When Dreams Come True

by Jacie

Summary

Tony deals with his father and finds an interesting way to get one over on his dad. Gibbs struggles with his feelings for Tony. Vance asks them to investigate a case, which sends Tony and Tim undercover as male strippers.

Notes

Special thanks to Jane_X80 for the last minute proofread. You're a lifesaver!

Disclaimer:
Don’t know them. It’s not true. I made it all up.
Sitting at his desk, Tony held his chin in his hands. Occasionally he shook his head and stared at his monitor.

After observing his senior field agent for several minutes, Gibbs finally called across the bullpen, “Hey, Skippy, what’s the problem?”

“It’s nothing,” Tony mumbled, as he tapped at his keyboard.

Within seconds Gibbs was striding passed Tony’s desk, waggling his fingers toward the elevator. “With me.”

Tony leapt to his feet and scrambled to make it into the elevator before the door closed.

A moment later, Gibbs flipped the switch to stop the car. “It’s not nothing. I need your head in the game. And it’s clear that you’re miles away.”

“My father called,” Tony began.

Gibbs sipped his coffee and waved his hand in small circles, motioning for Tony to continue.

“He’s ordered me to throw him a birthday party in DC. With strippers no less. Can you imagine?”

“You don’t owe him a damn thing. He has a lot of gall asking you to do anything for him. It’s not like he was ever there for you.”

“It has been tough,” Tony agreed, his eyes straying to the wall. “He always treated me like an inconvenience; never seemed to approve of my choices or lifestyle.”

“When you were in the hospital, I wondered why he never visited. He said he never knew you had the plague.”

Shaking his head, Tony replied, “We don’t keep in touch. I never told him.” After a pause and a heavy sigh, Tony looked back to Gibbs. “I didn’t want him there. It’s uncomfortable and he’s demanding. I was struggling to breathe, and didn’t want the added stress of having him around. I didn’t have the strength to deal with him.”

“What if you hadn’t survived?”

Tony shrugged. “I have a new family now. You, Ducky, Abby and the team. You mean more to me than he does.”

“What are you going to do about his latest demand?”

“I don’t know. Part of me is still the little boy who wants his father’s approval.”

Leaning over, Gibbs released the elevator. “Aren’t we all?”

“Your dad is a piece of cake compared to mine.”

“Steak tonight. My place,” offered Gibbs.
Steak at Gibbs’ house always included beer. As much as Gibbs drank, Tony marveled that the man never appeared the slightest bit drunk. Perhaps his body had grown accustomed to metabolizing alcohol quickly.

“Have you decided yet?” Gibbs asked as he pulled the steak from the fire.

“Decided what?”

“Whether or not you’re throwing a party for Senior.”

“Oh, that. It’s not like I have a choice. He’ll henpeck me until I give in. Or he’ll show up at my apartment and expect me to entertain him. It may not be the grand gala he’s expecting, but I’ll put something together for him. Maybe a nice dinner.”

“I thought he wanted strippers?”

Tony shook his head. “What man doesn’t want strippers for their birthday?”

“They’re not on my list.”

“But would you be disappointed if someone threw you a party and there were strippers?”

Gibbs chuckled. “I’d probably be okay with it.”

The pair ate their meal as *Roadhouse* played on the television.

Between bites, Tony observed, “If you tossed in a little martial arts and dance moves, you could be Patrick Swayze.”

“Are you sure?”

“Okay, maybe I’d be Patrick Swayze and you’d be Sam Elliott.”

“Life is not a movie. Real life is very different than a script.”

“I remember. The Marines taught you how to fight. No dance moves involved.”

“And they taught me how to shoot straight.”

Tony chuckled softly. “I remember talking with your dad. He said he told you not to touch his rifle when you were young, and you grew up to be a sniper.”

“And what did your father deny you?” asked Gibbs.

The smile quickly faded from Tony’s face. “I don’t know. Love? Someone who cares about me? Someone who will hold me when I’m down and tell me everything is going to be okay?”

“People care about you, Tony. I hope you realize that.”

“Like I said, the team is more like family to me now than he is.”

After taking a drink from his beer, Gibbs set the bottle back onto the coffee table next to his plate.

“You don’t need to do a damned thing for him.”

“I can’t escape from him. He knows where to find me. He told me he already had a ticket to DC and a room booked at the Adam’s House Hotel. He’s going to show up.”
“You could leave town,” Gibbs suggested.

Tony laughed. “It’s usually better to just play along and send him home at the end of the party.”

As the movie played on, Tony nodded off. Sliding over, Gibbs wrapped an arm around him, and smiled as Tony’s head settled against his shoulder.

While the ending credits rolled, Gibbs placed a kiss against Tony’s hair. “Do you want to spend the night?” he asked softly.

Tony didn’t answer.

An hour later, Gibbs reached into Tony’s pocket to retrieve his car keys.

Blinking his eyes open, Tony asked, “What are you doing?”

“It’s late and you’ve been drinking. And sleeping.”

“I’m okay,” Tony insisted as he stood up, wobbled and landed back onto the couch.

“You’re staying. That’s final.”

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A month later, Gibbs and Tony were sitting in a sedan, with a suspect under surveillance.

“Dinner at my place?” asked Gibbs.

“Dad’s party is tonight.”

“Oh.”

“What?”

“I’m not invited?”

“I didn’t think you’d be interested. We’re having a boring dinner with some of his stuffy, old friends.”

“And no strippers?”

Tony smiled broadly. “Oh, there will be strippers.”

“Same age as your dad?”

“Of course not. They’re young, hot and…” Tony paused as he watched a man across the street.

“And?” Gibbs prompted.

“That’s our guy,” Tony responded as he got out of the car and started across the street. Flashing his badge, he called out to their suspect. “Reggie Bowen? We’re agents DiNozzo and Gibbs from NCIS. You’re wanted for questioning.”

Reggie looked the pair over, as if considering his chances if he took off running. Both Gibbs and DiNozzo settled their hands on their guns.

“Don’t bother running,” said Gibbs. “We can question you with or without a bullet in your butt.”
Reggie nodded and put his hands up.

Tony handcuffed him and led him back to the sedan.

“What’s up with the strippers?” Gibbs asked again. “Young, hot and what?”

Tony grinned. “Male. To be fair, he never specified that he wanted female strippers.”

Gibbs chuckled aloud as he pulled into the traffic lane. “I’d love to see that.”

“You can come if you want to. I didn’t think you’d be interested. I know you and my father don’t see eye to eye.”

“I can be civil for one night.”

“Right. Only if I keep the two of you across the room from each other.”

“If you really want to have some fun, you could tell him I’m your date. Unless you’re already bringing a date.”

“I thought I’d have my hands full with my father. I didn’t want to complicate things by adding a date into it. And what about rule twelve?”

“You told your dad about the rules?”

“Maybe. I don’t remember. Sure, you can come as my date if you’d like.”

“Good. What time should I pick you up?”

“Such a gentleman.”

“I figured, you’ll have enough on your mind, so I might as well drive.”

“As long as you trust the valets with your pickup truck.”

Reaching across the car, Gibbs patted Tony’s knee. “I can take a sedan home.”

Tony was surprised to see Gibbs arrive to pick him up, not only driving a sedan, but also wearing a suit and tie.

“I almost expected a hoodie and jeans.”

“Your dad is always in a suit, so I assumed this would be a dress up affair.”

“Did you bring plenty of ones?” Tony asked.

“What for?”

“The strippers.”

Gibbs laughed as he drove toward the hotel. “I take it your dad doesn’t know.”

“No. I thought it would be a fun birthday surprise.”

Within minutes, they arrived at the hotel. Instead of using the valet, Gibbs opted for a nearby lot. The
pair walked briskly through the cool night air.

Tony had rented one of the hotel’s banquet rooms. He wasn’t surprised that his father was already there, greeting his guests. As he entered the room, Tony smoothed his tie and nodded toward his father.

Senior shot a harsh look at Gibbs. “Junior, you didn’t mention that Gibbs would be joining us.”

“What? I’m not allowed to bring a date? Since I’m paying for this soiree I thought it would be okay.”

“Did you say date? Junior, he’s a man. And your boss.”

Tony smiled charmingly. “And which one of those bothers you more?”

Senior returned the smile. “You’re pulling my leg! Of course!”

Gibbs wrapped his arm around Tony’s shoulder. “I’ve seen him do a lot worse.”

There was an open bar along one wall. Gibbs gravitated to it, ordering bourbon. After chatting with his father for a couple more minutes, Tony joined Gibbs at the bar, and ordered a glass of wine.

At the other end of the room was a stage. Just in front of the stage was a DJ dressed in a tuxedo, playing a variety of soft rock songs. He’d assured Tony that he had plenty of dance music appropriate for any age group.

Most of those attending were similar to Senior in age. More men were there than women. Tony and Gibbs chatted with the guests, who mostly bragged about their business deals, yachts or private planes. Gibbs rolled his eyes and ordered more bourbon.

After nearly an hour of people drinking and mingling, the guests settled in around the grandly set tables, and had a choice of three entrees. Gibbs and Tony both opted for the steak, medium rare. They purposely shot glances at each other, and Gibbs even put his hand over Tony’s at one point. All intended to stir the pot with Senior.

After dessert was served with coffee, Tony took the microphone from the DJ and gave a quick speech wishing his father a happy birthday. A cake was brought out, and Senior blew out the candles.

“I don’t know what you wished for, Dad,” Tony said, “But if it was for strippers, your wish may have come true.”

One of the hotel employees quickly dimmed the house lights, and the DJ changed to music with a strong beat as Tony returned the microphone. Another hotel employee focused a spotlight on the stage.

Senior and his guests applauded as an emcee took the stage.

“Welcome, welcome, welcome,” the emcee began. “We have a wonderful show for you tonight. I’m told we’re celebrating a birthday this evening. So Happy Birthday, Anthony DiNozzo. I hope you enjoy our entertainers.”

The emcee stepped to the side of the stage as the DJ changed the music again. Within moments, a well-built young man took center stage, flexing his muscles as he shed his cloths, and danced to the beat.
Gibbs and Tony glanced around the room. A few women appeared somewhat pleased with the entertainment presentation, but most of the men, including Senior, looked horrified. Tony did his best to suppress his laughter.

“Junior, what is the meaning of this?” Senior demanded.

“You asked for strippers. There you go,” replied Tony.

“Is this a gag?”

“Not something I discussed, but if you want a gag, maybe you can work something out with them. One question though. Did you want a dancer to wear the gag, or were you wanting to wear one yourself?”

Gibbs leaned close, his mouth against Tony’s ear. “I’m guessing he may welcome a blindfold.”

“What is this?” asked Senior. “Why do you have to ruin everything?”

Tony pulled a wad of ones from his pocket. “Did you need some ones to tip the dancers? I brought plenty.”

Tony stood up and approached the stage. The dancer jumped down to the floor and began grinding against him. After slipping a couple ones to the dancer, Tony returned to the table. Before long, a few women stepped forward to get a better view and offer tips themselves.

After the third dancer, a few chairs were brought up onto the stage. The emcee made an announcement that lap dances would be offered, clearly indicating that the more the dancers were tipped, the longer the lap dances would last.

Six dancers came out to the stage, and started a routine which included the chairs as props. After a few minutes, the men leapt to the floor and began moving around the tables, attempting to entice guests to come onto the stage for a lap dance.

