

Saying Goodbye

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Fandom: NCIS

Spoiler: 5x18/5x19 - Judgment Day

Rating: P14 / T

Contents: Something like an Episode Tag or Missing Scene to "Judgment Day", a conversation between Ziva and Tony, and the last goodbye of Jen and Gibbs. You will notice that I've changed the NCIS storyline a bit. 5x09 "Lost and Found" is differently in -my- world as is everything following except for Jen's tragic fate.

Disclaimer: I don't own anything. Just needed to write this down 'cause Jens death made me cry and it still does. If anything of this was mine, Jen would be still alive.

A/N: I know that there might be some OOC, but this time I don't really care because I think there had been so little of the grieving team (especially Gibbs), too little to my mind.

There is a vid on Youtube with the same title as the story. My user's name is CKLizzy.

A huge THANK YOU to vamp926 for her help, without her Beta skills the story wouldn't be here! :)

[[My song for this story: Sarah McLachlan - Touch]]

He didn't know how he'd come here, but now that he was here, he knew why. When his car stopped, Tony DiNozzo found himself in front of the walls of the cemetery; the one where they'd given Jenny Shepard her last honor a day ago.

Ever since the burial of his grandma he'd hated these quiet and bleak places. He almost smelled the death and, moreover, he felt it. But now, he knew he had to step into this much hated place. This at least he owed Jenny. Even if the rest of the team had told him that it wasn't his fault, he knew that he'd made a mistake, leaving her alone was something Gibbs would never have done. Gibbs would never have blown his protection detail; he would have followed her, against every possible protest.

But for Tony, the day off in Los Angeles was like a great gift and he hadn't even thought about the fact they hadn't sent him and Ziva for fun to L.A.; that the director didn't need her bodyguards as a symbol of status, but of course for her safety.

He couldn't understand why he hadn't listened to Ziva. He had made so many mistakes in his life, but never one that had to be paid with someone's life. With a deep breath, he took his way up to the gate of the cemetery – only to stop in front of it when he heard a familiar voice quietly call for him. When he turned around, he saw her standing just a few feet away from him.

"Ziva, what you're doing here on this grey Wednesday?" he asked, failing to put on his 'The cool DiNozzo'-mode.

"Don't go to her grave," she just answered, ignoring his words. Slowly she walked towards him.

"And why wouldn't I do that, only because you tell me so?" he shot back. He wanted her to go. He wanted to be alone, to tell Jenny how sorry he was; to talk to her one last time, even if she wouldn't answer him anymore.

"No," she simply replied and then carefully pushed him towards the gate. From their position they had a clear view of the place where Director Shepard was buried. They saw a sea of flowers. And they saw one man standing there, wearing a long black coat and holding a single deep red rose in his hands.

"Gibbs," Tony whispered and immediately understood why Ziva had held him back. He inhaled deeply. "I don't understand how he can bear it to lose another loved one, when even I cried myself to sleep last night," he then continued, barely audible, as if he didn't want Ziva to hear it, although he knew that she wouldn't miss it.

David didn't answer at first, she just watched how Gibbs bended over and placed the rose on the gravestone. With his fingertips he slightly touched the engraved letters of Jen's name on the stone.

"I came here to say good bye to her. Alone. That was three hours ago," Ziva told Tony with a low voice. It took the other agent a few moments to catch the meaning of her words.

"He loves her so much." It was such a simple statement, but even Ziva had to swallow hard to keep the tears in her eyes from falling. She knew he was right.

"As did she," Ziva replied and leaned against the outer wall of the graveyard. Then she pulled Tony a few steps back to make sure Gibbs wouldn't see them, though she doubted that they could hide from him. Maybe he had already become aware of them.

"And obviously they never took the time to tell each other. Now they'll never have the chance again. That's cruel, really cruel." In Tony's voice Ziva noticed real compassion, and maybe his own pain, remembering Jeanne.

"They were closer than you would guess." Ziva didn't know if it was right telling Tony, but on the other hand she thought in some way he had a right to know.

"And you would know that because...?"

"Because the Director told me," Ziva explained, her gaze still holding the picture of Gibbs kneeling in front of Jenny's grave.

"What?" Tony asked, irritated.

"She and Gibbs decided to fix what they'd done wrong in Paris nine years ago. You remember the little boy, Carson?"

"Sure," Tony nodded.

"You know, the Director took Carson home with her because she didn't want to give him to social service. Gibbs visited them at her house. There they... spoke out." She paused. "No, I mean they... you know, they spoke about Paris and what happened at that time. And they decided to give it another chance. Since then they'd tried to build up their relationship anew."

