Twilight: Revisited

by Nocturniquette

Summary

After Ziva shoots Tony for killing Michael Rivkin, the last thing the federal agent expected was to wake up back in the past several weeks before Ari shoots Gerald and Gibbs. He doesn't know what this is, or how it’s even possible, but he’ll be damned if he sits back and lets Kate die a second time.

Papa Gibbs/DiNozzo son story. NO TIVA EVER. I will not be placing Tony in an abusive relationship. I do not like Ziva and no, I do not have to explain why.
No Tate either. I like Kate, but I got more of a Brother/Sister feel from them in the show. NO SLASH.
Tabby friendship, McOzzo Friendship. This does have bashing of a character. If you don’t like it, please do not leave flames on my story.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Chapter 1: Twilight Revisited

All it took was a couple of seconds, and one Anthony DiNozzo Jr. found himself flat on his back, the concrete biting into his already injured shoulder. He bit back a pained hiss as his shoulder was jarred terribly and the broken ribs he acquired made themselves known.

Ziva loomed over him, looking like some sort of an avenging angel. Her dark hair was wild and free and her eyes….Tony unconsciously shuddered at the pure hatred in her deep eyes. She looked nothing like the cool Mossad Officer she always portrayed herself as. Instead she looked absolutely feral.

Tony feared for his life. For the first time since he met her, he truly feared her in this moment. Never in this life did he think that those lethal skills would be turned on him. All he did was follow orders and try and keep her safe.

Especially when she pushed her loaded Sig into his chest with such force that Tony felt something shift in his chest.

“Ziva...” he trailed off when he heard the safety click. Usually quick witted, Tony found his mouth dry and mind blank.

“She wouldn’t...’ he tried to tell himself. The look on her face suggested otherwise. Usually, Tony had a gameplan in these situations. At this second? He didn’t see a way out that didn’t end without him eating a bullet. He internally winced at the imagery that thought conjured.

How in the hell was he going to get out this one?

“You murdered Michael! He was just here on vacation and you killed him!” Ziva yelled at him, the tears in her eyes making her look even more unstable than she already appeared.

“He was here when he shouldn’t have been Ziva. He was told twice to leave the country. He chose not to and he murdered an ICE agent!” Why couldn’t she see that? Who was Michael Rivkin to her if his death hit her like this? Had she always been like under the surface and no one knew?

Ziva shook her head violently. “Michael would not do that. He was here on vacation. You killed him out of jealously!” she yelled, her voice shrill because her emotions were out whack.

Tony glared up at her, anger simmering in his green eyes. By God, what would it take to make her see the truth? He was not jealous of her relationship with Michael Rivkin! Or any other man she dated for that matter!

“I didn’t kill Rivkin because I was jealous of him, Ziva. I killed him because it was either him or me!”

It wasn’t like the man had left him much a choice. The Mossad man was trained in Kidon, and even drunk he was extremely dangerous. He was lucky to even be alive.

Ziva paused and stared at down at him and Tony got the awful feeling that maybe he shouldn’t have said that.

Her face had suddenly got flat; blank and Tony shifted uncomfortable against the ground. She still had her knee pressed into his stomach and her gun still pushed into his chest. There wasn’t a whole lot of room for to move.

“I wish it had been you.” she murmured into his ear. Before Tony feel the pain of that comment, he
heard a loud boom and the next thing he was aware of agonizing pain centered in his chest. Very near where his heart was.

He struggled for breath and wondered vaguely why it was so hard.
He came to the only conclusion he could with his mind split between pain and disbelief.

She had shot him.
His partner had shot him. The one person he was supposed to be able to trust with his life had just taken his.

He gasped for breath and already he could taste blood in his mouth.
Panic overtook him when he breathed out and tried to draw in a breath but couldn’t. He tried to move his body to the side so he could alleviate the pressure in his chest, but Ziva wouldn’t let him move.
Through blurry vision he could make out Ziva’s face.
There was a dark glint of satisfaction in her eyes and Tony idly wondered through his pain-filled haze how things had gone so incredibly, incredibly wrong.

The last thing he heard before darkness took him was Gibbs voice yelling his name.
‘Sorry Gibbs...’

His gut was churning so much he was starting to get nauseous. Nothing showed on his face, of course, but the unease was starting to get to him.
DiNozzo was supposed to be here several minutes ago so they could head back to the United States together.
Ziva had tried to make him choose between her or him, and DiNozzo would always come first.
He cared for both of them, but there was something about Tony that made him want to bury the younger man in soft wool and never let him leave his apartment.
Obviously, he never had. Instead, he pushed Tony to his limit and then some because he knew the other man appreciated it and because Gibbs knew he could handle it.

Checking his gun and cell, Gibbs was just about to start searching for his wayward agent, when the deafening boom of a gunshot sounded that silenced everything.
Gibbs didn’t even stop at the sound of Vance’s voice. His only thought was of Tony.
But what he muttered before he ran off was “Ziva.” He prayed he was wrong.

He arrived to a scene that would forever feature in his nightmares. He was vaguely aware of McGee and Vance showing up behind him.
Ziva was straddling DiNozzo’s unmoving body, seemingly not noticing the large pool of blood beneath him. Her face was made of granite, and she was still clutching the gun that had shot—Gibbs pointed his weapon at her, internally warring with himself and his emotions. His daughter had shot his son.
God, DiNozzo. Tony’s face was slack and faced towards them.
Blood trickled from his open mouth and Gibbs would later swear he could hear the soft plops as the crimson droplets hit the ground. From his position, he couldn’t tell if he was breathing or not. He needed to get Ziva away from him.

“Ziva, put your weapon down.” He ordered.
No response. Ziva didn’t even look their way.
“Why’d you do it David?” Vance asked, his own weapon pointed at the Mossad woman. He didn’t think for one second that the Israeli woman didn’t know they were there. She was too well trained for that. ‘Then why did Michael Rivkin’s death tear her apart so much?’ a snide voice in his head
asked. He didn’t have an answer to that question. Not yet, but he would. “He deserved it. He murdered Michael.” The words were soft. Yet they were brittle and broken sounding and there was an edge there that was sharper than any knife. “Put the weapon down, David.” He ordered again. If she ignored this one, he’d shoot her.

Something in his voice must have caught her attention, because she looked up at him. Gibbs tensed at the look in her eyes. They were empty and hollow and definitely not her. What the hell had happened to change her this much? She put her weapon back in it’s holster and didn’t fight when several Israeli agents grabbed a hold of her and put in her handcuffs.

Gibbs didn’t spare her another glance as she was taken away. He ran to Tony and got on his knees, uncaring of the pain he was causing himself by doing so. “I hope he’s dead.” she murmured as she was led passed him. Gibbs clenched his teeth so hard he wouldn’t be surprised if he’d cracked a tooth. He wanted to get up and shake her until her teeth rattled. He wanted to wrap his hands around her slim little throat and squeeze. But he did none of those, because someone more important needed him. “Get her away from me.” His voice was hard and cold and dangerously soft.

Vance eyed the scene before him, disbelief at the forefront of his emotions. Near to his side was McGee who was calling for an ambulance and giving directions. When the computer tech locked eyes with him, Vance could easily read the fear in them. McGee was just as lost as he was.

Now, Leon would be the first to tell you that he didn’t like Special Agent DiNozzo. The man was an immature, movie-loving fool in his internal opinion. He never understood why Gibbs kept him around.

