

## Chapter 4

Grissom was looking through Greg's findings again, trying to see if he had missed anything. Concluding that this definitely looked like a poisoning, he decided to wait for Brass to see if the police captain had come up with any possible suspects. Just as he was about to pick up the phone, Sara walked into his office.

"Jaqui checked all fingerprints we found. Excluded two sets of prints from the front door as belonging to the officers first on the scene. The rest on the door, in the kitchen, bath- and bedroom all belong to the victim." She plopped down into a chair. "So, basically, we got nada. And definitely no girlfriend."

Grissom frowned slightly before tapping his index and middle finger against his pursed lips. "Well, the prints might not give us anything to work with. Let's check in with Doc Robbins, shall we?"

"You shall keep your butt in your chair, and listen to what I've found out – in record time, I might add." Brass stepped into the office. "Especially considering you're pushing me around like Greg."

Grissom raised one eyebrow and left it at that, while Sara shot Brass an apologetic look.

"Yeah, well, I see you're in a repentant mood." He snorted slightly, and pulled out his notepad. "I checked with Mr. Jenkins, Newman's manger at the IT company. He was the one who called Newman in as missing. Nothing suspicious there. Nicer office than yours, though, I might add." Before Grissom could react he went on, "But the lady at the reception desk did pique my interest, so I'll look into her a bit more." Flipping a page, Brass scanned his notes quickly. "Checked Newman's hospital records, too. He had been admitted twice during the last three months. Symptoms were nausea and, well, tripping."

"Tripping?" Sara asked.

"Yeah, he was drunk off his ass."

"So much so that he had to be hospitalized?" Sara looked questioningly at Grissom.

"Actually, these symptoms are typical for Ethylene Glycol poisoning." He shifted his intense gaze from Sara back to Brass. "The doctors diagnosed 'tripping'?"

"Yes. Makes your trust level in our hospitals soar, right?"

Sara snorted, while a slight frown was Grissom's only reaction. "I think I'll check with the Doc to see if he found anything." He started to get up.

"I'll look into that reception lady a bit more closely. Keep me posted." With that Brass left the office and walked towards the LVPD building.

"Grissom?" Sara asked, still seated in her chair, turning to his pausing form in the doorway. "You want me to come or do you have anything else for me to do?"

Her tone was sweet, too sweet for Grissom's liking. "Why don't you check with Greg, if he's got any headway with the unidentified substance. Then come join me in the morgue."

"Of course." With that she quickly moved past him, not giving him a single look.

'Nothing sweet about that one...' Sighing quietly, Grissom got on his way to the morgue.

-----

"What do you mean you got waylaid?"

"Sorry, Sara. Warrick and Catherine had some pressing samples from their murder case that needed processing. I'll get to your stuff next, promise!" Greg made the boyscout sign and smiled sweetly.

"Sure. Just... page me, okay?"

"Will do! Anything for you, my..."

"Don't." Sara cut him off. "I'm really in no mood for this. Go suck up to Grissom." She left without a backwards glance, leaving one sad puppy of lab tech behind.

As she entered the morgue, she could see Doc Robbins placing a green blanket over the Y-incision on the body. The fact that the head was covered, too, didn't bode too well for Sara's stomach. Grissom was looking intently at a sheet of paper, then raised an incredulous face towards Robbins.

"NMS? Are you sure?"

"I don't do guesswork here, Gil. Your victim suffered from NMS." Robbins turned towards the sink to wash his hands.

"NMS?" Sara asked, looking over Grissom's shoulder at the piece of paper.

"Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome, a metabolic disorder." He tried to ignore the warmth coming from Sara's body close to his back, more apparent in the coldness of the morgue. "Symptoms are very similar to Ethylene Glycol poisoning. The body produces toxins, the patient starts to suffer from nausea, and apparent intoxication." He sighed heavily, and moved slightly away. "We'll have to get Greg to run the samples again, see if he hasn't made a mistake. Samples from the victim came back with Prpyon acid, which is very similar to Ethylene Glycol."

Sara took a step back, too. "You mean, he might have died of a natural cause?" She turned towards Robbins.

"From my point of view, yes. It is easily mixed up." Robbins shrugged apologetically.

"But Grissom," Sara turned back towards him. "That doesn't make any sense. The Ethylene Glycol was found in his food, not in Newman himself." Grissom looked thoughtful for a moment, before shaking his head slightly, as if to clear some cobwebs from his brain.

"That's right. I didn't...." He didn't finish the sentence, and looked at Sara, who shot him a quizzical glance.

"Oh?" Robbins paused from transferring the body from the slab, oblivious to the exchange behind him. "Well. Then somebody must have known of his condition, and used the Ethylene Glycol to mirror symptoms of NMS."

"Yes." Grissom put the sheet into the file folder he was holding. "Now we need to know who would have known of Newman's condition, and who is in a position to poison him." He sighed, and ran his right hand through his hair. "I guess we have to wait if Brass finds anything more. Till then, go home Sara."

"What?" She swiveled around.

"Go home, get some rest. I know that's what I'll be doing. And please don't argue?" He turned around and left the morgue, with a tiredness to him that seemed uncharacteristic.

Sara looked at Doc Robbins before shrugging jerkily and turning to leave, too. "Good night then, I guess." She knew what she would do first when she got home.

-----

Grissom opened the door to his townhouse and sighed heavily. He seemed to be doing this a lot lately. Especially this night.

Taking off his shoes and placing the jacket on a hook by the door, he shuffled further into his living room, and sat down heavily on his couch. He didn't bother to turn on the light, he could feel a headache coming. 'Great. Just what I needed.' Rubbing his temples slowly, he felt the pain only intensifying. With a resigned groan, he got up and went into his bedroom to retrieve his medicine from the bedside table. Pausing when he saw his bed and the lonely book lying on the small table, he quickly grabbed the pills and left the room.

Grissom got himself a glass of water from the fridge, his gaze wandering over the contents there. 'Shit!' Nearly slamming the door shut, he drowned two pills with the water then put the glass down on the kitchen counter with a loud clank. 'Shit!' Grissom wasn't a man to curse freely. Twice in the matter of a couple of seconds was serious. Pinching the bridge of his nose in order to gain some semblance of calm, and still his raging thoughts, he walked out of the kitchen and towards the front door.

He put on his shoes, grabbed the casefile and jacket, and left the quiet, dark townhouse behind himself. 'Might as well get some work done.'

-----

Sara had just sat down at her desk with the piece of paper and pen in hand. She looked at the sheet for a long time, till the writing began to blur in front of her eyes. Puffing out some air frustratedly, she threw the pen down and went to the kitchen. She paced for a few minutes, scratched an itchy area on her right arm, and then walked back to the desk purposefully. 'Quit delaying it. You know it has to be done. You know it....'

She was about to pick the pen up again, when a soft knock on the door made her pause. Quickly removing the pen and paper from the desk, she sighed, not sure if she was angry or thankful for the interruption. The knocking was repeated a little louder this time, and she went over to the front door. 'Yes, yes. On my way...'

---

TBC