

Title: Inevitable

Author: Frumpy

Rating: T

Spoilers: None really, except if you haven't seen ND yet.

Disclaimer: Last I checked, I still didn't own CSI. Damn.

A/N: Thanks for the reviews. And OMG, the talk, she's here! I hope this isn't too fluffy...

Chapter 11:

Grissom drove up to Sara's apartment and parked his car carefully next to hers. He'd managed to only procrastinate for half an hour after shift ended before he got going. Not bad for him.

He went up the flight of stairs leading to her door in a swift pace - once Grissom made up his mind there was no stopping him. Funny, but in all these years this was only the third time he went to her apartment, and each time seemed to be for more and more awkward reasons. Though this time was about him, not as before, and he had never been good at sharing.

He took a deep breath before knocking and the door opened only moments afterwards, as if Sara had been waiting.

"Hey."

"Hey." She smiled at him uneasily and stepped aside. He looked beyond tired and she felt another pang of guilt.

Grissom softly brushed against her as he walked in and then stood uncomfortably in the middle of her living room, eyes darting around on their own accord, taking everything in. Nothing had really changed. Only the wooden hand he had given her after a tough case a few years ago had moved from her desk to a bookshelf. Grissom looked back at her at the door, unsure how to proceed.

"Wow, this is awkward."

Her factual statement brought a smirk to his lips. "How about we pretend this is just a friendly visit."

Sara raised an eyebrow. "You do friendly visits?"

"Occasionally. At random intervals really." He felt more comfortable with the friendly ribbing, something they seemed to have lost over the years.

Sara smiled a real smile and moved to the kitchen. "Anything to drink?"

"A beer would be great." He thought he might need something to hold on to. Watching her move in her kitchen, opening the fridge, Grissom was struck by a side of Sara he hadn't really seen before. She was utterly at ease in her home, none of the barely contained energy and tension she usually carried around with her at work. He thought it was something he could get used to, but better not start hoping for something he might never have. Except that where this line of thinking had helped all his life, it failed to work when Sara Sidle entered the picture.

"I can almost hear you think."

Grissom was startled by the bottle of beer that had materialized in front of him and Sara's easy smile as she held it out, gazing at him.

"Sorry." He took the beer and moved to the couch, waiting till Sara had settled into the armchair opposite of him, a twin of his own beer in her hands. She took a sip and looked at Grissom.

"So, how was shift tonight?"

"Good."

"Hmm." She took another sip and waited, looking at him. "God, we suck at small talk, don't we?"

Grissom's lips twitched in that almost smile he did but it was gone just as fast. "Yeah. It's not what we're here for anyways." The way she drew up her legs on the armchair reminded Grissom of the last time he had been at Sara's apartment, and once again he cursed himself for not having seen it all sooner. And for lulling himself into the false sense of security that his little hand-holding had miraculously solved all of her problems.

Putting the beer on the table, he leaned forward. Now or never. "Okay, I..." He drew in another breath. "Mainly I wanted to apologize." At her surprised look he raised his hand to ward her off. "Please, let me get it out or I might not be able to start again."

Sara nodded quietly and he continued.

"I realize now that I wasn't paying enough attention to what has been going on around me and I am sorry I let things get out of hand so much. There isn't a moment when I don't wish I hadn't been so blind and things hadn't gone so far. The Edwards case... I just should have seen it sooner."

"I understand you blaming me for that." Sara's voice sounded small and she avoided his gaze.

"What?"

Sara thought she heard surprise in his voice and ventured a look at Grissom. She had expected to see an accusation in his gaze, but he seemed to be genuinely stunned. "I just... I blame myself that my reckless behavior led to that situation. And everything before that, forcing you to act instead of me."

"Sara... what, no. I don't blame you, don't think that for a minute. It's..." He drew a hand over his chin and leaned back. "What are you talking about?"

She drew her legs up further as if they provided some sort of shield to hide behind. "I should have never burdened you with my past."

"That has nothing to do with it." Grissom was trying to make sense of it all.

"You're saying you would have acted the same way no matter who was there?"

"Yes. No. God... Sara." He let out a frustrated breath and got up to pace, trying to get a grip on this conversation. "I mean, I would have done the same, but the reasons for my actions would have been different."

Sara watched him pace for a moment, running everything through her mind again. "That doesn't make sense, Grissom."

"It does to me." He stopped his pacing to look at her, trying to come up with the words.

Sara drew her eyebrows together. "Griss..."

"It's not your past I care about, okay?" He turned away again and went to her window, not wanting to expose the raw feelings raging in himself. For a moment there was only the sound of the curtains, softly billowing in the gentle breeze coming in from the outside, the air cool on his skin. The wind lazily manipulating the light fabric. It was a stark contrast to the cacophony of emotions he felt in himself, not sure how to handle them. And there was the age-old fear he felt, the fear that once he

put everything out in the open, it would leave him vulnerable and at the mercy of someone else. But before he could retreat behind his walls again, he heard Sara chuckling softly.

"That was about the most backhanded compliment I have ever gotten, Gris."

He still wasn't able to turn around and face her, idly running his hands over the curtain, trying to ground himself again, until he heard her walk up behind him.

"Hey, stop hiding. The world hasn't ground to a halt yet." The mirth in her voice annoyed him and he turned around, looking at her.

"I'm glad you're able to just be funny about it all."

"I'm not being funny." Sara's expression grew serious. "I was scared I'd look into your eyes and see nothing but accusation and disdain in there. I felt so guilty that you shot Edwards."

"I told you..."

"No, I felt so guilty that the moment after you shot him? I was glad. I was glad it was you and not me. Into what kind of a bastard does this make me?"

Grissom walked up to her and took her hand into his. "Well, if it makes you feel better, I was glad it wasn't you too, so we can agree on this." He smiled at her softly, wanting to try and steer this conversation onto safe ground again, but her serious expression didn't waver.

Sara grasped his hand tighter. "How can you discard it just like that? How do you do it, Grissom?"

"I can't. But don't ever blame yourself again." He drew her into a hug, burrowing his face in her soft hair and feeling utterly at ease with it. "I know it won't leave me for a long time to come. I've never shot anyone before and I'd seriously doubt myself if I were able to just shrug it off. And I was scared you would see me for who I truly am and turn away from that." Sighing deeply as he felt her hands clasp around his waist and hold him, he just let go of it all. "But it made me realize some things and I'm scared. Scared that one day I'll wake up with nothing but regrets."

Sara felt him shake slightly in her arms, his breath hitching. "Gris, " she hugged him tighter to herself, forgetting everything else for the moment. There would be time enough for that. She was worried things were moving too fast and too much was being left unsaid, but that would be for later. Gil Grissom did things at his own pace anyways. "We'll deal with it."

At that moment it didn't distress him to realize that he wasn't strong enough himself, because he realized at the same time that he didn't need to be. "I'm tired, Sara. I'm so tired."

TBC.