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<th>Mature</th>
</tr>
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<td>Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings</td>
</tr>
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<td>M/M</td>
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<td>Anthony DiNozzo, Connor Asher</td>
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<td>Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, One Shot Collection</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Summary

All know of Tony's reputation as a lover man but he does have a type ... Just what names could be in his little black book? A Series of unconnected one-shots and follow up to the previous collection.

Notes

This is the start of Phase Two and new names and pairings will appear as they are completed. Each Volume will close out with 50 entries - any pairing requests should be added to the content page as it will make them easier to track.

All pairings here will be a law or spy theme, other pairings will have their own collections such as
1) Big Damn Heroes
2) The Darkside (A more morally grey Tony)
3) A Night in Front of the TV.
Content Page: Law and Spy Zone

Chapter Summary

All names, pairings and the links to other parts of the Tony Little Black ever-expanding universe.

Chapter Notes

Threesome suggestions are now being moved to their own potential collection. (Part of Phase Three)

Other Volumes of Tony's Little Black Book

1) Volume One can be found here.

2) TLBB - Big Damn Heroes

3) TLBB - Shades of Grey

4) TLBB -Night in front of tv

Entries

1. Mick Rawson - (Criminal Minds: Suspect Behaviour)
2. President Asher - (Olympus Has Fallen) - Holiday Timestamp: Christmas History is in the Making
3. Cal Lightman 2 - (Lie to Me) - Is a sequel to previous short: Lie to the Master
4. Dwayne Pride 2 - (NCIS: New Orleans) - Sequel to The Best Thing in New Orleans
5. G Callen - (NCIS: LA) - Holiday Timestamp: The Princess Vows
6. Tobias Fornell 2 - (NCIS) - Sequel to An Agent Scorned
7. Mark Benford - (FlashForward)
8. Mycroft Holmes 2 - (Sherlock BBC) - Prequel for - Dig a Little Deeper
9. Martin Fitzgerald - (Without a Trace)
10. Tom Morrow 2 (NCIS) Prequel for - Unexpected Partners
11. Admiral AJ Chegwidden - (JAG) - Expanded Story - My Kind of Perfect
12. David Rossi 2 - (Criminal Minds)
13. Leon Vance 2 - (NCIS) - Sequel for - Power of Sports
14. ASA Peter Stone - (Chicago Justice)
15. Merlin - (Kingsman)
16. Aaron Hotchner 2 - (Criminal Minds)
17. John Cale - (White House Down)
18. Tom Kirkman (Designated Survivor) - Expanded Story - Designate: First Husband
19. Seeley Booth 2 - (Bones) - Prequel for - The Right Choice
21. Harmon Rabb Jr 2 - (JAG) - Sequel - So Glad
22. Jack Malone (Without a Trace)
23. Jack Hodgins (Bones)
24. William Cooper 2 (RED) - Expanded Story - Down at Eagles Nest
25. Mike Banning 2 (London Has Fallen) - Sequel to One good turn deserves another
26. Jay Halstead (Chicago PD)
27. Steve McGarrett 3 (Hawaii 5-0)
28. Frank Moses (RED)
29. James Bond 2 (Bond movies)
30. Eliot Spencer 2 (Leverage) - Sequel for Caffeine is Serious Business
31. Q (Bond Movies)
32. Spencer Reid 2 (Criminals Mind)
33. Charlie Eppes (Numb3rs)
34. Derek Morgan 2 -(Criminal Minds) Sequel for - A Series of Firsts
35. Sam Hanna (NCIS: Los Angeles) - Expanded Story - The A Team: NCIS Style
36. Martin Riggs (Lethal Weapon TV)
37. Stan Burley (NCIS)
38. Derek Morgan 3 - (Criminal Minds) Sequel for - More Firsts
39. Alan Shore - (Boston Legal)
40. Harry Hart (Kingsmen)
41. Jason Bourne (Bourne Movies)
42. Ethan Hunt (Mission Impossible movies)
43. Aaron Cross (Bourne movies)
44. Adam Dalton (The Brave)
45. Don Eppes (Numb3rs & Sentinel Fusion)
46. Chin Ho Kelly (Hawaii 5-0)
47. Sherlock (BBC)
48. Chin Ho Kelly 2 (Hawaii 5-0) - Sequel for:- The One that Got Away
49. Sherlock 2 (BBC) — Sequel for:- A Cunning Plan
50. Chin Ho Kelly 3 - Threequel following The One that Got Away & Recoupling.
Chapter Notes

Mick is played by Matt Ryan ... better known for his role as Constantine on the TV show.

To Catch a Sniper, you need...

Tony was done. In fact, no there wasn’t a word invented to describe how pissed off with the situation he was. In this case, the only thing that would satisfy him is seeing Ari Haswari nailed to the wall. The man kept shooting at his team and Gibbs was too close to the situation to be objective.

“What we need is a sniper.” Kate said, frustration evident in her voice.

“Are you forgetting someone?” Gibbs growled, his emotions close to the surface.

Morrow was listening to all of this and intercede before his MCRT said things they could not take back. He also couldn’t help but notice that through all of this the SFA has stayed silent. Morrow wasn’t fooled by the masks the man used in the job. He was well aware that when DiNozzo was quiet that was when he was at his best. “What do you think, DiNozzo?”

The young agent looked up from his notes, clearly not paying attention. “Sorry, Sir?”

Morrow repeated his question. “What’s your take on all this?”

DiNozzo sighed but didn’t seem hesitant to answer. “Haswari will have profiled the team and looked for weak spots. It’s why he is targeting the women on the team as it enrages Agent Gibbs. He wants Gibbs to go all Moby Dick so that he can be taken out. I do have a suggestion but I know it will seem counterproductive given that we have Agent Gibbs.”

Morrow was intrigued. “Say it anyway.”

“I could call in a very special sniper who would have no trouble tracking one of his own.”

Gibbs growled. “I know how to snipe!”

Tony rolled his eyes but unlike his teammates he wouldn’t stay quiet. “Yes Boss, I know. What I also know is that as you are the one we need to protect. We need another sniper and one that comes from outside that he hasn’t had a chance to study. It’ll give us our best advantage.”
Gibbs could, contrary to popular belief, listen to reason. “Who?”

Tony knew what would happen when he gave the name. He was giving up his privacy and revealing a pretty big secret that he had worked hard to keep and yet in the face of his teammate’s danger. He didn’t hesitate to say. “Mick Rawson.”

“You know the Ghost of the SAS?”

Tony smirked. “He joined the FBI so you shouldn’t tease him about his Britishness. It is the only thing he’s sensitive about.”

Kate almost forgetting about Ari. “What am I missing?”

Tony muttered something under his breath that sounded like *wood from the trees.*

Morrow sighed knowing that Gibbs’ inner bastard was going to be on full show in the coming days. So he added dryly. “A pissing contest in the making. Agent DiNozzo, go and make the call.”

DiNozzo left, presumably to make the call which Kate didn’t understand either. “Why would he need privacy to make the phone call?”

Morrow actually shook his head at the naivety in the question. He wasn’t sure how she could be so green working for Gibbs this long not to mention that she was the profiler on the team. “When one greets a partner some prefer to do it quietly.”

Todd paled. “Tony is not gay.”

Gibbs and Morrow shared a look and Gibbs knew what he had to do. He was unwilling to lose Tony to people’s inability to see things clearly. “You got fooled by the best undercover agent in town. He is well known to enjoy the company of both sexes but is a little shy around women since his ex-fiance left him on his wedding day. So the teasing and comments to DiNozzo about his love life stop. Period. There is a reason he didn’t feel safe enough to share this with you, Todd.”

“We’re his team.” McGee tried to protest.

Gibbs snorted. “His team, who teased him about having to kiss his friends male killer and then photoshopped him as a male cowboy. He left a PD over less hazing that that.”

“We didn’t mean anything over it, we just wanted to get one back on him.” Even to her own ears, it
sounded weak.

Gibbs shrugged and went for the jugular so to speak. “It’s all cool, right? I mean if several of our less enlightened colleagues jump him to show him what a real man is. Or, we’re in a firefight but the backup is slow to respond because they think a fag cop shouldn’t be serving? Well, at least you will be one up on DiNozzo.”

Kate felt physically sick because she could hear what Gibbs was not saying - all these things had happened to DiNozzo.

“We’ll make this right.” Todd promised but Morrow knew what response Gibbs would have.

“Talk is cheap.”

All comments ended as Tony re-entered the room. Morrow was the one to ask. “Is he coming?”

Tony nodded. “I had to sweet talk Sam Cooper, his boss, but he is letting him come over to play.”

Kate and Tim were seeing a different side to the SFA. There was a hyperfocus and seriousness to Tony that had been lacking usually. What they would soon understand is that - this was the real Tony.

“Merci,” Tony finished his phone call. “Boss, Inspector Trudeau confirms that Haswari left through Charles-De-Gaulle,”

“Well, well, well, I didn’t realise it was SO orange. Is it to protect against snipers?”

The team froze but Tony turned around with a grin on his face. “It’s good you’re here, Mick. And it is not my fault that my boss doesn’t have quite the aversion to an office that Sam does. I need to find this guy and I know you can help because he is really pissing me off.”
“Your inner Brit is showing, darling.” Mick teased.

Tony gave him the middle finger and neatly introduced him so. “We have Agents Gibbs, Todd, and McGee. Everyone this is Agent Mick Rawson of the FBI.”,

And turning back to his lover. “And don’t mention my Britishness - my uncle is still bemoaning our scandalous visit.”

You see his supposed recent break to Panama City hadn’t been quite as warm as was generally believed. He’d treated Mick to a week back home so he could see his little sister, Jenna. At the same time, Tony thought it would be a good idea to touch base with his mother’s side of the family.

And that was the last clue the team had regarding Tony’s social life because he immediately was dragging Mick over to the photos and an in-depth discussion started. Kate watched this and as she listened something became blindingly obvious. “You are a trained profiler!”

Rawson snorted. “I work for a BAU red-cell, of course I am a trained profiler.”

Kate shook her head. “No, I mean Tony.”

Mick still didn’t get it. “So what? Do you think Harvard give out Doctorates to people for fun?”

Tony sighed. “Thanks, only the boss knew.”

Mick didn’t seem to be sorry, in fact, he carried on his lecture but this time directed at Tony. “You know nothing good ever comes from hiding your light under a bushel.”

McGee looked like his whole worldview had shattered, it quite possibly had. “You are Dr. DiNozzo?”

“If I insist on it, yes.” Tony responded seeing no reason to lie. At this rate, he was going to take Morrow up on his offer to escape the annoyance factor. “Now back to the matter - like the terrorist who keeps trying to kill the boss.”

The junior agents did as they were told and didn’t even protest. Tony could say something to his smirking lover but there was no point. Mick had proved his point the minute Kate and Tim had jumped up to follow his orders.
An hour later and Mick said the magic words. “I know his next move.”

Gibbs knew that Rawson would be impressive but this was quick. “Out with it.”

Rawson hesitated. “I think Agent DiNozzo and I will need to have a word in private with you first.”

Gibbs was about to protest when Tony cut him off. “Everyone is entitled to their secrets, boss.”

Gibbs sighed knowing that Tony would not say a damn thing until they went to his office. “My office.”

The three men went to the lift and none of them blinked when Gibb slammed the emergency brake on. “Out with now that we’re all here.”

Tony took the lead on what to say next as he was the one with a personal relationship with Gibbs. “What Mick is trying to find a nice way to say is Ari knows about your first wife and child and is going to use that against you by targeting Kate.”

Mick nodded. “Tony has never once shared particulars but this is a textbook play from Hamas.”

Gibbs knew what had happened. “After Baltimore?”

Tony nodded and he couldn’t find it in himself to be sorry. “Two great things happened - you, and Mick.”

Gibbs finished. “But you were low on trust after Danny?”

Tony snorted. “I am an undercover agent, I am always low on trust. It is just not a healthy trait to have and stay living.”

Gibbs chuckled recognising it for a valid truth. This man was important to Tony and had helped settle his SFA so the offer came naturally. “Cowboy steaks at mine after we deal with Ari.”

Tony saw Mick pale. “What?”

“You told me that I would never have to meet your Dad.”

Tony smiled fondly because his boyfriend could be a goof. “The biological one, no.”

Rawson smirked but there was a message in the glare being sent out from Gibbs too. “Yeah but he is
not the one that counts, is he?"

Tony looked at his boss. “You’re right but keeping his stubborn ass alive will help.” He said nothing else simply restarted the lift and left Gibbs to reorder his thoughts. They needed Gibbs to know that he couldn’t go all Moby Dick or try to sacrifice himself as people cared about him.

&*&*&*&*&*&*&*

The rooftop was a Killzone and before Gibbs or Tony could say it - Kate opened the rooftop door. They saw the ominous red light land on Kate’s chest but as Gibbs tackled her to the floor the shot went wild - a second shot never came. There was only one reason for that - Ari was dead. Mick was in his own nest and obviously finished the job.

Gibbs and Kate were on the floor, soaked to the bone and laughing from the adrenaline overload coursing through their systems.

Kate asked the question. “Why am I not dead?”

Tony was grinning from ear to ear. “Mick.”

Kate understood what was not being said. “Don’t take this the wrong way but I think I love your boyfriend.”

Tony smirked. “That is understandable as he is pretty awesome.”

*It turned out that revealing his secret changed a lot of things - namely Kate lived and Mossad didn’t get their hooks into NCIS through Ziva David. Tony would have known more but Gibbs told him in front of Mick that he would be upset if Tony didn’t take the promotion that Morrow was offering when he went to Homeland security.*
Decisions, big and small, affect our lives in the strangest of ways. Scientists will argue about multiple parallel universes existing - all shooting off when you make a key decision at the nexus points in your life.

Tony had no idea why that came to mind right now but it might have something to do with the announcer calling the 45th President of the United States, Benjamin Asher, who has another title - Tony’s husband.

It started back in college, he reckoned, when he thought about similar thoughts. At the time, all he could think about was playing ball but there was a little voice in his head saying that DiNozzo’s have the worst luck. So he’d not chosen his natural preference and picked law instead.

~*~

Benjamin Asher had a type and now that he was away from his family and his parents he wanted to indulge. He’d joined the lecture hall to see two people in front of him. The first was his best friend, Margaret. She was a great woman, a pretty brunette who would no doubt do amazing things with her life. His family would just love to plan their wedding - they kept dropping hints to that effect ever since they’d graduated.

So why was it all he could see were the laughing green eyes of the person talking to Maggie?

“Ben - get over here and meet Tony, he’s a jock and wants to be a lawyer!”

Ben shook the man’s hand and the rest, as they say, was history.

~*~

His father, Benjamin Asher Senior, pitched an epic fit when Ben brought Tony home to meet the parents. The couple had been ready for it and Ben was so nervous that his family would make Tony run for the hills.

“Ben, if you go down that path the family will not support you.”

So there it was - confirmation of his suspicion that his father would rather disown him than admit to having a gay son.
Tony stood firm and met his father’s stare in a way few other people in this world could. “If you choose to disown Ben that is fine, we will survive. Just know this ... I will reach out to Uncle Clive and explain he might want to review his American contracts on the grounds of such rampant homophobia.”

“The only Clive I know is Lord Paddington, a Brit.”

Tony smirked hearing the implication, he is a Brit and you’re not. “My mother was his sister, she married an Italian ... it was all very unfortunate. Thankfully, my Uncle doesn’t hold my American-ness against me.”

Ben listened to his father chuckle. “Okay, touche. Ben, I am sorry I said those things. You need to realise that this world is not ready to accept you together and I am afraid politics is definitely not ready.”

Ben bit his lip and let out some of his tension. “I know that Dad, but no plan ever survives perfectly. Tony and I can and will adjust.”

And they did, Tony joined the FBI and Ben went to work as a prosecutor in the district attorney’s office.

~*~

Ben and Tony couldn’t disagree with Ben senior but any bigotry they faced was minimal in comparison to the love they shared.

It grew when Ben’s sister tragically died in a car crash, killing her and her husband instantly. There had been one survivor, little Connor in his chair and Tony and Ben didn’t even have to consider it. They had taken him home almost immediately. Others were amazed at how easily the couple adjusted their schedules to include Connor but it wasn’t an imposition to them. Ben simply took his cases with more care and Tony transferred from counter-terrorism to white-collar crimes. He and Ben were okay with the potential risk to themselves, they were old enough but they wouldn’t let Connor be risked.

The couple always found it amusing when Ben prosecuted a case that Tony arrested. Tony had just cracked a major art forgery network involving master paintings. His team was celebrating and rightfully so but he just wanted to get home. Christ, he was getting old but he wouldn’t trade it for the world. “Another time, I’m just going to go home and hug my kid.”

“And your gorgeous husband.”
Tony smirked as he left because his husband was handsome and looked stunning in a suit.

When Tony entered their townhouse Connor ran full pelt at him. “Papa, Grandfather is here with Uncle Dave and I think they broke Daddy.”

He said looking very worried for a three-year-old and it still got him when Connor called him Papa - or Ben, Daddy. They’d vowed to never let him regret the titles.

Tony took a deep breath because traversing the minefield of Asher family politics made him glad his own family had disowned him. “Well, Sparky, let’s go and rescue Daddy.”

Ben wasn’t broken just confused. He was happy as DA and assumed that his life choices would stop anything more. Only when he looked at Tony, with Connor on his hip, he never saw it as a sacrifice.

Tony was the one to ask the tense room. “So is Connor right? Have you broken Ben?”

His father-in-law looked amused and he may not ever say it aloud but he was glad that day that Tony stood up to him. “We asked Ben to stand for the seat in the Senate that is about to go up for a special election.”

Tony chuckled as now he understood why Connor would think that. “Yeah, that would do it. So what do your polls tell you, Dave? I know you pair, you wouldn't be here otherwise.”

Asher Senior smirked because he knew Tony would be the one to say it. “Apart from the deeply conservative, you pair are a modern political dream team.”

Tony knew Ben wanted it and he would support him to get there. “We’ll support you all the way.”

Four years later, and they were having a similar conversation as people were convincing Ben to run for President.

By this point, Tony was a Unit Chief and the Secret Service were glad their protectees understood security even if they were not too happy to have it.

~*~
Ben was back on the campaign bus and kissed Connor's head. His son had obviously tried to stay up to greet him after the debate. It was adorable and he was glad that this bus was crazy enough to have a family room.

Tony grinned. “Well, you were very hot and sexy.”

Ben chuckled as he took the offered beer. “You are just being nice.”

Tony shook his head. “No - I had the numbers running and was bugging Angie.”

Angie was Ben’s campaign manager who had taken the job to get a good man elected no matter his lifestyle choices. She was sure they could go close and after the primaries and securing the actual nomination people were starting to believe her claims. Tonight was the first Presidential debate and the opposition had gone for what they thought was a weakness - Family Values.

Ben had countered every sneer about him with calm reassurances. Yes, he was with a male partner, what did that matter? He and Tony loved each other, they worked hard, earned a wage and paid taxes - it shouldn’t matter what they did in their bedroom.

His opponent had flushed saying, “It isn’t natural.”

Ben smirked, “No, your unseemly, unnatural interest in my partner is worrisome. I hope you won’t be so obsessive about irrelevant things if you win the vote, will you?”

That got laughter in the audience.

Then, just as Angie predicted the opposition brought up Tony’s father. Ben had countered with the statement they had prepared. “My partner has not spoken with his father since he was twelve. However, he asked that if you brought up this dirty laundry he would do an interview with Ellen to tell his side if she was willing.”

Still calm, no worries and easily circumvented and then Ben lost his patience. The man suggested that they shouldn’t be raising Connor as they were in an unnatural relationship.

Ben asked with a false smile. “So I should have just abandoned my sister’s son?”

“Well, no.”

Ben sighed. “So I should have thrown away my lover who supported me through the traumatic death
of my sister, and has been with me all through raising Connor whilst holding down his job as a Federal Agent.”

“You’re twisting my words.”

No, Ben wasn’t, he was countering him and this debate was definitely Ben’s - and it was the asshole’s fault. “I don’t see how I am. I am simply responding to your comments. So what should I have done? If you choose your words so poorly now, I struggle to wonder what your presidency would be like.”

~*~

As one might suspect, fast forward to election night and Ben was now favourite to win despite everyone’s initial suspicions. Tony was standing right by Ben’s side with Connor there too. “Relax Ben.”

“How can I relax? They are about to call the result.”

Tony had a wicked smirk. “Well, I will be calling you Mr. President soon enough.”

Ben shivered knowing it wouldn’t be a good thing for Tony to call him that too much. He did not want to go on stage either to accept the Presidency or concede it with a hard-on.

“You’re going to pay for that.” Ben said quietly mindful of the huge amount of company and their son not even a foot away.

Tony smirked as he fixed his tie. “Maybe, but first you have to go and accept the presidency, Mr. President-Elect.”

“What?” Ben had missed the result being called as Tony had distracted him.

Tony grinned. “You heard, Sir.”

Ben shivered. “You better not keep calling me that or I will never get any work done.”

Tony leant in close, “Only in bed, Ben. Now go be all Presidential.”

And that was how Benjamin Asher Junior became the 45th President of the United States. If the couple had thought their road to the White House was eventful - that was nothing compared to terrorists forcing the redecorating or the disastrous state trip to London that had the First Husband
insisting that the family would only ever be staycationing from that day forward.

As Tony had just helped rescue him with Mike, Ben was smart enough to agree to every demand.
Chapter Summary

Tony often wondered if he'd return back to NCIS ... He had no idea it would be with such a bang.

Chapter Notes

RL job starts up again so I'm afraid updates will almost certainly slow down.

Set in the same universe as the previous fic - Lie to the Master. It is not necessary to have read that story but may help.

Return of Agent DiNozzo ... Sort Of

Tony had left NCIS and could honestly say that he hadn’t looked back. He was in a far less toxic environment now and as the Special Agent in Charge of the Washington office, he was handed cases directly from the big boss man.

Like for example today, and it sure was a doozy, Tony thought, as he read through the case brief. “So there is corruption at NCIS?” Tony asked, seeking clarification whilst being internally surprised at how unsurprised he was.

Charlie shrugged. “I have no idea and neither does the President but he wants it solved. He’d have asked Davenport but he’s busy being raked over the coals. Now we technically have jurisdiction and if I am aiming to shake loose things ... I figured you would be the best person to send, well, you and Dr. Lightman. I want a full audit and you are to leave no stone unturned ... feel free to shake loose every skeleton you can think of.”

Tony chuckled because if Gibbs and Co didn’t lose their minds seeing him, Cal was sure to drive them to it with his invasive questions. “You are a little bit twisted, Sir. Has anyone told you that?”

“Your husband.”

Tony grinned, crooked and full of fond affection. “Well, you were the one who brought the Lightman group into the FBI, Sir.”

“Go on, get out of here and find out what is going on!”

Tony looked through the folder and finally several red flags had been raised. It had taken way too long in his mind but better late than never. Tony had wondered if he would ever return to NCIS as
he hadn’t looked back since leaving. He’d finished the last joint operation taking down the Mob boss threatening Naval interests, and that was it. There was another great thing about that op - he’d met his husband, Dr. Cal Lightman.

~*~

Tony decided to go directly to Cal’s office as he didn’t want to stay indoors. “Hey, Handsome.”

Tony snorted at the greeting from Gillian. “Hello. Are you making Ben treat you right?”

She smirked. “After the shovel talk he got from you and Cal, I would say that is a given.”

Tony just smirked, unrepentant, because Gillian deserved all the happiness in the world. She was Cal’s best friend and had seen him through a lot and Tony would do anything to help her. “I’m not sorry but I need Cal ... for work reasons.”

Gillian frowned as Tony did his best to separate their work and personal lives - in fact, the first time they’d met was when Tony asked to rearrange the contract so she was primary. “Now that is surprising. Is this going to be headache inducing?”

Tonys snickered. “No, but I will be happy to get you a pudding cup if I say anything untrue.”

She smiled at him. “If you say so but I will hold you to it.”

Tony kissed her cheek. “I will bring one for my favourite woman anyway.”

She smacked him on the shoulder. “Go and see your husband, you terrible flirt.”

Tony smiled as he did as ordered - it wasn’t a hardship. “Hello, Gorgeous.”

Cal looked up from his files, glasses on and Tony really wished he didn’t have to go and storm a castle. He wanted to do other things right now with his husband looking like that. Damn being a professional.

Cal asked. “What do you want?”

Tony sat down looking very relaxed and pleased with his day. “Well, first of all, I want to treat you to lunch. Then ... I want you to come to NCIS with me, as the FBI director has tasked us with leading a team to audit the leadership. There have been concerns ... This is my favourite piece.”

Tony threw a folder over at Cal, he wouldn’t let Cal conduct interviews unless he knew the depth of what they could do. Cal whistled but his face showed his disgust. “Who blew the whistle.”

“You remember Kort?”

Cal nodded as he’d provided an excellent whisky as a wedding present. He’d be memorable as he was one of the few guests that Tony had invited to the wedding personally. “Yeah. CIA, excellent choice in McCallen.”

Tony chuckled. “Yeah, and he was given the reins of the programme and refused to take part in something so fucked up, his words, and blew it wide apart.”
Cal chuckled. “And you said he had no morals.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Trent has interests and they either align with his ... or they don’t.”

Cal agreed with that assessment and had figured that much by the end of the wedding. “So are you ready?”

Tony shrugged. “I have no friends left there, only ex-coworkers.”
And that was the truth. After all, he’d convinced Jimmy to come and work at the FBI and Ducky had retired not long after he’d left. Tony had worked hard to make them see just how bad things were at NCIS and why it would be a good idea to escape the sinking ship.

Cal stood up, buttoning his shirt. “So did the FBI director really give me permission to be as obnoxious as we want?”

Tony grinned. “Pretty much, or at least that was what I inferred.”

“You have a PhD, you can’t play airhead with me, dear.” Cal remarked and that was true.

Tony pouted. “Hey, I am good at playing the clown and I am still the only one who can sneak a lie past you.”

Cal smirked at him as he led them out of the office. “But I am exceptional in bed so you don’t want to.”

“That’s it, you’ve figured me out.”

They left the office to disbelieving looks from Ria and Eli but the kids would soon learn.

~*~

Tony had ordered a team to meet them at the Naval Yard and he’d briefed them before he’d gone to collect Cal. He was relaying last orders and letting them know what was ahead for them.

“Okay, so we have been tasked with a full audit. You will be met with rudeness, outright hostility and they will consider me to be a clown. Do not react to it ... It was what I wanted them to think ... They will soon learn.”

Cal saw the sharkish grin from Tony’s team - he recognised the faces, these were the ones that Tony had personally mentored since taking over the Washington office. “And Dr. Lightman.”

“Rule One still stands.”

For the uninitiated, rule one of the Washington office was no matter how infuriating the boss’ husband is - he can’t be shot, or let anyone else shoot him.

“Yes, Sir.”

Tony grinned. “This might almost be fun.”

~*~

Gary was still the guard. “Er … Agent DiNozzo, what are you doing here?”
Tony stepped forward. “It’s technically FBI Assistant Director and I am here on official business. The Director won’t be expecting us but we will be seeing him.” Tony finished firmly and all his team showed their badges and signed in.

The other guard jumped up. “I can show you the way.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “No need, I remember.”

Gary gulped because he knew when DiNozzo was this calm and focussed that usually someone was in a lot of trouble. He couldn’t imagine why the Director was in trouble but he said a quick prayer for the guy.

The team of five piled into the lift and set off for the headquarters level. Tony took a second and closed his eyes. He had no reason for nostalgia and he had no intention of letting any emotions colour his return.

~*~

“What is the meaning of this!”

Tony smiled cordially. “And good afternoon to you, Director Vance. And this is why we are here.” He handed him the orders and watched as Vance paled. Yeah, the man knew he was in trouble.

Gibbs was suddenly next to Vance. “Why DiNozzo?”

Cal got in Gibbs’ face, never being a fan of an intimidation tactic - he’d seen and studied them all and as a result they had rather lost their shine. “Well, that is a broad question, you would think the Lead Agent of the MCRT would be better at interrogating suspects.”

Tony smiled his polite professional smile. “Well, as you can see the orders are legitimate. I should imagine you want to contact Secretary Davenport but I am to inform you he is currently being raked over hot coals by the President.”

Gibbs didn’t know what was going on, this was more than a case of switched identities. As much as hated it he had to ask. “Tony, what is going on?”

Tony stood tall and proud, this was the man that Gibbs always envisaged Tony could become. He was sorry that he had not been there to see the final transformation. “You won’t like this but there are accusations of corruption and potential treason and misuse of soldiers in war times.”

“Those are serious accusations,” Gibbs responded. He turned to Vance. “Am I going to like this?”

Cal answered for him. “I’m going to go with a big fat no.”

Tony took control. “We will be conducting an interview with you, you can of course, ask for representation. In fact, I suggest you do.”

“I am not ashamed of what I have done.” Vance replied with a sneer.

Tony’s favourite young Fed, Tovet, muttered. “Arrogance for the win.”

She was a trained lawyer and was absolutely brilliant at helping Tony tie up every loose end that could disrupt a case being prosecuted.

Gibbs groaned. “Leon, don’t be stupid.”
Tony shrugged because it wasn’t his business, he’d done as the law demands. “You can stand in the observation room but you cannot be part of this.”

Tony turned to his team. “You have the case numbers and the files you are to search. Pene’?”
A bubbly blonde stepped forward. “Yes, oh awesome one?”

Tony grinned. “You are being given full permission to go deep into every file. Find me any misstep or something that doesn’t belong. McGee get Abby! Neither of you are allowed near a computer until Garcia has finished.

McGee had inched closer not believing that Tony had dared show his face back here. He was still as arrogant as ever and a bringer of chaos. “Why? Worried I can stop your hacker?”

Tony snorted. “No, McIdiot, it’s just I am fond of Penelope and I know she has an evening date with her husband, and I would hate for Derek and herself to miss that.”

Cal muttered under his breath. “What about our one?”

Tony just flashed a wicked grin for a second that spoke volumes. “We’ll get ours, dear. Now, Agent Gibbs, do you have any objection to using interrogation room one?”

“Is Leon being arrested?”

Tony shrugged as he didn’t know, it would all depend and what he and Cal could get out of him. “That depends on our chat.”

And with that, they headed to the room as they saw no reason to delay considering Vance had refused representation.

~*~

Ziva came back from her lunch break to a very sombre atmosphere and an unknown team in the bullpen. “What is going on?”

“Tony is here.” McGee announced looking unhappy as he searched through an evidence box. “And he is causing trouble.”

“He works for the FBI, no?” Ziva didn’t like this at all. She thought everything would fall into place nicely for her once he left. He was always the most suspicious of her, none of her tactics to get him onside and be manipulated worked. So she had done her best to isolate him from the team - it may have worked as he’d left but to a better job. That she had not expected.

“Why is he here?” She repeated, needing to know what the damage was.

Tim sighed. “Under orders, seeking out corruption amongst other things. He is here with a human lie detector, a hacker who is tearing through our files, a lawyer who is doing much the same and two agents who I am sure are ex-army. They keep staring at me everytime I move near my computer.”

“Why would I care about that?” Ziva asked.

Tim was morose and didn’t bother to hide it. “I have been ordered not to touch a computer until the hacker finishes.”
“This is ridiculous, I am going to see Gibbs.”

~*~

Gibbs was not where she expected. “Why is he here? And why is everyone listening to him?” Ziva demanded to know. She doubted the year or so since she’d seen him last would have seen his character completely transform.

Gibbs turned around. “Watch and see if you can figure it out. You may not have many more chances.”

Ziva was on guard. “And what is that supposed to mean? We have an understanding.” She was sure of that if nothing else.

Gibbs sighed. “They are looking into everything, Ziva... So your position is going to come under scrutiny. Questions are bound to be asked about why a Mossad Agent is on an MCRT.”

She said what was expected, even if it wasn’t true. “I have never shared secrets.”

Gibbs shrugged. “Maybe not yet, but divided loyalties can cause a problem.”

“And where is Tony’s loyalty, he was your protege for so long and he is causing your grief.” Ziva asked pointedly.

Gibbs turned his back toward the interrogation. “You were all wrong, Tony was here so I could teach him. His first loyalty was always to the law and when that got twisted, he left.”

She turned toward the window to try and understand how such a man could get respect. She was about to get a masterclass.

~*~

Vance was seething mad which was his first mistake. “You think you are all high and mighty coming into my agency?”

Cal made his first question more of a feint. “Now, I may be British but don’t you serve at the discretion of the Secretary of the Navy?”

Vance nodded, pleased. “That is right, and I have always had an outstanding working relationship with Secretary Davenport.”

Tony wanted to smirk but didn’t. “That is not something I would be bragging about after today if I were you.”

“And what is that supposed to mean?”

Tony smiled vacantly. “Nothing, I’m sure you would know more than Charlie.”

There was only one Charlie, the FBI Director.

Vance sneered. “And you still have no respect for your superiors.”

Cal sat back. “Oh, now I see it Luv, easy profile. And you always show deference for Charlie in work settings. Only at home when we have him around for tea to do you call him Charlie.”
Tony smirked. “I told you, Cal, NCIS got a skewed view of my personality but hey, at least I gave
them my real name.”

Vance rolled his eyes. “So what - it was not a big deal, people change their names all the time.”

Tony agreed pleasantly. “Well, of course they do, Director, what they don’t do is deceive the US
Marine Corps, Teek.”

Vance sat up straighter. “You think you are so clever, don’t you DiNozzo?”

Tony just smiled knowing that by not rising to the bait, he was riling Vance more. He had no idea it
would be this satisfying. Tony had taken the undercover job instead of being sent out to pasture as an
Agent Afloat. “What I am is irrelevant, Director Vance. Shall I take it by your aggravation that I am
right?”

“You have no idea what happened!”

Cal leaned forward. “Tell us, and let’s see if you can try being honest for one day in your life.”

“What does it matter? It’s clear I have lost the directorship. Christ, I will have to explain this to
Jackie.” Vance was starting to realise the implications of today. Only, he had no idea and Tony was
going to let him in on it - slowly.

“You know a gift would help, right? What should he get her?” Tony turned and asked Cal, like they
weren’t even in a serious interview.

~*~

Ziva threw her hands up in the air. “So what if he used a different name? We all use different names
when we’re undercover. It is just a name!”

Gibbs snorted as that was a very narrow and interesting way to see it. He knew the US government
wouldn’t see it that way. “The US doesn’t see it that way. Lying on your official paperwork is a
Federal Crime.”

Ziva snorted. “And why has he left him off the hook?” It seemed that Tony still hadn’t learnt how to
conduct an interrogation with the FBI.

Gibbs could see the glint in Tony’s eye and knew that his old SFA had no intention of letting him off
the hook. Whatever was coming was way worse and Gibbs had to wonder what that might be.

_He wouldn’t be left in suspense for long._

~*~

Cal took up the question and knew where Tony was twisting this to. “I know if I upset you, I should
buy you a book, especially if it has a movie tie-in to compare to.”

Tony nodded, pleased. “Cal is so good to me,” he explained to Vance, as if they were just catching
up over a coffee. “He is on a Byronesque kick right now. You know what though, I am keen on one
story.”

Vance rolled his eyes. “Why would I care?”
Cal smirked at Tony but drove in the hammer, for lack of a better description. “Yeah - why would he care about Frankenstein? He has bigger problems right now.”

Vance froze, there was no way they knew about the operation. It was his brainchild but it’s operational control was given to the CIA - they had a more morally flexible rulebook than other agencies. “You don’t know nothing.”

Tony grinned and it was the one he used when he wanted to infuriate suspects. “He thinks I would come here to waste time.”

Cal sighed as he picked out a dollar. “You called it Luv, I thought he would have more common sense. I mean they made him a director.”

Tony threw a folder on the desk. “You are unbelievable and what you subjected good men and women to was nothing short of sadistic torture ... and there is nothing, not anything that can justify torturing our soldiers to make better killers. The worst part is you were to stupid to build in a failsafe for when they inevitably snapped!”

Vance snatched up the folder. “Where did you get this?”

Tony smirked at Vance, knowing how much it would rile him. “I have a cousin in the CIA, he brings me interesting gifts from time to time.” Tony was just glad that Trent had stopped attacking his cars, he’d loved that Mustang.

Vance knew the jig was up and you didn’t need to have Cal’s powers of observation to know this. “I want my lawyer.”

Tony stood up and buttoned up his suit jacket, knowing that Cal would follow him. “Now that is the first sensible thing you’ve said. JAG will be down here shortly and the Secretary of Defense has been called to decide how he wants to untangle this FUBAR situation.”

~*~

“DiNozzo.”

Tony turned to see Gibbs and Ziva standing still by the two-way mirror. “Yes, Agent Gibbs. What can I do for you?”

Gibbs stepped forward and he had to remember he was now the most senior official in the office. “Do I need to get Hetty over here?”

Tony shrugged as it wasn’t his call. “It will be up to SECDEF as to who will look after the big chair.”

Ziva hissed. “It wasn’t enough to leave, now you are here to tear things apart. Are you that jealous?”

Tony response was not the most professional - he could admit that but he laughed raucously in Ziva’s face. He had to as she was just that clueless, seriously. “Ziva, I left because I couldn’t stand coming to work. I’m here in a professional capacity as concerns were raised at a Presidential level about what was going on here. I don’t tear down that which isn’t broken.”

“We’ll see, I will be speaking to my father about this!” She twirled around, all flying hair, not realising that was one of the problems.
Gibbs rolled his eyes. “That one of the problems?”

“Yes.” Tony responded and walked away to check on his team and he hoped to have enough to make the report and get out of there. He wasn’t here to endure petty conversations about things he may or may not have done.

~*~

Tony found the conference room they had taken over. “Hey - how are things going?”

One of his two ‘linebacker’ agents, Jones, answered. “The numbers and the budget are a mess.”

Tony sighed and pinched his nose, he had kind of being hoping that the only two messes that would come to light were Vance and Ziva. It didn’t look that way. “Lay it on me!”

“Assets and flows are out of balance.”

Tony knew that Jones was a maths whizz and hated such issues, “Come on, give me your best accountant, although, you’re hotter than Kristian Wolff. So what’s the damage?”

Penelope chuckled, “I love the fact that your husband doesn’t blink when you say things like that.”

Tony had a wicked grin, glad to be out of the oppressive main NCIS bullpen. “Why? Cal agrees with me, don’t you?”

“I do.” Cal acknowledged.

Jones neatly sidestepped that potential minefield because he was smart enough to know there was no good answer. He had also finished the permutations in his head. “Someone has skimmed 1,452,921 dollars.”

Tony groaned as this was not what he wanted to hear. He wanted to be home tonight with Cal and their step-daughter Emily. “Who?”

Penelope looked up from her files on the desk. “Well, I have narrowed it down to three suspects.”

Cal decided to have a guess. “I think the secretary, the mccharacter or the stupid Mossad assassin. Am I right?”

The bubbly blonde pouted. “You are no fun when you do that.”

Tony smirked as it had been a scream at the office party where the BAU and Cal met. “I am making the initial report to the director. We will work until the relief team turn up, then we’ll be back here early to continue.”

Cal watched as Tony stepped to the back of the room to make his call. “So, did we have fun today kiddies?”

Penelope rolled her eyes. “Cal, they have tried to hack so many agencies that they have left their own mainframe riddled with weaknesses.”

Tovet scoffed as she’d already heard about that. “I’ve already prepared the complaints from where they have hacked into our mainframe.”
And whilst Cal wasn’t overly fond of lawyers - he did love Tovet’s ability to get even with anyone who wronged someone she was loyal to.

“So Smith has told us about his fun. What about you, Agent Jones?”

Jones knew why Cal got a kick out of that but as he liked the boss’ husband he didn’t rise to the bait. “Well, they have multiple citations against them, whenever an agency has to work with them ... and they’ve rocketed since the boss left here. Mossad links go to a point where if I was reviewing them I would state they are not in National Security interests.”

Tony’s call had finished. “I heard all that and the Director is doing what I suspected. There is a relief team coming to continue into the night. We will be back here nice and early to keep running down the leads.”

Tony knew this was a FUBAR situation and he was well aware that the rumours and reality would be now hitting the people within the agency. When he left the conference room he was met by Abby and Tim looking at him with cross looks, like he actually owed them something.

“Why are you doing this, Tony? We’re your family and you abandon us? Now you’re trying to ruin us.”

Smith rolled his eyes. “Boss, if they’re your family no wonder you don’t talk to them.”

Tony smirked. “No, they’re not, they tried to use words such as family to manipulate you. I have a family, Cal, Em’ and the office.”

“It’s like that is it?” McGee asked, having no idea what might be about to befall him.

Tony smiled softly, now taking Cal’s hand in his. “Yeah, McGee it is. You know I often envisioned coming back here and saying my piece ... trying to get my feelings off my chest. Now that I’m here I find it all futile. You will never believe anything I say ... and I don’t need your validation. So bye bye.”

And Tony left without a backward glance - he would be back there in the morning to do his job.

Gibbs was standing behind Ziva and McGee and watched Tony leave with the Feebs around him. He’d waited silently wondering if they would notice him. They both flushed when they did. Gibbs didn’t give them a chance to speak as he wasn’t in the mood. “You never did learn to see behind the masks of Tony DiNozzo and now it will probably be your downfall.”

And Gibbs would be right. Tony had outgrown NCIS a long time ago and it was startling to realise whilst he’d grown up - the others had just gotten older.

It didn't matter as he was happy with his life; a good husband, a sweet step-daughter and a fulfilling job. He didn't need anything else.
Wedding Chimes are Ringing (Dwayne Pride 2)

Sequel to the original short: The best thing in New Orleans

Tony had gone away for his leave again. He returned looking tanned and relaxed and how could he not? He’d spent the weekend in his favourite city with his favourite man. Yeah, he’d finally managed to fall into a long-term relationship - and not with the silver fox people would expect - rather Dwayne ‘King’ Pride.

They’d met and hit it off when Tony had been sent down there to investigate a potential plague ship. At the time, Dwayne was recovering from his divorce and Tony had simply offered to help him get over it and move on. There were no expectations, just a lot of respect and affection, not to mention a lot of fun times.

Only with each possible break, they were meeting up and spending it together. They were not emotionally stunted enough to ignore the signs.

Dwayne kept it simple, stating in their hotel bed one morning. “I love you and I don’t want to share anymore. I don’t want to scare you away but I’d really like us to be exclusive.”

Tony rolled so he was facing Pride. “Okay, FYI - I haven’t slept with anyone else since we started our thing anyway.”

Pride’s eyes widened a little at that. He knew Tony was a gorgeous man and that his bed was never empty unless he wished it. He’d told Tony with the distance between them that he wouldn’t begrudge him if he found a night’s company. He’d said it as a way to stop himself falling for the crazy, beautiful man - as a way to protect his battered heart. Still, when they met in Nashville this evening, he’d knew he’d failed. After all, you don’t fly to meet someone casual 3 hours away for something casual. “I told you, you could.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “You did, but I could see in your face that you didn’t mean it. You were saying what you thought I wanted to hear. I’d prefer, going forward, that we be completely honest with each other and just so you know, I was committed to us before I even realised it, Dwayne.”

“My too, Tony, me too.”

And Dwayne pulled Tony on top of him to show just how committed he was.

~*~

As a result of their promises, Tony walked into NCIS feeling on top of the world. He and Dwayne had talked like adults and fucked like youngsters. Tony knew he would fight like hell to keep this relationship and they’d both agreed they would start to tell the people closest to them.

There was another person Tony would be informing as he would need to know, in the era of renewed cooperation between himself and Vance, mainly thanks to Dwayne’s nagging. He went to see the Director as it was early and no one else was around yet anyway to stick their noses into his business.

“Hello, Director.”
“DiNozzo - take a seat.” Vance greeted him.

Tony did as he was bid. “Well Sir, I’m here to let you know that my next of kin has changed to my partner.”

Vance noticed the pronoun game. “I can’t help but notice you are playing the pronoun game, Agent DiNozzo.”

Tony grinned. “Force of habit. And it was Dwayne who convinced me that it wasn’t necessary to hide here any longer.”

Vance seized upon the name, thinking of the Dwayne’s that worked for the agency that he might know. “Your partner is King?”

Tony nodded, beaming at Vance, not bothering to hide the fact he was in love for once. He was giddy with the first flush of admitting it and he hoped that he never lost it. “That’s correct, sir, and we have you to thank after you sent me down there because of the ship.”

Vance actually was glad to have helped. “DiNozzo, that took a lot of guts to admit and I thank you for telling me. I can’t imagine it would have been easy.”

Tony blew out a breath and was honest. “You know, it’s the first time since I joined the Force that I ever told anyone.”

Dwayne didn’t count as they were dating.

Vance smiled. “Then I am honoured to have your trust. I can understand why perhaps you are reluctant to inform your team. They believe the mask too well ... I know I was caught by it when I first arrived.”

Tony shrugged ruefully. “I can handle it as long as you understand that every break possible I will be disappearing to New Orleans or close by.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything different. Oh, and DiNozzo - if I was to get some inside information for the betting books, I would of course, split the pot.” Vance said with a smirk, showing he did have a sense of humour.

Tony grinned. “If that will be all.”

~*~

“Whose bed did you fall into? You are a looking too relaxed not to have another notch to your bedpost.” McGee said bitterly.

Tony smirked. “McJealous, your inner green in showing. And I told you ... I went to watch the Steeldrivers.”

Ziva looked up from her computer. “Who are they? And should I care? Plus, Tony why won’t you say? Normally you are pleased to tell us all about your off-duty explosions.”

“Exploits, Ziva, and like I told you; I love the band, I love the atmosphere of the city and am in a great mood because of it.” Tony replied, looking like a cat who’d got the cream. In fact, he started to hum one of their songs - I’ll be there.

“Fine - don’t tell us.”
Tony smiled as he opened up the monthly paperwork. “You promise? I ask because I could do with the peace and quiet to complete the SFA monthly paperwork.”

Gibbs stared at his second for a moment longer but said nothing. Whatever his thoughts, he wasn’t sharing them with his team, so really nothing had changed. Unlike the others, he did know this version of Tony - only he hadn’t seen this since the very beginning when Wendy, the ex-fiancé, was on the scene. He would love to know who’d managed to get close to Tony’s skittish heart. There are many ways to protect a heart - after wife number 3 and the tire iron, Gibbs went for the prickly bastard. For Tony, after Wendy and his broken heart, he went for cheap and shallow encounters. There was a logic there, if you don’t offer your heart to someone then it can’t be broken.

~*~

Vance had watched the MCRT on a rare afternoon where they were in the office. DiNozzo was bored, that much was clear, but instead of causing mischief, he had his nose in a case file and an evidence box.

McGee looked up. “What is it, Tony?”

“Don’t know yet, shush, McSkeptic, the evidence is speaking to me.”

McGee rolled his eyes and missed the point. Vance shook his head as he walked back to his office. He’d hoped that McGee could be the future of the agency but he was seeing startling flaws that would be difficult to overcome if he was to try and go up the chain of command. Vance had much to ponder - like how he could keep DiNozzo in the agency if his relationship with Pride heated up to the degree he suspected it would.

Pride was old school, where marriage was how he showed his commitment. At the very least, he would get one over Gibbs, and that never got old.

In fact, Leon started chuckling non-stop just thinking about Gibbs’ face when all was revealed. His assistant, Cynthia, stepped into his office and then stepped right back out again. She muttered something to him about being back in thirty minutes to see if he’d calmed down. This news was going to break so many people in the office - and he was about to come ahead in the betting pool. Life could be pretty amusing on occasions.

~*~

Tony could hardly complain and didn’t when he was the one sent to any office to do the Washington check-ins for regional offices - in and around New Orleans. He was actually pretty grateful as he always managed to make the travel plans involve a stopover in New Orleans.

Like today, he hadn’t seen Dwayne in person for too long. He was an adult and he wouldn’t pout but damn, he’d missed his partner. He headed toward the building downtown that Dwayne had managed to finagle into being the New Orleans regional office.

When he input the code to get through the door he heard LaSalle, who was Dwayne’s second, trying to get his stubborn boyfriend to have a break.

“You need to rest, King, you are not a robot.”

Dwayne shook his head. “No,” he bit his lip as he confessed. “I can’t sleep.”

Tony knew what it was, like all Agents who’d worked the job for too many years there were too many cases that weigh on your mind. In the bad stretches, the memories turned to nightmares.
Tony broke in knowing that Dwayne wouldn’t want to say why he couldn’t sleep. Every Agent was entitled to his demons. He just wanted to help him as much as he could. “What about if I was to drag you away?”

Pride’s face lit with joy at the surprise, and it shook away some of the dark shadows. Tony found himself smiling in return. He would have to buy Jared a new Duke football or something. This really was a gift beyond compare.

“Well Cher, you have methods of persuasion available to you that Christopher does not.” Dwayne said with a wicked smirk, knowing that LaSalle and Brody would squirm.

“And he better not.” Tony said with a little voice of steel.

LaSalle shook his head. “Hell no, I like living.”

Tony chuckled because he wasn’t that scary. “Come on, Sailor, let’s get you home.”

Pride nodded. “Just need to grab something off my desk and then I will be ready to go, Tony.”

LaSalle breathed out a sigh of relief as his boss was dragged out of the office by his boyfriend. Brody just pouted. “It really is not fair that all the good men are gay, taken or married.”

“What about me?” LaSalle exclaimed.

He’d walked right into it and he knew that as soon as he saw her wicked grin. She repeated. “Like I said - the good ones.”

~*~

At some point, Dwayne had finally found an apartment rather than sleeping in the office. It was a great place situated in the old quarter. Tony adored the place as it was full of character and history. As it was so close to his boyfriend’s office, Tony encouraged them to walk. It was good for them and Tony couldn’t help but flashback to that first night they spent together, walking around the city.

“I’ve missed you, Cher.”

Tony loved that accent and it still sent a tiny shiver down his spine. He twined his hand with Dwayne’s. “And I’ve missed you. I was so close to snapping that Vance sent me to do the regional check-in monitoring visits. Gibbs didn’t like it ... but orders are orders.”

Pride chuckled at Tony’s retelling because he had no doubt that Jethro hated Vance co-opting Tony. Tony was unaware that Vance used to serve a similar role when he was an Assistant Director at the agency. All he said as a reply for now was. “You know Jethro. He will get over it.”

Tony wasn’t sure but he would let it go for now. “I don’t care, I just want to enjoy our time together.”

There was only one way Dwayne could respond to that - kissing Tony senseless. He would never get enough of kissing this wonderful man.

The kiss broke only because they needed oxygen. Tony’s last sentence was bouncing around Dwayne’s skull because he knew he felt the same. That was why there was a ring burning a hole in his shirt pocket. The path they’d taken wound toward the hotel where they’d taken their first steps together as a couple, even if they’d not known it then.
Tony saw the pause and he could guess. “Fond memories?”

Dwayne nodded and answered him. “The best. Actually, all I could think is that you’re it for me.”

Tony had a shy smile. “No takebacks now you’ve said that.”

Dwayne hated the way that Tony still was so vulnerable when it came to open affection. As it had always come with conditions, Tony hadn’t really trusted it. It made Dwayne want to hunt down everyone who had ever hurt Tony in the past. It also made him realise that despite this being a little crazy, it was the right time so he pulled the band out of his pocket. “What say you, Cher. No takebacks for life.”

Tony’s eyes went wide with surprise at the elegant ring, a gorgeous platinum engraved band with black and white diamonds running around the centre of it. He couldn’t speak, completely overcome with emotions, but he raised his hand.

“Yes.” He croaked.

Dwayne would confess that he’d expected Tony to counter the proposal with questions. He was geared up with logical answers to combat those fears. So he was cut off before he could say anything at all. “You’re saying yes.”

Tony chuckled seeing his lover dumbstruck with awe. It was a rare sight. “Yes - so man up and kiss me.”

Dwayne knew it was smart to keep his future spouse happy so he did as ordered. It seemed only fair as Tony has just made him an extremely happy man.

~*~

It was the next morning and rather than wallowing in bed like the newly engaged would prefer to do, they were eating breakfast in an airport lounge. Pride has used his charm and badge to persuade the officials to let him eat with Tony.

“So where shall we marry?”

Dwayne thought about it. “How about a boat on the bayou?”

Tony loved it and it was perfect. It would be a small affair with only those judged to be friends and family. “I need to tell Vance that I will be looking for reassignment or I will finally have to join the Feebs.”

“Oh, and why is that?” Pride asked teasingly, even though he knew the answer.

Tony rolled his eyes, more than willing to play the game. “Well, I have this fiance that I have no intention of been so far away from.”

Pride kissed Tony once more as Tony’s plane was being called for boarding. “Phone me tonight.”

Tony took a deep breath because leaving was harder this time and he knew why. He was making roots in this city with Pride and he didn’t want to go. It was like Dwayne always said, the city got into your soul. Tony was sure that was so but knew the man was more significant, at least for him.

~*~
Tony had taken himself straight to NCIS as his flight had got in at midday. After all, he had concerns to share about the North Carolina office. “Good morning, probies. Did we manage without me?”

“We had to put up with Gibbs’ bad mood,” Tim complained.

Tony smirked, “You’ve been on the team too long, McWhiner, to still be bothered by Gibbs’ bark.”

“And where have you been?” Ziva demanded to know.

Tony knew it would be a frustrating answer but did it anyway. “Well, as important as your demands are I’m afraid Director Vance is the one I answer to. Bye kiddies, oh look, Gibbs is back and doesn’t look happy.”

Tony walked off humming his tune.

Gibbs saw a flash of something on DiNozzo’s hand as he spoke to David and McGee. He didn’t get a chance to figure out what it was as the hand was slipped into Tony’s suit pocket as he walked up to Vance’s office.

Gibbs didn’t know the song he was humming. “What’s he singing?”

“Your Man by Josh Turner, Boss.” McGee responded.

Tony didn’t care what they wanted to know. If they didn’t have the guts to ask him to his face then they didn’t have the right to know. He knocked on the door to Vance’s office and waited to hear he could go in.

“Good Afternoon, Director.” Tony said politely as he entered. His finger still twirling with his new ring.

“Is that what I think it is, DiNozzo?” Vance asked, pointing to his hand.

DiNozzo nodded. “It is.”

“In that case, congratulations.” Vance offered. “So tell me about North Carolina and then we can talk about what your next step with the agency is.”

So Tony did exactly that. “We have a major problem brewing in Carolina. The team leader isn’t effective and the SFA will either burn out or snap if something isn’t done.”

Vance pinched his nose. “How long?”

Tony couldn’t give an exact time frame. “Gut call says six months at the outside.”

Vance paused and asked a question out of curiosity. “How would you deal with the situation?”

Tony thought about it because there would be difficulties here. The Agent, Smee, had been with the agency for a long time. “I would suggest two options. The head of cold-case is retiring and Smee could take that over. It isn’t a field position but would suit his wealth of experience. The other option would be to state that North Carolina needs an Agent in Charge and make it administrative, letting Stapler take over the team lead.”

Vance knew he’d made the right choice. He may have had the wrong first impression about DiNozzo but he prided himself on admitting mistakes and fixing them. “So interesting fact, option number one is exactly the one we are going to take. Oh, and here is your new contract that I would
Tony read it and the first thing that jumped out was the Job Title - Assistant Director: Special Operations.

Tony had to shake his head because now he understood why Dwayne had been smirking at him. He must have known this offer was coming or at least suspected. He’d be having words with his fiance later - but for now... “Where do I sign?” as he whipped a pen out of his pocket and held it ready.

Vance shook his head and snorted in amusement. “I’ll give you a chance to let your team know your good news and then we will talk about the next steps. Do you have a suggestion for the MCRT’s next SFA?”

Tony knew the answer. “Bring Cassie Yates here. She will stand up to Gibbs and won’t allow David or McGee to bully her.”

“I’ll take that under advisement. Allow me to make the announcement for your promotion. It was high time, DiNozzo, no matter what helped precipitate it. The agency can better utilise your skills if you are not static with one team. The bonus is you can settle on the south coast.”

Tony stood and shook his hand. “Thank you, Sir. I won’t let you down.”

Tony almost slid down the steps and into his chair in a fluid loose limb movement.

Ziva glared at him suspiciously. “What is going on?”

Tony grinned. “I’m getting married and can’t say anything else.”

Ziva sneered. “If you don’t want to tell the truth, then fine. Don’t make a silly story up.”

Tony snorted. “Oh, but my little ninja there is nothing false about it. I am getting married in New Orleans and you will be invited. Thanks - I couldn’t be happier by the way.”

Gibbs and McGee knew Tony a little better. They could tell this was serious and McGee was the first to say. “Congratulations, but I had no idea you were in a serious relationship.”

Tony smiled. “Well, you know all those bed notches you assumed I’d made, well, since ten months ago. They’ve all been the same person.”

Gibbs could piece the information together. “You met someone in New Orleans.”

Tony smiled. “I did but you know them, Gibbs.”

“Only one I know in that area is ... Pride.”

Tony’s look was one of pure love and affection. “Like I said, you know my fiance.”

The team was stunned for a few seconds and Tony wished he had recorded their images for posterity.

“You’re getting married? You love me!” Ziva hissed.

Tony snorted. “No, Ziva I don’t, abusive relationships aren’t my thing. I love Dwayne and there is nothing you could possibly do to convince me otherwise. You are dreaming if you believe anything else.”
Gibbs saw the direct hit score against Ziva as her face flushed and knew he’d have to separate them lest one of them lose their temper. “DiNozzo, congratulations. Cowboy steaks at mine tonight, I think we need to catch up. Go on and share the good news with the others.”

Tony nodded, not too bothered by Ziva’s reaction or Tim’s inability to say anything further. He couldn’t wait to serve out his time in Washington and get to New Orleans. He had a feeling it would be a good test of his patience.

~*~

Ziva and Tim were in New Orleans and couldn’t understand why everyone believed there would actually be a wedding. It was ridiculous! They’d all gathered, believing that Tony would be marrying Agent Pride. There was no way Tony would go through it, he was too much of a man whore to settle down with one person.

The wedding was to take place on an old steamboat running along the bayou. It was so romantic. They couldn’t believe Tony and Pride were marrying. It had to be some sort of elaborate joke being pulled on them.

LaSalle was standing at the makeshift altar along with Tony and Pride. There was no bride, so they refused to walk down the aisle. This was not what this wedding was about. It was a way to make vows in front of their friends and family and show their love for one and another - end of.

McGee and Ziva were given seats on the front row as part of Tony’s family and they waited for the joke to be sprung - only it never did. The music started, Tony and Pride turned towards one another and you could see the love between them. The strength of it felt tangible to those who were merely observers.

“Dearly beloved we are gathered here today...”

The words were drowned out. If you asked Tony later on, he wouldn’t be able to tell you who was on the boat. He did say with a big smile, “I do.”

He was so okay with the instruction that the husbands were now okay to kiss. He wanted to make sure everyone realised that Tony was so completely with Pride that no one else existed, at least in his mind.

~*~

“He did it.” Was all McGee could say at the end of the ceremony.

Ziva sniffed as she ate the canape. “He is trying to forget me, it’s obvious.”

McGee didn’t know what to think but even he knew the Mossad agent was dreaming. “If you say so.”

He moved away from Ziva as he didn’t need to spend the day next to raging jealousy mixed with want. It was bad enough he got to see happiness so close but he couldn’t touch it himself. Romance and love were things that had so far eluded him in his own life. Yet again, Tony had everything Tim wanted in life - and he didn’t even care.

Tony had long since figured out that not all of life was a competition. As he swayed on the dance floor with Dwayne, crooning the words to the Willie Jones version of Your Man into his husband’s ear, he knew that he’d discovered the secret to a happy life. The trick was to live it as best you could.
Vance was on the link to Los Angeles listening to Hetty Lange. He had always assumed that he couldn’t be surprised any longer - but today would prove him wrong.

“I need Callen’s husband, Leon.”

Hetty Lange was a legend in her own right which is why she had the familiarity to call him by his given name, even if technically he was her boss.

“And who would that be?” Vance found himself asking.

“DiNozzo, Leon. Keep up. I need him for an operation and this is not something we can afford to wait on. Time is of the essence.”

Vance took in a deep breath as he reconciled the idea of the office’s resident ladies man as a married man - to a man. There was only one way he was going to solve this. “Get DiNozzo in here now!”

DiNozzo appeared a few moments later. “What can I do for you, Ms. Lange?”

“I need Antonio DeMarco to come to town.”

Tony sucked in a breath as DeMarco was one of his nastiest identities to still be active. He didn’t like any part of this and yet still, he asked. “Why?”

“Agent Callen has run into problems and I believe the only person who can safely retrieve him is Antonio DeMarco.”

Vance decided to interject, wanting to know what the hell was going on in his own agency. “Can someone please explain to me what is going on?”

Tony blinked looking almost confused at the Director, couldn’t he tell that this was a serious conversation. Hetty’s glare let Tony know that she was in agreement.

“Is now the most pertinent time, Leon?” Hetty asked, sounding disappointed in the Director. Tony adored the most formidable woman and he’d never been one of those males who foolishly let her height deceive him. Still, Tony knew that Vance was not going to be deterred from answers - he hadn’t specified that they should be in depth.

“Callen and I met on an operation, we hit it off. After two years we decided to seal the deal and married in Vegas. It was glorious. Now, DeMarco is one of my nastiest cover identities. It has never been burnt, at worst, he goes to prison to cool his heels until he is needed again.”

Vance was wrapping his mind around how easily he’d been fooled by the man in front of him. “And the women you brag about?”
Tony shrugged. “A game between G and me.”

Vane was finally getting it but Tony added one last thing. “Law enforcement hasn’t always been a safe place for those who are out.”

Vance whispered. “Those who do undercover work never stop, they merely go deeper.”

Tony nodded, he hoped this new understanding would make working for the director a little easier. As such, he stamped on his initial sarcastic response. “That sounds about right. Now Hetty, who has my husband?”

Tony was cursing by the end of the tale. He was going to make it a rule of their marriage that only he got to play with the mob. They wanted to adopt him usually, not kill him like they kept wanting to do with G. “Why did no one collar Lavrov as the local Bratva Captain?”

Vance was seeing the real agent, and one he had the sinking feeling that he was under-utilising. “You heard Ms. Lange, go get your husband.”

Tony stopped short for a second even as he started to make plans in his head. “How do I explain this to the team. They don’t know about G.”

Vance could at least do this for his agent. He was entitled to tell the team in his own time when he felt comfortable to do so. “You don’t. Get going, just keep this on you if you need an extraction.”

Tony caught the cell phone and smiled gratefully. He didn’t need to ask what it was. It was tradecraft 101 when you were going deep like Tony. There was no help from the agency, there were no altering the records, there were no quick fixes for this type of identity.

He took one last look at Vance and Hetty. “I will be going dark until I have G back.”

“Godspeed, Agent DiNozzo.”

~*~

Tony went straight to a quality leather shop to get a stylish but functional jacket. His next stop was at a denim shop to buy some 501’s and dark shirts. The outfit was topped off with Timberland boots. He switched his hairstyle as well and no longer did you see Very Special Agent Anthony DiNozzo but rather, enforcer extraordinaire Antonio DeMarco.

The information Hetty had forwarded explained the situation. G had gone under to find dirt on a drug dealer, Sergei Lavrov, but like mentioned, the authorities had missed he was the Bratva captain.

After a long flight, Tony was in LA at least and he thought that his initial plan was the best one. You see, Tony never went into business like his father had wanted but that didn’t mean he didn’t have the skill and charms to be successful at it. He approached the situation like a business deal. Lavrov had something he wanted - Callen. In return, Tony needed to find something that Lavrov wanted more and exchange them without Lavrov realising that he cared for G so he didn’t kill them both or try to extort Tony even more. Such a fine line he was walking here.

He headed to St Jude’s which was a dive bar in the rougher part of town. It was also a haunt for all those affiliated with the mob. Tony was gambling on the fact that if he stayed there long enough he would find out about Lavrov’s operations, or what he needed in order to grab G.

So it was all too much of a cliche - someone had stolen two hundred thousand dollars from him. The trouble was whoever had been brave enough to steal from Lavrov wasn’t stupid enough to admit it -
they’d fingered Callen for it. Tony had to rein in his fury for the moment but once Callen was safe, he would be hunting down the thief. The bastard had all but signed Callen’s death warrant.