Tony was the first one to follow a dancer back to the stage for a lap dance. Some of the guests cheered, some laughed. Senior was steaming. Gibbs watched with interest.

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Many of the male guests said a quick goodbye to Senior, and left early. In an attempt to make a good appearance before his friends, Senior stuck around longer than he would have liked. Eventually, he made his rounds to each of the remaining guests to bid them farewell and good night.

Before leaving the room he returned to the main table and stood close to Gibbs. “I don’t know why you and Junior take such delight in embarrassing me like this.”

Gibbs quickly rose to his feet. “You have no right to make demands on him. If you wanted a party, you should have thrown one yourself. Preferably in New York.”

“Is that what this is about? That I asked my only son to host a party for me? Is that really too much to ask?”

“He did as you asked. I don’t understand why you’re upset,” snapped Gibbs.

“Did you two really think I wanted *male* strippers? These guests are my business partners. Everything matters to them. This is not a joke.”
“Maybe you don’t know your son as well as you think you do.” Without waiting for a response, Gibbs turned and walked over to Tony, who had clearly been avoiding his father.

Senior snorted, and left the room.

A few women were still around as the entertainment wound up, some of their husbands waiting patiently at the table, while others had gone upstairs to their hotel rooms.

Tony was talking to the DJ as the lights brightened. The dancers had closed out their show, and were packing their gear backstage.

Gibbs approached Tony from behind, surreptitiously wrapping his arms around Tony’s waist, while planting tender kisses at the base of his neck. Tony smiled, but showed no other indicators that he realized what Gibbs was doing.

After shaking the hand of the DJ, Tony turned around and gave Gibbs a hug, then asked, “Where’s my father?”

“I think he went to bed,” Gibbs replied. “Had enough of the show.”

“I rather enjoyed it.”

“Which only infuriated him more.”

“I’m sure I will get a lecture about embarrassing him in front of his friends.”

“I bet next year, he’ll specify female strippers.”

“If my dad’s gone to bed, why are we hugging?”

Gibbs released the hug and gave Tony a head slap. “Better?”

Tony rubbed the back of his head. “More normal. The hotel comped me a room. Part of the deal for using the banquet room and their staff.”

“I’m okay to drive. Unless you want to stay. I can pick you up tomorrow.”

“Stay with me? You can join me for breakfast. I’m sure Senior will love it.”

“You really want him to think we’re dating?”

“Sure, why not? He causes me enough grief, it’s about time I send some back his way. Besides, you’ve been drinking.”

“I didn’t bring a toothbrush.”

“That’s okay. The hotel supplies toothbrushes and toothpaste. Anything you need.”

“Maybe all I need is you,” said Gibbs.

“My father isn’t lurking in the shadows, is he?”

“Don’t think so.”

“Practicing for breakfast?” Tony asked.

Gibbs took Tony’s hand in his own, and gave it a small squeeze. “I do think the world of you, Tony.
I may not always show it. I may not always remember it. But you are very important to me.”

“Love you, too, Boss. Maybe we can have them send a bottle of bourbon up to the room?”

“Why? You’ve already had more than enough to drink. And I’ll bet that room service liquor would be about four times what it costs at the store.”

“Five times. At least.”

“Then it’s just you and me. We can rest up before meeting Senior for breakfast.”

Tony started laughing and shaking his head. “I can’t wait to tell him we shared a hotel room.”

Outside the room, in the hallway, Tony pulled Gibbs close and kissed him. The bulge in his pants rubbed against Gibbs’ thigh.

“Was that for the benefit of your father?” asked Gibbs.

“Just in case he’s watching,” Tony confirmed at a whisper.

“Do you have the key card for this room?”

“I do,” said Tony as he slipped a hand into his back pocket.

As they entered the room, it was quite clear there was only one bed.

“At least it’s king-sized,” Tony noted. “Plenty of room for both of us.”

Flipping on the lights, Tony entered the bathroom. “See? Toothbrushes and toothpaste, just like I promised. Care to join me for a shower?”

“Afraid you’ll drown?”

Tony scrubbed his hands over his face as he stared at his reflection in the mirror. “I feel like I’ve been drowned in booze. Maybe I did drink too much.”

“No maybe about it. Probably makes it easier to deal with your dad.”

Gibbs walked over to the bed, while Tony undressed. In most cases, he preferred to read than watch television. However, the hotel room was bereft of interesting reading material. Every hotel room he’d been in carried ZNN. While Tony took a shower, and brushed his teeth, Gibbs stared at the large screen and wished there was a bottle of bourbon in the room.

Gibbs sighed. Nearly the same news every day, and it was usually sad and depressing: more traffic, more terrorism, more death and destruction. Gibbs’ fingers itched to hold a case file. He was wide awake and wanted something to occupy his mind.

A few minutes later, Tony walked into the room. His tousled hair was still wet, and a white towel hung wrapped around his waist.

Gibbs’ eyes immediately went to Tony’s groin, noticing the previous bulge was gone. He didn’t even realize his hand moved to adjust his own dick as he watched Tony from across the room.

If Tony noticed, he didn’t mention it. “The bathroom is all yours.”

“Thanks,” replied Gibbs as he rolled off the bed. He hadn’t felt the need for a shower before, but he
had to get rid of his hard on, or he would never get to sleep tonight.

Tony was sound asleep and softly snoring when Gibbs stepped back into the room. Gibbs carefully slid underneath the covers. Having not brought changes of clothing, it was clear that both men were naked beneath the sheets. That thought alone kept Gibbs awake longer than he would have liked.

Gibbs awoke grumpy. He had a hard on again, and hadn’t brought his special coffee blend. What the hotel provided wasn’t very satisfying, but it was better than nothing. When he checked outside the room, his hopes that a paper had been left behind were quickly dashed. With nothing else to do, he turned the television on and set it back to ZNN.

He eyed Tony’s cell phone. His team was constantly checking things on their cell phones. Surely, it was capable of delivering some sort of news that could be read. But Gibbs didn’t like the idea of squinting at a tiny screen. At least the television had a huge screen. It still wasn’t a newspaper. Gibbs missed the smell of paper and fresh ink, the feel of it in his hands, and the enjoyment of moving through it at his own pace.

Glancing back to Tony, he saw his senior field agent was still sleeping soundly. Tony hadn’t mentioned what time they were supposed to meet Senior for breakfast. Not that Gibbs was concerned. The less time he had to deal with Senior, the better.

With nothing much to do in the room, Gibbs decided to return to bed. After slipping beneath the covers, he snuggled close behind Tony, spooning him. Closing his eyes, he drifted back to sleep. It was early. There was still time to dream.
Tony eventually stirred. The room was warm, but in a soothing way, not stifling. His head pounded from having had too much to drink the night before. And yet, he felt comforted. As his senses came online, he registered the strong arm thrown across his waist, holding him securely. Soft breath tickled the hair at the back of his neck. The warm flesh of another person rubbed against his own bare skin.

Tony thought back to the previous night. “Boss?”

“Hmmm?”

“Maybe you could. Um. Holster your weapon?”

“You want to take care of it?” Gibbs asked in a whisper, his lips pressed against the gentle curve of Tony’s neck.

“Boss, are you awake?”

“Yeah.”

“I think you need coffee,” said Tony.

Gibbs leaned up on his elbow. “I need coffee?”

“Yeah. I think so.”

“I’ve had fucking coffee already. Or at least whatever it is that this hotel offers.”

Rolling over, Tony stared up into Gibbs’ eyes. “I just assumed you weren’t quite awake.”

“Why?”

“Well, you suggested I take care of something. Kind of. Personal.”

“Hey! It was your idea that I be your date.”

“Actually, it was your suggestion. I agreed just to mess with my dad. You’re the one who has a rule against it.”

Gibbs pushed himself up and out of the bed. His cock was still obviously hard as he walked quickly to the bathroom, slamming the door closed behind him.

Tony waited five minutes, then tapped on the bathroom door. “Gibbs?”

“I’ll be out in a minute.”

“I didn’t mean anything by that. It’s just. You normally have coffee.”

“Maybe you need some damned coffee,” snapped Gibbs. “I left a cup for you.”

Tony wanted to ask how many cups Gibbs had already consumed, but his boss had apparently gotten up on the wrong side of the bed. “Okay. But can you please bring me a glass of water when you come out? I have a splitting headache.”

“I’d imagine the room may be spinning.”
“A little. I guess I drank a little too much last night.”

“Ya think? And you wanted to order more booze when we got back to the room!”

Tony returned to the bed, sat down and held his head in his hands.

Gibbs emerged a few minutes later. His eyes avoided Tony’s as he dressed. When their eyes finally met, they studied each other for a minute.


Tony watched Gibbs return to the bathroom. Water splashed into a glass that was soon placed into Tony’s hands.

“I’m sorry,” said Gibbs.

Tony blinked his eyes and stared at Gibbs. “Are you deliberately breaking your own rules?”

“No. I need more coffee.”

“I told you that a half hour ago. I need aspirin.”

“You sit. Stay. I’ll bring you something. I’m going out for some real coffee,” said Gibbs as he headed toward the door.

“Boss?”

Stopping short, Gibbs turned to face Tony. “Yeah?”

“Did we do anything we shouldn’t have last night?”

Gibbs chuckled gently. “Only half of us.”

The moment the door closed, Tony groaned and allowed his body to fall backwards onto the bed. “I sure hope I didn’t do anything too fucking stupid.”

His head still pounded, but he was certain it was from booze, not from a head slap.

Gibbs returned a short time later and pressed a packet of aspirin into Tony’s hand. “I asked at the front desk. This is what they had. When are we supposed to meet your father for breakfast?”

“Nine.”

“No, we can’t. At least, I can’t.”

Stepping into the bathroom, Gibbs rubbed Tony’s shoulders lightly. “I’ll go with you.”

Pushing his way past Gibbs, Tony searched for his clothing and got dressed. “I feel like crap.”

“But you had a good time,” Gibbs reminded him.
Tony’s thoughts ventured back to the previous night. The corners of his mouth slowly rose into a smile as he remembered the strippers’ show and the lap dance. “Yeah,” he agreed, “I definitely had a good time.”

Glancing around the room, Tony’s eyes settled on his cell phone. It only took a moment to find his father’s number. “Good morning,” he said. “Are we still meeting for breakfast?”

Minutes later Tony and Gibbs approached the table in the restaurant where Senior was waiting for them.

“You’re late,” Senior chastised. “And you brought him. Gibbs, I’m beginning to think you’re a bad influence on my son.”

“At least he’s been around,” Tony said as he took a seat and the server placed a menu before him.

“If I wasn’t with you, it was because I was out working deals to send you to the best schools. You could have been anything, Junior.”

“And I threw my life away being a cop. Is that it?”

“I didn’t say that.”

“It always seemed that way to me.”

“I wanted to bring you into the business, son. When you were ready.”

“So you could teach him to be a conman?” asked Gibbs.

“Is that what you think I am?”

“That’s what I know you are.”

Turning back to Tony, Senior continued, “I’m an investor. I find people with money to invest. It’s all business. I could still get you in.”

Tony sipped at his orange juice. “No thanks. I’m doing something important. Maybe you don’t see it, but I help people.”

“I help people, too. Without investors, business doesn’t move forward. Come with me.”

Tony looked deeply into Gibbs’ eyes, and clasped his hand on top of the table where his father could see the gesture. “I can’t leave him.”

