but at least we'll know how he was killed, and why there wasn't as much blood as there should have been." He withdrew the blood soaked object.

Greg swallowed. "You're kidding. This is a joke, right?"

Grissom's smug smile returned tenfold. "Nope."

With a disgusted look, Greg accepted the...weapon. "Great."

Ecklie walked over to Henley who stood by the door, having been read his rights. "These your shoes?"

"Yeah, they're my gardening boots," he said. "Is that a crime?"

Ecklie put them in an evidence bag, then compared tread photos to the static lift he'd just applied to said garden boots. "Perfect match. Even have that little nick in the side," he said pointing. "That's all we need," he said, shooing Henley and the officer away.

Sara and Nick had a more grisly matter to attend to. After calling the Modesto area police with details of the dump site photos, the bodies were located.

"Shelley Mason," Doc Robbins said, pointing to what had once been a corpse and was now a hollowed out bug shelter. "Grissom was by to collect the bugs. He was of course very disappointed with the state of them after transport, but he'll take anything with six or eight legs."

"Or two sets of genitalia," Sara muttered, barely audible.

If he heard, Robbins didn't react. "Craig Mason," he said pointing to the other table. "Exact time of death is sketchy...even Grissom's bugs might not be able to figure it out. Rough estimate, they've both been dead about three weeks." Robbins handed them a folder. "Photos from the scene, the bodies were wrapped in blankets, which are in that box. Grissom took more photos after the bodies got here, which are being developed."

"Cause of death?"

"Shot, Shelley Mason point blank, Craig Mason from about three to five feet. No bullets recovered...my guess would be around a .38, so it's possible that it was the same gun as the one that fired your recovered bullet." Robbins pointed to the wounds. "Mrs. Mason's entered her skull, blew out a section and came out the other side; and Craig was shot through the heart. Clean shot."

Sara stepped forward, checking the hands for any possible signs of struggle or skin cells beneath the fingernails. "She's too far decomposed," Sara said with disappointment.

"The shoes link him," Nick said, "but it's only enough to prove his shoes and probably himself were there."

Sara started combing the bodies. "No, we're going to get him for this."

"Gun," Brass said, approaching Ecklie with Catherine, who held the weapon. ".38 calibre, R.O. Barry Henley."

Ecklie smiled. "Pay dirt."

Back together in record time, Ecklie, Catherine, Nick and Sara met together with findings. Rushing could be a wonderful thing.

"Gun matches the bullet," Catherine stated. "As does the shoes." She frowned a little. "His car is a Burgandy SUV, but he could be stashing another car somewhere else, or borrowed one."

"DMV search turned up no other vehicles, in either his or his wife's name," Nick said. "Shelley and Craig Mason have been dead approximately three weeks, no bullets, but the wound could be from a .38 calibre. Either than that, the Masons don't have much for us."

"The shoe links him to the murders of the Masons," Catherine said, "and to the murder of Norman Byrant. We didn't find any newsletters, year books or anything of the sort, though," Catherine said.

"He's smart, he probably burned them or hid them or planned his crimes somewhere else. It doesn't matter," Ecklie said with a broad smile. "We've got him."

Nick frowned. "It seems too easy. He messes up, leaves prints everywhere and leads us right to him."

"He wasn't expecting the neighbour."

"Why didn't he just off the neighbour? Dump the body? It's not like he'd be too nervous or inexperienced at that."

"It doesn't have to make sense, Nick," Ecklie said. "It's just got to hold up in court."

Grissom peeked in. "I heard you have a suspect in custody."

"No, Gil," Ecklie said, in a tired tone, "we've got the murderer in custody. Gun, shoes," he said, counting on his fingers, "prints. No jury would let that past them."

"Was he ever in jail?" Grissom asked.

Nick opened the file, before Ecklie could protest the inquiry. "Nope," Nick replied.

Ecklie shrugged. "That doesn't matter. Besides, the guy has an alias."

Nick read more of the file. "No, it's not an alias," he said. "Legal change of name. Started out as a guitarist, changed his name, then became the sound engineer he is today."

Grissom nodded, face blank. "All right."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Ecklie said.

Grissom shrugged slowly, an almost sad look, and walked away.

"What's all that about?"

It was during an interrogation of the accused Mr. Henley that Brass entered, apologizing for his interruption.

"What is it?" Ecklie whispered harshly.

"Can I talk to you outside?"

Ecklie grimaced, irate at the disturbance. "What?" he snapped harshly and quietly.

"We've got a little problem," Brass said.

"Being?"

"We've had Henley in custody for six hours."

"Yeah, so?"

Brass frowned. "405, called in half an hour ago. Suspicious circs. Tape recorder, the works."

Ecklie's features hardened. "And?"

"Time of death was two hours ago."

Ecklie paused. "Dammit!" he exclaimed. "Dammit, this isn't right. We had this guy. Another copy cat?"

Brass shrugged. "I don't know."

"Milander? Milander making fun of us again?"

"Look, get a hold of yourself and get your guys out there."

Ecklie breathed deeply, nodding. "Right."

Collecting at the scene, Catherine checked her watch. "Dammit, Greg got off two hours ago."

"Then call him in," Ecklie said.

"He's not on call."

"I didn't say he was."

Pulling out her phone, Catherine dialed.

"Yeah?"

"Hi, Greg, it's Catherine, look we've got--"

"Sweet! I was just going to call you guys."

"Um, all right."

"You see, I was sitting at home, staring at the ceiling and drinking some Coke, and just thinking about the case and everything--"

"We've got a situation here, so can this hurry and go somewhere?"

"Well, the report on file, the one we took from the periodicals index said that Milander's father died in '59, right?"

"So?"

"Well," Greg continued excitedly. "It also said that Milander's father's name was John."

Catherine sported a confused microexpression momentarily. "Go on," she said.

"So I got to thinking, if that was wrong, maybe it was a transcription error--Milander's father's name was Paul, too."

"Please get to where this is going quickly."

"Our new victims are born in descending order from '65 to '61, right?"

"'60," Catherine corrected. "We just found a new victim. We need you at the lab."

"Really? All right." Greg's phone cracked a bit, then resumed its rather clear reception. "I'm at the library so I'll make it there in about twelve minutes or so. Anyway, so he's pointing to '66, then, using the scheme of the original murders."

"Okay," Catherine said.

"Well, looking over the newspaper, it said that Milander was ten at the time of his father's murder trial."

"So?"

