

Chapter 9

Jenkins sat quietly in his chair, calmly looking at the two investigators who had sat down in front of him.

Grissom looked him carefully over. Brass had found the CSI Supervisor sitting in his office, eyes still closed, Sara's resignation in a drawer. After asking Brass to get Sara, he had watched Jenkins through the two-way mirror for a while, trying to assess him. Sara had walked up to him wordlessly, and they had entered the room behind Brass. The time had come to finish this.

"Mr. Jenkins, I'm Gil Grissom." He nodded his head to the left. "This is Sara Sidle. We have some questions for you."

"Yes. Detective Brass there already mentioned that. How can I help you?"

Sara regarded Grissom, but as he didn't make a move to start, she pulled out the three bottles of anti-freeze. "Care to explain this?"

Jenkins narrowed his eyes. "You got these from my house? I was never served with a warrant."

"There was no need to. We had enough evidence to allow us to search your house with the warrant we had without you having to be present."

"Evidence? Am I a suspect now?"

Brass stepped up behind Sara. "You have the right for a lawyer if you demand one."

Jenkins shook his head, not the least bit ruffled. "I don't need a lawyer. You can't honestly believe I had anything to do with what happened to Newman."

"Oh, but we do." Brass said mirthlessly.

"Maybe you could explain these?" Sara said, motioning towards the anti-freeze again.

"Of course." He looked at her calmly. "I have a brother in Boston, whom I visit from time to time."

"You mean to tell us, you go to Boston by car?"

"I hate flying." He shrugged. "It gets cold in the winter, as you undoubtedly know, so I like to be prepared."

"These are rather new." Sara pointed to the expiration date. "Bought this spring. Why would you buy anti-freeze in spring?"

"As I said, I like to be prepared for any eventuality."

'Oh, he's smooth,' Sara thought. She saw Grissom lean forward slowly.

"We also found a bottle of food supplements in your house."

"So?"

"You take any supplements?"

Jenkins frowned. "No, I don't."

"It's coincidence then that these are the same kind as Newman used?"

"Yes. They're for my brother."

Grissom nodded. "The one from Boston. The one who suffers from NMS."

Jenkins actually looked surprised at that. "How did you know?"

"That doesn't matter. What matters is, that Thomas Newman also suffered from NMS. You knew what supplements he was taking from Janice Cole, your secretary. She got them for him. However, you were the only one who knew Newman suffered from NMS because of that."

"So?" Jenkins said arrogantly. "That doesn't mean I killed him." He looked at Sara then at Brass. "I'm afraid I don't like where this is going. Since you have nothing else, I think this is over. What motive would I have for killing Newman?" He moved to get up.

"Mr. Jenkins." Grissom got his attention again, waiting a beat.

Without hesitation, Sara opened the folder she was holding and pulled out a piece of paper. It looked like it had been discarded and smoothed out again recently. She put the paper on the table in front of Grissom, and he lightly put his left hand on top of it. They worked so well with each other, communicating with gestures or looks; sometimes only due to some sort of instinctive knowledge of what the other was thinking. Why couldn't he communicate with her like this outside of work. That was always a painful and uneasy thing to deal with, more so with her than with his other co-workers. And why was he so utterly terrified of it?

He felt Sara pull her hand away, and nodded at her slightly. Almost as if acknowledging all the times they had done this effortlessly before, and not just this particular instant. 'And this last instant.'

Grissom quickly banished any personal thoughts from his mind, and shifted his full focus on Steve Jenkins again. He had gotten good at just switching over into work mode over the years – but at a cost to himself, and to the others. At times he wondered, if the cost had been too high. He gently turned the sheet of paper 180 degrees, and pushed it towards Jenkins.

"I think this answers your question." He lifted his hand from the crinkled paper, his intense blue eyes never leaving Jenkins's face.

Jenkins scanned the printed letter quickly, and blanched visibly.

"We found this in your office. Forgot to take the trash out?" Sara regarded him coolly. "He was to take your position, wasn't he?"

Jenkins cleared his throat, before shaking his head slightly. He seemed resigned. "Headquarters thought he would be good at the job," he snorted derisively. "They only look at the numbers, not the people." His eyes went to the letter in front of him again. "Newman was an asshole. No one knew what to make of him. He was eccentric, a loner who lacked people skills. He would have been a bad manager."

