

Chasing Ghosts

Von Nightstalcer

„McGee?“ Tony incredulously looked towards his teammates. Ziva, he had calculated with, even knew she would be there but McGee? Uber-correct McGee? That was a surprise and his feeling to be left in the dark that had been plaguing him the whole case intensified. He eyed them warily and stayed near the doorway.

“Tony...” Ziva started. “You know I have to get him, he killed my father!” He nodded, he knew that was the only way she would be truly satisfied and could begin to grieve. But there was the whole issue of it being illegal and they were federal agents, they served the system and therefore they had to abide the law even if they didn’t like it.

“You do know that both of you could lose your jobs over this? Maybe even your citizenship?” He only wanted to know if they really knew what they were up against and what kind of consequences this may have. They were a team and of course he would help them, no matter what the case, but as the senior field agent he had to protect them.

Ziva sighed. She knew it would end this way which was entirely the reason why she had only asked McGee to help her. His loyalty towards the team was unwavering and she could be pretty intimidating if she wanted to.

“Fine if you don’t want to help us, you may leave now. I have to tell Abby she shouldn’t stuck her foot in business where it doesn’t belong.”

“Her nose, Ziva, her nose.” Tony corrected her without thinking and put his hands up.

“And I didn’t say that I wouldn’t help you, it’s just...” He couldn’t continue his sentence due to the intense pain he felt right in this moment, when Ziva decided to quickly rush towards him. Before he could react she kicked out right into his bad knee, the one that Brad Pitt the doctor destroyed in his attempt to score against Ohio. Back then it didn’t hurt that much as he had passed out quickly after the hit.

Today, Tony went down like a ton of bricks, crashing hard against the dirty floor of the apartment. McGee just stood there, mesmerized.

“What are you doing?” he asked Ziva when she proceeded to take advantage of Tony being too hurt to do anything in his defense and cuffed his hands together behind his back with his own handcuffs.

She snorted.

“I knew he wouldn’t help but I thought he would keep his big mouth shut. I forgot about Abby, without her he would have never found us in the first place.” She slapped him on the cheek.

“Some kind of investigator you are.” She taunted.

Tony struggled to breathe through the pain that was radiating through this whole

body. He couldn't believe what had happened right now. He had been leery to approach them because they wouldn't like to be discovered by him but now he was assaulted by his teammates. And to top it off he hurt like hell and he had to prevent these two from going after Bodnar on their own no matter what cost. At first he thought Ziva was right. That guy was seemingly responsible for her father's death and he also killed the wife of their director (which explained why NCIS wouldn't do a thing to keep their agents away from Bodnar even though it was officially FBI and CIA jurisdiction.) so it was kind of justified in its own way.

But this went way too far. It seemed that Ziva had no limit towards the actions she took to reach the goal and every obstacle that had to be eliminated. Of course, with it being him that went after them it was easy. Gibbs would have never been overpowered that easily. Then again, they wouldn't do that to Gibbs.

"You know that now there is no way I can let you go?" he asked them expecting to be ignored. McGee looked at him but then turned his attention towards the computer search he had running.

Ziva smirked.

"I see that Tony. What will you do now, very special agent Antony Dinozzo?"

"Well Miss David...", he reacted accordingly.

"First of all I will notify NCIS of this, maybe Vance will not write you down for insubordination but Gibbs will not be amused." The thought of working with them together again in the future left him frightened though. The last time he was that wary of his team was when they decided that back-up didn't matter if it meant that they had to listen to his insane babbling (their choice of words; he himself knew that he had to talk that much about such mundane things, that's the way you flush out a homegrown terrorist in an otherwise lovely neighborhood) any more. Luckily nothing happened so he refused to inform Gibbs of this, he didn't want to create tension in the team any more other than what was already there.

This time though, at least Ziva actively pictured him as the enemy and reacted with violence and deliberately used a weak point for the strike. Not for the first time in their history, he might add.

"Oh I am so scared." She mocked him.

"This is ridiculous. You want to threaten me when I could kill you instantly with his my right index finger?" She started walking towards him and he flinched.

She laughed.