"So? He was born on the same day as Grissom. That was '56, so how could Milander be ten only three years after he was born? If he was born in 1956 Milander was ten in 1966," he finished.

Catherine thought. "The report was wrong."

"Transcribed wrong," Greg corrected, and Catherine could hear car noises in the background. "I came to the library to look through the papers, and guess what I found."

"The original paper," she finished.

"Exactly. Paul Millander Sr. died in 1966. I'll bring a photocopy."

Catherine smiled and nodded. "Good work, Greg. It's funny how much you're exactly like Grissom and exactly the opposite."

Greg sounded confused. "Um...I don't get it. Is that a compliment or an insult or both?"

"None of the above," Catherine said. "Just a thought. You get off work and the first thing you do is mull over possible case details and inaccuracies. And you know who does that." Catherine smiled wryly. "But you were looking for the why, and not the how," she said.

"I was just looking to help," Greg replied.

"Dale Toland," Ecklie said. "Do I need to state his date of birth?"

"Not really," Sara said.

"Find something, anything to connect this to Milander. Trying to make us look bad. I'm personally frying Gil for this," he spat between clenched teeth. "Where is Grissom?" he continued before anyone could say anything against it.

"Missing persons," Catherine said.

Grissom surveyed the scene with hidden remorse. He looked back at his notes. Missing nine year old girl. 49012 Peachtree Lane. He was hit terribly, reminded how much he missed Nigel, even though he'd met him only once. With a sigh, he continued along his lead. Footprints.

"There's nothing here," Sara said with disappointment, almost two hours later. "No evidence of anything, planted or otherwise. Just the bruising to indicate a struggle, a tape recorded suicide note. Doesn't say anything besides the same message all the others had."

Ecklie frowned. "We can't connect this to Milander, our copy cat or a new copy cat. At least this doesn't clear Henley."

Catherine looked at the tub with its smudges of blood. She shook her head. "So, what, who ever did this walks?"

"No," Ecklie said. "That's not happening. We're getting too complacent. Just because Gil doesn't think there's a point to combing these scenes doesn't mean we won't. Stop thinking like him. Get out of that rut and find me something. I'm not letting this go down the tubes just because our killer's a smart one. Get him, find him whatever. I don't care who it is. Get the person who did this."

Greg ran his machines, tired out of his mind and desperately needing a break. The thrill of the chase was only so good a caffeine substitute, after all.

At least it was better than testing Grissom's murder weapon, Greg thought with a shudder.

With relief, Grissom left the quaint little home, after finding the little girl that had just wandered off. This parenting stuff was certainly a task, he thought, climbing back into his vehicle. The thought passed through his mind to grab a peaceful cup of tea to clear his head, but he never got the chance.

"...robbery, shots fired, residential," his police scanner declared. "Any available personnel requested. Address: 349 Maplethorpe, Mulberry City, Mulberry County--"

Grissom looked up. Checked his watch. Twenty minute or so drive.

He floored it.

"Guys, guys," Nick said, coming up the stairs to the bathroom. "Sir," he said to Ecklie, "there's a robbery bulletin on the scanner."

"So?" Ecklie said. "We'll get to it; we're a little busy here."

"It's a house, Leonard Gething's house."

"Angela Gething," Catherine said, perking up.

Nick nodded. "Anonymous tip. Henley's cross the street neighbour."

Ecklie frowned. "All right. Take Sara."

"I'm gone," Nick said, leaving.

It was on the way, nearly there, that the second call came in on Nick and Sara's scanner.

"...349 Maplethorpe. Anthony Galhalger, next door neighbour, reported shots fired. Mulberry City, County of Mulberry...."

"More shots fired?" Sara said.

"Whatever it is, we're on it."

Grissom pulled up to the house, barely a minute after the second call, the first to arrive. He parked the next house over, on the right, anticipating squad cars. He fiddled with his radio, keeping it quiet, waiting.

Nick and Sara arrived next, squad cars immediately after. They piled out, waiting on the sidewalk of the property over, waiting for the police to clear the scene. David arrived, ready.

Sara stood next to Grissom while the officers put up police tape. It was eerily quiet. An officer stood next to her, and Nick behind.

Sara perked up, which Grissom noticed. He watched, time slowing down, the events to follow in the next few seconds.

She tapped the officer's shoulder. "Milander," she said simply, pointing.

There was a car. Blue. Coupe. In front of the property on the other side. There was a man, leaning over, reaching into the back seat. It could be Milander.

The officer sprang, his partner behind. "Hold it!" he yelled, powerfully. "Police! Drop it!" he continued, rapid fire in quick succession.

The man didn't move.

Grissom felt the shots. The officers had fired. A window shattered. The windshield. The rear window. One of the shots hit the man. He was thrown, falling to the street.

The officers started after. Grissom was frozen.

And then a child cried.

Grissom darted, yanking David with him. Nigel.

Time started again.

Reaching the car, Grissom found Nigel, screaming, covered in blood and glass. With extreme care and shaking hands, Grissom lifted Nigel from the back seat and carried him to the grass.

"Daddy!" Nigel screamed, a childish treble piercing ear and heart.

Grissom pulled out his tweezers, nodding to David, who readied some improvised gauze. Together they worked quickly, stopping the bleeding wounds. Sara stood over them, horrified. From a few paces behind, Nick called Ecklie and Catherine filling them in. Grissom heard them, and he didn't.

The medics arrived.

Sara hurried them over to Nigel and Grissom. Again, Grissom heard them, and he didn't.

David left, now someone else stood beside, helping him tend to Nigel. Grissom started hearing the screams again.

"Hold still," the paramedic said soothingly, working quickly.

"Daddy!" Nigel cried again.

Hearing the shot, the officers inside the house rushed out. They were filled in.

Grissom shook, and barely registered as Nigel was put on a gurney and loaded into a nearby ambulance.

"He's still alive," said a voice from behind. At first Grissom thought the voice meant Nigel, but that didn't make sense...he turned, to find the other medic knelt next to Milander. "He's out cold."

Grissom sat on the grass, completely out of sorts.

Sara knelt beside him, trying to get his attention. He didn't hear.

"It's clear inside," one of the officers told Nick in a drifting tone, watching the odd display in front of the house.

"All right," Nick said, setting to work. He and David entered the house.

Grissom didn't watch as Milander was taken away.

Ecklie and Catherine stood with Sara, having just arrived at the house.

"Where's Grissom?" was the first question, before any other explanation could be had.