Senior frowned. “I don’t like this at all.”

“That’s too bad. It’s my life. I love my job. And I love him.”

“I didn’t raise you to throw away every opportunity that is placed at your feet.”

“I’m quite happy with my choices.”

“As am I,” added Gibbs.

“Why do you always have to ruin everything?” Senior asked.
“Why can’t you be satisfied that your son is happy with his life choices? He’s an adult. You have no right to make demands of him.”

“You never stop being a parent. I only want what is best for him.”

“As long as it suits you? He’s happy, that should be enough.”

“Someone has to catch the bad guys,” Tony said.

“But it doesn’t have to be you,” his father retorted.

Gibbs and Senior were glaring at each other as the server stopped by to take their order. Senior opted for eggs benedict with a side of fresh fruit, Tony ordered a Belgian waffle with bacon on the side, while Gibbs opted for blueberry pancakes with bacon and eggs on the side.

There was no mention of the male strippers throughout the meal, nor was anything resolved. Gibbs and Senior were still at odds, and Tony was adamant that nothing could make him leave NCIS.

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By the time Monday morning rolled around, Senior was long gone, and the MCRT was back to work at the office.

“How was the party with Senior?” Tim asked.

As he dropped his pack at his desk, Tony replied, “Interesting.”

“Fathers, they’re never easy.”

“That may be the understatement of the year.”

Gibbs rounded the corner, coffee cup in hand. “Get to work. I want answers in the Mendleton case. Today!”

Tony’s cock took notice as Gibbs walked by on his way to the stairs. “We’re on it!” Tony said, a little louder than he intended.

“I’ll be in MTAC with the director.”

Tony watched until Gibbs was out of sight. Then he turned to his computer screen. The Mendleton case was another in a long string of cases that crossed their desks. “Gibbs wants answers,” Tony muttered.

“Gibbs wants the case resolved,” said Tim.

“And then we’ll have another one after that. And another and another.”

“That is how this job works,” said Ziva. “We solve a case, and we get another.”

Tony nodded. “They’re all the same.”

“Cases?” asked Tim.

“Jobs. You finish one task, and you get another. Over and over and over.”

Tim smiled. “Are you looking for a job change?”
“No. Not really. Senior wants me to join him in whatever it is that he does.”

“Conning people into investing in risky ventures?”

“Well, he deals with the super wealthy. It’s not like they would miss a few hundred thousand dollars. He has contacts all over the world. Jet setting into a lifestyle he can’t really afford. You know, when Senior can’t con a flight on a company jet, he resorts to riding on Greyhound buses?”

“Living high on the down low. And you’re thinking about joining him? Really?” Tim’s expression was one of disbelief.

There was a moment of silence before Tony turned back to a report on his desk. “No. Of course not. Let’s get a move on and solve this case. There’s another million cases waiting in line behind it.”

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Cases continued to cross their desks. Much as they predicted, every time they solved a case, another one soon popped up. It was an unending parade, continually streaming through their office.

A month after Senior’s party, Ducky stood before Gibbs’ desk and cleared his throat.

Glancing up, Gibbs removed his reading glasses. “Yeah, Duck?”

“Metro’s ME just called me about one of their cases.”

“Does it cross paths with one of ours?”

“They have a murder victim that they just identified as former petty officer Gene Moss.”

“Former?”

“Yes. He called to ask if we wanted to investigate. They are a bit overwhelmed at the moment and I get the impression he was asking if we could take this one out of their hands.”

“Why didn’t they go through channels?”

“They are. He just called to give me a heads up.”

Gibbs stood up and nodded toward the screen. “Tim, put him up there.”

Tim tapped away at his keyboard for a minute, then transferred the information and photo to the large screen. “There he is, Boss.”

After doing a double take, Tony walked closer to the screen, studying the image. Then he leaned close enough to whisper in Gibbs’ ear. “He was at my dad’s party.”

“Are you sure?” Gibbs asked.

“Yeah, he gave me a lap dance. A good one.”

Gibbs pointed at the image on the screen. “Him?”

Tony sighed and nodded. “Yeah. I’m sure it was him.”

Gibbs studied the image, then turned to Ducky. “Yeah, we’ll take the case. We need to make sure his killer isn’t after Navy personnel.”
“I’ll make arrangements to pick up the body,” Ducky said as he turned toward the elevator.

A moment later, Gibbs’ phone rang. “Gibbs. I’ll be right up.”

The team watched as Gibbs started up the stairs. “Research this guy,” Gibbs called back to them. “Find out what he’s been up to since he left the Navy, who his friends are, whether he was at risk.”

“On it, Boss,” Tony promised as he slid back into his chair and began an online search.

A half hour later, Gibbs returned to the bullpen. “We’re taking the case. Former petty officer Gene Moss was found shot and naked in Rock Creek Park. His body was dumped behind a dumpster.”

“When was his body found?” asked Tony.

“Yesterday morning.”

“Metro has already processed the scene, then?”

“Yeah. McGee, get out to the park to see if they missed anything. DiNozzo, give Ziva the phone number of that entertainment group you hired for Senior’s party, then come with me. Ziva, go check out Gene Moss’ place of employment.”

Gibbs and Tony were in the elevator before Ziva and Tim had grabbed their gear. Gibbs stopped the car with a flip of a switch.

“We’re going to take a look at the body, then I want you to find out who else was on Gene Moss’ crew. Find out if any of them worked for the same strip group, or whatever it is.”

“Entertainment. They advertise as dancers, but their ad is pretty clear that they’re strippers.”

“Just men?”

“No. They have women, too. I chose the men.”

“To needle your father?” asked Gibbs.

“It seemed like a good idea at the time.”

Gibbs flashed a grin. “It was memorable.”

“Indeed. He still isn’t talking to me.”

“Then it was a good idea. I know he’s your father, but he doesn’t have your best interest at heart.”

Tony rubbed his forehead. “I know. But I’ll have to make peace eventually.”

“Why?”

“Because he’s all the family I have.”

“You have us.”

Tony nodded and sighed. “I know. The thing is, I think he did the best he could. You know?”

“His paternal skills are somewhat lacking.”

“Always were.”
“Find out if there are any other similar cases around town. We have to determine if this is related to his being former Navy or not.”

“I’ll get on it as soon as we’re back upstairs.”

Fifteen minutes later, Ducky and Jimmy arrived with the body and placed him on the table. Ducky slowly unzipped the black bag to reveal the body.


Ducky looked up at him. “Of course it is. I told you they ID’d the body. They matched both his prints and his dental records. There is no question that this is former petty officer Gene Moss.”

“We met him briefly, about a month ago,” said Gibbs.

The men stared at the body for a couple minutes, then Ducky turned the head. “He was shot from behind with a downward trajectory.”

Bending down, Tony inspected the wound carefully. “Execution style.”

Ducky pointed out chafing at the wrists and ankles. “He was tied up at some point, and struggled against the ropes that bound him.”

At the end of the day, Gibbs stopped in front of Tony’s desk. “Come over for dinner if you like.”

“It’s late.”

“I know. Too late. Come on over.”

Tony waited until Gibbs was ready to leave the office for the day, then followed him home.

“Take a seat,” offered Gibbs as he placed his weapon into the gun safe.

“Steak and beans?” Tony asked.

“No, groceries are a little scarce at the moment.” He then flipped open his phone and ordered a pizza.

“You didn’t have to do that, Gibbs. I could have grabbed something on the way home.”

“Hey, I happen to like your company. And I’m happy to share a pizza and a few beers with you. Okay?”

“Sure, Boss.”

“You can call me Jethro at my house.”

Tony smiled awkwardly. “I’m just used to calling you Gibbs, or Boss.”

Gibbs shrugged as he left the room. Moments later, he returned and placed an open beer in front of Tony. The pair sat side by side on the couch with a case file on the table before them.

“What is your gut saying about this one?” Tony asked.

Gibbs put on his reading glasses and picked up the file. “I think it’s a strange coincidence that a guy giving you a lap dance at your father’s birthday party winds up dead in Rock Creek Park a month later, and happens to be former Navy.”
“I thought you didn’t believe in coincidences.”

“Which is why I agreed to take the case.”

“I thought Vance ordered you to take it.”

As he placed the file back onto the table, Gibbs removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes. Looking over to Tony, he said, “He told me Metro had a heavy caseload and asked if we could take this one off their hands. I agreed to investigate.”

“But your gut is telling you there’s more to this?”

Lacing his fingers together, Gibbs stared at the wall for a moment before he replied. “I’d like to know who shot our former petty officer and if it has any connection to him once being in the Navy.”

“Did McGee and Ziva come up with anything interesting?”

Gibbs put his glasses back on and flipped through the file again. “McGee notes that the park was clearly a dumping ground.”

“Any evidence at all?”

He made some casts of tire tracks near the dump site that may or may not be involved.”

“Did Ziva get anywhere with the entertainment group?”

“Looks like the manager said he hadn’t seen Gene for weeks. But Ziva spoke to a couple coworkers who said he’d only gone missing a few days ago.”

“Sounds like the manager knows more than he’s letting on.”

“We need to see if we can get someone on the inside. Maybe two someones. How are your dance moves, DiNozzo?”

“I do okay.”

Gibbs smiled. “More than okay. I was there watching you dance with the stripper.”

“I can manage. Who else did you want to send in? They’ve seen Ziva.”

“Which leaves McGee.”

“What is he going to be? The tap dancing stripper?”

“Work with him, Tony.”

“That’s a mighty tall order, Boss.”

“If he doesn’t get in, you have no backup.”

“Sure. His stage name can be Geeky Spice.”

The doorbell rang and Gibbs rose to retrieve the pizza. After paying the delivery driver, he placed the pizza in front of Tony. “Pepperoni, sausage and extra cheese.”

Tony sniffed the air and opened the box. “My favorite.”
Returning from the kitchen, Gibbs set a plate and a napkin down in front of Tony, “I remember the important things.”

“You do take good care of me. Aside from the head slaps.”

Gibbs smirked and grabbed a piece of pizza. “You enjoy the head slaps. Shows you that I care.”

“Maybe.”

“I do care, Tony,” Gibbs said just before biting into his slice of pizza.

“I know.”

As they were eating, Gibbs turned on the television and flipped through the stations until finally settling on the movie *Maverick*.

“I’m guessing you prefer the old black and white television show,” said Tony.

“This is what’s on now,” Gibbs replied. “At least the movie has James Garner in it.”

“You could probably get the series on DVD.”

“Do you see a DVD player in my house?”

“I could get you one for Christmas.”

As the credits rolled, Tony reached for his jacket and stood up to put it on.

“You can stay if you like,” Gibbs offered.

“I have a fish at home waiting to be fed. Besides, I don’t have a toothbrush or anything with me.”

“The Adams House isn’t the only place that has extra toothbrushes for their guests. You’ve been drinking. You should stay.”

“I only had a couple beers.”

“Five.”

“Five? You counted?”

“I’m the one who brought them out and carried the empties back to the kitchen.”

“I feel fine.”

Stepping closer, Gibbs dug his hand into Tony’s pocket and pulled out his keys. “I really think you should stay. There is an extra toothbrush in the medicine cabinet. Help yourself.”

“Okay.”

“You can borrow a T-shirt if you want.”

“I normally sleep in the nude.”

Gibbs smiled. “That’s okay, too.”
Tony was settled into the bed, when Gibbs spooned up behind him.