"See? Do me a favor Tony and for once shut up. Nobody listens to you anyway...even Gibbs is more than fed up with you. And for your information, he knows that we are going against Bodnar and he even provided me with Intel about his whereabouts. We are just finishing up here anyway. You're welcome to stay with us for the time being." She smiled when he blanched.

Did Gibbs really sell him out? He had told him he wanted to look out for Ziva and Gibbs had encouraged him to find her. Was it all a ploy to teach him a lesson, the lesson of his life that he was unwanted, not needed, not loved by them? Intended or not, he learned this, learned it fast.

Tentatively testing his throbbing knee he tried to stand up without the aid of his hands. He failed; his leg wouldn't support his weight.

"Listen" he breathed through his teeth not wanting to cry out in pain from the attempt.

"You help me up and I'll leave you alone to get on with your mission or whatever and I'll forget about your assault." And our friendship he added in his thoughts then that

one was definitely over after all this.

McGee had been busy typing something or another into his computer.

"McGee? Tim... Listen I..." but Ziva slapped him again; this time onto the back of his head so his whole body was flung forward with the force of the impact.

"Isn't that where you like it, Tony?" she sneered. Indeed the gesture had shut him up. She went towards her purse to retrieve something.

Now McGee reacted.

"Ziva, wasn't that meant for Bodnar?" he couldn't believe it. She just shrugged.

"We have enough, besides it is always better to test it beforehand."

Tony tried once more to stand up and get the hell out of here. Forgotten was the fact that they were a team that he was supposed to protect them with all he had, that they should all catch a bullet for another. Now they were the enemies and he had to get out of here or he would be at their mercy.

But like everything in his life, it didn't go entirely as he planned.

When he got to his feet he was grabbed by Ziva. "Hold him McGee!" she cried out and her younger companion complied.

"Get away from me!" he squirmed and kicked out at McGee which resulted in him nearly toppling down as his injured leg wouldn't hold him steady. Before he could restore his footing Ziva had quickly injected a needle in his arm.

Shocked Tony froze. McGee took him down on the floor again, this time cuffing him to the radiator so he couldn't run away.

"What did you do to me?" Nothing was left of the normally pretty cocky senior field agent, his voice was trembling.

"Oh don't worry. It's just a little sedative; we wouldn't want to harm you Tony. We're family, at least that's what Abby says..." she tried to soothe him but he was too shaken up to consider it.

"I know how you deal with family... you killed your own brother, what do I matter then?" he asked.

She smiled. "It works then." She answered, not explaining anything.

Tony was furious and at the same time scared shitless. Ziva was deadly if she wanted to be and clearly now she chose to be deadly towards him.

Indeed the injection made him kinda loopy so McGee and Ziva continued to track down Bodnar through their computers.

A few minutes later McGee abruptly stopped typing.

"Did you know he would follow us here?" he demanded an answer from Ziva.

"Honestly... yes. You know how nosy he is and I knew that Abby would track us down and that's why we have to hurry up a bit so that we are gone before they sent someone after us."

She made her way towards Tony again and enjoyed seeing him so shaken up as he tried to scramble away from her being stopped by his own cuffs. Oh the irony.

"Shhh Tony, you are just going to stay here and be quiet, can you do that for me, just once?" she asked sweetly and he nodded. Anything to get her away from him he decided.

"Oh now that's a good boy." She taunted, gesturing towards McGee.

"Hey Tim don't you too think that Tony needs to be brought a speck down more often?" As expected he came towards them and looked at his normally commanding agent.

"It's called a peck Ziva and yes I think that I like that very much. No more probie-calling." He decided.

"It's a nickname out of affection Tim..." Tony said quietly, biting onto his tongue to stop himself from saying any more. He was sweating now and he thought he knew the way he felt now out of experience. But that would mean...

"N-No way you did that to me!" he shouted, clearly frustrated now.

"I guess you realized what we injected you with. Don't worry; the mixture is much safer than what Saleem used. It is also much more effective to prevent you from talking around the subject you know?" She kneeled next to him, took a strand of hair into her hands and began caressing it softly.

"Tell me Tony, do you think that anybody will help you?" He just looked at her, fear evident in his eyes. It seemed he couldn't control his features anymore than his words. Still he tried to resist.