Sara pointed. "In the Tahoe," she said. "He's...he's in a bit of shock."

"Shock?" Ecklie said. "Because Milander is around?" Ecklie looked around. "Speaking of which, where is he? That bastard better not have gotten away."

Nick shook his head. "En route to the hospital. Officer shot him, after Sara spotted him."

"And Gil's upset they shot his boyfriend."

"Would you give it up?" Sara said quickly. "He didn't even look at Milander after they shot him. Nigel was with him. He was a bloody mess, covered in glass." She pointed to the car, missing a few windows. "Bullet passed through the windshield, Milander then the back window."

"Is Milander going to live to get what's coming to him?"

"He was bleeding out...medics were hopeful."

"Well, that's some good news." Ecklie turned, entering the house.

"Bastard," Sara muttered.

David stood next to lumps on the floor, stripped of dignity in death. Catherine and the others entered.

"Four dead," he said. "Three in the living room, one upstairs in the bathtub."

Catherine looked in horror at the two little girls, curled up and eyes open in frozen terror.

"They've been dead less than twenty minutes," David reported.

"Twenty minutes?" Catherine said. "That's impossible, the first call came in...the first call was a head start," she said. "For what?" Catherine knelt next to Angela Gething. "The second call was the neighbour...that's when the actual shots were fired."

"Twelve minutes ago," Sara said, checking her watch.

David nodded. "Sounds about right. They're still warm."

"He only had one daughter," Sara said, looking at the little girl she'd previously met. "Who's this other girl?"

Catherine leaned over her. "She's not going to have any ID on her...."

Ecklie stepped in on the scene. "Sara, Nick, you take the bodies downstairs. "Catherine, you're with me upstairs."

Grissom sat in the Tahoe, heavy and detached. People were talking at him. There were voices, lights...everything was hazy.

He looked out the window, distant. There was a woman there, hysterical. Grissom rolled down the window.

"...she's in there," the woman said quickly and crying, "she's in there!" she cried. "Please, I have to go in there! I have to see her, tell me she's all right, tell me she's...."

Grissom couldn't hear it all. Sara came out of the house. Puzzled but disconnected, he watched, and eventually realised Sara was getting a description of her little girl. Her little girl Alice.

Sara frowned, grief stricken by proxy.

"I'm sorry," she said. "A girl matching your daughter's description has...has been found. I'm so sorry," she repeated, "but she's passed away."

Grissom watched, torn, as the woman cried, allowing Sara to comfort her.

He wiped away a tear.

The table was covered in boxes, bags and files.

"Yearbooks," Sara said, quietly. "Found them in Gething's office. Gregory Morris, Lion's Gate Centennial, General Eisenhower... to name a few." She pointed to a stack of phone books. "Annotated," she said, indicating little pieces of tape on certain pages. "He highlighted the names of men born on the right dates, studied them," she picked up a file box on the floor. "Stalked them, got addresses, notes, recorded habits...." Sara pointed to another pile. "Newsletters, periodicals, anything with birthdates." The last was a pile of photocopies. "Even went looking for old newspaper birth announcements," she finished.

Catherine looked at the pile. "And which of these fine schools did our Mr. Gething attend?"

"None. Arrested at fifteen, sent to juvenile detention for manslaughter. Served three there, moved to the big time and served seven more. Released, and was back in and out for fraud, larceny and..." she scanned the list, "drug possession. Manslaughter charge was removed from his police record, as part of a young offenders clemency."

"Leonard Gething shot himself, and the rest of his family. We tested both his own hands as well as Paul Milander's and only Mr. Gething tested positive for GSR." Nick leaned forward. "But this is the most interesting piece." He passed a paper contained in a clear plastic bag. "Suicide note."

Agent Sanders read it. "My name is Leonard Gething, I was born...I reside...blah, blah, blah...I love you, mom. What a piece of trite. My mother was a bitch, actually, so that's the only time I've ever written that. For a supposed artist and musician, Pauline had no imagination. Art in life is art in death, and art is not a trifle. She never became a man; she could never do what she strived. She couldn't even go through with suicide. Any woman can off three people, that's no accomplishment. But she'd never accomplish the dozen." Sanders frowned, almost remorseful. "P.S. Give my regards to Mr. Henley; and of course, you're welcome for Pauline."

"He called Milander," Ecklie said. "Led us to him."

"Speaking of which," Sanders said, putting the note back on the table indifferently. He reached into his brief case. "An arrest warrant for Mr. Milander." Sanders sighed. "We've assembled all the evidence remaining from the original three murders, so it's up to you to build the case. That warrant is for the charge of manslaughter, for the death of Larry Jaruso."

"There were four," Sara said. "His mother."

Sanders frowned. "He was dead. The case was closed before it was even opened. No evidence was collected. Everything was disposed of, and the body was cremated. You can barely prove she's dead."

"What happened to her property?" Catherine said. "Did someone else in the family inherit it? Revert to the state?"

"You're going to love this," Sanders said. "All her property reverted to the estate of 'Pauline Millander', and thus to Shelley and Craig Mason. They've died and Milander's still alive, so the property goes right back."

"Crafty bastard," Nick said.

"I'm not sure that part was intentional," Catherine said. "He owns at least two warehouses and a house...he doesn't need more property. And since we can't prove he killed his mother," she said.

"He keeps the house," Sara replied.

"Crafty bastard," Sanders repeated.

Ecklie looked at his watch. "Does anyone know where Grissom is? He's supposed to be here, telling me how far he is on his cases," he said with a frown.

"Hospital," Catherine said. "Giving Nigel a nice little vigil."

"How sweet," Ecklie said with sarcasm. "It'd be nice if he informed someone that he's taking personal time."

"There's a letter and form on your desk," Catherine said. "It's not his fault you don't look in your inbox." Catherine grabbed an apple, about to leave the room. "Honestly, you're as bad as he is."

His shock had melted, in so the foundation of his ability to cope was horribly compromised. It was replaced, perhaps as a measure of sanity, with ire.

And the ire had found its outlet.

"Jim," Grissom said, hurriedly and catching up with the detective. "Which interrogation room is Hughes in?"

"Gil, this is a bad idea--"

"Tell me, Jim. Where is Officer Hughes?"

"We're handling this. It's a very bad--"

"Dammit, Jim, he took a shot at my son--"

"Which is exactly why this is bad idea." Brass exhaled, presenting himself as calmly as possible in hopes that it would carry over. "Look, we're handling this. He might have been a little hasty in his decision--"

"Hasty? Jim, he almost killed a two year old."