“Boss?” asked as he turned to face Gibbs.

“Hmmm?”

“I didn’t realize we were sharing.”

“I kind of like that your father thinks we’re dating.”

“No, he thinks we were joking. And he’s not even here.”

“It’s not like we haven’t shared a bed before,” said Gibbs.

“I know. It’s just a little strange.”

“Why? You told me you’d been with men before.”

“True, just not my boss.”

“Oh. Well, don’t think of me as your boss tonight.”

“How am I supposed to do that?”

“Just think of me as a guy named Jethro, who happens to like you. A lot.”

“Boss, are you hitting on me?”

“I understand if you’re not interested.”

“What about your rule against dating coworkers?”

“There’s always another rule. Bend it, don’t break it.”

“So, you’re not interested in dating, just sex? I get it, you’re bi-curious all of a sudden.”

Reaching out, Gibbs cupped Tony’s chin. “You know I’m not a words guy. All I can tell you is that I care about you. A lot. And more recently, I can’t seem to stop thinking about you.”

A moment later, Gibbs closed his eyes and pressed his lips against Tony’s.

They stared at each other after they broke the kiss.

Tony sucked in a deep breath of air, and exhaled. “Okay, then. Good night, Boss,” he said. He then rolled over, facing away from Gibbs as he hugged a pillow close to his chest. He stared into the darkness for a long time before sleep came to him. Then the dreams began dancing across his mind.
Dreams Of Strippers

Tony awoke with the feeling of déjà vu, although this time he was in Gibbs’ house, rather than the Adams House Hotel. Gibbs was spooning against him, his cock obviously hard and aligned with Tony’s crack, an arm thrown across Tony’s waist.

“Boss?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m going to take a shower. Okay?”

“Do you want me to join you?”

“No. Not really. I just didn’t want to startle you when I got out of the bed.”

Gibbs pulled his arm away from Tony, and rolled over, hiding his hard on.

Tony took his time in the shower, enjoying the warm water splashing across his skin. He heard Gibbs come in to pee and brush his teeth, and sighed in relief when his boss didn’t join him in the shower.

After drying himself off, he returned to the bedroom to find a pair of jeans and a USMC sweatshirt lying on the bed.

“Gibbs?” he called downstairs. “Is this for me to wear?”

“Yeah,” Gibbs yelled back. “If you want. I put your clothes in the laundry.”

“Good thing I didn’t wear a suit into work yesterday,” Tony muttered as he got dressed. “I guess this means I’ve officially gotten into Gibbs’ pants. And here I thought he was trying to get into mine. Maybe he did? Is that why he tossed them in the laundry? Better not think about that one, Anthony.”

He found Gibbs sitting at the table, reading the paper and eating cold cereal, a cup of coffee close at hand. “Mind if I join you?”

Gibbs nodded to the empty bowl and the glass of orange juice set across the table from him. “That’s for you.”

“Thanks, Boss.”

Lowering the paper, Gibbs looked over to Tony. “I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

“I’m not.”

“Are you sure? I know you, Tony. I can sense what you’re feeling.”

“I’d make a *Star Wars* joke, but I know you haven’t seen it, my Jedi Master.”

“Joking is your defense mechanism. When you’re uncomfortable.” Gibbs sighed sadly, then scooped up another spoonful of corn flakes. “It’s okay.”

“What’s okay?” Tony asked as he poured milk onto his cereal.
“If you don’t think of me that way.”

“Oh. Well. That is. It’s complicated,” Tony stammered.

“Complicated? How so?”

“You’re my boss. You have a rule against dating coworkers. I just never even considered it a possibility.”

Gibbs laughed softly. “I never thought about it much before, either. But when I saw you dancing with that guy. I don’t know. Something clicked.”

“Can we get through this case and talk about this later?”

“If you’re not interested, it’s fine.”

“I’m not saying that I’m not interested. I have to think about it. And I know how you are when you’re focused on a case. I have to focus if I’m going undercover. I have to be someone different. I can’t think about us, when I’m being someone else.”

“Okay.”

“I’m going to call Tim and we can meet up so I can give him some pointers. Hopefully we can both get hired.”

“I already called him. He found an online ad looking for dancers. Same number that you have for the group.”

“Good. At least they’re hiring. That’s half the battle.”

“Yeah. But it makes me wonder how many bodies are out there.”

“If Moss’ murder was related to his job as an exotic dancer.”

“My gut is telling me it’s related. I want you to be careful on this one.”

“Always.”

SESA-SESA-SESA-SESA-SESA-SESA

While Tony was taking his dishes into the kitchen, Tim arrived.

“Good morning, Boss.”

“There he is, our little McStepper,” Tony said gleefully. “I guess we can move some furniture out of the way.”

“Or take this down to the basement,” suggested Gibbs.

Tony started toward the basement stairs. “We’ll have to think up a stage name for you, Timmy. I’m partial to the Dancing Geek. Or you could wear your ice elf costume and tout yourself as Dancing Smurf.”

“Tony, we have to get hired first. Then they’ll probably give us our stage names.”

“Hmmm, that’s a shame.”
Tim set up his iPod and began stretching as Tony chuckled behind him.

“Take your shirt off,” demanded Tony.

“What for?”

“They’re strippers. They usually don’t dance with a lot of clothes on, so you might as well get used to it.” Tony pulled off the USMC sweatshirt Gibbs had loaned to him, setting it aside before pulling off the loaned jeans. Once he’d folded the clothing, he set it on the workbench.

“Pants, too?” Tim asked.

“Yes. You better get used to showing it off, McBashful.”

“Maybe I could get a job answering their phones.”

Gibbs shook his head. “Gene Moss was a dancer. You two need to be dancers.”

The selection on Tim’s iPod had Tony rolling his eyes. “There’s not much on here that’s really good to dance to.”

“What do you mean? I have a lot of stuff on there.”

“I’m not sure you can strip to Yanni. None of it is acceptable stripper music.”

Throwing his hands into the air, Tim said, “Just pick something, okay?”

“It’s a shame you’ve been letting your gym membership slide.”

“I don’t have a gym membership.”

“Obviously! Just saying. You’re not as toned as you could be. The ladies like toned dancers. Men, too. Okay, now the most important thing is to grind your hips and to look confident in your sexuality.”

“Let’s just do, whatever we need to do.”

Tony finally selected a song and set it to play. “Listen to the beat, and move with that. Try to do what I do.”

Gibbs drank his coffee and chuckled at the show. Tony had quite a challenge in trying to teach Tim to dance like a stripper.

“Really, Tim? My grandmother can move her hips better than you. And she’s been dead for thirty years.”

“I’m doing the best I can.”

“I thought you and your buddy won trophies for dancing.”

“Tap dancing,” Tim reminded him.

“Hey, you can be the tap dancing stripper! It’s a gimmick. They might go for it. I bet the gray-haired ladies would be quite entranced. Senior centers must be full of Fred Astaire fans.”

“He did more than just tap dancing.”
“And so will you. If only you can get the hang of moving your hips. I’ll bet Fred Astaire could move his hips.”

Tony worked with Tim on his dancing skills over the next week, and also took him shopping in thrift stores for an appropriate wardrobe. They intended to look like broke sailors who had been tossed out of the Navy. Gibbs sent them over to the NCIS gym to work out, despite Tony insisting that there wasn’t enough time to get Tim in proper shape.

“Make it work, DiNozzo. That’s an order,” said Gibbs.

Later in the week, they visited Abby for photos and fake IDs.

Abby scanned through her iPod for *I’m Too Sexy* and started it up. “Go ahead, boys. Show me your moves.

Tony immediately began dancing through the lab. “Come on, McStripper, strut your stuff.”

“I can’t. Not in front of Abby.”

Turning to Abby, Tony suggested, “Maybe he needs money first?”

Using her remote, Abby turned up the volume. “Come on, Timmy. If you can’t dance for me, how are you going to dance in front of a room full of strangers?”

Tim blushed as Tony and Abby danced around the lab, trying to entice him to join them. At one point Tony shed his shirt and pants, much to Abby’s delight.

“You are going to blow our case,” said Tony.

Hanging his head, Tim sighed deeply and admitted, “I’m not cut out for this.”

“It’s a case. Besides, how can it be so embarrassing? You’ve been onstage before. I have to believe you’ve danced in front of an audience before, if you’ve won trophies like you say.”

“That was different.”

“Why?”

“For one, I was fully dressed.”

“And for two, it wasn’t in front of me and Abby?”

“I don’t know if I can do this.”

Tony grasped Tim’s shoulders. “But you must. We have a job to do. And in this case, we’re going to have to go where our victim went, stripping along the way. We may not like it, but it’s the only way we’re going to solve this case.”

Abby toned down the volume. “And you can’t disregard an order from Gibbs. I know how you feel about failing. So you are just going to have to suck it up and get your groove on.”

Tim took a deep breath and nodded.

“You can do this,” Abby said as she snapped a couple pictures.
Tony called the line and was invited to come down to audition. He wasn’t asked for a name, nor was he given a time or date. It didn’t seem like there was anything to gain by Tim making the same call. They each packed the clothing they’d bought, along with a few personal items, into duffle bags they could carry from a shoulder strap. They wanted to look like former sailors. The pair rode the bus to into the warehouse district.

The building was rundown and had a couple stories above the warehouse portion of the building. Inside they found a small waiting area with a receptionist, and three other people apparently filling out applications.

“Hi,” Tony began. “We called about the job ad.”

The young woman behind the desk pointed to a row of clipboards that each had blank applications and pens attached to them. “Have a seat and fill those out.”

Tony dropped his duffle onto an empty chair, then grabbed two clipboards, handing one to Tim. “Do you need our names?”

“There is a place to put those on the application. Please print.”

Tony rolled his eyes at Tim. “Okay, we’ll just get these filled out then.”

The woman was focused on playing a game on her cell phone, and chewing her gum.

Both Tim and Tony were careful to use their alias’ names and wrote out all the fake information Abby had given them, including both being former Navy. They had learned that Gene Moss had been tossed out of the service for drug offences, so Abby gave them similar backgrounds.

Another man and three women came in after Tony and Tim, and were all given clipboards, too.

Minutes later, Tony nodded to Tim and they both turned in their applications.

The woman pointed to a door. “Take them down to the dance studio. Keep going down the hall until you see it. You’ll find a couple guys sitting at a table, give your paperwork to them.”

The pair walked through the door and down a short hallway, which had several doors, including a couple bathrooms. They could already hear music blasting from the far end of the hallway.

“Could be offices or meeting rooms,” Tony whispered.

The last door had a large sign that denoted: DANCE STUDIO.

They pushed through the doors, and stopped. At one end of the huge, open space there were two groups working on routines in front of mirrored walls, where they could watch their reflections. One group was men and the other was women.

Closer to the doorway, they saw the table with two men, one sitting, one standing. A few other people were sitting on chairs nearby, while one woman was dancing before them.

The man sitting at the table waved them over. “I’ll take your applications.”

He was young and fit. His eyes scanned over Tony’s application, then Tim’s. He snickered at what Tony was sure was Tim’s award winning tap dancing skills.
“Ex-Navy?” the man asked.

“Yeah. It was a bogus discharge, but you can’t argue with the military once they’ve made up their minds,” said Tony.

“Can you pass a drug test?”

“Absolutely. I never used the stuff. Drugs are stupid, right? It was just easy money. That was all. Neither of us came from money and we didn’t make much in the Navy. Someone pointed us out and we got tossed as an example to everyone else.”