A plan was forming, he would need funds. He was never so glad to be independently wealthy. He headed toward his private bank. He did get some funny looks walking into a bank predominately used by the wealthy British expats dressed liked a thug but needs must.

~*~

Back at the headquarters of the LA NCIS team, Deeks saw the flag of a person of interest. “Oh boy, DeMarco has come to town.”

Agent Sam Hanna didn’t know the name and was more concerned by his missing partner, Callen. “So what?”

Deeks rolled his eyes, it was one of the advantages of working for the LAPD. “DeMarco is a Mob enforcer for hire. He’s a real piece of work. The mob families vie for him but they don’t know if they want him or are scared of him.”

Hetty chuckled. “You shouldn’t believe everything that you hear, Mr. Deeks.”

Deeks shrugged. “I know he took down Malcusco in a fit of pique and gladly took the time in Lompoc. He said as he was sent down that he needed the rest.”

Sam was looking alarmed but he trusted Hetty. “Let’s concentrate on our drug sailor problem.”

~*~

Tony had found Lavrov’s den easily enough - you just had to know who to ask. He’d gone through the pat down and let Lavrov’s goons find four of his eight weapons. It was not his fault that the goons figured four was the maximum a paranoid person would stash on them.

The den was an abandoned warehouse and there was his husband strung up like a rag doll. The bruises and shallow cuts telling the story of how much he’d enjoyed his stay. Tony kept a lid on his temper although some of it must have leaked out as Lavrov’s goons were giving him a wide berth. It paid to have a reputation that preceded him. *Henchmen were just so twitchy these days.*

“Antonio DeMarco as I live and breathe. How did you find Lompoc?”

Tony smirked. “Cosy. I had a chance to relax, recharge my batteries and network.”

Lavrov snorted because for most Lompoc wasn’t a nice stretch but DeMarco had treated it like a business conference.

Tony kept his eyes on Lavrov. “Well, you know I went for a drink at St Jude's, I wanted my first taste of freedom. And there is this low-life scum bragging about how he stole from his Captain and got away with it.” Tony actually smiled but it was more on the demented side. “Now this didn’t sit right with me ... there should be honour among thieves and all that.”

Lavrov was looking at Callen with confusion, he’d been so sure that the man was the thief. “So who is this?”

Tony shrugged. “How should I know? I’ve been locked up. He’s cute though.”

Lavrov pinched his nose. “So what did you do with him?”
Tony looked confused. “Sorry, he is dead in an alley but ...” And he threw the bag on the floor. “I have returned your money.”

“What do you want in return?” Lavrov asked with careful suspicion lacing his voice.

Tony played it coy. “Like I said, I am networking.” Tony licked his lips as he looked at G. “Although ... He’s my style.”

Lavrov didn’t judge the man, he’d been in prison and certain tastes took a while to lose. This could be a solution to his problems. Gregori could be a sweetener to convince DeMarco to work for him. “He’s my gift to you, should I want to make you a contract offer?”

Tony rolled his eyes. “I will return here in 48 hours and you can convince me. I want my gift unhooked now, please.”

Lavrov was only too happy to order the henchmen to unhook him. “We’ll take him to your car.”

Tony had rented the GTR and would get NCIS to have it professionally cleaned. “Please.”

Lavrov actually followed Tony, in order to convince him that he would be a good boss. All the while Tony was resisting the urge to shoot the bastard where he stood. He was reminding himself that he was a Federal Agent and there was a little thing like the law.

Lavrov had the nerve to smirk as G was dropped into his car. “It was a pleasure doing business with you. I will see you soon DeMarco, thanks for the money and enjoy your finders fee.”

Yep, he still wouldn't be averse to shooting him, Tony thought, even as he got into the driver's seat and sped away. He kept the car moving until they were at least four miles away. “Straight to the hospital or NCIS?”

Callen snorted weakly. “NCIS.”

Tony huffed. “Don’t smirk at me, you let yourself get taken captive by the Bratva.”

G weakly squeezed his knee. “Love you.”

Damn the man, Tony thought. G definitely did not play fair. Tony knew how hard the words were for his husband to say because he was the same. “And I love you, you crazy bastard.”

~*~

Tony drove straight to the office and inputted the codes Hetty had given him. Once inside the outer wall, he got out of the car to help G as he had definitely seen better days, only to be met with a faceful of guns. Granted he wasn’t dressed as his usual impeccable self but there was no need for that type of greeting.

He wasn’t in the mood. “Get the guns out of my face and help me with my husband. Where is Hetty?”

“Right here, Agent DiNozzo. Congratulations on the successful retrieval operation.”

Tony snorted able to see some humour in the situation now that he and G were safe. “Hey, we wrote it into our vows.”

Deeks looked like his world was broken. “DeMarco is a cover?”
Tony nodded as he took the medical kit offered by Sam. “Thanks, it’s time to clean your cuts.”

“кукла спасибо.”

Sam snorted at the endearment as Tony rolled his eyes. “If your breathing gets any shallower, you’re going to the hospital if I have to drag you.”

G grunted as he shifted but knew this was one argument that he wasn’t going to win. “Yes, dear.”

“Asshole.”

Hetty had a small smile listening to the married couple bicker. “And how did you leave things with Mr. Lavrov?”

Tony had a wicked grin. “He thinks that I will be returning to discuss a job offer. I figure I would return with armed SWAT and get my two hundred thousand back.”

Sam just smirked. “You’re much prettier and meaner than G, why can’t you be my partner?”

Tony snickered. “Don’t let Gibbs hear you say things like that.”

“Is it true you have worked for the man for eight years?” Sam asked.

Tony nodded. “Yeah, on and off when not sent undercover or on retrieval operations to get princess here.”

“Not a princess.” Callen grumbled as he pulled Tony closer. Tony went willingly with a fond smile on his face. He could see the looks of awe on the others’ faces and just smirked. “It’s the rule. If one of us gets captured and the other rescues them then they have the right to call the captive princess for a month.”

Deeks shook his head but dragged Kensi back to work. Sam could tell that Hetty wanted a word with the pair so dragged himself away.

Tony stayed where he was as G had fallen asleep which was what he needed. “Hey, Hetty. What can I do for you?”

She smiled as the agent has asked the right question. “AD Granger is about to accept the Deputy Director post.”

“Okay.” Tony said, not understanding where this was going.

“Well, someone will need to take over and I can’t think of anyone more suitable for the post. Can you?”

Tony thought about it, knew that crazy as it sounded….. Yeah, he wanted the job. “Does Vance want me to have the role?”

Hetty smirked. “Well, he just asked me my opinion about your suitability. Plus, you have just shown that you can remain objective even if it is your husband in peril.”

Tony grinned. “I always did love the weather here,” and looking down at the man in his lap. “People aren’t too bad either.”
And that was that - the MCRT grumbled at the way Tony got a promotion they felt he didn’t deserve. Vance laughed his ass off at their cluelessness when it came to one of their own - he could - now that the veil had been lifted from his own eyes. And Tony, well, he didn’t care what they thought. He had good weather, a great job and a husband he could go home to. Yes, he’d convinced G to pick a home and settle in it.
The New Gibbs Rule (Tobias Fornell 2)

Tobias Fornell could honestly say that life was good. He was a Unit Chief of Major Crimes, he put bad guys away every day. Plus ... best of all, he got to go home to his partner, one Very Special Deputy Director Anthony DiNozzo.

Yeah, that one had been unexpected as he’d never, before Tony, considered a long-term relationship with a man. How could he refuse a man who appeared at his feet in a body bag? Gibbs was still spitting mad at the events around the Air Force One investigation. Tobias had taken advantage of the situation to get Tony working for the FBI and Tony had decided to use the situation to get the man he wanted. So it was win-win in both their eyes. When all was over, it didn’t matter too much to Fornell if Gibbs wasn’t talking to him when he got to enjoy scenes like the one in front of him.

Em was leaning over the cooker with Tony. He’d obviously been home long enough to cook properly and was aiming to teach Emily the same. The two of them were so focused on the meal that neither one had noticed his entrance. It was too cute for words and he snapped a few pictures. That action itself had multiple purposes - one, a glorious reminder of his family and two because he was such a nice guy, he sent the photo to Dianne. If it reminded her that he had the hotter and more successful partner, well that was an added bonus.

“Are you being devious?” Tony asked lightly.

Tobias chuckled. “You know me too well. I was merely sharing a photo of our cute family scene.”

Tony had mirth in his eyes knowing that what Tobias really meant was he was baiting his ex-wife. “If you say so, now come help with the sauce.”

Tobias did as ordered and Emily stood there peeking, asking all the right questions and stating that she wanted to try her hand at it on her own next time.

“Sure thing, with supervision.” Tobias said without blinking, ever the parent. “And now ... the most important part. The taste test.”

He did notice the way Tony’s eyes lingered on him. “What?”

Tony stepped forward. “You missed a bit.” And gently removed it from his lip.

Tobias sucked in a breath because without their eight-year-old daughter between them this would have ended slightly differently. The best part, he didn’t even mind because he wouldn’t trade the time with Em’ and he knew that Tony felt the same. His phone beeped and Fornell cursed.

“It’s NCIS.”

Tony sighed and he would have perhaps cursed if it wasn’t for the little ears. His phone went off not a second later, it was Charlie, his boss.

_Doesn’t need the DiNozzo treatment - look after Em_.

He wasn’t sure that was what the Director of the FBI should be texting him but he would take it. He was on reasonably good terms with Dianne, mainly because he’d upset Gibbs by leaving him. And yet, he didn’t want Em to go back before the weekend if they could help it.

“What do you say, Em? Stick with me and we’ll head to the movies later?”
She nodded her head. “Can we go see Cars?”

“Sure thing, sweetheart,” Tony promised and got a hug as a reward.

~*~

Fornell waltzed through the door of NCIS. “What have you managed to fuck up to the point where my weekend off with Tony and Em is interrupted.”

He’d never been the most diplomatic person in the world, and that ability halved when his time with his family was impinged upon.

Gibbs sneered. “You’re still playing house with DiNozzo?”

Tobias smirked. “Yep, Dianne adores him most days and Em calls him Papa Tony. What’s your point? We are not going to rehash old ground are we?”

The team was looking at one and another, to see if they knew what was going on. They had heard there was a tempestuous friendship between the two legendary agents. They didn’t know Tony.

Gibbs sighed. “No, David has done something stupid and run off. We need help to make sure she doesn’t end up dead.”

Fornell snorted. “What’s your pet assassin done now? And shall I say I told you so before or after you finish explaining?”

Gibbs rolled his eyes. “Don’t say a word.”

In that case, I will just go home.”

Gibbs growled. “You already stole one of my best agents!”

Fornell smirked. “No, I loved him when you threw him away.”

Fornell could have added at the way saying things like that were not too productive when your current team looked like kicked puppies. He recognised McGee, as Tony always referred to him, and he knew of Ned Dorneget but never really had the chance to observe him in action.

Gibbs sighed. “A suspect died when in her care and instead of allowing IA to do their job, she’s on the run.”

Fornell pinched his nose. “So she is guilty. Go and arrest her.” He didn’t get why his family time was being interrupted for something so simple.

“It is not that simple.” A voice to the side interjected.

Fornell snorted because he didn’t trust the new director at all. “Forgive me, Madam Director, but usually it is only very scared suspects or guilty suspects that run. Now I don’t think that a very seasoned Mossad agent would be scared. Do you?”

She flushed. “Officer David has a tendency to act with extreme force because of her training and may injure agents.”

Fornell still didn’t see why this was his problem. “Well, you knew all this when you accepted her as a liaison officer, Madam Director. There will be questions raised, I will start the manhunt but let me make thing one thing clear... I will not tolerate any harm to any of my agents. They will be allowed
to use extreme force.”

“We asked for your help!”

Fornell rolled his eyes. “No, you asked me to use my agents as a fetch service. The FBI is not, nor will it ever be, at your whims. Clean up your own messes.”

With his piece said he started to walk away. He was planning the call in and sorting what he would need to start the manhunt. He’d never liked the idea of her having access to American resources - ever. He still didn’t. “If you don’t like it feel free to take it up with the Director or his Deputy ... They will give you the same answer.”

He did leave then as he wouldn’t let any more of his weekend be ruined by crass stupidity.

McGee asked quietly. “Who is the Deputy Director ... Maybe they will be sympathetic to our issue.”

Gibbs rolled his eyes. “Nope and we don’t talk about DiNozzo.”

McGee’s mind put the dots together to see that within three years of leaving Gibbs, Tony was now the Deputy Director of the FBI. That was some rise to the top. “Okay, but why?”

Gibbs growled, “He left and that is enough to know.”

McGee paled and soon realised there was now a new Gibbs’ rule - Do not name the Deputy Director of the FBI by name, lest you want to have your head bitten off.

~*~

Tobias opened the door to find Tony and Emily asleep on the sofa and the credits of yet another movie rolling. Those two, he thought to himself as he shook his head fondly. It was worth another quick snap and he wasn’t in a hurry to awaken either one of them. One of the first things they’d done upon moving to their new place was to buy a couch where all three could doze and sleep if they wanted to. So he took a better option and joined them. Tony woke up slowly when the couch dipped. “Hey. How’s everything?”

“A mess but it will become clear soon enough.” Tobias assured his partner as he snuggled down, molding himself so he hugged Tony and Em, thankful that his family was still here.

Tony asked, vague concern in his eyes. “Do you need me?”

Tobias was already starting to feel his bones relax. “Always, but not for this.”

Tony smiled softly. “You old romantic.”

“Less of the old.” Tobias said shortly but the smirk said he wasn’t truly offended.

Tony risked waking Em by leaning across her to steal a kiss. “You’re mine and that is all that matters.”

Tobias liked the sound of that and an idea had been playing in his mind for a while. Well, it had ever since they could legally marry. “I like the sound of that. Want to make it official?”

Tony froze for a second as he didn’t seriously think that Tobias was proposing to him whilst they
were snuggling on the sofa with Em in between them. “You are asking me to marry you when we’re snuggled around Em’?”

Tobias nodded as well as he could considering how he was lying on the couch. Still, he had flair, “Yeah, I am. You’re it for me.” He lifted the ring box that had been in his trouser pocket for the last week. He’d been trying for the best moment, the most romantic one. And yet, in the end, it was now tucked up around his favourite people, feeling nothing but love and contentment with the world.

Tony may have nodded, not quite ready for words yet, to confirm. Tobias wasn’t too worried when Tony let him place the ring on his finger. “You’re too shocked for words.”

Tony had a wicked grin on his face. “No, I was thinking of Gibbs’ face when you invite him to the wedding.”

Tobias’ loud cackling did wake up a grumpy Emily. Still, all was forgiven when she realised there was going to be a wedding. “Can I tell Momma?”

“Sure thing, baby girl.”

Tony watched as she raced to the phone. “So that’s a good thing.”

Tobias reeled him in, kissing him senseless. “It will be great.”

The wedding was brilliant and was spoken about in Washington circles for quite a while. Tony married Tobias, in between much melodrama. There was a bomb from the mob, Gibbs and Dianne reconciling and Ziva ending up in the river because Em pushed her in when she was caught off guard during a bout of rudeness. No one talked trash about her Papa Tony. There were demands for their daughter to be punished. Diane snickered and Tobias still has the picture where he is kissing his husband whilst they are both simultaneously giving Ziva the middle finger about her suggestions.
To know one's future (Mark Benford)

Chapter Notes

Mark Benford - Joseph Fiennes
Demetri Noh - John Cho

To know one’s future.

Mark hated the fact his marriage was over. The strains of a marriage had become too much on Olivia and they’d separated. It had been amicable, thank god, and there was no contesting their marriage. They were still going to parent little Charlie together.

“You want to drink?”

Mark sighed because there wasn’t a time when he didn’t want to drink. “You say that like you don’t know the answer.” His sponsor did get the award for the most stupid question of the year.

“Hey man, I have to ask.”

“I know, and no, I am not. Olivia was good about it the first time but I am not risking my access to Charlie for a cheap drink.” Mark responded.

“Good and keep it that way.”

~*~

A day later and he wished that his failed marriage was his biggest problem. The whole world had gone to hell in a handbasket. The death toll was in the hundreds of thousands, people were freaked out and there were no answers. Well, he had a few possible answer but his ‘FlashForward’ as they were calling it, had more revelations than just why the whole world had blacked out for two minutes and seventeen seconds.

His friend and partner, Demetri Noh, was not going to let it go. There were times when he wished he hadn’t picked such a tenacious partner. “What was going on in your dream?”

Mark shook his head. “I’ve told you the relevant details.”

Demetri smirked. “Yes, but there was more to it and you and I both know it - so what was it?”

Mark knew he needed to talk to someone about it. There would be the bonus of distracting Dimitri from his lack of flashforward.

“I wasn’t alone at the office. There was someone who I was interested in.”
“Not Olivia?” Demetri’s interest was piqued.

Mark shook his head. “No. It was another Agent but not one of ours that I recognise.”

“Who? Was she cute?”

Mark rolled his eyes because if he knew that then this would be a lot easier - for one they could share details of their vision and compare notes so to speak. All he knew was the guy was gorgeous, with laughing hazel eyes and a killer grin. “Oh not cute, **he** was stunning.”

“A he?”

Mark nodded taking a deep breath. “Yes, he is and I really want to meet him which is crazy.”

Demetri had a soft smile on his face for the first time since all this craziness had hit. “You know what? I think that is the least crazy thing you’ve said since this whole mess started.”

“You’re not freaking out over the fact it is a guy I was kissing?”

Demetri shook his head. “No, are you?”

Mark had no idea how to express what he was feeling over it. He’d assumed he was going to be one of those cliched Fed’s who was married to his work and took the time see his kid and manage a potentially bitter wife. “No, I’m not. It’s hard to describe what I was feeling.”

Demetri shrugged. “At least you had a flashforward.”

Mark winced because this was a sticking point as Demetri was determined to believe his lack of vision meant he was dead. “Look on the bright side. You aren’t being tortured over what you saw.”

~*~

Tony DiNozzo had fallen to the floor of the MCRT alongside Vance and Gibbs. It was bad enough that he’d collapsed to the floor. It was even freakier when he awoke in Vance’s arms. He distanced himself. “What the hell happened?”

Gibbs groaned. “What hit us?”

Tony had no clue but he was scrambling to the computer terminal to check the emergency channels. He wasn’t willing to process the fact that he’d not been part of NCIS or the cute guy he’d kissed in his dream/vision. “Finding out.”

Vance was glad that he and DiNozzo had awoken first. “What do we know?”

Tony sucked in a breath. “Whatever caused us to blackout was global. I have put the all call out for every boat and naval resource to report in to tell us the good, the bad, and the plain ugly.”

Vance understood the implications too. “My god, let’s hope we had no birds in the air.”

Tony had the screens flipping up with news reports of what was breaking in. It was pathetic that they were part of the government machines and yet their best news source was still NBC.
Gibbs growled. “Why was I dreaming of a day in the future, and slapping an SFA that wasn’t you?”

Tony shrugged and tried to be a voice of reason. “You can’t have a go at me for your dreams, boss.”

He was more freaked at the way he seemed to have been a Feeb: the kissing a guy he had feelings for, well, that was secondary to his freak out over being a Feeb! After the murder rap crap, he’d been certain that he’d never be a Feeb no matter how good the offer.

Vance snorted. “I’m inclined to agree with DiNozzo, Gibbs.”

Wow, words that Tony thought would never be uttered. “What did you see, Sir?”

Vance knew this was unlikely to placate Gibbs but spoke the truth anyway. “I was reading intelligence reports sent by an Assistant FBI director, only his name was Anthony DiNozzo.”

Tony was not freaking out over the fact that all three of them seemed to have dreams about the future with a recurring point. “Well, I think I was investigating who did this ... and yeah, I was a Feeb.”

He happened to accidentally on purpose leave out the bit about the guy. Vance had long since had his eyes open about Tony but knew there was no way he was going to stop such an important investigation just in a pissing contest. He wanted answers more. “I’ll phone Charlie, the Director.”

Tony sucked in a breath. “Is this really happening? I mean I was in LA in the Flashforward so does that mean I am changing coasts?”

Gibbs shrugged. “You know you are going to LA, DiNozzo. Go and get me some answers. I suppose I’ll still talk to you even if you become a Fed.”

Tony chuckled and gave Gibbs a hug. “Be careful as I can’t watch your six.”

~*~

Tony had touched down in LA using an FBI jet. It seemed the Director of the Agency was only too happy to roll with a mysterious 137 second blackout as the reason for Tony’s blackout. He’d gone one step further though and the evidence board that he’d seen in his dream he’d done his best to recreate in the here and now. Admittedly he only saw partial glimpses of the wall through the agent but something was better than nothing.

Los Angeles was bright and vibrant as usual if only he was here to relax. “The office is this way, Sir.”

Tony breezed into the office. He was met by the Agent in Charge of the office. “The Director said you would be stopping by.”

Tony grinned. “I think I can help your investigation into the cause of the blackouts.”

“How is that?”

Tony handed him he detailed crime scene sketches he’d done. “That is Agent Benford’s wall that I recreated from memory.”

“I thought your specialism was undercover work?” Wedeck observed.
Tony shrugged, “I have always been able to draw and photographs only help me so much.”

“Well, let us know what you need and how we can help. I think you may just save the sanity of one of our top agents.”

Tony just nodded at the guy in charge of the office. He’d spoken with the Director and Charlie, had mentioned wanting an Assistant Director in charge of special operations. Tony was pretty sure that was just a fancy way of saying, troubleshooter. “Lead the way.”

~*~

Benford was trying to get a point across. “It was a ... goddamn it, a blue hand and that is all I can remember.”

Tony strolled across to the evidence board. “Here you go, Agent. I thought I could speed up collecting the evidence for your board.”

That stopped the rant mid sentence. “It’s you.”

Tony nodded. “That’s right, it’s me.”

The others in the office were wondering just what was going on between the two agents. The female spoke up. “And you are?”

Tony smiled, looking confident as ever. “I am the second person to see an evidence board from the future about what is happening right now. It is all terribly confusing and annoying but if there is one thing I do like, it’s answers.”

Benford smiled at him and starting to relax. “Was that the only section of the wall?”

Tony shook his head he pulled up four more pages. “Do you think your tech people can do something with these?”

Wedford smirked. “They’re your people too now, DiNozzo.”

Tony shrugged. “Hey, four hours ago I was an SFA of the MCRT at NCIS. Now, I am an Assistant Director of the FBI. Tony DiNozzo, by the way.”

Mark stepped forward to introduce his team. They were too good as well. “You didn’t introduce yourself, Mark.”

Tony felt that, for the record, the blush was adorable in a way he would want to induce as many times as possible. “We’ve already met.”

Mark let out a breath of air. “Yeah, that was some FlashForward. Excuse us ...”

And he promptly dragged Tony out of the room that was becoming their base of operations and looked for an empty office. He found one and dragged them both inside.

“You and I - we kissed.” Mark started.

Tony nodded. “Yes, we did and I could tell that we both enjoyed it ... but I catch you drinking and I will shoot your hand off, date or no dates.”
Mark sucked in a breath. “So you know then.” It got one of the conversations out of the way. He had a sponsor and he hadn’t touched a drink in two years but that didn’t mean he didn’t feel the want. It was there in his FlashForward, him sucking at the flask like he was dying of thirst.”

Tony shrugged. “All I know is what I saw in a FlashForward six months from now, that I am going to do my level best to dismantle as I have no desire to get shot again. Kissing - I’m open to, of course.”

Mark hadn’t had much levity in the last few days. His daughter had not handled her FlashForward well, Olivia had dived into her work to handle it and he had done much the same.

“We haven’t even kissed in real life yet.” Mark said teasingly.

Tony stepped forward and yanked him into a kiss. It was passion and fire all wrapped in a sinful package. Mark hadn’t felt anything like it since the dissolution of his marriage.

Mark pulled away reluctantly when oxygen became an issue. “Okay, I want to take you out and date you but how will that work?”

Tony grinned, knowing that he could have what he wanted - a true connection with someone. If he was willing to fight for it. “Technically, I don’t work for this office. I am assigned to Washington so there is no conflict.”

Mark nodded. “So what do you say - chinese over an evidence board?”

Tony chuckled. “Date night, right there.”

*The two agents handled the task force deftly and they moved the quickest of all agencies toward a plausible explanation for why the entire world, apart from two people, fell to the ground for 137 seconds.*

*What was trickier was navigating Olivia’s moods, a second blackout and making sure they had time for each other. Thankfully as they worked together that wasn’t so difficult. Tony was going to propose the day after the FlashForward time.*

**If he got a chance**
Tony had not regretted coming to live in England with his Uncle. Okay, so now he might be known as Anthony Paddington rather than his birth surname of DiNozzo. In reality, his father had not been the type to make him attached to the name. He was proud of the man he was becoming and that was enough for Tony.

Mycroft Holmes had been a surprise to both him and his Uncle. They’d met at one of his Uncle’s parties and Tony had been smitten. Tony had chatted and flirted with the guy all night and had been sad when he was called away.

“Do you have any idea who you’ve just flirted with?” Uncle Clive asked him.

Tony frowned because he knew his Uncle wasn’t homophobic. “Cute, hot older guy that won’t be after my money?” Tony finished, and was it sad that was now one of his considerations? No, he could have been forced to stay with his biological father and would have ended up left in a hotel room or something.

Clive snorted at his comment. “You’re not wrong, kiddo. He is also the real power behind the British Government.”

Tony wasn’t sure where this was going and he always preferred straight talking. “Are you warning me away?”

Uncle shook his head. “No, but you will be warned, away probably by him. So be prepared, take those lessons to protect yourself.”

Tony shrugged, he was at Oxford finishing his masters in criminology. What was unbeknownst to the general public was there were certain university clubs that were aimed at targeting those who would be of interest to the security services, in the way of employing them with useful skills after they graduate. “Okay, if it will make you happy, Uncle.”

~*~

Mycroft saw the young man again from the party. He was here on a separate purpose doing a scout for M for local talent as she had a few spaces open for the Double-0 programme. “Hello, Anthony.”

Tony whirled around from where he was having a sparring match for fencing. His face appeared to show joy for his reappearance which was something. “Mycroft. It’s good to see you again.

Mycroft was impressed, he’d just been about to protest and tell him not to let his guard down when Tony parried the sword thrust and carried on moving toward him. “I’m glad you’re here.”

“Well, you are a delightful distraction.” Mycroft admitted.

Tony smirked. “Just a distraction?” Remembering his Uncle’s warning. He pressed onward.”I was hoping to convince you to dinner.”

Mycroft had been thinking about these hazel eyes more than he should. He’d assumed the younger man had been flirting out of boredom. This suggested something else. “I know your uncle will have warned you about me.”

Tony smirked and had the counter argument ready. “He did and I took up fencing, shooting and
martial arts the next day.”

Mycroft had very rarely been surprised. His gifts and mind didn’t allow for surprises - but he was today. If he was warned and then took the classes, that suggested this was more than a passing fancy. “You’re quite young.”

Tony had a wicked grin. “Then you can teach me new things.”

“I have many enemies.” Mycroft felt obligated to remind him. He liked being the power behind the government but that didn’t mean he was unaware of the collateral hatred that he earned.

Tony shrugged off the concern. “I am taking steps to make anyone who snatches me regret it.”

Mycroft raised his hand to tentatively stroke Tony’s face. “I will pick you up at eight.”

The date went very well, and so did the next one, and the one after that. They stopped fighting the pull between them after their third date. It was about at that time that Sherlock and Sherringford decided to start demanding answers about why he was so happy.

_Mycroft was not forthcoming._

~*~

Tony awoke with a dull thud at the back of his head. _Amateurs. Really - a clunk to the back of the head? How pedestrian!_ He kept his eyes closed and just catalogued the sounds. He could hear the advice of the Marine who was their instructor for martial arts. He heard a second voice, of an irate man, who Tony could easily guess was not part of the group. In fact, he had to smile as the irate man reminded him of Mycroft.

“Good god, man. Just how stupid are you?” The irate man asked.

Tony could admit that he was dying to hear the answer too. He didn’t wait long for their captors’ response.

“We have his brother and his lover.” Way to state the obvious, Tony thought. What he hadn’t heard was a plan. It was obvious this concerned Mycroft so either irate man was Sherlock or Sherringford. Tony would find out soon enough when he stopped playing unconscious.

Sherringford rolled his eyes. “Great plan, _Einstein_. So what comes next?”

“You do as we say!”

Tony even with his eyes closed knew Mycroft’s sibling was sneering. “I mean when James and my brother turn up. If you’re lucky he will have left Sherlock with John.”

Tony wanted to chuckle as this wasn’t quite how he imagined meeting the family. However he was not the type to wait for rescue. He felt his wrist and grinned. His instructor, Walker, was an ex-marine, and he would be so pleased. They’d missed the tiny knife under his sports wristband. He carefully flicked it open and went after the rope bindings. He didn’t make a big movement but he did check - and no, his feet were not bound. So he was back to thinking _amateur hour_ with an internal sneer. He knew the minute he told Walker or Mycroft they would say something similar.

Sherringford was still belittling their intelligence. When Tony went on the attack, he stood up and his moves were as fluid as in practice. He used his knife to disable as he ducked and covered Sherringford when he heard the gunshot. The steel table was in a handy place to use as cover.
Sherringford looked at him. “So your Myc’s boyfriend?”

Tony grinned as he inched closer to the idiot who’d grabbed him. “That’s right. Keep your head down.”

Tony was breathing deeply and didn’t think about the fact he was shooting people. This was self-defence and in protection of his potential brother-in-law. It was kill or be killed and he rather liked living.

Sherringford waited until everyone was dead to pop up and survey the scene. “Did you kill everyone?”

Tony shook his head. “No, I left those two for Myc’ to interrogate.”

Sherringford smirked. “Then I really like you and approve of your relationship. Although I will be constantly reminding Myc that he is batting above his average.”

Tony pointed at the computer. “They had a computer for you.”

Sherringford sneered. “Yes, it is practically an antique but I can still ruin their days from here.”

Tony had a wicked grin. “Well, I say you should have fun and I can keep guard.”

Sherringford had a feeling that he was going to get on so well with his brother-in-law. Oh, he knew that wasn’t the case yet but there was no way his brother would be allowed to screw up this relationship.

~*~

An hour later, Tony saw the door breach and called out. “That better be you, Myc’.”

“It is I”

Tony grinned as he saw Mycroft and a rather snazzily dressed other man. He knew this must be the guy Sherringford referred to as James. “We had a fun afternoon.”

“So it would seem.” Mycroft observed. “Let me guess, they missed the knife.”

Tony had the kind of smile that intimated butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. “Oh, you know I am just a jock.”

James snorted at the act. He was infinitely familiar with playing a mask. “Sure you are, expect a call from M.”

Tony shrugged, his eyes were only for Myc. “Okay, but let it wait a day. I have plans.”

Mycroft couldn't say he regretted ever marrying Anthony, who was a true partner in life. He hated the day he was forced to send Anthony to America but it was for the best. James had to go on an extended mission, and John joined the army so it wasn’t like any of the siblings remained with their other halves.

They couldn’t complain about their reunion though.
Victor Fitzgerald was a figure known in Washington. The man was vicious, controlling, and liked to control his children's lives wherever possible. Tony knew all this as he had managed to date the man’s son for two years on the quiet. So Tony just knew that when the man came storming into the NCIS office - he was here for Tony, not for work.

He just said morosely. “And I was having such a nice day. Boss - watch my six, please.”

Gibbs reacted to the request and the very calm and controlled manner Tony was exuding. He was only like this when shit was about to go down. The others, McGee and David, were freaked out probably as they had never seen this side of his agent. Well, all children need to learn a lesson eventually.

“You son of a bitch!” Fitzgerald growled at him.

Tony’s smile lacked any warmth. “Whatever your issue is, don’t bring my dead mother into it.”

Tony knew there and then, that this is where he was going to be outed in more ways than one. Oh well, if this was happening, he was going to make it count. He hated Victor, for more than how he treated Martin as a child. This man had no right to demand anything of him or do this at his workplace.

“Hello, Director.” Tony replied calmly, ignoring the fact that nearly everyone in the bullpen was staring at him.

“Don’t hello, me. You have no right.”

Gibbs stood closer to Tony’s back, sensing the shift in the conversation. Tony got the feeling if Victor did punch him, Gibbs was going to return the punch with extreme prejudice.

Tony sighed. “Are you sure this is a conversation you want to have in front of all these people, Director Fitzgerald?”

Tony would give the man a chance to be smart. He wasn’t holding out hope that he would take it though. Sure enough, the man came out with something stupid.

“Aren’t you ashamed?”

Tony did the last thing anyone expected. He laughed in Victor’s face. “Am I ashamed? No. You see, I adore my partner and I had no intention of sharing my private life with anyone at work. It is you coming in here with your bluster and rudeness that is more at risk of doing so.”
Victor sneered one again, he really needed a moustache if he was going for fairy book villain. “You won’t get anywhere in this town whilst you are fucking my son. I will make sure of that.

Tony thumped his hands down on the desk. “Get out of my bullpen. You had no right to do this but guess what, Vicky? I’m not just fucking him ... I am going to marry him. Your invitation was going to be posted this weekend. Shall I assume you won’t be attending?”

The office was on tenterhooks, all knew of the FBI Director’s temper but their Tony, well, he was standing toe to toe with the man and refusing to back down. They were a little in the awe of the SFA.

The Director looked like he wanted to fall over. “You’re marrying?”

Tony nodded, smiling sweetly. “That’s right. Martin and I are done hiding what we are to each other. We both have a gun and are able to fight. So we’re not worried about homophobic idiots.”

Vance stood up on the balcony and knew then just how badly he’d misjudged the SFA. It aggravated him that he’d been fooled by the man’s masks but DiNozzo was too good to waste. He was standing toe-to-toe with a man that senators ran away from. Now he understood the stand-off with Eli David - it was clearly no fluke.

“Agent DiNozzo, I rsvp’d and Jacki wanted to know - can the kids come?”

Tony looked up at his boss with a blinding smile. “Jared and Kayla are welcome, Director.”

He’d met the kids when he’d done guard duty for them when the threat level had risen. Vance nodded and then turned to Victor. “Can we help you, Victor? I think DiNozzo was pretty clear otherwise.”

Victor froze - the buzz on the grapevine was that Vance hated DiNozzo and he’d been hoping to fracture the relationship further. In fact, it seemed like he’d managed to do the opposite. “This is not the last of this.”

Gibbs smirked. “Yes, it is. You are clearly homophobic, you are only too happy to abuse your position - something you’ve done helpfully in front of many witnesses. I think we’re done or I start playing this recording to every paper that is willing to listen.”

Victor stormed out of the room and Tony just watched with beady eyes as he left. He didn’t trust the man and he certainly didn’t trust him not to do something if his attention turned. Once the man left, the whole room applauded. Tony looked a little bewildered as people came up to him and shook his hand. They were congratulating him on his upcoming nuptials. Tim and Ziva looked shocked to the side of him but Gibbs was standing at his side.

It took about ten minutes before all the well-wishers went back to their own work. Tony just looked at Gibbs and said. “Your office.”

Gibbs nodded and walked with him to the elevator. He let it go so far before pushing the emergency button.

Tony sat down on the floor. “Well, that was fun. Did I really just get outed by Victor fucking Fitzgerald?”

“You did, son.”
Tony looked up vulnerable as hell, he’d kept his shields up in the bullpen determined that he wouldn’t break in front of Victor, Ziva or Tim. “You haven’t called me that in a while.”

“I know, I forgot. I can’t make it right but I want to move forward, in the right way. I have your back, Tony. You will just have to see I mean it.” Gibbs promised. It was as close as he could get to saying sorry without breaking his rules.

Tony chuckled, eyes a little wet, not that he would admit it. “I did, you threatened to kill the FBI Director’s career for being mean to me.”

Gibbs shook his head. “No, I made a promise, Tony.” To prove the point he pressed play on the recorder.

Tony looked a little hesitant, “So when do you want to meet Martin?”

Gibbs smirked. “I would say cowboy steaks as soon as we can.”

Tony nodded, “Go on, say what you’ve gotta say.”

Gibbs snorted. “A Feeb?”

Tony grinned. “Took me by surprise too. I can’t tell you how it happened. I was hooked from the beginning as soon as he sat down by me on a plane.”

Gibbs’ mind went back to a time when a delightful redhead sat down next to him asking him if he was a lumberjack. She had these rules and he better not break any of them. “I know how it is, that was how I felt about Shannon.”

Tony grinned weakly. “Thanks, boss. My freak out is over. I need to deal with Abby, McGee, and Ziva.”

“Not alone, Tony and show the true you. No more coddling any of them. If they can’t handle me by now then they never will.” Gibbs said, half an order, and half a request.

Tony nodded and dusted off his suit. He couldn’t have been thinking straight as he would never have sat on the elevator floor wearing Zegna.

~*~

When they entered the bullpen they noticed their area was suspiciously absent. Tony knew where they were. “Abby’s?”

Gibbs nodded and they headed toward Ab’s area. Tony had to laugh at the way they were all surrounding the computer terminal, gossiping about Martin. Gibbs just shook his head because it wasn’t the subtlest act he’d ever seen.

Tony was more sure of himself now. “You know, he is my fiance so if you have a question you could just ask me?”

All three whirled around, looking more like children with their hand caught in the cookie jar than agents and a technician. “We were just ...”
“Being nosey about my private life, I know.” Tony finished.

Abby was pouting. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Tony snorted and remembered Gibbs’ warning. It was time to stop holding back. “Well, I don’t trust you with my private life considering how you treat me in my professional life.”

“What?” Abby said, looking like she could fall down in shock.

“Now wait a minute.” Was McGee’s outraged comeback.

Ziva sneered. “I don’t care but are you trying to make us believe you are gay?”

Tony rolled his eyes and with a smirk asked Gibbs. “You said Mossad picked for intelligence?”

Gibbs shrugged. “Well, she is Eli’s daughter.”

Tony wanted to get a picture of their faces in that moment. He was going to get a sketchpad as soon as possible to try and keep it for posterity. It was truly a moment to treasure.

Abby looked heartbroken. “We’re a family.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “I have already had one family abandon me, I don’t want another who plays hot and cold with me when it suits them.”

McGee frowned. “You play a clown and I am supposed to respect you?”

Tony was glad they are getting to the heart of the issue. “Do you know, McGee? You said the keyword, *play* the clown. It was a role. When you came to the team, you were useful which is why I pushed Gibbs to get you on the team. The trouble was you were afraid of your own shadow.”

McGee looked like he was trying to assimilate the information. “You picked me for the team?”

Tony nodded. “That’s correct.”

McGee asked another question, hoping he’d get validation. “What about your degree?”

Gibbs rolled his eyes. “You mean to say you never looked?”

Tony shook his head. “Nope boss, they all assumed I am a dumb jock. They’re not sure why you kept me on the team.”

Gibbs had such a perfect look of disappointment that McGee, Ziva, and Abby all bowed their heads. “Tell them, Tony.”

Tony pouted. “Fine, yes I have the Phys Ed degree. I also have a Masters in Bioscience and Psychology. I defended my dissertation for my criminology Ph.D. last week.”

Tim looked like his world had crashed down. “You are Dr. DiNozzo? You said you had a dentist appointment!?”

Tony nodded, grinning a little evilly. “That’s right - a jock and a geek. How’s your worldview?”
Gibbs was not listening to any more of this. He wasn’t impressed with what he’d seen so far. He gave his own message. “You know what? I am done. DiNozzo is my SFA until I say otherwise. If you have a problem with that, ask for a transfer. Let’s go and do our jobs, Tony.”

Tony left, not too bothered by what they chose. Today had turned his life upside down, Martin was known about, Vance had supported him and Gibbs was back. His day was okay - if the toxic trio couldn’t handle that, well, that was their problem.

~*~

When he got back upstairs, there was another shock. “Hello, Agent Fitzgerald.”

Martin grinned. “Your director said he wanted a consult for his MCRT.”

Tony chuckled because there was being supportive and then there was this. He was beginning to seriously like his director and those were words he didn’t think he would ever get to. “Yeah, something like that.” He looked at his watch. “Hey, Boss. What do you say we got to lunch, my treat.”

Gibbs nodded. “And you can tell me how you two got together.”

Tony grinned, grabbing Martin’s hand. “Well now, Boss, that is another story.”
Gibbs watched the interaction of Morrow and DiNozzo with concern.

Earlier that day ........

Gibbs had been dragged into a dicey undercover operation. It was the type that was a clusterfuck from the start to finish, the under planned but vital to national security type were always the worst. To top it all, apparently there was a cop already undercover and no one was willing to tell him who.

The smuggling ring was messing with arms that were way out of their understanding. Gibbs was posing as himself but a corrupt version, acting as a front for his even more crooked boss. Now, you might think this was a risky strategy but it was often the easiest. Those who are corrupt already assumed that others think the same way - it was a way of validating their own greed.

“Are we going to talk or shall I go? I’m bored.” Gibbs drawled. He didn’t look the least bit concerned that he was facing a circle of guns.

“You are insolent!” The leader hissed.

Gibbs snorted. “Ask around, they will tell you my worst trait is that I’m a bastard.”

“Why should I deal with your boss?”

Gibbs rolled his eyes and cocked his head to the side. “I am not dealing with the stand-in. Your boss or no deal.”

A new voice laughed as he swayed into the circle. “I told you he wasn’t an idiot, Carlos.”

This new player was just that, new. Gibbs had no information on him at all, and he should if this was one of The Jackel’s inner circle. “So who is this exactly?”

The stand-in sighed and Gibbs hadn’t missed his flash of fear. “He is Agent Andrews who is negotiating for his boss. They want to help us.”

The new guy walked around him, Gibbs got the feeling that meat on a block had less scrutiny. “Is that so?”

“And which agency is this?”

“NCIS.”

Tony didn’t react but he knew that unlike the others - this one was genuinely undercover. This was perfect, he might be able to extricate himself without ending up dead. He was willing to take the opportunity. “Carlos, let me see if this is legit. This smells and you don’t want to risk exposure.”
“Why?”

Tony smirked. “Well, you know if it isn’t I will paint the walls with their blood for you.”

Carlos cackled, and Gibbs started to understand why maybe the other guy had flinched when he spoke. So, Carlos had found a pet psychopath - that was a non-comforting thought. “Go Tonio, although make the deaths a little less exposed this time.”

Gibbs thought, *Tonio the psychopath*, that was not too much to go on. Tonio, as he seemed to be known, bowed his head with all the reverence of a Samurai and motioned for Gibbs to follow him. Gibbs, seeing that this would allow him to leave without getting a faceful of guns, figured it was a good idea.

Gibbs growled. “Who the fuck are you?”

“Such language. Anyone would think you're a marine.” Tonio baited him.

Gibbs growled, “Sniper, and still have the talent. So I ask again, who are you?”

“Antonio DeMarco.”

Gibbs looked at him. “And what is a Mob enforcer from Philly doing in Baltimore?”

Tony smirked. “I wanted to see the sights. And you’ve heard of me?”

“Of Baltimore?” Gibbs added, disbelief colouring his voice. “And the FBI can’t decide if they love you, or hate you.”

DeMarco shrugged. “I get that a lot. So where is your boss?”

Gibbs sneered. “You touch him and I will see if your reputation is deserved.”

Tony smirked. “Oh babe, they don’t get much better than me,” adapting the Etta James quote. He couldn’t wait to see the undercover agent’s face when he realised Tony was on his side.

“I will end you.”

Tony smirked, and it was just the right side of salacious. “Don’t threaten me with a good time.”

Gibbs didn’t know what to make of the character in front of him. He was scary enough that the Colombian cartel members flinched in his presence and yet right now, he seemed to almost be doing his best to be a sassy cupcake. He would take him to Tom who was ready to play his part in the bargain and see what his boss made of this guy.

~*~

Tom had received the message that Gibbs was returning to the hotel and that it was game time. He’d prepared but being undercover was a whole different ballgame. Gibbs strode through the hotel lobby with a pretty little thing following him. The only thing that kept people from saying anything to Gibbs’ guest was the fact the man exuded an aura of *don’t fuck with me.*

The newbie grinned, all boyish charm. “Hello, salty goodness.”
“DeMarco, he is off limits.” Gibbs growled.

Tom knew that name, where did he know that name? “I think I’m much too old for you.”

DeMarco grinned at him, it was wicked and full of dirty promise. “It just means you will know how to have a good time.”

Gibbs watched the interaction of Morrow and DiMarco with concern. He knew that Morrow could do his job but he never expected to watch his boss flirt with a criminal, especially with one as slippery as DeMarco. “We doing a deal or what?”

“Indeed.”

Tony relaxed back into his chair. “I thought you’re supposed to be smuggling not pimping your boss out.”

“DeMarco!”

Tony grinned at Gibbs like this was an everyday occurrence, “You can’t speak to me like I am one of your Agents. I am not and if you lay a hand on me like I can tell your hand is itching to hit me, you will get it returned in kind.”

Morrow jumped in. “Easy, DeMarco, he is just loyal to me.”

Tony smirked because that much was clear. “You know, I think you might be right. So we need to talk about deals for Carlos.”

Gibbs frowned at the wording there. “You planning to sell your boss out?”

Tony shrugged. “Don’t judge me, I am not selling out the boss you think.”

Gibbs was pretty sure he’d just stepped through the looking glass. “You threatened to kill us and paint the walls red with our blood. So who exactly is your boss?”

DeMarco smirked. “It should have been the Baltimore Police Department but they are as crooked as the mob, and burned my identity. Do you have any idea what it is like to live as a psychopath twenty-four seven when you’re sane and have a conscience?”

Now both NCIS agents could confess that they dropped their undercover roles for a second. That was just so fantastical it sounded more like a Hollywood plot than an undercover operation. “Are you fucking with me?” Gibbs growled.

Tony shook his head. “I already established that the Director is more my type. Him I wouldn’t mind taking a ride on.”

Tom flushed faintly, he wasn’t blind, and Gibbs’ friend was just his type but he was also a good fifteen years too young - no matter his activities. “And how do we know you’re legit? And if you are, why are you still under?”

Tony rolled his eyes. “When you start undercover you may not realise this but you don’t ever stop, you merely go deeper undercover... if you survive. Despite my boss’s intentions, I have every intention of surviving.”
“I see.” Morrow said as he assimilated the information. He noticed Jethro’s smile so asked his agent. “What is it, Gibbs?”

“Just I heard Callen say the same damn thing nearly every time we speak.”

Tony shrugged. “Look, this situation sucks. You want the bad guys caught. I can do that for you. What you choose to believe at the end is up to you.”

Morrow couldn’t help but observe. “You are a very confident person.”

Tony shrugged. “I found out it saves time. I tried the clown act but no one believed it for too long. Hence why they want me dead.”

Tom and Gibbs shared a look because they knew the truth - this man would only let you see whatever he wanted you to see and nothing more. “What if we had been crooked?”

Tony snorted. “Then I would have played DeMarco to perfection and you would have been none the wiser.”

And Gibbs knew, frustratingly, that he had been hoodwinked by the young cop - he would make a brilliant agent. “Go tell your boss we’re legit and then you’re going to put in an application to work for NCIS.”

Morrow knew what Gibbs was looking for. “You want Tony for the MCRT?”

“Damn right.”

~*~

Jarvis was on a video conference, “You went looking for a smuggling ring and you want to adopt a cop?”

Gibbs snorted. “That is not what the cop, DiNozzo, if you care, wants to do with Tom.”

“Is that so?”

Daniel Walker, the Homeland Director smirked, “You can’t date him and have him work for you. Gibbs even has a rule for that.”

“Damn straight. It never works.” Gibbs said reflexively.

Walker’s smirk grew. “So in that case, he should come and work for us. It is a perfect solution.”

“Now wait a minute.” Morrow and Gibbs protested, knowing how valuable he could be for the agency.

Jarvis shook his head. “Look I’ve done the digging and I don’t care what his background is but if he wants you then I won’t allow him to work for NCIS.”

Morrow could have frowned. “Don’t you think we should finish this operation and let DiNozzo choose?”

Gibbs knew in that moment that his desire to get DiNozzo on his team was gone before it even
began. He’d seen the natural chemistry between the pair, and it was a done deal even if they didn’t know it.

He was going to grow to really hate Jarvis and he would not let the man forget it. His adherence to the stupid rules was going to cost NCIS one of the best agents - ever possibly.

And let’s face it - We all know what Tony chose as a year or so later he is walking across NCIS to his weekly lunch with his partner and Gibbs. It had become a tradition and even better if Tony got to mess with Gibbs’s MCRT.
As several are aware - this is the first episode of my rough trade challenge. I will be finishing the last episode today (hopefully). It will be posted here but I will be reviewing the episodes and possibly expanding them.

Author’s Notes: Canon is at my whim, DADT was repealed far earlier than real life.

Episode 1: Worlds colliding

There were always going to be rivalries, for example, cops and feds. There was another rivalry that existed between the JAG lawyers and the NCIS agency. Now, normally the rivalry was in the background and the competition benefited those who needed justice. However, tensions and feelings got a lot murkier when NCIS was asked to investigate the rather gruesome remains of one Lt. Loren Singer. JAG was being investigated by NCIS and this had the potential to get rather complicated.

However, AJ Chegwidden was going to find that soon he would like complicated, or at least the gifts trouble could bring.

~*~

Rear Admiral A.J Chegwidden was listening to the SECNAV explain the situation to him, as well as his reasoning. As much as he didn’t like it, he knew that calling in NCIS made sense - there were way too many sources of potential conflict. The victim was one of their own so just in case, on the rare chance the perpetrator was also one of their own, the investigation wouldn’t be compromised.

“Who will be leading the investigation, Sir?”

“Gibbs.” SECNAV Sheffield replied.

AJ breathed a sigh of relief as he knew the gunny. The man was proud of being an ornery bastard but he closed his cases. There was chatter about him taking on a young agent as a protege. No one knew why this particular Agent had lasted two years when all others had fled much, much sooner. The working theories were - the kid must have the patience of a saint; he was a masochist, or Gibbs had stopped looking for the next Mrs. Gibbs and gone after a man instead.

AJ knew it was most likely a mix of the first two but he would soon find out.

~*~

Gibbs stepped inside the JAG offices of West Virginia, they’d processed the body and he hated any murder case. The victim had been pregnant which meant there was more than one motive for this.

“Admiral Chegwidden, nice to see you again.” Gibbs opened with.

“I heard you’d gone into NCIS. Are you still terrorising people?” The admiral asked him, sounding
amused by the idea.

Gibbs smirked. “Yes, Sir. Let me introduce you to my team. This is my second, Agent Anthony DiNozzo and this is Agent Vivian Blackadder, FBI liaison.”

Chegwidden nodded at them. “How do you want to start?”

Gibbs knew where he wanted to begin. “You have her co-workers assembled?”

Chegwidden rolled his eyes. “I sure do.”

Gibbs looked at Chegwidden speculatively. “Did you know Lt. Singer well?”

Chegwidden snorted. “Gibbs, I have 850 officers under my command and I have been whipping the service back into shape since I took over as JAG.”

Gibbs knew this, he was well aware of the disagreement between Commander Theodore Lindsey and SECNAV. The latter felt that having been acting JAG, he should have been given the role full time, Secretary Sheffield disagreed and he’d been replaced by Chegwidden. Gibbs, despite his reputation for not playing well with others, did have some sense. “Well, we will leave you to it, Admiral.”

Chegwidden could have sworn he heard DiNozzo say. “Why did you let him go?”

Gibbs gently head-slapped his second. “Get your head in the game, flirt on your own time.”

“Is that a promise?” DiNozzo asked quietly.

AJ shook off the comment assuming it was Gibbs being sarcastic with his protege. After all, why would the gorgeous young man be interested in him?

~*~

Blackadder was on this JAG case and it was annoying the hell out of her. She had joined NCIS as a liaison officer so that she could track down her brother’s killer. They’d been making progress on the case when Director Morrow had assigned them to this new case. She felt it was a waste of time - they should be tracking down the terrorist, Atwad.

“Can’t you concentrate for a second, DiNozzo? And the Admiral, really?” She said, not bothering to hide her exasperation.

DiNozzo had a wickedly suggestive grin. “Hell yes - come on, you have eyes, Viv. That is a walking, talking poster for the Navy. He makes those Navy Whites look goooooood.”

“You’re a frat boy who chases women and you want me to believe that you find the Admiral sexy?” She said, dismissing his comments immediately - so sure she knew his type.

She didn’t like the look of victory that DiNozzo shared with Gibbs like she’d just proven a point. DiNozzo had an infuriating response. “You know what, I find people sexy and intriguing, or I don’t. The rest is merely labels and I have spent my lifetime screwing with those labels.”

She threw her hands up in the air. “Why can’t he give me a straight answer?”
Gibbs had one of those frustrating smiles. “He did. You just weren’t listening. Now go to the club and find out about our victim’s last evening and take the TAD with you for back-up.”

Gibbs didn’t want to send DiNozzo with her. He wanted Tony interviewing as it was one of his strengths.

~*~

The Admiral found Gibbs’ second, DiNozzo, knocking on his door. “Are you here to interview me? Or are you going to just stand around looking pretty in my office doorway, distracting my staff?”

DiNozzo looked delighted by his questions. “Can’t I do both, Admiral?”

Chegwidden snorted but gestured for him to sit opposite him. “Sit a while, ask your questions so I can get back to my work.”

Tony did as ordered and relaxed into the questions. Chegwidden could admit he was impressed, the young agent knew how to set you so relaxed that you would answer all questions without knowing that you had. “You’re a dangerous agent.”

DiNozzo affected an innocent look. “Only to criminals, Sir.”

A.J now knew exactly why Gibbs had hired the man from the cops, he would have been wasted there. “Uh-huh, now you know I didn’t do it. So let me get back to work.”

DiNozzo stood up gracefully and timed his last statement to perfection. It was a carrot to see if there was interest. “Sure, I want you free to ask out for drinks.”

Chegwidden’s head whipped up to watch the retreating figure, and did the agent just shake his ass in his direction? He snorted, the agent was a natural flirt - there was no way he would be interested in him. He just hoped they found Singer’s murderer soon so his team could get back to normal.

~*~

Tony had known that if they were going to crack this case, then they were going to need forensics to help. He used it as an excuse to head back from the JAG headquarters to NCIS, he needed advice from his favourite person there, Abby.

“Hey, Abs.”

The gothic scientist whirled around and engulfed him in a huge hug. “Tony, you’re back.”

“You keep hugging me like that, Morrow and Gibbs will get the wrong idea.” Tony responded, breathless from the force of the hug.

“So spill.” Abby said, knowing that look on Tony’s face. She’d known him too long, he seemed conflicted in a way Tony rarely was.

“Tony, don’t make me hug you again.” She warned him.

“It’s the Admiral, he is a walking sex act and makes me forget that I should hide.” Tony confessed, it came out in a rush. He felt relief in having shared his thoughts. It was crazy, dangerous too and yet he couldn’t stop thinking about the Admiral.
“Why?”

Tony quirked an eyebrow at the blunt question. “We work with the military and law enforcement. They’re sometimes not known to be the most tolerant.”

Abby snorted. “Yeah but you can fight Tony, and the boss made sure you could shoot as good as a marine. You haven’t given me a reason yet for you not chasing what you want.”

Tony let a huff of amusement. “You know me too well. He is older, Abs. He might not even want me. Plus, DADT was a thing until a year ago.”

Abby snickered at the mere thought of the admiral not wanting Tony. She had seen men she knew to be a solid kinsey zero still check his ass out. So she tried to reassure her best friend. “Tony trust me, he wants you but you will have to chase him. Do you want to?”

Tony bit his lip. “I really do.”

She was so happy for Tony, this was the first time she had seen her best friend really interested in another person since Baltimore. She hoped he was brave enough to chase what he wanted and decided to lighten the mood with a bit of teasing. “Although, Gibbs is going to be mad. He’s a lawyer.”

Tony actually started laughing at that. “Yeah, but he is a SEAL too so he can’t bitch too much.”

Abby pulled up this Admiral’s picture on the screen as she wanted a visual on the man who had Very Special Agent Anthony DiNozzo all twisted up. Seeing the picture, she understood the attraction Tony had, he exuded masculinity and was a very attractive man. “Oh, the twins from the club will be besides themselves if you’re off the market.”

Tony kissed Abby’s cheek. “Break the news to them gently but I am sure you can console them. I am fond of them but I will let you know how the chase goes.”

She giggled and handed him a file. “Here take this back to my silver fox. It has some interesting facts about the case.”

Tony’s mind boggled reading the results, this was certainly going to stir up the investigation and it definitely distracted him from his thoughts. “Are you kidding me?”

Ab’s shrugged. “DNA never lies. Rabb’s DNA was a match to the fetus, not a father but close enough to, say, be an Uncle.”

Tony sighed because that now put the Commander as a person of significant interest in their case. Gibbs was going to get in his face so it was going to be interesting to watch two bullfighters duke it out.
Chegwidden stormed into the observation room not believing what Mac had just told him. That Rabb was their prime suspect. He saw DiNozzo standing there looking pensive himself. “This is crap.”

Tony winced because he couldn’t disagree. He knew Gibbs must have a plan but this was a wing and a prayer job, the evidence linking Rabb to the murder was circumstantial at best. This was mind games at its finest and Rabb and Gibbs were finely matched. “Admiral, Agent Gibbs is doing his job.” He said in his best ‘placate the native’s’ voice.

“He is harassing one of my best men.”

Tony sighed because Viv, the coward, had ducked out of the room. “No, he is seeking justice for the murdered JAG officer, Lt Singer. You know this. Now, this may be an uncomfortable path that this has taken but it needs to be seen through.”

“Commander Rabb is innocent.” AJ was certain of it.

Tony shrugged. “They all are until they’re proven guilty but maybe you can exert your influence to make Rabb see sense and stop playing with the boss. Gibbs doesn’t have much of a sense of humour.”

AJ snorted. “Son, Gunny has never had a sense of humour. Rabb is as stubborn as a mule and won’t change his course without reason.”

Tony really liked the Admiral’s accent and he did wear his white uniform very well. He wished they were talking over more pleasant things with a drink, not debating on the innocence of one of the JAG lawyers. “Oh, I don’t know Admiral, use that southern charm of yours or alternatively ... you know, knock it into him.” Tony offered as a suggestion.

“Should an NCIS agent be encouraging me to do that?” The Admiral responded but Tony could see the amusement in his eyes.

Tony looked at him innocently. “I have no idea what you mean, Admiral. I mean, we’re just having a friendly conversation. It’s obvious he is covering for his brother, who by the way can’t be the killer due to the timeframe ... so it begs the question. Who doesn’t like Commander Rabb?”

AJ sighed. “There is a list a mile long, and there are a few in the JAG office itself.”

Tony shrugged. “I’d start with them because this level of framing is cold-blooded and suggests they are looking for out and out revenge.”
AJ observed astutely that one, he was no longer angry and two, the agent probably shouldn’t be sharing his ideas. “Should you be telling me this?”

Tony had a wicked grin. “Again, probably not but we’re just having a friendly conversation aren’t we?”

AJ shook his head and added, knowing that by being bold enough to flirt back - it often made the other person run. “Son, if I were ten years younger I would do something about your flirtations.”

“Age is just a number, Admiral. Plus, I like experience, nothing can ruin a good time more than fumblings.” Tony finished his boldest statement yet.

AJ was getting suspicious. “Are you trying to distract me?”

Tony smiled. “Am I? I hope not. I’m hoping you’ll put your sneaky lawyer skills to good use and find out who is trying to frame the good commander.”

AJ didn’t get it. DiNozzo’s boss was seated in the interrogation room rattling Rabb’s cage pretty good. And yet here he stood, giving an alternate idea that held merit. “I repeat. Shouldn’t you be discussing this with Gibbs?”

Tony shrugged. “I would and maybe if your boy hadn’t played mind games I would have been able to convince the boss. Now, I only see this ending in a court martial to determine guilt. I’d really love to stay and help but a terrorist we’ve been tracking has just popped his nasty head up.”

Sure enough, Gibbs left the interrogation room in a hurry. “He has been read his article 31, now get him a good lawyer - he’s going to need one. DiNozzo, we’re out of here.”

Tony turned back to the Admiral with a flirty smile and waved goodbye. “Nice meeting you, Admiral Chegwidden.”

AJ chuckled, that man was too pretty for his own good. He had AJ thinking of things he had no right thinking of a man probably twenty years his junior. The damn rule change where he could finally love freely was distracting too. There should be a rule about how tight a pair of pants the NCIS agents were allowed to wear.

AJ knew now was not the time to lose his head. “Mac? Get in there and knock some sense into Rabb! Then find me someone who can represent his sorry ass.”
AJ settled into his favourite chair in his library at JAG with a glass of good whiskey. He deserved it after all the shit Rabb had put him through in the Singer case. He was a damn good lawyer and pilot but the man’s ability to get into and out of trouble was probably the only thing he was better at.

“Knock, knock.” An amused voice broke his musings.

“Now what is a nice Federal Agent like you doing in a place like this?” AJ asked, amused and willing to play along. *DiNozzo really was too attractive for his own good.*

DiNozzo leaned on the door frame. “Well, I figured you’d had a rough day and I wanted to see how you were.”

AJ chuckled darkly. “Lindsey was a jealous, crooked asshole who hated me enough to go after one of my best lawyers. Right now, I am reminding myself that I swore an oath to protect and serve.”

Tony sat down opposite him, not looking the least bit fazed by the suggestion. “Nah, you’re not. You’re angry and you’re relieved and you’re looking for a way to relieve all the tension you’ve stored up because of the court martial.”

“You are too young for an old fox like me.” AJ wanted to remind him.

Tony was undeterred. “Admiral, I think at thirty one, I know my own mind. Let me decide what is too old for me.”

“You better call me AJ then,” and poured his green-eyed nymph a glass.

“Tony. See, we’re already making progress.” Tony said, assured that whilst the age argument wasn’t going to go away anytime soon, it was on hold for now.

“So why NCIS?” AJ asked, as it was the one thing that bugged him. A lot of cops wanted to end up as a Fed, only they looked at the Feebs, not an agency like NCIS.

“Gibbs asked.” Was the quick reply.

“Just like that?” AJ pressed, it was not like Tony was unaware.

Tony nodded as he sipped his whiskey. “Plus, you know Baltimore was just so boring.”
AJ just nodded, assimilated that type of loyalty. “Why me?”

Tony didn’t back down. “You interest me, in a way that makes me braver than I would normally be. Do you often start dates like interrogations?”

AJ shrugged because it had been the reason for a few of his dates being brief. The trouble was, he was a lawyer and a SEAL, it was not like he could switch his natural instincts off and people would get frustrated by that. He couldn’t help but smirk. “Only the ones who can handle me.”

Tony raised his glass. “Well, I can stand my ground having some experience in interrogations. Now I don’t know about you, AJ, but there comes a time when you have to leave the office. You should show me around Falls Church.”

AJ wasn’t a stupid man and took the invitation as a way to carry on their evening. “Lead out.”

~*~

AJ followed him out of the JAG headquarters and proceeded to show him around Falls Church. They’d stopped in what Tony knew to be a local park, which was a perfect way to end their first date. He wasn’t going to rush this - it was too important to him.

AJ saw something in that look that had him asking. “You like it here?”

Tony grinned, cheeky and full of mischief. “The view isn’t bad.”

AJ shook his head at the audacity of the line. Damn Tony though as it was working. He couldn’t give in easily though, he was a rear admiral in the Navy, after all. “Does that line work well for you?”

Tony was back to being amused but he played as good as he got. “You tell me.”

AJ stood closer, feeling brave. “It’s working but I’m a lawyer, you need to seal the deal so to speak. Your closing argument is a little weak.”

Tony found himself grinning. He took that challenge as permission and under the lights of the park leaned in so close that he could smell the cologne. It was heady. In his moment of distraction, AJ chose to close the argument first.
Tony’s eyes slipped shut as he gave himself over to the kiss. It was more erotic than some sex he’d had. He only broke away when oxygen became an issue but even so, he didn’t let go of AJ. Instead, he rested his forehead on AJ’s shoulder. “Damn, you got it wrong you know, you’re dangerous.”

