

= Pulling Strings ( White Collar ) =

" Pulling Strings " is the 14th episode of the third season of the American comedy @-@ drama television series White Collar , and the 44th episode overall . It was first broadcast on USA Network in the United States on February 7 , 2012 . The episode was directed by Anton Cropper and written by Channing Powell .

In the episode , Peter Burke ( Tim DeKay ) assigns Neal Caffrey ( Matt Bomer ) to work with his former girlfriend , Sara Ellis ( Hilarie Burton ) , to track down a missing Stradivarius violin . Meanwhile , Peter must deal with the arrival of Elizabeth 's ( Tiffani Thiessen ) parents ( Tom Skerritt and Debra Monk ) , who are in New York for their daughter 's birthday .

According to the Nielsen ratings system , an estimated 2 @.@ 469 million household viewers watched the original broadcast of the episode , with 0 @.@ 8 million in the 18 ? 49 demographic . " Pulling Strings " received mostly mixed to positive reviews from critics , with many praising individual elements of the episode .

= = Plot = =

After taking vacation from work to be with his wife ? and her parents ? on her birthday , Peter turns Neal over to Sara in order to retrieve a missing Stradivarius that she believes was stolen by her former fiancé and current boss , Bryan McKenzie ( Bailey Chase ) . Before beginning work on the case , Neal is approached by Agent Kramer ( Beau Bridges ) , who is in New York to look into Neal ? s upcoming commutation hearing . Searching McKenzie ? s apartment , Neal discovers a hidden security tape . Meanwhile , Sara convinces him to attend the symphony with her . With help from June ( Diahann Carroll ) , Neal and Diana Berrigan ( Marsha Thomason ) are able to go to the symphony as well . While they quickly discover that the second @-@ chair violinist is the woman on the security video , McKenzie realizes that Neal is not exactly who he claims to be . While searching backstage , Neal and Diana find a body ; they quickly recognize him as the symphony ? s instrument expert . Upon questioning the violinist from the security tape , Diana discovers that she had damaged the violin and had given it to the instrument expert for repairs . Sara approaches McKenzie with the information she has , pretending to want to join him . Diana and Neal soon arrive to arrest McKenzie , and Sara tells Neal to ? call [ her ] sometime . ?

Meanwhile , Peter suffers through the arrival of his in @-@ laws . Everything goes wrong at Elizabeth ? s birthday : her parents give her a much @-@ despised doll from her childhood , Peter ? s gift to Elizabeth does not turn out the way he had planned , and Elizabeth ? s father continues to disapprove of Peter . Peter eventually calls upon Mozzie ( Willie Garson ) for assistance , and together they right all of the wrongs .

Agent Kramer returns to the FBI to speak with Diana , who has recently announced her engagement to Christie . Kramer intimidates Diana , learning that she , Peter , and Jones ( Sharif Atkins ) have been covering up Neal ? s recent crimes .

= = Production = =

On June 20 , 2011 , it was announced that Beau Bridges had been cast as Peter 's mentor ; his first appearance was in " Countdown " , and he returned for " Pulling Strings " . The next month , the casting of Tom Skerritt was announced ; he was reported to play Alan Mitchell , the father of Elizabeth Burke . Bailey Chase 's casting as Bryan McKenzie , a Sterling @-@ Bosch vice president , was announced simultaneously . Debra Monk 's appearance in the series was confirmed simultaneously with the announcement of the fourth season renewal ; while it was not stated which episode she would appear in , it was revealed that she would appear in one of the season 's last six episodes . With this announcement also came news that Diahann Carroll would return to the series in her recurring role as June . " Pulling Strings " was directed by Anton Cropper , his first directing credit for the series . The episode was written by Channing Powell ; it was his fifth writing contribution . Powell has stated that Peter 's reduced role in the episode was due to actor Tim

DeKay 's preparation for directing the next episode .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

Upon its premiere , " Pulling Strings " drew 2 @.@ 469 million viewers , which , at the time , was the lowest of the series . The episode drew 0 @.@ 8 million viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic , which was down 0 @.@ 3 and 0 @.@ 2 million from the previous two episodes , " Upper West Side Story " and " Neighborhood Watch " , respectively . The episode ranked 28th in the 18 ? 49 demographic for the night , down seventeen places from the previous week .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Pulling Strings " received mostly mixed to positive reviews , with many critics praising Tom Skerritt 's performance , but with many criticizing the use of Hilarie Burton 's character . Kenny Herzog of The A.V. Club gave the episode a B + rating , praising Channing Powell 's writing in a mostly standalone episode . While he complimented Bomer and Garson 's rapport and Garson 's scenes at the Burke home , he stated that Burton 's character " continues to feel just off . " He went on to say that the episode is " once again an example of ... just how good they 've gotten at making White Collar tick . " Hilary Rothing of CraveOnline wrote that she enjoyed the performances of Bridges and Skerritt and that the Burkes ' storyline was " fun " but " still schmaltsy . " She also praised the episode 's use of Burton 's character . Rothing later complimented both the episodic case and Bridges 's story arc ; she ultimately gave the episode a rating of 8 @.@ 5 out of 10 . C. Charles of TV Fanatic called the episode " intriguing " and praised many aspects of " Pulling Strings " , including Bridges and Burton 's reintroductions and the use of Elizabeth 's parents ; Charles rated the episode 4 @.@ 8 out of 5 . Reviewer Gregg Wright gave the episode an 8 out of 10 , elaborating that while the episode " could have easily been an average or sub @-@ par procedural , " it became above @-@ average when all of the elements were combined . He also complimented Carroll 's appearance and Bridges 's performance as a strong antagonist .

Brittany Frederick of Starpulse.com gave the episode a more mediocre review , calling it " lackluster " and mentioning that she has " never felt Hilarie Burton 's chemistry with Matt Bomer . " She did , however , praise the heightened roles of Thomason and Atkins and the introduction of Elizabeth 's parents .