"Which is why we're holding an investigation into the matter at all." Brass put a hand on Grissom's forearm firmly. "You don't want to get involved."

"I want to talk to him. I want to know what the hell he was thinking."

"What was he thinking? Gil, he was apprehending a murder suspect."

"He didn't wait a second after they shouted at him. They just shot at him and because of that Nigel is in the hospital, fighting head wounds. I'm not just to going to lean back and watch as--"

"Gil," Brass said firmly, cutting him off. "He shouldn't have fired. He didn't say Milander's name. He didn't get his attention. He shouldn't have fired," he repeated. "He injured a toddler. We know this. You bursting in on his interrogation isn't going to help anything."

"He'll get a slap on the wrist and a pat on the back," Grissom retorted, suppressed rage hissing through tightly clenched teeth.

"No, Gil, he won't. He broke procedure."

Grissom stood, not at all satisfied with the explanation.

"All right, Gil," Brass said, stepping out of Grissom's space, now that he was coping better. "I'll take you to the inquiry. But," he said sharply, "you only watch. Only eyes and ears, and you stay outside. When he leaves, I don't want you anywhere near him. You so much as talk to him and you'll wish you were just suspended again."

Grissom frowned, nodding. "Fair enough."

Grissom stood outside the window, watching the proceedings. In his mind's eye a bright blue eyed boy was hooked to medical equipment and wrapped in bandages, sleeping peacefully.

"Officer Hughes, how long have you been on this job?" asked the IA agent who had just entered.

"Five here in Vegas, after four years in Memphis," he answered.

"Why were you transferred?"

"I requested it. Memphis wasn't doing it for me."

Grissom tilted his head, watching, oddly detached. They discussed further details of Hughes' career.

"Now, in your report," the agent said, opening a clipboard, "you state you fired at the suspect after your partner, C. Bradley, alerted him and asked him to freeze."

Getting irritated, Hughes replied, "That's right."

"What did your partner say?"

"He said to freeze, announced our authority as police," he said, perceptibly rehearsed actions entering his response, "said to drop it...meaning his weapon."

"And what lead you to believe he had a weapon?"

"He was leaning into a car to pick up something."

"So neither of you saw a weapon."

Hughed frowned. "No."

"The suspect's name was never said, correct?"

"No."

"And he didn't look at you?"

Hughes' expression firmed. "No."

"So you had no way of knowing if you indeed had his attention."

"He heard us," Hughes retorted obstinately.

"What if the suspect was deaf? Or otherwise impaired? He might not have heard you. Especially since he was tending to his child--"

"Look, there was a suspect there in front of me. We'd been hearing this 'get him at any cost' vibe for weeks, and he was just leaving a murder scene. The guy's killed over a dozen people. So he's there in front of me, I figure he's got a gun, and he's reaching for it, so I fired."

"He's only a suspect. He's not a murderer until a jury says he is," the agent replied coolly.

"Right," Hughes said.

"Wouldn't a gun be logically kept on his person?"

"Maybe he was going for heavier equipment. I don't know. We're supposed to clear the scene."

"Not by firing at suspects. He wasn't fleeing the scene; he wasn't resisting arrest. How did you even know it was him?"

"One of those science chicks IDed him," he said.

"So he doesn't resist, he doesn't flee and there's no sign he has a weapon, and you fire at him?"

"It was a weird situation."

"Weird situation or otherwise, procedure still stands. A weapon shouldn't even be withdrawn until a suspect shows signs of flight or altercation."

"Easy for you to say," the officer said.

The agent studied Hughes, and Grissom detected a hint of annoyance play around his eyes. "Is this where you tell me it's all right to throw out the rule book because you're on the streets and I'm not? I've heard it before. I was on patrol myself, and I'm not going to hear that you think you can dump procedure just because the job is tough."

"He was a suspect, possibly armed, and I fired," Hughes said in his own defence.

"You injured a child," the agent replied. "That's gross negligence."

"They said at any cost," Hughes continued, leaning forward. "It's not my fault he brings his kid when he offs his vics. Besides, the kid's not dead."

Having enough, Grissom turned and walked away.

The beeps continued monotonously, along with the rise and fall of Nigel's chest. Grissom tilted his head, watching Nigel sleep, looking at the slightly damp curls that peaked out from the bandage wrapped around his head.

A nurse walked in, checking that everything was in working order. She said nothing, as it was before, letting Grissom his silence.

It was a different atmosphere from intensive care, where Nigel had been moved from, which was a relief. It was full of nerves and despair there, desperation and worries, and he was glad for the calm environment.

The other thing about intensive care was the strict visitor regulations. Grissom had had to admit to his relation, as well as awkwardly spell out Milander's little secret. He hated doing that, but at least he could see Nigel. It also afforded Nigel the peace of a separate hospital room, as he was apparently, as a biological or adopted child, thusly covered by Grissom's HMO. He'd never thought of that before.

Intensive care wasn't a thing of the past, though, as Milander was still there, fighting a nasty gun shot wound to the clavicle and a concussion.

"Mr. Grissom?"

There was a doctor behind him. "Yes?"

"You wanted an update on Paul Milander's condition?"

Grissom turned away from Nigel momentarily. "How is he?"

"I can't give you exact details, but I can tell you he won't be in intensive care much longer. We'll be moving him within the next few hours. The bullet missed the artery, so there's no damage to his arm."

"What about his impact wounds?"

"Brain activity returned to normal. He might be disoriented for awhile, but there shouldn't be any permanent damage."

Grissom gave a slight smile, nodding. "Thank you."

As Sara and Nick sorted case evidence, Catherine entered with news.

"Grissom's been fully reinstated."

"Reinstated?"

"Fully?"

Catherine raised an eyebrow. "There's one hell of an echo in here."

"Why?" Sara put some bags in a white box. "I mean, I'm not saying he shouldn't..."

Catherine shrugged. "Milander had a gun when he came to Grissom's townhouse. Everyone who studied his story 'deigned that to be the truth'...and because of that they gave him the benefit of the doubt that anything that happened was under duress." Catherine sat down with her coffee. "When you can't prove it either way...."

"Side with the defendant," Nick finished.

"I'm glad he's not fired," Sara said, both relief and disappointment to her tone.

"You don't sound completely happy with that," Nick said.

"I don't know," Sara said, returning to her work. "I just think they should do something. Keep him on probation, demote him...at least give him a warning."