AJ smirked. “I’m a SEAL, of course I am.”

Tony shrugged, lifting his head up to look the other man in the eye. “That’s perfect. I like my men mean and dangerous.” To illustrate that, he leaned in and showed AJ exactly how he felt. He poured all his feelings into the kiss.

AJ sighed, knowing as much as he wanted to not let this evening end - it would be for the best. Sometimes, it sucked being sensible. “You have a case, the gunny mentioned it.”

Tony pouted. “Oh yeah, I am about to go and play Spanish fisherman to reel in Amad Bin Atwad.”

AJ kissed him one last time. “In that case, good hunting and call me when you get back.”

Tony sauntered off feeling a lot better about the situation than he had a few hours earlier. He definitely wasn’t going to let this thing with AJ go without a fight.

~*~

Gibbs knew his second too well. He needed just one look to see the calmness to know. “You go after what you want?”

Tony nodded, even as he started to morph into his soon to be alter-ego. “I did. He was amenable to my arguments.” He finished with a grin, thinking about how AJ liked to close his arguments.

Gibbs just shook his head. “You went for a lawyer, DiNozzo. You know how I feel about that.”

Tony tried to look repentant but he kept thinking of the kisses they’d traded in the park. “Yeah, but I am not saying sorry.”

“Atta boy,” Gibbs had to say, not wanting Tony to get the wrong idea. “Are you ready to go and capture Atwad?”

Tony nodded, “Yeah, these clothes are really not me.”

Gibbs nodded as he knew that but it was one the things that helped Tony disassociate his undercover roles from him. “Yeah, I know you wouldn’t be caught dead in it. Antonio DeMarco, ex-mob enforcer, looking to lay low and make some cash would.”

Blackadder hissed. “He can’t assume the identity of DeMarco, the man was a psycho.”
Tony had a malicious grin on his face. “Nah, Viv, I was Macalusco’s green eyed pet thug. I think. There were some less flattering names too. He liked me, weird, he still likes me even after sending him down for a long stretch.”

Viv didn’t believe a word he was saying. She was still too much Feeb to do this long term. He had reservations with her being on the Atwad case considering it was his funding that helped bomb the USS Cole and kill her brother. “There is no way a Mob boss you put away would still like you.”

Tony just folded his arms. “Gibbs?”

“He gets a Christmas card each year and the occasional gift of information. Little Nicky wants DiNozzo to come home and stop playing Fed was the last conversation, I think.”

Tony nodded because that was the truth. “Hey, do you think the thing between AJ and me will deter him?”

Gibbs shook his head. “No, JAG and Nicky’s interests don’t mix. He might even like the Admiral if he got you to go to dinner.”

Tony shook his head. “We just had our first date and besides, I can just imagine how well that family dinner would go. I don’t have a bulletproof suit. I haven’t had a chance to go to Rome in a while.”

Viv huffed. “You went after the male Admiral?”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Viv, I went after someone I admire and want to see again. So excuse me if we never talk about this again. In fact, that would be great.”

“But the Admiral is old.”

Tony rolled his eyes because it was going to be stupid comments like that, that could set back their relationship before it even began. He whirled on Viv. “You know what? He is my kind of perfect. Oh, and when he pulled me close yesterday and made me so breathless I thought I couldn’t breathe. Well ... he didn’t feel old to me.”

Gibbs being Gibbs finished with “Oohrah!!”

Tony just looked uncomfortable. “Can I please go now?”

“Go play psycho, DiNozzo.” Gibbs ordered.

~*~
The boat had docked in one of the shadier ports of Europe. It was a small port, so minimal authorities and a perfect smugglers or terrorist place. Tony was going to highlight this as it was a security and logistical clusterfuck and way too easy for the bad guys to exploit. It was just happenstance that he could exploit it in return to get close to Atwad.

Tony was sleeping on top of one of the containers. “Oi, you. What the fuck are you doing here?” He heard in heavily accented English. It always amazed Tony how quickly people learned to curse in English. Still, he was playing the psycho so he answered in a calm, measured way but projected an aura of violence. “You know, unless you’re the boss, you don’t have permission to touch me. And ... if you’re not the boss I am contemplating cutting your arm off at the shoulder and dropping you in the sea. How long do you think it will take the fishes to consume you?”

The poking man paled. “Boss, DeMarco is here.”

Tony rolled off the container in a graceful leap. “How did you guess?”

Atwad faced him. “Your reputation precedes you, Mr. DeMarco. I would prefer that you leave my employees intact. However should they annoy me, I will most certainly gift them to you as a treat.”

Tony grinned and almost purred out, “I think I am going to like working for you.”

~*~

Viv listened in as Tony slid closer and closer to Atwad. He never once considered Tony to be an agent or narc. To be honest, listening in, she would believe that Tony was an honest agent. It was a frightening ability and it disturbed her. “How can he be so calm?”

Gibbs pulled away from the camera for a brief second. “Are you seriously asking?”

Viv huffed. “I am not naive, Gibbs, but I just can’t imagine being able to shut myself off and pretend to be someone I am not.”

Gibbs’ eyes had returned to the surveillance monitor. Tony had, within two hours of being undercover, gotten onto Atwad’s base of operations. “You’re not naive, you’re letting vengeance drive you. After this, I’ll be sending you back to Fornell.”

“Why?”

Gibbs snorted. “You don’t accept DiNozzo’s skill even when it’s right in front of you. He may have been a cop but that was a blessing not a hinderance. Plus, during the Singer case you acted like it was beneath you as you felt this case was more important because of your brother. We’re law enforcement - not vigilantes.”

“You’re a cold man.” Viv hissed.
Gibbs shook his head. “No, I know how to watch a man’s six and I’m going to ensure you don’t endanger DiNozzo with your misplaced vengeance.”

Viv sighed, this was going to be a long week as they trawled the boat and kept up surveillance. The seas were choppy at the moment so their cover as a rescue boat was perfect, they could pass it off as an exercise or regular patrol.

~*~

Tony shuddered as the waves rocked the boat, he was not of a nervous disposition but the rocky waves and unstable TNT just had way too many ways it could go badly with a capital - B.

Atwad was transporting the cargo, he was staying in cover because at the moment, he didn’t know if Atwad was the brain of the operation, or if Atwad was playing pirate for the stolen loot. So Tony slept in his private bunk, apparently the scary reputation did have some side benefits.

Of course, that didn’t mean that Tony was relaxing, he had his knife under his pillow and his gun. Plus, the Atak knife is still on his wrist. He couldn’t shake the antsy feeling though. He wasn’t Gibbs with his gut - but when Tony was undercover he had always listened faithfully to his instincts. *They’d kept him alive.*

The shouts and alarms had him moving, slipping into the role expected of him. “What is going on? A man is trying to sleep!”

The one worker shifted. “We’re being stalked, boss is pulling into port.”

Tony headed to the control room, the nearest port was Rota which suggested Atwad was seriously freaked. What the hell had rattled the terrorist so badly?

Tony took a deep breath. “What the hell you playing at? You trying to get arrested, you’re pulling into Rota, the Americans are always crawling around that port!”

“We have no choice. The bitch is following me! Look.”

Tony was handed the binoculars and he already knew who he was going to see. He was going to eviscerate Viv when he got the chance. How dare the stupid bitch risk his life? “Who is she? And why is she stalking you, boss? Do I need to make her disappear?”

Tony asked calmly and he watched Atwad shake his head. “I want you to stay close to me when we land. You’ll be paid double to stop anyone who tries to harm me.”
Tony grinned, unholstering his gun. The terrorist had no idea he was the one he should be looking out for.

~*~

The boat made port and immediately went into lockdown mode and prepared for a gunfight. Tony had been ordered to stay close to Atwad which was useful. He watched the start of the battle and watched in disbelief as Viv stormed the boat. She was lucky she was with a goddamn sniper who was watching her back.

She stormed ahead, it was like she wanted to die. Gibbs better send her to a psychiatrist, let alone back to the Feebs.

“Atwad, you’re under arrest!” Her gun swinging widely.

“Shoot her!” Atwad ordered Tony.

Tony looked conflicted. “I’m considering it for her being a dumbass but I know my boss will bitch.”

Atwad didn’t get it, obviously, he couldn’t make the link. “I’m your boss.”

Tony laughed, bright amusement because that was never going to be the truth. “Sorry. He’s my boss.”

“Don’t you forget it, So what is it going to be Atwad?” Gibbs asked stepping into the control room, giving Viv a glare. He’d done his job and first secured the boat.

“I won’t let you take me!” Atwad screamed, putting his back to the wall. “You’re a traitor, DeMarco.”

Tony’s gun was now raised and his whole stance had gone from laid back to psychopath. “This is not Hollywood, and have you thought this through?”

Atwad wasn’t thinking straight, his only rationale had been to put a solid wall behind his back. He raised his gun and Tony and Gibbs didn’t hesitate. They both shot him, the trouble was the bullet from Gibbs gun went through Atwad and into the steel pipe carrying steam.

The force was explosive and Tony caught the blast, ending up slammed into the wall. His head was ringing from the blast force. He shook himself off but that was a bad idea. His whole body felt bruised. Gibbs actually held out a hand for him. He got up gingerly. “Vivian, if you say one word, I am contemplating not being a gentleman.”


Tony stretched his muscles and winced. “You’re right, that does help but not before she does the paperwork.”
Gibbs nodded and made sure she was aware. “I have no time for your crap and I warned you what would happen.”

She went to say something and then closed her lips - it was for the best. There was clear up and then a plane ride and she would disappear.

~*~

Tony got off the plane weary and still angry with the situation. It didn’t help watching Blackadder scurry away without saying a word. He ached all over. “DiNozzo, cowboy steaks?”

Tony smiled weakly. “Love to Boss, but I just want to sleep in the least awful way possible.”

“You need someone to keep an eye on you.” Gibbs reminded him what the doctor in ROTA had said.

“I’m not a child, Boss. I will survive. I just want to sleep in my own bed.”

Gibbs shrugged. “As you wish.”

If Tony hadn’t raced off, he would have heard Gibbs place a call to the JAG office. If Tony wouldn’t accept his help, then Gibbs would be sneaky and outsource. The admiral was never good at hearing the word no at the best of times.

~*~

Tony got back to Washington bone weary tired and wanting to crawl under his covers. He hated being slammed into a wall and the boat’s one was sturdier than it looked. At the moment, moving his limbs hurt him.

The elevator stopped finally on his appartment level. He saw a AJ leaning against his door wearing jeans and a white shirt. Tony may be exhausted and achy but he was still glad to see AJ. “What a nice surprise.”

AJ whirled around. “Oh good, you’re finally here. Let me help you.”

Tony would normally brush off the concern. He’d not really had major help since his mother died. He’d learned to live without it even if it hurt. “You drove down here to help me?”

“I sure did, now quit yappin ya jaw and go sit down. I have some soup to warm up for you.”

Tony didn’t argue with the orders of an admiral - not when they were so sensible. Tony shook his head knowing he Gibbs to thank, his boss wasn’t quite the bastard he wanted people to believe. He did collapse on his sofa wincing as his muscles protested even that type of movement. “You’re too good to me.”

AJ rolled his eyes. “Oh, with our careers I am sure you will get a chance to return the favour. Now feel free to vent about how FUBAR the situation went. The nice thing is you know I have the security clearance to hear it.”

Tony hadn’t thought much about that aspect but that was a good thought. His life was now by choice full of secrets, some big and some small. He could share some with AJ and if he turned around and said that, well, the admiral would understand.
“A case of bitter revenge not mixing too well with the law.”

AJ huffed. “The law is not perfect but it is what we have. When people try and circumvent it for their own ends... It never ends well.”

Tony raised his glass of water in salute. “Here, here. Agent Blackadder could have done with the lecture. She made a rookie error and let Atwad notice her. She was actually honest-to-god staring at him. The paranoid bastard had turned his back to a steel pipe. I had no choice but to shoot the bastard but the bullet passed through him and hit the corroded pipe.”

AJ could fill in the blanks, steam pipes that rupture had the same capability of harm as some bombs only with more pressure. “Is he dead?”

Tony nodded. “Very. Gibbs and I shot him from opposite sides, head and heart.”

Chegwidden sat on the couch with him, having put the soup bowl on the table. Tony found himself collapsing into AJ’s side relishing the warmth and comfort he found. This was not exactly the second date he had in mind when he was too tired to act. He really wanted to trade some more of those addictive kisses.

AJ chuckled and Tony felt the rumbles through him. “We will kiss and much more but only when you can keep up. Just rest, I'll be here.”

Tony was actually believing that AJ would be there for him and that was huge. He was so glad that NCIS and JAG’s worlds had collided. It had bought AJ into his life and Tony knew tonight that this wasn’t going to be a passive fling or short romance.

The future looked bright.
Retirement was good for the soul and David Rossi was sure it had given him ten years of his life back. He had youth on his side, or was that his lover? He couldn’t believe that a gorgeous young man like Tony had ever seen anything attractive in him.

He’d voiced that opinion once, Tony had clipped him around the head. “Don’t say stupid things, babe. Now, weren’t we going to go shooting?”

Dave chuckled, kissing Tony on the lips. “Yes, Sir.”

Tony rolled his eyes, grabbed their shotguns and called out. “Mozzie. You coming, boy?”

Dave noted that his dog seemed to follow every whim of Tony’s. He shook his head, much like his owner. He knew he should spend a little less time staring at his lover’s ass and a bit more on the shooting.

The birds were rife this morning. Both men aimed at their targets and as one might expect, they fell out of the sky. Dave called out with a grin. “Go on, boy.”

Tony stood in closer to him. “This is the life.”

“Uh huh, Dr. DiNozzo.”

Tony smirked. “Hey - the ink is just dry on the diploma.”

Dave smirked and placed their rifles on the ground and reeled in his lover for a kiss. “Yeah but I like saying it.”

Tony smiled into the kiss. “It’s not like you don’t have your own doctorate.”

Dave shrugged. “Don’t care.”

“Agent Rossi.”

Dave let go of Tony’s lips but rested their foreheads together. He knew that tone - it was FBI. “Not for ten years I haven’t been.”

“Assistant Director Strauss has requested to see you.”

Tony chuckled, having heard more than a few stories about David’s run ins with her. “She does know you’re engaged, right.”

Rossi shrugged. “And why am I being requested?”

The agents in question shrugged their shoulders. “We have no idea, Sir.”

Rossi frowned but he was doing this by his own rules. “Want to come and see how the FBI work?”

Tony smirked. “Fornell tried for years to convince me, what makes you think you can?”

“Well, I convinced you to marry me. So I think I have a good chance.”
Tony chuckled, grabbing their shot guns. “Well, I suppose then we should secure the guns and get changed.”

The agents looked worried. “Sir, the request was for you.”

Rossi snorted. “Agent, you don’t come to a man’s home, interrupt his celebration and then dictate terms. I will come to the meeting, anything more she can come here.”

~*~

Back in their bedroom, the two men separated to go to their respective walk-in closets. It had been an indulgence on their parts when they’d had the cabin renovated. Tony called out with amusement in his voice, “What are we going for? Drop dead gorgeous, I have TV money or this is old-school class.”

Dave snickered. “Go for Paddington blueblood. She’s going to misjudge you from the start. I think you should have fun with that.”

Tony’s grin got wider. “I can do that.”

He quickly changed and settled his suit. He picked up the black pinstripe suit he’d had made on Savile Row so it did embody just what he said. Tony had finished it with a white pocket kerchief, crisp white shirt, and black leather shoes. He didn’t pick a tie yet, he left the top of his shirt undone giving just a tantalising glimpse of his tanned chest.

Dave wanted to growl at Strauss for interrupting their weekend. He’d been away on a book tour and Tony had come out to the last stop on the tour in Seattle. Dave had proposed as they ate in the restaurant in the space needle.

Tony had said yes. It had been two years since they’d met and Tony had never regretted a moment. He picked up the watch that would go perfectly with the suit. Tony got it when one went into battle - one chose good armour. And a suit could feel like the best piece of armour.

He looked into his fiance’s eye. “You ready?”

“She will want me back in the BAU, I think, now Gideon is gone.” Dave said in a whisper.

Tony got it, he’d left the NCIS after the plague. He needed a break and used the time to finish his doctorate and meet Rossi. He was able to do that as he was independently wealthy. He felt a little guilty at the time but he’d taken a step back and evaluated his life. He’d been shot, stabbed, cuffed to a serial killer, nearly garroted and contracted a medieval disease that had killed half of Europe. So yeah, he was taking a break and enjoying life whilst he still had one.

~*~

Erin Strauss had heard from the agents incoming that Rossi was bringing his partner, his male partner. Now that had been a surprise. From the description, it sounded like he had male arm candy, maybe he was trying to find a male partner as he was bored of ex-wives, she thought tartly.

The knock at the door meant she had no more time to stew in her thoughts. “David.”

“Erin.”
She motioned for the chair and noted that the arm candy chose to stand and kept an eye on the window.

Dave was in no mood to play games. “Why am I here?”

“We have a nasty case that has appeared, and Agent Hotchner believes you could be insightful.” Strauss explained although she didn’t exactly sound convinced.

“You don’t want me here, Erin? Why ask?” Dave growled out because this was sounding more and more like they were yanking his chain.

She smiled. “Well, you don’t seem too serious when you bring your boy-toy along.”

Tony turned back to her, “I told you, Dave, I should have got a Doctorate in being your boy-toy. I’ll let Harvard know that they should reject my dissertation in Criminology and instead I’ll write one on all your good points.”

She flushed. “I am sorry for my tone. That was not fair.”

Tony smirked. “It is understandable, though. You have a textbook sadist with possible split personality disorder just getting started.”

She listened a little more seriously. “You have worked law enforcement.”

Tony sighed. “Yeah, I was Detective in three departments and did five years at NCIS before I left for a career break to finish my doctorate.”

She stood up. “What makes you say that he has a disorder?”

Tony felt like this was suddenly him being interviewed and, seeing Dave’s smirk, he thought the same. “The use of the not face mask as his way of speaking to the cops. The first photo on the evidence board and all the candid shots plastered around her room, speaks of a person who wanted to be noticed but didn’t have the courage to speak to her. Oh, and when the mask is tested, it will be her blood, proof that we should take him seriously.”

Erin looked to Rossi. “Do you agree?”

“Yeah, I do.” Rossi added. “He is going to be hard to catch.”

Strauss had never really done a profiling class beyond the basics at the Academy. “Why?”

Tony was the one to answer. “You’ll find this man is beyond average and that is part of the problem.”

Hotch had stood at the door silently listening to the two work. It was odd to see two so in sync. He knew David, having worked for him, the younger man was new. “Dave, how long has it been?”

“Three years, and then some. Tony, I would like you to meet Unit Chief Aaron Hotchner.”

Tony walked forward. “Nice to meet you.”

Hotch nodded. “You both were sharing some ideas. Can I ask - did you get that just from seeing the
Tony shrugged. “Not my first evidence board, it has been a few years, but yeah.”

Strauss had a gleam in her eyes. “Would you be willing to consult for this case, Dr. DiNozzo? David, I want you back full-time, I won’t lie. You had a ten-year break but Hotchner needs someone with your level of expertise to support him.”

Hotch grinned. “I have an office space just for you.”

Tony had to ask. “Where is the case?”

“Carrollton, Texas, is where it broke.”

Tony let out a sigh of relief. “Oh good, I want to be far away from Fornell when he finds out I’m working a case for the FBI.”

Hotch ushered them out and took them to the case and the team.

Erin knew of only one person who was named Fornell. She rang the Unit Chief of Major Crimes. “Hello, is this Agent Fornell? Erin Strauss.”

“What can I do for you?”

She paused for a moment. “I am looking for information on a Dr. DiNozzo.”

Fornell froze for a second because there was a name from the past. “I knew him as Agent Anthony DiNozzo. Good man, and high tolerance having worked under Gibbs. He left when he caught the damn pneumonic plague at work. Good thing too, the new Director swept in and made a mess.”

Oh yeah, she remembered that. The first female Director and she was ushered out after a year for having tried to hide her terminal illness. The resulting investigation had found widespread corruption. It was not pretty and only now was the agency getting back on its feet.

Strauss explained. “He walked in with David Rossi and took one look at a board and told me several things about a killer my BAU team are only just getting started with.”

“Then trust him.”

Strauss knew that Fornell was not the type to give false praise. “Just like that?”

“He knows his stuff. He served on the MCRT and it was only when he left that their solve rate started to dip.”

Strauss knew of that rate. “One last thing. I think he is about to marry David Rossi, will he have a problem separating home and work?”

“No.”

*Erin had better hope she could persuade DiNozzo to stay because she got the feeling that Rossi and DiNozzo were now a matched pair.*
When people asked Tony why he loved Leon Vance or how they’d gone from their earliest interactions to living together and raising two awesome but grieving kids. Tony would always fall back on the great Elizabeth Bennet. “I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look, or the words, which laid the foundation. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I had begun.”

~*~

Tony had got back to the house before Leon. It was not too difficult as there was a lull in terrorist activity - mainly because he and Morrow had coordinated a massive takedown of several actionable terrorist groups.

It was weird walking into a home, even now five years after having gotten with Leon. Yeah, that’s right - he and Leon Vance had been in a committed loving relationship. He’d not planned for it, he’d just initially wanted to help the Vance kids through their grief of losing their mother, and, for a short while, their father whilst he dealt with his own grief.

Kayla stormed in, throwing things around and had a face of thunder. It promised pain and retribution for anyone to say a thing to her.

Tony though, was a brave soul. “Hey, slugger. What’s up?”

She lost her angry look and threw herself at Tony. It was at times like this that he wished he had more positive influences growing up. He didn’t so he went with his instincts and pulled them towards the chair and sat on it. “Talk to me, slugger.”

“I want to go to the stupid ball.”

Tony frowned but had been living with hormonal teens long enough to know it was a bad idea to dismiss their feelings. He stroked her back, letting her vent her feelings. “Okay, so why can’t you go?”

“Are you kidding me?”

Tony winced, he had a feeling this was his and Leon’s fault so he pursued the line of questioning. “Okay, lay it out for me.”

She pouted. “Well, there is the bit that any boy who wants to date me has to get through the two agency directors.”

Tony interjected. “I am Deputy Director, you know Uncle Tom will pout if you say things like that.”
“Purlease, Uncle Tom is just waiting until he can retire.”

Tony wasn’t touching such a statement whether it was true or not. He had never considered a directorship, having no intention of ever going out of the field. It didn’t matter, what was done was done. “So anyway ... back to you. Why can’t you go to the ball, Cinderella?”

“What boy is going to want to ask me to the date and come back here to be scared off by the two of you?”

Tony snorted because, wow, he did sort of, kind of, feel a little bad for Kayla. She was a beautiful young lady who he knew would be an amazing woman. “Hey, look at me.”

She looked up with her big doe eyes and Tony smiled softly. “Listen to me, any boy who can’t stand the thought of coming home to your dad or me is not worth your time, little slugger.”

“I’m not little anymore.”

Tony chuckled. “Oh sweetheart, you’re still the same little girl who harassed her Dad to make sure he treated me right. You are still the same girl who demanded to be on the boy’s soccer team because you wanted a challenge.”

She grinned and that was one she’d learned from Tony as Leon often reminded him. “You taught me too many tricks.”

Leon walked in and was concerned. Tony had to smile at the way Director Vance quickly morphed into his partner. “Hey, baby girl. What’s wrong?”

Tony was the one to give him an answer. “She is bemoaning the two scary dads situation with the dance coming up.”

Leon was glad that Kayla’s head was buried in Tony’s chest as it allowed him to get in one paternal smirk. “You can go to the dance, sweetheart, but you will have to have security.” He said it firmly because that was non-negotiable.

“I know, Dad, I just...”

Tony pondered something. “I’ll do you deal. When the boy who you have in mind comes into the house, I promise you, your father and I won’t do a thing but a person of my choosing will be there.”

“Who?”

Tony shook his head and Leon was grinning, knowing who Tony had in mind. “Nope. Those are the terms of the agreement. You’re worried about your Dad and I so we’ll stop that worry if it’ll help you.”

Kayla was getting excited but there was apprehension there too. Good, Leon and Tony had reiterated that you don’t get anything free in life and if there was a deal that sounded too good to be true ... then it usually was.

“Okay, I agree.” She gave them both a kiss on the cheek before rushing out of the room.

Leon agreed as well, trusting his partner of five years. “Who do you have in mind?”
Tony looked innocent. “Why, good old Uncle Jethro with his friend Mr. Remington.”

Leon chuckled, knowing the punchline had been good. He sat down next to his lover and let the warmth of Tony soak in. It had been a tough day at work and Tony’s presence helped ease his mind. “Did I ever say how glad I am that my kids’ press ganged you into being their personal sports coach?”

Tony chuckled with fondness. “I can’t believe I managed to charm you, even now.”

Leon snorted. “You are gorgeous, were patient with my sorry ass, you were great with my kids and let me take things at my pace. I think it’s me who’s the lucky one.”

Kayla raced back in. “You’re both silly, be glad you have each other and us. Now, sorry Daddy but I need to borrow Tony for help on picking a dress.”

Leon looked offended. “Why not me?”

Kayla looked sheepish. “Look at your suits, Daddy. Pops is snazzier.”

~*~

Leon didn’t object because he knew Kayla spoke sense. Plus, he was man enough to admit that he really didn’t want to pick out a dress for a teenage girl. He knew it could be a nightmare. The one time he’d tried, he’d let Kayla go to her friends for the evening and sought refuge with Mr. MacCallen trying to get his ears to stop ringing.

He did have some fun planned though, he phoned his MCRT leader. “Hey, so Tony and I need a favour.”

“No, Gibbs. Tony made a deal with Kayla and she didn’t think about the fine print. She’s going to a dance and wisely sought to get our agreement to leave her date alone. Tony agreed but said there would be someone here of his choosing to meet them instead of us.”

Gibbs snorted. “I can do that.”

“Yeah, but you haven’t married him have you.” Gibbs always prodded any opening. “Anyone could snatch him away, Leon.”

Vance growled. “Over my dead body.”
Gibbs didn’t smirk or laugh, he had no need. “Well, if you feel strongly enough shouldn’t you do something about that?”

The phone call ended and left Leon pondering those words. He knew what would distract Kayla up to the dance.

*He had a proposal to plan*
Tony was in Chicago for a case that was now thankfully closed. He hated serial killers more than anything. Still, there was something going on in the city and it was big. Tony didn’t need to have an ear to the ground to know that - there was a buzz in the air. No, that wasn’t the right word - all this city needed, was a match, and it was going to go up.

As his flight back to Washington wasn’t until tomorrow, he’d found a bar and planned to try and drown the memories of the cases in expensive whiskey. Tony was delighted to find that there was a bottle of scotch as old as he was - perfect.

“Tough day?”

Tony looked in the direction of the voice and immediately pegged him as a lawyer or soldier. “Oh, you know ..., serial killer cases just suck.”

The man responded straight back, making similar conclusions to Tony. “Fed or cop?”

Tony smirked and held his hand out, offering a handshake. “Very Special Agent Anthony DiNozzo at your service. And you are?”

“Peter Stone. Assistant State Attorney”

Tony knew just what a coveted but difficult job that was to hold. He signalled for a second glass, feeling sorry for the guy. “In that case,” he poured the man a whiskey. “Here you go.”

Peter smirked but knew it was pretty weak. “Do I look that bad?”

Tony shrugged, neither confirming nor denying. He didn’t believe in kicking a man when he was down. “Trained investigator. Sorry.”

Peter took the glass and sidestepped any further comments. “To good taste.”

“And justice served.” Tony finished.

There seemed to be some sort of unspoken communication but both men downed their drink and poured another. It hit the spot and both men started to relax. Tony could see his new acquaintance was still too tense though. “Talk me through it.”

Peter shook his head. “You’re here trying to put memories to bed. You don’t need to add mine into the mix.”

Tony grinned, crooked and all charm. “And yet I find myself asking as you’re too cute to be frowning.”
Peter blushed but only at the tip of his ears. “Have you seen the case on the news?”

Tony nodded as he had read about the factory arson case where the 39 people perished as they’d been at a rave. According to news sources though, none of the usual signs associated were present. “Not arson?”

“I can’t prove it definitively.” Peter knew in his gut the case was going to go against him and the city.

Tony hummed. “You know there was one time where Don Mancuso wanted one enemy gone but wanted to make sure it didn’t look like him. Now, he made sure to arrange a boating accident. All very tragic and 120 people died all to cover the fact he wanted one dead.”

“Find the one and thus the motive?” Peter whispered a whole new line of argument came to the fore.

Tony nodded. “Convince the jury there was one person and it was personal. Odds are there is a beef between the suspect and one of the victims. He will be an angry guy, you should be able to tip him over the edge. He explodes in court and you will win your case.”

Peter sent a message to Laura. *Personal links between the victims and suspect. Motives*

She was good and had worked for him long enough that she’d know what he meant. “Thank you, you may have just saved this case.”

Tony shook his head. “You would have figured it out eventually and sometimes outside perspective helps.”

Peter looked into those green eyes and saw faith. “Wait, are you the DiNozzo who played for OSU?”

Tony smirked. “Only if you’re the Stone who got drafted by the Cubs.”

Peter laughed softly. “You know your sports as well, I like you more and more.”

Tony could blame many things for his next action but it wasn’t tiredness or alcohol that made him move forward and kiss the guy. It was sheer desire and the hint of character that Tony felt drawn to - he found himself wanting to get to know the guy more.

That evening, Tony peeled the suit off Peter and took his mind off the case and vowed to give him a night so good that he would have no choice but to rest.

~*~

The next morning, Tony woke up sated himself. He was going to go back to DC with a spring in his step. He looked at the guy sleeping next to him. “You ready to get your guy?”

Peter woke up slowly. “I might need some clothes first.”

Tony had a wicked grin. “I don’t know... How many women jurors?”

Peter chuckled and it felt good. Until he’d met Tony, all he could focus on was the thirty-nine lives lost. He felt obligated to make sure that they found their justice. He knew the kid had done it but couldn’t fathom why. Maybe that was the crux of the matter and he needed to offer that for the jury.
“I know what to do now. I need a thread, a reason to the madness as otherwise, it’s just a horrific tragedy and opposing counsel has already done a number on the jury.” Peter said it, knowing his words to be an absolute truth.

Tony leaned in. “Hey now, positive thoughts.”

Peter kissed him lightly. “You fixed that last night.”

Tony chuckled as he got out of bed, uncaring that his ass was on display. It would be a step backward considering all the fun they had had the night before and he wasn’t the shy type. “Well, you helped me too, I can face my co-workers on an even keel.”

Peter shouldn’t be thinking about anything but the case. He was the brave one now. “Will I see you again?”

Tony turned back, a true smile on his face. “Oh yeah. I am not giving this or you up without a fight. Now, you’re going to get ready and fight your case while I go back to Washington and deal with my knuckleheads.”

~*~

Peter heard the verdict being read and felt nothing but relief. His co-counsel, Anna, his mentee looked surprised. “You did it. You actually pulled it off.”

Peter high on the case said. “Thank Tony.”

She shrugged. “I don’t care who. You got justice for those people and that is what mattered.”

He put all his files together and then smirked quietly when her mind caught up with what he’d said. “Tony?”

He said nothing, she’d had her moment and it had passed. The rookie would learn soon enough. He moved through the press, not saying a word. This was not the moment to make his career, the win would do that for him.

He went home, knowing that his boss would let him do his paperwork at home so he could get it done with the Press hounding him for a comment. He did make a phone call knowing that it was an hour ahead in Washington.

“Hey, Tony. Is this a good time?”

Tony replied. “It’s always a good time for you even if it’s a crap day. In fact, let me put this on FaceTime.”

Peter needed Tony to know that he’d made a difference. “So you should know I won and the perp is going down. All because of your idea.”

“That’s great to hear, actually, as my day has sucked.” Tony confessed, feeling like he could share with Peter. If Tony was honest, he would love to be back at the bar, sharing their problems. He’d never been fond of the city until the weekend with Peter.

“Talk to me about it. Just like you helped me, let me do the same.” Peter pushed.

“You don’t know the half of it. A colleague died. He was working a case. It was an old one where a
Naval Commander died in a car crash having committed ten million dollars of credit card fraud against the Navy.” Tony’s frustration was clear to see on the phone screen.

Peter asked. “So why would he be killed?”

Tony huffed. “That’s the weird part. He was killed by a Smith and Wesson 66. He swallowed a memory card that has photos of a blonde on it. She’s always close to Voss’ serving bases and then bought his family home ... Only I can’t link the two romantically.”

Peter felt Tony’s frustration. He couldn’t imagine losing any of his close workers. “How do you know Voss died in the crash?”

“DNA evidence provided by someone who knew Voss and coincidentally died last year.”

Peter’s mind went to only one place and it was the logical place. “So your commander is alive and got away with his fraud.”

Tony sighed because that was his conclusion too, he just needed to convince the others. “Looks that way, why the small weapon though?”

Peter had MASH playing in the background and Corporal Klinger’s character raced across the stage in a dress. He loved the show, it was ahead of its time and had some of the finest acting he’d ever seen on tv. It was the perfect mix of comedy and drama and knew how to punch its audience in the gut with an unpredictable plot twist.

Peter had a grin on his face. “You know television and movies, right?”

“Don’t be rude.” Tony teased. “Why?”

Peter was getting excited. He loved a good mystery. “Bear with me ... the tv show MASH is on in the background and Corporal Klinger’s just walked onto the screen.” Peter turned the phone around so that he could see the character.

Tony sucked in a huge breath. “You think that the blonde woman is Voss?”

Peter put the phone back around to show his own face and shrugged. “I don’t know but it would make a twisted kind of sense.”

Tony had a grin on his face. “I really wish I could kiss you right now.”

Peter chuckled but had a pleased grin on his face. “Go close your case and then we’ll figure it out. You have to be careful, you work with the military.”

Tony looked fierce. “Babe, I know Eskrima, can shoot like a marine, that was judged by a marine sniper. This may be early days but I am done hiding if you are okay with that. I won’t make life difficult for you.”

Peter couldn’t explain the depth of feeling in his stomach. “If you’re in, then I’m in.”

Tony smirked. “Game on, we’ll take on everyone.”

~*~
The couple didn’t need to take on everyone but Peter helped Tony put the tantrum trio in place and even gave a verbal head slap to Tony’s boss. Tony came to Chicago and took one of Peter’s enemy’s vendetta to the guy using the law to do it, to the point where the guy came to Peter with a confession.

Individually - each man was a force to be reckoned with, together - they were unstoppable and the years ahead were filled with justice by day and passion by night.

Tony may have a few rules in his life but one he didn’t keep was Gibbs’ Rule 13 - Never ever involve a lawyer. After all, he was rather fond of Peter, dare he say it - even loved him.
Merlin got back to his quarters and grinned seeing the Zegna, hung up on the bedroom door. There was only person in the world who could get into his quarters and not spring one of his lethal traps - his lover, Tony. What a lovely surprise from having to evaluate recruits for the upcoming slot.

“How were the States?” Merlin shouted out, more for effect as he knew Tony would have heard him open the door. If he’d been asleep, well, no good operative sleeps that deeply if they wanted to stay alive. The Harry Potter books may have coined the phrase but constant vigilance was as good a motto as any for a spy to keep close to their heart.

Tony strolled in to the living area wearing Merlin’s bathrobe and nothing else. “Annoyingly colonial, as my Uncle Clive would say.”

Merlin reeled Tony closer by the belt of the robe. His eyes roaming over the peeks of flesh left tantalisingly on show. “Darlin, you’re a little American yourself.”

Tony gasped in mock outrage and replied with a perfectly snotty English accent. “Is that so?”

Merlin kissed his husband, who’d been away for far too long. Stupid Statesman demanding him for a long term undercover mission. “You canna fool me, husband.”

Tony kissed him right back as the NCIS mission was taking too damn long. “I know, it’s part of your charm. Now, I want you to take me apart piece by piece. So I can remember exactly who I am.”

“Yes, Sir.” Merlin replied with a grin, parts of his anatomy had been standing up to attention for quite a few moments.

~*~

Eggsy was looking around Merlin’s lab and saw the photo. It was at odds with the rest of the sciencey place. “Who Dat?” He was only here as Merlin had summoned his presence and as Eggsy was bored he was being nosey.

Harry smiled as he looked at the photo. It had been a good day and void of any craziness which was a rarity for the Kingsman. “The only American that Merlin will ever have any time for.” Was the best and the only explanation he could offer as it was the truth.

Eggsy looked perturbed. It might have been because in the photo, Merlin was actually, honest to god, smiling. Yeah, it wasn’t right. “It’s weird innit, he can actually smile?”

“Around Tony, sure.” Harry replied, it always amused him how the younger recruits never really considered them to be actual human beings with real lives.

Eggsy just hummed and stared. There was something incredible in that photo. If it was anyone else he would have expected a staged shot, by a professional photographer. The picture evoked laughter, joy, and love because that was what Eggsy could see in both men’s eyes. He’d seen the streets and he knew how to fake love when necessary - it was why he was so keen on finding it for real.
“So are we going to stop this crazy mofo or what?”

Harry sighed at him again. “You know, I am well aware of the masks one uses to hide, my dear boy. Yet, I am also well aware of how well you can speak English in the truest sense of the word. I would deeply appreciate if, when you’re around me, you would not mangle it as such.”

Eggsy looked at him shrewdly. “So around the others, I can be as common as I like?”

“Yes.”

“Deal.”

Merlin walked in at that moment. “I would appreciate being part of that agreement.” His smile went dark. “After all, it doesn’t pay to upset the man who builds your weapons.”

Eggsy nodded his head. “Right you are about that.”

Merlin gave them all the tech they needed. He wanted his best field team of Lancelot and Galahad to return. Merlin just knew in his heart that it wouldn’t be enough to get the mission done. He knew Tony had finished up his statesman mission, he didn’t want to but he would ask him to play backup for this one. He just had a foreboding feeling that if he didn’t, the mission would end in a death.

~*~

Merlin sighed. “Babe, I need a favour. Galahad and his candidate are heading to Texas and I have a bad feeling.”

Tony chuckled. “If only I could get rich off your gut. Who is their target?”

“There is something weird going on with Richard Valentine and a church down in Texas.”

Tony’s mind boggled. “Are you saying that the billionaire has got religion?” There were so many jokes there he didn’t know where to begin, mainly in that Richard Valentine could not support any religion that he was not the head of - his own ego wouldn't allow him.

“Take your Remington with you and observe.”

Tony shrugged, he would gladly do as his husband asked. He was fond of Harry too, he’d been Merlin’s best man at their wedding. “For you, of course.”

The plane was taking off and Tony decided to announce his presence, There was no quicker way to fuck up a covert operation than by playing the lone wolf. It just never worked well - ever.

“You’re him.”

Tony quirked an eyebrow in amusement. “Could you be a little more specific?”

“Da guy in Merlin’s photo.”

Tony smiled. “The sap, he still has our photo from the wedding?”

Harry nodded. “Yes, and all recruits look at it scared and in awe. Eggsy is the first one to outright
ask who you are.”

Tony grinned. “The only American Merlin likes?”

Eggsy frowned. “That was the answer ‘arry gave.”

Tony snorted. “You will find, Eggsey, that there are certain people in life who can blend into any place. I am one of those people. When I first met Merlin, I was being English toff at its finest. He bemoaned American literature, and I challenged him. It was only on our second date that I let him know I was American.”

“You fooled Merlin?” Eggsey was now in awe. The man was a tough bastard and didn’t let anyone fool him for long.

“I did, and that is why we work. Now, you have your mission and my job is to keep you alive whilst you do it.”

“With a snooker cue?”

Tony shook his head and opened the case. “You think I should play snooker with this?”

Eggsy leaned closer. “Now that is gorgeous.”

Tony could see the look in Harry’s eyes and knew Harry agreed - only he wasn’t looking at Tony’s weapon. “Yeah, I’ve always found deadly things attractive.”

“That explains you and Merlin.” Harry said as if it made sense in his book.

Tony had a crooked grin. “The man made me arsenic from a peach. I was hooked.” Eggsey was not too sure how that explained everything but it worked for them.

~*~

Tony held his breath as he listened to Harry take apart everyone in that church. It was unthinkable that someone had made a chip to heighten man’s aggressive tendencies. To do that to a man like Harry was to strip away his civilised veneer but he would walk away victorious. He had.

Eggsey wanted to get out of the van, Tony ordered him to stay there as Eggsey was a hidden ace up his sleeve if needed. It never paid to let the bad guys ID you all.

Tony watched it all through his sniper scope, whilst listening through Harry’s radio earpiece. Valentine had now entered the fray, annoyed that his plan had failed.

“I was promised 100% annihilation!!!!”

Harry shrugged. “You should have sent more men.”

“And if I have my assistant shoot you right here?” Valentine asked. “I don’t like blood or I would do it myself.”

Harry was calm knowing that Tony had his back. “You’re welcome to try.”

The minute the gun was raised, Tony put a bullet in the assistant to stop her. He didn’t like killing indiscriminately but would always put down anyone who threatened society.
“What the fuck is happening?” Valentine demanded to know even as he puked his guts into the road.

Harry snorted as he slapped the cuffs on Valentine. “Tony is happening. Now, you’re coming with us.”

~*~

Merlin watched as they dragged Valentine off the plane. “You have had a busy day, love.”

Tony grinned. “Does this count as my anniversary gift?” He asked pointing at their suspect.

Merlin smirked. “Only if you have all the evidence I would need to convict him.”

Tony snorted shoving the dossier in his face. “Please, sweetheart, don’t be rude. Here you go. I actually want you to come to bed tonight.”

Eggsy was grinning ear to ear as he heard what counted for a domestic conversation.

Merlin was a smart man so he simply said. “Welcome home, Tony.”

Tony grinned and if they’d been alone he’d have kissed the hell out of his husband as a greeting. “It’s great to be here. I might ask to serve as the liaison between the Kingsman and the Statesman. What do you think?”

“Best news I’ve heard all day.” Merlin answered honestly.

*It was not just Tony that got to come back to his real home - Eggsy did too. The awkward courtship between Harry and Eggsy was a source of great amusement to the married pair. However, they did take pity before too long - and locked them in a room, with a bed, a bucket load of condoms and lube with a message. “Dear boys, sort this out so you’re operationally functional.”*

*They did as ordered.*
Aaron Hotchner was not the type of man to plead and yet here he was - pleading with his old friend. “Dave - call them off.”

Rossi was smirking at him. “Now, Aaron. You should know you can’t persuade these particular females to do anything.”

“Dave, they’re trying to set me up on blind dates.”

Dave smirked, knowing full well what Garcia, Prentiss, and JJ were planning. “Well, yes. They want to see you happy again.”

Aaron wanted to bash his head against the desk and at the same time protect his privacy. “I have everything I need.”

Dave snorted. “Aaron, looking after Jack and work are not the only things in life.”

Aaron sucked in a breath because he did know that. His lover would never let him forget that either. He just had a way of making everything to do with work a little less bleak. Aaron still wasn’t sure how he managed it - but he did. They’d kept things quiet on the grounds of not upsetting Jack or either of the workplace status quos. It wasn’t a case of them being closeted or ashamed - more of a desire to have something just for themselves. Although after not too long they had carefully brought Jack in, completing their new family. Aaron was relieved that Jack seemed to adore Tony as much as he did.

Dave stood up. “I hear my paperwork calling. Look, you’re coming out with the team tonight. Meet one woman, show that you tried and maybe they’ll back off.”

Aaron seriously doubted that but he waved Dave away knowing that he would need to seek allies elsewhere. He had a plan now, he got on the phone.

“You busy?” Aaron asked, knowing what it was like to work for a federal agency.

“Always have time for you, babe.”

Aaron smiled. “So my esteemed colleagues want to set me up on a blind date on their night out this evening.”

Tony snorted. “Your boyfriend may have something to say about that.”

Aaron chuckled, “Yes, I thought he might but according to Dave, they’re worried that all I do is work and look after Jack.”

Tony was laughing. “You’re telling me your crack team of profilers has missed the fact that you are in love and happy?”

Aaron was smirking even if Tony couldn’t see his face. “You know I have a good poker face.”

Tony had obviously gone somewhere quieter. “Okay, so why not get settled, message me and then I can announce us as a couple in a way that will ensure you never have to worry about a blind date
“You jealous?”

Tony snorted. “Jealousy is for those who are insecure in their relationships and I know I have no concern. Don’t worry, have fun, I’ll make Jack and me something to eat and then come and collect you from your drinks. I’ll make it early enough to bring Jack with me if you prefer.”

Aaron thought about it for a second. “We said we’d keep it quiet, not wanting to affect work. If you do this then that option is gone, Tony.”

Tony knew the comment was fair and valid. “I’m done hiding Aaron. How about you?”

Aaron was. He knew it was time to publically move on. “Yeah, Tony. I am. I’ll text you the tavern where we drink. It’s a family place too.”

Tony snorted. “See you tonight, Darlin.”

~*~

“See you tonight, Darlin.” Tony closed his call. He was back in the bullpen and he saw Ziva and Tim look at him with interest.

“You have a second date with someone?” McGee asked in shock.

Tony smirked. “Actually, McDateless, we are way past second date stage and very happy. Thank you for asking.”

Ziva was frowning as she hadn’t realised and so it must be a ruse. There was no way that Tony could hide a successful relationship from all of them. “You must be lying.”

Tony quirked an eyebrow. “Oh no, my fearsome assassin. No lies. We just agreed today to stop hiding. It is all terribly exciting but right now we have a report to finish so I can get Gibbs to sign off on this for JAG.”

They flushed but kept sending furtive glances at each other. Tony was counting down the minutes before one of them asked an intrusive question or made an excuse to see Abby to try and ferret some answer out digitally.

Gibbs came back sipping coffee and quirked an eyebrow at the overly quiet bullpen. Still, he was not the type of man to kick a gift horse in the mouth and got to work on his own paperwork. He did see the furtive, annoyed glances that Ziva kept sending Tony so he knew something was going on.

“Hey, boss. Can I go now? I need to pick Jack up.”

Gibbs didn’t let his surprise show as he could now guess that Tony had let something slip about his relationship. Tony had confided in him as he needed to tell someone. He could get that after Jeanne and Wendy why he was very, very skittish when it came to serious relationships. “Sure, DiNozzo.”

McGee looked up. “Who is Jack?”

Tony answered, knowing it wouldn’t give anything away. “An adorable nine-year old who has a
great taste in movies. Now bye bye.”

Tony walked out with his head held high especially hearing Gibbs watch his six in his own way.

As soon as he left his desk he heard the questions.

“Who is Jack? What do you know, Boss? Why wouldn’t Tony say anything to us, we’re his friends.”

Gibbs’ response had been perfect and to the point. “Well, if you’re his friends then shouldn’t you be asking yourselves that?”

~*~

The school Jack was at had rung the bell for the end of the day. Tony could see Jack’s eyes alight with joy at seeing his face. It was a new thing but damn, Tony wouldn’t trade it for the world. He managed to pick him up into a whirling hug. “Hey, big guy.”

“Hey, what we doing this afternoon or do you have work?”

Tony shook his head. “No work, my man, Uncle Gibbs let me go early.”

Tony knew it was high time he actually introduced Gibbs to Jack. He had a feeling it would be a good idea for both of them.

Jack grinned. “Does that mean we can watch a movie?”

Tony smirked ruffling his hair. “Sure, kiddo. As long as you have no homework to do.”

Jack pouted. “I have math to do.”

Tony chuckled. “I’ll help you once I have sorted out dinner. We’re going to surprise your Daddy’s team.”

“YAY!”

~*~

At the tavern, Aaron had politely declined to do talk with any of the women. Dave was curious. “You haven’t batted an eyelid at any of the women. I know you said you weren’t looking for a relationship but there hasn’t even been a second glance on your part.”

Aaron smiled. “I have no need to, Dave.”

Garcia gasped, catching on first. “Why didn’t you tell me he was seeing someone. I’ve been wasting my time, oh chocolate hunk.”

Derek shook his head. “Er, I didn’t know and what are you talking about, baby girl?”

A new amused voice spoke up. “They are talking about me. Hey, Darlin. The little guy missed you and wouldn’t settle without seeing his father.”

David Rossi was not surprised by many things but this was one of them. “Look at you, Little Tony
“DiNozzo all grown up.”

Tony chuckled. “Yeah and I quit mob hunting and joined NCIS.”

“And somewhere along the way you ran into Hotch,” Dave observed, he would really like to hear that story.

Tony grinned crookedly. “Actually - I ran into him”

Jack was stuck with his head turned into Tony’s leg. It spoke volumes about the relationship between the two men. Jack didn’t take to new people quickly at all so this guy had been around a while.

Garcia cooed. “Oh bossman, now I completely understand you saying no to everyone we suggested. I think even our chocolate hunk has competition.”

Derek pouted. “Hey now.”

Garcia patted him on his cheek. “Oh don’t worry, sweet cheeks. He only has eyes for the bossman. Sor this is great this Agents’ Derek Morgan, Emily Prentiss, JJ Jareau, Dr. Spencer Reid and I am Penelope Garcia.”

Tony chuckled, used to vivacious people having spent so much time around Abby. “She’s not wrong. Now I’m sorry to do this but this man needs to be with his family so it’s been great to meet everyone and if I don’t have a case ... I’ll cook for you all some time.”

Aaron stood up. “It’s been fun but as you can see, I’m needed elsewhere.”

The family and there was no mistaking what they were, left with Aaron and Tony both holding one of Jack’s hands as they walked out.

JJ fanned herself. “Now that is hot.”

Prentiss nodded. “It’s like they say, the good ones are married, gay or taken.”

“Hey!” Rossi, Reid, and Morgan all shouted at the same time.

*The women just smirked and said nothing else - they’d said it all.*
The sounds of gunfire and screaming woke him up, drenched in sweat. It took a moment for John to realise he wasn’t there. He wasn’t back in the craziness. He was in DC with Tony’s arms wrapped around him. It was a great place to be and he felt his heart rate start to settle as he kept reminding himself.

“Hey, Darlin. You back with me?” Tony asked with nothing but concern in his voice.

John blushed, hating the way his stupid dreams had woken his boyfriend up. “Sorry.”

Tony kissed him softly, wanting to distract John from his brooding thoughts. “Nothing to be sorry for. You came home and that is all that matters. We’ll deal with the rest.”

John sat up on the bed, rubbing his face, almost as if he was hoping to rub the dream from his memory. “Well, I am sorting out a job today. So that’s something.”

Tony said nothing, knowing that for John it was a matter of pride. He had more than enough money but recognised the need to stay busy. “If that’s what you need.”

John stood up, shrugging on his running shorts and vest that he kept by the bed. He liked to run most mornings. The only way some days he could get a day started was if he pounded the memories into the ground. He kissed Tony. “You joining me?”

Tony groaned as the kiss was like the biggest tease, waking him up but knowing it wouldn’t end with mind blowing sex. He was hot and bothered so he may as well put his pent up energy to good use. All the extra cardio workouts, and yes he was including sex, had not gone unnoticed at the office. He could admit he was the leanest he’d been in years. He chuckled. “I’ve told people I’m training for a triathlon.”

John reeled him in close as he slipped his running top on. “You in a swimsuit sounds good.”

Tony smirked, knowing just what John was picturing. He might have to do something about that fantasy soon. “Come on, lover boy. Let’s run and pick Em’ up on the way back.”

John pouted and shouted. “Hey now. I’m a man - I proved that last night.”

Tony was by the door and had an innocent grin on his face. “Did you?” He teased as he raced out of the apartment.

John spluttered and chased after his lover, the man was sneaky and knew that John would secure the apartment first. It was just the distraction he needed. He thanked every day that he met Tony at RIMA and even more so that he was brave enough to love him.

The men raced towards the monument and then back towards Em’s. Their houses were not too far
The ex, Melanie, wrinkled her nose as the two men appeared at her door. It was tragic that they were two of the hottest men in Washington and one was her ex-husband and the other was dating her ex-husband. So she couldn’t truly enjoy the sight of two sweaty, panting men on her doorstep. “You know running is not a date.”

The two men smirked at each other. “Says you.”

Tony saw the young girl peering from the top of the stairs. He was so glad that she had taken him dating her Dad so well. “Hey, Miss Emily. You ready to see the White House?”

Mel chuckled. “Is she ever?” It was all her mother had heard about all week.

Em was explaining a million and one facts about the White House and Tony listened intently. He didn’t mind. “... And I will put all of this on my blog.”

Tony grinned. “YouTube or Tumblr?”

She smirked, looking back at her parents. “See. Uncle Tony gets it.”

Melanie shrugged. “You’re right, sweetie. You and Tony will just have to show us.”

Tony shrugged. “Fine by me but we really do need to get cracking. I need to change before I head to the office and drop these two off at the White House Down.”

“Have fun and stay safe.” She called out at the retreating figures.

*Sadly only one of those was an option.*

*~*~

Tony was at NCIS when the attack went down. It was unthinkable that terrorists had attacked the White House. His heart plummeted and his hand was on his phone even as he was barking out orders. He needed the Navy assets reporting in so Vance would be able to report into SecNav and anyone else who asked. He martialled the different groups, having each working on a different area.

“Come on, asshole, pick up.” Tony said to himself.

The call failed and Tony tried not to think the worst, so he tried Emily, he really hoped she answered. “Balboa, you have Europe, make sure all is secure. McGee, check in with Asia. Ziva, you have the Middle East.”

For once they did as they were told. Vance and Gibbs had been in MTAC. “Report!”

Tony stood tall and he may have slipped back into the military stance he’d learnt so long ago at RIMA. “Teams under Balboa, McGee, and Ziva are reporting in and keeping a track of our naval assets overseas. I assume the crisis unit will start in MTAC, Sir.”

“Good work.” Vance said in mild surprise.

Gibbs snorted at the shocked look on Vance’s face. “I don’t keep him around because he’s pretty.
He would be best to coordinate with the other agencies as they like him.”

Vance wasn’t going to say no. “You ready to be the coordinator and start the loop, Agent DiNozzo?”

It wasn’t a bizarre option as Gibbs and DiNozzo were the highest ranking agents in the Washington office at the moment. Granger, his Deputy Director, was in LA overseeing the special operations unit.

Tony sucked in a breath. “Happy to, Director.” He turned to Gibbs. “Em and John are in the fucking White House, boss.”

Gibbs felt for his SFA. “He is a tenacious bastard and she is a hell of a girl, Tony.”

~*~

Three hours later, and Tony’s heart was definitely in his mouth. Brave little Emily had managed to get the video uploaded to her channel giving the authorities the chance to identify the group. The video link-up between the agencies was a disaster and a pissing contest all rolled into one. Tony could understand the desire to get noticed but not at the fucking expense of the President.

Tony didn’t recognise the number but he answered it in MTAC hoping beyond hope it was John or Emily. To his joy, it was and he said loud enough for others to hear, seeing a few dirty looks from a few of the others. “John, so good to hear your voice. Wait. You have the President?”

Huh, that was how to make the squabbling stop between all the agencies. Tony put his phone on speaker with a smirk. “Yes, Mr. President.”

“What the hell is going on?” President Sawyer demanded to know.

One of the generals announced where they were at with the investigation. Tony had to smile at the President’s blunt summary. “So how do I get out of here? PEOC is compromised to hell, and whilst Agent Cale has done a damn fine job of keeping me alive, I want this resolved.”

Tony had heard the interview for the job had not gone so well. Another one of John’s ex’s was the Deputy of the Secret Service so that was awkward. Oh well, there was nothing like keeping your president alive to prove your mettle for the job.

“Do we know who the bastards are?” John asked.

Tony snorted because John was definitely not going to like his next answer. “Yeah, thanks to Emily’s Youtube channel we do.”

John exclaimed. “You what?”

Tony chuckled, not giving a crap who heard what he had to say. “Our Em’ took her phone and waved it around to catch each and every one of them, John.”

He groaned. “Where is she?”

Tony heard Agent Finnerty respond. “She is with the hostages on the second floor. Cale, you need to secure the president and then you can get all the hostages.”

“Agreed but I need an exit plan, they are sweeping again. Stenz got upset with me when I killed his
best friend.” John informed the crisis command, Tony would dearly love to see his face.

Tony grinned as that was the John he knew and loved. John was the one to ask. “Look, if I can take out their air defences, can you get some Marines to come in get us out of here?”

Carol chuckled because that sounded like the best plan she had heard all day. *The most proactive too.* “You do that and yeah I can.”

John and Sawyer muttered something like. “Let’s do this.”

Tony groaned because now he got why people hated dating him when he did dangerous things. This was beyond stupid. Vance, for once, looked sympathetic. “Go, get down there.”

“Sir?”

Vance smirked. “You’ve done good work ... you deserve to go and greet your man. I would be out of my mind if that was Jackie.”

Tony took a deep breath and was definitely not going to kick a gift horse in the mouth. “Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir.”

And he ran

~*~

The dust had settled and Tony was at the cordon having used his credentials to get close. He watched with a big fat relieved grin on his face as John came out of the White House surrounded by Marines, and little Emily in his arms. He was actually talking to the President as they went. The way President Sawyer was walking told Tony that he had a side injury - he’d caught more than a few knives to the chest sadly.

Tony ran to them at the same time as Melanie did. He let Mel grab Emily as Tony really wanted to kiss John. *So he did.*

The President coughed and Tony broke off his kiss, looking a little sheepish. “Sorry, Mr. President.”

“Don’t be, I can’t wait to see my wife and girls.” The man grinned, “But I am afraid I need my protection, Agent DiNozzo.” He said looking pointedly at John. Tony got it, his lover had kept the President alive against overwhelming odds.

Tony smiled, relief visible on his face. “I understand Sir, thank you.”

“He is a good guy.”

Tony knew what the President meant. “The best sir.”

Tony watched John walk the President to the helicopters waiting for him. Tony felt someone grab his hand, he looked at it smiling knowing it was Em. She’d been through so much and been so brave, a chip off the old block today and yet she asked him worriedly. “You okay, Uncle Tony?”

Tony looked at the amazing girl, who he was honoured to know. “Yeah, I am. You know, you young lady, are going to give me a heart attack and you’re not even dating yet.”

She giggled even as Mel found her way to his side. “What a day.”
“Hey Em’ - want to come for a ride?” John shouted from the steps of Marine One.

There was no one in the world who have been able to say no to the pout. Tony saw Melanie looking lost and he did the last thing anyone would ever expect. “Hey, let’s go back to mine and open a bottle of wine.”

She giggled. “The Ex and the current boyfriend. It’s John’s worst nightmare.”

Tony smirked, holding his arm out. “Maybe, but then he shouldn’t have gone gallivanting off with the President, should he?”

It was so much worse than John suspected as Melanie told Tony lots of embarrassing stories. Emily was giggling at the sight of her Mom and Tony collapsed on the sofa. “You’re in trouble.”

John grinned at his daughter. “Yeah, probably, but I wouldn’t change any of us for the world.”

They didn’t. Tony and John stayed together and defied any comments by simply being competent and awesome at their jobs. Emily just rolled her eyes at the way everyone asked her about her channel and would she post videos with her hot dads in. Like any teen, she would groan and say. “No.”

She didn’t groan when they got married - that was such an awesome day even if her mom did keep making heart eyes at Tony’s boss, Agent Gibbs.
Tom had taken over as HUD secretary not long after Alex’s death. It had been a perfect excuse to throw himself into a new challenge. He knew most people wouldn’t consider bringing his two children to Washington was a good thing but they needed the change as much as he did.

He’d never expected Tony, and his ease and sweetness. He never expected the kids to take to him and even encourage him to try and move on from Alex. The kids had shown a maturity beyond their years when they said their mom wouldn’t want him miserable and alone. The engagement had come from his kids actually asking when he was going to make an honest man of Tony.

Which is how he found himself here - in the Oval Office. His anger was simmering in disbelief at what he was hearing. “So in the same conversation as congratulating me on my engagement ... you are asking me to resign?”

“Come on, Tom. Do be reasonable. The conservatives will rip me apart.” The President responded.

Tom snorted. “It is good to know that you only practice LGBT rights, in theory, Sir.”

That did get the President to flush. Tom was guessing the President expected him to roll over. Well, that was not him.

“Give it twenty-four hours and think on it. You might want the time to devote to your new family.”

Tom Kirkman stood up and buttoned his suit up as he did. “If you like but if I resign it will be known that you asked me to resign because I want to marry the man I love, Mr. President. I am not ashamed.” Turning on his heel, he left without another word.

The President sighed, knowing that this might be trickier than he originally thought. He would strategize with his Chief of Staff in a minute. Looking across the room, he saw him standing at the door. “Well, that could have gone better, Sir.”

“You think? I suggest we make him the designated survivor. I do not want that man near a reporter tonight at the State of the Union.”

The Chief of Staff snorted. “I would say that is a smart idea.”

*Never knowing that he’d sealed all their fates.*

Tony was at NCIS when he got the call. He stepped away from the bullpen. “Hey, you okay?”
“The son of a bitch asked me to resign because god forbid he has a man married to another man in his cabinet.”

Tony sighed because he’d feared this. “You know I said I didn’t want to risk your career. You know I love you but not if this is going to cost you everything.”

Tom snorted. “Darlin, don’t be dramatic. My job comes after the kids and you.”

Tony wanted to punch a wall. Tom was a great guy and way too ethical for the likes of Washington. He always kept telling Tom he reminded him of Martin Sheen’s President, the one good man analogy. It had been what initially stopped him from pursuing the relationship but Tom and the kids had individually and collectively made him see that he was ridiculous. “Tom, you’ve worked so hard.”

Tom snorted. “I should be saying that to you. Tonight the Secret Service will be collecting you at six. I think you can do the math on why.”

Tony was stunned. So Tom would be the designated survivor. “Date night right there. They better have chips.”

~*~

Tony carried on his day as if there wasn’t anything different about it. At six, right on the dot, his escort appeared. “Hey, Mike. You here to bring me to Tom?”

“Yes, Sir.”

Gibbs smirked. “Well, you don’t tell the Secret Service no and you did say yes to the man.”

He saw the scowl on Tim’s and Ziva’s faces as they had not taken the revelation of his relationship with the HUD Secretary well, at all. Even worse, his lack of care about their reaction seemed to annoy them even more.

The drive was quick and efficient for the Secret Service. He was taken to a warehouse that had no outside appearance of being anything more than an abandoned place. Inside it was a very different picture - state of the art. Tony was shown to a room and in it was Tom. He had to smile and there he was wearing Zegna and Tom was in his favourite hoodie.

He hugged Tom close, just wanting to offer what comfort he could. “You okay?”

Tom smirked and handed him a beer. “I told the President in polite Washington terms today to go and fuck himself.”

Tony shivered and as they were the only ones in the room, he kissed his man. “Ohh, makes a man shiver.”

Tom smirk grew wider, knowing his partner was teasing him. He reminded him “You know the Secret Service is probably listening ...” It didn’t bother Tom as he continued leaving feather-light kisses over his fiance’s face.

Tony shrugged, as he wrapped his arms around Tom’s waist. “I have no shame, you should know this by now.”
Mike, Tom’s Secret Service Agent, entered the room with a phone. He was too well trained to say anything about what he’d just seen. “It’s the little lady, Sir.”

Tony chuckled, grabbing a chip and grabbed the phone first. He saw Tom sit back down at the table and pick up a beer he opened one sliding it to Tony and then got one for himself. Tony smiled in thanks but then paid attention to his call. “Hey, little lady. Shouldn’t you be in bed for Grandma?”

She giggled because she knew that Tony wasn’t really worried. “I am not a little lady. I’m a sweet pea.”

Tony never said a word on the day but it had been one of the most humbling experiences when Penny Kirkman had told him that he should call her *Sweet Pea* like her Dad. Tony knew that in terms of acceptance from a kid - that was right up there. “Yes you are, Sweet Pea, and how can I help you this evening?”

“You didn’t help Daddy tuck us into bed.” She complained.

He groaned because wow, guilt trip, right there. She had no need to learn anymore she was excellent at it already - he was dreading the teenage years, sure that she would burn through his inheritance. “You’re right but Sweet Pea, believe me, Daddy and I would much rather be with you. We have to listen to the President speak.”

“That’s soooo boring.”

Tony snickered. “You’re right again. Here is your Dad, Sweet Pea.”