But now? Now, he was finding it a little hard to hate the man who was currently dying on foreign soil. All because he did his job and one woman couldn’t see that. This was a goddamn mess. He never noticed that in his haste, his ever present toothpick had falling from his mouth onto the pavement. He never did reach into his coat for another. He went over to Gibbs side, ready to help.

Gibbs put pressure on the gunshot wound, but all of his instincts were already telling him it was too late. He put his face next to DiNozzo’s mouth and couldn’t feel a puff of air hit his cheek. No! Not like this! Not over something like this! “You will not die on me, DiNozzo!” he ordered. He felt more than saw McGee kneel next to him on the other side of Tony. “Breathe for him.” he demanded. McGee nodded and without a word, began to do as he was told. Tim ignored the tears gathering in his eyes. This wasn’t happening. They were supposed to go home. All of them. “Vance! I need you to put pressure on this!” With the three of them helping DiNozzo, and the sirens in the distance, it seemed like Tony was going to beat the odds this time as well. But they couldn’t seem to rouse him. “Come on Tony, not like this.” He didn’t know how long they knelt there with the Director of NCIS putting pressure on a gunshot wound and Gibbs counting to five as he pushed in on Tony’s chest, while McGee breathed for him. But none of them were giving up on the injured man.

A loud wet sounding cough had them all looking up. “Onto his side, McGee.” He and Tim gently moved Tony on his side and were alarmed by the
amount of blood that the man coughed up.

“That’s it, DiNozzo. Help is on the way.” Gibbs said, voice soft.

Tony coughed some more, his face scrunched in pain and green eyes glassy.

“M’sorry...Boss....”

“You got nothing to apologize for, DiNozzo.” Gibbs reply was swift and immediate.

“Sh—he shot….me....” Tony muttered aloud, a fresh trickle of blood falling from the side of his mouth.

“Shh, Tony. Save your strength.” McGee said.

“Where the hell is that damn ambulance!?” Gibbs shouted.

As if on cue, two paramedics came into view along with a backboard. They took one look at the scene and nodded at each other.

“Scoop and run.” They said and got to work.

Before Gibbs could really understand it, he and Tony were in the back of an ambulance and they were hurrying away from the airport to the nearest hospital.

Gibbs paced the hallway up and down, back and forth. He didn’t know how long he’d been out here waiting for news, any news, from the doctors working to save Tony’s life.

He knew he should call Ducky and Abby and let them know what was going on, but something always stopped him. He kept telling himself it was because he didn’t have any news to share with them, but he knew that was wrong.

He strode passed where McGee was currently occupying an uncomfortable looking hospital chair. The junior agent was slouched in his chair, looking down at his hands, unseeing. He held the same cup of coffee that Gibbs had gotten for him several hours ago. McGee had never taken a sip. It was obvious that Timothy McGee was very very far away.

The Emergency doors opened and Gibbs was pulled out of his thoughts. The man who approached was tanned, tall, and had a sad air about him. The man’s blue scrubs were splattered with blood.

“Family of Mr. DiNozzo?” the man asked, his voice tired.

“I’m his father.” Gibbs said and approached. Screw anyone who said he wasn’t. To his credit, the doctor didn’t even blink at the lie.

“I’m sorry...but...Agent DiNozzo died on the table. The bullet that entered his chest broke through the sternum, bounced around, nicked an artery, and then entered his left lung. Due to some previous scarring on his lungs, Mr. DiNozzo’s chances were already small. We tried to repair the damage, but it was too extensive. He lost too much blood for too long and we couldn’t replenish it fast enough. I’m sorry.”

The doctor was still talking, but Gibbs honestly didn’t hear a word beyond: “Agent DiNozzo died on the table.”

No, it couldn’t be right. Tony was alive. There was no way his agent had disobeyed a direct order! Granted, he’d given that order when Tony was dying of plague, but it still counted even today! He knew better than to defy one of his orders! He’d headslap him so hard he wouldn’t see for weeks!

He saw McGee run to the Men’s room, his face pale and green and his eyes bigger than dinner plates. He glared at the doctor, the rage he was barely keeping from exploding, suddenly coming to the surface.

“You just gave up on him? Just like that?” Gibbs didn’t yell and that made it worse. He never would have done such a thing!

The doctor took a step back, sensing danger.
“I’m sorry for your loss, sir. But me and my team--”
The poor man didn’t get any further, because Gibbs had taken a hold of the front of his shirt and
shoved him into the nearest wall.
“That’s my son in there! You let him die!” Gibbs yelled.
“Sir, you need to calm down.” came the dulcet but calm voice.
“That’s my son!” Gibbs screamed in his face. Why couldn’t he seem to understand?!
“I understand that, sir. But we tried.” The doctor said, his dark eyes full of empathy and sorrow.
Almost as if it was too much, Gibbs let him go and backed up until he hit the opposite wall.
His legs felt like jelly and he wobbled suddenly, and before he knew it, he was on his butt on the
cold floor, staring at his hands. He could see the crusted blood he hadn’t managed to scrub away
under his fingernails. He watched as his hands shook, trembling in mid air.
Tony...was gone. The young man he recruited in Baltimore...the young man who always followed
him with a quick “On your six, boss.” The young man who questioned his orders when he thought
was wrong. The young man who was more like him than anyone would know.
Tony was dead. And it was all Ziva’s fault.
Scrunching his face up briefly, Gibbs shook his head and got to his feet, though his legs were a bit
unsteady still. He took a deep breath and pushed back the anger and hurt he was feeling.
He needed to know.
“Can I see him?” Gibbs didn’t recognize his own voice. It was soft and brittle; frail sounding. It
sounded nothing like his usual bark. He sounded broken. Maybe he was.
Nothing made sense right now.
The doctor hesitated briefly, but he could see the sorrow that penetrated the rough man deeply and he
nodded his acquiescence.
He waved away the security guard that one of the nurses had called. It wasn’t the first time he’d been
attacked because he gave a family bad news. It wouldn’t be the last. It was the nature of the job.
Some people just didn’t deal well. Or know how to deal. And some news just broke people.
The doctor took Gibbs to the room where Tony was.
The man placed a hand on the gruff agent’s shoulder and whispered a soft “Take your time.”
He didn’t think that the man heard him. Those ice blue eyes were entirely focused on the sheet
covered body on the hospital bed.
As soon as the doctor left, Gibbs legs, which were already jelly-like from earlier, folded underneath
him and sent him to the floor for a second time.
He didn’t know how long he remained like that, staring up at the sheet covered body just out of his
reach.
With a soft almost defeated sigh, and a Herculean strength he didn’t know he possessed, Gibbs
slowly got to his feet and approached the bed.
God, he didn’t want to do this. It was bad enough losing Shannon and Kelly the way he had, but to
lose Tony as well? To lose another child so soon? To another violent criminal? It was almost too
painful to comprehend.
As quietly as he could, Gibbs grabbed one of the uncomfortable hospital chairs and moved it closer
to the bed. He didn’t know why he was being so quiet, it wasn’t like Tony could hear him now
anyway.

With that, tears prickled at his eyes and for the first time, Gibbs honestly didn’t know what to do. He
was usually the one with the answers and right now he was sorely lacking in them. Not only that, but
he was blaming himself for the way things had turned out. If only he hadn’t sent Tony to Ziva’s
apartment. If only Michael Rivkin had obeyed the first time he was told to leave America. If only
Ziva could see through her feelings. The thoughts about Ziva made Gibbs highly uncomfortable. He
thought he could trust her. Had trusted her. ‘And look what she did with that trust!’ a snide voice in
his head shouted at him. ‘She took Tony away from you. She killed him!’
He was angry, he was hurt, and for the first time he didn’t have a clear direction for his emotions. Ziva was to blame yes, but so was he. He’d allowed her placement and hadn’t fought with Jenny overly much about it. He had liked Ziva. Goes to show that maybe he was losing his touch. If he couldn’t see something like this coming…then it could happen to anyone else on his team. Maybe it was time to head back to Mexico...

