

**Title:** Inevitable

**Author:** Frumpy

**Rating:** T

**Spoilers:** None really, just general stuff up to currently aired eps.

Disclaimer: I don't own CSI - but if I did, I'd give it to Tarantino and have him direct every single ep from now on.

**A/N:** I apologize for the long time it took me to update. Writer's block sucks. For some reason the finale totally drained me. I promise to be better in the future.

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## Chapter 7:

The shade of the rock provided some much needed protection from the sun beating down. The desert around her was simmering with the heat and it wasn't even noon yet. The air was dry in her lungs and she could almost taste the dust. A desert centipede slowly made its way across the loose soil, legs undulating like endless waves. Sara leaned forward and scooped it up in her hand, bringing it closer to her position in the shade and then gently setting it back onto the ground. Funny how some people impact your life in the most unlikely ways. Sara had never been squeamish, but before Grissom bugs had been just... bugs. Now they seemed like a tenuous connection to his soul. Maybe if she understood the bugs, she might gain some insight into the man who had devoted his life to the study of them. Maybe she was fooling herself.

Watching the centipede scramble off, she leaned back against the rock, it's heat warming her skin through the thin layer of her shirt.

After her hearing Sara had gotten into her car and just drove. On and on, aimlessly. Along the Strip and the masses of tourists milling around. They seemed alien, foreign- crowds always made her feel lonely. She had driven till the city was far behind her and then a little further still. It was lonely out on the highway, random cars zipping past. The dirt road on the right had called to her and she had turned onto it, following it into the desert. When no signs of civilization could be seen she had just stopped, walked for a bit, and now sat in the shade of a big boulder in the middle of nowhere. The heat was oppressive, the ground hard beneath her, dust settling in her clothes and on her skin. But it made her feel connected, feel alive. Nature had always been a place for Sara to center herself and the vastness of the desert was a good reminder of her place on Earth. She had grown to love the area around Vegas. At first it had seemed barren and dead, but you had to look closer, observe, be patient to discover the richness that lay beneath.

She closed her eyes, a gentle breeze hot on her cheeks. She had come out to get lost, to not think. But there was too much going through her mind. Sara still reeled from the hearing. To say the outcome had been unexpected would be the understatement of the year. But as the surprise began to wear off, she couldn't shake the feeling that more was going on. Something she wasn't privy too. Something she was pretty sure she wouldn't like.

By all means, she should have been fired for her actions. It had been a gross disregard of the rules resulting in a disaster. Professionally and on a personal level. Maybe she had been ready to accept the professional punishment as easily because she could hold onto that to deflect from the personal guilt she felt. Not even so much for causing the situation, but for being glad that it was Grissom who had shot Edwards and not her. He had made the choice, he was willing to shoulder that load, and all she had felt at first was relief. It was probably natural, especially for someone who held life in such high regard as she did, but so did Grissom, and it just felt wrong. Like a betrayal. She hadn't seen Grissom since, but she couldn't bear the thought of the accusation he'd have in his eyes when he would look at her.

Opening her eyes, she tried to shake that thought and gathered a handful of sand, almost cool in her palm, and let it run through her fingers slowly. She didn't want to think about it anymore, but now she had a whole two weeks with nothing but her thoughts ahead of her. But only if that was what she let happen. It was in her hands - keep running or face it head on. Sara had never been one to run away from things. She shouldn't start with that now of all times, even if the prospect of being the one to address things openly once again had never seemed less appealing than now.

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The office felt cool and secure. Surrounded by things that most would find repulsive, Grissom had always felt at home. It was the little touches of personality that he hid behind the front of geeky bugman paraphernalia that made him feel at ease. Grissom knew very well what persona to maintain to evade a deeper probing by most people. Only few could see behind that. Or were actually willing to make the effort. People were fickle creatures, content with the outward appearance of things. It had always been his job to dig deeper, to see beyond the outer layer. But it was so much easier when it was about others. His own mind and soul was what he had been scared of exploring beyond a certain level, uncomfortable with the intensity and at times darkness he saw there. And all of that had been shaken recently, forcing him to take a good hard look. Certain events just didn't allow a rational compartmentalization.

And then he had the whole mess with Burdick to deal with. It was actually a welcome distraction from everything else going on, though he had a hard time gathering his thoughts. He'd have to explain it to Catherine mainly, he owed her that. Even he knew she would feel betrayed. But then the alternative would have been most likely worse for her. If her anger was what he'd have to face for it, he was willing to accept that. It had really been the only acceptable option, but he hated the fact that he would have to hurt a friend.

"Gil."

His head snapped up at the voice close by. He hadn't even noticed that someone had stepped into the office. Brass stood before his desk, trying to maintain a blank face, but not able to hide the concern in his eyes.

"Brass. What can I do for you?"

The detective sighed and took a seat, seemingly trying to decide what to say. "You could give me some answers. And don't pretend you are working, you weren't reading that file in front of you for a good five minutes."

"Were you watching me?"

"I'm watching out for you. What in the world have you done?"

Grissom leaned back and shot Brass an annoyed glance.

Seeing that this would be akin to pulling teeth, Brass decided to plunge right ahead, not willing to accept any evasive tactics from Grissom this time around. "Here's the thing. I come in this morning, learning that Sara's hearing had been rescheduled. Actually right after your hearing from what I got. So I was thinking... wow, IA can't wait to pin that one on her. Imagine my surprise at learning that she got away with a slap on her wrist."

"Did you want her gone, Jim?"

"Don't lay that on me, Gil. And don't try to make this about me." Brass pinned his friend with a piercing stare. "I know I'm not known for my deep thoughts, but I'm not an idiot."

"I never thought so, you know that."

"Then stop bullshitting me. And stop bullshitting yourself. It worked before, but not this time around."

Grissom looked at him tiredly. "Do I look like I'm bullshitting myself, Brass? I had to make a decision and I made it."

"Seems like this decision will touch quite a few people and I don't mean Sara."

"Can you look into the future now?"

Brass smiled slightly at Grissom's sarcastic tone. "You're real cute when you try to hide behind indignation."

"Did you come here with the specific goal to piss me off, Jim? If you did, you've succeeded. You can leave again." Grissom turned in his chair and opened a drawer in his desk, taking out his pain medication.

"Headache?"

Grissom didn't spare him a glance as he swallowed two pills and followed them with a glass of water.

Brass wasn't ready to let up. "I also happened to see Catherine. Pretty early for Swingshift. But then she was headed to the Sheriff. Curious, wouldn't you say?" Grissom didn't look at him as he closed the lid of the pill bottle with deliberate motions and put it back. "Gil, I trust your judgement, but I hope you know what you're doing."

"I don't need your advice, Jim."

Brass got up and nodded silently to himself. "No, you don't. But I think you need a friend. Looks like you might have a few less after today."

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**TBC.**