Tom took the phone as Tony kept listening to the latest drivel as he sat down as well seeing as this was going to be a *long night*. He’d never much liked the guy and wouldn’t be voting for him again after his stunt with Tom. The speech was in mid-flow and then the screen went blank and so did all the other channels. This was wrong. Tony didn’t bother trying for longer than a few seconds, he went straight to the window. He could have sworn he felt the building shake.

What he saw as a result shocked the hell out of him. Tony’s mind went blank for all of twenty seconds. That was the Capitol in flames, someone had bombed it. Terrorists had just attacked them at the heart of their democracy. Tony didn’t get any longer than that to think before the Secret Service raced back into their sealed room.

Mike was serious and informed them. “Sir, you need to put the phone down and Sir, you need to step away from the window.”

Tony could see how bewildered Tom was, truth be told, he wasn’t much better. Still, Tony moved over to clutch Tom’s hand as they were being manhandled out the room. He’d never had a wall of bodyguards around him so this was another new experience for Tony.

“Mike, what is going on?” Tom demanded to know, he’d not seen the Capitol and what was left of it, like Tony had.

Tony knew it, it sunk in seeing the huge motorcade. They were in the car in seconds and the minute they pushed onto Pennsylvania. Tony knew that no matter what he said their fate wasn’t going to change. He didn’t agree with Tom going outside without getting at least a clue. They needed their leader strong in front of the cameras not looking lost and bewildered. Tony lost his patience. “Jesus, just tell him, Mike.”
Mike took a deep breath as he still couldn’t believe he was saying this himself. “Sir, the Capitol was bombed and there are no survivors.”

Tom was still assimilating that and Tony said the words he needed to understand. “Tom, it means you are now the President.”

“What?”

Mike looked back, so glad that Tony was a federal agent and was familiar with federal contingencies. He did feel sorry for the man because his role as an agent would be taking a back seat to that of his fiance. DiNozzo was going to be asked to serve in different ways than he was used to. He knew that whilst he would struggle, he could weather the storm.

“The kids - have they been taken to Castle?” Tony asked using the Secret Service name for the White House. His mind had already gone into crisis mode.

“Yes, Sir. They are in the residence being kept safe by the Secret Service.” Mike answered, hoping to reassure them of that at least.

Tom was relieved but, realising the magnitude of what they were facing, he took a deep breath. “Can I do this?”

Tony sighed because there was no easy answer but damn it, someone had attacked them aiming to send the presidency and their country into a tail spin. “You have to, Mr. President.”

“What about our family?” Tom asked showing his first concern.

Tony had a small smile and it was tense, there was simply no way to predict how this would affect any of them. “We will face it together. We have no choice.”

“I know.” Tom said quietly. After all, what choice was there? “You know, you saved my life tonight?”

Tony didn’t chuckle at the irony as the events were too serious. “You saved mine a while ago. Now we’re even. So stand up tall, and let’s get to work.”

*The work was long and arduous. Tony, much to his colleagues’ disbelief, managed to transition into the First Husband role. Yes, they married, he couldn’t believe that they needed to marry for the Governors to agree to nominate their Senators but they did.*

*He might not have found it easy - he was too much an agent. His secret service detail got used to him being as armed as they were. In fact, his guard and he would often test range scores. The COC got used to seeing him there, his security clearance was high as it was and Tom put an end to it by raising it so he could have an advisor and sounding board.*

*It was a long few years but Tony had the privilege of having and helping to rebuild America to being great once again - alongside one of the more infamous Presidents of America.*

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Now being turned into an expanded story - **Designate: First Husband**
A Heartbeat away (Seeley Booth 2)

Chapter Notes

Warning: Off-screen death of a minor character (Rebecca)

Prequel for: The Right Choice - from the first collection.

Seeley Booth was a Ranger who’d seen more action than most. Here in Washington, he was still no stranger to danger as he was now an FBI agent. And yet, it was here, in a bloody zoo where he knew true fear.

His heart was racing, adrenaline pumping. “Parker! Parker buddy, where are you?”

He’d checked the monkey enclosure and the petting zoo. They’d come up empty. He was going to get his kid a microchip in his clothes or something so he would always be able to track him.

“Parker!” Oh thank god, he could see his son’s blond hair. The relief palpable, Seeley felt like he could breathe again. Parker’s face lit up seeing him and his son raced toward him. It was still a new feeling but Seeley didn’t think there was anything more valuable in the world to him. They met in the middle, arms wrapped around the other. “Buddy, you scared me.”

Parker pulled back, looking sad at just the mere thought of upsetting him. “I’m sorry, Daddy.”

He hated seeing that look on his son’s face. “It’s okay, little man. The main thing is you’re safe.” Seeley responded, wanting to reassure his son.

“Oh, Daddy, I need to give this back to Detective DiNozzo, it’s his shield. He said it would keep me safe until you got back.”

It was then that he realised they were not alone. Seeley stood up, Parker still on his hip. “Thank you. You’ve just saved my mind.”

And that was the first time Seely got lost in a pair of mischievous green eyes. It wouldn’t be the last time either.

~*~

Tony DiNozzo was himself getting lost in the most brilliantly soulful eyes. The guy was so masculine and gorgeous and yet loved his kid. If Tony had ovaries they would have exploded. Damn it, he needed to say something, anything. He put his hand forward to offer a handshake. “You’re welcome, just doing my job. I’m Tony DiNozzo.”

“Agent Seeley Booth. FBI” He responded.
Parker was solemn. He managed to explain not leaving the comfortable space on his Dad’s shoulder. “He understands us, Dad. His mamma is gone too.”

Seeley felt a pang, knowing immediately where his son had gone. “You went to see the dolphins, huh?”

Parker nodded. His mom had loved dolphins and they always made the boy think of her whenever he saw some. It had been nearly a year ago that Parker’s mom, Rebecca, had died in a car accident. Seeley had been on a tour in Iraq and informed that he had a son he knew nothing about.

He’d gone from a war-zone to the single father of a gorgeous but traumatized son. Parker had ensured he stayed on the right path and sought help for his own demons. His son had a bright, innocent smile like he’d come up with the best plan ever. “I know Daddy, Detective Tony can help you with your sadness.”

Seeley smiled softly at his son. His kid’s heart was bigger than words. “It doesn’t quite work that way, buddy, but we thank him again for keeping you safe.”

Parker nodded but he didn’t want Detective Tony to leave. He’d seen the look his Daddy was giving the detective. “Can Tony come with us for da crocodiles ... purlease?”

Seeley didn’t know what to say, the guy already had his gratitude but he didn’t want to impinge on the guy’s time. No matter how cute the guy was - he might be here with a date or something. “We can’t keep Tony, buddy. He is way too busy.”

Tony saw the pout and the thought crossed his mind that criminals should never be told how quickly he folded under it. “If your dad is okay with it then sure. Still, after that you need to spend time with your Daddy - he will get jealous if you spend all your time with me.” He added with a wink.

Parker smiled but shook his head. “Nope. Daddy says we shouldn’t be selfish.”

Tony smiled at the young boy. He was a rare innocent soul and truth be told, it was good to be reminded of why he did his job. Still, he doubled checked with the guy and Tony was relieved to see the nod to the head. The man gave him a crooked grin. “I would be glad for the adult company.”

Tony smiled in return. “If you’re sure. I have done my duty for the day so I am free.”

Booth wanted to ask questions but he didn’t. He took the win, he got to keep talking to Tony and his kid was happy. This was a good hour.

~*~

The crocodiles were glorious creatures and Parker was fascinated by them. He kept himself between the two adults knowing that he didn’t want to scare his Daddy again. And he wouldn’t run into Detective Tony if he wandered off again. Detective Tony was cool, he knew all these facts about the crocodiles that weren’t on the walls.

What Parker didn’t know was how Tony had benefited from recently re-watching Crocodile Dundee. He happily shared the facts he could remember from the film.

Seeley took a minute to appreciate how good, and cute, the man was with Parker. He found emotions and other parts of him that hadn’t stirred since he’d left the army. He wasn’t one of these people who needed to label his sexuality.
Seeley found himself asking, “Why the crocodile fascination?” Wanting to keep the man talking and with them for a bit longer, his kid had managed to snare him and now it was up to him to converse.

Tony leaned in close as if this was some grand conspiracy. “Shhh … it’s just the facts from Crocodile Dundee the movie I can remember.”

Booth actually laughed. “You’re something else.” The fact that they were close and flirting wasn’t unnoticed.

Tony smirked at seeing the young father smile. He had a feeling that Booth didn’t do that all too often at the moment. “Oh, definitely. You’ll just have to find that out.

Tony didn’t smirk at the slight flush he saw on the man’s cheeks. Instead, he chose to move the conversation back to safer ground. “So, are you a sports fan?”

Seeley snorted. “Is the Pope Catholic?”
Tony grinned crookedly. “Football fan?”

“Pittsburgh Steelers, all the way. I’m from there.”

Tony chuckled. “Yeah, I’m from Long Island so any New York team really I could claim. I claimed the Giants. I know, it’s tragic.”

Seeley had mirth in his eyes. “Well, now I have someone to tease about the games when Big Ben throws you into the ground.”

Tony smirked and must have agreed. “Well, I hope to be in DC soon. I have a job interview with NCIS tomorrow.”

Seeley chuckled and then groaned at the same time. “Oh no, you’re not going to work for Agent Gibbs aren’t you?

Tony looked sheepish. “That’s the plan.” He could see that there was about to be a follow-up comment but he cut him off. “I know about his character but I can handle him.”

Parker tugged on their hands bringing their full attention back to the little one. He was pointing at a crocodile whose face was almost pressed up against the glass. The smile was a little macabre but Parker was a light with joy so it was all cool. “He is so cool.”

Tony grinned, agreeing with the youngster. “I don’t think I would want to have to brush his teeth, though. Would you?”

Parker giggled and Seeley snorted. “Agreed.”

“How many teeth does Mr. Magoo have?” Parker asked.

Tony shrugged but pointed to the information guide. “Why not read the sign and see if you can find out for me?”

Parker was eager to show how well he could read. Seeley was grateful that some of his mood had lifted. “I think this is the most animated Parker has been in a while.”

Tony shrugged. The kid had shared why he was sad whilst they’d been looking for his Dad. He
could empathise with losing a mom early. “Happy to help, usually kids hate me.”

Seeley frowned because Parker didn’t warm to adults quickly at all. “Well, Parker adores you and your crocodile facts.”

Tony smiled softly. “Guess I better watch Dr. DoLittle before next time so I can wow him.”

It was said tongue in cheek but Seeley liked him even more for it. He obviously wanted to find things out just to talk to Parker. This guy knew how to hit all of Seeley’s buttons.

“What’s that secret smile for?” Tony asked.

Seely grins. “An hour ago I didn’t think my heart was going to beat again if I couldn’t find my son.”

Tony bit his lip. “And now?”

“It’s wanting new and very scary things.” Seeley confessed being brave enough. This wasn’t going to work if he was coy.

Tony smiled knowing what he was not saying. “You know what I’m thinking? Here’s my card, call me when you want to watch a game. I’ll come to you as I can imagine childcare can be difficult to organise around.”

Seeley wondered how no one had snapped this man up. Cute, considerate, willing to work with him and not blinking at the kid. On the rare occasion, he’d showed an interest in another adult - they’d run a mile seeing Parker. Not Tony, he was adaptable and moving with the situation.

“I would like that.” Seeley answered.

The pager sound made both of them look down. It was Tony who groaned. “Damn, Well, good bye, Parker. It was great to meet you, buddy. Don’t go wandering off from your Dad.”

He nodded. “Do you have to go catch bad guys?”

Tony nodded. “I do.”

“Okay then but come back soon.”

Tony chuckled. “That’s up to your Dad, kiddo.”

Tony stood up and looked at Seeley. “I hope you call soon. Your place though. It’s cool and no pressure.”

He said it seriously as this wasn’t a one night stand he was looking for. Tony wasn’t averse to the idea but there was more than just sex to consider here. He had no idea he was looking at a lifetime.
“Hey, what should I say I look for?” Dalton asked his partner, MacGyver. The man was busy rebuilding his bike but that was irrelevant. They were killing time in Mac’s apartment whilst their boss came up with their next crazy mission. It led to a period of boredom for the two men and they filled it in their own particular ways. Mac rebuilt a classic bike and Jack was setting up a dating profile.

Jack could admit, at least to himself, that seeing his Ex had made him a little miserable - especially watching her walk down the aisle. It was the right thing for Sarah and he hoped that new husband of hers made her happy but it had got him thinking about how lonely he felt. As much as people joke about him and Mac - Mac was his brother, not a potential lover.

Jack’s musings were broken by Mac’s sarcastic response of. “Er - Can cope with bad karaoke and won’t mind being shot at.”

Jack pouted but sadly, that wouldn’t be an unfair profile. It would certainly give his dates a fair warning. He couldn’t count a day in the last two weeks that he hadn’t got into at least one gunfight. “Won’t that put them off?”

MacGyver shrugged as he polished a new fitting he’d secured. “Possibly, big guy, but you won’t like them if they can’t handle it anyway. And when have any of our social occasions not ended in a fight?”

Jack just sighed as this was supposed to be fun. Mac was putting a bit of a downer on him. He then had a bright thought. “Can we at least add in - Must have a nice ass?”

MacGyver shrugged, after Nikki, he was a little dating shy. Still, he would happily support his friend in his own endeavours. “Sure, I can’t wait to see who you meet.”

Jack frowned. “What do you mean?”

MacGyver snorted. “Okay, granted, Nikki is complicated but you need to find someone who is okay with secrets, the occasional bad guy looking for retribution, not to mention all the crazy stunts we pull to save our own asses on a semi-regular basis.”

~*~

Abby and Tim were giggling like mad. They thought this would be the prank of the century. Tony had been all mopey since coming back from the Seahawk. They had made him a dating profile that was seventy percent true but they’d only changed his gender preference. They wanted to prank Tony to make him flip his lid because they wanted their Tony back. They didn’t like this super-efficient pod-Tony that had come back from the Seahawk. They’d even seen Gibbs raise an eyebrow or two.

“We should get a picture of his face.” Abby said with a giggle. She knew this was going to be funny - she kind of wished Kate would be there to see it.

McGee shook his head as he was not suicidal. “Not me, then he’ll know who it was. I don’t want his retribution.”
Abby hit his shoulder. “Oh, come on. He’s being pod! Tony right now and we need to do something.”

McGee had no problem with messing with Tony. He figured he owed the SFA after some of the pranks Tony had pulled on him. The dating profile was the first step and as Tony was in LA helping out Special Ops for the weekend it was a perfect time to enact their prank.

~*~

Tony finished up the case with NCIS: LA, he liked working with the Specials Ops teams - they thought alike. It was then his phone gave him an email. He recognised the company name as it was one that loudly and proudly proclaimed that they were the number one dating agency in the US.

He read the subject line of - You have one potential love match in the area. Arrange a date this evening?

Tony frowned. He hadn’t put himself on a dating site. He liked going out to bars and places and meeting people the old-fashioned way. He groaned knowing that Abby and McGee were somehow behind this. Idiots. So they thought he would freak out over a blind date?.

He saw the link and maybe it was his naturally curious mind but he clicked on the link. A man? Huh, that wasn’t expecting.

He looked closer at the picture and liked what he saw. The man was hot and around his age, he had a night to kill anyway as his flight was early morning out of LAX. So why not? If Tony was being honest, it had been a while since he’d even paid attention to his libido. If only his frat buddies could see the sex-machine now.

~*~

Jack was finishing up a day’s work in the office for once, which was different. The only trouble was - he was bored. So when the alert popped up on his phone, it got his whole attention. It was the dating site from yesterday. He hadn’t expected there to be any dates this quick. Still, he started this so he would finish it. He opened up the email to see the matched profile and whilst it was not a hot blonde chick with blue eyes it didn’t mean he wasn’t attracted. “Huh, he is hot.”

MacGyver looked at the photo over Jack’s shoulder. He already knew that his brother in all but blood had always swung both ways. “He is but he won’t help you with the little Jacks that you want.”

Jack smirked because right now he was okay with that. “No he won’t but he sure is pretty and can enjoy guns and karaoke ... plus knives. I like this guy and I haven’t even met him.”

“Wait - you actually wrote that as your profile?” MacGyver spoke with disbelief. He’d been semi-joking yesterday.

“What?” Jack said, not understanding the issue. “You made a fair point so I wrote it.”

MacGyver snorted, clapping a hand on Jack’s back. “I wish you luck then.”

~*~

Tony had no other suit than his Zegna packed for this trip so that’s what he wore. He figured, date or not, you should always look your best. He’d messaged his date a few times and they’d agreed to
meet at a karaoke bar. He was at the door of the bar, this was it, The point of no return - he opened the door.

There was the guy. “So - bad karaoke and guns, huh?”

The guy turned around. “That doesn’t sound like a good time?”

Tony sat down, looking at his date and the first thing he saw was a kindred spirit. “Sure does.”

“Tony DiNozzo.”

“Jack Dalton.”

Tony took the offered shake of a hand but he had a wicked grin on his face. “I hope the evening doesn’t end with a handshake.”

“Oh Darlin’, I am a gentleman but I can be persuaded otherwise.” Jack responded with his own cheeky grin.

Tony blinked at the forthright statement. “So what exactly is it you do?”

Jack sighed. “I work in a boring think tank.”

Tony snorted as that was a crappy cover story. “Look, so far I like you and I don’t mean to interrogate but let’s come up with a rule. A guy who has at least 2 guns and I’m guessing 4 knives, minimum, is probably not an office worker. I understand secrets ... Just let’s not lie to each other.”

Jack cocked his head to the side and returned the professional courtesy. “Two guns, and five knives.”

Tony shook his head. “You underestimated the knives but close. I work for NCIS and you’ve worked paramilitary at least.”

Jack was intrigued. “Hot and deadly? I think you are my new favourite person.”

Tony leaned in close so that he could feel Jack’s breath on his lips. “You’re not too bad yourself. So tell me about you, what you can and avoid any state secrets and I will return the favour.”

And Jack took a deep breath and shared some of his least hair-raising missions for the CIA. It seemed like the right thing to do. He was surprised to see Tony shudder when he mentioned Kort’s name. “You got bad history with Kort?”

“Bastard tried to blow me up.”

Jack looked him up and down. “Well, then, thank god he failed.”

Tony smirked. “Yeah, I am hard to kill. So what do you do apart from protecting your boy Mac’s back?”

Jack shrugged. “It is what it is. We get a mission ... it goes nuts, I keep Mac alive until he can science us out of it. You should be warned - because a disclaimer is everyone’s best friend - that a lot of gunfire and danger happens around me.”

Tony shrugged as he sipped on his drink. “Yeah, you shouldn’t worry about little old me. I’ve handled more than my fair share of shit. Still, I’m going to beg your indulgence to send a snap to my
work colleagues.”

“Selfie?” Jack asked, intrigued.

Tony nodded but wanted to explain. “You see, as glad as I am to be here, two of my coworkers thought setting me up with a guy would freak me out.”

Jack frowned. “But it’s not, right?”

Tony shook his head. “Nope, I’m enjoying good beer, hot company, and good sports. The only shame is because we’re sitting down I can’t check your ass out.”

Jack nearly choked on his beer because, damn, he was usually the forward one in the conversation. “Take your photo and then we can get down to serious questions - like football teams.”

Tony hit the message function on his phone. Typed in the message - *I think he is a keeper.*

The shot for the selfie was perfect. Tony was grinning and Jack kissed his cheek. It was a cute perfect shot. Of course, just after he hit send he saw the red light focus on Jack’s chest. He pulled his date over the counter whilst shouting “On the ground now,” to the other patrons.

Jack saw the light against the wall and huffed. “Ah ... come on. I’m on a date with a hot guy. I deserve some peace! *I really like him.*”

Tony grinned as this was ironic. “I like you too, big guy. Now I have 16 rounds and my knives. You?”

Jack sighed. “Same but help is on the way.”

Tony wasn’t going to ask how or the why. He was just grateful that it was on the way. “You recognise these guys?”

Jack shook his head. “They kind of blend into monochromal bad guys. You know?”

Sadly Tony did. The bullets impacted against the wall as Tony sighed and poked his head above the counter, he winged one and hit two others dead centre. Jack had done the same, they ducked back behind the counter to reload. “Two more.”

“You go right, I got left.” Jack offered, trusting his date to hit the mark.

It was a good plan and one they did well. The eight mercs were dead in a heap around the doorway. It was then that the help poured in with Jack and Tony pointing their guns downward for fear of any reprisals from the TAC team. “Okay, it’s safe now.”

Their date was forgotten as they helped the civilians to their feet and made sure they were okay. Jack watched Tony as he calmed a woman down with rapid Spanish. Damn, the guy was compassionate too. He took note as Mac came in through the door. “Jack, you okay buddy?”

“I’m okay. I had help and my date is good with guns too. Mac, meet my date, Tony.”

Tony dusted the cement dust from their firefight off his hands. “Hey, nice to meet you. Jack says a lot of good things about you.”

Mac shook Tony’s hand. “Well, you two will make awesome photos together.”
Jack snorted. “We already have.”

Tony showed the photo. “It’s a great shot.”

Mac had to check. “And all this hasn’t put you off a second date?”

Tony shook his head with a wink at Jack. “Well, I can’t wait to see what he comes up with for the second date, although I guess it’ll be my turn to come up with something, nah, I think we’re just getting started.”

*And that was oh so true; with Mossad vendetta’s, double agents who were actually triple agents and all the other craziness - their life together was never boring.*
This is a follow up short to the very first one that spawned the entire universe - So Glad

Tony was home finally. There was no more sea for miles on end. Even better, he was now home. He could see the keys on the table meaning that his husband was also home. “Harm?”

“Tony?”

Tony grinned, seeing his husband stepping out of the bathroom in a towel. Well, that certainly was the best welcome home he could imagine. “I’m home, Sailor, for good.”

Harm stepped forward and kissed him into the wall. No more words were exchanged as their reunion was ten long weeks in the making. Tony was back home and he was done hiding what he was if Harm was game.

Tony wanted all of Harm. Now. And he had him, several times in several positions. He was insatiable and Tony couldn’t stop.

After the fourth round, they collapsed back on the bed. Harm stroking his face. “Welcome home.”

Tony moved in closer, wanting to soak up the warmth of his beloved. He hadn’t had any physical contact like this since before he was forced to go onto the boat and he wasn’t ashamed to admit that he was more than a little skin-hungry. “Yeah, it’s good to be back. Vance pulled me back finally.”

Harm growled because he wasn’t too impressed with Vance. “You should tell him to stick his job, you’re worth more than he thinks.”

Tony smiled softly and wasn’t it sad that his husband was the first one to give him anything close to a positive evaluation or even acknowledgement of his skills in nearly twelve months. “Thanks, Darlin. I do think you’re biased though.”

Harm huffed. “Doesn’t mean I’m not right. Ask the Admiral.”

Tony chuckled, knowing that AJ Chegwidden rarely had good things to say about bureaucrats and regardless of whatever Vance had once been, that was all he was now. Tony could admit that he was pissed about being sent to the Seahawk but had used the time to think about NCIS and what was wrong. He was not perfect as he had let a lot of things slide but he was done ignoring it. Things needed to change and if that meant he needed to leave - then so be it, he wouldn’t let NCIS kill him through idle negligence. Harm would never forgive him and that was the path he could see himself heading down if he stayed at NCIS.

He spoke up. “Talking about the Admiral - would he be amenable to looking into some things for me?”

Other couples would slip into a sated sleep. Tony and Harm would often strategise about things that were bothering them once their minds were clear. “Like what?”

Tony sighed. “Like how a Mossad Liaison officer can serve on the MCRT and I hope to god I am
wrong but I think - without restrictions.”

Harm froze. “You’re kidding!”

Tony shrugged. “I know. I raised it when Shepard first placed her on the team. I did my best to minimise her chance to interfere with evidence chains etc but I can’t be everywhere at once.”

Harm was contemplating how big a shit fit the Admiral was going to throw. “Babe, you gotta get out of there. The Admiral is going to rake the place over hot coals and then go through it with a fine tooth comb after he’s done dancing on its ashes if they’ve jeopardized his cases.”

Tony sighed because he’d thought he’d finally settled at NCIS. He couldn’t regret the fact that he’d gone there as that was how he’d met Rabb. He was so glad that Gibbs had arrested him for murder. “So what do you think? Homeland or should I bite the bullet and become a Feeb?”

Harm snorted because only his husband would have such an aversion, understandable as it was, to the FBI. To him, there was only one answer. “Homeland, they haven’t tried to arrest you for murder, and it is not like you haven’t learned a thing or two about chasing down terrorists. Plus, you trust your boss there.”

Tony couldn’t deny the logic. “OK. First thing tomorrow I’ll contact Morrow.”

Harm kissed the side of his face and they fell into a peaceful sleep.

~*~

Tony knew it was early still as he had yet to leave for his first official day back. Yet he needed to do this before he chickened out or convinced himself that it was the wrong thing to do. He used the number he’d been given by Morrow to contact him on, if and when he was ready to move on.

“Tony, it’s good to hear from you.”

Tony chuckled, imagining Vance’s face if he heard the warm greeting. “Thanks, Director Morrow.”

“What can I do for you?”

Tony liked the fact he got straight down to business. “Well, I’m going to be blunt. Is the job offer still open?”

“Tony, I’d snatch you in a heartbeat and I would fight Jethro to do it ... Only I never thought it would be successful.”

Tony could hear the shock in his voice. He knew Tom deserved an answer. “Vance had a mole problem so he dismantled the MCRT for power games and to flush them out. My penance for following orders was to be sent abroad the Seahawk as Agent Afloat.”

“I heard about that and wondered at the rationale.”

Tony snorted because it was above his pay grade to determine. “I respect you so I will be honest with you. Mossad’s links make me uncomfortable and we seem to be getting even more inextricably linked. It’s getting ridiculous and I am done been ignored.”

“Mossad?” Morrow queried.
Tony explained as he finished getting ready for his day at work. “We have a Mossad Agent on the MCRT and I can’t say for certain but I don’t think her access is restricted in any way whatsoever. I lodged several complaints to no avail. You know Ziva David? She’s Eli David’s daughter and Director Vance is good friends with Eli.”

Morrow pinched his nose, knowing that this was a clusterfuck just waiting to come undone and he had the feeling it was Tony that was ripping it wide open. “Go to work, Tony, and I’ll be in touch. I’ll also want the emails and logs I know you keep.”

Tony smirked. “Yes, Sir.”

~*~

A day later and Morrow phoned Tony’s direct line. “You’re done at NCIS, the SecDef has arranged for a transfer of agency for you, Tony. The fireworks are about to start at the agency. Fair warning - it’s Chegwidden and your husband who are bringing it down.”

Tony didn’t react outwardly but his relief was palpable. “I see. Thank you, Director. I’ll be ready when the time starts.”

“Who was that?” McGee asked him as if he had the right to know.

“None of your business, McNosey.” Tony responded sweetly.

Ziva looked up from her computer. “You seem in a bad mood. Did your latest taste of the month break up with you?”

Tony was on a roll today. “You know what? It’s flavour and you’re not very observant, are you?” He challenged but said nothing else, he simply returned to his paperwork.

Gibbs hadn’t bothered to look up from his own desk and Tony just didn’t care any longer.

~*~

An hour later and Gibbs was now paying attention. “What brings the JAG with his two chief attack lawyers here?”

Tony had never really listened to Gibbs’ rule 13, a bit tricky when not only was he involved with a lawyer but married to one. He twirled the golden band on his finger that he’d openly worn to work today. He smirked. “You know they're the ones who often prosecute our cases?”

Gibbs shrugged. “True, but there’s no good to come of a situation where an Admiral is that angry.”

Tony chuckled and he’d been quietly packing his desk up. He’d done it so slowly as not to draw attention to the fact. “You would be right about that, boss.”

“You know what is going on?” Ziva said astutely.

Tony shrugged playing the innocent party for now. “I’ve been on board a ship for the last ten weeks. How could I know what’s going on? You’ve been back longer than I have.” He reminded them sharply.

Gibbs looked at the top of the staircase and noticed the stony look on Vance’s face. He could guess that the big chair wasn’t as fun as it looked. Too bad.
The meeting was lasting a long time and Tony kept calmly working through the SFA paperwork. It really helped that he knew this would be the last time. He was having to use his UC experience to stop the giddiness he felt from showing. He let himself get so absorbed in the paperwork that he lost track of the time.

His stomach growled and there was a voice that chuckled next to him. “I guess a husband should buy you lunch.”

_Huh, so that was what you needed to say to make the bullpen silent._

Tony grinned, ignoring the shocked looks and gasps. _Idiots._ He’d been wearing his wedding band all morning and no one had even blinked at it. Tony did reply to Harm though, just to make sure there was no doubt. “Sorry. You’re to blame. I built up an appetite last night.”

The suggestive words made McGee blush and Ziva’s face looked as stormy as it ever did. Harm rolled his eyes. “Come on, let’s go and get lunch. Where are your things? Vance is now aware of the transfer.”

Tony yanked open his desk and picked up his navy go bag. He’d stolen it from Harm but it had helped him on the Seahawk to have a subtle reminder of his husband. “Then let’s go.”

“Now hang on a minute, you got some explaining to do!” Gibbs all but roared. Tony stood tall and ready to face the team and say the things he needed to say. “Like what?”

“You think you’re leaving us? Not until I say so.” Gibbs said as if he had the god given right to control his career.

Tony snorted because Gibbs was about to sorely be disappointed. “Nope sorry, I’m a Homeland agent as of midday today. Try another one. And Gibbs - let’s face it, you still blame me for following Jenny’s orders and respecting her wishes. Funny, you don’t blame Ziva the same way.”

“And what is that supposed to mean?” Ziva demanded to know, voice dripping with venom.

Rabb was the one to reply to Ziva. “Sorry, but he was taken long before you tried to get your claws into him. Don’t take it too hard that your training failed you. I was already married to him before you arrived.”

She flushed with anger. “You are trying to make us believe you are gay? There is no one here that believes you.”

Tony smirked. “You know what’s cute, Ziva? You think I need your validation. The Seahawk let me reevaluate many things and look at my life through a lens and I realised several things ... So thanks to the support of Harm, I made some changes.”

McGee frowned but added with an almost sneer. “You don’t want to be here? You’re Gibbs loyal St Bernard.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “You know the trait you are sneering at is loyalty but it has to work from both sides.”
Gibbs looked away for a second so Tony knew that barb had hit home. “So you walk from your family?”

Tony was sure that Gibbs didn’t even believe what he’d just said.

Tony chuckled darkly. “You know my history, I’ve had people use that word to try and control me before. It didn’t work too well for them and it won’t work now.” He then turned to Harm. “Where are you thinking for lunch?”

“You cannot ignore me.” All three said in a weird stereo.

Funny. Tony was doing just that as kept his gaze on his husband. Harm shrugged at him. “This isn’t Falls Church. So, you should tell me.”

Tony picked up his coat and his go bag. He picked up the box of medals and handed them to Gibbs. “So long, Gibbs. For what it’s worth, thanks for everything you taught me but I’ve outgrown this place. It’s time to move on.”

Harm’s smile should have been used on a Navy poster to recruit. “That’s the truth.”

And no matter what happened at NCIS - and their multiple changes ahead - Tony kept forging on. He was done hiding who he was and if he ever reverted back, well, Harm would be there to set his course straight and true once again.
Jack Malone was once again a free man. His divorce papers were in his hand. Granted, it wasn’t like he hadn’t been married in all but name for the last few years but it still hurt. Sure, he still had his work and he would always do his best to find the missing people of New York. After all, no one deserved to be lost in society. He still believed that even after this many years.

He drank his whiskey after having yet another run-in with Victor ‘fucking’ Fitzgerald. It wasn’t the man’s nickname but Jack was sure that ninety-nine percent of the people who ran into the man probably spoke about him in the same way.

“You know that is $47 whiskey - you should at least savour it.” A voice added to the side.

Jack turned to face the voice and first noticed the emerald eyes, alight with amusement. “A connoisseur perhaps?”

The man snorted. “Well, I have taste buds so I sure hope so.”

“Many say that and open their mouths and I am disappointed.” Jack responded. It was so true, too. He couldn’t abide people who made out to be more than they were. If you didn’t know something, then admit it and fix it.

The man had a wicked grin, that promised so many things. Jack was reminded that he could appreciate that now he was no longer married. Green eye’s answer was telling. “No one has ever been disappointed with me or my mouth.”

Jack choked out a laugh at the boldness, Jesus, he was out of practice. “I bet. Join me.”

The man slid on to the chair and Jack could appreciate the crisp suit, white shirt that was unbuttoned at the top to leave just a hint of a skin. “So what are celebrating or commiserating?”

“The end of my marriage.” Jack announced as he took another drink.

The man winced. “Youch. So which is it?”

Jack snorted at the way he wasn’t deterred from the conversation. “You know. I think it is a bit of both.”

“I can drink to that.” The guy replied.

Jack found himself offering a name. “I’m Jack Malone.”

Cute guy offered his in return. “Tony DiNozzo. Which Alphabet do you belong to?”

Jack rolled his eyes as it shouldn’t be that obvious. “Do I wear a Fed cologne or something?”

Tony shook his head. “Not quite. I’m NCIS so I know the type.”

“FBI. Missing persons here in New York.”

Tony pouted at that. “Too bad, as you are the first Feebie I’ve liked and I’m based in Washington.”
The night didn’t end there. Tony felt it only fair to help Jack celebrate his freedom with a fun night of no-strings sex. They both agreed it was just a bit of fun to relax and it wouldn’t be anymore. It wasn’t the right time, too much distance between them and Jack had just got out of his marriage.

That didn’t mean that they didn’t keep in contact. In fact, they became a refuge of calm in their respective hectic lives. They often phoned the other to bitch about their days, lend a sympathetic ear, offer an insightful opinion and generally be there for each other. Over time, a strong, respectful friendship solidified between them.

The team in New York noticed it. Vivian, Jack’s second, could see the moment he stopped looking at Agent Samantha Spade with longing. There had always been looks that were unbecoming of a married man but then one day - they just stopped. She knew it couldn’t be the wife - they’d divorced. She guessed there was someone though, Jack kept looking at his phone and smiling.

So there was someone.

~*~

Tony’s colleagues were of a similar opinion. “Who is she?”

Tony looked up from his computer. “Who is who?”

Ziva rolled her eyes. “Your mystery woman.”

Tony smirked at the bold question, only she didn’t have the years of experience at interrogation to ask the right question. “There is no woman, Ziva, and you have reports that need finishing.”

“We don’t believe you.”

Tony looked up and drew a line in the sand. This year had been crap and he was back from being afloat, not to mention that Ziva was keeping secrets that he was sure they were going to blow up in their faces. He was done, though, being her whipping boy because of her family issues.

“You can believe what you like, Officer David. It doesn’t mean your reports can be late. Now I repeat - they are due before you leave so Gibbs and I can sign off on them.”

“I will find out who your girlfriend is.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Well, then, feel free to but I will be just as surprised.”

~*~

Tony was starting to lose his patience. “ Boss, you need to talk to Ziva.”

“Why?”

Tony took a deep breath knowing that he needed to keep his emotions out of it or Gibbs wouldn’t listen. “She is practically stalking me and being far too invasive into my private life. Apart from the fact that she has no right, it’s impacting on her work.”

Ziva flushed as she had honestly believed that Tony would not see her. “You are calmer, happier, it is obvious you are in a new relationship. I want to make sure it does not blow up in front of our mouths.”

Tony stood up and let her have it, it was long past due but needed to be done. How Gibbs responded
would see whether or not he would be handing over the white envelope in the bottom of his drawer.
“Okay, Officer David, let’s settle a few things. You are a work colleague and my partner in work.
That is it. You do not like me and frankly, I am tired of watching you trying to pretend otherwise in
order to manipulate me and everyone else here. I was undercover by order of my Director. I was
following orders, I know you might not understand that but this ends now. I am the SFA and that
does not give you the right to stalk me in my PRIVATE LIFE!”

Gibbs sighed. “You heard the man, Ziva. A man deserves to have his personal life kept private.”

“And if it ends in another potential murder charge?” She said haughtily.

Tony rolled his eyes. “Then you can feel free to be smug and superior but this conversation and your
interference in my private life is over.”

Gibbs looked at his SFA seeing a different side of him. “You okay?”

“Yes, boss.”

Gibbs noted. “Been awhile since you called me that.”

Tony smirked. “Been a while since you’ve just deserved the title. Come around mine and I’ll cook
tonight. I think we need to talk.”

Gibbs nodded, knowing that things had just changed. He could only hope that it was for the better.
He’d felt like something was missing ever since he’d returned from Mexico - only now it was
starting to feel like he was on an even keel.

~*~

Jack was calling Tony, so he put him on speaker as he was preparing dinner. Tony was glad he
called, feeling pretty damn good about his day already. “Hey, you. How’s life in the Big Apple?”

“Same old, same old. Although Victor Fitzgerald seems to have some heat on him.” Jack added,
sounding vaguely amused - with an almost question in his voice.

Tony didn’t stop chopping his vegetables. So his plan had worked then, good. If the next zucchini
was chopped a little more viciously then only he would know. He did fill in Jack on what might have
happened. “Fancy that. It’s like I was talking to a friend of mine here in DC mentioning a few stories
of how Ole’ Vicky seemed to like abusing his position.”

“You did, did you?” Jack responded with definite laughter in his voice.

Tony carried on and finished in an even tone. “I did. I don’t like people I care about being fucked
with - it seemed fair that I returned the pleasure.”

Jack did start chuckling as Tony had more than returned the pleasure and then some. Internal Affairs
were crawling all over Fitzgerald’s office. It was the type of sight that would kill a directorship bid.
For a man like Fitzgerald, that was all he cared for and had sacrificed everything including his
relationship with his son on the altar of ambition.

Jack wasn’t quite sure how he could convey just what Tony had done, saying. “Thank you, Tony,”
felt inadequate but it was true. Jack was grateful that this beautiful man had landed in his life and
kept dragging him back into the world. Tony had helped him even more than he knew. He was a
fool if he didn’t try to pursue this

“No need to be thankful, Jack, I would do it again. You know I was thinking about heading to New York next month.” Tony said in a way that offered him a chance to refuse.

Jack’s voice was warm. “In that case, stay at mine. Seems silly for you to get a hotel room.”

Tony didn’t hide his smile as he was alone in his room. “That’s mighty kind of you.” He didn’t want to read too much into this but he really liked Jack.

Jack chuckled. “No, it’s selfish really. I don’t want to share you.”

“I’ll text you details when I know.” Tony promised, shivering at that possessive tone. It certainly sounded like Jack was ready to take this further. He found himself humming as he completed his food. Life was good and Etta James just fell from his lips with ease. He itched for his piano but he’d savour the freshly prepared food and then spend time on the bench. It struck Tony that he and Jack had messaged each other nearly every day since they’d first met.

So much for no strings attached.- and yet he wasn’t scared. His life was turning in a new direction and Tony found himself eager.
Deeper Underground (Jack Hodgins)

Chapter Notes

Warnings: This is an AU of the episode aliens in a spaceship where Brennan and Hodgins get buried alive.

Jack woke in pain, it was a sharp pain and the air tasted stale. Plus, wow, his leg was killing him. This was bad because the last thing he remembered was chasing after Dr. B.

“Hodgins. Wake up.”

He groaned to show that he was indeed awake, even though right now sleep or unconscious oblivion sounded like a much better option. “What happened?”

He frowned because that was a good question but he couldn’t think clearly. It could be the trauma or something else. Why was his head so woolly? Man, he hated this.

Brennan looked freaked. “The gravedigger must have got us.”

He looked down at his leg and wished he hadn’t. It was mangled, to put it bluntly. There should be no circumstances in where you can see your own bone. That was just freaky. Plus there was another misshapen swollen lump below the open wound.

“I don’t remember.”

He didn’t. The last thing he remembered was kissing Tony goodbye that morning. There was irony, over breakfast they’d spoken about how dangerous Tony’s job was. He was so glad he’d changed Tony to his power of attorney if he was not present or unable to make decisions. He knew there was no way he was going to be able to keep their relationships quiet after this.

~*~

Tony was at work and it was like any other day. Gibbs was riding his ass and Ziva was smiling smugly in her chair at him. He honestly couldn’t care that she was dating Michael or whoever. He was happy in his private life and no one at work had the right to know - well apart from Jimmy.

The phone call had him nearly collapsing. “What the hell happened? He works in a lab, for Christ’s sake.”

The MCRT all stopped what they were doing listening to the conversation. Tony couldn’t care less right now. “Who took him? Don’t lie to me and where have they set up the operation to retrieve him?”

Tony was grabbing his coat and his go bag. He checked his weapon and his mind was racing. This was a case with no leads and very few happy endings. He was damned if he was going to let Jack become a statistic.

“DiNozzo.”
“What?”

Gibbs didn’t look impressed with his attitude, well, Tony hoped the man wasn’t stupid enough to give him a head slap. Today he would get it back with interest. “What the hell is going on?”

Tony took a deep breath. “My partner has been kidnapped by the gravedigger and I am going to help the FBI. Do not get in my way.”

Gibbs was reeling from the idea that Tony had a partner but he could understand a man’s desire to protect his loved one. “Go, I’ll square it with Vance.”

Tony let out a sigh of relief and started running for the stairwell. “Thank you.”

Tony heard Ziva and McGee protesting with Gibbs but right now he had other problems. He jumped in his Mustang and tore off toward the Jeffersonian.

~*~

In the car, Jack woke once more with a groan. “Why do I feel like crap?”

“You got run over, and I think he pumped you full of drugs.” Brennan answered. She’d been cataloguing all the items in the car that they had access to. The water; the broken phones lacking batteries; the camera and the very expensive male cologne.

“That will be why I feel like I got run over.”

She nodded and spoke up about her last concern. “And I think you have compartment syndrome.”

He was trying to think through the problem but his brain hurt, no, his leg was killing him.

“Here, take this.”

He took the ibuprofen gratefully but doubted it was going to help. “So we have ... how long have we been trapped?”

“Two hours.”

Jack groaned but he rubbed his beard trying to get his brain working. “Right, so sixty cubic feet... About ten hours.”

She nodded as that would have been her estimate as well. Her belief was this was in retaliation for them discovering this mistake in the Kent case. This was his way of rectifying it by them having to live it. “He will have made a ransom demand by now.”

Jack groaned. “Tony is going to kill me.”

Brennan smirked. “Is that who the cologne is for?”

Jack nodded. “Yeah, he’s a Navy cop but if a ransom demand is made then he’s the one that they’ll contact.”

Brennan looked pensive. “The compartment syndrome won’t kill you before we run out of air but it
will become more painful.”

Hodgins groaned once again seeing the look in his friend’s eyes. “I’m not going to like this, am I?”

She shook her head. “No.”

Hodgins knew that things were fraught and this wasn’t without risk. “Hand me one of those pens and a page from the book please.”

She handed them over without comment. Jack quickly wrote his note and popped it into his pocket. “I’m ready.”

She looked at him with compassion. “Tell me about your Tony.”

Jack grinned as he’d been dying to say something but the couple had only just discussed going public. It had never been a question of shame but rather circumstances. Tony worked in law enforcement where being openly gay was still not without risk. For Jack, as much as he didn’t discuss it, he was the sole heir of the Cantilever group, which meant something. He was, as he described it, rich to the power of ten squared.

“He’s hot, clever, fun, stylish and for some reason he loves me.”

Brennan smiled softly. “Keep talking, I’m going to need to make a long incision to release the pressure.”

Jack took a deep breath and gripped the roof of the car for something to hold on to. He thought about Tony. “Okay, so Tony’s good points. We met at a party, it was for the rich elite and he was there and looked so bored that I just had to find out why he was there. He looked REALLY good in his tuxedo....” The last was hissed out as a searing pain radiating from his leg made further speech impossible.

She patted his cheek softly. “It’s done. I’m sorry.”

Jack shrugged even though it hurt. “It’s cool, Doc, I think you just saved my life.”

“We have eight hours left before the oxygen runs out. Let’s do our best to get out of here.” Brennan said, resolute. She knew that Booth would do all he could but she had never been the type to sit around and just accept her fate.

Jack maneuvered himself into a vaguely comfortable position so they could work. “Right - what do we have?”

~*~

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Tony was walking into the Jeffersonian in time to hear, “The gravedigger doesn’t do that and why is the ransom so high? Does Dr. Brennan make that much money off her books?”

“No, that would be Jack.” Tony announced his presence to the whole room. He didn’t like the guy sitting next to the expert.

Booth looked up. “Agent DiNozzo, how can I help you?”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Jack is my fiance, Booth. Now, I’m here as his representative no matter what
Booth saw the flash in the other attorney’s eye. There was something wrong there and it stuck in his craw that he couldn’t explain it. “Let me catch you up to speed.”

He left the people in that room to argue amongst themselves. He would apologise later to Cam, for leaving her but Tony just might be the break he needed. He had the eggheads working the forensics but now he had an investigator to bounce ideas off.

~*

Jack awoke from a brief nap. “What you doin’ doc?”

“Using the horn and seeing if I can’t jerry-rig a battery for us to send a message.”

Jack shook his head. “You’ll need a resistor as there is too much power in the battery.”

“Smart.”

Hodgins chuckled. “So what message do we send?”

“A message to Booth? Or your Tony?”

Jack thought about it but he was sure that Tony would have no doubt joined the investigation by now. “Booth, Tony will be there anyway. We need to give them a clue to our location.”

“How we are underground surrounded by dirt?” Brennan responded. It wasn’t said with fear just a statement of facts.

“Dirt ... is so vague.”

Brennan smirked handing him a pile of the dirt. “So tell me something specific.”

Jack looked at the dirt separating out the fragments and meticulously cataloging them by eye. “We have Ash, Nitrogen, and Sulphur. Therefore I’d say we’re in bituminous coal country, I’d say Virginia.”

It was impressive to pick up all of that just from soil but they both knew it would still be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. She looked annoyed. “We need more.”

“OK. I’ll show you impressive.” Jack replied with renewed hope. This would not be the day he died. He needed to marry Tony and be outrageous. He started rummaging around for anything else he could use to narrow their location down.

~*~

Tony knew Vega’s type and he was tired of him hanging around. He didn’t need to know about previous encounters. “Why are you here?”

“The Cantilever group asked for my insight.”

Tony smirked. “No I didn’t and when it comes to Jack Hodgins’ life ... they have to bow to me. Now unless you have something that can help me find my fiance - get out .”
Vega had a protest on his lips but it died, seeing the twin glares of Booth and Tony. He scuttled out of the office. “I was going to threaten him some more first.” Booth whined.

Tony smiled weakly. “Sorry for stealing your fun.”

Booth shrugged and his attention was drawn to his phone. There was a message, random too so many but it must mean something to Jack and Brennan. God, he hoped it did.

“What the hell does this mean?” Tony looked at it and to his mind - it would be a problem that Abby would like. “Looks chemical possibly.”

Booth thought about it, “A message to Zach maybe.”

~*~

Between Booth’s frustration and Tony’s logic leaps, they figured it out but any joy at figuring out their location was almost lost in seeing the scope of what they still faced. They were surrounded by silt and there were no obvious markings to signify a recently dug area.

Booth watched DiNozzo stand on the ridge, his eyes searching everything. He would do the same. “Span out, look for anything out of place.”

The two men saw it at the same time, the puff of air in the distance. Tony and Seeley raced to that section. Tony didn’t think about his lungs and he was betting Seeley felt none of his injuries either.

They dug at the ground with their bare hands and Seeley grabbed a hand. It was a miracle. They pulled Brennan out first but Tony kept shovelling. He now had help as the rest of the Jeffersonian were with him.

He grabbed onto Jack’s hand and pulled with all his might. He saw Jack’s curly hair and hand first. He kept pulling and Jack came out looking severely beat up. Tony was reminded that that bastard had run Jack over him. His eyes were closed.

Tony whispered. “Come on, baby. Don’t be dead.”


“Right here, Jack.”

Jack patted Tony’s cheek and fell back asleep only this time there was a smile on his face.

~*~

It was all over the TV, the rescue of Dr. Brennan and her co-worker. To Tony’s and Booth’s fury one of the local PD had leaked the story to the press and there was a tv crew who had captured their rescue live on camera. So bang went any more undercover work.

He was sitting at the edge of the very luxurious private hospital bed. “Oh, no, you don’t.”

Jack shook his head. “I’m ready to go home.”

Tony carefully joined him on the bed, mindful of the recently operated on leg. “When a qualified medical doctor agrees then I will believe it. Please, Jack, for me.”
Jack whispered. “I think when I fall asleep that I’m going to wake up back in that car.”

Tony sighed knowing he had a new mission and damn it, he was probably going to have to join the FBI in order to do it. “Babe, I am not going anywhere. Anyone tries to hurt you ... they will have to come through me and I will shoot them in the head before I let them hurt you.”

“You’ll be here in the morning?”

“You’ll be here in the morning?”

“Wild horses won’t move me. Tomorrow and every day after that until you’re sick of me.”

Jack snuggled into his chest. “Yeah, that’ll never happen.”

*It turns out that the very careful and meticulous grave digger made a critical mistake. They hurt Tony DiNozzo’s fiance and he was pissed. He hunted down the woman, chasing down every scrap of evidence collected from the old and new case. It was a surprise for some as she was so against the typical profile. For one, she was a woman and a United States Attorney. So that was awkward - when it came to prosecuting. Tony, however, had ensured that the evidence against her was completely watertight and sat with Jack in the courtroom. Together they watched as she was sentenced, holding hands with matching rings glinting on their fingers.*
“Grandma, please tell me you haven’t taken a job in the US?” Tony asked, trying not to whine. He was reminding himself that he was the SFA of the premier MCRT of a federal agency and that it was beneath him to resort to whining. Then again, no one else had such a deadly grandmother.

Victoria Winslow popped her head out of the flower basket she was arranging. “Oh, Anthony dear, you worry too much.”

Tony sighed because he really didn’t. “You have Mossad twitchy for crying out loud.” He’d had to use all his training not to react when Eli David mentioned that Victoria Winslow had accepted a contract on one of his allies. Funnily enough, he’d begged time off on family grounds the day after. The minute it was granted he headed to Eagles Nest to find out what was going on in his grandmother’s mind. He was well aware she got bored and took jobs on the side since retiring but she wasn’t usually so blatant about it.

Victoria sniffed because she wasn’t scared of that thug, Eli David. He would always be an amateur in her eyes. “You know I offered to take out that stupid harridan daughter of his for you. I’d simply consider it your Christmas present this year.”

Tony groaned because this was an old argument. He couldn’t deny that just after Kate’s death, oh, how he’d been tempted. He instead went with, “You taught me everything I needed to know to take her out on my own, thanks.”

She smirked at that because he wasn’t wrong. “I suppose I did. Do the three dunderheads you work with still think you’re a clown?”

“Better a clown than a trained assassin, grandma.” Tony countered. There was a reason for his mask - you don’t suspect the charming, likable guy. He always made sure that the others felt like they were cleverer than him. All the better to be underestimated.

“You know I don’t like that term.” Victoria sniffed.

Tony had a cheeky grin even as he handed over a few roses, “Which one? Grandma or assassin.”

Both froze, hearing a car coming up the driveway. Victoria reached for the gun in the flower basket while Tony was the one to venture closer to the window. He groaned. “It’s Uncle Frank and some guests!”

“Guests? He doesn’t have friends.” Victoria could admit she was puzzled, this would be intriguing. Tony shrugged as he hadn’t seen much of Frank since the man took retirement. “Do I let them in?”

Victoria grinned. “It’s been a while and I am bored. You did say you’d taken a week at work for a family emergency.”

Tony was wondering if he should have taken a vacation instead.

~*~

“Tony!”
Tony smiled and stepped closer, not letting go of his gun. He was glad to see the old crowd but he wasn’t naive or stupid. “Hey, Uncle Frank, good to see you. So, who’ve you bought with you?”

“Marvin, Joe and this is Sarah.” He introduced his guests and then grimaced as the bullet was still in his shoulder. “Is Vicky here?”

Tony nodded and was sympathetic. “Come on, let’s get you cleaned up.”

Frank took the offered hand and Tony helped him up the steps with the motley crew following him. “It’s Uncle Frank, Marvin, and Joe with Uncle’s girlfriend by the look of it.”

Victoria peeked out and put the gun down. “Girlfriend, you say? You sly old dog. Well done you. Now let’s look at your shoulder while you tell me just who managed to put a bullet in you... you really are getting old. Aren’t you Frank?”

Marvin’s ability to say something deadpan and yet so perfect was alive and well. “Wow, she just went right for your balls. You okay?”

“He’s still bleeding.” The girlfriend said, alarmed.

Tony guided her to a chair. He could tell just by how rigid she was that she was not used to this life. Christ, Frank had found himself a civilian girlfriend.

Victoria was poking around his shoulder. “So who left you with the gift?”

Frank sighed. “Name’s Cooper. He’s CIA, damn good and trained by Kordeski. Wears a suit though, a lot like Tony in some ways.”

Tony perked up. “Single?”

Frank grunted. “Didn’t get a chance to swap life stories while we destroyed his office.”

Tony looked disappointed but was only teasing the man. “The more important question is what job did you all pull that requires your termination?”

There was deathly silence as they thought long and hard about it. “We pulled three jobs together for the agency.”

Marvin groaned, throwing his head against the bright pink pig he was clutching. To anyone else, it would look like Marvin was crazy. In fairness, he was crazy but Marvin used it as a way to hide weapons. “It will be the Nicaraguan one, remember, we had to go in and clean up after Stanton.”

Tony stared open-mouthed, not his finest moment. “You mean the Vice-President candidate, Robert Stanton?”

“Yeah, he was a snot-nosed kid, who was way too trigger happy.” Marvin informed the group as a whole. It made a lot of sense.

Tony pinched his nose. “So now because he wants to be VP, you three have been tagged RED?”

Victoria took control and she was very glad that her grandson had paid her a visit. He would have legitimate contacts he could work, whereas she had the less legitimate network she could exploit. “Seems that way. Tony, reach out to your cousin, find out about Frank’s hound. I want to know how good he is, and see if there is anything that we can get in order for the agency to change their mind.”
Tony sighed as he thought about his cousin Trent, who was annoying in the extreme. How else would you view a cousin who said hello using a car bomb? “If he blows up my car, you’re buying me a new one.”

“Of course, I always do.”

~*~

Tony saw the photo come through and damn, he definitely wouldn’t mind a ride on that agent. The hair, the physique, the marine bearing, the eyes. Tony couldn’t help but say. “I would not mind a ride on him.”

“Careful, he shoots people.” Uncle Frank reminded him.

“So do I ...if you ask really nicely.” Tony finished with a wicked smirk. He looked just like his grandmother with that smile.

Sarah was aghast. “You find that sexy?”

Tony smirked wickedly. “Sweetheart, he can shoot, he is hot and can keep up with Uncle Frank. That is beyond sexy.”

Frank just glared but Tony was unrepentant. Plus, the guy knew how to wear a suit. “I could always distract him while you go and get the files.”

Uncle Joe was staring at him like he was simple. “You don’t just break into the CIA, even if you pretend all you want to be is an NCIS agent.”

Tony rolled his eyes as it was an old argument. There was a reason he was at NCIS, it suited him. He got to have fun but his performances weren’t scrutinised as closely as they would be at one of the major alphabet agencies.

“Plus, Trent is going to get them for you. It’s his sorry fault that I blew your car gift.”

~*~

Tony stayed in Eagles Nest as his grandmother showed the others the exit not visible to satellite images. He took the time to swim, cook and relax. He hadn’t known he needed it. It should have been obvious; the masks at work had become brittle. This time was vital in recharging his mental batteries.

The kicking in of the door, while he was experimenting with a new passata recipe, was rude.

“Hey, I’m cooking, asshole.”

The hot agent burst through the door. He’d come on his own this time and it was obvious that he hadn’t escaped the encounter with Uncle Frank unscathed. “Who the fuck are you?”

“The cook” Tony sneered. “Who the fuck are you? And haven’t you heard of a thing called a doorbell?”


“Not here, she asked me to house sit. Can I help you with something? I make a mean pancake.” as
his eyes raked up and down the fine specimen in front of him. He was even better in real life. Tony was not disappointed.

“You’re not just a housesitting cook.” He responded. So he was observant too, this was getting too much for Tony.

Tony smirked right back. “Right you are but you are still not asking the right question.”

“And what would that be?”

Tony’s smirk grew. “Are you telling me that I have to do your job for you?”

Cooper snarled. “No, of course not. I am looking for Frank Moses.”

Tony shrugged. “Well, he is not here, just little ole’ me.”

Cooper was still on guard. “And if I look around?”

Tony just gestured. “Go ahead. Do you want any pancakes or not? Seems like you’ve had a hectic and damaging day.”

“I order you to tell me your name!”

Tony looked up exasperated. “Do they not teach you manners at the Farm?”

This was getting weirder and weirder. Cooper was starting to get unsettled. “And what would you know?”

Tony grinned crookedly. “I occasionally work with you cowboys. Now,” and he sighed exaggeratedly. “You’ve still yet to figure out the right question.”

“They’ve all left.” Cooper stated.

Tony served him a plate of food. “That was not a question but yes, yes they have.”

“Who do you work for?” Cooper had picked up on his deliberate slip. He was eying the plate of food as if it was poisoned.

Tony was upset by the very idea - he’d never poison his cooking. He grabbed a still warm pancake off the plate. “NCIS, now don’t forget the syrup it just adds something to the flavour.” Tony’s smirk turned wicked. “It’s not like we won’t burn the calories.”

~*~

“A company is not a name.” Will remarked and he ate a pancake as, bizarrely, he felt this conversation would go no further until he did. Why was this case so odd? Nothing was going as he expected.

Green eyes chuckled. “My friends call me, Tony.”

“Are you being deliberately obtuse?” Will demanded to know.

“Yes, you just look so sexy as you get riled.” Tony remarked, bold as he was gorgeous. William just ran a hand through his hair. “Okay, why don’t you explain to me what the hell is going on?”
Tony slid onto a seat at the breakfast bar and did just that. “Okay, prepare for story time.”

Will’s head was spinning. So the three retired RED agents were marked for execution just so Stanton’s path to VP was clear. This reeked and he was not a CIA agent to be a personal hitman for anyone. “I should go and stop them.” Will whispered.

Tony leaned in closer. “Or you could debrief me, thinking I have vital information and by that time... Stanton will have been exposed and you will have been laid. What’s to lose?”

William Cooper was not a stupid man, he was following a lead or at least that is how he would justify it to the CIA. Tony led to Victoria Winslow and she led to Frank Moses. “You shouldn’t tease a man.”

Tony closed the distance before him, kissing him boldly on his lips. “Who’s teasing?”

Will pulled him onto his lap. “And do you have information pertinent to my case?”

Tony was undoing his shirt. “Maybe - but I am nowhere near convinced enough to let you hear it. And I am trained to resist torture so what are you going to do?”

William’s answer was to pick Tony up and haul him onto the counter. Tony groaned and decided taking the week off was just the best idea.

Will did not disappoint one bit.

~*~

“TONY! You better clean the counter.”

William woke to his new lover standing up, somehow covering himself with an artfully placed flowerpot. His eyes widened slightly at the small machine gun he could see.

“Grandma, you’re back.”

William was glad he was lying on the floor or he may have ended back up. Jesus Christ, he’d slept with Victoria Winslow’s grandson. It was either brave or stupid.

Tony stood up grabbed the towel from the side. “Come on, Will. Let’s go upstairs out of the way of the Uncles, you never want to know what they’re plotting. We still work for the government.”

Will looked at Tony and decided that was a wise course of action. Of course, William and Tony wouldn’t always work for the government and took Victoria’s offer to come and work for her private firm. Way more action, no idiots although they were some crazy workers (everyone loved Marvin though) - Best of all, no fraternization rules as Victoria wanted Tony to be happy.

William didn’t need to know Victoria’s history or the fact Tony’s granddad is the ex-head of the KGB. He would always treat Tony right, just do not mention the trip that he took with Victoria to NCIS - Tony would never approve.
Mike didn’t regret returning as the Head of Security for the Presidential Detail after the attack on the White House. **He didn’t.** He’d proved to any doubters that he was the one capable of doing it against all odds. He’d rescued the President in the midst of the worst crisis the country had ever seen. It had been him against forty terrorists and amazingly he hadn’t died.

Only today, he was wondering how he was going to explain to Tony that he was missing their engagement party again. As daft as it sounded, he’d take terrorists any day over disappointing his fiance.

In Mike’s defense, it was not like he could have predicted the death of the English Prime Minister after routine surgery. As a consequence, there would be a State Funeral where President Benjamin Asher, his principal, would be expected to attend along with every other powerful leader in the world. The vein in his forehead was starting to throb just thinking about the logistical nightmare. *This was a clusterfuck waiting to happen.*

The President looked sheepish, knowing about the engagement party. “I’m sorry, Mike. Can we make it work? It won’t look good if I refuse the visit.”

Mike sighed, looking at his boss and saw the frustrated look of resignation on her face. “We can, we always do. Now my engagement party is another matter.”

Asher snorted because it was still amusing to see the homophobes try and tell Mike he wasn’t a *real* man because he loved another man. The best part was, Mike’s partner, Tony, was a Federal Agent and also took no shit. “Bring him with you, take him around London after the service.”

“Sir?” Mike wanted to make sure that he understood his President.

Ben smirked. “Well, seems the least I can do after ruining your party again. I can’t get in the way of the nation’s favourite couple ... my ratings will plummet.”

And that was still weird. After the attack on Olympus, Tony had met him at the gates and kissed him for all the world to see. It had repercussions, Tony had been promoted out of the MCRT as it had been impossible with the media coverage for him to continue. Oh, and for about eighty percent of the country, they’d become a poster couple for the government. “I’ll let him know, Sir.”

There was an upside to Tony being with them in London. He could smooth ruffled feathers with MI6 as Mike was sure a cousin or two of Tony’s worked there. After all, they were going to be pissed when he changed the precious schedule on them and had Air Force One arrive early.

~*~

Tony boarded Air Force One with Director Jacobs, Mike’s boss at the Secret Service. “Hey, Madame Director.”

She had a soft smile for him. Tony knew he was one of her favourites for helping Mike recover from his traumatic accident. Outwardly, all she said was. “Agent DiNozzo, I hear I have you to thank for soothing ruffled feathers in London.”

Tony shrugged his shoulders as it wasn’t a big deal. “Mike asked me to reach out to some of my cousins.”

She chuckled because she was well aware of how difficult that could be. “Well, sorry we messed up
Tony snorted and let her into a little secret. “We’re not, ma’am, Mike and I would have preferred to stay in. Now we can blame President Asher ... tongue in cheek of course.”

She smirked and motioned. “Welcome aboard Air Force One and let’s see if by the end of this I can’t steal you for the Secret Service.”

Tony laughed as Lynne was a monthly guest to dinner at his and Mike's place. “You will make Vance pout, and he likes making me play politics for him.”

That was another change since the Olympus has Fallen events. He’d performed a little too well and calmly under pressure. Vance had boosted him to troubleshooter, and the title of Assistant Director. It was past time, as Gibbs had pointed out, and Tony had flourished in the role.

~*~

Tony was in his cousins’ apartment as he had no interest in attending the funeral. It would be a security nightmare as it was and he had no interest in making Mike have a bigger headache than necessary. He was watching the events unfold on TV on the news channel. Tony saw Mike tense and knew something was wrong. Sure enough, Mike pulled the President down just before the chaos exploded around them.

And boy did it.

Tony saw the boat explode on the Thames and knew that was the one with French President on it; then the German Chancellor was gunned down.

It was not over.

Tony watched as Mike protected the President with his body but at least he still had his weapons. People were falling all around them. Mike stood up tall and proud and was fighting his way back to the car. Tony knew he had to get to Mike and the President. He was also relieved to see Lynne was still alive.

Tony groaned when the terrorist took out a plane as well so they had SAM’s. This was so bad. Tony knew the emergency exit was using a chopper and that would not work. They needed to get the President off the streets and preferably out of London. The first trick, get a message to Mike.

It was time to be the Wild Card.