His heart was in pieces and his emotions were scattered like so much dust in the wind. Wiping the back of his hand across his eyes, Gibbs hesitantly reached out and touched the edge of the blanket covering Tony’s head and face. He stopped short of pulling it down, mentally preparing himself for what he was about to see.

God, he didn’t want to do this. But to get justice for Tony he would. With that he pulled the sheet away. He wasn’t aware of the painful gasp that left his mouth nor was he aware of the tears trickling down his cheeks. His chest constricted painfully and he choked on a sob. Why had he thought it would be someone else under there?

“Tony...” he breathed his boy’s name and it echoed quietly in the room. Tony’s eyes were closed, the dark lashes standing out starkly against the grey tinge to his skin. The blood that had trickled out of his mouth was wiped clean and Gibbs was vaguely grateful for that. He could see a hint of bruising on Tony’s shoulder going down until it hid underneath the blanket and cursed Michael Rivkin’s name. He then cursed Ziva’s name as well, but it did little to make him feel better. Gibbs brushed Tony’s cheek, fully expecting a groggy “Hey, Boss.” as Tony stirred awake from yet another visit to the hospital.

All he received was silence.

Anyone who knew Anthony D. DiNozzo Jr. knew that the man was never quiet. He was always talking about his movies and doing impressions and always seemed to be moving. Tony didn’t know the concept of keeping still. Except perhaps when was in the field or undercover. Gibbs would have given anything in that moment to hear another one of Tony’s movie quotes. Or even a bad Sean Connery impression. Anything but the oppressive silence that cocooned around him.

Reality crashed down on him when the scene never changed. Tony was really gone. Hesitating only very briefly, Gibbs pulled the sheet down to reveal the wound that killed him. There in macabre detail was the bullet wound Ziva inflicted on him. There was the reason Tony was never coming home with him. This was the reason that he would never see that mega watt smile anymore. Or invite him over for cowboy steaks and beer after a tough case.

God, had it only been a few hours ago that he had chosen Tony over Ziva? It felt like an eternity. Wiping his eyes, Gibbs put the cover back, but not before he caressed Tony’s cheek one last time.

Tony was gone. The anger...no the all encompassing rage that left Gibbs earlier now came back with a vengeance. He knew why Tony was lying here. And he knew who was responsible.

Eyes glittering with barely suppressed fire, Gibbs gently covered Tony the rest of the way up and exited the hospital room.

He had a job to do.

He decided to wait to tell Duck and Abby until he was on familiar soil once again. Internally, he acknowledged that he was being a coward. He could have informed them over the phone, but he
couldn’t do that to them. They deserved to hear it in person. He cringed internally at the reaction.

Gibbs knew that the dynamics had fundamentally changed. No longer would they be a team. No longer would Tony be there to act as a buffer against Gibbs’s anger. No longer would Tony be that person that held Abby as she cried when something horribly happened. No longer would Tony tease and torment McGee. No longer would Tony walk into that office and sit down at that desk. No longer would he hear Tony and Ducky tell each other stories.

Frustrated and in pain, Gibbs punched the plane seat he was sitting on. If only he could go back in time...he would shoot David in her face the first time he ever met her. Then this whole thing never would have happened.

Feeling eyes on him, Gibbs looked up and saw Leon peering at him.

The other man’s eyes were unreadable and after another few seconds of staring, the Director turned away and didn’t say a word about Gibbs’s outburst.

Good. Gibbs wasn’t in the mood to explain any how. Though he thought he had detected a gleam of understanding in Vance’s eyes when he had looked at him.

The rest of the journey was made in silence. Even McGee, who was usually nervous around the two men, especially when they were together, didn’t seem to notice them at all. His grey green eyes were perpetually glassy and he didn’t seem to notice the hundred yard stare he was now sporting.

He wasn’t even aware of the stare Gibbs gave him. He prayed McGee made it past this...he prayed they all did.

Gibbs sighed for what seemed to be the thousandth time. Things were different now and they would never go back to being the same. Images of Tony flew across the back of his eyelids, but they were all too fast to really see them. But they all had one thing in common: Tony’s brilliant smile would never be seen again.

And it was all because of one woman. Never again would he accept an agent on his team without thoroughly evaluating them first. When and why he had let that slide he had no idea, and now his agent, his son, had paid the price for his shortcuts.

He met Vance’s eyes once again.

Never again.

When they touched down on the tarmac, Gibbs immediately noticed the welcoming committee that met them there. He gave a sideways glance to Vance, but as ever, the man didn’t reveal anything beyond slight disdain and annoyance. It seemed to be his default expression.

Four marines stood there, all in dress blues, and all saluting the plane and the people who stepped out.

Vance went over to them and spoke to the group. Within minutes they saluted again and went into the back of the plane.

Gibbs watched, heart clenching painfully as they marines carried out an American flag draped coffin. It still didn’t seem possible that Tony was gone forever. He still expected him to pop out and say it was all a practical joke. Hell, it didn’t even feel like the time where they thought Tony had died when his Mustang had exploded. This felt...surreal and yet...it felt somehow more final. Solemn even. Like a blanket had fallen over him and he couldn’t lift it. At this rate, he wasn’t sure he wanted to. It wouldn’t be like a bandaid that you quickly ripped off and silently endured the sting of pain that followed. No this, this was worse. Gibbs knew that if and when that blanket that had fallen over his emotions lifted, the pain would be innumerably worse. He wasn’t sure he could take it. He had only just dealt with Shannon and Kelly and now this.
He watched them until they departed, his eyes suspiciously moist. He blinked away his tears and strode toward Leon. “You arranged this?” he asked clearing his throat. Vance nodded wordlessly, tucking a toothpick in between his teeth. “...Thank you.” Gibbs said softly. He saw Leon nod and he turned away, intent on getting McGee and going back to the office. He needed to tell Ducky and Abby, Palmer too. It was going to be a long day.

When he stepped into the office, he saw several agents give him pitying looks. Normally, Gibbs would have glared or snarled and told them to mind their own business. But right now, he couldn’t. He couldn’t look at the people that Tony worked with and tell them leave him the hell alone. It felt like dishonoring his memory and so Gibbs remained silent. That is, until Agent Balboa placed a hand on his shoulder halting him. “Abby is in her lab and Dr. Mallard is in Autopsy. They know something is up but not what. We thought you would like to tell them.” Gibbs didn’t even bother to ask how Balboa or anyone else had found out what was going on. If his brain wasn’t quite so muddy, he would have remembered that they had extradited Ziva back to the country to face trial for her crimes. He would have remembered that Ziva was in holding downstairs. But his mind was muddy, so he merely nodded and left without saying a single word.

He saw Tony’s desk; his Mickey Mouse stapler and his Ohio State Championship mug and suddenly he couldn’t stay here. He couldn’t stand to his see his desk. He could still the eyes of the bullpen upon him and he hated it. God, he needed to get away from here. He had to get away from everything. All the looks, the silence, the there is no more Tony thoughts in his head.