"Do you believe that somebody in the office likes you? That somebody would stand up for you, have your six as you Americans say?"

"Gibbs..." he whispered, not wanting to reveal any more. She janked at his hair and he whelped.

"Gibbs. What is this kind of relationship between you and him anyways? Chooses you over me, a talented assassin that can control a whole slew of men with no problem or casualties against a worthless, self-absorbed jerk that sometimes has seen the right movie. You are only lucky because these dumbasses are stupid enough to use plots from fictional stories to murder someone. McGee here is a genius; he can manipulate any computer-protected system he wants, trace money all over the globe and more things more. Even his calculator has more brains than you do. Gibbs, we don't need to talk about him. Marine sniper, many black ops – has a weakness for women that get him to think they replace his daughter. One day it will get him killed, no agent should be allowed to have such a weakness.

Abby, scientist genius that can find every evidence there is to find – mostly she solves the cases on her own, you are just doing the footwork.

Even my predecessor Kate protected the president and what exactly do you bring to the table?"

He knew she taunted him, wanted him to make him angry. He knew it but still walked into her trap when she dared to mention Kate.

"Kate was a horrible profiler but she was worth a dozen of your kind, David!" he shouted.

"And you tiny Tim here... shot a cop out of a hunch, still makes probie mistakes after nine years, maybe because he refuses to listen to any word that comes from his supervisor, that only tried to make him a better agent, that harassed him to make him stronger, that spared him the real ugly rituals of newbie's on the force that I had to endure. That doesn't have enough fantasy in him to create his own fucking characters or stories for his goddamn book." He was panting now, beginning to sweat and he wished for his cuffs to be gone as he wanted to pull off his jacket and the suit underneath.

"Not to forget that he helps a traitor, someone who has killed without remorse and didn't feel sorry the slightest when she killed off the potential suspect because she was annoyed. Oh and let's not forget her lovely boyfriend, who offed another federal agent but he was in love so that rights every wrong there is. But what can you expect from a woman that shoots at her own brother to get under Gibbs skin so she could manipulate him all these years? Tell me Tim, do you like working with some heartless assassin that lies to you all this time just so that Gibbs and Gibbs alone would trust her?" He couldn't stop now. Well, it seemed that he wasn't supposed to; they gave

him the truth serum in the first place.

Zivas lips became thin, her eyes burned with rage.

"Oh come on Ziva. You wanted me to tell the truth, you're gonna get it full force. If this was Star Wars I would throw it in your face with..." he stopped because she hit him hard into his chest so all the air was forced out of his lungs.

"Shut up for once Tony. Nobody is interested what you think about me anyway. Vance wants revenge and he's gonna get it through me and Timmy here. Do you not think that he will be thankful if we rid the earth of this imbecile that killed his wife? I bet he will. And he transferred you once; he can definitely do it again or even fire you."

At this Tony shuddered, the drug forced him to think about this possibility. Even though he knew it was highly unlikely that they would earn themselves a medal with their behavior (Vance was the director of a federal agency, even he had to abide the laws) his insecurities drove him to desperation and that was exactly what Ziva wanted.

"Well that's more like it. You aren't so full of everything now are you? McGee, look at him, isn't he pathetic?" she laughed at him and McGee grinned.

"Yes Tony. Always bragging about your conquests, so how much did you have really?" He grabbed the face of his senior field agent and began to enjoy the whole thing. A little voice in his head tried to reason that this was insane, that this conducted as torture but he ignored it.

Tony squirmed, he didn't want to answer it but the drugs were messing with his defense system.

"Not... so much." he pressed out against his will. Tim dug one finger into Tony's neck.

"How many exactly?" Tony could feel the others breath on his skin and he shivered. When would this nightmare end?

"Too much for you to count McGee." he answered which earned him another headslap, this time courtesy of Tim.

"Did you have any sex since EJ?"

"N-No. Not many since... Jeanne."

"And you're calling me pathetic. You are nothing Tony. No superior agent, not even a womanizer. You are just a con-man, like your dad."

Tony went still, his face a deathly white shade.

"No!" he shouted.

McGee smirked.