"When did she?" Tony wondered and looked at Ziva questioningly.

"Tell me?" she completed his question before answering, "On the flight to L.A., when you were sleeping, we had some time to talk, she told me nearly everything. I didn't understand it at first, but when she mentioned that she was deadly ill, I thought she maybe just needed someone she could tell this. Only to, talk about it, you know, she didn't have anyone to talk to."

"She had Gibbs," Tony contradicted her. He watched his boss for a moment, then continued, "Why did you tell that to me, Ziva? Isn't it something Jenny entrusted to you because you're her friend?"

"She did. But now it wouldn't make any difference. I want you to understand that she knew she would die soon and that she was happy in these few last weeks. There's nothing to blame yourself for, Tony. It was Jenny's decision and only hers."

"Did he know?"

"There was so little time left and she wanted them both to be happy and not to care about her unavoidable death, especially Gibbs."

"But she accepted that he would suffer. She should have told him so he would've been prepared!" he grumbled, although he still did it with a low voice. After a few seconds he added silently, "If you could be prepared for the death of the woman you love."

Ziva could clearly hear the tears in his voice and laid her hand on his arm while fighting with her own tears.

"It is hard for him, but he'll learn to live with it," Ziva explained with a tone of voice sounding for Tony like she was shockingly sure of her words.

"Sometimes you're really heartless, Ziva," he countered, getting angry, although he was not sure if it was for her or for himself.

"No, it's only that life taught me that the end can come faster than you'll be able to realize. It hurts me to see him this way, I'm not that cold, Tony, even if you think otherwise. It is the second time he lost a real love of his life and I can only imagine how he feels right now."

"It is the third time. You forgot Kate."

"He mourned over her death, but not like that. He didn't love Kate that way."

"How would you know?" DiNozzo barked and walked a few steps away from his partner, and then he continued, "You weren't even here then, you didn't see him right after her death. You never saw him when she was still alive."

"No, I didn't. But I saw his craving for revenge, how he had wanted to see Ari dead. As far as Kate and her death were concerned he found his peace through Ari's death. Kate was a friend and colleague and he hated the fact that he'd lost her. She had been a team member and had died playing Ari's little power game. The liquidation of the Russian woman a few days ago was only partly revenge, but more completing Jenny's mission, giving her death some kind of sense. He's a broken man fighting to stay strong in front of his team and friends."

Even though he didn't want to have admitted it to Ziva, deep in his heart Tony knew Ziva was right. He had no idea how she could know all this but she was right and the truth hurt so much.

"Look at him now, Tony," she added, her voice thick with tears, and nodded in Gibbs' direction, "he is crying, weeping, and a picture of misery. Now that he is alone he had given up his battle against his grief and the tears."

Ziva was good at guessing, but she had no idea how right she really was. Gibbs felt exactly how she had described it. He hadn't felt this miserable since the death of Shannon and Kelly. Now he realized how much he had loved Jen, more than he could've ever told her.

He didn't exactly know why he'd come here because he had known before that he would cry as soon as everything was over, as soon as the case was closed. Just like he knew that everyone would be at the cemetery and would see him crying.

Every fiber of his body hurt. He was kneeling on the cold, damp earth, his trousers soaking from the wetness. He was shaking slightly and he was not sure if it came from the crying or from the dankness. It had rained all night, causing a sinking of the temperature so now it was nearly eight degrees colder than the day before. It was chilly and the damp cold ate through to his bones.

But he didn't care at all for the cold. Since he had called Jen and had the phone answered by Tony telling him what had happened he'd felt a numbness he wasn't able to break through. It was like being packed up in absorbent cotton yet it was no pleasant feeling.

The last few weeks had given him the chance to live again. He hadn't felt so alive, so happy for years. He had never stopped loving Jen and even though he had tried to deny it when they met again three years ago, even though he had been with Hollis whom he had loved, too, his feelings for Jen had never changed. He silently thanked her that she had held him back from leaving her house the evening he had visited her and Carson. Now he wished he had thanked her for that earlier; thanked her for holding him back making a mistake as he should have done it all these years ago when she'd had been about to leave him.

How he wished he could talk to her just one more time. Take her into his arms and tell her one more time that he loved her. His heart broke the second time in his life knowing that she, like Shannon and Kelly, would not come back. He had seen so many people die and a lot more dead, but when it came to the ones he cared for he wasn't able to understand the concept of death, of someone leaving forever, never coming back, never again being there to talk to or to laugh with.