He stepped into the elevator and pressed the button to Abby’s lab, but halted it’s progress with the emergency stop button. He leaned back against the wall, his emotions threatening to bring him to his knees. He made a choked noise and suddenly he was banging his fists against the metal wall before him, tears streaming down his face. Anger and sorrow warred within him and he desperately wished for a convenient target to take out his anger on.

“God, Tony….” he whispered. How could it have come to this? What could he have done differently? Why had Ziva—why had she…? God, she fucking murdered DiNozzo and had been fine with it! How had he not seen this coming!?! Gibbs blinked rapidly and took a deep breath. He would not be doing anyone any good if he fell apart now. He would wait until he was in his basement with his boat and his paint thinner like alcohol. Then and only then would he let everything wash over him. But not right now. The rest of the team needed him.

Stepping into Abby’s lab was like stepping into a graveyard. There was no loud booming or pulsating music. There was no beeps from Major Mass Spec. There was no evidence being run and no clacking of keyboards as Abby did her job. There was nothing but silence and Gibbs was almost overwhelmed a second time in as many minutes.

He swallowed and spoke softly. “Abs.” A blur of movement came toward him and he suddenly found himself with an armful of sobbing Goth.
“Gibbs! Tell me it isn’t true! Tell me Tony’s...that he’s not...” Abby cried into his shoulder, unable to finish her thought out loud. He had no idea how she found out, but he was internally relieved that he didn’t have to break the news to her.

‘Coward,’ his mind whispered. Gibbs didn’t deny it.

Unfortunately for them all, it was true. There would be no more movie quotes or bad impressions. There would be no more pranks, or friendly snooping. There would be no more mega watt grins or green eyes sparkling in mischief. There would be no more Tony.

“Tony is gone Abby.” he said in the same gentle voice he’d been using since it happened.

“NO!” Abby shouted and hit him with her closed fist on his shoulder. Gibbs didn’t say a word and let her continue to beat on him. Part of him felt like he deserved it. He knew how close Tony and Abby were—had been, he corrected himself silently. He winced.

In the beginning, when he recruited Tony from Baltimore, they hadn’t gotten along. Abby resented the “Ken Doll” playing at investigator and Tony had no idea how to get on her good side without pissing her off even more than she had already been at him. It had been a vicious cycle of back and forth until the day that Tony took a bullet for Gibbs. After that, Abby had admitted she’d been wrong and she had promptly put Tony right into her little family and made him her brother. It had been a beautiful friendship ever since.

He grabbed Abby into a gentle hug and led her back into his embrace. She clung to him desperately, her sobs cutting into his heart and causing tears to prick anew at his own eyes. What he wouldn't give to spare her this pain.

“I never thought—why did it have to be Tony! Tony was always so nice to everyone! He--” Abby cut herself off as Gibbs reached into his pocket and produced a handkerchief and held it out to her. Abby grabbed it and dabbed at the mascara running down her cheeks.

“Gibbs...what are we going to do now…?” Abby sounded and looked very lost and Gibbs couldn’t blame her for that. She was looking at him like he had the answer to the universe in the palm of his hand. For the first time, Gibbs knew he would be letting her down. Guilt tore at him even as he drew her into another hug and kissed her hair gently.

“I don’t know Abby.”

The fact that Gibbs didn’t have a definitive answer made it finally hit home for Abby, whose sobs renewed.

Very Special Agent Anthony DiNozzo was really gone and he wasn’t coming back. Not even Gibbs could keep death away forever.

Much later then Gibbs knew, he stepped into Autopsy. The bright lights were turned down but not off, and Palmer was nowhere in sight. Doctor Mallard sat at his desk, a glass of bourbon in his hands.

He didn’t react when Gibbs stepped up behind him.

“Got anymore of that?” he asked softly.

Ducky nodded wordlessly and poured him a glass.

For a long while the only sound within the room was the clinking of glasses as they drank quietly.

“I’m sorry Jethro. I know how much the boy meant to you.”

“To all of us, Duck.” he replied.

“Indeed. I remember the day you and I met the lad in Baltimore. I couldn’t believe that such a young man went to-toe-toe with you and managed to get you to share jurisdiction with him.”

Despite himself, a quick grin flitted across his face and his eyes lightened a touch. He recalled that
day quiet well.

It had been raining quite hard all that week, so the roads were slick and the temperature was cooler than normal for a summer in Baltimore. He had gotten the call from the Baltimore Police Department about a murdered sailor and had taken Blackadder and some greenie he hadn’t bothered to remember the name of with him, that Morrow had told him to accept “or else”.

He recalled getting there in record time and feeling amused at the green and pale faces he’d caused by his driving. He recalled walking up to the scene, expecting to run roughshod over the local LEO’s and get jurisdiction and the case and have everything shipped to NCIS. You know, business as usual.

Only he’d been met at the yellow police tape by the enigmatic Detective Tony DiNozzo who had tried to run circles around him. In the end, he’d been impressed by what he’d seen and offered to share the crime scene and resources of NCIS with him. He remembered Morrow being duly surprised by such a thing, considering it had never happened before. After that convoluted case, he’d offered Tony a job at NCIS. He’d accepted and the rest was history.

Then he remembered why he was here and all emotion was wiped clean from his face. He would never get the chance to talk to Tony ever again. It just now hit him what his death really meant.

Had he told Tony how proud he was of him? Had he ever made it known that he thought of the younger man like the son he’d never had?

God, he couldn’t remember the last time he told Tony “good job”.

What was wrong with him? Why was he such a cold-hearted bastard? Why couldn’t he say the words that he knew Tony so desperately needed to hear from him?

Now, now he would never again get the chance.

Gibbs unexpectedly turned and threw his half empty glass of bourbon against wall. He collapsed against the empty autopsy table, his vision wavering.

Oh God. Tony was really gone. Oh God.

He barely heard the words that Ducky was saying to him. “Breathe, Jethro. It will pass.” At least Ducky was smart enough not to say that everything would be alright. They both knew it never would be again.

Later that day, early in the afternoon in fact, found him at his home. He was in the basement, sanding his boat and drinking what Tony dubbed his “paint thinner’.

Tony’s funeral was tomorrow morning, and Vance was kind enough to take the MCRT team off of rotation for the next month or so.

So here was Gibbs, at home, drowning his sorrows in bourbon and sanding. The normal method wasn’t really working.

Memories flickered across his mind’s eye. Meeting Tony in Baltimore. Watching Tony tumble out of a plane and seeing his parachute. Getting the phone call from Tony that he screwed up, hearing his voice stumble through his words, knowing something was wrong. Watching Tony underneath those horrible blue lights and listening to him die right in front of him. Seeing Kate’s blood splatter over his cheek and neck as she was murdered by Ari.

Watching as Tony started to trust Ziva.

His thoughts halted at her name. Even thinking her name made his body quiver in rage. It was a
good thing he left his service weapon at NCIS. Also conveniently where Officer David currently was.

He supposed it would be easy to sneak in and go to her cell. Ask her why, but deep down he already knew the answer.

Except Gibbs wanted to do a helluva lot more than ask her why. He wanted to shoot her. He wanted to hurt her like he was hurting right now.

But he knew that that wouldn’t solve anything. It would, but it would just lead him right back to where he was now.

Plus, he was too damn drunk to actually make it up the steps out of the basement, let alone capable of sneaking into NCIS undetected.

“You know boss, you drank way too much of that stuff.”

Gibbs froze. The drink in his hand slipped free of his grasp and shattered on the floor. That voice...had this all been a dream? Just a terrible figment of his imagination?