"I think he got his warning," Catherine added.

"How's Nigel?" Sara asked.

"Cute," Catherine commented. "He looks like he's doing all right...Grissom says he'll be fine. Problem is, they arrest Milander, and then official guardian status is up in the air."

"Well, Grissom's not going to take him," Sara said.

"I don't know," Catherine said, "he's taken quite a shine to him. I hope he at least considers it."

"Grissom? With a baby?" Nick said.

"He's not a baby...besides, I think Gris could be a great father." Catherine sipped her coffee. "If he gave himself the chance."

"If you say so," Sara added.

Greg did cartwheels on the way to Catherine's office, free of the lab. In doing so, he nearly knocked over an interloping bipedal--otherwise known as Warrick.

"Hey, sorry, man."

"You need to reduce your sugar intake," he commented.

"Yeah," Greg said, sliding past and into the office.

"Find something?"

"Yes...just to tie up a loose end." Greg handed Catherine an analysis sheet. "The hair from the Bennett scene matches Angela Gething." Greg shrugged. "I mean, it's not case breaking, but that's not up in the air anymore."

Catherine nodded, adding it to the pile of loose ends being tied up. "Did you know that Leonard Gething had size 9 feet?"

"So?"

Catherine gave him the 'think about it' face. "So...?"

"The crime scene shoeprints were size 10."

"We found rolled up socks, three inside each other, a key to Henley's house and a mold of Henley's hand. Like a glove, he could slide over his hands and put prints all over the place."

"Dastardly," Greg said. "Did he know the nosy neighbour would come by?"

Catherine shrugged. "Maybe. Probably. The best criminal works with what they have instead of trying to set it up."

Grissom puddled about the building, working on cases. Next up was an autopsy, a 419 from the day previous. Putting on his glasses, he joined Robbins and David.

"Welcome back, Gil," Robbins said. "Glad to have you back."

Grissom nodded. "Glad to be back."

"I thought you were still on personal leave," David said. "I mean, not that I'm trying to pry."

"I was...but...but I needed to come back," Grissom said, combing his eyes over the body.

"The best therapy for a workaholic," Robbins said.

Grissom looked up and flashed a grin. "Exactly."

"Extensive injuries to the phalanges," Robbins said, lifting up the cadaver's right hand. "Possibly from a boot or a mallet...something flat and smooth with a good amount of surface area."

"And the carpals and meta carpals?"

"No breaks, but superficial defensive wounds to the palms."

Grissom leaned over the hands, soaking up what they told him.

"How's your neck?" Robbins asked, combing blood flakes from the head wound.

Grissom looked up. "Sorry?"

"Your neck." Robbins put the flakes aside, finding nothing but blood. "About a week ago you had bruising here," Robbins said, pointing around his voice box and surrounding area.

Grissom was frozen for a moment, and then responded, "Fine," with a swallow. He returned to his inspection of the hands.

"Did you fall?"

"No," Grissom said after a pause.

"There's some fibers in his ear," Robbins said, indicating said ear. "White."

Grissom moved to extract them. "Odd place. Not from earplugs...a hat?"

"I knew someone who put tissues over earphones," David suggested. "She said they hurt her ears, so she'd wrap them in tissues. I said it was odd and she said other people do it too."

"Might also be for cleanliness," Robbins postulated, "if the earphones were shared."

Grissom peered closely. "It's possible."

"Was it a scarf?" Robbins asked. "Or a tie?"

"Around his ears?"

"I meant your neck injury," he clarified. "Did you have a tie too tight?"

Grissom blushed a little. "I don't think I did."

"So," David started, feeling vaguely uncomfortable. "How's the little guy?"

Grissom looked to him, with an expression of confusion and perplexity.

"The little guy. Nigel."

"Oh," Grissom said. "He's...he's all right."

"David says he sustained a lot of injury."

"None of the glass penetrated too deeply," Grissom said, moving on to inspect the other hand. "Their main concern was the blood loss...but they stabilized him fairly quickly." Grissom scraped under the body's fingernails.

"Good to hear," Robbins said. "Rope burns," he continued. "On the voicebox."

"My neck is fine," Grissom said, not looking up from the hand of interest.

"I meant your vic," Robbins said. "If he'd strangled you with a rope you'd be dead too."

Grissom exchanged glances with Robbins, changing expressions a few times before looking away, reaching a tie in their silent game of pride and inquiry.

"But you weren't strangled with a rope," he said after Grissom was back, engrossed with the hand again.

David still felt vaguely uncomfortable.

"Is there something you'd like to say?" Grissom said, making precious eye contact for only a second.

"I was just curious how touchy a subject that was."

He grimaced, adding nothing.

"It's just a concern, you know. About three years ago you had the same bruising. Now, if it were more frequent, it could be a clotting or disorder making its appearance, but since I've only seen it twice, that might not be the case."

Grissom stood. "Do you really want to talk about this?" he asked, not angrily but at odds.

"Do you?"

He was blank, and then he looked confused. "I don't know," he said with a curious pout.

"Do you want me to leave?" David asked, feeling as though he wasn't there to begin with. "Because if I'm interrupting you...."

"Are you uncomfortable, David?"

"Yes?" he said, as a question.

Grissom laughed. "I'll never get tired of that."

"Of what?" David asked.

"That face you make when you say that." Grissom chuckled to himself. "You could use that in a poker game. It's very amusing and concealing at the same time."

"Thanks, I think," David replied.

Grissom returned to the hospital, but not to visit Nigel.

"They said you were doing much better," he said by way of greeting, a little awkward.

"I'm not dead y-yet, anyway," Milander said with some humour. "They've been good, here. Even s-sent someone to feed my d-dog."

Grissom checked his watch. "You were out for two days."

"Yeah," Milander said, nodding carefully. "Thank G-god it wasn't more. They called and said Mo was d-doing fine...if not very happy to s-see some food."

"Mo?" Grissom said with a smile.

"Mozart," Milander replied. "I've j-just always had dogs n-named after c-composers."

Grissom nodded, his smile falling and returned to the serious. "Gething called you."

Milander nodded. "T-told me he was going through with his 'final stage.' I d-didn't kill him...I w-would have."

"That's how he got you there," Grissom continued.

"Knew me too well, I g-guess." He shook his head. "But he never got it."

"Never got what?"

"It wasn't about the game. It wasn't about the hiding," Milander explained. "It was about the story. He never understood that. You d-did, though. Leo liked to over plan everything. H-he was too c-complicated."