"I'm impressed Tony. Not many manage to lie when under truth serum. Ziva, I think he needs another shot."

"No, no please. I will be good, I promise." Tony was so scared that he couldn't differentiate anymore where he was and why.

"Wait McGee. This is getting interesting. Tony, what are you seeing?"

"I see my father. He is upset with me. No Dad, I'm sorry!" he was now screaming.

"What are you seeing Tony?" Zivas voice was sterner now. She held his head between her hands now, still kneeling in front of him.

"Tell us. Is it embarrassing?"

He nodded; his whole body was shaking now.

"I'm at another reenactment. Father is busy and wants me to be occupied. Another man comes to play with me but... he doesn't stop at playing. He... I don't want to, I scream for help and he hits me. It hurts. I broke my arm. He says he likes little boys the most, especially if they don't want it. I try again to get some help, and I kick him in the nuts. He falls down and I ran away. Hours later I came towards my father and... the man is waiting there. I'm scared, but my father sends him away. I feel safe again, he

rescued me. He loves me. He...."

Tony stops, he is crying now; his skin is wet from sweating so much. His breath is shallow but Ziva and McGee are totally engrossed into his story.

"What did your father do then?" Ziva finally asked.

"He... No, that's enough. Please." He opened his eyes which he had closed earlier when beginning to remember this event in his youth. Pleading eyes fell towards McGee as he knew that Ziva would have no mercy. For the first time McGee began to doubt his actions. Maybe some things should never come into the light.

"Tell us. Tony, tell us, you know you want to. You can never shut your mouth, now we want you to talk, so tell us, we will listen." Ziva knew how to get him to obey, he wasn't the first prisoner she had held and got him to spill his secrets. But she had to admit, normally she used brutal violence to achieve it, this psychological torture was also entertaining.

"He threw his glass of Macallan 18 towards me. Funny he even had his drink with him at the campsite. Wasn't from that century..." Ziva headslapped him.

"Focus Anthony!" she ordered and he complied. This was ingrained in him more than it could ever be in any soldier, marine or not.

"Yes Sir!" he answered automatically which caused Ziva to snicker.

"He... he threw it and began to hit me with his belt. Said I was a disgrace, that I wasn't a man. I caused his business deal to crash and he lost a ton of money, because I didn't want to entertain his client..." he hiccupped while telling this and began to shiver even more.

"Please no more." he nearly begged them.

Ziva nodded. It was enough.

"He was right, you know? You were a disgrace, still are. What kind of agent cannot take this for the greater good? I slept with man all the time when the mission called for it. And I was only twelve." Now McGee couldn't stay quiet.

"Ziva! Did you listen? Tony's dad... he basically sold him to that sick bastard..." he was horrified by this knowledge.

"It didn't happen so there is no reason for you to get all teary. But we are done here anyway. Pack up your stuff, we need to leave soon. This was way too entertaining so we lost a lot of time." Ziva decided and McGee looked towards Tony.

He stopped crying but was still shivering violently and he shrank back from McGee when he made a step towards him. Fear was prominent in his eyes but there was also something else.

"Do you see now why I tried to protect you?" he seemed to say to McGee and he gulped.

Why did he always realize when people were trying to be his friend when it was too late? For Tony and him, it definitely was. Somehow his confidence about this mission wasn't there anymore. He turned towards Ziva to talk to her again but Tony spoke up.

"Well, now we all had loads of fun, when will you tell Gibbs what you are doing? I don't believe you that he is okay with this."

He couldn't help it; he had to step in again before his probie did something entirely stupid such as pissing off a very deranged and deadly Mossad assassin.

Thanks were written in McGee's gaze as he blinked.

Ziva just smiled and proceeded to take off Tony's tie.

"You are right, it was fun. And now you once gain have to shut up. Don't worry, they will find you soon." With this she shoved his tie into his mouth and gagged him efficiently.

Muted Tony could only watch as they packed their things, taking only the laptop and some USB-devices with them. At last Ziva came towards him once again and took his cell phone out of his pocket.

"Can't make it too easy."