Tony took a deep breath and got to work. He picked a burner phone, knowing that Mike would have its twin. His message was brief and not one that could be easily deciphered if it was intercepted. He was so glad that he and Mike had been paranoid enough to set up their own cypher now. Eight keystrokes was all it took (123.421 pd) and then he ditched the phone.

Tony knew Mike would understand the message. It was a risk but it was a safe house he’d set up in London, there were multiple safe exits including the underground and would allow them to regroup. The terrorists were turning the streets into a shootout scene from a western movie so time to get out of there before it turned into the Alamo.

~*~

Mike dragged the President through the doors of the safe-house. He was high on adrenaline and grief.
for having lost Lynne. “Hey, babe.”

Mike didn’t care too much about protocol right now, he kissed his partner for all he was worth. Even if he was giving the leader of the free world a bit of a show. He knew Tony would have something for him so as soon as he broke the kiss he was asking. “What the fuck is happening?”

Tony gave him a report of what he knew. “Terrorists. The Bawkarwari family are claiming responsibility. They want to wipe out those responsible for the bombing of their house. It’s how they’re phrasing it - not shy to brag about it all over YouTube”

President Asher paled because he’d been the one to push for it at the Security Council. “All this because of the attack on their stronghold.”

Tony stood tall and beat Mike to the punch. He had a feeling it wouldn’t be the last time that they would be saying this. The President was a good man and that meant he would agonise over the tough decisions. “Don’t go there, Sir. They are murdering terrorist scumbags it is their damage, not yours.”

“But look.” Asher pointed out of the window at all the carnage, the smoke, and fires visible in the background.

Tony did look but only to secure the windows, shutting the curtains so as not to advertise their position to anyone who might get lucky driving past their street. “This is not the first time the city has been attacked. The country has a motto for times like this, Churchill summed it up with *never surrender*. The people will rebuild - we need to make sure you stay alive.”

Mike was checking all the weapons Tony had stashed in the safe house and was pleasantly surprised. After all, it was to his level of paranoia and he could wage a war against a small country with the arsenal in front of him. “I fucking love you.”

The President stared at him and Mike didn’t even bother to look sheepish. Tony lightened the mood. “Was it the grenades or the rifles?”

“All of it.” He finished with a crooked grin.

Tony smirked because food would never be the way to Mike’s heart but rather weapons. Tony did explain where they came from. “I reached out to the cousins and they stocked this safe-house for me, it is uber-safe. Only the Quartermaster at MI6 knows about this place.”

The President relaxed as he saw Mike relax. In fact, he spoke up, “Is this the bit where I say I am really glad I crashed your engagement party?”

Tony snorted. “Well, this beats picking out a cake.”

“You cannot let them take me alive, Mike.” Asher said, all too serious. It was rolling around in his mind. He would not be broadcast around the world to further their sick and twisted agenda.

Mike hissed and pulled away, Tony knew he was flashing back to the events of the winter car-crash. Tony was the one to say the words knowing Mike never would be able to say it. He would do the deed if only absolutely necessary. “You won’t be but it won’t come to that, Sir.”

Asher didn’t believe them - and that was okay. The circumstances sucked and they weren’t going to get any better. Tony had bought them time but they needed to sort out a plan.

“So who do we trust?” Asher asked, changing the subject.
Mike chuckled darkly. “Right now, I trust us three.”

Tony snorted because that wouldn't be too different to how he would feel if they weren’t under attack. “Yeah, and we don’t know how far they’ve infiltrated communications.”

The President sighed. “So what do we do? Wait here until they figure it out?”

Tony shook his head as this was only ever meant to be a temporary reprieve to take stock and regather their thoughts and weapons. “I have a suggestion but Mike is going to hate my guts.”

“Not the Holmes’, please. I cannot take the seriously crazy part of your family.” Mike actually pleaded. Funnily, Asher had always wondered what it would take to break his agent. He never imagined it would be the future in-laws.

“Sherlock and Myc are not that bad and Q is the one responsible for the toys in this flat.” Tony reminded him.

Asher put a hand on Mike’s shoulder. “Explain it to me.” He hoped to cut out the potentially very domestic argument he could see brewing.

Tony took a deep breath. “Mycroft has a ridiculous amount of power and connections in Britain. If anyone can get you the right hidden connection to anyone back home it will be Myc.”

Asher didn’t see an alternative because as crazy as it sounded - right now, terrorists were ruling London and needed to be swept out by the army. Asher deliberated for a few seconds. “Do it, but I want a gun.”

“Yeah Mike, give the President a gun.” Tony said with a grin, knowing it would make his fiance’s head explode with pressure. Any distraction right now would be good.

~*~

Mycroft answered on the second ring. “Anthony now is not a good time, surely you’ve seen the news.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Myc, I’m in London and I have Mike and Ben with me, I need a safe exit or a plan. I don’t want to risk the standard channels and neither does Mike. Hence the call.”

“You have Ben with you, do you?”

Tony knew he’d catch on, didn’t grace his question with an answer. “Yeah, you know he’s a friend of Mike’s. You also know this is the type of favour you adore to accrue.”

“I will be in touch through Q.”

Tony finished his phone call and immediately destroyed another phone. It was a good job that Q had left twenty of the burner phones in a drawer.

The President was pacing. “Just who is your cousin?”

Tony looked sheepish. “My mother is a Paddington and in England that name carries weight. A lot of weight. Mycroft Holmes is one branch of the family and inside the family, he is often referred to as the British Government.”

Asher was shocked. “The Fixer.”
Tony shrugged. “Some may call him that. I trust him implicitly. His reach in the UK is scary and if there is anyone who can get us out of here - he’s the guy to do it.”

Asher ran his hands through his hair. “The Pentagon will be going out of its mind.”

Tony knew this. “I’m aware, Sir.”

Mike stepped in. “Ben, right now our care and priority is your safety. We’ll settle any arguments when we’re all back home safe and sound.”

Asher appreciated the calm confidence and had to smile because with Mike it wasn’t an empty promise. He knew his agent, the man would move heaven and earth to make it happen. “When we get back home, I’m marrying you both in the Rose Garden and anyone who wants to tell me I can’t - can go fuck themselves.”

Tony smirked as he rather liked that idea, plus, it would save him and Mike from people who wanted to plan their wedding. “Sounds like a plan.”

~*~

They withdrew from London using the tunnels, not the underground tunnels used by the metro system but rather the world war two tunnels. It was unpredictable and a plan that not even the Bawkarwari family could plan for.

Tony took the back, whilst Mike took the front - the president was sandwiched between them.

“This tunnel stinks.” Asher commented.

Mike smirked. “I’ve been in worse.”

Tony added helpfully. “Yeah, I mean at least I’m not handcuffed to a serial killer this time.”

The President whispered. “You’re kidding me.”

Tony shook his head. “No, Sir. It has been suggested on my appraisals that my life resembled a Hollywood script.”

“Well, let’s make sure we get a happy ending then.” Asher said, resolutely.

The noise ahead meant all froze and were alert. There was no harm, it was just a rat. They didn’t lower their weapons though.

“How much further?” Asher whispered.

“Two miles, Sir.” Mike’s grin could be seen even in the dimly lit tunnel. “Aren’t you glad for our daily runs now?”

Tony could only imagine the looks they would get. The respect and camaraderie between Mike and the President couldn’t be faked.

“I suppose I am.” The President replied.

An hour later, they reached the gate between them and freedom. Tony hoped they had friendlies in front of them. It was supposed to be Mike’s old buddies Delta Force. Looks traded between all three of them. They knew this was important and could be deadly for them.

“Been a pleasure gentleman.”
Tony smirked. “Likewise but Sir, you promised to marry us, and I intend to collect.”

Mike had a wicked grin on his own face. “I’m with him. Let’s finish and then find Bawkarwari and blow him to kingdom come.”

~*~

“Dearly beloved we are gathered here today because I am President and I called rank.” Ben started tongue in cheek but being President meant he could get away with saying things like that.

He waited for the gentle laughter to die down before he continued. “These two extraordinary men wish to make a commitment to each other. I have had the privilege to see their talent and their love for each other firsthand during my trip to London.”

Mike and Tony were just grinning at each other, lost to the world. Mike trusted the people running the security - mainly because it was his friends from Delta-Force. Tony looked into the crowd and his three cousins were there - Mycroft, Sherlock, and Q along with their plus ones. It seemed only fair considering they were the ones who’d helped spirit the President out of the country under the noses of the terrorists who still had a stranglehold on the city.

It had worked but yet again, there had been upheaval in Tony’s life.

For one, he was married - that he was okay with. He loved Mike stupid and was more than happy to make the commitment. There was the question of succeeding Lynne Jacobs. President Asher would accept only one of two people and Mike refused to stop guarding Ben personally. So that’s right, Tony now answered to Director - fuck his life, to quote Mike but he wouldn’t change a damn thing.
Playing our Roles (Jay Halstead)

Chapter Notes

Played by Jesse Lee Sofer

The PD was in shock, one of their own had been kidnapped at the drop. This was the worst possible outcome they could have had. Voight knew that with Derek Keyes as the kidnapper it was only a matter of a time until they started to get the videos of his detective being tortured. He hit the wall. Stupid maybe, but it was a release of tension.

“How do we get him back?”

Olinsky knew this was not going to end well. “I’ve reached out to some contacts. I just hope he’s available.”

“Who? Halstead’s been gone three hours. What do we know?” Voight was losing patience.

Tony decided now was as good as time as any to introduce himself. “Well, I’m here and I would love to know the answer to that question myself. All I know is I have orders to rescue one damsel detective.”

Voight stared in disbelief. The guy was wearing Armani and screamed Federal Agent. He had yet to see a reason why this guy would be able to do what he said. “He’s been kidnapped by Derek Keyes, the Chicago Heroin Kingpin.”

Tony stood toe to toe with Voight and everyone was holding their breath. They were not sure who this guy was but he had balls if he could stand up to the Sergeant. “Do you know what they say about cops and criminals?”

“No, enlighten me.”

“There is a fine line. What drives our personalities is the same, we just simply chose different sides in the profession. Thankfully, you have guys like me who can flip between the blurred lines but I know which side I’m from. Now, I need a place to change as I came straight from the office. I’m sure Detective Olinsky can clue you into my background.”

Kevin Atwater, the youngest detective, showed him the changing area that was designated for them alone.

Voight waited for the guy to leave. “What the fuck? Who the fuck is that?”

Alvin smirked. “That is the best undercover agent in Washington. I called my markers in so that he could get Jay back. Play nice as he is our best chance.”

“Just like that?” Voight didn’t hide his disbelief. He was never a fan of fairy tales.

~*~
Kevin was leaning against the door and just talking. It was what he did. He used his charm to get the suspects to tell all they knew. He was well aware that it was a good skill, one he suspected that would do him no good right now.

“So - jeans, boots and hair gel?”

This Tony looked up. “Well, no, there is a bit more to it. Think of these as the props. Nearly 98% of a person’s perceptions are made up before you even open your mouth. I can hardly pretend I’m a thug if I turned up in Armani and loafers. Well, that’s not true. I wouldn’t be a good henchman as it would imply that I don’t like to get my hands dirty.”

“You’ve kept the Rolex.” Kevin pointed out. He was keen to learn and he could sense this guy was a fountain of knowledge.

“That’s true and when we go back up to the team, you’ll understand why. Characters and legends need to grow with time ... if you don’t burn them. The good legends you should always keep active if possible, they can come in handy.”

Tony looked one last time in the mirror. His shirt was still high-quality but a workable one. The desert boots replaced the loafers. You could get dirty in these boots, they spoke to a man not afraid to get his hands dirty.

Voight looked more intrigued and less hostile seeing their undercover prospect when he walked back in the room. He could see the way Dawson and Burgess were startled. “Okay, so let me show you the situation.”

Tony didn’t flinch at the images of their detective being tortured. He couldn’t. If he was Antonio DeMarini, then he would be looking closer, looking to see if he could inflict more damage. He was a perfectionist and ruthless. At least, that was how he played it last time.

“Your boy ex-forces?” Tony asked, trying to understand just how quickly he needed to work. The quicker he acted, the riskier it was but he wouldn’t risk the mental health of any agent if they were not trained to handle torture. There was a difference between told to expect it and being trained to withstand it.

“Army Ranger, he can hold out.” Olinsky answered.

Tony had one more question. “Is he good with going with the flow and picking up subtle hints.”

Olinsky nodded. “Yeah, he’ll go with whatever picture you paint. Now tell me you can get him out.”

Tony rubbed his face. “Well, Agent Anthony DiNozzo would be shot on sight ... but Antonio DeMarini would be able to walk through his door.”

Dawson frowned. “DeMarini - as in the baseball bat maker.”

Tony had a sharkish grin. “It is the weapon I favoured when I was under with the Mob. The boss found it funny too.”

Ruzek frowned. “The boss?”

“Don Malculso, he was the Head of the Family I was hunting.” Tony answered and even his accent was morphing. He normally didn’t talk about his past exploits. He’d took a measure of Sergeant Voight though, and knew he played closer to the line than even Gibbs. He needed Voight to see him
as a guy who could get the job done, or he would become a hindrance.

Voight understood a hell of a lot more just by that simple sentence. “What do you need from us to get our boy back?”

“An address.”

~*~

Keyes was looking at his latest asset and wondering just what he should do. He was in a catch twenty-two, he’d kept and tortured a cop. It was bound to rile the forces and they would be pressuring him. He couldn’t kill the idiot, he’d had the sense to give the cop some first-aid, mainly as it would look better if this went south.

“What made you think it was a good idea to keep him alive?” Keyes hissed at his son.

“You know it happened too fast! Besides you are using it to trade for stuff from the cops.”

Derek smacked his son for the cheek. “I am only doing that to buy time. I need a plan and a good one.”

“Boss, there is a knock at the door.” His bodyguard answered. Keyes had picked him for his ability to take a bullet, not for the size of his brain.

“Who the fuck is it and it better not be the cops!?!?”

Halstead was sat on the sofa with his arms tied behind his back. He really wanted to punch Derek Keyes in the face. No, he’d been imaging shooting him in the face. It was therapeutic and keeping his stress levels down.

“He says he’s Antonio Marini and he wants his boy back.”

Derek turned to his little hostage. “Just who the fuck are you?”

Jay didn’t do what he wanted. He wasn’t safe but he was guessing this was a lifeline. “You better let him in. He gets crazy when he doesn’t get his way.”

~*~

Tony waltzed into the very nice home office area that Keyes had made for himself. He could tell that the guy liked to think of himself as a civilised guy. A real businessman but anyone could delude themselves into thinking that.

Tony looked directly at the cop who looked pretty cute even with the damage done to him. “You know, when I said maintain your cover and get close to Voight for me, I did not mean get tortured for the guy. Your loyalty is as it should always be to me.”

Jay gasped. “Sorry, boss. It was a clusterfuck.”

“You’re goddamn right it is.”

Keyes was lost and his mind was whirling. “What do you mean cover?”

Tony sat down next to the trussed up detective and slipped the knife into his hands. To Keyes, Tony
asked a question. “Do you know my reputation?”

Keyes was racing for the facts in his mind. “You worked for the Malculuso’s. Their pet psychopath.”

Tony smirked and added in an exasperated voice like he was aggravated at the way it kept being bought up. “You know, you take your favourite baseball bat to one little meeting and you get a reputation.”

“I think it was what you did with the baseball bat.” Keyes added dryly. He was wishing his gun was not on his desk. He was feeling hunted in his own goddamn house.

Tony shrugged and waved it away. “Anyway, that’s old hat. I started up a protection and security division of my own.”

Keyes understood that reference at least. “Is that what they are calling a racket these days.”

Tony shook his head. “No. I provide legitimate protection for those who pay.”

“And those who don’t - go out of business.”

Tony smirked and said nothing as it was true. The fact those he took out of business were actually criminals and ended up arrested in the resulting takedown was just a happy coincidence.

Keyes sat down opposite this guy. He needed to look him in the eyes, trying to get a feel for his character. This man was too dangerous to have as an enemy. “Explain your boy.”

Tony leaned forward to get Keyes’ whole attention. It was the perfect cover for Halstead to work on his plastic cuffs with the knife he’d slipped him.

“Well, little Jesse was cute. He got out of the army and you know sometimes civilian life is not kind for our brave men. He fell onto his other assets, times were hard and I never judge. After all, he is very talented.”

Keyes was weighing up the scenario. The cop? He didn’t know what to think. The cop had been a rentboy. He could see it. “So how did Jesse become Jay Halstead.”

Tony chuckled darkly. “You mean to say you rose to the top of the heroin pile and you’ve never paid off a cop or two?”

“Point.”

Tony smirked. “A wave of a hand here, a change of a few G’s and Jesse’s record is gone and Jay Halstead is looking for a job and finds a guy who knows a guy, who owes me a favour and I now have a line in to Intelligence in the city I am thinking about expanding into. Only you fucked that up.”

Keyes was stunned. “You sent your little boyfriend into Chicago for two years as a staging ground for expanding operations.”

Tony looked at him as if he was disappointed. “You know, I’m guessing it’s a lack of ambition that hasn’t seen you expand into other cities. Or, Christ, if you are thinking about it - don’t. You will end up killed or on someone’s hit list.”
Keyes frowned. “And what is that supposed to mean?”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Well, I didn’t care about you until you took my Jesse and I am not someone to cross. You keep crossing people by accident, well, you are going to end up dead - sooner than you think.”

Keyes was indecisive. “I am supposed to trade him to the cops.”

Tony chuckled meanly. “Keyes, that is not my problem. Now you see in the time we’ve had this chat my people have taken out your so-called security ... So am I walking out of here with my boy ... Or, are you never going to be able to walk again.” He said it in his most calm, Hannibal Lecter like voice. It was all the more psychotic for its deadpan delivery.

Keyes sighed. “Leave, I will figure something out.”

Tony stood up, pulling Jay with him. He was pretending his Jesse was still handcuffed. “I am glad we came to a gentleman’s understanding.” Tony sent a look at the detective letting him know they would act when they got to the door. That way they would be far away from Keyes’ gun.

Keyes snorted. “I don’t play card games with psychopaths, you’re too unpredictable. Let me show you the door.”

Tony smirked and just as they reached the door both men acted in concert, surprising him and overpowering Keyes. It was a quick and vicious takedown.

Tony could see the vindication in the cop’s eyes. He was favouring his one side, understandable as Tony had seen the video. “Well, I’m just a visitor in the city. You should read him his rights. Tony DiNozzo by the way.”

Jesse shook his hand, as Keyes was now handcuffed and unconscious on the floor.

As Jay read Keyes his rights, the rest of the Intelligence division poured through the door. They were all patting Jay, hugging him carefully until Tony spoke up feeling strangely protective of the Detective. “Hey, I am pretty sure you need some medical attention.”

Jay smirked, showing he still had his sense of humour. “If you say so, Daddy.”

Tony threw his head back with laughter. “Oh god, did you see his face?”

Jay talked to his favourite new person as they walked to the EMT’s ready at the entrance. When they were on their own, he sagged against DiNozzo. Jay couldn’t believe he was so relaxed around this guy but he was. He trusted his instincts if nothing else.

~*~

Jay woke up slightly disoriented by the smells and sounds until he realised he was in a hospital bed.

“How are you feeling?” DiNozzo asked him as his face came into view between him and the ceiling.

Jay was feeling more alive than ever. This was crazy and he was feeling bolder than he had in awhile. The drugs he could still feel fuzzing up his head didn’t hurt either. “You know - I wouldn’t mind being your boy.”

DiNozzo kissed him softly. “Get better and then we’ll talk about going a real date as the real us.”
Tony didn’t know it yet - but Jay would be the one who was a keeper. He thanked Vance personally for loaning him out. Well, kind of - he did it in his resignation letter as he never quite got around to leaving Chicago. It really was an awesome city - and it was a time for a change.
Tony grinned at John as the old man laid food at the table. “Come on, eat, enjoy this view.”

“You could have this view every day if you moved.” John reminded him.

Tony rolled his eyes. “I’m thinking about it, old man. Quit meddling.”

John sat down on the lanai and passed a plate of meat over. “You’re thinking about it.”

Tony shrugged. “Steve is chasing his terrorist all over the world but you know what? I miss being a cop.”

John slid a beer over next as this sounded like a beer conversation. “What’s changed? You’ve been with NCIS for how many years now?”

Tony took a deep swig of his beer. “Six years.”

“You’ve invested a lot of time there.” John observed, no judgement in his voice. It just wasn’t his style.

Tony shrugged as he understood the issue and could finally verbalise it. “And yet I’m stuck there. I spent too much time wearing masks and now the people believe the masks and don’t see me.”

John hummed thoughtfully for a few moments. “Could you change the perception?”

Tony chuckled, imagining the dense duo’s faces if he showed his true abilities at work. “I could but I might give the team a collective heart-attack.”

John would always be on his son-in-law’s side. Okay, so maybe they didn’t have the certificate but the boys were as good as married. He just wished Steve’s wanderlust would settle down so he could be happy with Tony. He knew Steve would eventually and one of the amazing things about Tony was that he never held it against Steve.

There was a knock at the door. John frowned as he wasn’t expecting a visitor. “Anyone know you’re here?”

Tony shook his head. “Nope. I left Washington and haven’t spoken to anyone there since.”

He’d not taken Gibbs’ return and attitude lying down. He’d spoken to Jenny and when she’d been dismissive he’d taken two weeks of leave saying he was thinking about his future. He didn’t much feel like going back playing Gibbs’ loyal St Bernard. He could have done it if Gibbs had respected him still but the stunt on his return to work let Tony see a future for himself that he didn’t much like.

“I’ll stay frosty.” Tony said, tongue in cheek. By frosty, he meant his weapon was pulled and ready to fire. He might not be Gibbs but his gut was burning. There was something wrong - he just knew it.

Tony heard the front door open and then shut but he didn’t hear John say a single word. That can’t be good. He let himself into the kitchen area, not wanting to be stuck outside if things went sideways. He needed to be in the house and right now he really wished Steve had visited recently, there would be way more weapons. There were sounds of hustling and a chair being pulled into the
centre of the floor.

Tony needed more information before he reacted. He wanted to avoid calling in police and SWAT etcetera until he knew more.

John hissed. “Who are you?”

“Victor Hesse, and your son, well he’s arrested, my brother. So we are going to talk about a trade. I’m just going to have my friend set up a connection. Apparently, it is hell trying to get a signal to Korea but I am willing to make the effort for my family.”

Tony took a deep breath. Christ, Steve was hunting the Hesse brothers. Things now made a lot more sense. Victor and Anton Hesse took up numbers three and four on NCIS’ most wanted. There were two men as far as Tony could tell which meant he had the element of surprise. It was arrogant in the extreme if that was the case.

He needed to find the right time. He made very careful eye contact with John, letting him know that he wasn’t alone.

“Tell your son how much you love him.” Hesse sneered. “You know sons and fathers should talk more.”

Tony could hear Steve shouting on the phone. This would be killing his lover. Tony heard the cock of the gun and slipped in behind Hesse. The man was so focussed on his goal he’d lost sight of his surroundings. “One more word and your brother will see you next in a cardboard box.”

“I pull this trigger and Johnny here goes bye-byes.” Hesse responded.

The hacker accomplice was already freaked and holding his hands out. Tony didn’t blink. “You should know then, you do that and I’ll shoot you in the spine. You’ll live, still be in prison with your little brother but you will need his protection for the rest of your miserable life.”

“Who the fuck are you?”

“That’s unimportant. So what are we going to do ... Alive or Dead?”

Hesse put his hands above his head, letting himself be cuffed. Tony didn’t like it, he had a feeling he would be seeing this guy again. Still, he was a Federal Agent and not a criminal. “You have the right to remain silent…”

John had taken his cuffs off with the key Tony had handed him. “Put these on Vicky’s friend and then talk to your son. He’s screaming himself hoarse.”

John did just that. “Steve. Son. Calm down. I’m okay and I’m so glad your boyfriend was here visiting.”

Tony chuckled, seeing Victor’s glare. “What? It’s a modern world, Vicky and have you seen Steve?” Tony shivered. “He’s simply irresistible.”

Tony hadn’t moved his gun from on Victor. He did, however, have his own phone out - he was calling SecNav directly. He was not letting this go to anyone else as it would be useful leverage to land the job he wanted. “Sir, I need a team capable of securing Victor Hesse at my location. I would have called Director Shepard but she’s somewhat cross with me right now and I am supposed to be
on holiday. I don’t want to cause you a headache, or stop us from keeping jurisdiction.”

“Victor Hesse, whilst on holiday. You do have the most extraordinary luck. Stand by.” SecNav was pleased, so decided not to shout about the lack of procedure. He was going to get to the bottom of why DiNozzo had felt the need to go straight to him later, he would do so after securing Hesse. This was a red-letter day for the Navy - both Hesse brothers.

Tony didn’t blink at Hesse who was staring at him. “What?”

“I will kill you, your little fag SEAL boyfriend and burn your whole world to the ground.” Victor promised with just the right glint of crazy.

Tony rolled his eyes. “You’ll have to get in the queue. Me and Steve aren’t too sure who has the most but we’ll compare soon.”

Davenport’s voice was back on the phone. “You will have a SEAL team there shortly to help you escort him back to Pearl. We’ll make permanent arrangements after that ... I am seconding you to Naval Intelligence for the duration of his time there. Get me actionable intel and I’ll let you pick your next job.”

Tony grinned. “Yes, Sir, and thank you. Sorry for disturbing you.”

“DiNozzo, you just helped apprehend a serious thorn in my side. I can forgive you a disturbance.”

~*~

John held the phone out, “My son wants to speak to you.”

Tony took the phone and even still didn’t let his gun waver. He knew the Seal team would be here soon but until that point, he was not letting his attention wane for even a second. “Hey, I wasn’t going to let him shoot John, he’d just fed me BBQ and beer.”

“I know, right?” Tony smirked. “Well, I spoke to Davenport. Your buddies are going to come and keep me company and ... Well, I’ll catch you up when you get back home.”

Steve didn’t give a shit that he was in the company of his men. “I fucking love you.”

“I know.”

“I cannot believe you just Han Solo’ed me.” Steve said in disbelief. He was riding a hell of a high. For a minute, he’d felt his whole world crumble only for it to change the very next second.

“You can because you know me.” Tony finished. “Come see me and tell me in person.”

~*~

John was seeing the Agent in full force and couldn’t help but make one comment. “You know, back to our earlier conversation... It would be a shame for you to stop doing such good work here. Why not figure a way to have your cake and eat it too. I should imagine Victor here will help.”

“Find it funny, I am going to make you eat your words.”

John rolled his eyes but said no more - as the SEAL team had arrived. “Pick up for DiNozzo?”
Tony chuckled at the humour. “Yep, two to go. I’ll just be a minute.”

Tony went over to John. “Will you be okay? I don’t see much damage but you know Steve will mother hen you if you don’t seek medical attention.”

“Go deal with your terrorist and bring my son with you to tell me all about it.” John finished, pulling Tony into a hug.

~*~

Jenny Shepard was ashen as she heard what was said to her in MTAC. It was never good when SecNav demanded a face to face conversation.

“What?”

“I want to know why DiNozzo is in Hawai‘i when he should be running the MCRT. That was the agreement we made or did I just imagine that conversation.”

She paled. “Well, it was temporary, Sir, whilst Gibbs recovered. He has now returned.”

Davenport was beginning to see just what had happened. Good. It was about time for DiNozzo to show his teeth to people in Washington. “Let me get this straight. DiNozzo does the job for four months, improves the solve rate by 0.5 percent from what was already a record and then you expect him to go back to playing second fiddle.”

Jenny grimaced. “Well, Gibbs’ behaviour didn’t give me anytime to explain alternate posts available.”

Davenport chuckled because you could get whiplash for how quickly his Director could back peddle. “No, Jenny, you didn’t and my boy has just caught Victor Hesse whilst on holiday. I have already said he can name his next job.” Davenport emphasised. “Any job. I want to keep that kind of talent.”

“Yes, Sir.”

~*~

Pearl was just like Steve remembered. It had been a few months since he’d been here. “Home sweet home.”

Hesse was glaring in his spot on the plane. Steve found it was one of his favourite looks – glaring handcuffed terrorist.

His second, Peters, was grinning like a loon. He’d been like that ever since they’d been in US airspace. Steve could understand after having nearly been blown up in Korean airspace. “We do get leave after this, right?”

Steve snorted because his team was not subtle. “Yeah, Peters, I’ll put in for team leave after this.”

He got cheers, he’d known Peters the longest. “You cannot wait to see your boy, right?”

Steve shrugged because his second wasn’t wrong. He just needed to finish his mission first. Survive the debrief and then he would be finding Tony, a shower, a bed; in pretty much that order. If they
could wait that long. Of course, he said none of this to his deputy. “My boy caught Victor Hesse on his own.”

“Well, he would have to be badass to keep your interest, Sir.” Peters responded loyally.

~*~

Steve didn’t disagree. He’d finished the hand-off and his debrief, all nine hours of it. It was a good job that DADT was long gone and his boss found competency to be the most important trait in anyone.

Admiral Jenkins smiled at him now the long debrief was over. “You know I have a treat for you.”

“Sir.” Steve had been in the service to know what a double-edged sword those words could be. “Come see your Agent in action. I almost feel sorry for Victor Hesse.”

Steve was shown into the observation room. Tony just sat there writing what looked like a report.

Hesse sighed. “What are you here to bore me to death?”

Tony didn’t even look up from his report. “Well, my boss said I should get you to talk. I figure that’s not going to happen ... So I bought my paperwork with me. I don’t want to miss my opportunity to catch up.”

Victor’s face was to be treasured. Steve spoke softly. “For how long has Tony being ignoring him?”

“This is the fifth hour. He’s been very unaffected by anything Victor has said to him.”

Steve knew what Tony could so. “Oh, he will be whatever you need him to be to get the suspect to talk, Sir.”

Jenkins smirked. “He is certainly showing some of our boys how effective a different approach can be.”

Steve watched on, enthralled by the chance of seeing his lover work.

~*~

Victor groaned. “You are so fucking annoying!!!”

Tony looked up feigning a perfect picture of hurt - you would genuinely think that he cared for Victor’s opinion. “Hey now. I did not come into your house and threaten someone you like. You did that. I’m just here because I have orders. You’ve become repetitive, you are going to kill me, Steve, John, the whole fucking world if you can. I just don’t know why I should care. I mean ...” Tony leaned in closer. “You don’t think too clearly do you.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

Tony sat back now smug, he’d got the unbidden reaction. It was the first step. “Well, I mean, Victor, come on. You got caught by a Federal Agent who was on holiday because you didn’t do your homework.”

“How was I supposed to know McGarrett was a fag?”
Tony smirked not rising to the slur. “Come on, Vicky, it is the twenty-first century. Don’t be sore because you lost today ... I was thinking about the future. I mean you will never get a chance at revenge with your current silence.”

Victor frowned. “It’s like you want me to come after you.”

Tony actually cackled. “Hey, you want to come after Steve and me, I will take that chance but right now... you are going to be dropped into a deep dark hole never to be seen again. You have no leverage you could use except maybe information. That’s something to maybe leverage yourself out of a black site. Maybe.”

~*~

Admiral Jenkins raised an eyebrow. “Is he seriously offering himself and you as bait to get information.”

Steve laughed as he’d always said that Tony was a wolf in Armani clothes. They all saw Steve, and saw a threat - Tony didn’t always have that issue. “He is, Sir. Best of all, look. It’s working.”

They listened in disbelief as Victor started to spill useful secrets. He never spoke of his own empire or Anton but he did give plenty of information about his enemies around the world. Tony just made sure the tapes were rolling. It would be up to the boys in Naval intelligence to collect this and fact check it.

Two hours later and they took a break. It was the first time Tony and Steve had seen each other in months. “You are something else, SuperSeal.”

Steve chuckled as he was the only one now in the observation room. Jenkins had stepped out for a break. He reeled Tony in. “Stay in Hawaii, please? I’m going to ask for a transfer here.”

Tony pretended to think about it. “Well, your Dad is a wise guy and I think I can ask for any job I want. So I am sure I can make Hawaii my home base ... But we find our own place. I am not moving in with your Dad.”

Steve chuckled as he kissed Tony once more. He kept it PG as he was at work but he figured Admiral Jenkins wouldn’t have stepped outside if he didn’t expect them to do something after months apart. “I will, but we should get married first.”

Tony pulled back. “Was that a proposal?”

Steve nodded and pulled the ring out of his pocket. “What do you say?”

Tony had only one answer. “Yes.”

The Hesse’s did manage to escape thanks to some incompetence but Steve and Tony together hunted them down once more. It was always a good thing when 5-0 and NCIS worked so well together. SecNav didn’t need to exploit any assets, his Assistant Director in charge of Special Divisions was married to the head of the 5-0 team, six months ago Pearl Harbour had overtaken the DC office as holders of the highest solve rate. For everyone (except the bitter DC MCRT and their director) life was good.
I like him (Frank Moses)

He was in a club. This was so stupid - he couldn’t believe he’d listened to Victoria. He was retired and bored and going to a club was not going to improve his mood. He got up to leave and knocked into a guy.

He helped the guy stay on his feet. “Sorry.”

The guy was gorgeous and strong enough to use it. Nice suit too, it spoke of money. Frank really couldn’t turn off his ability to read people. Although it could make first-time interactions sometimes very awkward. “No harm. You didn’t let me fall on my ass.”

Frank shook his head. “Not my style.”

“What is your style?” Green eyes asked with a wicked grin. It made Frank think of oh so many things he wanted to do to the man.

Frank had a crooked grin as his night was definitely looking up. “Somewhere quieter.”

Tony was feeling bold and really did need a way to unwind. He’d found today an exercise in patience as the twatish trio had been extra annoying. This guy was an older fox and hit every one of his kinks when it came to guys. “Mind if a guy joins you?”

It was subtle on purpose if the guy wasn’t interested he could just say so.

Frank thought about it for a second. “Sure, show me a quieter place.”

“You don’t know one?” Green eyes responded, surprise in his voice.

Frank shrugged as if it wasn’t a big deal. “The job didn’t allow for much of a social life.”

Green eyes nodded. “The perils of working for Uncle Sam, so I know what you mean.”

“Frank.” He said, with a handshake. It was odd to get used to giving his real name but he no longer worked for the CIA so he could do that now.

“Tony.”

Frank was feeling good about tonight after all, despite his initial trepidation at going out. “Is this place far?”

“Two blocks,” Tony replied. “Don’t worry, you’ll love it.”

“You mean it has beer and sports,” Frank responded.

Tony leant in and whispered. “All that and more.”

Walking to the bar was supposed to be easy. It was. Frank didn’t see how it could go sidewards. Well, that was if they didn’t have a friend like Marvin.
The walk was interrupted by Tony being dragged into an alley. Frank reacted immediately drawing a
gun from his back. Instincts don’t die and he wasn’t stupid enough to let his training go to waste just
because he was retired. What impressed him though was the fact his new friend reacted quicker ... 
only he had a knife poised in Marvin’s belly.

Frank could count on one hand those who’d bested Marvin.

“Frank, I got you away from the spook. Let’s kill him and go find some Twinkies.” Marvin assured
him.

Frank facepalmed mentally because if Marvin cock-blocked him, he was debating shooting his old
friend. Instead, with a smirk. “You got the spook ... or has Tony got you, Marvin?”

Marvin looked down, in shock seeing the knife. “Huh?”

Tony rolled his eyes and with an easy grin sensed this was a misguided friend. “My boss has a rule -
go nowhere without at least one knife. I’m Tony, Frank’s date. Also, not a spook. That’s rude to
assume. Plus, there is the whole thing where I really hate getting shot when I could be having such a
pleasurable evening.”

Frank didn’t question the idea that this had turned into a date. Hell, Tony was super attractive, into
him and could get the better of Marvin - this was promising. “Marvin, I like this guy and you have the
worst timing.

Marvin huffed in annoyance. “No, you do my friend. They want to retire you. We should ditch the
non-spook.”

Tony groaned because why couldn’t he just have a nice night out. “Why? What do you know that
could embarrass someone?”

Both men replied. “Too much.”

Tony snorted because it was just typical. He had the most interesting kind of luck. It was the best
way to describe his luck - it was neither good nor bad. It just seemed that the crazy things always
happened to him. Like ... The guy in a suit aiming a rocket launcher at all three of them. He pulled
the two men down as it took out the box of containers behind them.

“This is Armani, you bastard.” Tony shouted.

Frank pulled him up and they all started running. “Let’s move away from the crazy guy with a rocket
launcher, yeah?”

Marvin looked like he wanted to stay and fight. Tony wondered just what the CIA had done to the
guy. It can’t have been pretty. He kept an arm on both of them and dragged them out of sight. This
wouldn’t last long, if the guy was CIA chasing them then they would have access to all the cool toys.

Good job he had a safe house of his own. This one was completely off the books and his failsafe for
if an undercover op came back to haunt him. He would have to use it, he wasn’t going to let anyone
die on his watch. Not until he a) got answers and b) got a kiss from the hot guy. A man had to have
priorities.

~*~

Frank stepped inside the apartment and was quite shocked. “This is fancy.”
Tony snorted but added in an English accent. “Yes, well, Lord Anthony Paddington wouldn’t live in squalor. This is where I rest when over this side of the pond.”

Marvin smiled in approval. “Nice. Do you have any weapons because bug-fuck crazy terminator is coming back? And I don’t like feeling naked.”

Frank sighed because it was going to take a miracle to not scare off his new interest. “I am so sorry, Tony.”

Tony chuckled because this was just how the night was going to roll. Sure, he had a ton of questions. Oh, so many questions but he was an investigator - he knew how to come at a problem. The first thing he needed to do was get in contact with Gibbs and then ditch his phone. He wasn’t going to make it easy for the fuckers to chase him. He already had an app on it that bounced his location a cell tower over. “No harm.” He messaged Gibbs - Code Purple.

It was code for he was in a situation where he didn’t need back up but wouldn’t be at work and Gibbs would need to cover. It was something they’d figured out after an operation had gone FUBAR. Tony chuckled the phone in the microwave and fried it beyond belief. He had a backup phone that only Gibbs knew - he’d never give it to Tim or Kate.

Frank didn’t understand how Tony was just willing to roll with all the crazy. He was sure anyone sane would have headed for the hills. “You should have run.”

Tony smirked. “Not my style, besides, you’re too cute and I should at least get to kiss you.” He finished unabashed. If there was one thing he’d learnt - it was that time was fleeting and he should seize every moment that he wanted.

“You still want to be with me, even after nearly being shot by my friend and nearly taken out by a CIA goon?” Frank had to check.

Tony had a crooked grin. “Well, you are my type. Not the first time I’ve had a gun pointed at me ... or had the CIA threaten me.”

Marvin snorted. “Then you should definitely hook up... it’s about time you pick someone less jeopardy friendly.”

Frank huffed. “I was doing just fine until you decided to help me.”

Tony chuckled but tried to soothe some of his concerns. “He was.”

Frank didn’t much care that Marvin was in the room. The kid, who was on his ass was good. He wouldn’t miss an opportunity that presented itself. He pulled Tony in for a kiss - it was electrifying as he hoped.

Tony licked his lips. “I was going to help you without the bribe, you know.”

Frank smirked, feeling his own lips tingle. “Think of it as an incentive.”

Marvin groaned. “Why does he need an incentive? He is into you, he just said so.”

Frank looked sheepish. “We need to see Vicky.”

~*~
Tony had somehow found himself at a place called Eagles Nest. He met a woman, who reminded him of his maternal grandmother ... Only he was pretty sure that his grandmother never kept a semi-automatic weapon in her flower arrangement.

“I love how you roll.” Tony said simply. It was hilarious, she looked like the archetypal grandmother and she was an assassin.

Victoria smirked. “Well, it actually works to keep the flowers propped up too. And you are simply too gorgeous to be with these two crotchety men. What’s your name?”

“Tony,” he grinned. “And I really like Frank.”

“Francis, really?” Although she didn’t seem annoyed. “And the craziness hasn’t scared you off.” Now she seemed intrigued.

Tony shook his head. “Nope, then again, I have been handcuffed to a serial killer and survived. I think my fear gene is damaged.”

She patted his cheek. “Well, maybe you and Francis will be a good together.”

As she said that she swanned off to the kitchen area saying she would be right back. It was a good thing too - Frank had been dinged by a bullet as they’d escaped from DC.

Frank was sitting on the table looked annoyed, blood staining his shirt. “What?”

Tony smirked. “You have great friends.”

“You should see my enemies.”

Tony shrugged, checking his own weapon and knives. He had a feeling he didn’t have enough on him for the drama coming their way.

“What’s got you antsy?” Frank asked as this was the safest they could be until they figured it out. “I’m the one shot.”

Tony pursed his lips. “I offered to kiss it better. Right then, I want my own firepower. I think I’m going to be needing more than I’ve currently got on me.”

Victoria cackled at the look on her old friend’s face. She knew he would struggle with the fact his new love interest was more than capable of looking after himself. She knew that once the idea did hit home and he accepted it he’d be, best of all, happy. “Oh, you are a treasure. Let’s go and find you something that suits you.”

Tony heard Frank say to Marvin something like. “Is that a good thing?”

“Maybe - is it because he’s half British?”

Frank didn’t think that was it. He’d find out when Victoria was ready, no doubt. He got a little freaked seeing Victoria but no Tony. “Where…?”

“Relax, Francis. I haven’t hurt your boytoy. He is merely picking a few weapons to feel calmer.” She chided as she set herself to picking out the bullet. “He is fun though, where did you find him?”
“A bar, and I think he found me.” Frank had to respond as that was the best way to explain it.

She chuckled. “He seems to be rather calm under pressure.” She clearly admired the trait and to be fair, considering their occupations, it would be a key characteristic of any partner.

Tony had walked back in and froze. He guessed this was where old friends helped each other see things. He’d done the same to Gibbs, who acted more like a silent sentinel who let them figure it out. “Should I go back out so you can finish talking?”

Victoria’s eyes gleamed. “Nonsense, it will be much more fun if you are in the room.”

Tony got the feeling this was the second part of some unseen test. He could play the game. “Does he still think I am going to run away?”

Victoria snickered. “Be kind, he isn’t used to good things happening to him.”

Tony knew confidence and time would prove it.

~*~

Frank did have to agree when Tony helped him break into the CIA, fake his death, deal with Marvin, Victoria’s craziness and no matter what - Tony stood right by his side. He did return the favour when he went on a small trip to Israel to secure an agreement from Eli David to reign his daughter in. The look on Tony’s face when he exited Mossad’s headquarters and saw Frank leaning against the waiting car outside was something he would cherish forever.
James was in trouble. He knew what his life expectancy was when he took on the job. He was under no illusion that he would live to see old age.

His annoyance was in completing half a job. This man, no, this lunatic wanted to bring the British government to his knees. He was cuffed to a chair, thankfully this time he had clothes on. He’d already been worked over by the henchmen - he was waiting for the big boss.

“You know, James, you really are a broken shell. And yet you keep going back to mummy.” Silva had the temerity to tut at him like he was a disappointed parent.

James wondered who the hell mummy was supposed to be. After all, his mother and father were long dead, it was one of the reasons he’d been so attractive to the Security Service and Navy.

Silva, he finally had seen the man. He was psychotic, charismatic - the perfect villain and he obviously saw himself in that role. And yet, that wasn’t who held James’ interest. The man standing just inside the room. He wasn’t a zealot, hanging off everyone of Silva’s words. He’d seen enough of them in his day’s stay wherever they were. He was not a sycophant in love with the idea of Silva like he’d seen a few of the women. He was also not scared of Silva like he’d seen a few of the other men.

So who was he?

James listened to the monologue about rats and how this somehow related to him and Silva. James felt that was a rather rude analogy, admittedly, he hadn’t taken the greatest care of himself but he wasn’t that bad.

Silva was opposite him now and flirting with him. James was equal to this task, he’d learnt seduction techniques long ago for both men and women. He was equal to this man’s measure.

“What makes you think it’s my first time?”

Silva perused his chest and liked what he saw, James could tell that much. James was just running through a strategy of using it to his advantage when Silva stood up. “New plan.” Silva announced. “I’m going to like this.”

James was straightened up and even allowed his suit jacket buttoned up. It wasn’t like he could do anything with the numerous guns pointing in his direction. He moved slowly and cautiously with the guns at his back. He’d wait for an opportunity to present itself. The mystery man was talking to Silva in rapid Spanish. It was odd because genetics wise, he’d have suspected Italian ancestry. Who was the mystery?

~*~

The island they were stranded on was beginning to make more sense to James. It was the perfect bolthole for the villain to plot and scheme. How had everyone missed this? The computer skills may be the answer but James struggled to believe that anyone could elude Q.

“Oh, Jimmy boy, you remember Severine.”

If anything the woman was in worse shape than he was in. He hated this, he couldn’t rescue her. He just didn’t have the odds or the angle. James glared at Silva, hoping his glare conveyed the promise
to kill him. *Slowly.*

“Let’s play a game.” Silva announced like James had a choice in playing.

“I am going to pour this delightful scotch into a glass and place it on her head.” Silva announced. The woman was trembling and crying, knowing what fate awaited her. She was being tortured by having to wait for it. Silva, the bastard, was enjoying this. The men around looked away, all except the mystery guy. Silva wasn’t done,

“Let’s see if you are still a master marksman since your return. Are you still the great double-o?” Silva smirked as if he already knew the answer.

This was where some people may have regretted the alcohol and drugs but not James. He was a great believer in living life; good or bad. You have to deal with the consequences and move on. This would be one more death to add to the list.

He lifted the gun, knowing he should shoot but he didn’t want to be responsible directly for her death. He had a gun, but could he take them all out. He saw mystery man grin at him and flash a blade. *An ally?*

James didn’t question it, he took the chance. He shot the two men closest to him. In the confusion, he still saw the way his ally took out four on his own with just blades. *James was infatuated.* The two men actually made sure that they dispatched everyone. The only people now standing were James, Mystery man, Silva and a still bound Severine.

Silva watched, confused as mystery man levelled a gun directly at him. “Corazon?”

Mystery man answered. “You don’t hit women, you bastard, or shoot them.”

James was delighted. “James Bond.”

“I know who you are, Mr Bond. Now get your team to collect this piece of trash.” Mystery guy didn’t reciprocate the introduction. James huffed mentally but now was not the time to explore his infatuation. Oh, how M would laugh at him.

James grinned. “They are on their way, Corazon.”

Mystery guy just snorted. “You’ve never played the honeytrap?”

James shrugged because he couldn’t deny that he wouldn’t. He was just impressed because Silva’s levels of paranoia meant this man was more than good at being undercover. James found himself wanting to find out more. The choppers descending distracted him but James made a mental note to find this Corazon.

~*~

James was back at headquarters and watching through the glass as Silva ignored the whole world. “What does he want?”

M sighed, as this wasn’t one of the most complicated situations. She could see the glittering, raging hatred in Silva’s eyes. She’d known him long ago and to some extent, it was her choices that had created Raoul Silva. She would do whatever it took to defend queen and country, including making difficult choices.
“His Corazon.”

James just stared in disbelief. “His sweetheart was the one who helped me capture him.”

M smirked. “Yes, he appears to be quite something.”

James did love M’s capacity to say something without saying anything at all. “Is there something you wish to say?” He asked, trying not to give anything away.

“No, just that *his Corazon* will be here in thirty minutes.”

~*~

James had chosen not to leave the area. In his head, he was justifying it with excuses like Silva was dangerous and he didn’t trust the man. Denial was not just a river.

M strode in with mystery guy. James hoped he would learn something about his background.

“Mr Silva, you requested him so here he is.”

“Tonio, were you not happy with me?” Silva asked.

*Tonio* shook his head. “I was lonely and then James came along reminding me of the outside world. It’s quite stifling to be locked up on an island, you know.”

James wanted to laugh. He did, truly, but that would break the spell and that was not a good idea. *Tonio*, well, he was making progress.

“You liked him?” Silva hissed, James got the impression that if Silva had been out of the glass cage, he would have at least one bullet in him.

Tonio leaned forward against the glass. “What’s not to like? I saw you looking as well, it was like I wasn’t even in the room.” *Christ*, it was like a twisted domestic.

Silva snorted out of frustration. “He was my way to mumsy, you know that.”

Tonio shrugged. “A fat lot of good it did you. You’re stuck in a box.” With a vindictive smile, he added. “And James is not, so I guess I can have some fun.”

“I won’t be here in forever!” Silva warned ominously.

Tonio didn’t have a care in the world. He was ready to press home his advantage. “What should I do? Wait for you? You’ll be stuck here for years.”

“Quite right.” M announced primly. In fact, she would be doing her level best to see him disappear for what he did when selling the undercover agents identities.

Silva stood up. “She did this to me.”

Tony, James and M watched as his face disappeared as the prosthetic was removed. Tonio didn’t flinch, he stood his ground. “So you’ve said but even when I was burned ... I never, nor would I ever condone killing other men to get petty revenge on their bosses.”

Silva frowned, he looked genuinely perplexed by the idea. “I need my revenge.”

Tonio growled right back. “So be direct about it, you bastard, don’t come at others. The collateral
you will harm don’t deserve it.”

M was tart. “He’s welcome to try.”

Tony pressed the metaphorical knife in. “I know, Aunty, you are forever complaining that I became too American for your tastes.”

“It’s what happens when I let your blasted father keep custody of you.” She pursed her lips.

Bond didn’t know whether he should check his pulse for having almost hit on M’s nephew. Or, laugh uproariously for Silva’s face. He’d been duped, plain and simple. He was definitely not taking this well.

“Smile, Silva. After all, your plan worked ... you’re closer to mummy.” James said with a grin.

Silva was looking directly at Tonio. “I will be coming for you soon, I will make you see you’re wrong.”

Tony smirked, said nothing, and did the worst thing possible - he turned his back on him. James followed him soon after.

~*~

Tony was drinking a coffee in his Aunt’s office. “Are you going to hover all day or say something?”

Bond chuckled. “Now it’s the damnedest thing. You sound like an American and yet speak like you’re British.”

“Peril of a blue blood mother and an American father.” The quick response that was both telling and not at all. James wasn’t to be deterred.

“So, drinks?” James had never got what he wanted by being reticent on a matter.

He got a massive grin in return. “Even knowing my Aunt is your boss?”

James shrugged. “She is usually vexed with me but you’re stunning and I want to know more and yes, I am willing to risk M’s wrath in order to do so.”

Tony leant in to kiss him and James responded with enthusiasm. “Mmmm, in that case, call me Tony and I’ll meet you at the Hyatt at 8.”

James smirked. “I will be there.”

“Ask for Paddington.”

*And the rest was a matter for the redacted records.*
Eliot Spencer 2: Revenge of the boyfriend

Eliot had never thought he could have such vengeful thoughts again. He’d turned away from that path a while ago. Nate had helped in that regard. His choice of Leverage Inc was probably the best thing that had happened - apart from meeting Tony.

When Tony came back to his apartment, Eliot was already there preparing a meal, wanting to surprise him. Only Tony was so miserable it was palpable and he was so hoarse. Eliot had been having no excuses he’d guided his boyfriend to the couch and pulled the whole story from him. It had taken a while, his voice so raw from constant use that there had been multiple breaks for drinks and coughing fits. He finally gave up and typed out the remainder of the story on his laptop.

His lover’s two teammates, and he used that word loosely, had cut the comms on him when he was hunting homegrown terrorists. His fury hadn’t abated as the night had gone on. He’d forgotten about the meal and just sat with Tony until his lover had slowly slipped into an exhausted sleep. Eliot was reluctant to release him and get up and tidy up.

Eliot pulled his mobile out of his pocket - he had a problem and a team he could trust to help him. “Nate, it’s me. We have a new target and it’ll be a fun challenge - they need to pay but I can’t kill them. Tony would never forgive me.”

Nate had to bite back laughter because Eliot sounded so frustrated at the idea but was pleased with his friend’s growth. “The team will meet you tomorrow and we’ll make a plan. You still in DC?”

Eliot rolled his eyes even if he knew that Nate couldn’t see. “Yeah, I’m at Tony’s.”

“Okay. Tomorrow, 11:00 am at the monument.”

~*~

Tony groaned. “I can’t believe I fell asleep on you.”

Eliot rumbled, projecting calm no matter what his inward feelings were. He was well aware that Tony would start to blame himself regarding the incident today. “You can fall asleep on me anytime, darlin’.”

Tony shivered and snuggled closer. “You can’t use your accent against me.”

Eliot laughed softly. “Oh.” He deliberately upped the drawl. “Why’s that, sweetheart?”

Tony pouted. “I can’t think when you speak like that.”

Eliot’s face lit up like he’d won Christmas. “Well, in that case, why not slip into the bedroom and we can make this day at least end right.”
Tony stepped closer - only to pause at a knock at the door. He wanted to growl but knew his throat wouldn’t appreciate the attempt. He did not want an interruption; the time he and Eliot had together was always too fleeting.

Ziva was at his door. Tony did not have time for this - and he how dare she come to his house after today? She had instigated the stunt and used how scared Tim was of her to ensure that he went along with it.

“What do you want?”

She showed him a bag. “I felt bad about the joke. I wanted to cook you some soup and make sure you were well.”

Tony didn’t believe a word of what she’d said to him. He’d realised something today and it had been a sobering thought. She’d never forgiven him for killing Michael. He was struggling to find the right words so Eliot did it for him. “Darlin, I said come to bed. I told you I would make you forget about today.”

Tony always shivered when Eliot used that accent with him. It was mainly because Tony knew it was his real accent. It showed a huge amount of trust.

Tony whispered showing just how scratchy his voice still was. “Thanks, Z, he’s got this.” And then closed the door.

Tony pulled Eliot in for a hug, grateful for the support whilst still letting him deal with the problem. Eliot chuckled. “She thinks she’s fierce?”

Tony nodded and would love to see Ziva’s face as she heard Eliot’s summary.

“Let’s go to bed.” Eliot tugged on his hand and led his lover back to the bedroom. He’d make sure Tony got a subtle revenge but he could not let the incident pass without some form of reprisal - their stunt could have seen Tony dead.

Of course, he didn’t say anything yet.

~*~

Eliot woke Tony gently with lemon and honey. He smirked at the way his lover crinkled his nose. “Yeah, no caffeine ... Your voice won’t thank you.”

Tony sighed but he knew Eliot was speaking sense. He ignored the fuzzy feeling of how nice it was to be with someone who cared for him. “Love you.”

Eliot kissed him soundly. “And I love you. Now go drive that bitch crazy.”

“Don’t hurt them,” Tony whispered.

Eliot chuckled because Tony knew him too well, he should have known that he wouldn't be able to sneak this past him. “Physically I won’t touch them but they need to pay and you’re too good to seek it for yourself.”

Tony nodded, trusting Eliot’s words. “See you tonight, right?”
Eliot nodded, it was an easy promise to make especially as their new target was one Timothy McGee. Eliot knew Ziva would give him an opportunity to take her down a peg or two, he’d seen it last night when she’d been at their door.

~*~

Ziva was actually sitting on his desk. Tony sighed because he didn’t want to deal with her shit. “Where’s McGee?”

Tony shrugged as he had no idea. He just sat down, he wasn’t so much giving her silent treatment as using his voice sparingly - it had the added bonus of annoying her. “Are you not going to talk to me?”

Tony quirked his lip and managed to convey his confusion with just a look. After all, yesterday she was complaining he talked so much he switched off the radio on him.

She huffed. “You’re not still raw over the joke, are you?”

“Sore…..throat.”

Tony didn’t expand on his hoarse comment, he just got started on the SFA paperwork. It wasn’t going to write itself was a fact he’d learned long ago. He saw a message on the phone.

“Ignore the bitch, Dad’s a pussy.”

Tony chuckled softly because he doubted anyone had ever called Eli David a pussy before. Still, he knew that Eliot would quite happily do that to his face.

“Is that your boyfriend?”

Tony looked up from his screen and neither confirmed nor denied the question. He simply rolled his eyes.

“You want me to believe you are gay?”

Tony shrugged, he’d never been fond of lies and in all honesty, he’d come to a startling realisation; he had no interest in her opinion. He’d considered her family at one time but it was obvious that was only from his side.

“Where’s McGee?” Gibbs demanded to know.

Tony shrugged as he had no idea and hadn’t bothered to find out. If the man was stupid enough to skip work for no reason then he wasn’t going to clean up after him anymore.

Ziva reached for her phone. “I’ll phone his home.”

“You do that!” Gibbs bellowed. He was still pissed. He knew there was something wrong yesterday but he had no clue what. He couldn’t do anything unless someone gave him some clue as to what was going on.

“Your voice?”

Tony put up a mini-whiteboard with one word written on it - Terrible
Gibbs made a mental note that Tony would be staying in the office today. Good, he would be able to work on the other two and find out what the hell had gone on. “Rest it.”

Tony looked up startled but there was a blinding smile. It was so rare it caught Gibbs by surprise. He was racking his memory to think of the last time he’d seen it.

Ziva spoke up and spoke dispassionately. “He is meeting a movie mogul.”

Gibbs growled. “He’s what?”

She shrugged because it was not like she’d suggested it. He was a stupid man at the best of times. She’d needed him here so she could make sure their stories were airtight.

~*~

Sophie and Parker were the ones to meet with this McGee. They’d done the profile and knew they could appeal to his ego. He’d changed over the last few years and they could use the arrogance born from the literary success.

“So do you have any questions about the contract?” Sophie purred. “I’m sure it will be the first of many.”

McGee looked so pleased. “I sure hope so.”

Sophie waited for the follow-up questions, only none came. He took a phone call, she could hear it was tense. “Mr McGee, we need to discuss the finishing of the details.”

“I get ten million for this movie, and up to fifty million for further rights depending on its success, right?”

Sophie nodded. “That’s right and the money is handled by the corporation to ensure that you get to keep the majority of the money.”

McGee’s ears were still ringing from the phone call and knew that if he didn’t make it back to the office asap there wouldn’t be enough left of him to make the money. He signed on the dotted line. “I have to go ... I’ll be in contact soon.”

Parker and Sophie just looked at each other in disbelief. Their research had led them to believe McGee was a smart, educated man - and there he was signing a document where his rights to the movies were now going to make several charities very happy. Sophie had taken great care to pick the right ones, the injured Navy personal fund and the mute society. They just seemed fitting.

Parker just scoffed. “I thought he was smart?”

Sophie shrugged. “I have no answer. I can’t wait to see Eliot’s face when he finds out that McGee has just become the most generous charity donator in history.”

Parker smirked. “I hope Eliot stays with Tony - he’s way less angry around him.”

“A agreed.” Sophie was messaging Eliot to say mission successful even as they wrapped up on the scene.

Eliot took the phone out to check his message and grinned. Now, now was a good time to go to lunch. He could treat Tony and he hoped he could get the Mossad bitch to react to him.
It was even more glorious than he hoped - she attempted to bait him and eventually lost her temper at his lack of response and went for him. Instead of Eliot putting her on the floor, Tony did. He then gave her a lecture about professionalism and what the fuck was wrong with her and why did she think that shit was okay. Ziva completely lost her mind at that point and attacked Tony as well as Gibbs when he tried to stop her.

At that point, she lost her job.

Eliot knew she would come at him - if he was feeling kind, he’d drop her in Israel.
Sherrinford Holmes, better known to the Security branch as Q, was quietly contemplating the best way to make his brothers disappear without leaving any evidence behind. In his defence, he would defy anyone who was related to Sherlock and Mycroft to never contemplate their murder.

“Leave now or I swear, Mycroft, I will take your favourite car and incinerate it.”

“You wouldn’t, you love the Aston too much.”

Q looked up and smirked. “You’re right. I’d be sad but at the chance of revenge and getting you to step away from my private life it would be worth it.”

Sherlock looked smug. “You like John too much to take him away.”

Q snorted. “Please, I wouldn’t do that but I do have a key to your vault. Just think what I could do with a few hours to rearrange things.” He let his smirk speak volumes. You see, that was what everyone forgot, he may not have the political power of his eldest brother or his deductive skills but what he did have were stellar science and engineering skills. He wasn’t above reminding people of that if it could get him some respite. For heaven’s sake, he just wanted to drink his pint in peace.

“Hey babe, did I miss anything?” The voice was American although with barely a trace of an accent. The man winked at him and mouthed play along. Well, Q was no fool, this man was drop dead gorgeous and gave Bond a run for his money in seductive personas. This night was definitely looking up.

“Not at all, luv. My brothers were just teasing me for my woefully inadequate social life.” Q added in a dry sarcastic tone.

“I have no complaints.”

Mycroft was startled and visibly so - oh, this was golden. “And who might you be?”

Tony stared at the older brother, and he was more than equal to the task. He didn’t scare him, he’d stared down more than one serial killer after all. Protective older brothers just didn’t quite fit into the same bracket after that. “Anthony Paddington.”

Sherlock snorted. “Oh, the rebel. You gave mumsy so much joy when you took over the family and turned it on its head.”

Tony shrugged his shoulders. “The family was in need of modernising. And who better than a half-American?”

Mycroft looked perturbed as he’d heard more than a few stories about the young Paddington Heir. The type of stories that had Q’s workplace actively looking to recruit him. “Well, we will leave you to your date, Sherrinford.”

Q rolled his eyes and added sarcastically. “Oh, thank you. Let’s do this again next month.”

He waited until his brothers had left the pub. His rescuer was about to speak but Q held out a hand and ran a small card over the table, covered by his palm. It beeped and Q rolled his eyes.
“Amateurs.”

Tony didn’t blink as the younger man crushed the bug between his fingers. “So, I’m Tony.”

“I heard. I prefer Q to the name my brother used.” He said seriously to his new friend.

“Queue? As in a line?”

“No. Q as in the letter.”

“Hmm.” Tony pinned the man with his sharp green gaze which turned mischievous. “So you’re quizzical, quarrelsome, quirky, quiescent, quintessential, quotable, querulous, quick-witted and quixotic?”

Q was fascinated. “Yes.”

Tony threw his head back and laughed, Q found himself tracking the line of his throat. “Well, I would like the opportunity to find out first-hand.”

*And the rest was history.*

~ *~

Tony opened the door to his flat in London. “And how can I help the British Government today?”

Mycroft stared at him. “I find myself in a conundrum.”

Tony gestured for Mycroft to enter the flat. “Do you care to share?”

“I suppose I must.” Mycroft just nodded and his assistant stayed to guard the door. “So you were a surprise.”

Tony smirked. “You wouldn’t be the first person to say that to me, and I doubt you will be the last one.”

“What is your intention towards my brother?” Mycroft demanded to know.

Tony just handed him a tea, knowing better than to offer him coffee. “Well, anything your brother wishes to allow me the liberty of ... if I’m being strictly honest.”

Mycroft didn’t huff but spoke truthfully as his little brother may have unwittingly found someone who could protect him from what was about to come. He’d thought about approaching Bond but there was a man who was about to burn out in spectacular fashion - it was too dangerous for him to know.

“There is an enemy that hunts the family and I fear for Sherrinford with his constant desire for independence.”

Tony bit back about the comment regarding independence as Q was over thirty years old so was a fully grown adult in his own right. “Who?”

“He calls himself, Moriarity. Genius IQ and wanted a challenge so it seems he has decided that pitting himself against my family as it is the most fun he has had in ages. His words, not mine.”
Tony frowned. “I know that name. He’s turning up in all the papers at the moment as the ‘mastermind’.”

“Exactly. He knows that all three Holmes work for the Crown or for Justice. So what better way to pit yourself against the family than take over the criminal underworld.”

Tony chuckled but it was without mirth. “He makes Don Macaluso look like a rank amateur and a stand-up member of the community.”

“I’m aware.” Mycroft responded, tight-lipped. There were moves he would love to make but his position with as much power as it afforded him, also in some respects limited his power in others. “He is slippery.”

Tony knew how much that last statement would cost a man like Mycroft Holmes. He was a man who prided himself on being a fixer. “I can look into it. I have favours I can call in on both sides of the pond.”

“I know.”

Mycroft just walked out his piece said, leaving Tony with a few decisions on his next move. He knew what he was going to do the minute he heard threat against the man he loved. He had a favour to call in - Trent deserved the mess. After all, the fucker had blown his car up.