“Neither of you currently have a place to stay?”

“No. We just got to town and were sitting in a restaurant when we saw your ad in one of those free papers. The diner was nice enough to let us call from their phone. It’s a bitch trying to find a pay phone anymore.”

The young man laughed. “Yeah, it is. So neither of you have a cell phone?”

“We have no money for a cell phone. We’re desperate, man. We could really use a job. Please.”

“That depends on your dancing skills, my friend. Take a seat. Milo will call you when he’s ready for you. My name is Alex, if you need something later.”

Tony turned slightly, watching the girl currently dancing. “So we audition in front of the competition?”

“Yeah. Why not? If you can’t dance in front of other people, you’re not going to make it at this job.”

“What if we steal someone else’s moves?”

“Look, Tony,” Alex said, reading the name off the application, “If you’re good enough to take a stellar dance move from one of the other applicants, and execute it flawlessly in front of us with no practice, then we really want you. That’s exactly what we’re looking for.”

“Thieves?”

“People who can pick up dance moves quickly and execute them flawlessly.”

“Got it.”

Tony and Tim found two chairs next to each other and watched other applicants get called up to dance one by one. After they danced, they would talk to Milo, the man standing behind the table, and occasionally walking in front of it. After their talk, some applicants grabbed their things and left, while others took a seat.

Tony saw there was a small space a few feet away where applicants appeared to be stretching and warming up. He elbowed McGee and nodded to the space. “Get your McStretch on if you want to.”

Tim nodded. “Come with me?”

“Okay, McNervous Nelly. You better get loosened up pretty damned fast.”

After they stretched for a few minutes, Tony warmed up with some dance moves and encouraged McGee to do the same. A couple of the other applicants watched and chuckled at Tim’s efforts.
Eventually, they returned to their seats and waited to be called.

Tim McElroy was eventually summoned for his opportunity. He tried his best to dance like Tony had taught him. After his turn, he went to talk to Milo, then walked back over toward Tony with his head hanging. Before they could talk, Tony DiAmore was called to dance.

Tim sat quietly while he watched Tony dance to the heavy beats. A few minutes later, Tony was waved over to talk to Milo. After their chat, he nodded, then returned to sit beside Tim.

“T’m in,” said Tony.

“I’m not,” Tim confessed. “Although, he said I could wait around and try again later today, or come back some other time.”

“You know what you should do?”

“What?”

“Show them your tap dancing skills.”

“Tony, this is not the tap dancing crowd.”

“Yeah, but hear me out. For one, it demonstrates that you can be taught. Those people across the room obviously work here and are being taught new routines. Secondly, they must have some shows where they perform for little old ladies who would probably get a kick from seeing a tap dancing stripper.”

Tim huffed.

“I’m serious. Besides, I need you here, with me. I need you, Timmy.”

“Okay. I will try again.”

When the current dancer completed their audition, Tim returned to the table and spoke to Milo about another chance. Afterword, Tony nodded toward the warm-up space and they went to work out a new dance routine for Tim’s second audition.

It was a long wait before Alex called Tim’s name again. As Tim danced, Tony walked over to the table and stood beside Milo.

When Tim finished his routine, Tony signaled him to remain where he was for a minute. Tony turned to Milo. “Look, I appreciate you giving me a job. Really. I need it so badly. But Timmy, he’s a little on the slow side. I’m not sure he can survive without me. I know he’s not the best dancer in the world, but he really needs this job and really needs me to watch out for him. He’s such a hard worker. I think little old ladies would love him. He can dance like Fred Astaire and probably looks like their grandsons. I would really appreciate it if you could give him a job. Even if it’s just cleaning up around here. Please?”

Milo turned and looked Tim up and down, then turned back to Tony. “I see you boys have no addresses or phone numbers.”

“Honestly, we just got kicked out of the Navy. We’re desperate. Please. We’re both willing to work super hard for you. We need jobs. We have to work.”

“Okay. We have rooms upstairs. Dancers can stay here for free. Most of them do. One floor for men,
one for women. No men on the women’s floor and no women on the men’s floor. Don’t test me on that.”

“We’ll stay where we need to be.”

“We put photos of the dancers out on the web and we make dance teams. Those are dancers who have similar styles and work well together are grouped together. Our clients can choose teams, individual dancers or let us send who we have available. Their choice.”

“Got it.”

“Grab your gear and go upstairs. There’s some food in the fridge. Make what you want, clean up what you use. We’ll get some photos, but you might get scheduled before that. Look for Bryant. He’ll fill you in and get you assigned to a room.”

Tony nodded, then waved for Tim to follow him. Alex pointed them to a staircase. They continued upstairs to the men’s floor. The women had the top floor and there was a guard in the stairwell, who pointed to the door that read  **Men’s Floor.**

Inside the landing, the space opened up to a room with a few tables and chairs, a couple televisions and a kitchen at the far end. Several men looked up at them, but only one came over to talk to them.

“I’m Bryant. Congratulations.”

“I’m Tony, he’s Tim. Milo told us to talk to you.”

“The kitchen is over there. Eat what you want unless it has a name on it. If you want something other than what we offer, you can buy it yourself. The guys get very pissed when someone eats food they paid for themselves.”

“Got it,” Tony confirmed.

“There are mini fridges in the rooms. You can keep your beverages in there. Food, too, if you want. Clean up after yourselves, wash any dishes you use immediately. If you get caught not cleaning up, then you will clean up after everyone for a week. We do have a schedule for minor things, like making coffee and wiping down the coffee maker, counters, microwaves and emptying out the dish racks.”

Tim and Tony scanned over the kitchen area.

“See that board? Those are work assignments. Find your name and check the schedule. Brax will get you set up with some clothes and photos. You won’t start working until tomorrow.”

Tim’s eyes went wide. “Tomorrow?”

“Hey, the faster you start working, the sooner you get paid. You won’t get a check, just your tips.”

“We don’t get paid?” asked Tony.

“You do, but that covers your room and board, clothing, haircuts and training. You don’t get a check, just tips. Follow me, I’ll show you to your room. There are two bathrooms on this floor. We all share them and take turns cleaning them. It will be on your schedule. I check, so you will clean them until I am satisfied.”

As they walked down the hallway, Tim located the bathrooms and checked the other rooms. None
had doors on them. “There are a lot of guys around for us all to be sharing two bathrooms.”

“That’s what we have on the floor. No showers. Those are downstairs just off the dance studio, near the workout equipment. Men’s and women’s areas are separate. Don’t get caught in ladies’ territory.”

Tony adjusted his duffle strap on his shoulder. “The guy in the stairwell warned us. What happens if we get lost?”

“Don’t get lost. You might find yourself dead.”

“Oh, good to know.”

Tim’s eyes grew wide again and Tony shrugged.

Bryant led them toward the end of the hallway. “You guys can share this room. There are two single beds.”

Tony nodded and entered the room. It was tiny. After Bryant walked away, Tony dropped his duffle on one of the beds. “I see why the guys stay out front. There’s barely room to turn around in here.”

The room was square, with two dressers, one garment rack and a mini refrigerator. No closet.

“Do you think he wandered into women’s territory?” Tim asked at a whisper.

“Don’t know.”

“I’m not planning on breaking that rule.”

“ Might as well get some rest,” Tony suggested. “I get a feeling this place is rocking around the clock. You never know when we’re going to get called to do something.”

“Are you hungry?” asked Tim as he began unpacking his things.

Using his duffle as a pillow, Tony relaxed on one of the beds and closed his eyes. “Nope. Not hungry, just tired. I’m getting some rest.”

It wasn’t long before dreams of scantily clad strippers danced across his mind.
Hours later, there was a knock on their wall. Tony awoke to find Bryant standing there, and Tim missing.

“Hi,” said Bryant. “I wanted to point out that we also put your schedule up here in the room.”

Tony looked at the cork bulletin board near the doorway. He remembered it being blank before, but it now had two sheets of paper tacked onto it. One was marked Tim and the other Tony. “Got it.”

“You’ll have a couple busy days. Milo expects you to put in some effort, but if you do well, he understands that people do need to sleep.”

“They’re not really going to send us out stripping tomorrow, are they?” Tony asked.

“Doubtful. You’ll need to go down to the studio to work with the choreographers. You can pick out a few songs you like, but they have to be approved before you can use them for a show. And they’ll get you hooked up with clothes and stuff. They’ll probably give you a haircut, and some makeup tips.”

“Makeup?”

“The better you look, the more tips you get. We have a gym and tanning beds downstairs, too. Some of the guys work out up to six hours a day. It helps get the tips.”

“Of course it does.”

“Keep an eye on the clock and your schedule. Milo doesn’t like people who are late. And you have to make time to eat and sleep around your scheduled activities. Watch for changes to your schedule, too. Check it several times a day.”

Tony finally rolled to sit up on the bed. “They change that often?”

“They can. If we get a last minute call for a show, or if someone is scheduled and can’t make it.”

“Why couldn’t someone make a show?”

Bryant shrugged. “Some people suddenly quit and move on. Sometimes people get sick. Who wants to see a stripper who is sneezing and coughing?”

“Good point.”

“Milo often sends one of the newbies out on a show as a backup. Just in case something happens last minute. You don’t get paid, but it gives you a better idea of how things work, you can see what people like to see and tip better for. Plus you get to learn how to set things up and break them down. All good information to have.”

“I’m sure.”

“And if you help them out, a dancer having a good night might toss you a couple bucks.” Bryant tapped his finger against the posted schedule. “Don’t forget.”

“Sure, thanks. Hey, Bryant?”
“Yeah?”

“Have you seen Tim?”

“He’s out front. He had a bite to eat and I think is reading a book or something. These rooms are a bit boring. Most guys only sleep in their rooms, but spend most of their time out front or downstairs.”

“That makes sense.”

Tony scrubbed his hands over his face, then rose to his feet and followed Bryant down the hallway. He quickly spotted Tim off in a corner, with a book and a coffee mug.

“Did you sleep well?” Tim asked.

“Yeah. I was so tired. I needed some rest.”

Tim softened his voice. “I told him since we didn’t have a place to stay before, that you’d watch over me and our stuff when I slept.”

“Okay. Did you check out our schedules?”

“Yeah. You might want to grab a bite to eat. We’re due downstairs in twenty minutes.”

Tony nodded as he eyed the kitchen. A few minutes later, he returned with two sandwiches, some chips and a glass of ice tea. “Bryant told me how this all worked, how they have a budget for groceries, but we can buy our own food if we want.”

Tim leaned close and kept his voice low. “I’ve been talking to a few of the guys. It doesn’t seem that anyone is around for a long time. Alex and Bryant have been around for a few years, but most of the dancers have been here two years or less.”

“Makes sense. If they’re not getting a paycheck, something may be a little dodgy about this place.”

“They get to stay here for free. I just don’t see what they’re doing with their tip money.”

“They’re obviously not spending it on room and board. Unless they’re buying extra food or booze.”


“Maybe. The rooms are small, so not much space to store anything.”

“Some could be saving it up until they can afford to quit this job and find their own place.”

“Did you ask about Gene Moss?”

Tom closed his book, and set it on the table. “Yeah. I told them that we served with him, and he had tipped us off to working here.”

“Anyone know him?”

“Yeah, a couple guys I spoke to. They don’t know why he left, but said it wasn’t unusual for guys to just move on without saying anything.”