Gibbs understood why she hadn't told him about her disease, because if it had been him being ill, he too wouldn't have said anything; just to avoid the burden and instead enjoy the time left. Jen had wanted them to be happy in these last few weeks and she had been successful with this plan. How he wished he could take this short time and put it into a box.

He remembered the long conversation they had the night when he had visited Carson at her house. He remembered how they gave in to the longing they both had felt since they'd met again. He remembered how it had been, waking up next to her, holding her, feeling her soft skin, her smile the first ray of sunlight he saw even before the curtains were opened.

He had gotten used to the little teasing, their conversations and discussions and the secret glances they had shot each other when they had been sure no one was watching. These glances full of love and longing, or just of the happiness of having each other. New tears began to swell up in his eyes and he didn't even try to fight them back.

They had every right to come out.

"He's kneeling there like a statue, like there is a movie playing in his head, his own private movie of memories," Tony mused, his voice so low that this time, Ziva nearly missed it.

"There're a lot of memories to play in his head. He had known Jenny for so long," Ziva replied before getting lost in her own thoughts.

A few moments later Tony added, "You think he blames himself?"

"I don't know, Tony. Maybe he does. He wasn't there when she died; he wasn't there to save her from being killed. He will never forgive himself for that. You'll never hear him say so, but he will blame himself for this one," she answered thoughtfully. Her friend and partner remained silent. A few seconds later she carefully slipped her hand in Tony's.

"Come," she said quietly and pulled him with her, walking back to his car. She had come here by foot and she was glad she did so because now she could drive Tony home.

"It will go on like this, won't it?" Tony asked, glancing back in the gate's direction, and then he looked at Ziva.

"What?"

"The dying, the loss of your team members, your friends, and the people you care about. First Kate, then Paula, now Jenny, it will never stop."

"How could it, Tony? It's what our job is about, the danger, the loss. It's what we have to accept, whether we're able to or not."

"A part of me had hated her for what had happened. This whole story with Jeanne, how it had ended. But, I had also loved her like a second mother." He went silent for a moment, leaning against his car, watching a few birds flying around an old oak tree. "I never told her. That I was happy having her around, have her as the big boss. She had been the one who would have covered up for every single one of us if possible."

"I'm sure she knew, Tony. She was a very smart woman and she cared about us as much as we cared about her," Ziva assured him, stepping in front of him and forcing him to look into her eyes. "She knew what she did when she sacrificed herself. Stop blaming yourself." She watched him intensely and didn't miss how he tried to avoid her gaze because he knew she was right, that she had read his thoughts, again.

"Why do we wait telling people we care about and maybe love how we feel? Why does it have to be always the same," Tony began, until he reached the moment of his personal breakdown. Ziva had seen it coming and pulled him into a deep and caring hug. While Tony cried he held Ziva close to him as if he never wanted to let her go again, and she too, finally let her tears flow.

He, too, was sobbing hard. Gibbs wanted to smash something, to throw something around, but he hadn't even enough energy to get up, to stand on his feet. He still couldn't believe what had happened. He wanted to wake up from this nightmare.

He released a little cry, breaking the silence around him, trying to find some relieve, to let out some of this pain that had built up inside him and now nearly broke him. It was then that he heard something which made him think he'd gone crazy.

"It is okay, Jethro," her gentle voice, so well-known to him, soothed him. When he looked up, she was standing beside him, a loving smile on her face. She was only a lucent picture of his Jenny, a warm and comforting breeze in the cold air and yet she seemed so real. "Stop crying, Jethro; you know I had always loved see you laugh," she added and offered him a hand which he took. Somewhere in the back of his head he knew there was nothing to take, but he didn't care. He let himself help to stand up. With a sad and painful expression he faced her.

"As I loved seeing you laugh, as I loved laughing with you. I miss you, Jen," he finally responded.

"There is no need to miss me. I will always be with you, living in your memory. I won't forget you and I will always love you. You know that, don't you?"

He slowly nodded, resisting the urge to pull her in a tight embrace because he feared that he then had to accept that she was only an imagination.

"I love you, Jen," he said instead, soaking in every detail of her picture. It was how he wanted to keep her in mind.

"Goodbye, Jethro," she told him and gave him a soft kiss on his cheek, warming the very core of his heart, giving him the strength to give her one last smile.

"Goodbye, Jen."

And with the smile still on her lips, her vision faded.

"You'll always be in my heart," Gibbs whispered when she was gone. With a single tear in his eye he turned and left.

~ Fin ~