

We never Close

Season Three Reloaded

Von VampiresLady

Kapitel 5: Troubleshooting Part V

Monroe and his men had towed McMiller's car into a nearby police garage to protect the evidence from further outer influence.

The patrol officers retreated as Eric stepped up to the metallic silver BMW and put on a new pair of gloves to begin his new task. Carefully he extracted two sets of fingerprints and various partial prints from the steering wheel. Most likely the complete sets belonged to Mr. McMiller and his wife. He also found five different hairs on the front- and back-seats. One hair was black so he assumed it was Viviane's hair. Another had the same golden color like Julie's head. The glove box contained nothing unusual. A lot of city maps, an abandoned pack of cigarettes and three compact discs.

The car was pretty clean. *Too clean for a family car*, he thought skeptically.

Although toddlers and small children made a greater mess than teenagers, two 16-year-old-girls would have left more traces in their parent's car than this.

Eric got out again and asked one of the officers to help me open the trunk.

Ten bags with the weight of one pound each had already been confiscated and had been taken to the lab in a box. Sure enough, Ryan would take the samples of fingerprints, so Eric had no point in bothering about them, so he turned his attention toward the trunk.

The trunk's floor was carpeted with a dark green rug that showed white powder residue at the brim. He ignited the flashlight and bowed down to take a closer look.

He'd suspected the penetrating smell of motoroil or anything, maybe the high-dosed cocaine, but it didn't have the same nuances. He firmly grabbed a knife from the toolbox and began to slice the carpet.

He coughed as the white substance dispersed like dust.

Jumping back, he snorted to keep the powder from entering his airways and blood.

"You're okay?" a policeman asked in surprise and hurried to his side. Waving with one hand, Eric shook his head "I'm alright! I'm alright!"

He rushed to blow his nose and wash away the white dust that threatened to enter his bloodstream.

"More cocaine?" Eric asked himself, dedicating himself back to the task and extracting a small amount of the white powder into a bag.

But - in case it was cocaine under the carpet - why should McMiller hide it like this, when ten heavy bags of pure cocaine lay less secretly in the trunk?

"McMiller's hiding something we didn't consider before," he muttered.

He ducked out of the trunk and closed it.

"All clear, guys, I'm finished!"

Eric knelt down beside his toolbox and started packing the evidence into a paper bag, when - suddenly - another penetrating smell struck him. He wrinkled his nose and tried to figure out what it was and why he hadn't smelled it earlier.

Slightly turning his head toward the car again he caught sight of something that look like water dripping from the underside of the BMW.

He crouched beside the left tire on the backside and ducked down underneath the car's underside. The smell became even stronger.

"Gas", he muttered and reached for his flashlight.

The gasoline dripped out of a damaged conduit right beside the fuel tank.

He got back to his feet and turned to the patrol officer. "Haven't you guys noticed the tank is leaking?"

The policeman shook his head with an expression on his face as if he done something terribly wrong.

"Alright then, let's get the car on a lifting ramp to have a closer look at it!"

Half an hour later, Eric and two other officers trailed the leakage of the conduit and experienced that people always found the most abnormal places to hide their secrets. All upper valves of the tank had been sealed with some sort of superglue and Eric figured that it might be easier to approach the problem from a different angle. Only a few minutes later a young technician helped them cutting a hole into the half-filled fuel tank...

And when they finally broke through several liters of gasoline came washing out – as well as an automatic 9mm handgun.

"Well, that's interesting!" Eric said and picked up the gun, "Calleigh's going to like this one!"

Calleigh propped her chin up on her left hand while she was skimming through McMiller's records. His career was pretty ordinary, but something was giving her the creeps as she read the lines in the database.

Then she caught a name that rang a familiar bell. "What are you doing here?" she asked aloud and full of interest.

Waiting for the printouts she saw a patrol officer coming into the room. He handed over a gun. "Delko found this in McMiller's car. Could be the murder weapon," he told her. Calleigh grinned back and nodded.

"Well then I will have a look at this, I'm done here anyway."

Suddenly the whole case appeared in a different light. None of them had thought the father was involved in such dark business, but obviously that was just the tip of the iceberg.

Eric headed into the lab and took out the bag with the white powdery residue from under the trunk's carpet and placed it under the microscope.

It proved that powder was obviously no cocaine.

Extracting a small amount of the powder, he mixed it with distilled water and several chemical indicators – he couldn't trust his eyes when the mixture in the test tube turned slightly pink. Nevertheless, his eyes widened even more when he read the final results.

Rushing out of the lab in a slow run, Eric began searching for Horatio. It looked like they got more than a suspect when Monroe brought Jeffrey McMiller there.

Eric crossed Ryan's path as he hurried through another glass door and looked around for Horatio. "Hey, boy!" he greeted him, "Have you seen H? Couldn't find him in the interrogation room!"

"No, haven't seen him since I collected the samples. But I'm also looking for him. Maybe he is in his office?"

