

Title: Inevitable

Author: Frumpy

Rating: T

Spoilers: King Baby again and a sort of mention of Butterflied. Like anyone hasn't seen that, yet.

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

A/N: Oh god, the fluff. It's gotten to me... All G/S all the time.
Thank you everyone for your continued reviews. GREATLY appreciated.

Chapter 13:

Grissom took a slow, measured sip of coffee to gain some seconds and sort the thoughts racing through his mind with lightning speed, trying to come up with a fitting response to Sara's question.

"What?"

Sara turned from him and went back to stirring the eggs she was preparing, turning them in the skillet and adding a pinch of salt and some spice Grissom couldn't see clearly. It was a convenient excuse to not face him directly.

"I know that Catherine got demoted so I wouldn't lose my job."

Not again. That was primarily on Grissom's mind. He had understood it coming from Catherine. Had expected it from her. But to hear the same coming from Sara did more than just surprise him. He recognized a pang of hurt at her words, but tried to explain it away with Sara having gone through some highly confusing days, probably only matched by what he had gone through. Still, that she could think that of him stung. Bad.

He lifted the coffee cup again to hide behind it. He could hardly fault her for not fully trusting him anymore after everything.

"You really think I would do something like that?"

Sara didn't give an immediate answer, instead distributing the scrambled eggs on two plates and placing two slices of bread in the toaster. After pushing the bread down, she turned to him. "I am not sure."

The cup in front of his face did a poor job of hiding the hurt she saw in his eyes and she immediately wanted to amend her words.

"I would like not to, but I know what I heard."

Grissom gave up trying to hide and placed the cup on the breakfast counter, leaning back. If emotions got in the way, he had always retreated to cold logic, finding comfort and order in facts. Where could she have heard that from?

"Sara, who told you that?"

"Catherine."

Okay, screw logic. That didn't make any sense. "Catherine talked to you?"

"Well, no." She shifted her gaze and looked distinctly uncomfortable. "I kind of overheard it."

Ah, his little chat with Catherine. Still, that sounded distinctly un-Sara like. Not only the fact that she'd just accidentally overhear a conversation, but that she'd actually believe it. He raised an eyebrow in contemplation. "You were in the lab."

Sara's look of discomfort shifted to one of sheepishness that made her look incredibly young.

"I didn't mean to. I came there to talk to you, but you were having an, uh, talk with Catherine. And your door was open. I could not not hear it." She shifted on her feet. "In a way, I mean. I left as soon as I realized that I was eavesdropping. Would you please stop looking at me like that?"

"Like what?"

"So... so smug." She emphasized her assessment with an annoyed gesture.

"I don't look smug." Grissom was struggling to not find this amusing. He realized he wasn't dreading this conversation as much as he had thought after all.

"Yes you do. And now you look like you're enjoying yourself on top of that. It's embarrassing enough already."

"I'm sorry." He tried for a contrite expression, not sure if he succeeded fully. "It just seems so unlike you."

Sara only huffed and turned to the toast that had popped out. Placing one on each plate, she put one in front of Grissom then went back to get the butter.

"Sara, sit down."

She looked at him and the soft expression on his face. "I know, I know. Follow what cannot lie."

"Well yes." He watched her sit down opposite of him and proceeded to butter his toast.

"So how about you provide me with some facts to consider?" Sara took the opportunity to turn the conversation back to the topic she had wanted to talk about before it had wandered into uncomfortable territory. "How about you answer my question why I still have a job."

"No."

The forkful of egg paused midway between her plate and her mouth. "You're not going to answer me?"

Grissom put his toast down and rubbed his hands together, intertwining his fingers on top of the breakfast bar. "I meant no, I did not demote Catherine in order for you to keep your job."

"Okay." She waited, but as expected he didn't go on, instead putting some egg on his toast and taking a bite of it.

"Grissom." She pinned him with a glare.

He chewed for a moment, deciding how much to tell her. "Catherine's demotion had nothing to do with you. The Sheriff placed me in a position in which I had to make a choice and let's just say I wasn't ready to let either of you go."

"That sounds so politic of you." It was Sara's turn to raise an eyebrow.

"I suppose it was." He looked at her. "Look, I can't tell you everything. It's rather complicated."

She snorted. "When is it not?" Taking a bite from her own toast, she decided to not press him just now. There would be time. She just knew she wouldn't give up until she got the answers.

"I know that look." Grissom smirked. "You won't rest til you hear the whole story."

It surprised her a bit that Grissom could read her so well, but then he was a perceptive guy. Even if he usually only used it at work. She'd have to do some adjusting to the picture she had of Grissom, that apparently he only seemed clueless when he wanted people to think that.

"Okay, I'll tell you what I can or you won't let go, will you?"

