

Chapter 3:

Sara walked into Grissom's office trailing close behind him. Trying to ban any personal feelings from her mind, she focused on the case at hand.

"It looks more and more like poisoning. I guess you were right." She said as she sat down in a chair opposite Grissom's desk.

Not acknowledging her compliment, he got into the chair behind his paperwork littered desk. "I'll have Brass check the victim's background. See if there is anyone with a motive. Stunted girlfriend maybe." He picked up the phone.

"I don't know. His house didn't look like he had a girlfriend." Sara said absentmindedly.

Grissom shot her a quick glance before looking back at the phone on his desk. "Brass. Check the victim's background. Coworkers, friends, everything. See if anybody can name someone with a motive for killing him, female friends and so forth." He shifted a little in his seat as he felt Sara's gaze on him. "Yes, okay. We found traces of Ethylene Glycol in his food. It's looking like poisoning all right. Sara and I'll go back to the crime scene."

He hung up the phone and picked up his jacket. Waiting for Sara to walk out of his office before him, he quietly closed the door and followed her to the parking lot.

The drive back to the crime scene was spent in an uncomfortable silence. Sara still being miffed at Grissom for his earlier conduct, and Grissom not knowing how to open up a conversation about the case, without giving too much away. He parked next to the now lone police car and got out without waiting for Sara.

As they stepped into the house, he turned towards the kitchen. "Check the bathroom. See if you can find anything like anti-freeze or something that might contain Ethylene Glycol."

"Okay." She took her kit and walked through the bedroom, which was adjoining the bathroom. Sara's gaze swept over the large bed with the one set of pillow and blanket. In the bathroom she looked over the single toothbrush and various male hygiene articles. '*Sure doesn't look like a girlfriend to me,*' she thought again.

Rooting through the cabinets, she found some pain medication, food supplements, and cleaning stuff. Nothing with Ethylene Glycol, though.

Sara walked back into the kitchen and found Grissom looking into the fridge. He stood unblinking and unmoving, looking intently at the contents of the refrigerator. Sara walked up behind him. "Got lucky?"

For the second time that night Grissom got ripped out of his musings by Sara's presence. He quickly closed the fridge, but not before Sara caught a glimpse of a couple of bottles of beer, and various packaged meals. "Think someone poisoned his food?"

"Possibly. I didn't find anything containing Ethylene Glycol in the kitchen."

"Ditto for the bathroom. Think the fridge would hold some answers?" Sara asked, watching him closely.

“Maybe.” Some unreadable emotion crossed his features before he schooled his face into an impassionate mask again and faced her fully. “We should take some of the food back to the lab, get Greg to run some tests on it.”

“Sure.” She reached for the refrigerator door, but he stepped into her way.

“Why don’t you go call Brass. See if he got anything on the victim.”

Sara frowned and stepped back. “Why don’t I.” She said flatly, before stalking out of the room.

Grissom sighed and opened the fridge again. *‘I could be standing in my kitchen.’* He thought. Why was he acting this way? And especially around Sara at that? Surely, his behavior would only fuel her apparent suspicions. She seemed to be set on watching him tonight. Sighing again, he packed some of the beers and foodstuff to take with him. *‘Snap out of it, Gil. Stop projecting.’*

Outside, Sara was *this* close to screaming. What in hell was going on? Was Grissom doing this on purpose? He knew she didn’t appreciate being kept out of the loop on something. But something was off regarding Grissom tonight, she just couldn’t put a finger on it.

Getting out her cell phone, she speed dialed Brass’ number.

“Brass.”

“Sara here. I’m to check in with you. Got anything for us?” she slowly walked towards the car.

“What am I? A fucking genius? I just arrived at his work place, for god’s sake!” Brass replied, clearly upset.

“Hey!” she frowned at nothing in particular – well, maybe *someone* in particular. “Don’t yell at me, yell at Grissom.”

“Sorry. I shall call!” with that he hung up.

‘Great,’ Sara thought. *‘This night is going so well... Now I got Brass pissed off, too.’* And with Grissom seemingly set on pissing HER off....

As if on cue, Grissom walked up to the car. “And?”

“And nothing. Brass needs some more time.” She walked to the passenger side of the car. “Oh, and I suggest you don’t call him for at least an hour,” she threw over her right shoulder.

“Okay...” Grissom looked at her questioningly, but as nothing more came forth, he shrugged nearly imperceptibly and got into the car.

Brass flipped his cell phone shut and cursed under his breath. Pulling into Thomas Newman’s workplace, he calmed his thoughts and decided to keep the various ideas about getting back to Grissom to himself. For now.

He double-checked his notes and walked into the modern glass and steel building of *Nevada IT Developers*. Looking around the spacious front room, he approached a young, dark haired woman sitting behind the reception desk.

“Jim Brass. I called about seeing the Department Manager?” He held out his badge for the woman to see.

“Ah yes, Mr. Brass.” She said pleasantly, checking some handwritten notes. “He’ll have time for you in a couple of minutes. May I ask what this is about?”

Wanting to quell her curiosity before it got out of hand, he addressed her again. “Ms. ...”

“Cole.” She supplied eagerly, a smile forming that didn’t quite reach her eyes.

“Ms. Cole. You may not. This is an active investigation.” Brass turned to sit down in one of the overstuffed chairs provided in the room.

“Investigation?”, she said in a small voice. Brass cringed inwardly. *‘Damn!’*

“This is about Thomas, isn’t it?”

His interest piqued, Brass approached her again. “And what would you know about Mr. Newman?”

“Mr. Newman, yes. Just... he didn’t show up for work for a couple of days. I was getting worried. You see, I’m responsible for the sign-in sheets, so I notice these kind of things. He was always so responsible.”

“*‘Was?’*” Brass asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Errr, yes. I mean, you wouldn’t be here otherwise, would you?” She busied herself with straightening out some items on her desk.

“Ms. Cole. What exactly was your relationship with Mr. Newman?”

She looked up surprised, big eyes going this way and that. “Relationship? Oh no. I... he worked here. He was nice. That’s all.”

“I see,” Brass said suspiciously. Just as he was about to proceed with the questioning, a man in an evidently custom tailored suit stepped out of the big oak doors on Brass’ right side.

“Mr. Brass?”

Cursing internally, Brass gave a short smile before shaking the man’s hand. “Det. Jim Brass. I’d like a minute or two with you.”

“Certainly. I’m Steve Jenkins. Thomas worked for my department.” He shook his head slightly. “Why don’t we move this into my office?” At Brass’ nod Jenkins turned towards the reception. “Janice? Please put any calls on hold, or tell them I’ll call back!”

“Of course, Mr. Jenkins.”

Brass threw her a quick glance before following the manager into his generous office.

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