Ryan raised an eyebrow at Eric and made his way towards H's office. Eric followed and hurried up the staircase right behind him.

"And why are you searching him? Any interesting news?" Eric asked and tried to be kind.

"You could say that! One thing is that McMiller's fingerprints were all over the cocaine, no surprise there. But what really surprised me, was this..." Ryan handed him a piece of paper, so he could see the results written on it. "His DNA was on the one bullet Viviane shot."

"What places him at the crime scene when the two girls got shot and makes him their murderer!" Eric said thoughtfully, "Now I see why the kids said he was creepy."

He stopped and watched Ryan heading further toward H's office.

"Hey... Ryan", he said, waiting for his colleague to stop as well.

With some confusion Ryan turned around and looked at him questioningly. "Yes?"

Eric combed his hair back, narrowed his eyes and slowly stepped up to him again.

"Well, I just wanted to say...", he began slowly, a nervous smile on his lips.

Just do it! he told himself.

He inhaled the air slowly looked up and straight into his eyes.

"Good Job."

Ryan stared at him in surprise, before he smiled slightly and nodded. "Thank you..."

To say that he was shocked would also have been a total understatement. He'd never thought he would see the day when Eric Delko actually told him he did something right...

But it felt damn good.

"Well.. then let's see H," Ryan smiled back at him.

"Right you are!" Eric agreed and began walking by his side.

An odd sensation tickled in the pit of Eric's stomach. It was a strange feeling and he didn't know what it meant, but he was somehow relieved he'd told Ryan what he'd thought.

Horatio was sitting in his office going through everything again, when Calleigh came rushing in, a huge grin plastered on her face.

"Good news?" he asked her and he couldn't stop the hopeful undertone that had crept itself into his voice.

"You bet," she told him still smiling broadly. "Eric found a gun in the fuel tank of McMiller's car and I compared the bullet with the ones we pulled out of Viviane's and Julie's bodies. It was a match, so, we found our murder weapon. McMiller himself has no criminal track record, but I found several files that struck me concerning 'Advansa', the company he works for."

"What about it?"

"Three years ago the company was involved in an other cocaine scandal. One of the tradesmen has been accused of drug smuggling and dealing. I looked a little further and *bang!* that guy turned out to be McMiller's instructor."

"So, that's how he has gotten attached to the drug dealing business," Horatio

guessed.

There was a soft knock on the door and Horatio knew – by experience as well as by intuition – that it could only be Eric or Ryan.

Or probably both.

Eric let Ryan enter first for he was the one with the big news, then walked in himself. "Hey", he said casually, "Seems like we're making progress! Ryan, you wanna go first?" Ryan nodded slightly and smiled at him. "Sure, thanks." Ryan hurried to hand his result over to Horatio. "We found only McMiller's fingerprints on the cocaine, so everything he said about being set up is utter nonsense. But the interesting part is that it was his DNA on the bullet."

Eric laid his own printouts on Horatio's desk and waited until he'd finished reading Ryan's results with a satisfied smile. "And – on top of that – I found another white powder underneath the trunk's carpet. I tested it for drugs... well, it wasn't what I'd thought it might be, but finally everything fits together."

Eric pointed at the readouts of the chemical substance.

"Looks like I found our missing pharmaceuticals. It's the same stuff Julie's been medicated with to cure her leukemia. McMiller must have grinded it with a pestle and hid it under the carpet."

Eric casted a look at Ryan, but turned back to Horatio abruptly as Ryan felt his glance weighting on him.

Horatio nodded at them, satisfaction now written all over his face. "That will be good enough for the jury!" he stood up and smiled. "Looks like we finally got him. Good job, everyone."

"Well, we finally saved the day, didn't we?" Eric asked Ryan with a broad smile curling his lips.

Horatio had left the three of them alone in his office, because he was not interested in wasting time to book Jeffrey McMiller. None of them tried to hinder him.

Calleigh watched Ryan and Eric ever since they had entered the room and she had to admit she was confused. When exactly had they gotten so friendly with each other? And the glances they were shooting at each other weren't any less confusing.

"Of course we did, ever thought we wouldn't?" Calleigh answered Eric's comment laughing. "Maybe we should go out for a drink."

Eric nodded slightly.

"Sure, why not?" Ryan agreed. Even if he was still confused about what had just happened, he had never been invited out for a drink by any of his coworkers, so he was not going to question the offer.

"It's decided, then," Eric said and looked at Ryan and Calleigh one after another, "Haven't been out for a while anyway!" Eric collected the results and piled them besides the keyboard of the PC - they would have enough time to work those out the next day. "So, shall we invite H as well? He didn't join us for quite some time, don't you think?" he asked Calleigh.

"Yes, that's right. Alexx too?"

"Sure... if her husband's willing to look after the kids!" Eric grinned.