“They question is, was it his choice?”

“No one seems to know. He hadn’t been talking about leaving. Not that anyone remembers.”
“That’s interesting.”

A few minutes later, the pair returned to the studio area below to check in.

Milo pointed to a door across the room. “I want you to work with Brax.”

When they entered the room, they saw there were mirrors, sinks and a half dozen barber chairs. Brax was a small man wearing tight, black leather pants, a frilly pink shirt and had painted fingernails. His bangs were long and seemed to continually fall in front of his eyes, which had him constantly flipping his head.

“Have a seat,” Brax offered.

Tony and Tim sat in chairs next to each other.

“Brax is an interesting name,” Tony said.

The stylist studied each of them for a few moments. “It’s short for Braxton. Family name.” Stepping closer, he ran his fingers through their hair and studied their facial structures. “First of all, I need you both stripped down to your tighty whities or whatever you’re wearing.”

“What?” Tim asked.

“I need to see the whole package, my dears. It is my job to make you as attractive as possible. I need to see what you have, and will choose a wardrobe, haircut and possibly even a hair color for you.”

Tim and Tony glanced at each other. Tony stood up first and undressed. Tim followed suit.

“Oh, dear. This may be quite a challenge. I’m going to start with you,” said Brax as he approached Tony. “Back in the chair.”

Brax wetted down Tony’s hair, then began snipping away. Once he was satisfied, he pushed Tony back over the sink and applied a lighter color to his tips. Turning to Tim, he said, “You just sit tight. I have to have a chat with Milo, but I will be right back.”

As soon as the stylist had left the room, Tim turned to Tony. “What was that all about?”

Tony chuckled. “They must have something special planned for you. Maybe blue hair, Elf Lord.”

Tim rolled his eyes and waited for Brax to return.

A few minutes later, Brax hovered over Tim, and trimmed up his hair. “Darker hair for you, I think. Milo thinks. Something about going Fred Astaire with you.”

Tony laughed aloud. “Well, he is quite a little tap dancer.”

“Classic. We’re going for the classic look with him.”

As soon as Tim had the darker dye in his hair, Brax returned to Tony, rinsing out the color to reveal blond, frosted tips. “Lovely! Now, just relax while we get some piercings on you.”

“Whoa, what?”

“Milo’s orders. Some clients like piercings and think they’re sexy.” Brax retrieved his piercing gun and shot a stud into one of Tony’s ears. Setting down the gun, he reached for a tube of light cream, and rubbed it over Tony’s nipples.
“What are you doing?” asked Tony. “That’s cold.”

“It’ll numb you up just slightly.”

“What?”

Grabbing the piercing gun, Brax said, “Nipple piercings! They’re very sexy, trust me. Great way to get tips.”

Tony squirmed in the chair. “Wait a minute.”

Tim grinned. “I think we should trust their expertise, Tony. It’s all about the tips and they obviously know what their clients want to see.”

“Shut the fuck up before I head slap you.”

Brax rested a hand on Tony’s shoulder. “It doesn’t hurt much. Now, you must remember not to take out any of the hardware. Just dab them with rubbing alcohol twice a day for a month so they don’t get infected. It will take that long for the holes to set.”

“If this stuff comes off, the holes close up?”

“And then I’ll have to pierce you again. It will only hurt more the next time. I can promise you that.”

A minute later, Tony’s nipples were both pierced and bearing little gold hoops. It was Tim’s turn to chuckle as he admired Tony’s new accoutrements. Brax rinsed out the darker dye from Tim’s hair, then styled both Tim and Tony. Once their hair was dry, Brax called Milo in and they discussed costuming.

Tony was soon costumed with tight, leather-look pants and vests, while Tim was given tear-away tuxedos and a dress uniform.

Milo nodded his satisfaction with their looks. “Go see Nicky and Milan, the choreographers. You’re going to have to dance until you get it. Then we’ll put you in the show and you can start earning some money.”

“That’s what we’re here for,” Tony said confidently.

The choreographers worked them for several hours before allowing them to return upstairs for a meal.

“That was exhausting,” Tony said as he made more sandwiches, and gave two to Tim.

“They don’t seem to offer much, for food.”

“You noticed. I take it most of them don’t like cleaning up after, so they keep the food cheap and easy. The freezer is stocked with frozen meals. I just didn’t want to wait for them to cook. I’m ready to eat fast and go to sleep.”

Tim nodded, then took a bite of the sandwich. “A hot meal sounds good.”

“They also have eggs and some rice. All cheap stuff.”

“But we can survive on it.”

“Someone is going to owe me one fantastic steak grilled over a fireplace when we’re done with this.”
Tim smiled.

The next few days consisted of working out in the gym, cleaning and dancing, with short meal times and an occasional rest break. More than one of the other dancers had offered them special pills intended to keep them awake, boost their energy, or help build muscles. They both declined the offers.

Their room didn’t have a window, although light came in from the corridor.

Keeping their voices low, they chatted in their room, while listening for footsteps in the hallway.

“Anyone look suspicious to you?” Tim asked.

“There are some possibilities. He could have left, and someone tried to rob him. It could have nothing to do with this place.”

“Not according to Gibbs’ gut.”

“True. If it was here, did he get jiggy with a woman, or get caught in the ladies’ space? Difficult to imagine. He was Navy. He was disciplined, and would have served with women. There appears to be plenty of drugs flying around this place. Did he take something and try to sell it outside? Did he threaten to go to the cops about something illegal?”

“He was busted for using. It’s why he was tossed from the Navy.”

“Or did he give a lap dance to the wrong woman?. Or man?.”

“I hadn’t thought about that.”

“Jealousy causes a lot of murders. It’s usually money, love or revenge.”

“Maybe he stole tips from the wrong dancer,” Tim mused.

“At least you told them that we knew him. It shouldn’t be too suspicious that we’re asking around about him.”

“But it might not be good if someone here murdered him. If we get too nosy, they may come after us.”

“Milo is ex-military. He runs a tight ship here,” Tony shared. “I pushed him a bit about this place. He did say there was a high turnover. That’s why they’re constantly hiring new dancers.”

“Did you ask him about Gene?”

“No, but I can. I’ll tell him that I expected to see him around and learned he wasn’t here anymore.”

“Watch your six.”

“Always.”

Tony and Tim did little other than work on dance routines for their first week. Aside from that, they cleaned and asked a few questions. They quickly learned who was easy to get information from, and
who was suspicious and inclined to reporting their behavior to Milo.

Bryant kept a close eye on all the male dancers, but paid extra attention to the newer guys. He seemed to always have an eye on Tony.

Eventually, they were sent out to assist on a couple shows. They were to help carry things in and out of the building and help the dancers get ready, and do quick costume changes between their numbers.

“You should probably know,” Tony whispered at a gig, “I told Milo you were a little slow. It wouldn’t hurt if you acted a little confused around him now and then.”

“You did what?”

“It’s the only way I could convince him to hire you. I told him I felt responsible to watch out for you and didn’t think you could survive on your own.”

“Thanks a lot.”

“It got you a job.”

“And someone to watch your ass.”

“I’ve been told that my ass is very enjoyable to watch.”

Another two weeks went by before they were sent out to perform. Most of their performances were for older ladies. Sometimes they tipped well, but often it wasn’t much.

“They wealthy ones will tip, but if they’re on a fixed income, it won’t be much,” a dancer named Pietro shared with them. “We’re definitely considered B or C string. You have to be fitter to be on the A team.”

“Like Mr. T?” Tony asked. “I pity the fool who can’t dance.”

“We dance almost as much. The A string dancers cost a bit more. It evens things out. We’ll get more seniors, though.”

“Money is money,” Tony said as he packed his costumes away after a show.

“That is true.”

“Did you know our buddy, Gene Moss? He tipped us off to this place. We served with him in the Navy. We were surprised he wasn’t here.”

“I don’t know what happened to him. He was just gone one day. It happens. I wouldn’t ask too many questions about him, or anyone else that disappears.”

“Why?”

“I get the idea that Milo doesn’t like people who ask questions. He likes people who follow orders and dance well.”

Tony nodded. “He likes people who make him money and don’t cause any problems.”

“Exactly.”
As the days passed, they found they were often watched closely, and were even told they couldn’t leave the compound without someone sent by Milo to accompany them. Tony had to hold his temper. Some days it was difficult to have a private conversation with each other, as someone was always nearby, and easily within hearing distance.

Tony and Tim kept track of the dancers who mysteriously disappeared. It usually happened on a night they had gone to a dancing gig. They returned from the gig, but never came upstairs. No one ever admitted to knowing what had happened.

“It’s weird,” Tony whispered one night in their room. “It’s mostly the really good looking ones. I notice that some of the women seem to disappear, too. Definitely something fishy is going on around here.”

Two weeks later, McGee awoke and found that Tony was gone. He had been scheduled for a show at the last minute, while Tim had the night off. Tim had done some reading, watched a little television and then turned in.

An hour after he awoke, Tim located Bryant and asked about Tony. “It’s strange. The costumes he took last night are still gone.”

“I don’t know anything about it,” Bryant replied. “Sometimes guys just decide to move on.”

“Not possible. Tony would never leave me,” Tim insisted.

“Were you two lovers?”

“No, but he took care of me. He watched over me. He wasn’t even going to accept the job here if Milo didn’t let me stay, too. He promised he would never leave me.”

Bryant shrugged and went back to sweeping the floor. “Promises get broken sometimes.”

“Not Tony. He would never leave me. I know he wouldn’t.”

“Go ask Milo if you want.”

As he stood staring at Bryant, Tim sucked in a deep breath and thought of what to say. “Yeah, I’ll do that.”

Taking the steps two at a time, Tim bounded down to the dance studio and found Milo talking to Alex. “I need to know where Tony is.”

Milo scratched his sculpted, trimmed beard. “He took off. Sorry kid. He said he was going to send for you once he got settled somewhere else.”

“He wouldn’t do that.”

Muscles tightened as Milo looked Tim over. “Accept it. Deal with it. I’m sure he’ll be back for you in a couple of weeks.”

Tim’s eyes darted between Alex and Milo. He was certain they were lying. Tony was never going to return. Backing away slowly, Tim watched the other two men. “Okay. Whatever.”

He ran back up the stairs and to their bedroom as fast as he could. Then the tears came. He’d lost Tony. And Gibbs was going to kill him.
‘I’m so stupid,’ he said to himself. ‘I could have asked to go as a backup. I could have watched him. I could have saved him. Gibbs is fucking going to kill me.’

The next night, when he was dancing and the Cedar Crest Senior Center, he deliberately took a wrong turn and walked away from his group while on a break. As soon as he found a phone, he called Gibbs and asked to get picked up.

Within minutes, local police had the center surrounded. A few of the senior ladies initially thought they were part of the stripper show, until a woman named Vera attempted to shove dollar bills down an officer’s belt while telling him there would be more once he stripped down to his G-string.

The entire group of dancers and their handlers were wrangled up and detained while Gibbs, Ziva and Fornell arrived.

Gibbs immediately searched the room for Tim, and took him aside. “Where’s Tony?”

Tim shook his head. “I don’t know. We got separated and he was gone. I know he never would have left on his own. Something happened to him. Something bad.”

“Any headway in what happened to Gene Moss?”

“I’m not sure, Boss. Tony was working on a theory.”

“What was it?”