Sara smiled. "Nope."

He only nodded. "As expected." He ate the last of his toast and pushed the plate away a bit, threading his fingers again. "Sheriff Burdick got his hands on some files that had, shall we say, interesting information about some high-profile people. You'll remember them. You and Nick logged them into evidence during the Eiger case." Grissom knew he didn't have to say any more, Sara's sharp mind was already making the connections.

She remembered indeed. Files on Antwater and Braun. And Atwater was gone now. That left Braun. And while Sara didn't know the full story behind Braun and Catherine, she did know that there was some history between these two. Apparently Grissom knew more, but she didn't expect him to tell her, knowing he would never betray someone's confidence like that.

"Okay. That still does not explain what Catherine's demotion had to do with me." She watched him mull this over.

"It didn't have anything to do with you. Not directly."

"Grissom. I know you can't say much, but this is getting ridiculous. Burdick could still have fired me and demoted Catherine, you know that."

As much as he admired Sara's sharp mind, having it turned against him could be tricky. "That would have left the lab pretty short staffed, you know."

"You're more than capable of picking up the extra work, running Nightshift. And Sofia did get Swing already."

"Except, I wouldn't have been running the Nightshift."

Sara frowned. "I... that doesn't make sense. Why not?"

Grissom sighed. "I left Burdick no choice. Keep us all or lose us all. He wouldn't want that PR disaster on his hands. He simply agreed with me."

Lose us all... Sara blinked and tried to make sense of that statement. He didn't... He couldn't.

"You threatened to leave?"

"In a way." Grissom shrugged slightly. It was as much as he was willing to say without revealing anything about Catherine or himself. "It was the only way I could see."

Sara still had an unbelieving look on her face. "You put your job on the line so I would keep mine?"

Okay, when she put it like that it really made Grissom uncomfortable. A whole new level of uncomfortable. That implicated way too much of what he wasn't ready to admit yet. Curse that brilliant mind of hers. So Grissom used his most powerful weapon - a blank face and silence.

Sara just gaped at him, considering all the implications. Foremost on her mind was another talk she had overheard a long time ago. There seemed to be a pattern, she thought wryly. That day had been

like a slap in her face. 'I couldn't risk it.' Grissom could say it to a suspect but not to her face. Only now he had done it, he had risked it. Hadn't he?

She shifted her look from his clasped hands to his guarded face. He tried for his Grissom look, but she could see the discomfort in his eyes. Things were moving entirely too fast just now. And if she was feeling that way, Grissom must be ready to bolt.

Sara swallowed and decided to let him off the hook. For now. "I see. The lab needs me, right?"

Having his own words flung back at him had never felt that great before. Of course he knew that she was only giving him an out. And that this wouldn't be the last he'd hear of it. Too much had been left unsaid. But he guessed he had himself committed in a way. What was surprising, most of all to himself, was that he didn't feel sheer panic at that thought. Interesting. He'd have to think that over.

Grissom hadn't planned on revealing that tidbit to Sara, but now that it was out, he had to admit that it felt like a step in the right direction. As he had said to Sara, he was done collecting regrets.

So he just smiled at her and nodded, fully acknowledging that they both knew they were only playing along with this little game. Glancing at the clock, he noticed that it was time to get going if he wanted to change before work.

Sara followed his line of sight. "I guess you better get going."

"Yeah. Thanks for breakfast."

Sara was glad in a way that she'd have time to think about everything that had been said today. She'd have two weeks actually. "You're welcome."

"What did you put on the eggs?"

"Nutmeg."

"Hmm. Beats the fireants I put on mine." He slid off the barstool and started to walk to the bedroom.

Sara scrunched up her face. "I don't think I've ever been this glad before to be a vegetarian."

Grissom stopped halfway through the living room and turned around. "It's quite good. Really."

"I believe you. I do." She got up and carried the plates to the sink. "No need to prove it to me." She heard him chuckle before he disappeared down the hall, probably to get his shoes.

She had put the butter and bread away by the time he came back fully dressed.

"I'll run by my house before going into work." Scratching his beard lightly, he decided what to say. "Thank you. For everything. And I'd like to repay you some day with a breakfast invitation."

Sara smiled and walked to the door with him. "I'll take you up on that offer." Small steps were fine by her. They were the most comfortable with each other they had probably ever been. And while Sara didn't want to get her hopes up for nothing, not again, things did indeed look better than in a long while. She was willing to see where this might lead, at the same time not willing to be the one to initiate anything anymore. It was up to Grissom.

Opening the door, he turned around halfway through. "And it's not only the lab that needs you."

With that he was gone and Sara could only stare after him, wondering if she'd really heard that. The fireants must have gotten to his head.

TBC.