"He wanted to best you."

"He thought it was about the c-crime, the 'accomplishment'." Milander moved his hand, plucking idly at the cover sheet. "He m-made too much out of everything."

"We found Shelley and Craig," Grissom said gently. "I'm sorry."

Milander's expression fell. "He never got that either," he said with sorrow.

"How so?"

"He thought that they were cover." Milander switched to fidgeting with the bedside rails. "That they were the h-hobby. They weren't my hobby," he said, raising a hand to his face. "I thought leaving...leaving would untangle them. That t-they w-wouldn't b-be involved anymore," he said through a shuddering tone. "Comfort blanket."

Grissom said nothing.

Milander looked away for a moment, then back. "They'll arrest me when I'm r-released," he said.

Nodding, Grissom sighed.

"Make sure someone's t-taking care of Nigel," Milander said, shifting to sit up. "God knows how long it'll be b-before I'll see him again."

Grissom regarded Milander's expression, strangely unable to decipher the emotion. He didn't say anything, feeling grossly inadequate.

He probably should have known better than to walk by Ecklie and his team, Grissom reasoned, full swing into break. Favouritism. Despite his promotion, Ecklie still ate with them, chatted with them, pulled strings for them.

"Hey, Gil," Ecklie called, and it was too late to run past like he hadn't heard.

So, with irritated feet, Grissom walked into the lion's den. "Yes?"

"I heard you're taking the kid," Ecklie said, relaxing with coffee and a tea biscuit.

"Temporarily," Grissom corrected, "when he gets out of the hospital."

"Where are you on that body dump?"

Grissom looked at him oddly. "You'll get my case report."

"Hey," Ecklie said, "you're not reinstated until Thursday. Until then, I'm your supervisor and you're telling me where you are on your body dump."

With a frown, Grissom explained. "It wasn't a dump. It was a murder scene."

"Then explain the lack of blood," Ecklie said.

Grissom opened the clip board he was holding, which contained the important bits of his current caseload. He pulled out a photo. "Murder weapon."

Ecklie took the picture, tilting it this way and that. "What the hell is that?"

Grissom sighed with sarcastic disappointment. "And they promoted you to head the department."

"It's a dark photo," he defended.

"The lighting is fine," Grissom replied.

"All right, fine," Ecklie said, handing the photo back. "I can admit when I don't know what something is. Now, what is it?"

Grissom responded by handing the photo to Laurie, the day shift fiber expert.

"It's a..." she peered closer. "It looks like a tampon, still in mostly in its wrapper, covered in blood."

Grissom took the photo back. "And that's why there wasn't enough blood at the scene."

Ecklie put down the remaining half of his biscuit. "I'm not hungry anymore." He took a sip of coffee. "And your robbery?"

"Warrick took it. Bullet got a hit, and last I'd heard they'd made an arrest."

"And how about putting a case back together to get Milander?" Ecklie asked.

"That's not my case," Grissom said, a warning present underneath his words.

"That doesn't mean you're not involved. That doesn't mean you're not going to try and 'help'," Ecklie said, the accusatory bite indicating he wasn't referring to the aid of their department.

Grissom frowned sourly. "I'm not involving myself in any respect with that case."

"Whose side are you on, Gil?"

Grissom stepped back, preparing to leave amidst the inquisition. "Whose side are you on?" Grissom's arm dropped to his side, and his breathing stiffened. "If you have evidence that I've compromised this case or concerns regarding my performance, present them to me and do it privately."

"You have compromised this case. Milander had your baby." Ecklie put his mug down, turning to Grissom. "He had your baby," Ecklie repeated. "Do you know how that looks in court?"

"Creepy."

"Weird."

"Gross," were the helpful answers from the day shift crew.

"Talk to me privately," Grissom said, a firm, non-evasive tone to his voice.

"Why? So you can hide all this? You screwed over a case and there's consequences--"

"You want to make an example of me? To prevent recidivism? Excuse me while I laugh, Conrad."

"So that makes it better, because that will never happen to anyone else?"

"I have work to do," Grissom said, stepping another pace back.

"You've got a real problem with authority, don't you, Gil," Ecklie said.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You wanted the promotion, I got it, and now you're stonewalling me."

"Is that how you see this?" Grissom said, walking back into the room. "Let me clarify this for you. I wanted you to get this job. When the position was vacant I looked at myself and thought that you were more well-rounded, better at dealing with people. I thought you'd treat the position with respect." Grissom frowned. "But I was wrong."

Ecklie paused. "Come to my office before your shift is over."

"Fine."

The trip was an odd one, with a dynamic Grissom couldn't identify or name. He pulled up to the CSI building, having to finish some more paperwork before clocking out for the day. Due to scheduling and times, the odd trip was necessary. He looked next to him, at Nigel in the passenger seat, who sat quietly.

"I just have to finish up a few things...then we'll...we'll go back to my house."

Nigel nodded, very quiet.

They walked along the halls together, until Grissom realised Nigel's young and short legs wouldn't keep up, no matter how slow Grissom walked. He moved to pick Nigel up.

"I'm not a baby," Nigel said, moving away angrily. "I can walk."

Grissom dropped to a squat to meet him at eye level. "I know you can walk," he said, "but we'll get to my office faster if I carry you. And it's safer."

Nigel turned his back, crossed arms and facing the wall.

"The faster we get to my office the faster you can see my butterflies."

Nigel turned around slowly. "Butterflies in your office?"

Grissom nodded with a smile. "I have a nice big frame with lots of butterflies pinned inside. All different colours and sizes."

"Dead butterflies," Nigel said.

"Yeah," Grissom said. "How do you feel about spiders?"

Nigel shrugged, playing with his coat's zipper. "They're okay."

"There's spiders too." Grissom moved a little closer. "So what do you say, I'll carry you the rest of the way so you don't get hurt and then you can look at all the butterflies and spiders?"

Nigel considered this offer. "Okay."

Grissom smiled, picking him up. "Let's go, then."

"Who are those people Uncle Gil?"

Grissom looked up, and saw a few curious observers peering in his office windows. He looked back to his papers. "Co-workers."

"What's that?"

"People that work here too." Grissom finished filling out the form and moved on to the next one. "It's not often there are kids here."

"Oh." Nigel looked back to the pinned and dead butterflies in the picture frame case in front of him. "What's this one called?"

"It's a Mourning Cloak Butterfly," Grissom replied.