~*~

Tony wasn’t a stupid man though, he had no intention of keeping the conversation he’d had with Mycroft from Q. His man was ridiculously smart and built weapons for fun. He liked his new car in one piece.

“What did my brother want?” Q asked, knowing the look on his lover’s face.

Tony huffed as he handed Q a glass of his favourite wine. “He came to give me a warning of a threat to your family.”

Q froze. “Seriously? And what the hell? Someone who scares Myc?”

Tony started to laugh because Jesus, he loved Q with all his heart. He adored the family with all their quirks - they were so real.

He didn’t lie to Q, he wouldn’t do him that disservice. “Yes, I am taking steps to put him in the crosshairs of people who will make him disappear.”

Q didn’t believe in fairy tales and that sounded way too easy. He was aware that Tony worked as a liaison at Thames House for the Americans. It was kind of a perfect role for him to be in, honestly. “Just like that?”

Tony shrugged as he couldn’t say how well his plan would work. He’d simply informed the CIA of a potential character running around London coordinating too many criminals for it to sit comfortably with him. This was the seat of English power after all, and if this criminal had started blackmailing political figures - well, that would impact on American security potentially.

~*~

Switch to a now infamous rooftop scene with a gloating Moriarity who thinks he’s won. Sherlock is
ready to throw in the towel if it would save John and Sherrinford. Only at the last minute - someone shoots Moriarity.

Sherlock stepped closer to make sure the threat had passed. Moriarty coughed black blood, letting Sherlock know that the man wasn’t long for this world.

He no longer seemed a villain or even clever. He just looked lost. He rasped. “What happened?”

“Tony did.” Sherlock knew this was Tony. The bastard had slipped a tracker in his coat after dinner at his house yesterday. Sherlock couldn’t figure out why so he’d left it there. It was a puzzle he’d figure out and he adored them.

John raced to his side. “What should I buy him?”

Sherlock snorted. “Hell if I know, but it better be something good. Think he’d like a pony?”

Tony didn’t need a pony or any other type of present. He had Q and that was more than enough for him.
Tony was standing in Vance’s office waiting to find out his next assignment. The man had come in to sweep the house clean, the house being NCIS. Tony was wary of the new director but considering how badly burnt he’d been by Shephard he didn’t think anyone would blame him.

“Sit down, Agent DiNozzo.”

Tony sat down, unknowingly whilst standing he’d gone to military posture. It was a habit from his school days when he thought he was in trouble.

“Tell me, what is your take on my actions.” Vance asked him calmly.

Tony looked up startled. “Sir?”

Vance rolled his eyes. “You have been the SFA for ten years. I thought initially it was laziness and gossip suggests you get by on your charm.”

Tony could hear the but though, so there was a relief. It was a little bit tragic that the new director who didn’t know him, could tell more about him than his own teammates. “What would you like me to say?”

“The truth.”

Tony sucked in a breath. “You have no doubt been given a mandate to fix the mess left by Director Shepard’s death. I’m pissed that she is dead but not because of a burden of guilt but that she will never answer for her actions. On the surface breaking up the team looks like you’re punishing us for the death of the previous director.”

“You’re right about it being on the surface but what do you suspect?” Vance pressed. Tony got the impression that was a test he needed to pass.

“You have a mole issue.”

Vance chuckled. “You are definitely more than your mask suggests.”

Tony sat back comfortably in his chair, there was no point in hiding and damaging his career or standing with his new boss. “Permission to speak frankly?”

Vance nodded. “You have it.”

“I never trusted Officer Davids’ placement on the team and had no intention of making myself a target for her. Hence the mask.”

Vance looked at him critically. “And the perception that you are less educated than your
Tony shrugged but did explain. “When Agent McGee came onto the team he had woeful esteem issues and needed something to feel superior about so he would stop jumping at his own shadow.”

“So you adapted to suit the team's needs?”

“That is correct.” Tony said slightly bewildered, after all, wasn’t that he was supposed to do?

Vance chuckled and answered the question he didn’t ask. “It shows exceptional people management skills and puts things into perspective. Gibbs is not known for his even temperament.”

Tony chuckled as that is an understatement. “True. So what will I be doing Director?”

“Well, I noticed there is a doctorate in your file that none of your colleagues seem to be aware of. I am going to make you put it to good use and show the agency in a good light. I’m sending you to Quantico as we need a guest lecturer and then we’ll talk when you get back.”

Tony stood up and shook the director's hand. “Look forward to it, Sir. Is it lecturer’s choice or a theme?’”

“Undercover operations, again something I felt you would be neatly qualified for.”

Tony nodded his head because he couldn’t argue with that logic. He was glad that he wasn’t being sent to a far-flung office or Agent Afloat. He could handle being a teacher for a few weeks. It was nice to know as well that he had the Director’s support even if he didn’t have his team’s support. He wasn’t sure when things had fractured so badly but he could see it now. He was aware of the quote regarding a vase, it could be repaired but that didn’t mean you wouldn’t see the flaws.

~*~

“Well?” Gibbs demanded to know.

Tony stared down his former boss’ angry glaze, he’d had too many years of practice. “Ordered to Quantico.”

“For training?” McGee said with a snort.

Tony smirked. “No, trainer. NCIS doesn’t let Doctorates go for useless endeavours.”

He didn’t say a further thing and he left remembering their shocked faces. It was petty but it was glorious. He put his phone notifications on mute as he was taking the afternoon for himself. When he got back home, he’d start preparing his guest lectures after he’d contacted the Commandant to see if there was anything else needed.

~*~

Quantico was bright and breezy and full of fresh-faced recruits. It was nice, even if it made Tony feel cynical and jaded. He’d found the coffee vendor that the instructors all used. It made a seriously nice cup of java.

He didn’t spit out the coffee but this was definitely not his cup of coffee. “Who ordered Vanilla Latte?”
“That would be me.” A voice to the side said.

Tony looked the agent up and down. “No crime, sorry I sipped some before I noticed. I think you have my hazelnut americano.”

“I do. Agent Spencer Reid.”

Tony shook his hand. “Agent Anthony DiNozzo, I’m guessing you are guest lecturing as well.”

Spencer nodded. “I drew the short straw from the BAU.”

Tony chuckled, knowing that tone all too well. He’d have been the same if he hadn’t needed a break which is what he was choosing to view his time at Quantico. “You do fascinating work there, I love the papers you’ve written as a result.”

Spencer flushed, not expecting the man to recognise his work. He ran the name of Anthony DiNozzo through his mind. “Wait, are you the same Dr DiNozzo who wrote the paper on long-term effects of undercover and managing the potential psychological effects?”

Tony nodded, pleased himself. It was refreshing not to hide his intelligence for once. As a result, feeling more courageous than he had in awhile. “Do you want to together for drinks later?”

“I’d like that. Eight o’clock tonight. Instructors bar?” Reid queried.

“It’s a date.” Tony said with a smile.

*It was the start of many dates.*

~*~

Tony had been ready for his lecture for days, it was the final of three lectures he was giving. The first one it seemed to generate some buzz as the second one had been a packed out hall and so was this one. It didn’t matter to him, although he could admit it was flattering to know that people valued his insights.

A person snuck up behind him. Well, tried to - it was Spencer and Tony would recognise his aftershave anywhere. “Hey, you made it.”

Spencer nodded, “And I invited the team. There were some issues with one of the members of my team and I think the whole team needs to hear it.”

Tony understood. “Anger and resentment from a role played too well?”

Spencer nodded, he bit his lip. That kind of summed up the situation with Prentiss perfectly. He himself had been guilty of treating her harshly and it was only his time with Tony that had helped him sort through his feelings. He knew that the whole team could do with seeing things from a new perspective and it would hopefully help them heal. Spencer missed the old dynamic that had been lost with Prentiss’ supposed death. “I didn’t understand until we spoke at length.”

Tony pulled him in for a hug. Spencer was amazing, his intellect was stunning but Tony had been attracted by his heart. “Hey, happy to help and if I can help your team ... I’m all for it.”
Spencer nodded. “They treat me like a kid sometimes.”

Tony lifted Spence’s chin up. “Eleanor Roosevelt. No one can make you feel inferior unless you let
them.”

Spence sighed. “I know. I know.”

Tony whispered in his ear. “We’re all works in progress. Go meet your team and then we will eat
out. My treat for helping prep my final speech.”

Spencer rolled his eyes as it hadn’t been that big a deal. He could read 20,000 words a minute, for
goodness sake. He walked from the area to find a seat amongst his peers.

~*~

Spencer took in his team - Prentiss looked jumpy, Morgan angry, Rossi amused, Hotch resigned and
JJ looked thrilled. “Hey, guys.”

“So this is the Rockstar.”

Reid shook his head. “No, Dr Agent Anthony DiNozzo, his lectures have been well received and I
know the Director is trying to lure him over full time.”

“Why doesn’t he want to come?” Rossi queried.

“He doesn’t like the agency for legitimate reasons.” Spencer replied it was up to Tony if he wanted
to share those facts. He would treat it as being said in confidence until told otherwise.

Rossi shrugged. “What we doing here, Reid?”

Spencer answered honestly. “The theme is undercover work and its side effects to all stakeholders. I
think we’d all benefit from hearing what Tony has to say.”

Prentiss had picked up what the others might have missed. “Tony?”

Spencer actually smirked, he blamed Tony. “That’s another story.”

~*~

There was another set of agents, only this time it was NCIS - Gibbs, McGee and the new MCRT
were all there.

McGee hissed. “When were you going to tell me Tony had a PhD?”

Gibbs growled. “Be quiet. We managed to swing the afternoon off and I want to hear what DiNozzo
has to say.”

In reality, he had no answer as he didn’t know. It had been a shock to the system and he hated that
he hadn’t known. He wondered if he’d known before the explosion. He probably did.

The lecture was riveting. Tony had a natural charm and enthusiasm that carried him through it but it
was clear there was a keen intelligence. How had McGee missed this? Oh, he had a sinking feeling a
lot like shame crawling over him.

“He’s good.”

McGee nodded to the new MCRT member. “Yeah. He was my training officer.”

“Lucky you.” Tim nodded and felt sheepish as he’d never felt like that before today.

He hoped he got a chance to say sorry because screw the rule about not apologising - sometimes it was necessary.

The speech wound up and Tony accepted a Q and A session that let the others see the downsides to the job. It wasn’t easy to lie to everyone you love after all. It took a strength and character to shoulder their loved one's anger, knowing that they did it for a greater cause.

~*~

The session completely finished to rousing applause and a full agent seemed to burrow through the crowd to get to Tony. McGee watched and his eyes widened at the hug. Tony didn’t do casual touches. He’d wanted to speak to Tony but the man turned away. McGee shared a look with Gibbs and he saw something there - a dawning realisation. They’d pushed Tony away and now they were the ones left out in the cold.

“Damn it.” Gibbs hissed.

McGee shrugged, a little sad but knowing what he did of Tony’s character. They’d burnt out Tony’s trust - he was done with them. “Too late. We’ll be lucky if he stays at NCIS.”

"That was something he’d got wrong. Vance wasn’t going to let Tony stay as SFA and in fact, had promoted him to the Assistant Director role, one Vance had himself filled not too long ago - Special Operations. It was the MCRT’s turn to be left out in the cold."
Coast to Coast (Charlie Eppes)

Professor Charlie Eppes was still a little shocked to be back in LA. It wasn't the fact he was finally back home, or that he was the youngest tenured professor at CalSci. It was more how well his relationship with his partner had progressed. He’d always figured his quirks would see him never succeed in a long-term relationship. It turns out, as much as it was a cliche, he just had to wait for the right guy.

Speaking of the devil, the knock at the door broke his musings. He would never be upset by his lover dropping in - ever. “Hey, Tony.”

His fiance and that was still new enough to be exciting, looked very at home. He was wearing the Armani tan suit that Charlie really liked to peel him out of whenever they were alone.

“I wanted to see how well you’re settling in.” Tony was looking around his office with his standard situation awareness. It wouldn’t have escaped his notice that not all the boxes were unpacked. He’d obviously gotten distracted but that wouldn’t surprise Tony.

Charlie grinned, “As you can see I started with the whiteboard and markers.”

Tony laughed as that was just like his lover. He would get lost in the numbers to the detriment of reality around him. “Math attack?”

Charlie looked sheepish but he loved the fact Tony never held it against him. “Something like that - and how has your first day been, Mr Agent-in-Charge?”

Tony grinned. “Oh, this office has all the cool tools. So no regrets there.”

Charlie stepped closer to him and hugged him knowing where the regret comment stemmed from. “Your old team were morons. You have to believe me - I’m a genius.”

Tony kissed Charlie softly but reassured him. “I believe you. I’ve realised it’s their loss, not mine. Plus, I get the better deal; you, promotion, LA, the sun. They have to stay in DC with their egos.”

Tony said nothing else, he simply started to unpack a few books onto the shelf. They’d been living together for long enough that Tony knew how his ordering system went for books.

Charlie was grateful for the help but he didn’t want Tony to spend his lunch helping him unpack. “We should get lunch.”

Tony’s stomach growling almost a second later was an answer in itself. “Sounds like a plan.”

The couple walked across the university square. Tony made quite the impression amongst the female population of the university. Charlie could admit, at least to himself, to a vicious satisfaction when they realised that they were together and they averted their eyes.

Tony carried on the conversation, ignoring any looks and focussing all his attention on his fiance. “Talk to your brother yet?”

Charlie pouted. “No, I'm building up to it.”

Tony nodded and wouldn't push his lover. It wasn't like he couldn't appreciate complicated family dynamics. He knew that not all of the family knew how to deal with Charlie’s genius without
appearing controlling. Sadly, the hour was nearly over and he had to make his way back to Special
Ops office. He pecked Charlie's check. “Catch you later, babe.”

Charlie watched Tony leave and he could hear the audible coo of several female students. He would
go back to unpacking his office as he didn’t want to be late home. Tony mentioned pasta and that
wasn’t something you missed unless you were dying or kidnapped.

~*~

Back at the office, Tony was informed there was a communication he needed to take in the MTAC
area from the Director. This was going to be fun. Vance no longer hated his guts and that was only
because he’d challenged the man to read his full jacket over a weekend before they had another
conversation.

Tony had done it so that he could soften the man up when he asked for a transfer to LA through
whatever means necessary. The man had been annoyed he’d been fooled but pointed out that the
Special Ops centre opening who were going to be specialising in undercover operations. Hetty
Lange would do day to day running of the office but Tony was replacing Agent Macy.

Tony pinched his nose. “What do you mean they lost a prisoner?”

Vance looked aggrieved to admit what had happened. After all, it was an embarrassing slip up for
the MCRT. “Agent McGee and Officer David were accompanying a Hamas suspect to detention
when he gave them the slip.”

Hetty and Tony shared a dark look thinking the same thing. Tony let Hetty say it though as she used
her status as a living legend. “Did he escape?”

Leon huffed because this was a clusterfuck. He'd let DiNozzo go to LA as it had made sense.
McGee would have the chance to step up. Plus, he’d been annoyed to be fooled. However, over the
last week, he’d seen that maybe things on the MCRT were not on such an even keel. He couldn’t
regret letting DiNozzo go to LA as SECNAV had made it clear that if he’d lost DiNozzo to another
agency, Vance would be put on probation. “That is being determined by IA. What I need your office
to do is reacquire him. He has valuable intelligence.”

Tony sighed. “Do we have an awareness of Mossad assets in the US currently?”

“Just what are you suggesting?” Vance asked, wanting to see how much DiNozzo would be willing
to say,

Tony shrugged. “I’m saying it is awfully convenient that a supposedly highly trained Mossad officer,
seemed to conveniently let a Hamas Agent disappear. After all, I’m sure that Mossad would love to
debrief him personally.”

The silence that reigned let him know that the others didn’t disagree with him. If what Tony
suggested was true - this was a clusterfuck waiting to unravel. Oh wait, this would be another reason
Tony was glad he was free of Washington.

Vance huffed. “Right, I need to talk to the cyber division as well. Updates every six hours.”

“You got it, Director.”

Hetty smirked. “You know, I was worried you wouldn’t stand up to him.”
“Agent Lange, I worked day in day out with Gibbs, Vance is simple in comparison.” Tony confided.

“Of course, an old woman needs her fun.”

Tony walked down the steps. “Okay, the new operation is a go. MTAC in five minutes to get the ball rolling.”

G perked up. “Already?”

Tony nodded. “Politically sensitive for the head office.”

“Wonderful.” Callen knew what that meant and he would be pissed if he ended up sweeping something under the carpet.

Tony clapped him on the shoulder. “Oh, it gets better. This is something you will be able to hold over Gibbs.”

Five minutes later and Agents Hanna, Callen and Blye were being briefed. Hanna’s eyebrows were getting higher and higher by the second.

Tony could guess as to the source of his disbelief but knew it was important that any grievances were aired. The operations they would normally be running were too sensitive to have any grudges or shit. “Say what you need, Agent Hanna, you’re amongst friends.”

“We’re supposed to believe David that she just let him slip by?”

Tony snorted because he’d had a hard time believing it too but he’d let the head office spin whatever tale they chose until he could change it. “Well, only until we get information to confirm or deny her story.”

Hanna looked relieved. “I hear ya.”

Tony nodded as this was going to be new for everyone for the next few weeks. “We’ll learn together.”

Terrorists were not as paranoid as they used to be, or, they’d never faced a woman like Agent Kensi Blye before. Tony didn’t know which was true in this case but it made sense. He did get great satisfaction in watching her take down their suspect with Krav Maga.

“Nicely done, Agent Blye.”

Kensi looked up having read the perp his rights. “Thanks, boss.”
Callen chuckled. “Well, we’re starting off successfully.”

Hanna looked mean. “Hey, now comes the fun part - the interrogation.”

Tony sat opposite their suspect. He’d already informed Vance that he’d take a crack at their suspect in LA. The site of the interview was simple, a boathouse and the perp was locked up.

The terrorist was unnerved by Tony’s stance. “Shouldn’t you be asking me questions?”

Tony shrugged playing it casually. “Would it make a difference? I figure I will sit here, and after a set amount of time, I will huff, leave and then start the paperwork to have you transferred to Gitmo. I will offer you an insincere have a nice life and then go have dinner with my partner.”

“That’s it?”

Tony nodded, smirking. “Yeah. I mean, I have a new job, new place, new everything really. I’m not going to mess that up, you know?”

“Gitmo?”

Tony nodded. “You’ve committed acts of terrorism on US soil. What did you think was going to happen?”

The guy was looking pale as his situation actually hit home. Tony leaned closer. “So you realise the mess you’re in?”

“They never said anything about Gitmo in DC.”

Tony leaned back, relaxed in his chair because he now owned this interrogation and he knew it. “Yeah but then you escaped and the Director made you my problem and I have yet to see or hear a reason why I wouldn’t send you away.”

“I was told to run and meet a contact here.”

Tony simply waited silently.

“He’d be introduced as Ben.”

Ben? Tony started to laugh raucously. “So you were going to sit down with Ben Malachi, Kidon’s finest. I kind of wish I’d let you. It would have been an interesting experiment. Who would be more pissed? Mossad or your buddies.”

The terrorist could see the corner he was now back into. “I didn’t do it.”

Tony snorted and spoke in Arabic. “Whether you do or don’t ... I’ll sure spread it far and wide that you did.”

The guy looked up in surprise and Tony smirked. “My father did business with the Crown Prince’s family. I learned to be able to communicate with one of my first friends. So again, don’t expect any aid to come from your people.”

The guy looked angry and lost. “I’m a dead man then.”
Tony smiled softly. “Perhaps, or you can tell us everything you know about the original operation you had planned and what were you supposed to do in L.A.”

“All of it?”

Tony nodded, firm and fair. “If you do, just maybe, you stay in prison in the United States under a different identity.”

“That’s no life.”

Tony looked up into their suspects’ eyes hard and firm. “You screwed up and broke the law. You will be made to pay for it. The question is, are you man enough to face the consequence of your actions?”

The terrorists head bowed. “What do I need to do?”

DiNozzo stood up. “Two agents are going to come in, you will give an honest account and mention any supporting evidence that you can. You will give an honest account or I will toss you back to your Hamas buddies with a Kidon tattoo on you. Clear?”

The man nodded, you could tell from just his body language that he had no intention of lying.

~*~

Outside the room, Callen and Hanna were watching the play being made by the new agent-in-charge. After all, they knew his record, knew his undercover skills but this was something else they needed to see. To learn how to work as a team, which one would do what. They got to watch a master of interrogation at work.

Tony stepped outside. “He’s ready for you now.”

The two walked in to take over the briefing.

“Why did you hand over the questioning?” Hetty asked, curious.

Tony sighed but told her the truth. “He indirectly mentioned Ziva, and if I’m right this will reveal that she’s spying for Mossad. So, given my own complicated relationship with her, and Mossad, I felt it best to not be the one to do the questioning.”

“A prudent measure perhaps, you should take your fiance out for a nice meal.” Hetty offered, checking her watch. “You know how academics can be, always forgetting to eat.”

Tony chuckled because she wasn’t wrong. “I think you’re right. I’ll have my phone if needed.”

~*~

Tony drove to the campus and his mind was a whirl. He’d come back from his tete-a-tete with Eli David furious and heartbroken. The agency he’d given to his loyalty to had shown none in return. He’d returned to his apartment with Charlie looking nervous and biting his lip. He’d prayed this wasn’t going to be a break-up speech especially as he had the ring in his pocket.

Instead, it was a job offer in California and Tony made an immediate resolution to support his lover.
He’d used his performance against Eli David as a way to challenge Vance to wake up. He’d then requested the move and considering how shit Vance had treated him the man acquiesced.

Considering what he’d just now unravelled he was even more glad of his resolve to break free. He traversed the halls of Charlie’s workplace easily enough, his badge letting him through. Well, that and he was an approved visitor.

“Hey Darlin, you ready to get dinner? I had a satisfying first day and I can’t wait to find out what math mysteries you unlocked.”

Twin scowls greeted him. “Huh, guess building up to having a talk with you didn’t go as planned.”

Charlie laughed weakly. “Hey Tony, this is my brother Don. He works for the FBI, I think I said that before.”

Tony nodded. “It’s come up, nice to meet you, Don. Tony DiNozzo.”

“Which Agency?” Don asked pointing to the badge on his waist.

“NCIS. Now, a stuffy office is not the place for any conversation of importance and I promised to feed Charlie.”

Charlie was grateful for the reprieve and jumped on the opening. “You did, no case?”

Tony shook his head. “It’s broken and my team are handling it. I was ordered to take you out by Hetty.”

Charlie smiled softly. “Well ok then.” He turned back to his brother. “I’m having dinner tonight so come back in the morning if you want some math done.”

Don looked like he was going to stroke out. “Is that how you’re going to treat your brother?”

Charlie hadn’t realised the depth of his confidence in interacting with people - until now. He loved the fact that whilst Tony was standing next to him, offering him silent support, he was letting Charlie make his own stand.

“No, that is how I will treat Agent Eppes who is demanding I do some work for him. As you can see, I have a prior engagement.”

Tony grinned as he handed Charlie his coat, taking the verbal cues from his fiance. “Nice meeting you, Agent Eppes, you should come around some time and I’ll cook.”

~*~

Charlie waited to rant until he was in the car. Tony waited him out for the rant to die out and then kissed him. “I love you, Charlie, crazy family and all. We’ll face it together - okay?”

Best plan ever, and boy were they tested but that was a story for another day.
More Firsts (Derek Morgan 2)

Direct Sequel to - *A series of Firsts* from the original collection.

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**First Team Meeting**

Tony chuckled seeing Derek all shifty. “Babe chill.”

Derek scowled. “I’m not stressed.”

Tony chuckled even if he kept his eyes on the road. “Of course not, you are often squirmly when you’re perfectly relaxed.”

All Derek could feel was the box that felt like it was a weight in his pocket. He’d asked and received Garcia’s help to pick it out. He just needed to find the right time. “Come on, the team have been interrogating me. I need the backup.”

Tony rolled his eyes as he parked the car up in the lot. “Says the big bad FBI Agent.”

Derek smirked wickedly. “Hey, you know I’m good for it.”

Tony grabbed his hand. “Come on, let’s go face your friends. Just remember Garcia already knows.”

Derek chuckled as it would definitely deflect some of the questions she let that slip. It was after all, fair. She was the one who’d introduced them to each other in the first place. “Hey, we already thanked baby girl.”

Tony had indeed thanked her by buying several geeky gadgets that would help her hacking. “She loved those gifts.”

“I know.”

Tony opened the door to the pub. He could see the team immediately. They’d appropriated the table closest to the dartboard and he was guessing the blonde and brunette playing on the dartboard were Prentiss and JJ.

“Shall we?”

Derek rolled his eyes. “Stop yanking my chain.”

Tony knew just how to tease his lover. “You don’t usually complain.”

“You’re funny.”

Tony smirked. “Hilarious, I know. I’ll get us drinks - you go say hello.”

Derek slid onto an empty chair at the table. “Hey, guys.”
Prentiss turned around. “Where’s your boytoy?”

Morgan rolled his eyes but Tony answered for him. “Actually he is mine, Agent Prentiss.”

She blushed but spoke up. “Emily, please, we’re off the clock.”

“Tony.” He said as he slid into the booth next to Derek. “So have they finished teasing?”

“Not even close.” Rossi said dryly. “Good to see you, Tony. I’m guessing you don’t need introductions?”

Tony snorted as he shook his head. “You too, old man. No, I’ve seen the photos but I am looking forward to getting to know you all. Oh, and I did as I promised. I quit mob-hunting.”

The team all looked intrigued but Derek already knew this - they’d shared what they could about cases. Derek snorted. “Yeah, the family were so impressed the contract on his life is only valid if he’s taken out in Philadelphia.”

“You have a contract on your life?” Reid asked, alarmed.

Tony shrugged. “I have made a few enemies but Don Macaluso actually respected how ruthless I was and informed the family from jail that he didn’t want a reprisal unless I was in the state.”

Rossi chuckled as Tony was actually underselling this. He wanted, no, needed the BAU team to understand that Tony was more than capable of looking after himself. “Tell them the whole story, Tony.”

Tony pouted. “You suck, old man.”

“Don’t be mean to your elders.” Rossi responded dryly.

Hotchner knew the name of DiNozzo, he was well aware the Director wanted him as part of the Agency. “If you don’t mind, what’s the full story?”

Tony sipped his pint. “Okay, so when I was a Detective I was asked to go under in the Macaluso clan. I did, I rose up the ranks and gathered enough evidence to take out the Don, and his upper ranks.”

“How did you manage that?” Prentiss asked, intrigued.

“There is only one way to become part of the upper echelons. I had to prove my loyalty and the Don liked me, he said I had the charm and ruthlessness to lead the family that his own sons lacked.”

Rossi finished the last bit. “Don Macaluso is also willing to drop the contract if Tony is willing to take over the reins of the family.”

Tony looked sheepish. “There is that but it’s not going to happen. Derek would never approve of being a gangster’s moll.”

Just the idea had the whole team in fits of giggles. The team carried on talking and bonding - it was a relief for Derek’s team to accept him. Tony knew how important the team was when you worked in law enforcement.
First Job Change

Tony came back to the apartment furious and unable to hide it. His anger was not abating at all. He couldn’t believe how stupid the agency was being and he seemed to be the only one who saw it.

Derek looked up from his book. “Woah, talk to me.”

Tony was glad Derek was home as he needed to vent and check that he wasn’t being paranoid. “Work is driving me crazy.”

“How’s that?” Derek asked.

Tony slumped on the sofa, falling into Derek, soaking up the willing comfort. “Do you know who they’ve added to the team?”

“Tell me.” Derek said softly. He was well aware that Tony was always going to struggle with who they added to the team. This was the person coming in due to Agent Todd’s death.

Tony hissed. “A Mossad Agent, she was the one who profiled us - for her bastard brother to shoot Kate to hurt us all.”

“And she’s now on the team?”

Tony nodded. “Oh yeah, and with no limits on her system access. It’s a clusterfuck and I’ve raised my objections to deaf ears. I want no part of this but that means I’m going to have to resign.”

Derek hugged his partner, knowing that the idea wouldn’t sit right with him. “If they don’t have your back you have to go. We promised each other ... remember?”

Tony twisted in his arms. “Yeah, I do. Jesus. I thought I’d finally settled at a place.”

Derek snorted. “When it’s time to move on you know it in your heart. What is your heart telling you?”

“That you are an awesome lover and you should take me to bed.”

Derek kissed him hard. “I can do that.”

A day later and Tony was fielding calls from Morrow to accept the job at Homeland Security.

The first meeting of the (other) team

Assistant Director of Homeland Security, yeah, that was a title that still hadn’t sunk in - yet. It wouldn’t take long though and Tony actually found himself loving the new job. It was a challenge and it did the country good - making him use all of his skills that he’d learnt from being a cop, his education and his time as a Federal Agent.
Derek opened the door about ten minutes after him. “So how was your first day on the new job?”

“Busy, but productive.” Tony replied. It was about as much as he could say due to national security implications. “Oh, and I expect a few missiles incoming from NCIS!”

Derek looked up from the couch that he’d dropped on just trying to shed the tiredness of his last case. “Oh, why is that?”

Tony sipped his coffee as he came back into the living room, handing Derek his own hot drink. “I may have done something about my concerns regarding the Mossad Liaison position on the MCRT.”

Derek snorted. “We could just not open the door, you know?”

Tony grinned imagining the faces of his former team if he just completely rejected them. It had not been pretty his last two weeks at NCIS but he refused to be bullied or talked out of his resignation. Director Shepherd kept trying to offer him different jobs out of the country if it was the team that had upset him.

“OPEN THE DOOR, DINOZZO!”

Tony opened the door. “Hello, Gibbs. What can I do for you?”

“You can explain why. Don’t I deserve that?”

Tony motioned for Gibbs to come in. He wouldn’t let the other members of the MCRT in - it was more than obvious to him now that they were not friends. “Okay, you think the little Mossad agent is the bee’s knees but I don’t. She profiled the team to help Ari kill Kate. I don’t care if she saved your life. I wouldn’t put it past Daddy dearest to have set his bloody son up.”

Gibbs wanted to shout his former SFA down but he couldn’t. The thought struck a chord. All the anger that had kept him righteous deflated almost at once. After all, that could easily be the truth.

“Talk me through it.”

Tony sighed. “Do you really want to hear my thoughts because two weeks ago you told me to shut up.”

Gibbs looked peeved because he suspected now that if he’d listened he may have kept Tony on his team. “I’m listening, DiNozzo, I can’t promise how I will react.”

Derek stood up. “Civilly or I will haul you out of here. This is our home.”

Gibbs snorted. “I told you he was good for you.” Gibbs had known it ever since the plague crisis. He’d not told McGee as it was none of his business unless Tony told him.

Tony grinned because it was the truth. “We match.”

Gibbs nodded. “Spell it out for me, Tony.”

Tony sighed. “Okay, so imagine I’m playing the long game. I have a son who is an embarrassment. He’s a loose cannon and I can’t trust his allegiances. Now, I may be a father but my first loyalty is to Israel. I see an opportunity - I put him in the crosshairs of NCIS or the FBI. I send my faithful daughter who is raised and trained the right way. Her job is to assimilate and assassinate her brother.
and thus earn the trust of whichever agency sinks their teeth into the trap.”

“Of course, with Jenny’s links, it would be NCIS.”

Tony nodded. “NCIS who just so happens to have counter-terrorism operations. I mean, it’s a
goldmine as far as I’m concerned. Let the other agency do the legwork and reap the benefits of the
information as I can have my daughter pass it back to her original agency.”

“Eli David is sending his daughter to fucking spy?”

Tony shrugged. “That is my take on things, and Gibbs - you asked. Think about it, really think about
it. Her skills are more suited for counter-terrorism, not the MCRT and yet there she sits. She now has
access to some of the Navy’s best secrets and is in a position to pass them back.”

Gibbs groaned. “Okay, so what’s your plan?”

Tony snorted. “You know me better than that. You carry on as normal, Morrow is letting my first
case be to investigate this. You keep doing your job and let me worry about Ziva.”

Gibbs nodded because despite how Tony’s time had ended at NCIS he still held his skills in high
regard. “I will, for what it’s worth Tony, you are still the best young agent I’ve worked with.”

Tony nodded. “You were a bastard but I learnt a lot, Gibbs, just because I moved jobs doesn’t mean
I won’t harass you for cowboy steaks and to find out about how you get those boats out of that
basement of yours.”

Gibbs nodded. “Thursday good for you both?”

Derek nodded, knowing just how important it was for Tony to keep Gibbs in his life. “If we have no
cases, sure. I kind of want to see this boat.”

Gibbs didn’t stick around and Morgan waited until the door was closed to pull Tony into a hug.
“That wasn’t so bad.”

A knock at the door a minute later made Tony groan, even as he kept his head resting against his
lover’s. He had a wry grin on his face. “You just jinxed us, you know that, right?”

Morgan looked resigned. “Were they all cray-cray?”

Tony burst out laughing. “Damn, I needed that.” He walked over to the door. “Can I help you
McBackstaber?”

McGee flushed. “You left.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “I took a promotion and a great job opportunity. What - was I supposed to stick
around to continue to be maligned and let an officer who has no clue ruin my cases? I think not.”

McGee looked confused, this was not the Tony he expected. He could see the apartment and the
man roaming freely around it even if he wasn’t being allowed in. “I don’t understand.”

Tony snorted. “And that is the first sensible thing you’ve said in months. Now I ask again, why are
you here? I don’t work for NCIS any longer and we’re not friends.”
McGee looked lost and confused. “I don’t understand.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Wait and see over the next week and you’ll catch a clue. Now if you’ll excuse me, I want to spend the evening with my partner.”

“But you’re not gay!”

Tony chuckled as wow, the probie’s world was so black and white. “Go away, McGee. You know nothing about my life and you never wanted to.”

Derek looked up, amused. “You’re not gay? Damn, you should have told me before we moved in together.”

Tony smirked, enjoying this more than he thought he would. He didn’t realise he was so tired of wearing the mask. “I am totally Derek-sexual and that’s all I need to be.”

“Smooth.” Derek replied. “Which one is this?”

McGee flushed and scurried away. Tony was still fairly sure that intimacy scared the young agent.

“You scared him away.”

Derek smirked. “Good - now come to bed. We have some fun things to get to.”

Tony would always take that offer over anything else. Derek had been a lot of firsts in his life. Now he only had to find the right time to ask him the most important question of his life, little knowing that Derek had the same issue on his mind.

So who would get to be first to ask the question?
The A-Team (Sam Hanna)

Sam loved modern technology. Okay, granted it made spying and warfare more difficult, and more deadly, but it also allowed him to have a conversation with his partner on the opposite coast. Their jobs were such that as much as they loved each other, they recognised the important work they did together.

Although he had the cool toys - his partner had the more fun job. “Miss you, babe,” Sam confessed.

“And I you, Darlin’. Now go catch a bad guy. We’re in time out because Gibbs offended the Head of the FBI.”

Sam couldn’t help but smirk because Gibbs was old school and a marine down to his very bones. There was a part of Sam that was very glad that Gibbs was watching his partner’s six. “And just what did he do?”

“He threatened to shoot five of his agents for rank stupidity.”

Sam actually threw his head back and laughed. “Wow, we’ve all thought it ...”

“But Gibbs will actually say it.” Tony finished.

Sam smirked. “Yeah, I’m kind of jealous. You coming my way soon?”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Let’s not jinx it by making plans.” He said dryly. The couple had long ago realised that even before they were married if they made plans then things got in the way ranging from plagues to serial killers and everything in between.

“End of the week?” Sam asked, he wasn’t begging but damn it. He missed his husband.

Tony smiled, knowing what he wasn’t saying - it was one of the reasons they worked so well together. “Fingers crossed.”

G tapped his shoulder. “Come on, I’ve got an op that’ll distract you from your missing boo.”

Sam snorted. “Never say those words again, G.”

Sam should have known his operation with G wouldn’t go smoothly. He woke up groaning and in pain from his throbbing head. Damn, their bust had gone bad - really bad. He woke up groggy so someone must have hit his head and his hands were tied behind him. He was also sure that he was attached to someone else. Oh yeah, it was G.

Sam took stock of the room - white, sparse and one red dot in the far corner meaning they were possibly being observed. “Yo, G. You with me?”

Callen groaned because he was awake and that meant he could feel all of his bruises. He had also immediately taken stock of the situation and knew what the score was. It was a case of right now, they were burned so they only reason they were alive was their captors wanted some information. “What did we say that ended up with us having sore heads?”
“Beats me.” Hanna replied.

Callen sighed but knew they needed to give NCIS a chance to send in backup. Callen just spoke in vague allusions not knowing who was listening. “Relax, you know Hetty will send in the A-Team.”

The A-Team was the agency nickname for DiNozzo and Gibbs. For a long time, no one could believe that anyone would ever partner with Gibbs. And yet, Tony had, and even better - he liked Gibbs. Now, there was some unsavoury gossip as there would always be around the watercooler. The type of comments where people wondered if Gibbs was moving onto husband one after four marriages.

Sam knew better as he’d been the one dating Tony at the time. The two had ended up as special investigators for the Director, taking on the special cases. At one time, there had been discussions about making them an MCRT but that needed more than two members. They’d come close but McGee left to be a writer in a cloud and it turned out that liaison officers were sent in with orders to give official secrets back to their agency.

After McGee, Director Shepard had left them alone and Sam knew Tony was much happier for it. Tony and Gibbs looked like an odd partnership on the surface but they worked. They had each other’s backs and Sam knew that Gibbs would always watch out for his husband.

“You say that like it’s a good thing.” Sam said with the resignation of someone who’d been married long enough to know what was in store for him once Tony did rescue him. There was no doubt in Sam’s mind that Gibbs and Tony would be able to extract them - it was knowing the mileage his husband was going to get out of said rescue. The princess-in-need-of-rescuing analogies would be torturing him for months.

Callen would have shrugged if he had the arm movement to spare. “Oh, I don’t know. There is going to be some fun and introductions that will need to be made back at the office.”

Callen had often wondered whose reaction to Sam being married to a guy would be best. He guessed that Deeks would flap, and Kensi would tease Sam for bagging a pretty guy.

“Why didn’t I ask Tony to partner with me?” Sam asked resigned to his fate. He knew that G was looking forward to the office finding out about Tony. What he was more worried about was the trouble G and Tony would get into - they usually were thick as thieves and got into exponentially more trouble together than they did individually.

“Rules.” Callen reminded him.

“Oh, yeah.” Sam looked at the camera wondering when the goons would decide to embrace the full cliche and come into the room to start their monologuing.

~*~

Back in the OSP office, Hetty had just been informed of the kidnapping of her two senior agents. There was only one course of action she was willing to take. “Get me a line to Washington.”

Deeks frowned. “What’s in Washington?”

Hetty snorted. “Not what but rather whom .”

Deeks looked to Kensi to see if she knew the answer but all he got was a shrug. It seemed like they’d
Learn the answer at the same time. They had to wait ten minutes and then they would find out.

Ten minutes later and Kensi, Hetty and Deeks were standing by for the video link up with the NCIS Director.

The director looked poised and elegant asking. “Hello, Hetty. What can I do for you?”

“I need Agents’ Gibbs and DiNozzo to extract my two agents.” Hetty informed the director calmly.

Jenny sucked in a breath because a direct request for them meant that shit had hit the fan. DiNozzo and Gibbs were the NCIS equivalent of fixers. She’d not ever seen the two men’s type of positions before she’d taken over NCIS and had tried to get them to morph back into the regular structure. It had taken only two weeks for her to see that their cross-set of skills made them an extremely effective pair. They smoothed over high profile cases that had gone cold. They were able to extract agents who’d been burned, using a mix of their undercover skills and Gibb’s sniping skills. They simply got whatever job needed doing, done.

Jenny trusted the Hetty’s judgement - she’d been in the business too long not to know the right touch to fix a mission. Plus, there was an appeal of getting Gibbs and DiNozzo out of Washington and away from the FBI director. “I see. They can be wheels up within the hour. What do we know?”

Hetty looked to Deeks, who took the cue and answered the Director. “The two agents were snatched at the theoretical bust. I’d say they were made or someone snitched on them. I didn't have a good angle to interject without escalating the situation.”

Jenny shook her head, knowing the liaison officer would no doubt be blaming himself. “You worked within the mission parameters. Hetty, they’re yours. Try to leave LA in one piece.”

Hetty shrugged because she knew what Director Shepard was alluding to before adding lightly. “It is not my fault they chose to snatch Agent Hanna.”

Jenny snorted because it still amused her how badly people misjudged DiNozzo. “And they think that Gibbs is the crazy one.”

Hetty smirked at her director. “Well, if they will take a man’s husband ... then they have to accept the consequences.”

“Hanna’s married to DiNozzo?!?!?”

Hetty had a twinkle in her eye. “Those files are redacted.”

And for good reason.

Now you can read the expanded version of this story - The A Team: NCIS Style
Explaining to Do (Martin Riggs)

Chapter Notes

Deals with a loved one (Riggs) thinking a loved one is dead and the potential mental health issues that could bring - ala tv canon. If that is a trigger please avoid.

Tony’s fury was palpable. He couldn't believe what he was being told. He’d heard the words but he was failing to comprehend - mainly because he couldn’t believe anyone was that much of an asshole. “Are you serious?”

“You knew you were being selected for the mission.” Vance remarked like Tony shouldn't be surprised.

Tony stood up. “I was blackmailed into a job I had no intention of doing. You then had the gall to tell my fiance that I was killed. Said fiance, who is a fucking Navy-SEAL, who has PTSD and still works in a high-stress environment.”

Vance shrugged. “It had to be convincing.” It did in his mind, he couldn’t regret his decision. DiNozzo, thanks to his insight, had managed to get the dirt to destroy Sheppard and take down the Frog.

Tony could tell Vance didn’t give a shit. He was a results man and would always fail to see the human angle of any operation. He had to voice his opinion because, to be honest - right now he was going to be quitting. “You actually are a bastard.”

Vance broke the toothpick. “You are to be rewarded by SECNAV for bringing down the Frog so don’t make waves about this, Agent DiNozzo.”

Tony laughed hollowly - it was like Vance actually thought he cared about the award. “He can shove the award up his ass. Hey, Gibbs. You can add it to your box. Yours are still in my drawer but you’ll have to get them yourself.”

Gibbs bowed his head but knew what was coming the moment of Vance’s callous reaction to the operation. “I know, DiNozzo. For what it’s worth, I still expect you for cowboy steaks.”

Tony had a small grin. “You taught me everything, boss, and now I need to get my man.”

“Go.” And Gibbs did understand. He would move heaven and earth for a second chance with Shannon.

Vance frowned. “What are you talking about?”

Tony had a massive grin on his face. “I quit.”

“You can’t quit!” Vance bellowed. He was already imagining what SecNav would say.

“Go fuck yourself, I need to go and find my fiance before he does something really stupid. If I’m too late you can’t imagine the trouble I will bring down on you.”
Vance growled. “Are you threatening the Head of a Federal Agency?”

DiNozzo’s grin could only be described as feral - and he was reminded that this was the man who’d brought down Benoit. The man shook his head even as he threw his badge on the desk and placed his service weapon next to it. “No, Director, that was a promise. Gibbs, I'll phone you when I settle ... wherever I end up.”

“Go, DiNozzo.”

~*~

Tony was a fortunate man in that he didn’t need a job. He’d never admit it to his colleagues at NCIS but the money from his Uncle’s will had in fact been millions of dollars. He’d used some of the money to track his fiance down.

He had to wonder how Martin had ended up with the LAPD and then he could have smacked his head. His buddy, Steve, was the District Attorney and would have found him a job. He was reading some of the exploits and shook his head. Tony knew anyone who thought his career was colourful hadn’t read the arrest jacket of Martin.

Tony had walked into Steve’s offices to talk to his old friend. He needed to handle this carefully. Ah, perhaps he should have phoned ahead. Steve was pale and shaking. Tony sighed. “I can explain.”

“You're alive?”

Tony sat down to explain. “My ex-boss is an ass and decided to screw with my life on every level. I had no idea that they’d actually made my death official with friends and family until the op ended. I wanted to find Martin first. I needed to find him and explain my ex-boss is an ass.”

Steve guessed that Tony was dealing with the asshat ex-boss but he had to offer. “You want me to help sue his ass?”

Tony chuckled. “Nope, you’ve already cemented best friend status keeping my fiance alive when I couldn’t.”

Steve chuckled. “I'll call his captain, get you an update.”

~*~

To say the former SEAL had taken the death of his fiance badly was the understatement to end all understatements. He was crazy, thrill-seeking and living very close to the edge. He would have done something more drastic but Martin had promised Tony long ago that he would never eat a bullet.

Seeing the vest of a former soldier ticking though, he wondered if he was about to finally meet Tony in the afterlife. The whole situation was messed up, a company messing with soldiers and one of them fighting back - the only way he knew how.

Roger was looking at him as he tried to talk the guy down. “This isn’t the way.”

“I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING. THEY ARE KILLING MY BROTHERS.”

Riggs knew he was speaking the truth and went with a different tack. He put his gun down. “Okay
but you’re going to have to kill me too because I am not leaving.”

He could see the indecision in the guy. Martin didn’t react to it not wanting to tip his hand. Of course, the stupid trigger-happy bodyguard shot through the bomb jacket. “Er Roger, we have a problem. He hit through the detonator.”

Roger looked at him and they had seconds. There was no way this ended well but they had to try - it was not in their characters to give up.

Roger thought about it. “We can throw it out the window.”

Riggs shook his head. “Not gonna work and the concussion will damage the building.”

“We can jump out of the window.” Roger suggested.

Riggs gave him a droll look. “Trish is going to murder me.”

Roger had a dawning realisation seeing the pool below them. This was straight from his crazy ass partner’s playbook and his heart was steady. It was their only way. “You better be as good a shot as you say.”

Martin was laughing, exhilaration and adrenaline coursing through his veins. “You’re crazy.”

And Roger could never bitch at any stunt he pulled, the man was running with a bomb, shooting at a window in a high rise building. *This was crazy.* He may have been bitching but he still jumped off the top floor and was twisting mid-air in order to shoot the bomb.

It was very satisfying to watch the thing blast to smithereens. He even got a softish landing thanks to the pool.

“MARTIN RIGGS - YOU GET YOUR CRAZY ASS OUT OF THAT POOL ... YOU HAVE SOME EXPLAINING TO DO!”

Martin paled because he knew that voice, only that voice was impossible. It couldn’t be. “Roger, did I die?”

“No, not this week, miraculously, despite your stupid stunts. Why?”

Riggs had a manic grin. “Roger, is there a man standing at the side of the pool, quite handsome, European in his looks, wearing a designer suit.”

Roger nodded and there was a big grin on his face. He’d seen the man in photos around Rigg’s trailer. He didn’t know how this had happened but his partner was getting a happy ending. “You’re not imagining it, Riggs ... he is really there.”

The Police department froze wondering who the hell was yelling at their newest maverick detective. Roger wasn’t frozen though, he was nudging his partner into action. “Go kiss him already.”

Riggs swam to the side of the pool and pulled himself out smoothly. He stalked over to Tony, who looked thinner but oh so gloriously alive - it was a miracle. Still, he had a few things to say. “What do you mean I have some explaining to do. YOU WERE DEAD!”

Tony pulled him in close. “I got better when I ditched my dickhead of a director. I’m all yours now.”
Riggs had oh so many questions, his mind was whirling at a thousand miles a minute but there was one incontrovertible fact. Tony, his Tony, was alive and perfect. There was only thing any man could do at that moment - kiss him. Martin fell into the kiss like he was dying. He didn’t want the kiss to end but broke away when oxygen became an issue.

His arm was still wrapped around Tony’s waist despite being dripping wet. “Hey Roger, this is my fiance, Tony.”

Roger shook Tony’s hand still obviously bewildered by the turn of events. Tony couldn’t blame him as they didn’t have the whole story. Still, Tony remembered his manners. “Nice to meet you. Thanks for keeping him alive.”

“And let me tell you, he has not made that easy.”

Tony chuckled. “Oh, don’t think I can reign him in. I’m told we’re terrible influences on each other.”

Riggs snorted. “We should get that on our rings.”

*And the best of it was - they did.*
Secret Husband (Stan Burley)

Stan Burley was slowly being driven insane. He had no idea why he’d agreed to stay on as SFA. Not only was he having to put up with too much crap at work but he was also having to put up with hearing his husband saying ‘told you so’. He knew it must be bad when Gibbs himself was picking up his feelings and worst of all asking about them. If Stan was the religious type, he’d be looking outside for signs of the apocalypse.

“What is it, Stan?”

The question did make him smile because at least there was some progress. Gibbs had finally started to call him by his real name last year. He was proud of that and it had only taken four years to get to that point. There was great prestige in being the second on the MCRT but it came at a price. Stan’s boss was a demanding bastard and would freely say that the second B in his name was for bastard. He took a deep breath but answered his boss honestly. “The newbies' lack of understanding of protocol is starting to get on my nerves. You need to remind them that whilst we’re the premier team we are still setting an example for the rest of the agency.”

Gibbs frowned at him before asking in a low and dangerous tone. “You saying you don’t like my way of running things?”

It was funny, a year ago he’d have folded to Gibbs or chosen to placate him to keep the status quo. Now though, Stan looked him in the eye. “I’m saying there is a chain of command for a reason and if we’re not following it ... I need to look for a new job.”

“You leave when I say.” Gibbs reminded him of the unwritten rule and he rolled his eyes.

Stan pinched his nose and tried to remember how Tony suggested he phrase this. He had to remember with Gibbs that tact was not the way to go. “Gibbs, I am so tempted right now to join the FBI just to avoid her whining even if I end up sleeping on the couch for a month.”

“You’re married?” A new shocked voice interjected.

She looked defensive and Stan detected a hint of hurt, which was crazy. He was the senior agent and there was no part of his job description that suggested he was under obligation to share his private life.

Todd obviously didn’t take the hint. “It’s just you’ve never mentioned her.”

Stan snorted. “And I never will either,” but not for the reasons that Todd was no doubt imagining. He caught Gibbs also smirking at him. It was rather ironic because they were both imagining Kate meeting Homeland Security Agent Anthony DiNozzo, who also went by another title - Stan’s husband.

~*~

Kate was never one to let a mystery go but didn’t know who to ask. She would go and try Abby, she should know.

“So what’s Stan’s wife like? Is she pretty?”
Abby spat out her Cafpow, showing just how surprised she was by the question. “Why do you want to know? And pretty’s not the word I would use.”

Kate shrugged. “It came up but Burley closed the conversation down.” She had a grin on her face. “If not pretty, then what?”

There was a smirk on the goth scientist’s face that let Kate know there was a joke, only she didn’t know what it was. It was so annoying. “Well, what word would you use?”

Abby’s grin grew fond like she was remembering an event. “Stunning would be a fairly objective description. In fact, most people envy Stan when they’re seen in public.”

Kate sighed. “So why no pictures or a ring?”

Abby shook her head in disappointment like Kate was still not seeing the bigger picture. “You’re really asking that?”

Kate pouted. “Why?”

Abby rolled her eyes. “Kate, you’re part of the MCRT and that brings with it enemies especially with the criminals you put away. Stan’s not a bad guy for wanting to protect his spouse.”

She huffed. “It’s just I can’t even get a date. It’s depressing to know that Stan works longer hours and has a hot wife at home.”

Abby was definitely trying to stop laughing but Kate knew that there was no way she was going to share with her what it was about.

As Kate left, Abby made a call to someone with unholy glee in her voice. “Hey, wifey.”

~*~

Kate didn’t know why she kept thinking about it. It was probably because it was a mystery and she hated those. There was a quiet voice in the back of her mind that said it was because of Stan. She just didn’t understand it.

McGee wouldn’t know anything, she was sure of it, but he did have those useful hacker skills - maybe he could find out?

“Hey, McGee.”

The younger agent looked up. “I didn’t do it.”

“I never said you did.” Although her eyes narrowed. “Why? What makes you think I’m annoyed at you.”

His innocent, “It’s your tone,” was even worse but she could hardly complain.

“What do you know about Stan’s wife?” She asked, wondering if he’d shared more with a male colleague as a way to bond.

He looked up in surprise. “He’s married?”
She nodded and tried to ensnare his interest. “He admitted it in an argument with Gibbs ... Although when I asked about her, he just shot me down.”

McGee looked puzzled. “Huh. I didn’t expect that.”

To Kate’s disappointment, he didn’t seem to be using his skills to dig up the details. In fact, gossip shared, he turned his face back to the screen and continued to dig up the financials that Gibbs had asked for.

Men were useless.

~*~

Stan got home that evening to see his husband already home. “Were the terrorists polite today?”

Tony chuckled handing him a beer. “Nope, we’ve hunted them into the ground so now they’re extra hard to catch. What’s got you cranky today?”

If Tony was a more stupid man he might have used the word bitchy but he’d learned his lesson, sleeping on the couch sucked. “Agent Todd.”

“Ah, your newest agent - and how is that working out?”

Stan gave him a droll look. “I told you so, is so not what I want to hear right now.”

Tony took the hint and kissed him, making him forgot all his worries. They broke apart when oxygen became an issue. “I was going to say Abby called and I think you’ll want to know what about.”

Stan sighed. “What did Todd do now?”

Tony didn’t hide his grin. “She wants to know all about your wife... Abby greeted me with *Hey Wifey.*”

Stan threw his head back and laughed because wow, that was precious. “And she calls herself a profiler.”

Tony shrugged, he didn’t need to call for a profiler as he had his own degree in profiling. In fact, it was his doctoral thesis that got the notice of Homeland. “Come here.”

Stan went willingly and settled in for the massage expertly given. Tony had learned how to do so in one of his undercover stints. “You know, I’m glad you’re my husband.”

“It was the massages, I know.”

Stan shook his head. “That and your mind and body. The whole package is quite stunning.”

Tony chuckled pulling him into a hug. “That’s how Abby said she’d described me when Todd asked.”

“We speak nothing but the truth.” Stan then had a grin on his face. “I was just imagining her face if you picked me up for lunch.”

Tony snorted. “Say the word and I would do it. It was when you felt comfortable and safe enough.”
Stan rolled his eyes as it was an old conversation. They both weren’t naive. It hadn’t always been safe to be out at work but times had changed. It wasn’t like the HR departments weren’t already aware.

~*~

Four weeks later and Stan was imagining all the ways he could ‘accidently’ lose the two junior agents. It might not have been his most charitable thought but they were both so annoying that he couldn’t help it.

Gibbs had known what his SFA needed and, despite most people's perceptions of him, he could be nice on occasion. He’d sent DiNozzo a text an hour before to say he should take his husband to lunch.

The bullpen was mostly a flurry of keyboards tapping away and phone calls being made. As a result, Tony had managed to make his way over to the MCRT before they’d even noticed.

“I hear you’re making people cry, Darlin’.” Tony said, clearly amused and looking delectable in his grey Armani suit.

Stan’s head shot up. “What? How?”

“Your boss text me. He says you’ve nearly brought people to tears. That’s usually his job ... I think he’s jealous.”

Stan was not one to kick a gift horse in the mouth. “Boss, can I go to lunch?”

“Yes, be back in an hour.”

Kate stood up, the shock having worn off after a few moments. “You’re married to him?”

Stan nodded and looked a little smug. “Yeah, I am. Why?”

She flushed. “Well, you said married and I assumed a woman and you never corrected me.”

Stan shrugged. “It’s not my job to teach you how to read clues. Although you might want to work on it – it is kind of vital to the job.” His put down delivered, he turned around and walked out with his husband.

You know what - life was good. He had a job he mostly adored, a great husband who understood the job and two trainees that he would take to task rather than whine about. It was his job after all. In the meantime - he had a lunch-date with his stunning husband to focus on.
Proposing should not be this difficult. *It shouldn’t*. Derek did not understand how this kept happening. He loved Tony and he knew that he wanted to spend the rest of his life with him. He knew this with every fibre of his being.

How could he not? Tony was gorgeous, funny and even better - understood the pitfalls of the job. That, in part, was the problem. He knew who he needed to talk to and because he was on a break he headed to Penelope’s office.

She took one look at him. “Come to mama and tell her what ails you, my sweet chocolate hunk.”

Derek slumped onto the chair she kept for visitors. “Why can I not find the perfect time?”

Penelope was a magician with a laptop but she could admit to not following. “For what?”

“To ask the question.” Derek replied.

Penelope could blame trawling through databases for a while to being slow on the uptake. “Oh, so you want to propose.”

He nodded. “I love him stupid and we’re it.”

She squealed with happiness and hugged him. “Oh, I am so glad to hear it. So what’s going on?”

Derek huffed. “So let me talk you through the first three attempts and you can judge if I really am as pathetic as I feel.”

**Attempt 1**

Derek had the ring for a week, he’d gotten his grandfather’s ring from his mother the week before. It meant his plan was progressing - now he just had to ask the question.

They were having a date night at the sports bar where they first went on a date. It was Super Bowl night and they were looking forward to it as their teams had made it - *miracles of miracles*.

It was even better. As regulars, they’d managed to get a booth. It would be perfect; watch the first half, grab their food and make the proposal. The owner of the place had even agreed to put the ring on Tony’s plate of food. He was just waiting for Derek to hand it over during a drink order.

Derek had gotten over the first potential sticking point - neither of their teams had caught a hot case so they could get to their favourite place.

They’d sat down and Derek was still playing it cool. He’d been enjoying the day and the dinner with Tony was going well. They’d shared a few stories before the game and then the crowd had been overtaken with Superbowl fever.

Derek was ready - he’d taken a deep breath and gone towards the bar. He should have thought more about it because by this time the bar was rammed with people. Derek had nearly managed to make it to the bar when an honest-to-god bar brawl started.

Tony and he were on the same wavelength - what they really wanted to do was fire one shot into the
air. Sadly, they were adults and had a lick of common sense, plus, the paperwork would be a bitch.

Instead, Tony called it in using his credentials and then they both leant on their cop skills. They took the two ringleaders, yanked them apart and immobilized them against the bar. “Now why is it you idiots can’t enjoy a game and leave us in peace.”

“I will kill you!” The drunk idiot screamed.

Derek snorted. “So we’ll add threatening a Federal Agent to the mix.”

Tony saw the guy pale. “Wow, I think you’ve just found an instant sobriety fix up.”

~*~

Penelope listened and she couldn’t help but smile at the story. It was not that she wanted Derek to be sad. He was clearly so frustrated by his apparent inability to ask a question but she was well aware that it wasn’t just any question.

It’s just he was so cute with his frustrations. She tried to be sympathetic. “Okay, so your training and circumstance affected the first go. It happens. What happened the next time?”

Derek huffed in remembering - he’d been so sure he’d got it right the second time. He’d been careful and planned it to be so very different from what he’d done at the bar. If they were on a remote hiking trail - there should be no interruptions. Right?

Wrong.

**Attempt 2**

Derek adored this national park and he’d convinced Tony that this was the ultimate hiking trail. Derek really couldn’t complain about this Sunday. He’d slept in with Tony and now they were enjoying nature, fresh air and great views.

He spoke softly. “The view at the top is inspiring.”

Tony just smiled fondly at him. “If you say so, love.”

Derek could practically feel the weight of the ring in his pocket. He wasn’t nervous, there were no drunken crowds to disturb their moment. He wanted this to go right. Derek checked his watch. By his reckoning, they had twenty minutes before they reached the summit.

When the yelling began - Derek got a sinking feeling of *not again*. Had he done something bad in a previous life?

~*~

Penelope was unwittingly spellbound listening to Derek’s unfortunate tale of woe. “So what happened next?”

Derek sighed. “A stupid frat pledge kid had come on a hike with his Fraternity - only he forgot his epi-pen ... and he’d neglected to mention his allergy to bee stings.”

Penelope nodded. “I take it he got stung?”
Derek just nodded. “Boy, did he. We rendered aid, got the emergency services there but by the time we’d calmed the nervous frat boys and seen the kid safe, well... the mood had passed.”

Penelope smirked as she could just imagine it. “So what did you do?”

Derek snorted. “I thought we could hire a boat for the lake, chill and see if we could recapture the mood, you know.”

Penelope nodded. “But?”

“The boathouse had burned down in an arson attack. I took it as a sign and we went home.”

Penelope said nothing because she figured if she had the same day - she probably would do the same. “I would have to. So what happened to attempt three?”

Derek chuckled because despite his frustration he could see the irony. “It went like this.”

**Attempt 3**

After the disaster with nature, and the sports bar, Derek figured a romantic dinner in a nice restaurant would be the way forward. He felt like whilst some might consider it a cliche - it worked. *He hoped.*

He’d gone on Yelp and checked the reviews. Derek was sure that this would be the best place. Plus, it was Thai food which was a shared passion. Derek had nixed the idea of Italian as Tony always complained it was never quite right.

Derek would have to say, having tasted his partner’s cooking, he agreed that more often than not it was not up to scratch. The place was classy and never had any issues with law enforcement, Derek had placed a call after the bar brawl. He was paranoid.

*Only not enough.*

Pene’ racked her mind for what disaster could befall you at a restaurant. “So, no First Aid, or Bar brawls.”

Derek shook his head. “Nope but it turns out just five minutes before I had it all planned, I mean I had the band primed to play his favourite song and everything...”

“But?”

Derek glared just at the memory. “So ... well, one of the other guests of the place ... *really* didn’t like their food. Apparent anger issues which were more than evident.”

“How?”

Derek shrugged. “It might have been the upending of his food, or the fact he tried to use his plate to brain the waiter and then the chef who tried to come to the aid of the waiter.”

Penelope was giggling. “So your proposal was again interrupted by having to arrest people?”

Derek was trying not to be dramatic as that was so not his style but he had to ask someone. “Am I cursed?”
Penelope looked bemused but offered a serious suggestion. “Why not ask him at your place? You’ve focussed on making it perfect but you just want him, right?”

Derek thought about it and a simple plan started to form. He’d have a black and white movie playing, cooking his own signature dish. It wasn’t Italian to Tony’s standard but Derek knows how to cook delicious chicken.

He kissed Penelope’s forehead. “Thanks, baby girl.”

~*~

The final attempt ... Kind of

Derek had it all sorted. He’d got home first, cleaned up a bit, got the chicken on and set up the home entertainment system. He’d been convinced by Tony to improve the system but to be fair it had taken one NFL game on the system to be sure.

Derek had a spring in his step because he felt good about this. There could be no disaster when it was just them in their own home. There would be no bar brawls, no anaphylactic shocks, no arson attacks or crazy people in general who wanted to brain the chef. It was made of win.

Tony came in from work looking exhausted but his eyes lit up seeing Derek already back. “Hey, babe. I thought you were still in Portland?”

Derek grinned. “We finished early and I wanted to celebrate the case being closed. Sit awhile - the chicken is almost finished.”

In truth, it was just settling and the heat had already been switched off. Tony knew this with one glance at the cooking dial. So, with a smirk and grabby hands, “Sit with me.”

Derek rolled his eyes because there was a translation to that - Tony wanted to cuddle him. Still, he was a man who wasn’t stupid. He happily slid next to Tony and soaked up the warmth, comfort and intimacy so readily available between them. It still amazed Derek how easy it was between them but he never took it for granted ... hence the attempted proposals.

The trouble with sitting next to Tony was Derek started to relax and all the stress and frustration from the case and the failed proposal attempts caught up with him. He soon snuggled against Tony and both men ... fell asleep.

Just as he was dozing off, Derek remembered thinking he was definitely cursed or blessed ... he just wasn’t sure.

~*~

Both men woke nearly at the same the next morning. Derek was just behind Tony as his partner was awake and looking at him fondly. Derek could say he was struck by the complete look of awe and love on Tony’s face. He knew Tony loved him but to see it so openly on his face, knowing how much his partner hid away - was inspiring.

Tony spoke softly. “Marry me.”

Derek could have screamed with frustration, after all, how many times had he tried to ask? He didn’t
though because he was not a stupid man. He kissed his fiance stupid, then rose from the couch and grabbed Tony’s hand, taking him back to their bed so they could celebrate properly.

“Yes.”
Made up? (Alan Shore)

Alan Shore was confusing everyone. He was a brilliant eccentric lawyer, he was a good friend of Denny Crane and a perfect flirt, he’d made them a stupid amount of money since Denny had brought him from the Practice place they’d sent him.