When he was finally alone he sagged against the radiator and tried to take deep breaths. It failed. The barbiturate in the serum caused impaired lung function and for him that could end deadly as he already had compromised lungs. Which Ziva seemed to have forgotten as well as her morals and the oath she had sworn to protect the United States and their laws.

This not included him – at least in her copy of it.

It seemed she had never gotten over the whole ordeal with Rivkin otherwise he could not understand why she would hate him that much. Also, the death of her father ruined all the progress she had made the last years; she instantly switched back to Mossad operative. Maybe she wasn't to blame, maybe this way her way to cope, to grieve and to deal with the ugly truth.

Maybe he really was worthless for the team, that's why McGee participated in this little game.

Yes, it was only a game, nothing serious, they were just joking Dinozzo. Much like the time when they left him hanging out to dry or when Ziva re-injured his arm on the dusty soil of Israel.

If only he could breathe...

The following morning, Gibbs came in early, like every day. He booted up his computer which he knew perfectly to start without throwing it into the next wall but McGee had to feel useful did he not? Then he went for coffee, like every morning too. After that, it would only be half an hour till Dinozzo came in. Under normal circumstances.

Today wasn't normal in that regard since the clock turned to nine and there was still no sign of Dinozzo or his other agents. He only worried about his senior field agent though as McGee had requested a weekend off for reconnecting with some of his buddies from MIT. Yeah right, Gibbs thought. McGee was elf-lording himself through the day, but that was fine with him. Not everyone had a basement to build boats in. Ziva on the other hand didn't exactly tell him where she would be but he was an agent and a very attentive one at that, so he knew she was following Bodnar to Berlin. He only hoped she wouldn't get killed. Thank God that McGee was only dying virtually. Still, no Dinozzo being here had him worried.

He decided to visit Abby, the cold cases could wait. Without Dinozzos ideas they would stay cold anyway. He wouldn't admit it but he was getting older and connecting the dots like Tony did on a daily basis was getting more and more difficult for him. He was still supervising everything and he also liked if he sometimes had more information than his agents but only because he enjoyed being a bastard to them too much. Sometimes he wondered if some victims could have been saved had they worked more efficiently and not with this much one-up-man ship they used to do.

Taking the elevator towards Abby's lab his gut began to grumble. He hadn't eaten anything for breakfast but then again he almost never did only when his agents bought something after an all-nighter.

Loud music if you wanted to call it that instead of noise, skull-cracking, deafening noise to be precise was heard on the whole floor in front of Abby's lab as Gibbs entered it.

He went towards Abby who was working on some evidence while dancing in front of her computer.

"Abby" he signed instead of screaming against the noise.

"Hey Gibbs" she signed back and pressed the button on her keyboard to stop the music.

"Abby, has Tony been here?" Gibbs already knew that his agent wasn't in the building but maybe Abby knew something he didn't.

"Um.... I don't know if I'm supposed to tell you Bossman..." she began tentatively, biting her lower lip.

"Abs, spill." he simply ordered her and she began to beam.

"Well you're the boss Bossman so I just tell Tony that you tortured it out of me." She laughed and typed some sort of search parameters into her computer.

"Tony had me track Zivas cell yesterday evening. I guess he wanted to convince her that going after Bodnar is a stupid idea." Abby concluded while letting the computer repeat the search."

"Oh! I can't track her anymore boss. Seems she is already out of the country. But I can tell you where she was yesterday." She eagerly wrote the address down for Gibbs.

"Can you trace Dinozzos cell for me?" he asked and she began typing again.

"Boss... Tony's cell is turned off, I can't get any location. Boss, he broke rule three!" Now she was angry at Tony for being such a fool sometimes. He knew the rules, the basically breathed them in and probably followed them more closely than even Gibbs did.

Gibbs shook his head but said nothing. He didn't believe in coincidences and for a moment he thought that Tony had gone with Ziva to Germany to catch Bodnar. It wouldn't fit into his view of justice but then love was a pretty strong motivator for any guy to throw away rules and even laws. He himself knew that fairly well and he regretted it nearly every day. Except shooting that bastard.

With his usual driving speed Gibbs reached his destination being the place where Ziva (and probably Dinozzo) was last evening.