"I'm sure he'll love too. Then let's do it like this... I'm going to ask Alexx, you H, right?" Eric nodded and watched Calleigh leave with a happy smile on her face. He turned to the door and opened it in order to follow her down, when he saw Ryan standing there motionless. "Ryan? You coming?" he asked and his voice sounded far more concerned than he had intended it to be.

Ryan blinked slightly. He had been deep in thoughts while the two of them were talking. He'd heard the concern in his voice, but dismissed it as an imagination. "Sure," he told Eric, smiled slightly and followed him out of H's office.

Horatio threw the files on the table and a dark expression spread across the lines of his face as he sat down.

"We know, Jeff! We know, you killed Viviane and Julie and we got enough evidence to book you for a lifetime!"

McMiller opened his mouth in order to protest, but Horatio cut him off.

"I just wanna know one thing: Why? They were two innocent girls, both living on the edge of death, so *why* did you shoot them?"

"Innocent? *Innocent?*" McMiller snapped enraged. "That bitch Viviane tried to blackmail me! How dare she! Just because she found some cocaine in my backpack while looking for money she thought, she could do it! I am no man you should mess with and so I gave that bitch what she deserved! And Julie, she was useless anyway. All my wife did was mothering her. It's no loss they are dead!"

Horatio sucked in the air sharply and held his breath for a moment to calm down. The vehemence and fierceness of McMiller's response shocked him, but within seconds that shock evolved itself into frustration and anger.

"No loss, hm?" he said with a sardonic smile and tried hard to keep his self-control "Than it wouldn't be a loss either, if I'll have you and your greed locked up in a nice and cozy 6-to-4 meter cell, would it?"

McMiller frowned at his words.

"They shouldn't have interfered with my business!"

Horatio glared at him. "All Viviane wanted was a last chance to spare her sister's life as well as her own. But you didn't give her the money to buy them."

McMiller snorted. "What makes you think so, lieutenant?"

"Greed can be a powerful, but also a insidious and deceitful ally, my friend. You tasted blood when you started working for 'Advansa' and you took over the drug dealing for you former instructor. But the money you earned from that business was not meant to be spend on your wife and children, was it?. Greed ist what made you kill Viviane and Julie and greed is what will put you in jail. But you will have the rest of your life to think about what you have done..."

Horatio stood, but he didn't turn his eyes from McMiller's face.

"You would have killed them, one way or the other and you knew it. You knew it!"

McMiller stared at Horatio and the lieutenant could see into the very heart of McMiller's depraved soul.

"Take him away!" he said and Monroe firmly grabbed McMiller's arm.

The tradesman put up a fierce resistance, but he knew he was doomed.

As two additional officers entered the interrogation room to get a hold on the shrieking man, Horatio turned away from the scenery and slam the door shut behind him. He just couldn't stand the sight of McMiller any longer.

Alexx was mildly surprised as Calleigh came into her office and invited her out on a drink with the boys. As much as she liked to return home to her husband and children, she did just couldn't refuse the offer.

She took her blazer off the wardrobe. "So, anything more I should know?" Alexx asked Calleigh who had told her the outcome of the McMiller case. "Well... Maybe" she teased her as they made their way to the elevator where they waited for Eric, Ryan

and Horatio. "But I'm sure you'll figure it out yourself."

Alexx raised an eyebrow in sudden suspicion. "Really? Why don't you tell me? You know, there's no point in hiding something from Mommy!"

"I know. But a mommy knows her boys, doesn't she, Alexx?" Calleigh said grinning. She just loved those little banter with her old friend.

Alexx smiled broadly back at her. "Sure she does. What a mommy would she be, if she didn't? Besides, where are they?" she let out a long and deep sigh and shook her head in resignation. "Always too late!"

"They are boys!" Calleigh laughed. "It's normal for them to be late, isn't it? Well... for most of them at least."

"Eight you are. Well, we both have our little unpleasant experiences with boys trying to be accurate, don't we, darling?"

They walked in silence and it appeared to Eric it was the best not to talk for a while to erase this strange feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Passing by the interrogation room, they found H standing at the window watching the first traces of dusk. He didn't seem to happy and all of them could perfectly understand his emotions, sometimes more than they desired to.

Eric stopped dead in a polite distance and pulled up one arm to hinder Ryan from proceeding too.

"H?" he asked quietly.

When he heard Eric's voice, Horatio stopped his musings and turned around, his head cocked to one side. "What can I do for you two?"

"Ehm...", Eric started, "It's just... we wanted to ask you, if you like to have a drink with us? Alexx and Calleigh are waiting for us at the elevator. But we understand, if you don't feel like it, honestly..."

Horatio's gaze shifted to Ryan – who hurried to nod in agreement – before he looked at the floor for a moment.

"I think a few drinks wouldn't be bad," Horatio finally told them and looked up again, fiddling with his sunglasses once more. "Well then... let's not make the ladies wait any longer"

The end of 'Troubleshooting'...

Stay tuned for the next episode!