"What's its other name?"

"*Nymphalis antiopa*."

"What's this one called?"

"Sleepy Sulphur Butterfly," Grissom said, tapping his pen against the desk, thinking.

"What's its other name?"

Grissom opened his mouth to answer, but he went puzzled instead. "Bring it here."

Nigel stood, carry the precious frame gently.

"Oh, right. *Abaeis nicippe*," he read.

Nigel nodded. "I like yellow."

"Hey, Gil," Catherine said, peering in around the now open door, setting off the fish. "You got a minute?"

Grissom shrugged. "Sure."

Catherine came in, shutting the door, walking to Nigel instead of Grissom. "Hi, there, little guy," she said, ruffling his hair a little. "What have you got there?"

"Butterflies," he said, turning the frame around. "Dead butterflies," he clarified.

"Are those your...uh..." Catherine looked up to Grissom. "Uh, what is he calling you?"

"Uncle Gil," Grissom said, filling out paperwork absently.

"Are those your Uncle Gil's?"

Nigel nodded, cheerily.

"Do you like butterflies?"

Nigel nodded again, seemingly enthralled with the pointless conversation.

"Why don't you go play with your butterflies over there, okay? I need to talk to your Uncle Gil."

Nigel left, to go study the butterflies.

"Does that make me Auntie Catherine?" she asked, leaning over Grissom's desk.

Grissom shrugged. "I don't know." He looked up. "What does that make you?"

"He's cute," Catherine said, looking back to Nigel, who smiled brightly.

"You know, you're the first person who's noticed," Grissom said, with traceable sarcasm.

"I'm honoured," she said. "Does this mean you're keeping him?" Catherine asked, very quietly.

"Because he's cute?"

"No, because you two get along. He likes butterflies, you like butterflies...and...well, I'm sure there's other things."

Grissom raised an eyebrow, then returned to filling out forms. "I don't know what I'm doing with him yet." He shrugged. "I'll take him at least until I find someone I trust to take him."

Catherine sat down. "I'm really glad you're giving this whole thing a shot, you know. I think you could be a really great father."

Grissom shrugged.

"How's it going so far?"

"I've only had custody for twenty minutes."

"And how have those twenty minutes been?"

Another shrug. "He's popular. Everyone keeps coming in to say hello."

"Who could resist that face?" Catherine said. "Those clear eyes, that curly hair and those little dimples?"

"I've noticed most his visitors were women," Grissom said.

"Aw, come on, men think babies are cute, too, they just won't--"

"I'm not a baby," Nigel said, indignant.

"--admit it."

Grissom laughed to himself. "He has great hearing, you know."

"So no guys came by?"

"Warrick was...and Greg. But they came to talk to me."

"Uh huh, sure. They just figured they needed solid excuses."

"Their affair," Grissom said.

"You know if you're worried about someone to watch him while you're at work, there's plenty of people who'll watch a cute little kid."

"I've noticed." Grissom started on another form. "I've had at least twelve offers from people who wanted to take him around the building. Including one from Greg," Grissom finished.

"And you didn't let them? Gil, you've got to at least trust Greg--"

"Who says I don't? Nigel wanted to stay here with the butterflies." Grissom checked his watch, marking it down on a time sheet. "I've been reading a bit on parenting and you should always give a child a choice where it's possible."

"Well, there you go." Catherine sat back. "That's a good sign right there."

"Of what?"

"Of what kind of father you'll be. You'll--"

"Please don't use the f-word around Nigel."

Catherine looked puzzled.

"Father," Grissom said in a hushed whisper. "He doesn't know."

"You didn't tell him? Why don't you want him to know?"

"It has nothing at all to do with whether I want him to know." Grissom put the sheet in his out box. "I can't be his father if Milander is. It means a lot to him, so if I have to be Uncle Gil, so be it."

"You know, sometimes you're too understanding for your own good. Do everyone a favour and stop being selfless for a day."

"We already have one Ecklie," Grissom quipped.

"There's a start right there." Catherine stood. "I've got some things to get to before I leave. If you need anything, advice, help...a shoulder to cry on just call, okay?"

Grissom looked up, and smiled. "Thanks. I will."

Catherine stood with Sara and Warrick before leaving, talking as Nick shuffled about in the background, apparently looking for something.

"Grissom looks so cute with Nigel," she said, turning behind to get a glimpse of them through the windows. "He'll be a great father. It looks like he might actually take him."

"Grissom with a kid?" Warrick shrugged. "I mean, he's a great guy and good with kids from what I've seen, but full time parent?"

"I don't think Nigel can tear him away from work," Sara said. "I mean, how hard is it for you to spend time with Lindsey?"

"Yeah," Catherine said, "it is hard and I have the same job and I manage," she explained. "He'll be a great father."

Sara walked to the window, watching Nigel through the clear wall.

"Nigel likes butterflies," Catherine said to no one in particular. "And spiders. Not that any kid of Grissom's wouldn't like bugs, but it's something. Just as long as he doesn't treat Nigel like a case study or something...not that he would."

"Cath," Sara said. "Cath, Nigel's eating bugs," she reported.

"And he...what? Oh, God, Grissom should know he's got to watch him." She turned to the office.

"No, no, Grissom's feeding him the bugs. You know, those chocolate grasshoppers he keeps in his fridge?"

Nick laughed, finally finding what seemed to be his keys and walked over to Catherine. "He'll make a great father, won't he."

Catherine shrugged. "Grasshoppers are nutritious, right?"

Warrick and Nick were working on a 420 about three weeks later, when Catherine burst in, presumably irate.

"This is ridiculous," she said, hands moving about in an impotent fury.

Nick and Warrick looked from their microscopes. "What's up?" Warrick asked.

Catherine threw a file on the table. "All that work we did to find every shred of evidence from the Milander murders?"

"Yeah?"

"Judge threw every scrap of it out." Catherine emphasized each following syllable, jabbing the manilla folder. "Every last scrap."

"What?" Nick asked. "Why?"

"Because Grissom lead the case. Because Milander had Grissom's kid." Catherine folded her arms. "Rape or no rape the evidence is apparently not admissible no matter who collected it. It didn't even make it past the arraignment."

Warrick turned, appalled. "So, what, he's just going to walk?"

Catherine shook her head. "We've still got him on that assault turned homicide."

Nick frowned, complacent to a degree from seeing similiar things in the past. "At least he'll serve time," he said.

"I don't know about that."