Sara felt more than saw Grissom stiffen beside her. "Oh so you did the world a service by killing him. It wasn't for personal reasons," she said sarcastically.

Jenkins looked at her calmly, his confidence and slick demeanor back in place. "I believe now would be a good time to claim my right to a lawyer."

Grissom got up and went to the door quietly. "I would believe so." He opened the door and motioned the young policeman outside to step into the room. "Stay with the suspect."

Sara watched him walk towards his office before she turned towards the locker room. Opening her locker, she sat down on the bench, exhaling slowly, and looked up at the sheet of paper in it. She had hoped to feel relieved when this moment came. 'Far from it.'

'Incredible how many useless things one acquires over the course of a bit more than four years.' Sara lugged another box into her living room. The apartment was almost bare by now. Suitcases and boxes littered the floor. She had started to pack after getting home from the lab, and hadn't stopped all night. Now as the first glimmer of dawn was visible through the window, she decided to indulge in the luxury of a break.

Picking up up the mug from the coffee table, Sara gently blew the steam over the rim, while her eyes roamed over the empty shelves and bare walls. She took a sip and sat down on the couch, leaning back into the soft cushions. The movers would be coming around noon, they would transport the furniture and most of her belongings to a storage unit until she would need it again. A week or two at her parents' would do her a world of good. And get her away from here.

Her gaze stopped at the single unpacked object in the room. The card was still attached to it, even if the writing had been smudged a bit from the time she left her window open the night a thunder storm hit the city. The ink had faded from being exposed to the sun for too long. Time had that effect on things. They were either extinguished in a matter of seconds, or slowly blurred into nonexistence over the course of years. The once strong and clear ink had turned into something pale and almost indistinguishable. But it was still there.

Sara got up and gently fingered a leaf. It was amazing how long ago it seemed to her. She thought she had gotten some sort of answer at that time. But it had turned out to be just as elusive as the man from which it had come.

She sighed and put the cup down.

Grissom sat on his couch, rubbing his temples wearily. It wasn't a headache that was troubling him, or that kept him from sleep despite his bonecrushing weariness. He rubbed his temples

hard, as if willing the pain to go away by inflicting a different kind of pain. A soft knock penetrated his daze, and he got up to open the door without thinking. Only as he laid his eyes on her, did everything register.

"Sara?"

She brushed past him and barged into the living room. 'Nothing to lose now.'

"Thank you for signing the resignation." She sat down on the couch where he had been sitting only moments before.

Grissom looked at her for a while, for once not trying to hide the pain he felt. Not anymore. Softly closing the door behind him, he turned his translucent eyes to her, before shifting his gaze to the floor. "You're welcome." It was barely above a whisper. Total defeat.

"What are you afraid of, Grissom?"

"You." His voice sounded hoarse. There was no more hesitation. No more hiding behind other people's quotes or clever double entendres.

"Me?"

"Yes."

Sara shook her head slightly. "No."

"What?" His blue eyes finally settled on her face.

"You're not afraid of me. You're afraid of change. So you don't think about change, you push it away. And you push me away." She locked eyes with him. "Maybe you're afraid of being rejected. But I can't reject you. You're too fast for me."

"Sara." He took a small step towards her.

"No. Grissom. Don't say anything. Nothing you say can change anything. I made my decision. Please accept it. Please accept me." She got up and went to the door. It hurt her to see him like this, but she had needed to come here, as much for herself as for him. As she turned the knob, she looked at his forlorn figure. "Words don't change anything. Not anymore. But maybe you will." He looked up at her words. "I'll be there, Gil."

With that she stepped outside into the early morning sun and closed the door behind her.

He didn't see the tears, and didn't hear her sobs as she drove out of the city.

She didn't see his tears, or his retreating even more into himself for the week that followed. She didn't see how he sat in his living room night after night; alone, thinking things over. She didn't see him calling Catherine, taking a few days vacation, and then checking in with airlines for flights to California. He knew her thinking well enough to know that she would take some time to pull herself together at her parents, the only support she felt she had. Especially since he hadn't been there for her for a long time, as he now realized. Grissom packed a few clothes, picked up his keys, and went outside. He felt a tingling and warming

sensation as he finally made his decision. No more denial. No more waiting and wishing for the one thing he had denied himself for too long. No more cold lonely nights. 'I'll be there, Gil.' So would he. He only hoped he wouldn't be too late

He smiled.

THE END