“I’m not sure. Dancers were definitely going missing on a regular basis, but they kept playing it off like it was normal. The people running the place would just say that they got tired of stripping and had left the business. But it was weird.”

“How so?”

“Tony had been dancing a gig when he went missing. The costumes he’d taken, they were gone, too. Then I poked around and saw they were hanging up downstairs in the costume room. I’m positive they were the same ones Tony had with him.”

“Try to remember, Tim. What did DiNozzo think was happening to them? What did he say, exactly?”

“He’d noticed that it was really good looking dancers. Mostly really toned dancers. It wasn’t so much the best dancers as the better looking ones.”

Gibbs nodded. “Interesting.”

“I’m sorry, Boss. It’s my fault. I should have insisted on going to the gig with him.”

“He’s resourceful, McGee. We’re going to find him. Are the dancing gigs the only way someone would have seen Tony?”

“No. They have our photos online. People can order specific dancers, or a specific team. They said they grouped dancers into teams if they had similar styles. There’s something else, Boss.”

“What?”

“Tony got hired a couple days ago to go to a rich guy’s house. He said the guy was the only one there. It’s unusual that we don’t dance for groups of people.”
“He went alone?”

“No. There are always a couple handlers and an emcee with us. That night, he’d gone with two other dancers, both male. They both looked a lot like Tony, too. It was Blake and Sergio. Tony even said that they must be the guy’s type because they were so much alike. He said they all gave the guy lap dances and the man tipped them all generously.”

Gibbs nodded and pulled Fornell aside. He filled him in on what Tim had relayed. “We need to find out who that guy was. I have a feeling this has something to do with him.”

“You think he kidnapped Tony from the stripper group?”

“I think they’re taking orders online and selling young dancers with no attachments. People who won’t be missed by friends and family.”

“You think Moss tried to run away?”

“Maybe he knew what was going on and he tried to stop it. Maybe he tried to walk away and they stopped him.”

Miles away, Tony’s head sagged. He was tied to a chair, drugged and gagged.

When he came to, he tried to put the pieces together. He’d danced a gig, but Tim hadn’t been sent along. That was odd as Milo usually sent them together. But this was a last minute thing. He’d been told that Taylor wasn’t feeling well and they needed Tony to take his place. Tony had grabbed a couple costumes and raced out to the van.

After the gig, the whole group was walking across the dance studio on their way back upstairs to their rooms, when Milo had called out to Tony, asking him to step over to discuss a new routine with Milan.

“What the hell happened after that?” Tony asked himself, fighting his foggy memory.

It was dark down in the studio. They’d pulled him into one of the smaller side rooms, and he’d felt a jab to his arm.

“They drugged me,’ he’d remembered. ‘They shot me up with something. I can’t even think straight.’

No matter how hard he tried to remain awake, he nodded off, still tied to a chair. That night he dreamed he was dancing in chains, beaten and tortured.
Fornell wasted no time in getting warrants for the dance troops’ warehouse. Gibbs raced across town with Fornell riding shotgun and Tim in the back seat doing his best to maintain his balance. The local officers were keeping the dancers at the senior center detained until transportation could be arranged.

Tires screeched as Gibbs entered the warehouse district.

“Take it easy. My guys have eyes on the building,” said Fornell as he held on tightly.

“Tony’s in trouble. I can feel it in my gut.”

“If you roll this car and we go up in flames we’re going to have a tough time saving DiNozzo. Just a little something to think about.”

Gibbs pressed the accelerator to the floor. There was a locked chain-link gate across the entrance, but Gibbs buste right through it, then hit the brakes so hard, the car spun nearly sideways before coming to a stop.

The moment he leapt from the car, Gibbs was shouting orders. “I want this building surrounded. No one gets out. Where is the helicopter?”

Fornell glanced over to his men. “Where’s the warrant?”

“Here, sir,” one of his men said, thrusting the piece of paper toward him.

“You hold onto it. Let’s go ring the doorbell.” Fornell took his gun out of its holster as he nodded toward the entrance.

Leaning over, Gibbs retrieved his backup piece and handed it to Tim. “If he’s still here, where would they hold him away from the others?”

“I don’t know. Not upstairs. That’s like the dorm area. There are a few rooms downstairs that I’ve never been in,” Tim said.

“Are they armed?”

“I don’t know. I never saw anything. Some of the security guys carry guns, but not all of them.”

Gibbs waved for Tim to follow. “Stick close to me. Who is in charge?”

“This guy named Milo. He’s not quite six feet, in good shape, brown hair to his shoulders. He kind of looks like Yanni. A little bit.”

“Who or what the hell is a Yanni?”

“He’s a Greek musician, Boss. Self-taught pianist. Great stuff. I could loan you a CD.”

A head slap stopped Tim’s babbling. “I want to question him. You point him out. Got it?”

“Yes, Boss.”

Fornell banged on the door. One of the security guys cracked the door open, only to have Gibbs and Fornell force their way inside. Before he could reach for his gun, Gibbs had the man disarmed.
“I’m looking for Milo. Where is he?” demanded Gibbs.

“In the back.”

A dozen agents followed Gibbs, Fornell and Tim into the building. One of them cuffed and detained the security guard while another explained the warrant.

Tim led the way through the corridor, while Fornell signaled to his men to check each room they passed. Locked doors were kicked in to reveal offices, file rooms and a meeting room.

As they entered the dance studio, there were several people working on routines.

Fornell flashed his badge, as agents followed him into the room. “Agent Fornell, FBI. We’re serving a warrant. Someone turn that music off.”

The agents had entered the room with weapons drawn. Most of the dancers immediately froze and raised their hands.

Tim saw that Nicky turned the music down. “Where is Milo?”

Nicky nodded to Brax’s area.

One of Fornell’s men brought him the warrant copy and two large photos. “We have a warrant to search this premises and to question everyone here. We are investigating the disappearance of these two men, Gene Moss and Tony DiAmore. We will be questioning everybody here, one by one. If I find out that anyone has been holding back information, they may be charged as an accessory to murder.”

“Murder?” someone asked.

“Gene Moss was found dead, with a bullet in his head. That is murder. This was the last place he was seen alive. Tony was sent in to investigate and now he is missing. Think carefully if you want to cooperate, or spend the rest of your lives in jail.”

Due to the number of people involved, the FBI called in the local police to help control them. Fornell had them split into smaller groups and assigned agents to begin questioning them. Other agents were sent upstairs to search the dorms and bring everyone downstairs to the dance studio area.

Tim and Gibbs slowly entered Brax’s area. The front room where he cut and styled hair was empty. As they moved into the back room, they found Milo, Brax and two female dancers searching through costumes.

Gibbs spotted a door on the far side of the room. “What’s in there?”

“That’s my bedroom,” Brax said nervously.

“Go open it, or I’ll kick the door down.”

There was a noticeable shaking of Brax’s body as he walked quickly across the room and opened the door. “It’s not locked,” he said as he twisted the handle, then raised his hands up.

Gibbs held his weapon drawn, while Tim quickly searched through the room and returned a minute later. “He’s not in there.”

“Who?” Brax asked.
“My partner, Tony,” said Tim.

“All this for Tony?”

“He’s a federal agent and so am I.”

Brax looked surprised, and glanced over to Milo.

Gibbs holstered his weapon and walked over to Milo, twisting his arms behind his back and handcuffing him. “You and I are going to talk.”

“I’ve got nothing to say. Most of our dancers are transients. They’re homeless. We give them a home and a purpose.”

“Can you explain why so many of them go missing?”

“I guess they just aren’t the settling down types and they just decide to move on.”

“Are you going to stick with that story? Because I can tell you’re lying. There’s something more going on here. I can feel it. Let’s go find your room, Yanni.”

“Boss, his name is Milo. Yanni’s a musician.”

“Whatever!”

Tim and Gibbs escorted Milo across the dance studio to another room and sat him down on the bed, still handcuffed, while they searched.

After a few minutes, Gibbs grabbed a wallet from a drawer and flipped it open. “Who is Alex Talburt?”

“Alex,” Tim said. “He’s Milo’s assistant.”

Drawing his weapon, Gibbs pointed it at Milo’s head. “Where is your room? If you won’t tell me, I will find someone out there who will.”

Milo nodded to the side. “Next room over.”

With a quick motion, Gibbs holstered his weapon again and gripped Milo’s arm tightly as he yanked the man to his feet. “I suggest you start cooperating,” he hissed. “If you don’t, I will go out of my way to make your life miserable.”

The door was locked, but Gibbs didn’t feel like waiting for a key to be produced. It didn’t take him long to kick the door in. Again he settled Milo onto the bed. “I’ll bet this feels more like home. Well, enjoy it, because I have a feeling you’re going to be spending a few years behind bars.”

Fornell appeared in the doorway and waved Gibbs over. With their heads close together, he whispered, “Got this kid Alex out here talking.”

“Alex Talburt?”

“One and the same. He said you were searching his room. I guess it made him a little nervous.”

“He spilled?”

“A little,” Fornell confirmed. “We’re pushing the accessory to murder charge. He sang like a bird.”
“What’s his story?” Gibbs asked.

“They hire transients, people who won’t be missed. They have these dancers who make good money. The thing is, all these people aren’t necessarily the best dancers. They have some special clientele who are wealthy, and willing to pay for playmates.”

“Prostitution?”

“More like human trafficking. He’s not sure if Gene Moss fought being sold, or if he figured out what was going on and tried to stop it.”

“What about Tony?”

“Apparently, they had a buyer. Alex said he’s not into that part, but this guy Milo runs everything. He has the records and knows who the buyers are and which dancers they bought. He knows the buyer’s types and keeps them supplied. He sometimes hires people knowing that they’re going to be sold.”

“What a piece of trash.” Gibbs shook his head and returned to where Milo was sitting. “Your boy, Alex, just spilled on your whole operation. We know you had a buyer for Tony. We need to know where he is. Now!”

Milo dropped his eyes to the floor.

Gibbs glanced over to Tim. “Keep searching. Toss this place.”

After nearly tearing the dresser apart, Gibbs joined Tim in the walk-in closet. They rifled through all the clothing and a few boxes of paperwork. Then something caught Gibbs’ eye. As he ran his hand along a panel, he located a release, which opened a doorway. Milo seemed to deflate the moment it was found.

Gibbs pushed his way into the darkened space and found a small room, not much bigger than the closet. He instinctively knew the unconscious man bound to the chair was Tony.

Flipping out his knife, he quickly cut through the bindings and the ball gag. Pressing his mouth against Tony’s ear, he whispered, “Tony? Are you okay?”

When no answer came, he pressed his fingers against Tony’s neck, relieved to feel a pulse.

Tim stuck his head through the doorway. “Is he okay?”

“He’s going to be fine. Get an ambulance on the way. I want him to be checked out. Just as a precaution.”

It still concerned him that Tony was nonresponsive. It was a struggle, but he managed to move Tony through the closet and placed him on the bed. “What did you do to him?” he shouted at Milo.

“I’m not saying anything without a lawyer present.”

Fornell nodded to Gibbs, and stood in front of Milo. “The man is a federal agent. If you don’t help us, we’re going to throw the book at you.”

“Several books,” Gibbs added. “Maybe even a couple bricks.”

“It would be to your benefit to cooperate with us.”
Milo still refused to speak.

Gibbs took a seat on the bed beside Tony, and held his hand. “Come on, DiNozzo. Wake up.”