Slowly, Gibbs turned around. And there right before his eyes, was Tony.

He was leaning on back against the stairs, arms folded across his chest and legs crossed. He was dressed immaculately in one of his expensive Italian suits, no wrinkles to be seen.

His mega watt smile was just as he remembered it, and his eyes were sparkling just they way they always had.

“I’m dreaming.” Gibbs murmured and turned away.

“No, Boss. Your drunk. There’s a difference.”

“Go away. Your not real.” Gibbs said slurring his words.

Ghost Tony did not go away. In fact, he stepped closer to him.

Gibbs snorted out a bitter laugh, that was tinged with more than a little darkness. God, Tony had always got on his nerves.

“Even dead I can’t be rid of you.”

Ghost Tony jerked back away from him, the wounded expression on his face hitting Gibbs right in the gut.

“I’m sorry Tony I--” He’d broken one of his own rules. Not that he was really aware of that at the moment.

Ghost Tony’s face softened and he stepped in closer to him.

“It’s ok, boss. I understand. Now, how about I get you over to that cot I know you stuffed underneath that boat of yours?”

Gibbs felt a warm hand on his arm guiding him under the newest boat, named Anthony.

“Aww, boss. You named a boat after me. I’m touched.”

“Shut up DiNozzo.” Without looking he could knew that Tony was smiling at him again. He was tempted to headslap that smile right off of him, but didn’t think he had the coordination to pull it off.

After Gibbs was placed onto the cot, he looked up and found Tony looking down on him with an expression he couldn’t quite place.

“What?” he asked gruffly.

“Boss...I know how you feel about apologies, but...you know it wasn’t your fault right? You told me to keep an eye on Rivkin and I did. That doesn’t make it your fault.”

Gibbs grunted and didn’t answer. The hell it wasn’t his fault. If only he had fought Jenny harder over Ziva’s placement. If only he had gone himself to Ziva’s apartment. Let her hate him. Let her shoot him. It never should have happened. But it did. And like always, Tony paid the price for it.

“Ziva was the one who killed me.” The pain that filled Tony’s voice took his breath away. “I never thought she would do it….”

“I mean...I know we had our problems Boss...but she...she shot me. She said I deserved to die. That I was jealous of Michael. She hates me.”

“You...don’t think she was right do you?” came Tony’s quiet voice. He hadn’t heard Tony sound like this since Kate died.
Glancing up, Gibbs could feel the other man’s hurt. And much to his shock, there were very real tears in the other man’s eyes and falling down his cheeks.
“No, Tony I don’t. Because I know you. You were following orders and I believe you when you say your weren’t jealous.”
“But?” Tony’s voice wavered.
“No but Tony. She was the jealous one, not you. She was the one who pulled the trigger, knowing what would happen. You didn’t force her hand. She made her choice in Israel. She tried to force my hand and I chose you. I chose you Tony. And I always will.”
Ghost Tony didn’t say anything for a little while. Instead he sniffled a little and wiped his tears away before he sat opposite Gibbs, somehow fitting onto the rest of the small cot.
“Boss I...I never got the chance to tell you but I--”
Ghost Tony stalled when Gibbs held up his hand.
“I already know DiNozzo.” Gibbs countered.
“Then please let me say it!” Tony pleaded.
Gibbs halted his movements. Never had he heard Tony sound so urgent before. His gut twisted painfully at the look on his boy’s face.
“I don’t have much time left here. I need you to know how I feel.”

While Gibbs attempted to wrap his drunken mind behind that message, Ghost Tony began to talk.
“While you may be the hardest man I ever worked for, you were the best one I ever worked for. You never gave me a job that you couldn’t do yourself. You trusted me and even though you didn’t always keep me in the loop, I trusted you right back. I gave you my loyalty and my blood and sweat and tears and you never made me question if I was doing it for the right reasons. Boss...Gibbs...Jethro...your the father I never had. I’m sorry I never told you while I was still alive. I guess I thought you always knew...but Boss...Jethro...I would have loved nothing more than to be your son. Goodbye Gibbs. I love you.”

With that, Ghost Tony faded away and for the first time since all this began, Gibbs fell asleep with a small smile on his face.

The next morning dawned bright and sunny. Gibbs grimaced as he opened his eyes, the pounding in his head made worse by the footsteps on the stairs coming into the basement.
“Jethro, you down here?”
Gibbs groaned quietly before he slowly stood up. He wobbled unsteadily for a moment. For a few seconds he thought he was going to faceplant onto the floor, but after a minute or so, his equilibrium was restored.

“Jethro?”
“In here Tobias.” Gibbs muttered loud enough for the FBI agent to hear.
“You look like hell, Jethro.” Tobias took a sniff and made a face.
“You smell like a brewery.”
“What do you want Tobias?” Gibbs asked tiredly, scrubbing a hand down his face.
“I’m here to take you to the funeral, Gibbs. It starts in 2 hours. That’s just enough time to clean yourself up and get something to eat.”
Gibbs nodded but didn’t say anything. He grabbed the coffee out of Fornell’s hand and took a long gulp.
Tobias glared at him, but ultimately relinquished his caffeine to the man who needed it more than he did at the moment.
“Your lucky I’m a better man, Jethro.”
Gibbs snorted.
He stood behind Gibbs as he clumb the stairs, making sure that the Gunny was all there and wasn’t going to fall down. Wouldn’t have been the first time.
They made it to the kitchen where Tobias proceeded to make some more coffee.

“Go take a shower and get dressed. Breakfast will be on the table when you get back.”

Gibbs nodded and left, but not before passing a quiet “Thanks, Tobias.” over his shoulder.

Tobias nodded to himself but didn’t say anything back.

He knew the other man was hurting. He’d seen the red-rimmed eyes and the shattered glass down there and it wasn’t unexpected.

You’d have to be blind not to be able to see how much Gibbs cared about DiNutso.

For one of his own agents to gun down another in cold blood like David had….

Tobias’s jaw started to hurt because he was clenching it so hard.

He wanted to go into the NCIS lockup and shoot the Israeli woman for what she done. And if this is how he felt, than his heart, as gruff as it was, went to out to DiNutso’s coworkers.

The hardest part was not knowing why. Oh, he heard the rumors alright. All about how DiNutso had been jealous of David’s relationship and other bullshit like that. Tobias knew enough about Tony to know that those rumors were complete crap.

Tony may goof off, may spout off inane comments about movies and do horrible impressions, but the man was not as fake as his frat boy persona was.

Oh, Tobias had seen through it eventually. He had never called the kid on it though. He figured the kid had it for some reason. Some things were best left alone however.

Tobias shook himself out of his reverie as he heard the coffee pot fill up and the shower turn on.

He glanced at the clock. 6:32.

The funeral started at 8. He glanced out the window. The sky was lightening from a pinkish orange to a sky blue and there were no clouds in sight.

It was shaping up to be a beautiful day. DiNozzo would have liked that.

Fornell sighed and turned away. He walked over to the refrigerator and pulled out things to make an omelet.

A few moments later, he heard the shower turn off.

He poured Jethro another cup of coffee and placed his breakfast on the table.

He sat down on the opposite end and dug into his own food.

It was going to be a long day.

The funeral home was packed with people. Gibbs didn’t know why he was so surprised. Tony had a way of making friends (and enemies) everywhere he went. He saw his frat brothers off to the side, in a small group and idly wondered who had called them. He had passed Abby and McGee and the Nuns on his way inside the funeral home. Inside, there were even more people. He nodded at Agent Balboa and his team, and slipped passed Vance and his wife, Jackie.