The house in front of him was nondescript, fairly tall and housed quite a few parties. He entered and listened at every door. Most of the families and people living there were home and there was a lot of noise coming out of the apartments. Only one was silent, disturbingly silent.

The door was locked, so he rapped at it.

"Ziva? Are you there?" he asked, getting no answer. Making up his mind he kicked the door open, drawing his sig to be safe.

When his eyes fell onto Dinozzo he thought that there was nothing that couldn't happen to his agent and friend.

"Dinozzo!" he bellowed, crouching down in front of him. He was unconscious but woke slowly. His eyes opened and he blinked. He tried to draw some air into his lungs but found he couldn't. He tried to cough but the tie slash makeshift gag was hindering him.

Gibbs saw that Tony was miserable and began to take off the tie.

"Easy Dinozzo. Just breathe..." he tried to console him but the shaking was returning and Tony was fighting for every breath.

Gibbs was lost; he couldn't see anything that could be responsible for his agent not getting air. Of course, there could be injuries under his jacket that he couldn't see and a broken rib could have devastating consequences.

He began to dial 911 but then it seemed that Tony had gotten a hang on his breathing and finally sucked in air.

It was erratic and very shallow but it was breathing and he got more lucid.

"Thank you Boss." he rasped.

"Thank you for saving me, I really thought I would die here..." He still was connected to the radiator so Gibbs took out his key and took off the cuffs. Tony flexed his hands, feeling the blood flow return to them. His arms hurt like hell but he would live.

"What happened?" Gibbs wanted to know. His normally cocky and outgoing agent was shrinking back at every move he made and he was sounding so desperate he had never heard him before. Well not entirely true, he had sounded the same way as he nearly died from the plague and later on when Kate was killed.

"Ziva..." Tony began to talk but had to stop due to a cough making his way through his airways.

He retched but nothing happened. He hadn't eaten since lunch yesterday.

"She went to Bodnar?"

Tony nodded.

"She cuffed you here?" He didn't want to believe it but Tony nodded once again.

"McGee..." he whispered, stopping immediately after saying it. Like he regretted it.

"McGee was here too? Did he leave together with Ziva?"

Tony nodded, biting his lip to prevent himself to say any more.

Gibbs felt that Tony was holding something back, something huge. He wondered how his agents came to act this way, trapped their teammate in here, cuffed and gagged with no way to call for help.

"What if I hadn't missed Dinozzos presence? What if a case had come in, I would have checked only later after processing the scene..."

He couldn't believe his own thoughts. This was so reckless and the way Tony was suffering to just fucking breathe was a telling sign that they went too far this time.

"Let's get you to the yard, son." Gibbs helped Tony to his feet, not thinking how he had addressed his agent right now.

Tony heard it though and he stopped dead in his tracks causing Gibbs nearly to fall over.

"Don't call me that Gibbs. I'm no good and you deserve a better son."

Gibbs had to rethink if there was any possibility that Tony was injured more than he thought after all. He must have a concussion.

"No concussion boss." he mumbled as if reading his thoughts.

"Head's fine, ribs are too. Just bruised. Knee hurts like hell... it's the bad one..." he trailed off.

"I'll help you" said Gibbs, having decided that everything else could wait until they were at the yard. Tony needed a good nap, something to eat and mothering courtesy of Abby.

Together they got fairly quickly into the car and Gibbs was driving fast but without reckless turns in case Tony lied to him about the concussion.

Gibbs plans were shot though. Once they had reached the navy yard instead of getting Tony towards the lab, Vance cornered them both in the bullpen.

"Gibbs! Dinozzo. SecNav called to inform me that two of our agents were seen at the airport in Frankfurt Germany with the option to fly further to Berlin. Why didn't you keep them here?" He knew Vance' protest was faked; he wanted Bodnar more than anyone else except Ziva maybe. However he was a director of a federal agency and he

had to keep his agents from going off grid to search for a killer on their own.

"Listen Vance..." Gibbs tried to get it in that he had only rescued Dinozzo from exactly trying to accomplish this but Vance cut him off again.

"As senior field agent, you had to know what they were doing yet you did nothing to stop them. You are a disgrace..." Gibbs stepped towards Vance with a fierce glare.