Minutes later, the ambulance arrived. The EMTs immediately began checking Tony out. One of them used an ammonia inhalant to awaken him.

As Tony’s eyes fluttered open, Gibbs smiled at him and gave his hand a squeeze. “Good to see you again.”

“Yeah, Boss. You, too.”

“Do you remember what happened?” he asked softly.

Tony attempted to sit up, but both Gibbs and the EMT pressed his shoulders down.

“Just relax and let them check you out,” Gibbs said soothingly.

Tony took in a deep breath and released it slowly. “They told me they needed me for a last minute stand in because another dancer was too sick to go. The gig was fine, but when I got back, Milo said he wanted me to talk to the choreographer about a new routine. They gave me a shot of something, and tied me to the chair.”

“You’re going to be fine,” Gibbs assured him. “I’m going to have Ducky meet us at the hospital.”

“I’m fine. Just a little headache. Maybe I feel a little woozy.”

“Once they check you out, you’re coming home with me until we’re sure whatever they gave you is out of your system.” Gibbs paused to run his hand through Tony’s blond-frosted tips. “You might need a new nickname.”

“Like what?”

“Spike?” Not caring who saw him, Gibbs leaned forward and kissed Tony’s forehead. “You’re going to be fine.”

“Spike? Really.”

“What’s that?” Gibbs asked, just noticing the stud earring in Tony’s ear and flicking it with his finger.

“Yeah, they sort of did that. They said it looked sexy.”

Tim grinned. “Are you going to tell him what else they pierced?”

“Do tell,” begged Fornell.

“Shut up, McGabby. They don’t really need to know about that.”

Gibbs continued toying with Tony’s hair, then rubbed his arm. “Yeah, I really do.”

“Come on, Boss. It’s a little embarrassing. I can take them out anyway. No one needs to know.”

“Fine, if you won’t tell me, I’ll have Tim put it in his official report for all to see.”

“No, Boss. Please, no.”
“Tell me?”

Just then the EMT opened Tony’s button-down shirt to listen to his heart.

Gibbs grinned and Fornell chuckled.

“Pierced nipples. Interesting,” Gibbs mused.

“Well, they can go away and there will be no proof they ever happened.”

Gibbs leaned close to whisper in Tony’s ear, “Or you could say they were always there.”

“You’re killing me, Boss. Why would you care if my nipples are pierced or not?”

“I don’t know. They’re kind of sexy. But it’s your body. You can take them out if you want to.”

“We’re ready to transport him,” said the EMT.

Gibbs tossed the sedan keys to Tim. “I’m going with Tony. I’ll call you when we need a ride.”

Ducky pulled a few strings to get Tony examined and released quickly, and agreed it would be a good idea for him to stay with Gibbs for a few days.

“I’d be happy to drive you back to your house if I had the room. Unfortunately, my Morgan only has room for two.”

“Don’t worry about it, Duck. Tim’s bringing the sedan.”

Minutes later Tim arrived. “Fornell caught a ride with someone else from his office. How’s Tony?”

“He’s going to be fine,” Gibbs assured him.

With Tim taking the wheel, Gibbs sat in the back with Tony’s head settled into his lap. Tony nodded off while Gibbs stroked his hair gently.

When they arrived at Gibbs’ house, he woke Tony up and thanked Tim for driving.

“Can you eat?” he asked, as he settled Tony onto the couch.

“I’d love a steak, but I’m too tired to wait.”

“I could warm up some soup.”

“Okay.”

A few minutes later, Gibbs waved Tony over to the table and they each had a bowl of stew.

“It’s good. Not really soup, but close enough,” said Tony.

Gibbs reached over to head slap him. “Eat. You look like you could use some food.”

“It was a little slim pickings over there. They prey on the homeless and downtrodden. They love former military as they’re usually well-disciplined and in good shape.”

“Did you find out what happened to Gene Moss?”
“I’m not positive, but it sounds like he had made a couple friends here. I think they had sold one of his friends and grabbed him after a gig, like they did me. I think Moss stuck around waiting for his friend that night, and saw them drug the guy and take him away. Moss must have tried to fight to save his buddy. He must have figured out what was going on and they shot him because of what he knew.”

Gibbs nodded and called Fornell, giving him the information Tony had supplied. After he closed his phone, he turned back to Tony. “They’ll get to the bottom of it. Your information will give them a big head start.”

“Easier to find the treasure if you know where to dig.”

Gibbs smiled. “And if you know what you’re digging for.”

Reaching across the table, Gibbs covered Tony’s hand with his own. “I was really worried about you.”

“I had Tim for backup.”

“I know. I don’t like it when I don’t have eyes and ears on you.”

“It’s tough to have cameras and microphones on a stripper job, especially when they supply the costumes.”

“Right down to the G-stings?”

“Oh yeah. They have special glittery G-strings.”

“Tim walked away with a tear-away tux. Too bad you had already changed back to street clothes.”

“Are you saying you’d like to see me strip for you?”

Gibbs ran his index finger across Tony’s jawline. “I think it would be very hot. If you want to. Maybe now that the op is over, you can think about what we talked about. No pressure.”

“I did some thinking about it. There were a lot of boring moments on this op. And the only things I had in the room were the bed, a fridge and McProbious.”

“I’m glad he was there. He’s the one who knew you were missing and called it in.”

“He did?”

“Yeah. They told him you had quit and walked away. The first chance he had, he wandered away during a gig and called me.”

“I guess I owe him one.”

As he stood up, Gibbs rubbed Tony’s shoulder before grabbing the empty dishes and taking them back to the kitchen. “So with all your thinking, did you decide anything? Am I sleeping in the bed or on the couch tonight?”

“We have shared a bed before, Boss. Twice.”

“Jethro. Boss is too formal for people who share a bed. At least when they’re not at the office or on the job.”
“I’d be interested in a little bi-curious exploration.”

“Exploration? Am I going to plant my flag or something?”

Tony broke out in laughter. “Sometimes you do have a way with words.”

“I was hoping for something a little more serious. A little more permanent. I know you tend to date around, but I want to come home to the same person; the person I care about.”

Tony’s expression changed, and his voice softened. “I care for you, deeply. I guess I always have. I just don’t want us to make a mistake. It almost feels like I’m jumping into shark infested waters.”

Gibbs laughed. “No, that would be if you were dating one of my exes. Ask Fornell. He’ll tell you.”

“How can you be so confident that we can make this work?”

Cupping Tony’s chin, Gibbs looked deeply into his eyes. “My gut.”

Tony watched as Gibbs walked away. He sat alone at the table as he listened to Gibbs turn on the television; another western classic by the sound of it. With a heavy sigh, Tony stood up and joined Gibbs on the couch.

Lying down, he placed his head into Gibbs’ lap. “I like it when you stroke my hair.”

With a smile on his face, Gibbs moved his hand so he could run his fingers through Tony’s spiky hair.

“Do you like the frosted tips?” Tony asked.

“Not really. You look like you belong in a middle aged boy band.”

Tony laughed aloud. “I can get it dyed back to my normal color tomorrow.”

“I suggest you do it before you come into the office. Abby and Ziva will insist on photographic evidence, and they’re not likely to ever let this go.”

“You’re probably right. So how will this work with the team? What about your rule about not dating someone from work?”

“It’s there for a reason. It doesn’t always work out.”

“I don’t want to screw up the friendship that we have,” Tony said as he shifted on the couch.

“You won’t. And maybe we can skip the dating part and just jump into the serious relationship part.”

“Loophole?”

“A little one.”

“And we’ll keep it a secret from the team?”

“There are people at NCIS who are already convinced that we’re dating.”

“Really? That’s interesting.”

“I talked to Ducky about us. He said it was obvious to him that we’ve been in love for years. He said he was surprised that it took us this long to figure it out.”
“I must confess, I do love you, Jethro. It’ll be interesting next time my dad comes in town and he finds out that we really are together.”

“We can keep it a secret from him if you want.”

“No way! After all the crap that he’s put me through? I’m not hiding anything. In fact, I think it would be funny as hell to tell him we were married, and that you’re going to start calling him dad.”

“That’ll be the day.”

A couple hours later, Gibbs tapped Tony’s shoulder. “How are you feeling?”

“Good. Warm, safe and comfortable.”

“Ready for bed?”

Tony nodded and placed his hand into Gibbs’. “Sure.”

When they entered the bedroom, Tony began humming his own stripper music and began dancing around the bedroom as he shed his clothing.

With his back to Gibbs and his hands on a chair, he began grinding his ass. Gibbs came over and wrapped his arms around Tony from behind. One hand held him securely below his bellybutton, while his other hand rubbed over Tony’s nipples.

Tony groaned, and Gibbs nibbled at his earlobe. His hand reached lower and stroked Tony’s cock, while his own pressed firmly against Tony’s ass.

“I’m not even going to last until we get into bed,” said Gibbs.

“So the nipple things are a turn on?”

Gibbs spun Tony around and placed his hands on each of Tony’s nipples, toying with them until they puckered. “You are a total turn on. Let’s go to bed before we start something we can’t stop.”

Tony took Gibbs’ hand and led him to the bed. As he settled on his back, staring up, he watched as Gibbs undressed. “I want you.”

Gibbs smiled and folded his clothing neatly, then set everything onto the chair before climbing into the bed. Bending slowly, he licked across one of Tony’s nipples, and toyed with the gold hoops, flicking them with his tongue.

“Let me know if it hurts,” he whispered.

Tony moaned and arched his back. “It feels amazing.”

Gibbs continued his tongue-assault on Tony’s nipples, teasing them and nipping carefully at the hoops, while he reached down and pumped Tony’s cock. Pushing back, he took a deep breath. “I’m glad they didn’t pierce this,” he said as he gave Tony’s cock a firm squeeze.

“That would hurt. I don’t even want to think about it.”

Gibbs nodded then licked a trail down the center of Tony’s chest, his hands grasping hips. Continuing downward, he licked and nipped at Tony’s thighs, then took the cock into his mouth. Hollowing his
cheeks, he closed his eyes and concentrated on sucking.

Tossing his head from side to side, Tony moaned as he clutched at the sheets. “That feels awesome.”

Pulling back, Gibbs looked up at Tony as he began pumping his penis with his hand.

Tony moaned again and arched his back as he climaxed. Gibbs finally released Tony’s cock. He made a quick trip to the bathroom to retrieve a towel, then returned to bed to clean up his lover. As he wiped Tony’s cock and stomach, Gibbs kissed him deeply, exploring Tony’s mouth with his tongue.

“That was the best,” Tony gasped, his body still tingling from his orgasm.

“We’re going to make this work,” whispered Gibbs.

“Yeah, we are,” Tony agreed. “Give me a couple minutes, and I’ll take care of you.”

Gibbs hugged Tony close, and kissed him deeply again, then pressed their foreheads together. “You need some sleep. You can reciprocate tomorrow, if you want to.”

“I want to. I’m going to give you a lap dance you won’t soon forget.”

After another kiss to Tony’s temple, Gibbs settled onto his back, one arm around Tony’s shoulders. “Sweet dreams.”

“Love you, Jethro.”

And with that, Tony closed his eyes and was soon asleep. Gibbs held him close, snuggling together as they slept peacefully. This time the dreams that came to Tony were focused and Gibbs dancing him across the room to the bed they now shared, hugging him close and making love to him while moonlight streamed in through the window. As he slept, he awaited the morning, when he could make his dreams come true.

The End!

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