But to see all of these people here….

God, DiNozzo really wasn’t coming back was he?

Grabbing a chair where his name was taped to the back of it, Gibbs sat down heavily. He looked at the coffin sitting in the middle of the room and was thankful that it wasn’t open casket. He hadn’t done the funeral arrangements; they’d been a stipulation of Tony’s will. Oh, he and the others had been included in the will, but so far, they hadn’t been told what they were getting yet. Not that Gibbs or any of the other’s wanted any of Tony’s things. No, they wanted the man himself back. His stuff seemed like a paltry sum in comparison.

But he wouldn’t throw anything away that he got—if he had gotten anything at all, that is.

Gibbs shook his head. What the hell was wrong with him?

He looked around and saw that Vance and his wife would be seated behind him, the frat brothers would be in the first row, along with Abby, McGee, Ducky, and Palmer.
He gave a passing thought to DiNozzo Sr, but quickly let it go. He had tried calling the man and letting him know, but he had never received a response to the message he had left. Well, it wasn’t like he hadn’t tried.

It left a bitter taste in his mouth that Tony’s own father wasn’t even at his funeral.
If Gibbs found out that the man blew it off for a drink and a pretty woman….Well there would be no more DiNozzo men in the world.

Steadily, more and more people entered and found their seats. Soon, the place was full and the priest stood up at the podium to read a scripture from the Bible.
He knew DiNozzo wasn’t overly religious, but his mother had been a Catholic.
Gibbs allowed a tiny smile to flit across his mouth. Even in death Tony was still looking after people and their wishes.

His eyes flickered to the coffin and he remembered why he was here. The smile died on his face.
He tuned out the priest’s words. He’d heard it all before long ago, and he didn’t care to hear it again.

He stood when everyone else did, but didn’t immediately go over to the casket. He would let everyone else go first. He would then say what he needed to afterwards. He wasn’t a fan of making those types of speeches in front of an audience.
So he sat back down in his chair and waited.

Several hours and cups of coffee later, Gibbs was finally, blessedly alone.
He nodded at the priest, who patted his shoulder and left without a word.
He took a deep breath, suddenly not ready for this, but knowing that he needed to.

Taking another deep breath, Gibbs took the drained the last sip of coffee out of his styrofoam cup and stood up. He crushed the cup in his hand and tossed it. He made his way over to the closed casket, looking at the pictures on display.

There was only one team photo, and that one featured Kate. There were no photos of Ziva and if there had been, he would’ve broken the thing.
One particular photo captured his attention. It was just a photo of the two of them, when Gibbs had gotten his boat out of the basement. They were on the Kelly’s main deck. Tony was laughing at something and Gibbs himself sported a broad grin. Both of them looked so happy and carefree.

Heart clenching painfully in his chest, Gibbs looked away, only for his gaze to be drawn to the beautiful mahogany casket with flowers stationed around it.
It was impressively decorated. Latticework, small flowers and vines decorated the side and top.
It was truly a work of art.
If only it wasn’t Tony’s last resting place.

Rubbing his fingers gently over the wood, Gibbs finally ran out of excuses. He was going to have to do this. It didn’t matter now if it shouldn’t have happened. It was already a done deal.
It was now or never.
“Tony...I---” Now that he was here, he didn’t know what to say.
“I’m sorry,” He started quietly. “I screwed up.”
Unbidden, a memory from last night hit him from out of nowhere.
“Boss...I know how you feel about apologies, but...you know it wasn’t your fault right? You told me to keep an eye on Rivkin and I did. That doesn’t make it your fault.”
Gibbs gasped quietly to himself. Was Tony…? No, the casket was right there.
Had he really talked with….?
He wasn’t going crazy was he? He hadn’t imagined an entire conversation with his now deceased son did he?
“I don’t have much time left here. I need you to know how I feel.” He’d really talked with…?

While you may be the hardest man I ever worked for, you were the best one I ever worked for. You never gave me a job that you couldn’t do yourself. You trusted me and even though you didn’t always keep me in the loop, I trusted you right back. I gave you my loyalty and my blood and sweat and tears and you never made me question if I was doing it for the right reasons.
Boss...Gibbs...Jethro...your the father I never had. I’m sorry I never told you while I was still alive. I guess I thought you always knew...but Boss...Jethro...I would have loved nothing more than to be your son. Goodbye Gibbs. I love you.”

Tears sprung in Gibbs’s eyes. “Ah, hell DiNozzo...” he whispered quietly.
“You were the best agent I could have asked for. I don’t know what I did to receive your loyalty, but I’m damn proud that I got it.” He said and paused.
He caressed the woodgrain under his fingertips in a slow soothing circle unconsciously, his mind thousands of miles away.
“Kelly would loved to have an older brother like you Tony.” he whispered softly. Surprisingly, the old hurt of losing his girls never came. He imagined Tony growing up with him and his chest constricted. It had nothing to do with pain this time, but to do with all those missing moments he could have had with the younger man, if only he had said something earlier….
“Yeah...Tony. I always knew. I always knew.”

Tears blurred his vision and Gibbs did nothing to wipe them away. They spilled down his cheeks in silent rivers.
“I love you too Tony. God, I wish I’d told you while you were---” Gibbs cut himself off. He reached into his pocket and drew out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes gently.

He stuffed the cloth back inside his breast pocket, suddenly weary and feeling his years.
Losing people was always hard, he knew this. But losing Tony was like losing Kelly all over again and it tore at him.

Sitting down heavily in the pew closest to the casket, Gibbs buried his head in his hands and wept.

He wasn’t surprised when Tobias dropped him off at his house and decided to stay. He wasn’t surprised to find Abby on his couch sleeping, her mascara smudged from crying. He wasn’t surprised to see McGee holding her hand as he stared off into space. He wasn’t surprised when Ducky came out of his kitchen, holding a steaming mug of coffee for him. He wasn’t surprised to see Jimmy Palmer following right behind him, his eyes red rimmed and his posture sad.

He took the drink and sat in his recliner (the one Tony insisted he needed but he hadn’t bought, forcing the younger man to purchase it for him) and took a long sip.

He was a little surprised to hear a knock on his door. He was surprised when Leon Vance stepped through, his countenance unusually grim.
Gut churning unpleasantly, Gibbs stifled it by taking another sip of his coffee. (DiNozzo usually liked his with a bit of cream and sugar. But on rough days, he took it black.)
“David’s father has learned of what his daughter did and is attempting to get her extradited back to Israel.” Vance said, highly irritated and without preamble.
Gibbs immediately stood up, sloshing hot coffee all over his hand.
“Ziva is going to answer for her crimes, Leon.” he growled. There was no damn way he was letting
her get away with murder.
Vance nodded. “Yes, she will. But David’s father is applying pressure to the SecNav who is
applying pressure to me. He wants to know if we have an airtight case against her. I told him we do.”
Gibbs fingers gripped the porcelain cup in his hand until his knuckles turned white.
“I don’t give a damn what the SecNav is dealing with. David shot and killed Tony and she is going
to be tried right here in America for it!” There was no way in hell he was letting Daddy David rescue
his daughter.
“Then we better hope we have the airtight case I said we did.”
Gibbs set down his coffee and grabbed his coat.
“What are you doing? You know you’re not supposed to be anywhere near this case Gibbs.” Vance
warned.
“You want an airtight case Leon? Then let me and my team handle it.”
Vance shook his head. “You know I can’t do that Gibbs. It’s a conflict of interest at best and a cover-
up at worst.”
Gibbs stepped closer to the Director, his face inches away.
“That bitch murdered my son Leon. If all your worried about is your goddamn reputation-_!” he
his in anger.
Vance cut him off mid sentence, whose eyes narrowed at him. “I lost an NCIS agent Gibbs. I may
not have...appreciated DiNozzo, but I feel his loss. I am not your enemy Gibbs and I sure as hell am
not doing this to save face!”
“Then allow my team to work the case, Director.”
Vance shook his head, but Gibbs soldiered on, interrupting the other man before he could another
word in.
“We want justice for Tony. Are you really going to deny us that?”
“Want revenge Gibbs. It’s not the same thing.”
Gibbs laughed darkly. “If I wanted revenge Leon, David would already be dead.”
“I’d advise you to remember who you’re talking to Agent Gibbs.”
“Your standing in my house, Leon.”