*He was also married.*

Denny was listening to Shirley and Paul rant about something. He didn’t understand why they were arguing in his office but he supposed it had to do with his name being on the side of the building. “We expect all our partners to be truthful.”

Denny looked up from his file. “I am sorry, what is this about?”

“Alan!” Paul shouted.

Denny was still confused and he didn’t think it was because of his advancing age. “What’s he lied about?”

“The marriage, of course, there is no way that man is married.”

Denny started to snicker because he did, in fact, know the truth of the matter. This was going to be one glorious reveal. He would allow his best friend to have some fun here, after all, it was his honour that was being maligned.

“Surely you have checked with HR?” Denny asked, shocked at being the voice of reason.

“Yes.” Paul answered tartly. It was one of the first things he’d done once he’d seen the gold ring. “It has a bank number, and a name of Mr Classified.”

Denny did laugh at that because it was so Alan and Tony. He was not a man who would ever be into another man but he could see why Alan was attracted to Tony. “Well, there you are then.”

“Denny, he has to be honest with the company or how can we trust him with our clients?” Paul tried to reason. He had heartburn just reading the cases that Denny and Alan had tried the last month.

Denny put his papers down and looked up annoyed by the interruption. “I think you can trust the billables we pulled in. Top 2 wasn’t it?”

Shirley flushed because it was true. The only reason she’d been called here was that the erratic behaviour of their other named partner had left the other shareholders nervous. “You know you were, your class action suit assured you of that.”

Denny smirked. “Blame Alan and his bleeding heart, it started off as a pro-bono punishment by Paul.”

Shirley chuckled because she saw the look of annoyance that flashed over Paul’s face, knowing it to be a perfect truth. “Well, however it started it worked well for the firm.”

Denny didn’t understand the nonsense but said innocently. “Well, we have the Christmas party coming up and plus ones are expected to be your significant others.”
A dawning look of satisfaction was rising in Paul’s face and he left Denny’s office looking smug. He would stay that way until the party but would be in for a shock.

Shirley knew him too well. “Who is it?”

“The person you would least suspect but at the same time, they fit. Plus, I like them. They let me have Alan time.”