"It's a Manslaughter charge," Warrick reminded. "Three to ten."

"Yeah, and I'll be surprised if he gets the three." Catherine sighed. "I mean, he was attacked, it was dark, he was pregnant, he was, apparently, a fine upstanding citizen--"

Warrick snorted. "According to who? His lawyer?"

"The judge. Milander's representing himself. They won't even get him on fraud, because he successfully argued that he got the separate IDs so that he could live and function as a man."

"Now that's bullshit," Nick said. "I mean, one ID, all right. But two? And you can't possibly tell me he stopped at two."

Catherine shrugged, exasperated and drained. "Tell that to the judge. Like I said, he sees an attacked pregnant transgendered individual who ducked out mysteriously but understandably from his life as a good judge and father. He might not even get the three years if he proves it was completely in self defence."

"The guy offs his own mother," Warrick started, "and three others and he gets a Manslaughter conviction?"

"Just pray he gets that conviction," Catherine said bitterly.

Another week past, and Catherine went to visit Grissom at home.

"Hi," she said, after he opened the door.

"Hello," he said, a little confused, letting her in. "What's the occasion?"

"I brought a present for Nigel." She looked around. "Where is he?"

Grissom didn't answer, looking evasive.

"Is there something wrong? Is he okay?"

"He isn't here," Grissom said.

"Where is he?"

Grissom walked away, sitting at his table. "...he's living with family now." He swallowed. "I didn't..." he shrugged, leaving the thought incomplete.

Catherine walked over to sit with Grissom. "Are you still going to visit him?"

Grissom nodded. "If he stayed here I'd never see him, and he needs someone to be here for him. I visit him."

Catherine passed the small wrapped package to Grissom. "Then you can give this to him. He's staying with your family, I take it."

Grissom nodded. "My second cousin. She's been trying forever to get cleared by child services to be a safe house...to take care of foster children."

"She hasn't been cleared? And you left Nigel with her?"

"It's no fault of hers, really," Grissom said. "She's single. That's an unstable environment according to family services. They haven't been desperate enough to clear her. But this way they don't have to, and I can still visit him."

Catherine frowned, but nodded. "I'm glad you did what you felt was best for him."

Grissom rolled his eyes. "Unfortunately I had to...explain the situation."

"What situation?"

"About his...mother." Grissom sat back. "Why he has two biological fathers."

"I hope your family isn't gossipy."

"Not really."

"That's good." Catherine shifted. "I mean, I'm just wondering why you had to tell her? Does it matter?"

"Between Nigel visiting Milander, and why he calls me Uncle, it's much less confusing and threatening if she knows why," Grissom explained.

"Makes sense." Catherine looked around, slowly taking in the new atmosphere. "It seems empty here, now."

Grissom nodded, wistful. "Yeah."

It was quiet.

Warrick was the one who entered the break room, to inform the team.

"Three years," he said.

"What's that, bro?" Nick asked.

"Milander. Three years for Manslaughter." Warrick looked across the hall to Grissom's empty office. "Anyone want to go and thank Gris?"

"Where is he, anyway?" Sara asked.

"Interview in Hendersen," Catherine replied.

Warrick sat with his co-workers at the table. "He'll probably get out in a few days for good behaviour. I'm thinking the best way to get out of a crime is have a baby and sport a law degree."

"What'd you expect, man," Nick said, biting into an apple. "No priors, seemingly decent guy...he's not going to get a heavier sentence because a bunch of nerds said he killed four other people."

"Why don't you go have a kid with him, then?"

"Hey, whoa," Nick said, reclining in the not reclining chair, tipping it back with his feet against the table. "Don't go there, pal."

"He's going to a guy prison, right?" Greg asked.

"According to Nevada law he's a man," Warrick said. "Since the 80s, I think."

"Women's prisons are scarier anyway," Catherine said. "Besides, they'd tear him to pieces."

"They'll tear him to pieces in a male correctional facility too."

"Wait 'till they find out he's still a woman," Sara said.

Warrick put his fingers to his temples. "Don't mention that...bad enough picturing him with Gris."

Nick shuddered.

Greg butted in. "But he's not a woman," he said.

"If he had a kid," Catherine started, "he's a woman enough. Especially in a prison."

"Can we not talk about this?" Nick asked.

Warrick shuddered. "That's just wrong."

"What's wrong is Milander getting three years," Sara said.

"Hey, we did our job," Greg said, "and the system played out. We can't just make it our mission to--"

"Hey, look," Sara said, getting in Greg's face. "Find your own lectures and catch phrases and stop stealing Grissom's. The last thing we need is another Grissom."

"Especially since he just fucked over a serial murder case," Nick interjected.

"That's not all he fucked," Catherine added.

"Can we please not talk about that," Warrick pleaded.

"I just don't think that we should rag on Grissom for--"

"Shut up, Greg," Sara snapped, getting in Greg's space even more. "Just shut up, okay? No one wants to hear it. Find a new role model and stop standing for Grissom. He screwed up, and that's all there is to it."

"But--"

"Shut up," she repeated. "If you like him so much, why don't you go screw him?"

Greg, for once, stood up for himself in the face of adversity. "I'd have a better chance at that than you."

Before either one could take a swing at one another, Nick and Warrick launched, pulling them away from each other.

"Cool down, guys," Nick said.

"Take it easy," Warrick added, leading Sara back to her seat. "If you can't deal with it, take a walk."

Sara sat, crossed armed and seething, for a few minutes. She stood, and took off.

Warrick checked his watch, then turned to Nick. "We should get back to the garage," he said. "Car should be fumed by now."

"I'm with you," Nick said, as the two left.

Catherine stood, walking to Greg. Cooling off but still visibly affected, he shivered with dispersing anger.

"Maybe you shouldn't set her off like that."

"Why doesn't anyone respect Grissom anymore? He's the best anything here, and so he's a little different...he didn't fuck over the case and he didn't do anything they said he did that didn't--"

"Calm down," Catherine said, putting a hand on his shoulder. "It's a touchy subject. He did something shady, so whether it's wrong or not isn't the matter. You want to talk about it, fine, find someone who wants to hear about it. Don't set people off."

Greg shook his head. "I can't talk about him even when it's not about Milander. If it's not completely case related, I can't even mention him. It's like no one likes him anymore."

Catherine frowned, taking her hand away from him. "Greg, maybe you should look into finding a new role model."

Torn, Greg almost cried as he watched Catherine walk away.

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