“If you want the investigation done right, then let us handle it.” Gibbs said after a moment. He was
not going to budge on this.
“He’s right, Director.” came McGee’s soft voice. “Tony would want us to do this for him. Not only
that but...Tony’s deserves the very best on this.”
Vance paused for a brief second or two. “I have plenty of capable agents at my disposal to help get
justice for Agent DiNozzo.” Leon said sternly.
McGee didn’t waver. “But none of them are his family.” he muttered softly, his voice breaking half
way through his sentence. He swallowed thickly and continued. “Tony only had us Director.”
Vance still didn’t look convinced. “Look at us Director; we need to be doing something to help.
Sitting around here thinking about what--” McGee had to pause and rub his eyes. “We have to do
something to help.” he finished.
Abby, who had woken up when Gibbs had started to yell, squeezed McGee’s hand tightly.
He gave her a watery smile and received one in return.

Vance took in the long faces; the pinched expressions barely suppressing grief and realized that
Agent McGee was correct. These people were a family and they needed to be doing something.
He’d already lost one good agent, he’d be damned if he lost the others to their sorrow.
He sighed. He never had these sorts of problems out of any other team in his office….but that’s what
had made them such fine agents.
“Fine. You can work the case. But I don’t think I should have to tell you to be careful do I?” McGee
and Abby both nodded, as had Ducky, but Gibbs just put on his coat and exited his house.
“Gibbs! Wait!”
“What do you want Abs?” he asked without turning around.
He felt her squeeze him around the middle from behind. He felt her head lay on his shoulder. “We’ll get her Gibbs. She’ll pay for what she took away from us.” Abby promised darkly. Gibbs patted her hand. Yes they would. “Let’s go. We have work to do.”

It was night by the time they arrived back at the NCIS offices. Abby and Ducky went down to her lab. McGee and Gibbs went to the bullpen. Gibbs stared down at the crime scene photos and sighed quietly before placing them back on the desk. Either he was getting too old for this or this was a bad idea. He got up and noticed that he had McGee’s attention. “You want anything?” he asked quietly. He resolutely did not look over at Tony’s empty desk. McGee shook his head. Once Gibbs left, Tim got up and stepped softly over to where his friend’s desk was. He lightly touched Tony’s pens, his coffee mug, his Mickey Mouse stapler, his nail file….he ran his fingers over the edge of the desk and blinked away the tears in his eyes.

How had it come to this? WHY had it come to this? Tony was just doing his job and Ziva had-- He knew that Tony could be immature and could talk a lot and yeah, he used to wish that Tony would just shut up sometimes, but permanently? He’d never thought that Tony would die…well not like this. He glanced over at Ziva’s desk and saw that her things were left untouched as well. He walked over to it and just looked down at the place where Kate had once sat and where Ziva had tainted forever.

Without warning he threw out his arm and knocked everything on Ziva’s desk to the floor. He let out an angered yell that echoed in the room. The crash was loud in the otherwise silent room and McGee found that he rather liked the sound. So he picked up more of her stuff and threw it on the ground. Pictures, her personal lamp, anything that was hers that wasn’t NCIS went onto the floor. He went to grab her computer monitor, but a firm but gentle hand stopped him. “McGee—Tim. Stop.” It was Gibbs. “No boss! Ziva did this to us! She killed Tony!” “Breaking her things will not bring Tony back, Tim.” Gibbs said softly. Tim reluctantly put the monitor back down onto the desk. He knew deep down that Gibbs was right. That didn’t make the hurt go away however. “I’m going to ruin her. She’s going to wish she’d never heard the name Tony DiNozzo.” With that, Tim stalked back to his desk and he got to work. Gibbs decided that this time, he really didn’t want to know what the junior agent had planned.

They worked silently from then on. No one wanted to disturb the unnatural quiet that permeated the almost deserted bullpen. Life seemed just a little bit duller without Tony’s antics to keep them all occupied.
It had been a hard several months. For all of them, but no one more so than for Leroy Jethro Gibbs. He had retired, effective immediately, even before the trial of Ziva David had officially begun. Her trial was now being followed by the world due to an unfortunate Probie who let loose a few secrets unwittingly to an undercover reporter. It hadn’t taken long for the reporter to uncover what was going on with the alphabet agencies. One of their own shooting and killing her superior? ZNN had eaten it up. They hadn’t stopped playing the highlights ever since it started. Tony would not be impressed that they managed to get NCIS on the 6 o’clock news at last. Not at his expense.

That Probie was systematically made an example of and let go of from the agency as soon as they knew who it had been. His name was now taboo in the office these days. After, his name became a sort of curse. “You don’t want to get Blackwalled do you?” was heard in hushed conversations. And so the story of the unfortunate Probie stuck around for a long time afterwards.

But Gibbs didn’t care about any of that. He seldom left his basement these days, and there was always a small glass of whiskey by his side now. He didn’t know what day it was or how long it had been since he’d seen the sun. He hardly ate, sleep was practically non-existent. None of those things mattered anymore. He wasn’t always drunk, but now more often than not, he had a good buzz going and didn’t appreciate anyone attempting to cut through it. Like right now. His phone chimed and beeped and Gibbs tried to ignore it, but the more he ignored it, the more annoying it became.

Picking it up and flipping it open, he answered his usual greeting.
“What do you want now, Tobias?”
“The trial for Ziva David is over.” came the quick but quiet response. That soon, Gibbs couldn’t help but wonder.

For a long time, Gibbs was silent. Tobias waited, but Gibbs never muttered another word. Sighing quietly, but expecting nothing less, Fornell went on to explain.
“A federal court found her guilty of all charges Jethro. She’s been sentenced to death via injection.”
Again, he received no response.
“I just thought you’d like to know—”
“Thanks, Tobias...for everything.”
Then Gibbs unceremoniously hung up, his head hanging low. Blue eyes looked at nothing in particular before landing on one of the precious few photos of his team he kept in his sanctuary.
It was a team photo, one that included Kate. She was turned toward Tony, smiling, her mouth open like she was laughing. Though that may have also something to do with the elbow she dug into Tony’s ribs, thus ruining the shot because of Tony’s grimace. Tony looked chagrined but there was a glint of humor in his eye that belied the attempted innocent face he was trying to pull off. He thumbed over Kate’s laughing face, sadness welling up within him. Kate had been the first agent he lost to a bullet. It was as if that became a precedent of some sort. Because DiNozzo followed her only years later to the same family connection.