Shirley’s eyes widened she’d caught two things from Denny’s statement - just like he’d known she would. One - he’d played the pronoun game and two - they were able to share Alan with Denny and seemed to be reasonable about it. She found herself curious to meet this mystery person. She knew better than to try and imagine them - if Denny said they were unpredictable she wouldn’t dare to imagine.

~~~

Alan got home, weary to the bone. Paul Lewiston was an excellent manager of the branch but was a giant pain in Alan’s ass. “You back?”

Tony popped his head out of the kitchen. “Thankfully none of my detectives or cops did anything stupid.”

Alan chuckled as that was not always the case for Tony since coming to Boston. “And you were worried that leaving NCIS would make things boring.”

Tony came out of the kitchen with a whiskey tumbler in his hand. “I don’t think those were the words I used.”

Alan pulled his husband close. “What I was distracted by was your Superintendent dress uniform.”

Tony rolled his eyes more than aware of how much of a uniform kink his husband did have. He’d never regretted leaving NCIS, it had been a choice between love and a job that had steadily been eroding at him. “Have fun being a lawyer today?”

Alan smirked. “Well, I managed to make sure a mother could keep seeing her children despite the efforts of her scumbag ex-husband.”

Tony was pleased, knowing that despite both of their best efforts the law wasn’t always fair. “Good, so now tell me what’s got you so frustrated?”

Alan huffed because no one could see all of him as well as Tony could. What was brilliant was he trusted Tony to never abuse that skill, just like Tony trusted him in return. It was one of the things that made the couple work. “Paul ‘Bloody’ Lewiston”

Tony frowned. “Why? And I’m pretty sure that’s not his name”

Alan rolled his eyes and added drolly. “Says the man ... who worked under Jethro ‘the second B is for Bastard.’ Gibbs.”

Tony shrugged as he couldn’t argue the point but he still knew exactly what to say. “You were more than enough for me.”

Alan kissed his husband because, well, despite rumours, he was only human. “And I thank all that is
right in the world that I am.”

“Love you too, you stubborn bastard. Now fess up - what is bugging you?”

Alan smirked. “Apparently I’ve made you up and I’ve been informed that leaving my dependent paperwork is not allowed to be left as Mr Classified.”

Tony sat him down on their couch and curled his feet under him. “So I’m imaginary, am I?”

Alan could see the funny side of it now he was home with Tony in his arms. “Apparently, or crazy, as no one sane would marry me.”

Tony twisted around so he was facing him. He looked fierce and righteous, it was quite the bewitching sight for Alan. “You are more than the mask you wear at work. Forget those that can’t see you. Know that I do.”

Alan fondly remembered the conversation where he was the one saying those words. “They’re good words.”

Tony smirked at him. “Well, what better way to make a point than to throw a lawyer’s words back at them. You have a Christmas party this year?”

Alan sighed. “Yes, and I have been ordered to bring you.”

Tony was smirking and Alan recognised the smirk - it was his mischievous one. “I’ll be there. Arrive stag at the beginning ... I will make an entrance.”

~*~

Alan was at the damn party cursing everyone and anyone he could think of. “Where’s the boytoy?”

“At his job, Denny. You know this.”

Denny handed him a glass of whiskey. “Here, this will make the stupid conversations go better.”

Alan chuckled. “It will certainly help, I can see Paul gossiping and pointing. You know, for a lawyer he has never figured out the art of subtlety.” He sighed. “And here he comes.”

“You were given an instruction. A simple one, Mr Shore if I remember correctly.”

Alan rolled his eyes. “Yes, well my partner can’t just drop everything and attend a social function on a whim. They have a job too and frankly, this is beneath you, Paul. Is this because you didn’t come to the wedding?”

“It was a great wedding.” Denny chipped in helpfully (sort of).

That did bring Paul up short and Alan saw realisation set in. “You were there?”

Denny snorted. “I was best man, Paul. Alan’s my Flamingo.”

“And my husband. It was the agreement we reached.” A new stern but amused voice announced.

Alan grinned as Tony had worn his uniform and was drawing every eye in the room. Tough - he was the one to have snagged this stunning man. “Yes, yes you are. How was the Mayor?”
“Asking when we’d dine with his wife. She wants my pasta recipe.” Tony confided.

Alan could say he was now enjoying his evening. “Darlin, let me introduce you. Tony, this is Paul Lewiston and Paul, this is my husband. Superintendent Anthony DiNozzo of the Bureau of Investigative services, Boston Police Department.”

Paul had a look of shock but had the manners to shake Tony’s hand. “Pleasure to meet you.”

Tony shook his hand. “You too, I understand you’ve been eager to meet me.”

Alan was wrong. Squirming Paul Lewiston was not the best thing that night - it was his husband showing up and being badass in his uniform ... so much so, he dragged Tony away to show his appreciation, much to the disapproval of some and the amusement of others. Alan was beyond caring, though. He had something much more important to focus on.
Eggsy stared at the man walking down the corridor in the Kingsman Headquarters, trying to place him in the people he’d met but he couldn’t. He stared, not because the guy was attractive, he was, but then again everyone attached to Kingsman seemed to be preternaturally pretty. It was the fact he stopped in front of his mentor without any warning and dipped him low, kissing Harry **vigorously**. *That he did not expect.*

Huh.

Eggsy didn’t even know his mentor was involved with anyone. After all, he’d been so focused on his tests and not dying through a variety of different creative ways. The guy in question looked Eggsy up and down before turning back to his partner. “Darlin’, I thought you said we wouldn’t adopt without talking about it?”

Eggsy blushed but then his brain registered the accent and in shock, he blurted out. “You’re American?”

The guy’s smirk grew. “When I choose to be.” This time with an upper-class British accent. The guy held his hand out. “Tony DiNozzo, although over this side of the pond they tend to call me Lord Paddington.”

“Eggsy to friends and Gary Unwin to those who insist.” He replied, offering the handshake.

Tony led them towards a set of couches where he settled on the one with Harry with Eggsy taking a seat opposite them. It was interesting to see Harry be so ... **domestic** was about the only way Eggsy could think of to describe it. This messed more with his worldview than the pub fight.

“So how goes the job interview?” Tony asked, keen to find out more about the boy his husband had taken an interest in.

Eggsy blew out a breath. “Merlin is off his rocker, yeah?”

Harry smirked but Tony threw back his head and laughed. “He can be. He is also the best person to stock you up before a mission, well, maybe not Ginger but she is something else.”

Eggsy snickered imaging Merlin’s face. “Should you be saying that in front of your husband?”

Tony grinned, boyish and charming and Eggsy knew charm had probably gotten him through many a mission. “Oh, Harry knew what he was getting into when he married the Statesman liaison.”

Eggsy’s mind was whirling. “Statesman, as in the American version?”

Tony nodded, pleased by how quickly he’d pieced the information together. The alacrity would serve him well in future missions. “Ginger is our version of Merlin. Wee bit more hair, mind you.”

Harry chuckled. “You know, I really do think we should let them meet up.”

Tony shuddered because that was a big fat no. “Arthur and Champ would kill us.”

Eggsy was smirking. “Why? What would be so bad about it?”
Tony thought about the question and let his mind run through the worst case scenarios. “Well, they would either choose to take over the world ... or have the most terrifying genius kids who would definitely take over the world.”

Eggsy smirked. “But would he be more relaxed and not try and drown the recruits?”

Tony shrugged. “Meh, Merlin is mercurial at the best of times.”

“That is not comforting.” Eggsy observed.

Merlin listened to Arthur ranting with growing alarm. The old man was ranting and pacing and didn’t look like he was going to slow down anytime soon.

“Just how did he know?” Arthur demanded to know.

“Sorry?” Merlin asked in return because the ravings were making little sense to him in all honesty. He just wished his lab would be left in one piece. He wanted to get back to his research.

“That horrible chavvy candidate that Lancelot nominated.” Arthur was furious and it was setting alarm bells off in his head. He quietly called for Tony using his tablet, it needed to be someone not quite as connected to the Kingsman but still invested.

“That’s not a term I would expect to hear from you, Sir. A bit beneath you isn’t it?” Merlin rebuked.

Arthur shrugged as poured himself a generous whiskey. “He should have baulked at the dog. His file said he would.”

Tony breezed in and answered the question indirectly. “He would only baulk if there was no reason for unnecessary death ... or are you in the habit of sending candidates to fail?”

Arthur narrowed his eyes. “Did you have anything to do with this, you colonial ...”

Tony cut the question off with his own use of protocol knowing how much it would burn Sir Arthur. “Oh, don’t be rude, Sir Chester. You are well aware it is Lord Paddington.”

“You have no right to interfere in the internal runnings of this organisation!” Arthur all but screamed.

Tony looked blase even as the old man went puce, shouting in his face. “Is that what I did?” He smirked, “And there was me thinking I just evened the odds. Don’t you all love an underdog on this side of the pond?”

Merlin chuckled. “There is nothing wrong with that and you did marry an Englishman.”

Tony nodded because he did. “So I did and I adore him. So what is so wrong with Eggsy, Sir Chester? Surely if he is the most talented - it shouldn’t matter his background. There is more to life than going to the right college.”

“You went to Harvard and OSU.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “I am aware of where I was educated but I was referring to inborn skills rather where you’re born. The two are not inextricably linked.”
The Arthur stormed out of the room. Tony looked at Merlin. “Do you think I upset him?”

Merlin shrugged. “It does the old git good to know that people will stand up to him.”

~*~

Eggsy took to the role of Lancelot with style. He often supported Galahad on successful missions. Tony was glad as Harry tended to do less stupidly heroic stuff and he didn’t want to set a bad precedent for Eggsy.

Tony made it back to England as often as he could - to the point where the Statesman had changed his address to that of the Townhouse in England. Thanks to the technology and the glasses that they used for meetings - Tony could be anywhere in the world and still participate in the meetings.

Harry came in looking aggravated and like he’d been on the wrong side of a bomb. Tony was up in a second. “What the hell happened?”

“Richard Bloody Valentine.”

Tony frowned. “What does the tech billionaire have to do with this? ... He hates blood.”

Tony noticed the look of glee traded between the two and it spoke of chaos. “One of you tell me what is going on before I start guessing.”

Harry was the one to explain knowing that his husband’s tone was one where he would start throwing or shooting things very quickly. “Well, he seems to be making waves kidnapping politicians and scientists alike.”

Tony sighed. “So a world domination plot then?”

“The odds do seem high.”

Eggsy grinned. “So we get to see your neck of the woods?”

Tony chuckled. “Sure, come see where I sometimes reside. Home is right here.”

“Agreed.” Harry kissed Tony as it was part of their ritual. The minute one of them was leaving they always had a proper goodbye. After all, they knew how dangerous their roles could be. They didn’t stop the other from doing their duty - it was too ingrained in both of them, so instead, they lived their lives without regret.

Tony let them go but he went to find Merlin as something in his this didn’t sit right with him.

“Merlin, my old friend, tell me what the fuck is going on?”

“You already know. Valentine has gone to church and Galahad and Lancelot are going to see what’s the what.”

Tony didn’t care he was on the phone. “Hey, can you get Tequila and Whiskey to church in Texas? I will give you the coordinates. There is a shitstorm about to go down and I want a few of our best to back up our English cousins.”

“You’re damn right. One of them is my husband and I want him breathing by the end of the night.”

~*~
It is amazing what a small change can bring. Like, for example, one worried husband makes sure that his husband has a team behind him.

“‘You know we could have handled it.”

Tony put his paper down. “So you say.”

“‘We could have.”

Tony smirked. “I know but I fucking love you and I would be really pissed if you died.”

Harry pulled him in close. “And I you, dear heart. I don’t know what I would do without you.”

Tony was just glad he didn’t have to find out.
Tony had more than one reason to downplay his academics. He let McGeek think he wasn’t a brainiac because he didn't want him digging into his records. Tony had no desire to relive his past - it hurt him even now to think about it. After all, McGeek would almost certainly end up with a heart attack if he did go digging - if it wasn’t the doctorate then the estranged husband would certainly do it. Tony hated the CIA for more than one reason, taking his husband from him and making him disappear was the main source of his frustration with the Company.

That was why he nearly had a heart attack listening to the alert briefing. “We have a black alert for a rogue CIA agent.”

Tony looked up at Gibbs to see who it was wondering who had freaked out the Agency this week. They really should keep better track on their agents, or better recruitment policies - Tony wasn’t sure which. “Oh?”

“Agent Jason Bourne.” Gibbs announced to his team. Kate looked at the folder handed to her, so did McGee, Tony never picked the file up. He was already tumbling through his memories to his time pre-Philly to the days he tried not to ever remember.

Tony knew he hadn’t hidden his reaction all too well but there was nothing to do about it now. He needed to get out of the bullpen to recollect himself. “Excuse me, I need the bathroom.”

Tony scurried away as first as his shaky legs could carry him. He was so confused. Why was David considered rogue? Since when was David Webb, mild-mannered professor a trained killer. What the hell had the CIA done to him?

He didn’t even bother hiding in a stall, he sort of collapsed against the back wall. Gibbs had followed him needing to know just what had freaked out his dependable SFA. Tony had known it the minute he’d gone - that there was no way Gibbs wouldn’t go digging to find out what that was about.

“Speak, DiNozzo.”

DiNozzo snorted, looking up as that order wasn’t as simple as Gibbs thought so he answered honestly. “I have no idea where to begin.”

“Tell me, why the picture of Bourne had you scurrying to the bathroom like a little girl.”

Tony looked up and spoke from his heart, knowing he might unbalance Gibbs but Karma and all that. “He’s my Shannon, only before the army and whatever fucked up programme of the CIA got ahold of him he was David, Professor David Webb, my husband.”

“DiNozzo.”

Tony had no idea where his word sickness was coming from - maybe it was just the chance to finally talk about his real past. The one he’d not spoken about because it hurt. It was one of the main reasons he couldn’t blame Gibbs for running to Mexico. He may have hated the way he abandoned his duty - not the way he’d needed to heal his heart.
“You read my full file, you knew I was an academic before I joined the Academy.” Tony remarked because it had been all there.

“I know but what are you going to do?” Gibbs replied, with a hint of challenge in his voice.

Tony looked up. “The sons of bitches messed with his head to the point where he chose to forget everything. I cannot forgive the CIA for that.”

Gibbs spoke softly for once. “I’d give anything for a second chance. Seems to me you’re an investigator who finds things. So, go find your husband before they do.”

Tony choked out. “Just like that?”

Gibbs smirked because he was seeing the fire in his agent’s eyes once more. “Well, just think of the added bonus. Making the CIA look stupid.”

Tony snorted but stood up and dusted himself off. “So boss, can I have some leave?”

Gibbs shrugged. “Sure, DiNozzo. You have sensibly asked to be excused from a case, and I expect you back as soon as the case is closed.”

~*~

Tony was in Paris - too bad it wasn’t for a romantic break. Well, it could turn out that way if luck was with him for once. Tony had a knack for collecting favours and he was about to collect big time.

“What do you want?” The frosty question was how Kort answered his phone.

Tony found himself smiling despite the situation. It was always a good day when you could piss Kort off. “Trent - don’t be like that. What programme did Bourne get sucked into?”

Trent didn’t speak for a few seconds before responding with, “Are you sure you want to go down that route?”

Tony laughed hollowly as he was going to cause trouble for anyone who got in his way. They’d lied to him about the love of his life, and right now, Tony had a small chance. So he was willing to use any resource available to him. “You’ll find that I don’t ask questions I don’t mean. Bourne. Programme?”

Trent sighed because he’d do it as he definitely owed DiNozzo that much at least. “Are you sure you don’t want a car for me to apologise with?”

Tony knew he was taking a risk here but sometimes you have to dangle a carrot to catch a break. “No, Trent, I want my husband no matter what fucking name he is going under.”

That seemed to do the trick. “I’ll be in touch.”

Tony had no doubt that there would be an angle Trent would try and use to his advantage. However, if Trent could catch up to him and Bourne, well, they deserved to be caught.

~*~
Tony had a bead on Jason but this was far from easy. He was laying low in a bar. It was pure luck that Tony had caught a glimpse of him in the crowd around one of the central plaza’s. The CIA still showed they were stupid idiots who wouldn’t know surveillance if it bit them on their ass.

Tony had shown he was better adept at surveillance, blending with the crowd and watching as Bourne ducked into the dive bar. He played it cool, following in his footsteps and as he entered through the door, his countenance changed. He was now just another weary guy in need of a drink. After his week, he doubted anyone would blame him for going down that route.

Bourne caught his eye when he was scanning the crowd and deliberately held his gaze. It was so unfair. His husband was gorgeous before he beefed up, now he was stunning. Tony needed to focus and of course, his husband would make it difficult by walking toward him.

“Do I know you?” His husband asked, not bothering to hide his confusion.

“A version of you knew me.” Tony replied, getting to see first hand just how bad the amnesia was. After all, how else can one answer a question like that?

“Well - that isn’t vague at all.” Jason snarked.

“I know David Webb. Jason Bourne is new to me though.” Tony confessed, knowing that he couldn’t afford to bring lies into this conversation.

Jason’s heart constricted as that name felt right. An image tumbled through his mind of students. At the moment, this seemed to be the only way he could access his bitty fragmented memories. “Did we meet at Uni?”

“Yes, but we were professors.”

“This makes no sense.” He hissed, his confusion getting the better of him. “Professors don’t wear guns or knives.”

Tony wanted to say so many things and went straight for sarcasm. “Well, tit for tat, darling, and if you can end up a CIA assassin, I can end up a Federal Agent. NCIS. It’s only fair, I wanted some of the cool toys.”

Jason glared. “What were we?

Tony hated to be the person but he could see that Bourne was wary of him. It would go against his training to be so trusting of someone he’d just met. Tony knew this logically but it still hurt to see his husband so lost to him. He was walking a very fine line here and he was well aware of the consequences should he misstep. “You aren’t ready for that answer.”

And then Tony did the hardest thing he could, he left the bar. For one, the conversation they were to have - couldn’t happen in the bar.

~*~

Tony pulled the coat closer around him, the air was chilly in Paris at this time of year. He could sense someone behind him and knew it was Jason. He didn’t cause a fuss because the last thing Tony wanted was for Bourne to be captured before he could try and help. Just as they turned a quiet street that lacked the usual CCTV camera, Bourne grabbed his arm.
Tony whirled around to be faced with his husband’s stunning blue eyes lacking the warmth he was used to. “Can I help you?” Tony asked sarcastically because really? “You shouldn’t go about accosting anyone you feel like.”

Bourne was adamant. “You are not a nobody to me, I know you are someone. Who are you? Why do I see you in my memories?”

Tony had to clamp down on his hope. He tilted his head to the side. “And how many memories? And why do you care? Conklin is all you see right now.”

Tony pushed Bourne with him, linking their arms. “Don’t freak out but you have an unfriendly shadow.”

“Where are you taking me?” Bourne demanded to know.

Tony rolled his eyes. “Look, I suggest we go to my safehouse. Even if you don’t think I’m an ally yet, I haven’t killed you, hurt you or even pissed you off so I have to be a step up on everyone else, right?”

Tony had always managed to use logic in an argument with David - he hoped it might still work. The dual name thing is confusing him too. He had fond memories of David, his husband, although right now thinking of him as Bourne or Jason helped remind him of the situation - that the person in front of him was effectively a new person.

Bourne was looking around - almost expecting betrayal. Tony huffed. “Look, stay or come with me. I am done arguing about this.”

“Quit nagging.”

Tony quirked an eyebrow. “Do I look like a bored housewife to you?”

“There is no good answer to that you can’t twist.”

Tony grinned. “You’re right - so let’s get you off the street.”

Tony knew Jason was clutching his gun in his pocket, it was probably providing him with a feeling of security. It was like an assassin’s version of a teddy bear. It was adorable in a scary way, Jason was wary as fuck - it was the only reason he was still alive without his memories. He’d had people try and continually try to kill him from the moment those fishermen had fished him out of the sea with a bullet in his back. The fragments flashes that he soon realised were memories were so bitty that they were more a hindrance but since meeting this guy, he’d had several and never felt bad for them. It might have been they were tinged with happiness and not death.

They stepped into the hotel and Jason was sure that this was the one the CIA were actually using. Tony looked him in the eye. “We’re honeymooning, darling.”

Jason smirked at him. “Are you relying on physical displays making people uncomfortable?”

Tony chuckled. “That, and the fact the only room available was the honeymoon suite.”

Jason did act his part, although, even without his memories it felt natural. The lift closed and he broke away - too confused. His memory was suggesting this was not the first time he’d kissed this man. He would have been suspicious but as he pulled away he saw the chain.
He was all too familiar with the chain as he was wearing an identical one.

Jason asked tentatively. “Why? What happened to us?”

Tony sucked in a breath, choosing to guide them to the chairs of their hotel room. It was telling that Jason was still sitting away from him, it was like he was fighting what his body knew to be true.

He waited until they were both settled on their respective couches before he carried on explaining. “There was a war and you wanted to sign up. I couldn’t follow you as I had a lung complaint that was stopping me on health grounds but I could see how unhappy you were so I told you to go. Only, six months later, I get a soldier at my door and they’ve told me you were captured and suspected KIA but with no body, you would be listed as MIA.”

Jason could see the anguish and the man was either an exceptional actor or, he was the biggest ass in the world. He’d not had much of a filter in the last few days so said exactly what he was thinking. “I was the biggest ass in the world.”

Tony snorted because that wasn’t a lie but David hadn’t been the only one to let him go. “You wanted to do your duty but what we need to do now is find out who abused your trust. How you lost your memories? And what we can do to get them back?”

“Just like that? And why would you help me after what I did?” He spoke quieter for the last bit. “I’m not him.”

Tony shrugged because he was painfully aware but he was fighting for a chance to regain his marriage in its full glory. “I may be a forgotten husband but I have a thing where I’m loyal to the core. Besides, I’m not being completely altruistic. I am hoping that constant exposure might jog your memory about us.”

Jason ignored him. “Do you have a plan?”

Tony rolled his eyes as that was just rude, “Yes. You read your file and let me know how you want to play the rest of this out.”

“You can’t magic my CIA files out of thin air, can you?” Jason literally only had his sarcasm to shield himself.

Tony snorted and produced the file. “Several people owed me ridiculous favours.”

“You’re impossible.”

Tony nodded and kept up his smirk. “Oh, I am all that and more. Stick around and find out what type of person I really am.”
Ethan had been summoned early to IMF headquarters early on this Monday morning. This did not bode well for world security because as far as Ethan was aware - he hadn’t done anything over the weekend that would warrant being reamed out by the director himself - although, the week is young.

He was listening to the facts being presented to him and he wouldn’t let his mind wander when a mission was being explained. Then his mind stopped as he was sure he had misheard the last part. “Excuse me?”

Director Huntley rolled his eyes at his sass. He narrowed his eyes, as the man himself was openly bisexual. “This isn’t going to be a problem is it?”

Ethan rolled his eyes because seriously, people should stop judging him so quickly. “No Sir, I am not homophobic.” He offered a wry smile as he explained. “It’s just I am not too good at being married.”

“Well, treat this mission as a practice run and see if you haven’t improved.” Huntley offered.

Ethan snorted because you had to love the way some people could make things sound so simple. “Just like that?”

“Well, he comes highly recommended and besides - I want to steal him full time so do try and not scare him off.” The Director ordered.

“Yes, Sir.” Hunt responded.

He looked to Brandt. “Why couldn’t you be my fake husband?”

William smirked at Hunt. “We wouldn’t give off the right vibe and you know it. We’re more like brothers than lovers. I know DiNozzo’s rep ... he is the best at undercover work.”

“Oh yeah?”

Brandt nodded. “Yeah. He infiltrated a mob family in Philly, rose to the level of being called son, and when he took them down ... the Don offered him the family. What happened to you?”

Ethan pursed his lips but answered honestly. “I spent a month in a Supermax keeping my guard up as the last Director was upset with me and he wanted me to cool my heels.”

“Need I say any more.”

Ethan rolled his eyes. “I’m going to go and shoot some targets. Let me know when my fiance gets here.”

Benny, who had not been privy to the meeting and had only walked up to the pair to say hello, looked bewildered. “Ethan is getting married?”

William couldn’t resist the urge to be mysterious. He clapped his friend on the shoulder. "It is for the good of the country.”

"Seriously? We think this will end well?” Benny asked. "The last time we ended up breaking him out of a Russian Supermax."

Brandt shrugged because he didn't know if this would end well or not. "We will have to see, won't
Tony listened to the brief. He’d just watched Gibbs waltz out with a ‘you’ll do’. Sheppard had looked put out when she ordered Tony to MTAC. Ziva and McGee had moved to join him. He shook his head. “Sorry ducklings. You can’t go.”

“Of course we can, Tony, this is not a laughing matter.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “No, you can’t get through the doors of MTAC. You need to be authorised by someone with Alpha One security - and no one has done that.”

Ziva sneered. “And you have that clearance?”

Tony smirked and let the real him peek out for a second. “For years. How’s your worldview, little Ninjarette?” His bit said - he swaggered up the steps towards the MTAC. Fuck Gibbs and the horse he escaped to Mexico on.

He’d entered and heard the door hiss to signify that MTAC was once again secure. “When’s the hookup?”

“Coming right up.”

Tom looked up to see a face he recognised. “Hello, Sir. How’s the new job? Not that I can blame you for leaving the CIA.”

Huntley chuckled before he asked. “Didn’t you make Trent buy you a new car for his stunt? Surely your hatred doesn’t hold to the whole agency.”

Tony smirked. “It still does. I hold a grudge like no-one’s business. So what can I do for you?”

“I have an impossible mission for you that I want you to accept.” Huntley explained. Those words were said with deliberate care. Tony, being an undercover operative, had heard of the IMF. So that's where Huntley had ended . Tony wasn’t sure if it was a promotion or a punishment considering some of the agents that were rumoured to work for the nebulous agency.

Tony thought about the words. You’ll do. That wasn’t a rousing vote of confidence and he knew McGee and Ziva well enough to know they’d fight his leadership. It was giving him a headache just thinking about it.

This felt like a lifeline - it seemed to easy but it was vital for national security. He was man enough to take an opportunity presented to him. “Is this a secondment, or a permanent switch?”

Huntley quirked an eyebrow. “You’d consider a permanent switch? No agency believes they could get you out of there without a presidential order.”

Tony shook his head. “My loyalty has run off to Mexico so now this is now just a job.”

Huntley looked like Christmas had come at once. “Try this operation and if it works out we’ll make it permanent.”

Tony could work with that. “So when do I get to meet my future boo?”
Huntley smirked. “At the Registration office.”

Tony sighed because if the operation was moving this quickly there was a major problem. “So rich playboy? Kept man? Or am I the billionaire?”

Huntley thought about it. “A mix of the first two.”

“I can do that.”

~*~

Ethan was waiting at the registry office in an Armani tux. He had his brief, he was an oil billionaire who was wanting to expand into new fields. His soon-to-be husband was his way into a new market after a fashion.

Or at least that was his way into the very exclusive party/exhibition. You had to be stupidly rich and be married. The clause was so that anything heard couldn’t be revealed under spousal privilege.

Tony had an eager grin as he stepped through the doors with no entourage. “Hey, baby. Sorry, I’m late. I just couldn’t find the right clothes.”

Ethan ran his eyes possessively over his new partner. He liked what he saw, there was no doubting that Anthony ‘Tony’ Paddington was all male, and dangerous. Ethan wondered if he’d picked up on all the weapons he was carrying. There was a stray thought about peeling him out the Tom Ford morning suit and find out. “You look absolutely stunning. Ready to get married?”

Tony smiled softly. “Ready as I’ll ever be. Let’s do this.” He took Ethan’s hand.

The registry affair was simple and Benji and Brandt were playing witnesses. They had noticed the way both agents adapted with ease and the registrar in charge of the ceremony said nothing.

And soon enough they were married.

“And I now pronounce, Ethan Henry James and Anthony Paddington, husband and husband.”

The two men grinned, looking joyous as if this was the best day in their life. Brandt and Benji knew it was for a mission and yet they’d believe it if they hadn’t known what was going on and were just looking at the two men.

Tony walked out of the office with his new husband and pointed at the limousine. “Our ride awaits.”

Ethan smirked. “After you, babe.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “You’re too good to me and I wanted to treat you.”

The two men traded a simple kiss before sliding into the back of the car. Tony was the one to start. “Howdy, Partner. Now, will you please explain what the fuck is going on?”

Tony flipped through the file he was silently passed and groaned. “Seriously, where the hell did they get their hands on a nuke? They are supposed to be bored billionaires. This is a shitty honeymoon gift, you know.”

Ethan snorted. “Well you know how it goes, money begets power, which in turn causes raging megalomania and a desire to rebalance the Earth. We save the Earth and then we can have some
fun.”

Tony smirked, he’d be keeping his new husband to that promise. “I’ll hold you to that, honey.”

~*~

Tony stepped out of the plane that had jetted them to the conference. It was being held in Las Vegas, where the hotels were a stone’s throw from the airport. Tony slipped his sunglasses on to protect his face. “So you’re here for work, does that mean I get to play?”

Hunt leaned in close, close enough to whisper. “Feel free to flirt your way to the keypass I need.”

Tony leaned in, hooded eyes. “You got it.”

Ethan had never had this - someone who synced with him so easily. It could become addictive. “Let’s go check out the hotel for the conference.”

The conference was being held in the MGM Grand which was on the strip. The guest list was very particular and the increased security outside matched what they expected. This was why the only way they were going to have a chance was going through the front door.

Ethan was asked for the check-in details and to provide proof they were married. He did not look amused. “Sorry, I thought this was a technology conference, not a voyeurs one.”

Tony gripped his hand and pulled him into a kiss. “Hey, you promised me a working vacation and a chance to relax, Darlin.”

Hunt sighed keeping his forehead pressed to Tony’s. “And we will, babe, but I have to work first.”

The manager rolled his eyes. “And there is the proof. I hope you have a good stay at the MGM.”

Tony took the card keys off the Concierge and pulled Ethan toward the elevator. “You won’t make friends that way.”

Ethan smirked. “But I have you to be the charming one.”

Tony snorted and took his sunglasses off. “Well, it’s been fun but I have my orders.”

Ethan grinned. “Let me know when you need the distraction.”

“Faithless husband?”

Ethan smirked. “Oh yeah, I will be dragging you away as soon as you need it.”

~*~

Tony hated every single thing about the bozo in front of him. What he did have that was alluring was the nuclear plans in his bag. This is what happened when you worked with amateurs. It was naive and stupid but he wasn’t beyond taking advantage.

He flipped his phone open and sighed. “Typical.”

“What’s that, doll?”
Tony sighed. “He told me to amuse myself, he is too busy tonight. He didn’t have to bring me, I could have been in Europe sunning myself on the yacht.”

Escobar, his mark, tilted his head to the side and Tony knew he was picturing what he’d just said. “Your husband is not attentive?”

Tony shook his head. “No, I don’t know why he married me. It’s not like he seems to care anymore. I’m sorry - you’re here for a drink, not to listen to me unload all my problems.”

“Non, I don’t mind. I find it sad that you are here and so alone when your husband should be attentive.”

Tony smiled sadly. “Alas, I think he likes money and beautiful things but once he has them he locks them away.”

“You shouldn’t be locked away.”

Tony cocked his head to the side. “I’m not beautiful.”

Escobar shook his head. “You might not see it but it is there.”

Just as his hand shot out to stroke Tony’s cheek. Ethan made his appearance in spectacular fashion. “Just what the hell do you think you are doing?!?!”

Tony groaned. “So now you want to play the husband card?”

“I am your damn husband, this ring proves it.” Ethan shoved his hand in Tony’s face, who used it as an excuse to feign a step back.

Escobar stood up. “My friend, perhaps this is not the environment.”

Ethan hissed. “Stay out of this ... this is between my husband and me.”

Tony rolled his eyes recognising they were making quite the scene and really hoped this didn’t end up on YouTube. It shouldn’t be considering that the only people in the hotel right now should be rich enough to buy YouTube in order to stop it publishing an embarrassing video. “Don’t take that tone with me. You told me to stay out of the way while you conducted business, forgetting it is my seed money.”

“You’ve never cared as long as you get the finest things.” Ethan said with a vicious smirk.

Tony had grabbed the papers with a sleight of hand trick that a CI in Baltimore had taught him. “I’m out of here.” He flicked a fake phone number onto his mark’s desk and with a smirk added. “Call me.”

Ethan yelled. “And where are you going?”

“To find a divorce lawyer, you bastard.” He waltzed out of the bar and straight back to their room.

~*~

Tony was lying on the opulent bed breathing hard because that had been a trip. It was not the plan.
He’d meant only to snag the key or Escobar’s room - then the opportunity presented itself. He knew Hunt would agree with him but that didn’t mean it wasn’t without risk.

He was reading the plans for the nuclear weapon in his hand. This was heady stuff and important work.

“You want a divorce?” Hunt said, leaning back against the door with a wicked smirk. “And there was me thinking we were doing so well together.”

Tony stood up, his shirt slightly undone. “You only want me for my nuclear plans.”

“That and your fine ass. I did make vows and I think I should honour them.”

Tony chuckled. “Well, we do have time before the extraction and I never did get a wedding night. But…. I think it’s your ass that’ll be honoured tonight.”

“Works for me.”

~*~

Huntley had never been the type to kick a gift horse in the mouth. He happily oversaw the transfer of Agent DiNozzo to his organisation. He might have had some small reservations about fraternisation rules but since DiNozzo’s arrival, Hunt had not caused a single major international incident or been disavowed.

In fact, he decided he needed to find an anniversary gift
**Gunfight at High Noon**

No one knew about Tony's house in the countryside. It had been a gift from Uncle Clive when he’d told him about the new job.

His Uncle, unlike his father, never tried to dissuade him - just helped him have a refuge.

There was the small thing where the house was registered to his English family but technically in his name. Anthony Paddington had this house, not Anthony DiNozzo.

It was a sprawling house on the edge of Lake Anna, not quite a rustic building either. It was a large glass mansion but hey, the Paddington’s own half of southern England and seeing as Tony wasn’t a douche he hadn’t been cut off from his mother’s fortune.

He loved even driving up to the place - the lake truly was a stunning tranquil area. Plus, for the more paranoid part of him, made for excellent cover from potential threats.

He had the weekend off and he had plans to take full advantage of the fact. He was longing for a swim in the lake now the temperatures had warmed slightly. He didn’t expect to spin his Mustang to avoid someone shooting at him. Damn it. He should have bought the 4 x 4. He didn’t know what the fuck was going on - but he was going to kill someone if they broke a single pane of glass.

“Get down!”

Tony didn’t need to be told, his instincts and plain common sense told him to duck when bullets were being shot at him.

“Who the hell are you?”

“Aaron Cross. Nice to meet you .”

Tony groaned as he heard the bullet rip into his Mustang. “That remains to be seen.”

“Blame those assholes.” Cross said simply, even as kept his focus on the bullets being shot at them.

“Who are the assholes?” Tony figured he should have asked or shouted his ID but it seemed the minute he’d entered the fray he was persona non grata and fair game.

“CIA, Black ops.”

Tony should have done a double take but he didn’t. He knew the game now, it didn’t matter whether he’d done anything wrong. If you were in the wrong place at the wrong time then you were fair game. It was especially true if they were burning a programme to the ground because of the risk of
exposure. Tony hated the CIA; if they blew up his car again he was going to be pissed.

“How many more?” Tony shouted across the din of the bullets exploding. There was one thing, for a black ops team they were surprisingly inefficient. Gibbs would be having kittens at the wasting of bullets.

“I count four.”

Tony sighed. “I’ve got the two on the left.”

They shot up from the cover of the Mustang and shot the remaining unwelcome guests. Less than five minutes from having arrived at his house. “You’ve got some explaining to do.” Tony groused at his shooting partner.

The man looked sheepish and held out his hand. “Do I have to?”

Tony looked at the remains of his car with a forlorn expression. “You know that was a classic car that I restored. I loved that car more than anything in the world and thanks to you ... it needs to be rebuilt again. I want to know why.”

Cross had a wry smile. “Don’t suppose we can go inside?”

~*~

Tony sighed but actually wanted a drink at least - and for that, he needed to go inside. “So why does the CIA want you dead?” He softened the harsh question with a beer but he wasn't letting this go. They'd destroyed his car.

“I have no idea.” Aaron responded, hoping the truth shone through. His eyes were twitching at the glass windows. It was making him nervous, left him feeling exposed. “Why so much glass?”

Tony smirked because that was such an operative viewpoint. “My Uncle is a businessman, not an operative and it was a gift. Why? Nervous?”

Aaron gave him a stony look. “A CIA hit team has just attacked us and you’re okay sitting in a glass mansion on a lake?”

Tony smirked because this wasn’t just a glass mansion. There was more than one surprise trapped inside his house. If people wanted to come at him, he wasn’t going to roll over and die for anyone. “I think we’re alive and that is not by chance. Talk.”

“You’re very bossy.” Aaron teased him.

Tony didn’t back down. “The worst. I’m the SFA of NCIS’s MCRT and I’m exhausted and you need my help.”

“So I interrupted your intended beauty sleep?”

Tony had never really embraced Gibbs idea that head slaps were necessary and certainly shouldn’t be part of the employer structure but seriously? Tony chuckled. “Look, I have done more than my fair share of interrogations - you cannot expect me to be distracted by such lame attempts.”

Cross sighed. “Do you think I’m a bad guy?”
Tony shook his head. “No, I don’t. You’re still breathing which should tell you a lot. So to sum it up; the CIA, your old bosses, want you dead but you don’t know why.”

“That would be a fair report. So what’s the plan and what part of the alphabet soup do you belong to again?”

“NCIS and my plan is phone my boss and get some ideas that don’t end up with us dead.”

Cross looked at the guy who’d saved his ass and told himself he wasn’t prone to crushes. He’d been trained to be all about the mission and put aside any other desires that could threaten it. But still …..

~*~

Tony knew when he was in over his head. He’d finally managed to get the truth out of Aaron and man they’d made him stubborn, or as Tony suspected that wasn’t a result of the chemical changes but rather his personality. He could see the doubt and the suspicion rolling off his newest acquaintance so tried to reason with him. “We need advice and my boss knows a lot even if he is a bastard.”

Aaron stood up, hissing, not able to stay silent on the matter. “We can’t trust anyone.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Sit back down before you pop the stitches I put in you. Look, my house has been attacked, we need help and I don’t want to get dead. So I’m through playing by your rules. We’re doing this my way.”

“And if we end up dead?” Aaron asked tartly.

Tony smiled back sweetly even if he was exhausted. “Then feel free to say I told you so.”

“You’re impossible.”

Tony chuckled. “No, Aaron, that is you but I want to keep you breathing so quit being stubborn and accept my help, for crying out loud.”

Tony needed advice and Gibbs was a bastard but he knew how to do his job. Plus, Tony was aware that the man had more than once dabbled in black op work and would be able to offer the right insight.

The call connected quickly and he put on speaker so Aaron could listen in. “Hey, boss.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be at your getaway?”

Tony chuckled. “I am, boss.” He heard the clank of a tool that let Tony knew Gibbs was working on his newest boat. “I have a hypothetical for you.”

Gibbs knew Tony - he never worked in hypotheticals. He was too action based but he would let the illusion be present. Gibbs knew that there could be more than one fly on the wall. “What’s the scenario?”

“Say you have a friend who you are sure is in shit but you can’t alert anyone to the fact that he may be alive ... but you don’t know what shit they’ve stepped in.”

Gibbs snorted at the vagueness. “You come at it from a side-angle - find a compatriot or someone
"that doesn’t set off an alarm bell."

Tony grinned as whilst it was not the answer, it did give him more than one idea. He wanted to get off the phone quickly before the CIA actually managed to somehow pick up anything useful if they’d already picked up who he was and what they might be planning. "Thanks, Gibbs."

"DiNozzo."

"Yes, boss?"

"Don’t die. I’d hate my training to go to waste." Was the gruff sign-off but Tony actually smiled at Gibbs’ remark.

Aaron quirked an eyebrow. "That’s some boss."

"Oh, the second B is for bastard as he assures everyone but I’ve learned every trick I know and a few marine moves from him. They’ve kept me alive so far and besides, I can’t deny an order from a marine so now I have to stay alive." Tony confided.

"Does that work?"

Tony snorted. "When I was dying from the plague he ordered me not to die and I am still breathing."

"Huh. You’re a tough pretty bastard."

Tony wasn’t sure if he should be flattered, launch an insult or flirt back. He settled with a "We’ll plan a date after we stop the CIA from killing you."

"And you!"

Tony shrugged. "Hey, they tried to blow me up and my car last week. Crazy fuckers. Right, if we’re going to have a chance we need to know what programme you were from and why they’ve decided to burn it to the ground."

Aaron thought back to all the encounters they had in the testing stage. They’d given him some weird drugs and they’d tasted funny and afterwards, he felt like he had the worst flu. Still, he knew they’d done something. Once he’d healed, he could remember things far easier; he learned new skills with no difficulty and he could heal quicker. Aaron had no idea what the hell they’d put in the capsules but it was like they’d bottled the Captain America traits in a pill. "I heard one name and I don’t think I was meant to hear it. Frankenstein."

Tony looked intrigued and then he had a dark grin. "You know one of the great things about being a former cop?"

"What?"

Tony’s grin took on a demented grin. "I know a lot of blackhat hackers with an axe to grind against the man."

Aaron was confused. "You’re the man technically."

Tony shrugged. "But I am cool and have no problem paying them for the odd little job."
Cross had a feeling that if the man wanted to rule the world it wouldn’t be out of his reach. “You’re kind of devious.”

Tony shook his head. “Nope, I’m the wildcard and proud of it. Now - we have work to do.”

*Cross had no idea the work would last a lifetime - but that’s another story.*
Captain Adam Dalton was proud of his team and what they’d accomplished. They got the job done and often they had no support and knew that should they be discovered in a foreign land the government would not acknowledge them if they were ever caught.

As a result of his hectic and secretive work life, he’d put his romantic life on hold, well, until he met his current partner. It was fortuitous that they met when he was on holiday and was willing to keep returning to the same place.

The punch to his gut knocked him out of his thoughts. He was brought back to reality with the vicious punch.

“WHY ARE YOU HERE?”

Adam spat the blood out of his mouth, making sure it hit his captors boots. “Visiting my boyfriend.” It wasn’t even a lie - technically.

“You’re a soldier.” Another punch.

Adam sighed because this was the twenty-first century. “So? Tony’s hot.”

He knew his team were listening but they already knew about him. They’d met when Tony holidayed with him the last vacation they had.

His earpiece hadn’t been discovered and he heard his second, Carter, say. “Look alive.”

There was a bang and an amorous couple were swaying and trying to tear off each other’s clothes on a pallet in the corner. He would recognise the couple anywhere and he was glad his captors figured his groan was pain and not disbelief.

The two captors stared at each other in shock - couldn’t this stupid couple get their rocks off somewhere else? They were in the middle of an interrogation after all.

“Hey.” Captor one shouted.

The couple ignored them, their eyes were on a different prize, especially as the woman had already got the belt off the guy. Adam watched with his one good eye knowing what would happen next.

Sure enough, captor one, and captor two advanced on the couple making out. They waited until the captors were nearly upon them to spring into action. Jazz used the belt as a makeshift garrote and Tony showed he knew what to do with a knife.

“Cap.”

Adam tried to focus on the voice of their team’s medic, McG, but it was too difficult to concentrate.
All he could see was how badass Tony was and found himself grinning through his sore, split lip.
“Sorry I was late for our date.”

Tony huffed. “Don’t worry, Captain America, you can make it up to me. Besides, I got to bond with your team. It was fun apart from the chronic worry for you.”

Jazz though, she knew how to break the tension, she had a shit-eating grin on her face as she teased. “Sorry I put the moves on your man but damn he can kiss.”

Dalton snorted. “As you rescued my ass I will forgive you - and yes, he sure can.”

She rolled her eyes. “I want to be the best man at your wedding when you can make an honest man out of him.”

~*~

Adam’s eyes opened and he wondered if he was dreaming. “Hey, you.”

Tony immediately was alert with the speed of a combat-asset. “Hey handsome, you gave the team Quite the scare.”

Adam looked around and noticed he was in a local hospital, not the NATO base hospital. “What happened? The last thing I remember, you were kissing Jazz.”

“In my defence, it was to rescue your sorry ass.” Tony said, not the least bit repentant. He would do it again in a heartbeat if it would save his lover. That was the thing for both of them, they could separate physical acts that could get the job done from actual emotions.

Adam snorted but it started a coughing fit. Damn, the bastards had got a rib.

Tony sighed. “Not just a rib, they took out a lung too, you punctured it which is why you’re a rich tourist that was gay-bashed.”

Adam had to smile at the way Tony thought on his feet. He could do with Tony’s skills in his unit. He’d seen the way his man could blend into any background. It was as impressive as Jazz’s ability to do it. She used her femininity to blend into the background, whereas there was nothing about Tony that let him lend into the background and yet he still achieved his mission. “You’re always looking out for me.”

Tony kissed his cheek, not wanting to cause him any further pain. “Too bad we’re so often on different continents.”

“Is that getting old for you too?” Adam asked with an insecurity he rarely felt.

Tony nodded. The men had avoided heavy relationship talk, loving what they had and not wanting to damage the status-quo. Still, if there was one thing that yesterday had shown Tony - he couldn’t avoid putting off the conversations that were important. “It is ... I want this more and more. Holidays aren’t enough especially if I have to rescue your ass.”

Adam held out his hand wincing at the pain that shot through his arm. He wanted Tony closer and he wasn’t above being sneaky. “Sleep with me.”

Tony snorted. “You’re in no position to make comments you can’t keep.”
“Funny. I mean an actual rest. It is going to suck that you are so close and yet I can’t as it is.” He had to ask. “How long do you have?”

“A week but the doctors said you are not going anywhere for at least ten days.” Tony replied not sounding annoyed or angered, just overly relieved that Adam would be okay. It was there and then that Adam could admit that he knew he was head over heels for the guy.

Tony hated being back from Turkey, he missed Adam and the rest of his madcap team. He also hated that Adam hadn’t fully healed before he left.

“Where did you go.”

Tony looked up. “On holiday.”

“Gibbs is mad.”

Tony wasn’t too keen on post-bomb Gibbs. The man was too stubborn to admit that he hadn’t fully recovered and Tony was starting to get tired of playing the emotional punch bag. On top of that, he’d seen Adam’s team and the healthy dynamic between them and it had only highlighted the chasm between Tony and the rest of NCIS.

Tony looked at Ziva and smirked. “I don’t care.”

When he looked back up, Ziva was no longer there and instead it was Director Shepard. “Hello, Madame Director. How can I help you today?”

“The NSA Director wanted to pass on his thanks for your invaluable help retrieving one of their assets.”

Tony smirked wondering how badly Adam would bristle at being described as an asset. “It was my pleasure. You could say I had a personal investment.”

Jenny snorted indelicately but kept his secret. She’d seen the way the MCRT had treated their SFA and she was amazed that DiNozzo had stayed this long. She’d been genuine in offering him ROTA but he’d known that Gibbs wasn’t fully ready and declined. Only now, she was watching the team do their level best to chip away at his personality. She had a smile on her face even if it was strained, she was pretty sure she was about to lose an invaluable agent but she should have stepped in earlier. “Yes, well, you have a call in MTAC.”

In MTAC, Tony saw Deputy Director Patricia Campbell standing tall and proud on the screen. “He’s okay but I have a proposal.”

Tony was cautious. “I’m listening.”

She played it casual. “I need you as my Assistant Director to push my agenda in the Eastern Region. One who has already shown he can be professional despite a loved one being in danger. One who exploited assets on the ground with unparalleled skill.”
Tony had never been so glad for his father’s less than legal ways before when he’d exploited the network to find Adam. “I see.” Tony’s mind was whirling as this was an incredible opportunity for himself. He’d never hid his connections in the Arab world but NCIS had chosen to never make use of them.

There was no choice when there were so many pros and so few cons. “When do I start?”

She was grinning now, happy to get what she wanted. “I’ll start the interagency paperwork. You will have a week to settle and get up to scratch with our way of doing things then I am going to set you off as my local fixer.”

Tony figured that wouldn’t be his official job title but he’d be able to work with it. “Does Captain Dalton know?”

She had a sharp grin. “I figured you might want to surprise him.”

Tony had to grin at that response. “You’re going to be a great boss.”

~*~

Tony choose not to waste any time. He went to see the Director immediately as he felt that she deserved an honest explanation. It seemed she was expecting something too as Cynthia waved him straight through.

“So did you accept the offer?” She asked him, curious to see if he took this opportunity. She was a little annoyed as she was going to ask Tony to do a special project for her but in his current frame of mind, it wouldn’t have ended well - she could recognise that much.

Tony nodded, as it was finally sinking in that he was leaving NCIS. “She wants me as an assistant director based out of the NATO Turkey base.”

Jenny looked up with a smirk. “It is a good promotion and you will be closer to your loved one.”

“That had crossed my mind.” Tony confessed. This last trip had been eye-opening. The two men had readily admitted that this was a serious relationship and nothing casual no matter what they’d told themselves at the beginning.

As a result, one of them was going to have to make the move - and Tony was being presented with the option. He would be a fool not to take it.

Tony was trying out doing what was best for him for a change whilst still serving his country. He was sure - he was going to like this new balance.
Tony had heard the same thing over and over again in his life and he was tired of it. “You’re an oddity.” “You’re not meant to exist like this?” “Wait - your mother’s death brought you online? It didn’t turn you dormant?”

And now thanks to Gibbs - he was facing the same prejudice again. The new recruit onto the MCRT was not the type to catch a clue - quickly. Kate had seen his lapel but noted it was unbonded and for an Alpha Prime no less.

Shocked she hadn’t seen it during the Air-Force One case, she stuttered. “You come in pairs, you can’t function alone.”

Tony glared at Gibbs as he blamed this pick on him solely. He went with tried and tested sarcasm. “I don’t know, I mean I learned to wash and dress myself and everything ... I’ve been self-sufficient for years.”

Tony really truly hated the romantic fiction that pedalled Guides as these fragile sex starving creatures that needed to be coddled. It wouldn’t be so bad if people didn’t think they were like that in real life.

Todd flushed knowing she’d been called on her crap. “I didn’t mean it like that.” She said, trying to back-peddle.

Tony stiffened and in that moment, he was done playing. “I find this line of questioning intolerable. I don’t need to pander to your curiosity. I am not broken.”

She blanched, as the word intolerable had very real-life consequences when uttered by a guide. “I’m just trying to understand.”

Tony snorted because he was sure the pout and wide eyes would work on most people. He was not average in any form of the word. He’d wanted to be underestimated but that couldn’t happen in the environment they worked in. “Piece of advice - to an average guide, it is difficult to lie to them, to a Prime... It is impossible.”

She scowled, now acting like she was the wronged party. “There is no reason to be so aggressive.”
If he chose to make a formal declaration of her being intolerable then there was no way she would be able to work on the MCRT.

Tony smiled thinly. “Oh, Agent Todd,” he all but purred. “I was only returning the favour.”

Director Morrow was standing on the upper level of the bullpen. “Agent DiNozzo, you have a conference call in the MTAC.”

Tony looked up in surprise as he had nothing planned. “Director?”

“It is Guide Sandburg and he said it was urgent.” The Director explained. He was nervous, as most people were when talking to Dr Blair Sandburg, who also went by the name of Alpha Prime Guide Sentinel of the US.

Tony flushed because he really hoped it was for a case and not because his adoptive father felt his annoyance just now. It wouldn’t be the first time but he was over thirty years old so he seriously needed to stop worrying.

~*~

Tony had moved to MTAC and saw Blair on the big screen and he couldn’t help but grin. “Hey, Pops. What’s up?”

Tony knew the procedure was to record all conversations so he was done hiding. After all, it wasn’t like his adoption wasn’t on his records. He was lucky that Dolores down in HR was a doll and kept his record to only her. She was fiercer than any Dragon. The shock ripple that ran through the technicians in the room was palpable. The whole world knew who Dr Blair Sandburg was and it was known that along with Sentinel Ellison they had an adopted son. The identity of whom had been kept whilst they grew up, only he reached adulthood - and still, his name wasn’t released.

Blair avoided the awkward silence by breezing through it. “Your Dad wants to remind you that he taught you to shoot for a reason.”

Tony chuckled because anyone who believed Guides were meek had never met his pops. He matched Blair’s malicious smirk. “Yeah but the paperwork is a bitch for shooting a colleague.”

Blair scowled. “You don’t have to put up with intolerable bullshit. You helped me to write the legislation, remember?”

Tony blushed as he’d studied both criminology and law wanting to understand both sides of the issue. He’d loved sports but his abilities meant he wasn’t allowed to play without heavy suppressants and they messed with his head. “I know and I did just verbally slap her down. I will make it formal next time.”

Sandburg looked pleased by his response remembering how hard he and Jim had worked to build Tony up from the shell he was when he arrived in their care. “Good. We didn’t raise you to be a doormat. Just remember - no matter how hard you try you can’t cure stupid.”

Tony did cackle at that because he loved his father’s twisted sense of humour. “So what do you need? You would have used Air Guide if it was just to give me a pep talk.”

Blair looked sheepish. “I know you’ve been enjoying your independence at NCIS but there is a problem in LA that both me and your Dad would feel better if you were involved.”

Tony didn’t sigh or make any type of reaction as it would be unbecoming. He’d kept his career
separate from the Sentinel Agency, wanting to find out who he was before he went into it full time. After all, his Pops was an academic and his father was in the army, followed by a cop before they ever ran the Sentinel Council. Tony had always known that his job was going to come with an expiry date - mainly when he found his Sentinel. He might not have known him for the first twenty-five years he’d been online but he had faith he or she was out there and he would find them. He looked forward to the day when he would no longer be considered broken by society.

“What’s the case?”

Blair grimaced as the case was so abhorrent that he’d meditated on the spiritual plane for two hours and curled up with his spirit guide. “The local PD had a case and failed to spot a serial killer targeting children.”

Tony knew there would be only one reason that Blair would be asking him to intercede. “Online or on our register?”

Sandburg knew Tony could help them. “Both.”

Tony hissed as to kill to a child was one of the worst things possible. All that lost potential would be crippling and had the potential if the child was online to cripple the local areas sentinels and guides. “What’s the signature? And how the hell did the killer avoid the empathic event? We should have known about the serial killer?”

Ellison popped into frame. “A stolen part of the person... and now they’ve migrated to drawing sick tableaus of famous paintings. And your question is why we want you on the case. You will be going to LA to work with Don Eppes and his Violent Crime taskforce, they have a good record with cases and we need this solved.”

Tony had no idea how much of fate had just interfered. “I will be on a plane within the hour.”

Blair snorted. “There is a plane waiting at Reagan for you.”

Tony knew the way they both worked. “I will see you in LA?”

~*~

Tony was on the specially commissioned plane that was used by the Senior council and he could relax as a result. The plane had cutting-edge technology allowing Guides to be buffered from the minds underneath and for the Sentinels not to have to dial back their hearing just to travel. It was a good job it was the Council jet as his spirit animal just appeared out of the blue - sitting on top of his work notes. His spirit animal had a mischievous grin on his face and Tony tried to be stern. “You’re not helping.”

Orso was great if a distinctly unique, guide spirit animal. It’s just when a practically corporeal version of a mountain bear sits on your work - you are not going to get close to it. Tony was just lucky that Orso was a spirit animal as if he wasn’t, his bear would have broken the table.

Tony looked at the pout on his spirit guides face. “Don’t pout, buddy. We need to find the bastard.” Then he got a sharp razor like grin, one not too dissimilar to his spirit animal. “And then you can claw him up and we’ll take whatever’s left.”

Orso’s look projected - *Are you sure?*

Tony nodded and offered his hand for a high-five. Orso returned the gesture with his paw and Tony grinned as Orso faded into the spirit plane once more. He’d done his job, reminding Tony not to
swirl too deep as there was no one to pull him out without his Sentinel.

Tony looked at the pictures and apart from being Sentinel or Guides, there was no link in their victimology. They were all from different backgrounds and no single age group as the ten victims ranged from age five to thirteen.

There were some notes about the team he’d be working with either. Tony looked at the picture of the lead agent. He seemed to have a potted history about him too, huh, a good son who came home willing to take a demotion to be with his mother who was dying. She’d passed away but Eppes had chosen to stay away after the funeral for some years and …. Tony froze seeing the other man’s status. His mind kept reading the same phrase again and again - *Alpha Prime Sentinel - Level 10. Unbonded.*

Tony looked at the photo and it struck a chord deep within him. He couldn’t explain why - but he decided that he wouldn’t be distracted from his main goal. They had to find the killer and fast. He couldn’t help but feel sad at the loss of life and innocence he was seeing in the pictures. This killer was a potentially terrifying notion for oh so many reasons - they were either online or being manipulated by a mundane.

Tony heard the squark that made him look up, they’d entered Californian airspace. He wasn’t seeing Orso but rather a Bald Eagle. Tony didn’t pat it as he’d not been invited to and it was the height of bad manners to pet another’s spirit animal without at least warning them.

“Who do you belong to, beautiful, and aren’t they missing you?” He found himself asking.

The bald eagle preened at the praise and stepped forward. Tony knew he wasn’t going to have much choice but to pet her when she all but nuzzled his hand. “You belong to my sentinel, don’t you?”

Tony choked out a cry at the regal nod. It was everything he’d longed for so long. He’d been online since he was eight. He was the longest unmatched person to exist. It freaked people out when they realised how long he’d been living without his Sentinel, the other half of his soul. And now it was in touching distance but he had to deal with this crisis first. “Are you going to make my life complicated?”

The eagle jumped to his shoulder and pecked his ear. Tony couldn’t help the relief he felt, it was a like a small sliver of the void he always felt was being filled. Tony was feeling giddy to think he was so close to his potential Sentinel - he’d been waiting a very long time.

Tony heard the pilot announce. “We’re landing in Los Angeles International soon, prepare for landing.”

Tony gathered up his folders, and by now they would only be reference points. “Let’s get this show on the road.”

~*~

“Hello, LA.”

“Agent DiNozzo, it’s a pleasure to meet you. I’m Colby Granger.”

Tony gave him a sunny grin. “You too, Agent Granger. Where’s your fearsome leader?” He was peeking around wondering why the man in charge wasn’t there to meet him.

Charlie took a deep breath and grinned. “Oh hello, I’m Dr Charles Eppes, it is great to meet you. I’m Don’s brother.” With a cheeky grin. “The fearsome leader that disappeared.”
Tony couldn’t ever remember making someone disappear before he’d even said hello before. He spotted the man standing over Dr Eppes and Tony relaxed. “Hey Ian, Gibbs will be annoyed that I’m working a case with another sniper.”

“Gunny should learn to play well with others.”

Tony snorted as there was no force in this world that could make Gibbs do something that he didn’t want to - of that he was sure. “Yeah, well, not even Orso gets him to behave.”

“Who’s Orso?” The sunny woman asked him.

Tony answered. “You’ll meet him soon enough and he gets grumpy if he doesn’t get to surprise people.”

Tony guessed the eagle on his shoulder was going to stop things from being awkward by dragging on. “So it’s too bad your leader has disappeared because I kind of think this lovely lady belongs to him.”

The eagle preened and Charlie’s eyes widened as she did indeed belong to Don. “Wow. She usually won’t go near anyone but Don.”

Tony had a smug grin. “She didn’t give me much of a choice.”

“She doesn’t like to do what anyone else wants.” A new silky voice added.

Tony froze at the sound, his long wait was over and the rest of the world fell away. “Sentinel.”

~*~

The world froze around them and in his head he swore he could hear Blair laughing. Stay out of my head Pops. Having a Shaman adoptive father meant that he could be annoying without the use of technology.

The response back was immediate from his Pops. You just started a bond that was felt through the entire western seaboard. Your father and I will be there soon. You better prepare Eppes for meeting your Dad.

Tony blushed because god damn it. He was old enough to take care of himself and yet he just knew his Dad was going to be all over-protective Sentinel.

Just because you’re old enough - doesn’t mean we stop caring. That is what family and tribe are for.

Tony knew that was more a reminder for him to remember he was more than his beginning years. Thanks, Pops, now I need to concentrate.

Blair sent him the shaman equivalent of a snort and left him alone. What a choice. This sucked, he was facing his Sentinel and yet he couldn’t do anything about it just yet. This was like having your ultimate dream standing right in front of you but having just out of your arms reach.

“Want to bond…” Eppes growled, clearly trying to shake the fog of finding his perfect match off as they were both on the same wavelength. This needed to be delayed if possible.

Tony was feeling a little calmer because the bald eagle was still on his shoulder. It was providing a weak but tangible connection to his Sentinel. He wished Orso would do the same and sure enough, Orso appeared to (pardon the pun) bear hug him.
Tony wanted to assure his Sentinel. “And we will but the tribe comes first... I am not going anywhere without you.”

The group took a step back from Orso apart from Ian, he scared less easy. Tony snorted at the way, Egerton hugged his Guide closer. “Relax this is Orso, my spirit guide who is more corporeal than most.”

“You’re a guide.” Granger repeated, not quite a question.

Tony nodded because he’d just been identified as one. “That’s correct.”

“With a Mountain Bear for a spirit guide.” Granger finished as if he was not quite sure that could be try.

Tony smirked. “I’m a special snowflake.” He took control of the situation, ”Now we need to get back to the offices Sentinel Ellison and Guide Sandburg will be meeting you back at headquarters.”

“Why are they coming?” Charlie asked him.

Tony sighed. “They just felt their kid start a bond, just after he was sent to help on a vital case. They want to help and they are nosey old men so take your pick.”

Tony wanted to laugh at the shocked faces of the LA team but he did get it. His adoptive parents were infamous and as a result, so many people built up images in their head of what they could be like. It would be odd to think of them as parents, even though they cared for all Sentinel and Guides. Tony was just oh so lucky they went one step further for him.

Eppes spoke and his voice made Tony shiver. “They’re coming here.”

Tony nodded. “If we’re going to delay the bonding we will need the help of a couple as powerful as we are. That means it can only be them.”

Eppes winced. “Damn, it would be your guardians.”

Tony chuckled and had to pull back from clapping him on the back. They had a three sense imprint, taste and touch were all that was missing. If Tony touched, Don or vice-versa even the most stubborn person would be unable to avoid bonding in those circumstances. His hand back at his side, he offered a wry grin to his Sentinel. “You will be fine, you’re a big bad Sentinel. Now let’s go and catch this son of a bitch as we deserve a long undisturbed bonding period.”

Don could only agree and Ian whispered. “Whipped.”

Don managed to keep walking by his guides side, keeping up their conversation and effortlessly flipping the bird.

Charlie giggled as his usually serious brother didn’t often show his less serious side. Granger was still confused. Ian rolled his eyes. “They are super-powerful and we have a crazed killer of us on the loose. They’ve acknowledged their intent and are resisting the urge to finish the bond.”

“How strong do you have to be to resist the urge?” Reeves asked being curious and the only other mundane on the team.

Charlie and Ian answered in chorus. “Very.” They shuddered, imagining when they’d met if they’d resisted the urge to bond. No, actually, Ian knew he would have gone on a feral drive and knocked over and/killed any potential sniper in the LA area.
“He has a forceful personality.” Granger remarked and if it hadn’t been clear that he was off limits he would have been flirting so hard.

Ian smirked because they didn’t know the half of it - to understand it you had to see it. “And you will see just how honestly as his parents are coming down. To think this is going to really be something ... I hope Don likes the spotlight.”

“What do you mean?”

Ian rolled his eyes. “Do you remember the furore in the news when the Alpha Prime Sentinel-Guide pair announced they adopted but kept his name etc out of the press?”

“Yeah, of course, I do.” Granger remarked. He’d been a kid at the time but he’d known it was a big deal but then it all went quiet and the story died away in favour of new things. They’d been heading towards the cars they were using for transport.

Ian tried to help the team see the point he was trying to make. It wasn’t always easy with mundanes. They just didn’t have the same biological imperatives as sentinel and guides. “Well, their baby boy is done hiding and ready to face the world.”

Reeves was more receptive to body language. “Why is that such a scary notion?”

Ian snorted. “Scary, not so much.” After all, the community knew of Tony, just was aware that he wouldn’t be taking an active part until he found his Sentinel. “I don’t finish the story did I?”

Tony called out. “Ian, Charlie. Can you ride with us?”

The couple nodded, guessing they were going to be there for support, plus, to discuss several things that needed to be considered.

Ian looked back at the rest of the team piling into the second SUV. “By all accounts, the heir is more powerful than the parents.”

*Life was going to be interesting - that was for sure.*
“Yo, Fed in the House.” Kono hollered from her workspace.

Danno took an opportunity to take a look at their guest. “Nah, his suit costs probably 5K. He’s more likely a lawyer.”

Steve sighed but there was a massive grin on his face. “No, he is a Fed and the suit did cost 5k. Hey Brah, welcome back to the island, Tony.”

Tony grinned at his old friend. “Relax, this is a friendly meeting. I just wanted 5-0 to meet the new SAC at Pearl NCIS,”

Steve grinned, delighted at the promotion. He knew Tony deserved it and he would welcome his almost-brother being back on the island. “I’ve missed you, brother.”

Tony sunk into the hug, grateful for the chance to be around people that did care about him. It was a reminder that the toxic words from the trio were just that - poisonous words.

Danno could admit that he was intrigued by this mainlander, even more so, when he recognised him in some of the photographs at Steve’s house. He was in the family photos growing up and Danno didn’t like to ask about the past knowing that Jack McGarrett’s death was still very much a sore point for Steve.

What intrigued Danno more though, if he was being honest with himself, was Kono’s reaction. The usually bright and bubbly rookie was looking tentative, nervous and happy all at the same time.

The staring ended when this Tony held his hands out, and Kono dived into them. He heard her say. “Glad you’re back, cousin.”

Tony pulled back so they could talk but didn’t break the hug. “I figure we’re both older and wiser and once he’s begged a little, we’ll see if we can make it work.”

She chuckled. “He’d be a fool not to. He was stupid at the time.”

Danno still didn’t know who he was, or what happened but he was hoping someone might explain something soon. He did notice, though, how pleased Steve looked with his friend’s comments. Danno was getting the impression there was a love-lost situation.

Steve asked eagerly. “You sticking around for lunch?”

Tony shook his head. “Can’t, I’d love to but I need to have a conference call with SECNAV so we’ll have to catch up over lunch or dinner sometime soon. I also figure you could break the news so he could have his freakout and then we can start to behave like adults.”

With his piece said, Tony gave Steve another hug, and a longer but what Danno could only think of as a familial hug to Kono. Tony looked sheepish as he stood in front of Danno. “My apologies, Detective Williams, I’m Special Agent in charge, Anthony DiNozzo, NCIS. I grew up with this one.” Pointing at Steve. “And this one is family in all the ways that matter. I look forward to getting to know you.”

Danno took the proffered handshake and his mind started to whirl, trying to think where he knew the
name. “Wait - are you the same DiNozzo who went Mob hunting in Philly and survived”

Tony could only shrug sheepishly. “Guilty as charged.”

Kono looked perturbed. “What did you do?”

Tony shared a look with Steve but all he got back was an unhelpful shrug. He bowed to the inevitable knowing that it would come out eventually. “I helped infiltrate and bring down the Malculuso family.”

Danno snorted as that was such a sanitised description. “It’s crazy dangerous and most UC’s end up dead. Instead, this one has a ‘polite’ contract put out on him.”

Kono couldn’t imagine a polite contract. “What does that even mean?”

Tony sighed because it was just as the detective described. “Look, Don Michael liked me and he spread it far and wide. As far as he was concerned, I was his preferred heir and he’d accept no bounties on my head unless I came to Philly and refused to take up the family firm.”

Danno snickered at that because that was like out of a movie. “Wow. You are something else, my friend.”

Tony just pouted. “The saddest thing is that that isn’t even the craziest thing in my life.”

Steve looked at his watch, knowing Tony was trying to avoid meeting someone. “Hey, you better go especially if you are not ready to see him again just yet.”

Danno didn’t hear what Tony whispered to Steve but the SEAL looked sympathetic.

Kono slid up next to Steve. “Do you think cuz will get it right this time?”

Steve snorted because that was the million dollar question and he was no prophet. “Who knows?”

Chin had finally returned from his lunch break. “Knows what?”

Danny now understood that Tony had timed his visit to deliberately avoid Chin. “New NCIS guy at Pearl came to visit. Agent Tony DiNozzo.”

Chin dropped his coffee in shock. He certainly never expected to hear that name again. He’d not handled their relationship well, at all. He’d attempted to be protective at the time but he realised later, he was pushing away anyone that cared because he was ashamed of the accusation of being a dirty cop - and that had included his fiance at the time. “What? How? He’s a cop?”

Kono shrugged as that bit hadn’t been explained but she was guessing their boss knew. “Nope - suited and Italian-booted. He did say that you had to beg for it but he’d be willing to listen to you.”

Chin winced because Tony was very Italian in his temperament when truly riled. He was great at hiding his emotions and had the best work masks he’d ever seen but they always fell apart around people he truly cared for. “He probably hates my guts.”

Kon shook her head, she didn’t hold her punches. “No. Despite you being an idiot he still cares. You are going to have to work for it but I think you are in the chase of your life - and you’re the prey.”

And Kono was right - the chase was on.
AUTHORS NOTE: (And yes, there is going to be a part 2 short to this before this collection is out.)
Sherlock needed a plan. A good one. It couldn’t be a rash plan - there was too much at stake. He was certain that he needed to fake his death and disappear. He had one friend in all the world who could help him this time - and it wasn’t John. He reached for a phone that had only one number in it because it was time to make a call. The time for procrastination was over.

“It’s bloody early, Sherlock.”

Sherlock snorted at the annoyance in his old friend’s voice. Plus, he knew it was all for show.

“Careful, Tony. Your answer is showing your inner Paddington.”

Tony may have just woken up but he wasn’t naive - something was wrong. Sherlock was never worried by anything - it was a side effect of his intellect. Tony didn’t let him evade. “What’s wrong, Sherlock? I can hear it in your voice.”

“It’s bloody irritating how well you can read me.” Sherlock replied with a huff.

Tony laughed at the reply. “I don’t know, I think it makes our friendship work myself.”

Tony wasn’t wrong. There were a few times in his life he’d wished that Tony had settled in Britain. Sherlock knew the time for evasion was over, he needed to tell someone and Tony was uniquely suited to help him.

“I have a criminal after me and he is going to kill people I lo... am close to.” Sherlock explained.

Tony sighed in annoyance because he could smack the psychologist who told Sherlock he was a high functioning sociopath. Sherlock did feel, the problem for Sherlock was he felt too much and so tried to distance himself from those horribly pesky emotions so he could function. Tony had no problem in lecturing Sherlock. “You shouldn’t listen to that bullshit psychologist. You have emotions - you just compartmentalise better than most.”

“It’s my mask and it works.” His old friend used Tony’s lingo to explain, not that it was necessary - Tony already knew.

Tony rolled his eyes, knowing that it would not be for effect. “I’m not throwing stones, Sherlock. I’m just saying you shouldn’t use it with me.”

Sherlock wasn’t the type to give in to despair but he couldn’t see a win here. And yet, just as he suspected, Tony was already thinking through the problem.

“Are we sure the dude doesn’t know me?” Tony asked, wanting to double check his facts.

Sherlock was adamant, knowing it for a fact as his foe had not brought up Tony. “No, Moriarty has no clue about you.”

That was a relief as it would make Tony’s job easier. If he was unknown he could be the wildcard and it was something he excelled at, mainly because he chose to follow his instincts. He knew in his heart he would do everything to protect Sherlock, who was his oldest and truest friend. “You know, I think it’s about time you joined me in America.”

“How?”
Tony kind of wished that he could see Sherlock’s face. “How do you feel about marriage?”

Sherlock snorted as it wasn’t the first time the suggestion was raised for the pair. “I believe Myc’ will finally be able to collect on that bet he made.”

Tony’s mind was running through an extraction plan. He knew it would be a complex problem but he could pull it off. “Expect a random pickpocket tomorrow to give you a new wallet.”

~*~

The rooftop scene went off without a hitch and Sherlock seemed to fall to his death but was caught by Tony’s man and injected with the compound to save his life. Tony was going to give Sherlock the bill for the life-size model he’d had created to fool the mourners. It was all very comic book and he totally stole the idea from the Kreme storyline.

Most importantly, Moriarty brought the lie - and bragged about it. Sherlock was sorry that John believed him to be dead and was clearly mourning him. Still, he told himself that if he revealed himself now it would be all for nought and his best friend would be in danger from that lunatic once more. John needed to concentrate on Mary and their first child soon to be born.

The plane was a private one registered to Lord Paddington. It was a title that Tony only tended to use when in the British Isles due to most of his mother’s family perishing in a fire. As the remaining legitimate heir through his mother’s side, he inherited the family wealth. The incredible irony being, his dissolute father had just disowned him so Tony chose to make it official, asking an old family friend who’d never been keen on his father to act on his behalf.

Jack Parker-Smith was excellent at acting on his behalf and continuously and aggressively sued his ex-father until the bastard got the message and kept his hands off Tony’s money. The man was his favourite ‘uncle’ as a result.

Tony was pacing while waiting for a message from Sherlock - if everything had gone off without a hitch, then he should be messaging soon. Tony could have smacked himself because he knew better- he started to compose his own message.

Sherlock was, in fact, building himself up to messaging Tony but was still stewing over the fact he’d had to retreat. It felt like losing, not something he’d much experienced in his life. Tony still showing just how well he knew him.

Game not over - merely postponed. - T

I have no idea what you talking about - S

Liar - T

Sherlock snorted with amusement. He had to wonder if he would manage to keep their marriage unconsummated. He was never the type to seek random hookups for mere sexual gratification but he did love sex with someone he was interested in. Irene had made him a little gun shy around romance but he wasn’t completely turned off the idea.

Tony promised him they could deal with the threat of Moriarty together and he liked the sound of that - a lot. Sherlock settled back and tried to rest, his sleep patterns been disturbed for too long trying to find a solution.

~*~
At work, Ziva, Abby and Tim were gossiping about their currently absent SFA who’d been granted vacation time. “Are you sure he said England?”

Ziva nodded. “Yes, he said a friend from the mother country. That is what he would consider the mother country, yes.”

Tim nodded in answer but his mind couldn’t make the puzzle pieces fit. “It makes no sense.”

Abby shook her head because it did if you knew Tony's family background. “It does - his mother was English blueblood.”

McGee frowned as bizarre as it was - he never thought of Tony as growing up, which was ridiculous even for him. It might be because as much as Tony would talk it was never about his childhood.

“So why would he ask for extra vacation time?” Tim was aware that Tony rarely took time off. In fact, he could imagine HR being ecstatic that he was using some of it up.

Gibbs was standing in the doorway, annoyed by the gossiping when they had a case. His gruff sarcastic comment of, “He asked for honeymoon time. Now get back to work,” only added fuel to the fire.

Gibbs may have raised his voice but it did not have the desired result as the toxic trio were in too much shock. Their brains had closed down for a few seconds and needed to reboot. They couldn’t comprehend the idea of Tony actually settling down and marrying someone. Plus, there was the question of who would be stupid enough to marry Tony?

~*~

Tony did not have a care in the world and the opinions of his ‘teammates’ mattered not a drop to him. He was on a beach with his oldest friend staring at the gold band that was around his finger. They had headed to Monterey Bay for a quick ceremony and there were worse places to relax and unwind. Tony knew that, despite his ever working mind, Sherlock needed a few days to adjust to the fact that a) he wasn’t going to die and b) his friends were safe for now. “It’s not so bad this married life, is it?”

Sherlock looked smug. “I can be an excellent husband even if I have to answer to Ben.”

Tony just quirked an eyebrow because Sherlock could pout all he liked but Tony would not do a thing differently as the whole thing was to keep Sherlock safe. “So are you ready to be a writer?”

Sherlock snorted as it was an easy cover to live. “If I don’t have a best-seller in the first month, I will eat my hat.”

Tony giggled. “Not the hat. I love that hat.”

Sherlock quirked an eyebrow, filing that fact for later use.

“So ready for DC, Darlin?” Tony asked him, knowing that Sherlock needed to have adjusted to the fact if they were going to make this work.

Sherlock smirked. “Sure thing, sugarplum.”

Tony wrinkled his nose but two could play at that game. “Really, Honeybear?”
Sherlock groaned, knowing he shouldn’t make this a competition. “I will figure out an acceptable nickname.”

Tony chuckled deeply. “I knew you’d see it my way. Now you can come and help me make my team’s heads explode in a day’s time”

~*~

Tony entered the bullpen with a spring in his step. This was like a brilliant prank and the best part - he just acting like himself. Sherlock had pointed out quite reasonably that the best and easiest way to screw with the toxic trio was to simply drop the mask.

“You got married?!”

Tony frowned, feigning disappointment. “Was that congratulations I heard? Thank you, we’re very happy.”

Ziva looked furious. “How could you?”

Tony had a harder glint in his eyes. “How could I ... not invite you? Or stop waiting for you to figure out your damn mind.”

“I ...”

Tony smiled and finished her sentence before she could even say another word. “... am happy with Michael, just as I am with Ben.”

Tim jumped in. “What is Ben short for, Bernadette?”

Tony snorted because that was the best he could come up with? “Try Benedict, but close Probie.”

“You’re gay?!”

Tony shrugged, not making a big deal out of it, knowing this would mess with his teammate’s heads even more. “For Ben, sure. Now back to your reports.”

The two junior agents just looked at each other as if to see what they should do next. They never imagined this so were unsure how to act. It was unnerving.

And Tony had yet to invite them all to a meal prepared by Sherlock but the dinner party would have to wait for another time.
Danny Williams had learned a lot today about his team. He had no idea about Tony before today and it was like he was this family secret but the genie was firmly out of the Armani bottle as far as Danno could tell.

Right now, he was on Steve’s lanai taking in an evening beer and trying to understand some of the tangled history between Tony, Chin, Steve and Kono.

Danny remarked. “So the Fed, Tony, is Chin’s ex-fiancé?”

Steve nodded and knew that Danny should have the background as it wasn’t fair considering every other member had ringside seats to it. “Yeah, Tony is my oldest friend. We met when we were twelve and we ended up at RIMA together.”

Danny understood that as he knew from Steve that Jack McGarrett had sent his son away when things got truly dangerous. “So he stole Chin’s heart?”

Steve snorted. “Danno you should have seen them, they were perfect but then the claim of Chin being dirty broke them apart.”

“How?”

Steve sighed because this wasn’t simple. “In a nutshell, Chin pushed Tony away so he wasn’t tarred by the accusation of being dirty like he was. It was high-handed and Kono constantly every year on the day Chin broke the engagement gives Chin shit for his life choices.”

“They seem close.”

Steve snorted as it was true. “Tony was like Kono’s cool older brother. They used to surf together and he never told her she should be girly or act any one way.”

“So when they broke up?”

Steve sighed because Tony had been an idiot there too. “He told Kono to be mad but support Chin afterwards. He had me, and he could and would start again.”

Danny knew the type all too well, the type to sacrifice their own happiness for others. He’d seen Steve’s face the day Rachel was hugging him in the hospital and he could confess it had stopped him from making a huge mistake with his ex-wife. “Well, he sure shook things up.”

“He has that effect on people.”

~*~

Tony looked over the sea from the lanai of his new place. He’d taken a page out of the McGarrett’s book and closed on a place with a beach. His phone disturbed the peace and, recognising NCIS Washington, he answered it. He soon regretted it.

“WHY DID YOU LEAVE!”
Tony sighed because seriously, he hoped Abby would have gotten out of her snit. This was ridiculous. “You know it’s against NCIS rules to abuse agency property.”

“I have no idea what you mean.”

Tony rolled his eyes because Abby’s little innocent me routine had stopped being effective in his second year. “Yes you do, Abby, and do you want to know the truth?”

“I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t.”

Tony chuckled but it was dark and hollow. “I was fucking miserable in DC, not a friend to be had (he wasn’t going to rat Jimmy out) and I was done playing. You know what? I thought I would try happiness for a change.”

She hissed in shock. “We’re your family.”

Tony just sighed because the sad thing was she seemed to believe what she was saying. “No, I was your verbal punchbag because I stayed and kept things together when Gibbs ran away to Mexico. All I heard was that I wasn’t Gibbs ... well, you got him and I left. So congratulations - you got what you wanted.”

“It’s not right without you here. You’re Gibbs’, right-hand man.”

Tony didn’t understand how someone could have such seriously blinkered vision. “Don’t call again unless it’s work related ... I’m around my real family now.”

Tony must have known some bullshit would be thrown up as he’d got his surfboard out and stalked down to the sea. A few waves and he’d exhaust his frustration out of himself.

Steve had come around straight after work, wanting to catch up with his oldest friend. He was glad that he was back on the island. It felt right for Tony to be in Hawaii.

Tony had just wiped out when Steve shouted. “Need to practice with Kono.”

Tony grinned seeing Steve and turned back to the beach. Tony had clearly kept up his workout routine, “Looking good.”

Tony smirked. “It helps the lungs, your workout routine.”

Steve nodded, glad to have been able to support Tony in the wake of his terrible run-in with the plague. “I can sit while you go change.”

Tony smirked, chucking him a Longboard. “Sate your thirst while you wait.”

Steve’s musings in his thoughts were broken by Tony returning. “That’s better. Sorry, an old acquaintance pissed me off.”

Steve nodded, being familiar with the routine of using exercise to work off frustration. “You going to be okay, brah?”

Tony settled back on his own chair. “I am now.”
The silence settled for a few moments when Steve spoke up again. “It is truly great you being back here, it didn’t feel right being back on the island without you.”

Tony nodded, knowing what he meant. “How did Chin take the news of my return?”

Steve snorted because some things don’t change. “You made him drop his coffee... Which I did not think possible.”

Tony snickered because Chin’s caffeine habit had always been a serious habit. “I know of only one person with a worse coffee habit and he’s a Marine.”

Steve spoke up, letting Tony know how deep Chin’s issues went. “You know Chin fought me adding him to the task force.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Chin has always been his own worst enemy. Now distract me. Talk to me about Blondie?”

Steve knew he was talking about Danny and Tony knew him well enough to know about his preferences. “He’s loud and proud, he doesn’t let me get away with anything and he is determined to get me to work and behave like a cop.”

Tony smirked, seeing the dopey look on his mate’s face and asked knowingly. “When did he punch you?”

“First day.”

Tony snorted because that would have hooked Steve in without even trying. “You do anything about it yet?”

“Not yet.” Steve confessed but challenged Tony. “Have you?”

“Touché.” Tony responded, “But I have taken the first steps and it is up to Chin to meet me halfway. We have to be equal in this if we have a hope of making it work.”

Steve could see the longing in his friend’s eyes and he hoped they made it work. He raised his bottle. “I’ll drink to that.”

Tony clinked his in return. “To the chase.”

~*~

Chin had received a text from Kono. *Surfing, our favourite place. The suggestion is making it a team day*

Now that would be intriguing. Chin knew Kono wasn’t being subtle but she’d given him shit at the time about being masochistic and high-handed. He’d been steeling himself to talk to Tony since he’d known he was back on the Island.

He couldn’t let Tony do this all his own way - after all, it was his fault it was broken in the first place.
Chin could only hope that Tony still had a weakness for malasadas from his aunt, who’d made a batch for him knowingly. He’d brewed some of his finer beans too and prepared a flask of good coffee to steal Tony’s attention for a few minutes.

It had been a good plan but as he got close to the beach, he started thinking of contingencies and had to shake himself out of his thoughts. Actions would be what fixed this - not words. Although, Chin would need a few words too.

Just like old times, he found Kono and Tony out on the waves. Danny was ranting. “So top rate footballer, basketballer and surfing ... he would be easy to hate.”

Steve snorted. “No, you don’t because Gracie is already calling him Uncle Tony.”

This was true. The little girl had lit up like a Christmas tree at his little gift to her, a surfboard with a dolphin design. Danny had wanted to protest but Tony had explained that it was a tradition for an Uncle to gift their niece with their first board in Hawaii. Danny didn't know the traditions of the Island well enough to know if Tony was talking crap but he knew when to give in. “You’re right. Plus, I should see Rachel’s head explode this evening, according to Tony.”

Steve smirked. “Tony is right and anywhere he comes, Chin. Like old times right?”

Chin’s sunglasses were down his head. This kind of wasn’t fair seeing Tony for the first time in shorts, soaking wet and looking so relaxed. “Yeah.”

Steve clapped him on the back. “He’ll listen, so make it count.”

Chin took in a deep breath. “I know, and I am going to steal Tony for breakfast and then we will return.”

The team pouted but Steve understood why. “I’ll hold them off but I can’t promise for too long.”

Chin just gave him a small nod of appreciation. Sure enough, the pair got out of the sea, laughing and breathless.

Tony planted his board down in the sand, right next to the smaller one for Grace and Kono’s board. “See, Danny, nothing to worry about.”

Danny huffed. “Kono is a champion so I am not doubting her ability.”

Tony held a hand to his chest. “Hey, I kicked those waves.”

Chin chuckled. “Fearlessness was always your problem.”

Tony shrugged. “The bigger the wave, the bigger the thrill. Long time no see, Chin.”

Chin was standing stock still. “I know. I was thinking we could grab a quiet breakfast just the two of us. Talk.”

Tony smirked. “Talking will make a change but what the hell? Why not? Fear not, team, breakfast is being delivered and we will be in shouting distance.”

~*~
Chin felt something settle as Tony took the lead but led them to their once favourite private part of the beach. They’d snuck out a lot to steal private time in this place. It was a small hilly dune, that when you were on top of it - you couldn’t be seen on the beach below.

Tony watched as Chin opened the food. “From Aunty?”

Chin nodded. “She says you should come around.”

Tony sucked in a breath at the almost easy admittance back into the fold. “I will”. He wanted to be polite but the long surfing session had made him hungry. “Thanks for the food.”

Chin had tactically waited until Tony was eating to start talking. “I was a fool.”

Tony nearly choked hearing the words he’d longed to hear for so long. “Yes, you were.”

Chin turned to face Tony letting him see into his eyes. “I can offer no excuse but to say at the time it seemed logical.”

Tony snorted and showed how vexed he was. “You were a high-handed prick but you know what? I tried dating and no one came close to you.”

Chin looked sheepish. “Part of me is sorry you’ve not found happiness but the selfish part of me is glad that I have a chance to correct my wrong. Are you going to let me?”

Tony chuckled at the bluntness but it was one of the things he’d adored about Chin. He’d always known where he stood.

Chin shrugged unrepentantly. “I’m only human.”

“Yes, you are.” Tony leaned forward to kiss his cheek, and it felt like a brand. “Now we’re going back to the others to see the Ohana you’ve been building.”

Chin followed quickly behind.

~*~

The team sat down on a few blankets and enjoyed some food. It was noticed by the rest of the team the way Tony and Chin shared a blanket. They had the most incredible ability to stay orbiting the other. They didn’t touch but it was like there was a tension between the pair. And yet, at the same time, they were relaxed making for an odd dichotomy.

Grace sat next to her new Uncle asking him loads of questions about DC and about England when she realised they had the same sort of mixed origins.

“So you’re a Lord?”

Tony snickered. “Only in London and it has the added advantage of making Senior mad.”

Steve glowered at the mention of the man. “If he comes near you I am tossing him in a shark tank. I don’t care how much Danno rants.”
If Danny was about to say something - it died on his lips when Chin added. “And I will help, that man should be banned from the islands.”

Grace frowned. “If he is mean to Ohana he should be.”

Tony was touched. “You are very sweet, Gracie. So you ready for your first lesson?”

She nodded and eagerly followed Kono and Tony to the water’s edge. Today would not see her do much in the water but she was still happy to start. It wasn’t unfair to say that surfing was a way of life here and Grace was eager to fit in at school.

~*~

Steve waited until they were down by the beach. “So?”

“We spoke and cleared the air, a little.”

Danno frowned. “By a little, you mean not at all.”

Chin just gave him a look. “We spoke and I didn’t get punched so life is good.”

Danno sighed with frustration. “Why can’t people use words instead of their fists?”

“Like you did when you met Steve.”

Danno went red having been caught on his hypocrisy but he valiantly tried to explain himself. “Oh come on, he was being all neanderthal Superseal.”

Chin snorted and enjoyed the turnabout. “You’ll figure it out.”

Steve glared but Chin stared placidly back. Today was the first day in a very long time that he had hope that he could fix one of his wrongs. It had been stupid and he’d regretted it for a long time. He chose to stare at Tony, relaxed and in his element teaching little Grace who was lapping up the words.

“What’s your next plan?”

Chin shrugged. “Dinner followed by a piano concert.”

Steve chuckled because music was one of Tony’s biggest weaknesses. “You better hope the piano player is good or you know how mad he will be.”

Chin snorted. “It’s Lang-Lang so he should be happy.”

~*~

Tony was getting ready for his date with Chin. He was told smart dress, concert level but he had no idea what concert. He’d checked and rock concerts usually don’t require black tie. No matter what was planned, Tony would always dress to the part. He flicked through his suit rack and picked the tailored Armani jacket that had been an indulgence on his last holiday to Rome.

The knock on his door greeted him to an amazing sight - Chin Ho Kelly in Black Tie was always a
treat. “You look fantastic.”

Chin smiled and returned the compliment with his usual honesty. “And you still looked like you stepped off the cover of GQ.”

Tony said the words that were from so long ago with nostalgia. “So we should thank the gods we are talking and ignoring everyone else.”

Chin pulled him into a hug. “As much as I want to do it, I have an evening planned for you ... you deserve it.”

Tony blushed slightly. “Okay, big guy, lead on.”

Tony loved movies, and one movie came to mind. The concert, the fountain, the avid watching of the music whereas the partner is watching his date. Only, this was no opera, and he was no Cher. Still, every note and ballad made him feel lighter. The player was incredibly talented.

Chin leaned over. “I’d love to hear you play once again.”

Tony shivered as he remembered those evenings. Sex with a piano wasn’t nearly as sexy as Pretty Woman tried to make it - but they did always have fun. “How about this evening?”

Chin didn’t suck in a breath or ask his date if he was sure. He’d realised he’d lost that right a while ago, he would trust Tony to know when he was ready. He bit his lip to stay decent in public. “I’d love a private concert.”

Tony chuckled low and sexy and Chin was suddenly bemoaning the cut of his pants. He needed to think something very unsexy before the intermission or he would scandalise the other patrons.

Tony looked down with a smug grin. “Wow, just words, what you going to be like when we touch.”

Chin whispered. “Explode probably but what a way to go.”

Tony didn’t let him go because, as he primly informed Chin before stripping his trousers off, he was owed five years of orgasms.

~*~

The next morning, Kono was waiting for her surfing partner. “So how’s operation: Chase Cousin.”

Tony looked sheepish. “You know what? It’s been twisted around but I am okay with that. He took me to a classical concert yesterday, we talked and then I let him come home.”

Kono was bouncing. “Oh, so we’ve progressed to sleepovers.”

Tony chuckled. “Yes, you brat, we have. It’s good and I don’t want to jinx it.”

*~*~

It was a good plan but then Wo-Fat had to rear his head - and snatch several people that Steve cared about. He should have done his homework because Tony also cared for those people.
Authors Note: and yes - there will be one more short to finish this collection and story off
Tony had returned to his place to smell gorgeous food. “You’re cooking?”

Sherlock pursed his lips. “I’m bored.”

Tony snorted as he didn’t believe that for a second. He knew his friend and knew that would soon be the case but not yet. “Please, you’ve been exploring and committing DC to your memory palace, just like London.”

Sherlock shrugged because it was true and there was no reason to deny it. “One should always know one’s escape routes.”

It was good advice.

Sherlock handed him over an Italian white wine that would compliment the salmon and potatoes he was preparing on the stove. “So how was your day, dear?”

Tony smirked, avoiding the trap of making a return comment. “Well, I bamboozled my teammates and then did reports.”

“Was I right?”

Tony snorted because Sherlock was always right. “Of course you were.”

Sherlock looked pleased by the acknowledgement. “So have you invited them for tea?”

Tony raised his glass with a mischievous grin. “And not let you have your fun?”

Sherlock chuckled in bemusement. “You’re a good husband.”

Tony smiled softly. “I’m going to try to be.”

“And that is all anyone can ask.”

***

A week later and they’d arranged the dinner. Tony and Sherlock were sitting on the sofa. “You know you can sit closer.”

Tony blinked. “Are you sure?”
Sherlock rolled his eyes. “Have you ever known me to say things I don’t mean?”

Tony snickered. “Yes, to wind up Mycroft and if you want to test a person’s reaction.”

Sherlock smiled at that valid and honest opinion. It was right too. “Ah, but then I have said something I mean, merely just as a misdirection.”

Tony leant into Sherlock’s hand that was stroking his hair. “So you wouldn’t be upset if I watch my movie with my head in your lap?”

Sherlock shook his head. “Perfect compromise, you can watch the movie and I can read.”

Tony didn’t say another word and put the Connery Bond movie in. Tony loved it, and it was the one movie Sherlock wouldn’t bitch through the whole way.

Sherlock marvelled at the easy touch between them. It wasn’t sexual which is what it had been before Tony. He just wanted to help Tony relax and he knew his man was touch-starved. Sherlock made a vow to ease Tony into the idea that people do care for him without expecting something in return.

Tony was asleep, Sherlock knew he’d been busy at work and saw no need to disturb him. He was most aggrieved when an hour later, his own body succumbed to sleep too. When he was to analyse the feeling, later on, it was ease and contentment that had eased him into sleep easier than expected.

~*~

Sherlock awoke earlier than Tony did in the morning as the morning light disturbed him. He found himself wrapped up in Tony’s arms. He didn’t throw his husband off as it gave him a few peaceful moments to consider what he wanted. This had started off as an agreement to help him with Moriarty but as the last two weeks had gone by he found himself wanting more.

“I can hear you thinking.”

Sherlock snorted. “I’m always thinking but you are quite distracting.”

Tony’s eyes fluttered open with a disarming grin. “Are you saying I distract you?”

“Yes, you do.” Sherlock glared. “Don’t let it go to your head.”

Tony’s lazy grin grew if possible and it should not make him more interesting. Sherlock knew he had striking looks but Tony was model gorgeous. “I take it as the highest compliment.” His eyes dropped to the lips that were so close.

Sherlock knew he had to be the one to make the move. “We’re adults, we’re married and I would rather you take action rather than just stare and make ...”

Tony snorted but closed the distance between them. This was their first kiss since the marriage ceremony. He knew that Sherlock had to grow accustomed to living in the States which was quite different to London. He’d hoped they’d move to a more intimate marriage but until Sherlock was ready - he’d be the best friend he could be. This was more than he hoped.
The kiss was passion and curiosity all rolled into one. Tony broke away. “Damn, you’re dangerous.”

Sherlock smirked. “Only to my enemies ... and when will your teammates be around this evening?”

Tony caught the segue between enemies and Ziva and Tim. This was going to be the highlight of his evening and he didn’t care if that made him mean. He was adopting a policy of *live and let live* but he wouldn't not let things slide.

Tony kept kissing Sherlock in small soft kisses. “I really don’t want to go to work.”

Sherlock who was trying to decide what he wanted to map on Tony first. “It is inconvenient but I have to get things ready for this evening.”

Tony who’d reluctantly pulled away and sat up. “What are you planning?”

“Fillet au McGee and a Ziva Gratinee.”

Tony actually burst out laughing. “As much as I love your gastro-economic delights ... I think they’d be too bitter to eat.”

Sherlock got up. “Verbally flaying is okay?”

Tony nodded and had reached the coffee machine. “As long as you remember it won’t be a fair fight.”

Sherlock didn’t care, he knew how much the pair’s actions had affected Tony. It wouldn’t be allowed to continue. “Shouldn’t start something you can’t finish. You know mummy has rules about that.”

~*~

Ziva looked at the apartment building she’d been given the directions too earlier that day. Tony had been insufferable all day, whistling and happy without saying anything but married as a response.

She had at least managed to time her arrival to coincide with the arrival of McGee. This was a new and significant change in property and she had to ask, “Since when does he live here?”

McGee had no clue, he’d made decent money from his book but he couldn’t afford to live here. “No idea. Swanky though.” Seeing no other choice he knocked on the door.

Tony greeted them wearing jeans and a white shirt. “Hey, McProbie, Ninja. Welcome to my humble abode.”

Tim grumbled quietly. “Not so humble.”

Ziva smacked him in the stomach as she wanted to see the mystery husband. “Be *circumspect*.”

Tim stroked his stomach at what was definitely red-light DOD behaviour. “Be polite, Ziva.”

She rolled her eyes. “You Americans and your idioms.”

A new distinctively English voice spoke up. “Oh, don’t worry ... We English have more and I still
say American and English are two separate languages.”

Tim frowned as he was sure that was a snobby comment. “You communicate with Tony well enough.”

Tony stepped next to his husband. “Ben, this is Agent Timothy McGee and Officer Ziva David.”

Sherlock smirked at Tim. “Oh, Agent McGee, there is more than one way to communicate and some don’t require words.” Okay, so they hadn’t got that far yet but he had definitive plans for when he’d run off the sycophants.

Tony snickered but pecked his husband’s cheek. “Don’t shock them too early, Ben. Probie is delicate.”

Ziva saw Tony’s retreating figure heading toward the kitchen area. She had a bottle of red wine in her hand. “I am not sure if it will go with the dinner but I bought this.”

Sherlock looked at it, smiling. “Thank you, Tony hates red but I am fond of it.”

She flushed at the judgemental look as if to say how could you not know? She didn’t like this, she was aware of the saying that love changes you but Tony was acting like a pod-person. He barely even talked to her at work anymore. “You’re welcome.”

Tim smirked glad that he wasn’t the only one to step in it before the dinner had even begun.

~*~

“Has Gibbs been over, Tony?” McGee asked as they were seated.

Tony snickered because that had been hilarious. Gibbs and Sherlock had started to debate the finer points of boat making. It had gotten so late and with the storm that had hit, Tony demanded that Gibbs take the spare bedroom. ‘Yeah, he and Ben got into a debate about boats.’

Ziva smirked. “Were you not bored?”

Sherlock retorted. “There was no need for him to be bored, he sails often enough.”

“You sail?” Tim asked in shock.

Tony rolled his eyes and retorted with. “I grew up on Long Island, McDaft, of course, I know how to sail.”

“You never said you could, you only ever talk about the basketball and American football.”

Tony rolled his eyes but made another cutting remark. He blamed Sherlock, knowing that if he didn’t stand up for himself - Sherlock would nag him. “I love sports, I am also fairly good at cricket, and rowing too. What of it? It doesn’t help solve cases.”

Ziva spoke softly. “They’re British sports.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “I’m half British and my husband is British, I know all of my heritage.”
Tim frowned because the puzzle pieces of Tony were breaking down in his mind. Jock’s focus on one sport, not multiple ones. He needed to think on this but Tony’s husband was freaking him out. At any available time, when he looked up, Ben was staring at him with a laser focus. It was creepy and definitely unnerving. It was more disturbing than some of the serial killers he’d investigated.

Ziva moved the conversation along. “Are you a chef?”

Sherlock shrugged. “I can be but my attention has waned. I’ve always wanted to write so I am taking up the challenge.”

“McGee has written books.”

Sherlock nodded, pointing to the wall of books. “I am aware, we own the books for amusement purposes.”

Tim put his fork down. “And what is that supposed to mean?” This was supposed to be an evening meal to get to know Tony’s husband and potential teasing information. And yet, Tony’s husband had done nothing verbal digs in sly clever ways.

“The characterisations of your team. I find it interesting that you have Officer Lisa and Agent Tommy is a torrid love triangle.”

McGee huffed. “It needed a love interest angle.”

Sherlock shrugged. “If you say so but Officer David would struggle to be with anyone who didn’t put her at the centre of their world and Tony wouldn’t do that.”

She sneered. “He has put you at the centre of his world.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes. “He married me, he didn’t change his personality for me. I am one of his oldest friends and know everything there is to know. I understand duty and his desire to protect the innocent - it is one of his most admirable qualities.”

Tim looked up from his dinner to see Tony and Ben sharing a look of fond love. He felt nothing in that moment but jealousy. He wanted someone to come home to, to share his life with like Tony had. It wasn’t fair.

Ziva was not sticking around for any more, she was being verbally hunted and she knew if she stuck around she would lose control of her temper. It would not serve her purpose, or Michael’s if she dug too deep. Michael’s mission was too important for Mossad to make waves. “The meal was pleasant but I really must return to my fiancé.”

Sherlock stood up and Tony moved to get her coat. Tony was pulling on his undercover reserves to not start laughing uncontrollably. He wondered if the little ninjarette had run away from some stern words. Actually she did, she was up to something that would need investigating.

Tim decided that he could use Ziva as an excuse to get out of there too as this evening had not gone the way he thought. “I must be off too, I need to finish my chapter draft.”

Sherlock nodded. “Do be sure to add Agent Tommy’s shocking gay marriage. It is bound to get a reaction.”
Tony waited until the door closed to finally let out his laughter. It had been building for so long he thought he might explode. “I adore you.”

Sherlock smirked. “That wasn’t even a challenge.”

Tony shrugged ruefully. “They’ve always had a high opinion of themselves. Still, you were incredibly sexy as a literary critic.”

Sherlock stepped into his husband’s arms. “So what is my reward?”

Tony showed him all night long and Sherlock was sure of it - he was keeping Tony, he just needed to persuade him to move to England if they could deal with that arsehole Moriarty.
Tony was in MTAC listening intently and holding back a smirk. Oh, he’d known his MCRT was doing well. After all, thanks to his links to the 5-0 task force they’d shared jurisdiction and managed to close more high-profile cases together. It was shown in the media and the FBI Director was grumbling at how the Taskforce leader wouldn’t play with them so nicely.

As a result, his conversation with the director as he reported in was decidedly friendly. She finished with, “I would avoid accepting any DC calls as the solve figures have just been published for the last month.”

Tony wanted to fist-pump but restrained himself to a smile as he had to ask. “How did we do?”

“Well an office agency record of ninety-seven point five percent.” Shepard informed him with a smile as Tony deserved it. One of the reasons she’d made the offer was their solve rate was languishing in the low eighties before he took over.

Tony stood rock still. He knew that when he’d been part of the DC MCRT they’d had a record always in the ninety-six percent. “And Agent Gibbs’ team?”

Jenny snorted and her face showed her annoyance. “They managed eighty-four percent.”

Tony wanted to laugh as this was a valediction of a different kind. He loved the fact he’d taken the agency record but it concerned him that perhaps victims would begin to suffer. “Has he managed to keep an SFA yet?”

Shepard shook her head. “No.”

Tony bit his lip but considering how happy he was right now he figured he could at least offer a suggestion. “Try and tempt Cassie Yates ... she has the temperament to put all of them in their place.”

Shepard nodded her head. She’d been thinking of who she could use as a replacement. In her mind, Tony’s promotion had been well deserved but left her with problems on the home front. “I will consider it. Thank you, Agent DiNozzo.”

Tony had phoned Steve to tell him first as he knew his old friend would get a kick out of it. At the same time, they agreed to meet up with each other for a morning swim the next day.

~*~

Steve woke up feeling good pretty about the day ahead. After all, why shouldn’t he feel good? Mary was happy on the mainland, the team were going from strength to strength and Tony was about to meet him for a morning swim. All was good.
Tony called out a greeting as he unlocked the door and stepped through into the living room. Steve had said he was family and had given him a key with the instructions to always let himself straight in but Tony didn’t feel right just wandering in without announcing himself. What if he was ‘entertaining’ someone? That could get awkward. Still, he had a grin on his face as he saw his chosen brother. “Hey, brah.”

Steve grinned right back as he was looking forward to a morning swim. “Ready for a swim?”

Tony nodded because oh boy was he ready. “Oh yeah, Brad is very happy with my move to Hawaii, apparently.”

Steve chuckled at his enthusiasm. “No better place in my opinion.”

Tony was relaxed now in a way he hadn’t been for a long time. His job was going well, and even better his relationship with Chin had progressed to the point where they were splitting time between places but they were together whenever possible. “Oh, I agree.”

The swim was carefree and perfect. The sea was a great leveller, as you cut through the water it would let you empty your mind. You could get rid of every angst thought, every bit of anger. Tony could admit that the Washington MCRT had disappeared into the waves. As a bonus, his lung function was improving and his arms and legs had nice muscle definition. He knew Chin appreciated it, the way he kept stroking his arms in bed.

The only trouble was they had to finish the swim to get to their day jobs. One of the things though, Steve had picked up was to keep a police scanner active. They’d made it to the kitchen when they heard the officer down shout out.

They both raced out of the door, knowing it was Kono’s place. Steve drove and Tony was calling into NCIS to tell his deputy that he would be late. He then put a call into Danny, only Danny was ranting as well. This wasn’t good. He could barely piece together the words.

Tony pulled the phone out and onto speaker as Steve needed to hear his reply. “Danny, we know they’ve taken Grace and Rachel and we will get them back but they’ve also shot Kono and Chin hasn’t checked in.”

“Who have we pissed off this badly?” Danny asked.

Tony’s mind was racing. “I don’t know but head to Kono’s. We need to stop playing defence with these bastards.”

Steve frowned, thinking through a list of enemies he was aware of that would have the balls and the backing to pull off a kidnapping and shooting a cop. “The only one I know would be Victor Hesse but he crawled into a hole after he took a plunge off the ship.”

Tony nodded but figured there was another approach they could take. “Look, Danny, I’m going to call you back. I need to make some other calls.”

Tony waited until the phone clicked off, knowing Danny would be annoyed with him. It would be worth it though if he could get a name. Or, at least rule out a few names - either would work for him right now. “This is Agent Anthony DiNozzo, I need a direct line to intelligence. Now.”

He didn’t have to wait long. As an agent in charge of an office, it was understood that he wouldn’t
be making a request lightly. The minute he got through to an analyst he relayed the information. “We have a major threat to the Island and someone has attacked Commander McGarrett’s closest associates. I need to know if Victor Hesse has surfaced and any other big targets have come to Hawaii.”

Tony heard a snick on the line that let him know the call was being transferred. To Tony’s relief, it was Jenny.

“Tony, talk to me.”

He took a deep breath. “Someone has attacked the 5-0 taskforce in a big way. We can offer aid here. The chances are it’s a scumbag from Steve’s Naval Intelligence days.”

Jenny knew how important McGarrett was to Tony and the Navy link meant they could participate in the investigation. “You have full authorisation and I would love for you to catch me a big fish.”

Tony snorted but he couldn’t deny the sentiment. “Well, I am about to go hunting.”

He signed off the call just as they made it to Kono’s apartment. She was being treated at the scene for a nasty wound to her stomach. She was scowling and not being cooperative. Steve raced over to her. “Hey Kono, you are no good to me with a hole in your side. Let them fix you up.”

She looked annoyed. “I know those bastards shot me in the back but they tased and snatched Chin. They have Cuz. I wouldn’t them take me to the hospital ‘til I could report to you. They looked Japanese, boss.”

Tony was surprised. “No face masks?”

Kono managed a weak grin. “They did but I pulled it down. Seemed only fair after he shot me.”

Steve put her hand in his. “Hey, look at me. They’ve snatched Grace and Rachel too. We’ll get them back.”

It was that promise that seemed to be the magic one and she relaxed enough to be taken away. Steve turned back to his brother. It was a dark look on Tony’s face. It never ended well for whoever was stupid enough to put it on his oldest friend’s face. “Tony, you with me?”

Tony turned to Steve, shaking his head like he was trying to get rid of something. “Of course I am. Let’s go hunting - We just need a target.”

Tony may not have been in a SEAL but he could be scary as hell. If Steve was the hammer you sent after someone then Tony was the scalpel. Tony would slide right up to your side and take you down and you wouldn’t know it was happening until it was over. Steve would keep a close eye on Tony but he was right - they needed a target more than anything.

~*~

Elsewhere on the island, Chin woke up clutching the back of his head. There was no lumps but rather two sore areas on his neck. He knew what that meant - some bastard had tased him. “Ouch.”

“Uncle Chin!”

Chin clutched the little girl who’d dived at him. She was clearly frantic and it was obvious why.
“Mom looks hurt.”

Chin moved over to the other side of the container, gingerly not feeling a 100% just yet but he needed to move to check on Rachel. He wasn’t a medic but he’d gone through the basic training.

She was breathing easily which was a good sign. Chin refused to give in to fear and fell back on his training, skiing questions of the only witness he had. “Did the bad men hit your mummy?”

Grace frowned and shook her head as that wasn’t quite right. She explained it as best as she could, unfamiliar with what they used. “It was two prongs and they had electricity on them.”

Chin let out a puff of breath in relief. “Okay - so good news is your mummy will be okay but she will have a headache.”

She cuddled between her mom and Chin. “I’m scared, Uncle Chin.”

Chin knew exactly what to say. “I’m not. Come on, Gracie, your Daddy will tear down the island to look for you.”

She looked pleased by that idea but then sad once more. “What about you?”

Chin grinned. “You know how Uncle Steve gets about people he cares about, and Uncle Tony is just as bad.” He whispered as if he was confiding a great and terrible secret. “He is just better at hiding it than Uncle Steve.”

Grace sat back contemplating what would be worse than Uncle Steve on a rampage. She remembered her daddy’s rants about Uncle Steve and his crazy escapades as he called them. “Really?”

Chin nodded solemnly. “Yeah, I’d tell you stories but your mom would kill me.”

She looked aggrieved but then tried to bargain. “We could not tell her?”

“Too bad, she’s awake.” Chin replied.

Rachel, sure enough, was awake, she immediately grabbed Grace. “Where are we?”

Chin answered her with the limited information he had to hand. “A metal container, judging by the sounds near the docks.”

“Why have we been snatched?” She asked sounding annoyed at the fact, not scared which was promising.

Chin shrugged because he didn’t have any more answers although he wished he did. “No one saw fit to tell me.”

“Oh - that is just perfect!”

Chin smiled softly as he’d heard Tony say the same thing when exasperated. “Huh, so maybe it is a British thing.”

“I beg your pardon.”
Gracie, who was still glued to her mother’s lap grinned, showing the same quickness of mind as her mother. “You mean Uncle Tony says it too?”

Chin nods and bites his lip. “His accent will even slip.”

Grace giggled. “That is funny. Can we try and make him say it?”

Chin smiled calmly. “Sure thing, Gracie.”

The two adults shared a look. Rachel showed true gratification for Chin helping to distract Grace. She just hoped that her ex-husband and his friends hurried up in finding them. She would even make Stan pay for anything damages they incur during their rescue.

~*~

Tony and Steve were back at Headquarters, along with Danny. Steve looked at his oldest friend. “We need a target.”

Tony sucked in a breath just a moment to rein his emotions in. He wouldn’t go Ahab because he’d seen what happened to Gibbs when that happened. However, what he could do was give this his whole attention. If he felt inclined, he could call for back-up as his partner had been kidnapped. “Do I call in reinforcements or are we just going to go and get the job done?”

Steve rolled his eyes. “Policy dictates you should but I’d rather not have Gibbs on the Island. I still want to punch him for how he treated you.”

Tony snickered, just imaging the Washington MCRT’s faces if Steve did just that. “As much as I would love to - I may have gotten somewhere with our faceless enemy. I have just got a report back from NCIS.”

Steve looked curious. “So no Hesse, that is a relief.”

Danny was thinking rationally. “This snatch was designed to destabilise our taskforce, right?”

Steve nodded. “The victims, though, don’t point to a vendetta against one of us. So is it something bigger?”

Tony groaned, not liking what was being implied. “I kind of hope it is a grudge right now as that would be easier to contain.”

Danny didn’t like it either. “Christ, I thought you were normal. You are just like him. Are you going to go and run off half-cocked? Please don’t say you will drop a guy in a shark tank.”

Tony shrugged. “Look, I have the worst luck but the other reason you take or distract a taskforce is that you want to do something major and you want them looking elsewhere.”

The NCIS file slid up onto the electronic screen. Danny whistled. “You have non-redacted files?”

Tony shrugged. “Clearance is high but, Steve, this guy worries me.”
Danny looked at the innocuous man. “Who is it?”

Tony answered. “Goes by the name of Wo-Fat. The technician likes me. I gave her our names and asked for a likely name.”

Danny looked at the guy. “Why would he be a likely person to snatch Gracie?”

Tony showed the full file. “Kurt over at the CIA sent me some extra information. Our boy was Chinese Intelligence star boy and is kind of a big deal.”

Steve frowned in confusion. “I never had a run in with him, I would have remembered.”

Tony hated to do this but with the case so critical he needed to cut through the emotional shock now. “It wasn’t you, although it was a McGarrett, specifically your mom, Steve. He has sworn revenge.”

Danny groaned because it wasn’t that simple though. He’d seen the guy’s face on photos this week. His mind raced as he needed to place him. “Steve, bring up the surveillance photos of the Yakuza meetings this week.”

Steve bought them up with a few flicks of his hands. Tony spotted him. “There you are you bastard... so it is a twofer.”

Steve snorted. “You know what they say about revenge.”

Danny snorted. “He’s already dug his grave. Let’s just make sure we have enough to make sure the judge can bury him in it.”

Steve took a computer terminal. “I’ve got tracking on Wo-Fat’s movements”

Tony got his phone back out. “I’ll shake a few more trees to see what else I can find. I haven’t started in on Europe yet.”

Danny took a deep breath. He had to stow his emotions and focus on the job. “Okay, I’ll check the financials of the three and see if I can pick up where they might have stashed them.”

~*~

It turned out that after an hour with a few colourful threats they had a lot more information. “How did you get CI’s so quickly?” Danny asked.

Tony smirked. “Well, you take the hackers and the idiots and keep an eye on them. They are more useful to you on the outside than on in the inside.”

Danny shook his head. “I forget you were a cop before a Fed sometimes, and then you show your experience.”

Tony smiled sweetly. “Best of both worlds me.” He then briefed them. “So I reached out to an inspector friend in Interpol. They said that Wo-Fat works to clear the way for Yakuza interests.”

Danny pinched his nose. “So the Yakuza equivalent of a demolition team.”

Tony nodded. “And just as effective by all accounts.”
Danny took over. “This is Hiro Noshimuri. And he would be the guy to employ said Wo-Fat. Now it turns out that Noshimuri has big business interests on the Island, pays his taxes, even has a charity organisation he runs. However, he also runs a club in the rundown downtown part that seems to have a clientele that is exclusively Yakuza.”

Steve smirked. “Let’s go pay a visit.”

~*~

Danny was driving and looked at Steve and Tony. “How are you going to play this?”

Steve was secreting knives and weapons on him in his usual way. Danny guessed he wasn’t going to go in quietly and ask a few questions. When he took a look at Tony, though, he had to groan. “You’re supposed to be the calming one.”

“I don’t think calm is something the Yakuza understands, Danny.”

“We have to be careful.” Danny warns.

Tony looked at him. “I intend to tear them down quickly so we find our loved ones before they can act and move them. Now if we do this right ... We will have two locations we will need to split too.”

Steve nodded. “Take down the bosses, and take down the kidnapping location.”

Danny looked torn but Tony put his hand gently on his shoulder, not wanting to startle the driver of the car. “Hey, you go to get Grace. I can watch Steve’s six.”

Danno pouted. “Watching you Rambo up, that does not fill me with joy.”

Tony had a wicked grin. “I always wanted to be Magnum or Chuck Norris. They were cool guys.”

Danny groaned. “Right, okay, I can’t take this. Let’s go talk to the Yakuza thugs. Remember Steve, unconscious thugs can’t answer questions.”

The street outside was calm. No scratch that, it was deserted. Like the way, a place of danger is avoided. Steve was the one to comment. “Definitely the right place.”

Tony whistled. “That is a sweet bike.”

Steve had a manic grin. “You know...” As he sat on the bike already. “... I always wanted to ride one. And look - someone left the key in.”

“Steve!”

Tony just snickered. “I’d say now is your chance but they don’t seem to happy.”

A motorbike Steve is a happy Steve. He rev’ed the engine and started to do spinning circles, each time using basic forces to knock out opponents. The stairway was obviously the way to get to the bar and Steve saw no reason to get off the bike.

Tony just rolled with it, pulling Danny with him, weapon in his hand. He would back Steve’s play. Whatever it was. Right now, it seemed, sow seeds of chaos and see who fell apart.

The Yakuza were stunned but not ready for three ballsy men to stand up to them. Worse, with badges, they had to play nicely or the Oyabun would leave them to rot. They knew the rules, they should stay silent. The lawyers would see to their release.
Steve started. “I am wondering just who would be stupid enough to snatch a cop and another cop’s family. It was like your boss wanted our attention.”

Danny snorted. “They’re thugs, they’re not going to talk. Their Kyodai would kill them.”

Tony sneered as he stepped closer. His expertise was the Italian Mob but in some ways, they all worked in similar ways. He was calm, collected, appearance immaculate as he purred. “I’ve been a Mob enforcer, these aren’t even worthy to be Shatei, I bet the Oyabun is making them earn their stripes.”

One of them turned to glare at Tony unable to hide his reaction. Interestingly, he had scratches on his face, say from like a woman’s fingernails. “Hey Steve, wanna bet you’ll find our Officer’s DNA in his face?”

All three of them zeroed in on the man. Bless Kono and her kickass feisty ways. She may have been shot but she still helped them to break their case. Steve was going to be sure to tell her that, knowing how annoyed she would be at being sidelined through an injury. “What do you know? I think you’re right. So let’s take a walk.”

“What about us?”

Another one spoke up and Tony whirled around. “Oh, I called HPD to deal with you. They’ll have to fingerprint you and book you ... but I’m sure there’s nothing to be concerned about. It’s not like you’re Yakuza or anything. I’m sure your fingerprints won’t be in the system on unsolved crimes.”

Danno was laughing now. It was amazing how nonchalant Tony was as he stood up to the Mob, then again, he was aware that it wasn’t the first time.

Tony shrugged. “I forget. Let’s go see what our canary knows ... Steve is alone with him right now.”

Danny raced down the stairs, hoping like hell that his Camaro was not being used as part of the interrogation. It turns out Steve was looking very closely at the guy’s molars. “What is this? ... Steve - you looking at becoming a dentist?”

Steve had his hand on a pair of pliers and was keeping them in the suspect’s face.

“So I am missing one of my team, my favourite niece and her mother. And I think you know where they are ... So I have 32 chances to get the location from you.”

The man was sweating. “You’re a cop.”

Steve shook his head. “No, I’m a SEAL and a task force leader. He is the cop and usually, he is screaming in my ear about the violations ... trouble for you, you took his little girl.”

He looked to Tony as if he would be his saviour. Tony snorted and was channelling his Mob persona a little. “Oh, sweetheart. I want to tear you limb from limb and bathe the walls in your blood. I think between Steve and I we can make you disappear too, I hear he has a shark tank that is a bit rusty ... if you catch my drift.”

Danny internally was groaning but he knew what Tony was doing here - he would back the play. He would especially do it as he could see it was working. “I thought you said Antonio DeMarco was just an act?”

Tony shrugged. “No, he is me, and despite what my bosses say, sometimes you just can’t fake murder. It got me in the inner circle though, he called me son.”
The man whimpered. He knew the tale of DeMarco, the bosses lieutenant, the wakagashira, used to joke he would feed his enemies to DeMarco if they pissed him off. He looked in the man’s eyes and saw no hint of remorse. He looked between the SEAL and the crazy one. He looked at the cop, “If I take you to the container, will you keep me away from these psychos.”

Danny looked to his friends and couldn’t laugh as it would ruin the effect. “I want the address now, and if you’re not lying I will take you into HPD protective custody.”

“The Docks, container 19, row 12, pier 5.”

The blue lights told them they had their clean up crew. “These need to be booked, I will be taking this one with me.” Danny threw the suspect into his back seat. “What are you going to do?”

Tony pulled his phone away. “Gettin some support on a vehicle, we’re going golfing and have been ordered to bring in Wo-Fat. Seems the Navy have a few questions.”

Danny pulled them into a hug. “I’m gonna get Gracie and the others. Be safe as I can’t watch your crazy asses.”

Tony smiled softly. “You just go and get your little girl and bring my man home and we’ll be cool. We’ll give you the signal to say that we’ve taken down Wo-Fat.”

~*~

Tony took a deep breath knowing that their hard work and tearing up the Island had worked. It had been the hardest thing in the world to let Danny go to the container alone. Danny needed to see that Grace was okay even though Tony knew Chin would be protecting them as best he could. He needed to be with Steve in order to make sure that Wo-Fat was taken down in such a way that he couldn’t wriggle away.

Bonus - he was on the NCIS’ most wanted wall. So it would come up who caught him. It was insignificant in comparison to making sure that Chin and the others were okay but it was a nice afterthought.

Tony picked a golf club up as he passed the entrance to the fairway.

“You planning to play?”

Tony smiled sweetly, Steve knew that look. It was the one he had in the mirror when he reached for Semtex to solve a problem. “Sort of.”

Steve smirked. “You’ll be the one writing the report up and explaining it to Danny.”

Tony snickered and shook his head in disbelief. “If only people knew that a loud mouth New Jersey detective was the way to get you to calm down.”

Steve shrugged and then his focus laseredin on their suspect. Wo-Fat, to the eye, looked like any other businessman. Too bad for him, Tony and Steve knew better. What they didn’t know but you could bet they would find out. What was the fascination and obsession with Steve and his family?

Steve had checked his records - at no point had he had any dealings with Wo-Fat, even when he’d been an intelligence agent. He saw Tony suddenly relax his shoulders and make his way to the golf cart.
“Hey, Mr Noshimuri, terribly sorry to bother your golf game but I need to talk to your business associate.”

“Who are you?” Wo Fat asked.

Tony snorted. “As if you don’t know. Don’t be coy, Mr Fat, I know all about you. What I don’t get, was why us? You could have gone on with your shady business dealings with the Yakuza and we would have noticed later, much later. Yet, you make it personal.”

Noshimuri is tensing but Steve puts his hand on Noshimuri’s shoulder. “Don’t get involved. It won’t end well.”

Wo-Fat seemed to calculate his odds and went for his back. Tony was anticipating that and Steve would draw too, that was why he was taking the lead so Steve could shoot anyone who pointed a gun at him. Tony swung the club rabbit quick, using a move Kate had taught him. Wo-Fat was predictable, with no weapon he went to use his legs. Tony blocked the first move and swung the club hard to knock him unconscious.

Steve moved forward with the handcuffs. “Medical attention for the suspect is needed. HPD - you’re clear to enact the take-down.”

Tony looked at the other two men. “You know, maybe Hawaii isn’t such an attractive business opportunity. I know the governor will be looking over your accounts carefully.”

“You don’t know who you’re threatening.”

Steve snickered. “I’m Commander Steve McGarrett and this is Special Agent in Charge Anthony DiNozzo. Oh, and someone already tried to come at us through our loved ones... so I wouldn’t recommend it.”

Tony grinned. “Let’s go see them, and leave these men to their golf game.”

Steve agreed and between them, they hauled Wo-Fat off the golf course to the waiting patrol car and ambulance. The treatment was minimal but to ensure the concussion wasn’t going to let him collapse. Steve was still glowering at the bastard. “Drop him in the tank, boys.”

The policemen nodded and pitied the man who thought it was a good idea to pick on Commander McGarrett. It was already gossip that the assailant was the one who’d shot officer Kono, and kidnapped Detective Williams’ girl, ex-wife and Detective Kelly.

~*~

Tony was with Steve heading back to the 5-0. They’d heard from the PD that the hostages were okay. Danny had been there to coordinate their rescue while Steve and Tony had taken on the Yakuza thugs. In fact, Tony was thinking of taking up golf, he sure loved the club in his hand.

“That swing was a thing of beauty.”

Tony chuckled. “Thanks, brah, I was thinking of taking up golf.”

Steve smirked. “Maybe you shouldn’t have them in the house though.”
Tony rolled his eyes. “The only thing I want to do to Chin right now is kiss him senseless.”

“Sounds like a great plan to me.” Steve remarked. “So why don’t you? He’s right over there.”

Tony saw his man standing, well more leaning against a desk. He looked weary but resolute and hadn’t stopped staring at Rachel and Grace. Tony recognised a protective instinct and he had no doubt that Chin’s would be a mile wide for a long time.

Tony tried to think of a witty one-liner but none filled his head. He couldn’t stop thinking of his fear and worry when he knew Chin was in the hands of the sadistic Wo-Fat. In his mind, he hadn’t hit the corrupt bastard hard enough. He figured if he couldn’t say the words then actions would be better.

He stormed forward, grabbing onto the back of Chin’s head and gave him a kiss worthy of Hollywood. Chin immediately reacted. The kiss spoke of longing, relief and overwhelming love.

Tony broke apart, shaking a little at the overwhelming emotions. He’d been so focused on getting him back. “You scared me.”

Chin shook his head. “I knew you’d find me.”

“Always.” Tony confessed.

To Chin, Tony looked so badass in the moment and so full of passion toward him. He felt overwhelming relief that this gorgeous man had found it in his heart to let him back into his life. “Marry me.”

Tony pulled his upper half away so he could see Chin’s face. “Are we going to make it down the aisle?”

Chin looked rueful. “Yeah, we will. I’m not going to be stupid any longer.”

Tony grinned, looking fond, and not such a badass agent anymore. The look of love kind of stifled it. “Yes. The answer is yes.”

Chin one-upped his kiss, actually dipping him. Tony could have kicked his ass but happiness stopped him. The wolf whistles and cat-calls made them remember that they were not alone. Tony was righted and calmly asked. “So. Who wants to help me plan a wedding?”

The path of true love hadn’t run smoothly but here was to hoping their marriage would. Knowing them though, there would always be interesting times ahead but together they would be able to cope with anything the future threw at them. Always together.

Chapter End Notes

And wow, this is the end of the second collection of Tony’s book. The series has gone from strength to strength and peoples’ responses have blown me away. A HUGE thank you to all have read and left kudos or comments.
I wanted to add a special mention to Edronhia, my beta, without her hardwork this would not be readable.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!