"Stop it. You wanna know how I found him this morning? He was cuffed and gagged at the place where Ziva and McGee planned their little trip. They turned against their teammate to get Bodnar. You can be proud of them; they will kill him off for you." Gibbs was angry now and the rage was underlying his every word.

Vance was clever enough to step back in case Gibbs decided to take a swing at him. He looked towards Dinozzo and realized that the self-absorbed brat he normally saw wasn't there. He would have mistaken him for another person if he was honest. Dinozzo tried to blend into the wall, trembling. A tremor ran through his hands so he put them into his pockets.

For a second Vance thought that he had been deeply hurt but Gibbs had just described restraint. Granted, they were his teammates, his friends even but that couldn't be all.

"What are you not telling us Agent Dinozzo?" he demanded to know, intimidating him. Tony flinched what Gibbs saw and his eyes widened.

"Not much director." Tony answered with a slight slurring in his words. He appeared to be dead on his feet; which was understandable.

Gibbs was looking at him.

"Tony, you have to tell us. Did they tell you what they planned?" He shook his head.

"Ziva said you gave her the Intel about Bodnar in the first place. Said you sold me out, set me up by suggesting to me to keep an eye on her."

"That Intel was wrong. We had conformation a few hours ago." Vance provided new information for them. This didn't help them though.

Gibbs was shocked.

"Dinozzo, that's not true. I knew she would want to go there, that's just the way she is. Mossad corrupted her..."

"Yeah, corrupted is a good word for it. She's an assassin and not loyal to the US."

"That is a harsh accusation agent Dinozzo." Vance couldn't keep his mouth shut.

"Director, I cannot believe you are questioning his loyalty here. He has nothing to gain from lying."

Tony laughed at that, tonelessly.

"If I could I would boss. But I can't and they left me hung out to dry. Again. First it was just turning off the mike and hoping nothing would happen; now it turns to cuffing and gagging. No biggie director, I swear I won't file them up for insubordination." the sarcasm was there, trying to deflect them. Gibbs sighed; he recognized this method from the very beginning of him working with Dinozzo.

"Tony, I just want you to tell me what happened yesterday."

Tony looked at him, standing suddenly straight.

"Fine. I tell you. Not that I have a choice anyway. Stupid mouth of mine running off without me all the time." If he had had the power left to hit the wall he would have done it. He was disgusted with himself right now, he was so weak that they could do that to him and now force him to relive it in agonizing detail. Screw his stupid brain of his, always so attentive and remembering always the details. The fucking details. So he told them both what transpired yesterday evening forgoing one little detail.

They stared at him, not only for knowing that he had been betrayed by his partners but also for the recount of his harassment.

He couldn't stand their gazes; he stood up and wanted to leave the bullpen, the whole building, even the freaking country.

Gibbs stopped him, holding a hand to his shoulder.

"How?" he wanted to know.

Tony shuddered.

"Truth serum. I'm sorry boss." He ran towards the stairs, not caring that he would likely fall them down if he attempted to go down. Gibbs let him be, knowing he had to be alone right now.

He looked towards Vance.

"They are done for. That was torture. I cannot comprehend why she would do that to him. He already suffered through it once, for her for god's sake and she still did it. Tony's right, she is not loyal to us and an assassin too. If I hadn't searched for Dinozzo this morning and we would have gotten a case he would be dead by now. The barbiturate in the drug caused his airway to close up which is deadly enough if you are otherwise healthy, but Tonys lungs are damaged from the plague."

Vance nodded.

"I agree with you. I am extremely disappointed in McGee. He was very promising but this I cannot overlook. No matter how much I do not like Dinozzos methods, he wouldn't have done this to any agent, especially not to his friends. I understand how hard it must have been to tell us about this. Did you know?" he suddenly wanted to know.

Gibbs shook his head.

"About his father? I suspected, but never that kind of thing. I knew I should have hit him when he visited a few years ago. It's a wonder Dinozzo turned out that decent."

Again, Vance couldn't do anything as agree with the lead agent.

Tony tentatively made his way downstairs towards Abby lab. Jimmy Palmer was there giving Abby some probes from a body being Ducky's guest but he shushed them with his hand.