Picking up his bourbon, Gibbs hurled it at the wall, watching in macabre fashion at the honey liquid dripped down the concrete like blood. The glass tinkled as it hit the other broken glasses on the floor. It was not the first full cup to meet an unfortunate end. But it would be the last. He slumped against his unfinished boat, scrubbing a hand down his rough unshaven face.

He remembered Tony’s reaction to the white mustache he sported after returning from Mexico. “Boss, it looks like a caterpillar died on your face.” God, he could still hear it in his voice and see his face. Tony had been so animated...so alive...

God, Mexico. What a fuck up that had been. Going away had hurt Tony so badly, but his “official” return had done just as much damage. Tony hadn’t deserved that and he’d done nothing to rectify it. God...how many ways could you possibly fail one person? Tony had been nothing but loyal and good to him and he treated him like dog crap he stepped in and scraped off the bottom of his boots.

Seeing another photo, stuck under the one with Kate, Gibbs grabbed it and stared at it for a long time. Tony was standing behind him, just off to his right, right where he was supposed to be. Right where he wasn’t at anymore. The Gibbs in the photo had his head angled upwards toward Tony who had his head angled down toward him. They were both smiling and laughing. Tony’s eyes were glistening with life and happiness in that photo. It was Tony’s 2 year anniversary. Abby had wanted to celebrate the day because Tony hadn’t moved on and she had cajoled the two of them into it. He was grateful now all of these years later that he had gone along with it.

Where had those men gone? Before Kate, before McGee...when it was just the two of them...things had gone fine. But after Kate..., It seemed after Kate died the hits just kept coming and they couldn’t catch their breath. Too much had happened in such a short time and they’d all coped the best they could.

So why had they laid all their shortcomings and flaws at Tony’s feet like it was his fault everything had gone wrong? Gibbs knew the answer. Tony was affable, fun-loving, trustworthy, and loyal. Nobody felt guilty about dumping on him because Tony himself understood why they did it. Didn’t make it right though.

He picked up Tony’s picture, thumbing over it with a gentle softness that he never used on the agent when he had been alive. Those green eyes, which used to hold such sparkle...that smile that charmed everyone he met (He had been one of the exceptions.) He missed his boy more than words could say. He missed the movie references he had no idea about but somehow had ended up being useful on a case. Or solving it. He missed sharing dinner with Tony and talking with him. He missed all the little pranks and stupid nicknames he came up with.

God, he couldn't take this anymore. Losing Shannon and Kelly had been terrible enough, and though he exacted his vengeance, it never brought him the satisfaction he sought. At least he had gotten his payback. With Tony, there was none, save for the fact that Ziva might get the death penalty. He just couldn't comprehend why she’d done it, even after all this time. Her own partner! What had possessed her....? Tony had had her six the entire time! Had she even once had his? These questions
had bounced around in his mind ever since and he knew he wouldn't get an answer. None that would satisfy him anyway.

He took her under his wing despite the shady circumstances surrounding her start at NCIS and had given her something sacred—his trust. And look at what she’d done with it. She’d gotten McGee, (who was Tony’s very own Probie for God’s sakes!) to loathe and despise the man who trained him. Not only that, but all the little insults and put downs and disrespect over the years. He should have done something when the first one was uttered. But he hadn’t. He figured Tony would bring it to his attention if it was bad enough, but he never had. He broke one of his own rules. He’d assumed. Hell, he broke more than one! And it all came at DiNozzo’s expense. It always had. He had never learned from his mistakes and DiNozzo had ended up paying the ultimate price for it.

So, with Tony keeping mum on the subject and the disciplinary actions he could have taken, Gibbs never said anything either. It was one of those regrets that you wanted to make right, but you knew every effort would be in vain. Sometimes it wasn’t the big things that stayed with you. It was the million little things you never said or did that hurt the most.

At least McGee had grown up. Gibbs was just sorry it taken Tony’s death for it to happen. McGee was no longer shy about his position on the MCRT and his new personality reflected it. He didn’t take any backtalk about Tony and no one was stupid enough to say anything within his hearing after the last incident. That guy’s nose had been broken in two places. Tony would have been proud. Then he would have shown Timothy how throw a punch without hurting himself. There had been a mark in his file over it, which consequently, stopped his rise to the directors chair. When questioned about it by Vance, Tim had told him the truth. “Tony would have done the same thing.” Gibbs had been really proud of his agent when he’d heard that. It was the truth after all. Tony, who played the fool, didn’t suffer fools either. Kind of ironic, but the truth often was.

Gibbs put the photo down, right next to his wife and daughter. He stared down at them for a while. It seemed fitting somehow….right in a way that he felt in his gut. His family. He rubbed his finger over each of their faces again. He loved them and missed them in equal measure.

“One day, I’ll see you again. And in the next life, I’ll be better. I promise.”

Then Gibbs took an old Sig-Sauer and put it by his temple.

“I’m sorry.” There were too many people he was apologizing to.

Ducky...Abby...Timothy...Tobias...hell even Vance had earned one. Palmer even made the list.

Their faces and their reactions played across his mind like a movie. Ducky would be quietly devastated. Gibbs felt a large amount of guilt for leaving his older friend to do three of the teams autopsies. The Scotsman would more than likely leave NCIS after this. Abby...she’d refuse to believe he was gone at first. Then she'd be mad at him, maybe enough to hate him. He didn’t know if she would forgive him for this and he doubted he deserved it in the first place. But she was a strong girl and she’d make it.

Tim...he'd be angry. His world had already shifted permanently because of Tony’s premature death, and he would resent his death too. But Tim had grown into his own. He'd be the rock for Abby, Ducky, and Palmer now that Tony no longer was. Tim would one day understand. Tobias….he would miss the ornery bastard. Rivals and friends in equal measure. Out of all them, he knew Tobias would forgive and understand him first. He knew how much Tony had meant to him. Hell, Tony had even jokingly called Fornell, “Uncle Toby” once. Tobias had acted offended, but he quietly confided in Gibbs that he liked it. Vance...he didn’t like the guy or his predilection toward politics more than NCIS, but the man was solid. He wished he’d gotten to know the other man. At another time, maybe they would have been friends? Who knew, the universe worked in strange ways. Palmer...he was so grateful to the Autopsy Gremlin as Tony had referred to him once. He had been surprised by his and DiNozzo’s unorthodox friendship. Tony was the jock/sporty type and Palmer...well...he wasn’t. He
was glad that Tony had a confidant to talk to when things at work got bad while he’d been drinking his sorrow away in Casa De Franks. He was proud of Palmer. He wished he had gotten to know Tony’s friend better.

He could only hope they would forgive him for leaving them like this. But he just couldn't take it anymore. "I'm sorry," he murmured. He pulled the trigger.

Chapter End Notes

And this is the end for chapter 2. Again, I apologize for the long wait. But now that you’re here at the bottom, I want to tell you something. This story is going to be massively AU. NCIS canon is non existent for the rest of the story after this one. It will be referred to in flashbacks but that’s it.

What do you think is going to happen? I’d love to hear your thoughts! Thanks for reading!

Nocturniquette

End Notes

Papa Gibbs/DiNozzo son story. NO TIVA EVER. I will not be placing Tony in an abusive relationship. I do not like Ziva and no, I do not have to explain why. No Tate either. I like Kate, but I got more of a Brother/Sister feel from them in the show. NO SLASH.
Tabby friendship, McOzzo Friendship. This does have bashing of a character. If you don’t like it, please do not leave flames on my story. Not only will I delete them, but I will call you out for it. YOU’VE BEEN WARNED.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!