

**Title:** Inevitable

**Author:** Frumpy

**Rating:** T, mostly for language

**Spoilers:** None really, just general stuff up to currently aired eps. The rest is pure speculation.

**A/N:** Thank you so much for the reviews!

**Chapter:** 2

"Want to tell me what happened?"

Sara looked up from the swirling brown liquid in the cup in front of her. Swirling, swirling, never stopping. About the same as her mind felt now. Trying to gather her thoughts to answer Brass, she shrugged almost imperceptibly.

"It was a stand-off. It was him or one of us. Grissom... we had no choice." She dropped her gaze again. Brass wasn't stupid after all, but no one could fault her for trying.

Brass cleared his throat. "So much I gathered." Sitting down in front of her, he let out a world weary sigh. "Let's rewind a little, what..."

"I screwed up, okay? Is that what you want to hear?" Sara pushed the by now tepid coffee to the side, feeling too sick to even think about drinking anything.

"What I want and what I need to hear are two different things." He rubbed his temples, tired beyond belief and looking incredibly old and infinitely sad. "Look, off the record. There won't be a question as to whether the shooting was righteous or not. However, there will most likely be an inquiry into what led to that situation. Frankly... I have a bad feeling about this. So tell me what led to this and... we shall see."

Sara regarded him for a moment then slumped in her seat. She knew already. Deep down she was blaming herself ever since Grissom had stepped into the room, gun drawn, man on a mission. But saying it out loud was like making it into a truth, something tangible.

"We were working the rape case from yesterday. Grissom and me, that is. The..." she drew a hand over her forehead, then schooled her features into something approximating a neutral expression again. Trying to stay unaffected by recalling everything, she launched into a quick description of the events. "The girl that got abducted on her way from school and then found raped on the side of the street. We got some foreign DNA from the rape kit, and Grissom interrogated that creep – Sean Edwards."

She drew into herself for a moment, remembering the interrogation and the utterly quiet and detached way in which Grissom had conducted it. Cold. She had never seen him that cold before, voice as brittle as rotten ice, eyes almost dead. She knew rapes involving minors were a hot button issue with him, but he had been this close to taking the guy apart in front of everyone. He had seemed driven in a way, but not in the quietly sad manner he used to have around such cases. More like a cold, simmering rage. Controlled, but still scary to see in Grissom.

"Edwards had been charged for assault on a minor before some months ago, but was let go back then. He fit the description one of the victim's... one of Clara's teachers gave of the abductor. But we couldn't compel a DNA sample - judge wouldn't issue a warrant. Not enough evidence."

Sara could see Grissom walking stiffly out of the interrogation, watching Edwards leave the room and smile at Grissom in that stomach churning lip curling kind of smile he had. What was worse was to see the smile returned from Grissom, like they both recognized something in each other. Sara didn't even want to contemplate what.

Shaking her head, she looked at Brass again. "We worked through the day, neither of us able to go home, get away from it, so we didn't even try. Then the call from the hospital and that Clara had remembered where she had been taken."

Brass flipped open the notebook. "246 Clydesdale Street."

"Yes. She remembered it because it was close to where a friend of hers lived." Sara started toying with the coffee cup again, getting the liquid to twirl once more by twisting it slowly, gently.

"And you told Grissom about this... when?"

"I didn't." She swallowed. "Look, he was in a meeting with the Sheriff. I couldn't call him there, and I didn't want to lose time. I was hoping the bastard had left something of himself behind, the evidence was time sensitive."

"Makes sense." Brass scribbled something in his pad. "And you called for police back-up... around the time you didn't call Grissom?"

"I didn't call."

Brass had known, of course. He nodded. "It didn't even cross your mind, did it?"

Sara shook her head softly, not looking at him, instead watching the coffee's twirl dying slowly, steadily.

"Okay." He shot her an apologetic look. "Okay... I have to place you on unpaid leave for right now. You didn't follow procedure, not only endangering yourself, but another CSI and a possibly innocent..."

"He wouldn't have been there if he hadn't done it, Jim! I needed to find..."

"And a possibly innocent citizen." His voice rose steadily. "The evidence will tell the story. Your actions resulted in a fellow CSI having to shoot that citizen, now facing a hearing and enquiry into whether it was a righteous shoot or not. No way can I keep you working right now." Brass closed the pad he had been writing on, the gesture ending the official part of this.

'Not sure what's worse', Sara thought.

"It's okay, Brass. I understand. Only doing your job."

Brass regarded her for a while, her nervous toying with the cup in front of her, the slumped shoulders, shifty eyes. "Listen – I have no choice here. Sara." He waited till she looked at him. "This is serious. You screwed up. Big time. No way around that."

"I know that, Jim."

"Why?"

"It just happened. I wasn't thinking. I just wanted to nail the guy for what he'd done." She pushed the cup away and stood up. "Are we done?"

"We are." He got up and walked around the table, wanting to touch her, hug her, something to show her that he was there for her and didn't blame her, not much at least, but who was he kidding. But she inched away from him, and he just nodded quietly. "Go home, Sara. This is gonna be messy."

"Yeah." She shot him a terse smile. "Thank you."

xxxxxxx

Grissom walked up the steps to his house slowly, like in a daze. An officer had dropped him off, and he would be picked up the next day for the hearing. The department sure didn't waste any time if it could look potentially bad for the bigwigs. At the same time, it felt strangely anticlimactic in a way. Like he had just banged his shoulder on the job and not like nearly having a bullet rip through it. Or worse -seeing Sara get shot. By a guy he had shot in return. Same shit, different day, huh? But then, that suited him just fine, didn't it?

For once though, he knew that was wishful thinking to an extent. For all the calmness and control he presented to the outside world, he knew it would haunt him. It would come at unbidden moments – middle of the night, entering some room, watching Sara work. He could deal with the first ones, he had to an extent for all his life, but the last image made his stomach clench.

Not like he blamed her. Never. Yeah, it was majorly stupid on her part, but who was he to say so. He'd done his share of careless and stupid things. He didn't blame her for what he had to do, either. That was his choice. Logically – he was in the better position anyway, since the gun was trained on him. And overall, well, he didn't want 'this' hanging over Sara's head, too. No, no blame.

Only for himself. For not having seen this sooner, for not seeing the clues that were so obviously in front of him all this time. Had he been so sure of himself and that a little hand-holding would truly fix things? He had made the effort after all, right? More than he could have said about him in previous instances. Hell of a lot of good it had done both of them. And in the end, his obliviousness or his blatant disregard for everything had brought them into that situation.

Grissom shook his head disgustedly and pushed open the door, stepping into the cool interior of his townhouse. Maybe the sparse and organised feel of the place could quieten down everything.

He saw there were 5 messages on his answering machine when he passed the phone in the living room, but it failed to rouse his interest. He just filed the information away to retrieve it later. Shower... he needed a good long shower.

Not like he could scrub away the guilt, though.

TBC.