"Please, do not ask me anything. I just wanna lie down, my knee is killing me." Tony said entering and both of them were too stunned to say anything in return. Tony admitting he was hurt was rare, but telling them that he was hurting a lot was nearly a natural event itself. Abby was worried that his knee had been shot, maimed or even his leg cut off to cause this intense description from Tony. She went towards him, as he laid down onto her futon in her ballistic office.

"Just hurts Abby. Nothing to worry about."

"How?" she wanted to know, forgetting that he didn't want to be asked.

He cringed but answered immediately.

"Ziva busted it." he said slowly knowing there was a storm coming ahead at him.

"SHE WHAT???" Abby screamed.

"What did you do, Dinozzo? Tried to kill off her boyfriend again?" the instant she let the words out she knew it was the wrong thing to say.

Dinozzo stood up abruptly, nearly toppling over her desk.

"Wow Abby, seems I wasn't the only one having truth serum today." he said curtly and left. Palmer just looked at Abby who couldn't get it.

"That was very insensitive." Palmer scolded her. She nodded.

"I know, but he had to make Ziva very angry for her to do that... like the time when he

killed Rivkin, she took him down in Israel too out of anger." she told Jimmy.

"Interesting story Abs." Gibbs said, not having a CafPow with him.

"Gibbs, Gibbs, Gibbs, Tony..." he cut her off.

"... was hurt by Ziva and McGee and he didn't do anything except his job which they ignored. I heard you scream at him. You listened to his answer?"

She nodded, very subdued this time.

"Well, you can connect the dots. After that I want you in MTAC, we have to track down Ziva and McGee in Europe and as our techno-geek decided to go rogue and is therefore no longer an agent or a friend..." at this he paused, knowing that Abby was very close to McGee. She still nodded, keeping quiet for once.

"...we need your knowledge up there. I will take Tony home with me." With that he left, nodding towards Jimmy.

"He needs a friend, Palmer. Be up to it or you answer to me." Palmer began to beam.

"I will be the best friend he ever had." he saluted to Gibbs who smiled slightly.

"That is possible true."

With "friends" like McGee and Ziva, Dinozzo needed no enemies.

He found Tony in the men's room, splashing water onto his face.

"You coming?" he only asked his agent. Tony nodded, following him.

He didn't say anything on the way towards Gibbs house. Gibbs understood, the drugs were still in his system and sometimes the truth was just too painful to let it out.

As they drove in silence through the stop-and-go in DC Gibbs sighed.

"I know you want nothing more than to forget it and never talk about it again, but you should. It will eat at you and with no more left at the team than you and me I need you more than ever. I should have told you more often that your insights were mostly the key to solve most cases. What you do no computer can accomplish. McGee was good with technologies, but he only did the basics of investigative work, getting a feel for the witnesses and a suspect is much more important. Most murderers do not leave enough and solid evidence to nail them. That is the task of the investigator and you are doing a hell of a job with that."

Tony just shrugged his shoulders.

"Tony, I'm serious. I know you don't want to be hurt by others when you show them who you are but they hurt you anyway and they nearly killed you because they couldn't get what kind of person you are. I know it is also my fault because I let them have so much leeway with undermining you but I never thought..."

"I know you didn't Boss. You have my six. And forgive me when I only want to have you as my backup from now on. Till I can trust again. Which could be over entirely so maybe it's best for NCIS and the MCRT if I resign..."

Gibbs held up a hand to slap him but Tony flinched violently so he stopped himself.

"I'm sorry." he murmured.

"She poisoned it. Thought it was a sign of affection but she..." Tony stopped. He couldn't do that again.

"I understand. I will show you differently, alright?" Tony nodded.

They fell silent for a while when Tony spoke up again.

"When you build a new team, I want Dorneget." Gibbs smiled, this was a start.

"Why Dorneget?"

"No competition with the ladies of course, boss."

He looked towards Gibbs, grinning his trademark smile. It was faked, but eventually it would again become a genuine one. There was a long way to go with that.

Instead of the deserved headslap he gently squeezed Tonys shoulder.
"Rule five Dinozzo."