

**Title:** Slipping

**Author:** Frumpy

**Rating:** PG-13, to be on the safe side.

**Disclaimer:** If I'd own CSI, TPTB wouldn't be yanking our chains like they did last Thursday. How lame.

**A/N:** Thanks for the reviews! Greatly appreciated! Apologies (again) for the long time it took me to update, but RL is getting in the way.

And a BIG thank you to Marlou for being the great beta she is!

On with the case.

## **Chapter 10:**

"Grissom."

Sara was already up and putting dishes into the kitchen sink when Grissom moved a bit away to take the call. His succinctness told her that it was indeed about work. All she heard was "When", "Are you sure?", and "We'll be right there".

He flipped his cellphone shut and looked at her, his expression carefully schooled. "That was Brass. He got a DB he thinks we ought to see."

"Bugs?" She asked hopefully, picking up her purse and walking towards him.

Grissom shook his head softly. "No. No bugs." He looked at her with a dark look in his eyes, and Sara got a strong sense of foreboding.

"You think they found..."

Grissom shrugged slightly. "Brass wasn't specific, but it might pertain to our case, yes."

She nodded and walked past him to the door. "Let's go."

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Grissom gripped the steering wheel tensely, looking in the rearview mirror to see if Sara was keeping up. He thought he could see both anticipation and dread for what they might find in her face even from this distance. It would mirror his own.

He pulled up behind Brass's unmarked Taurus, mindful of leaving enough room for Sara so she could park alongside his car.

Brass spotted their approach and ducked under the crime scene tape to make his way through the small crowd that had gathered outside the alley. The neighborhood wasn't exactly upscale, but also not quite rundown enough to be a gang neighborhood. Still, a dead body didn't seem to warrant too much attention, and a contingent of flashing police cars apparently wasn't that out of the ordinary, either.

Grissom had just retrieved his kit from the backseat when Brass reached the side of his car. "Hey," Brass looked over at Sara who was walking up to them, her own kit already in hand, then back at Grissom. "Wow, both of you at the same time. You two practice this?"

Grissom wasn't in the mood for this kind of mindless banter. "What have we got, Brass?"

With a raised eyebrow, Brass pointed behind himself. "DB in the allyway. Waste collector called it in about 30 minutes ago, says he didn't touch a thing after he saw the body. He did throw up, but well out of the way."

"Good," Grissom said, then frowned at Brass's exasperated look.

"You know who it is?" Sara interrupted, stealing a peek at the alley, trepidation in her eyes.

"Not yet. We cannot be sure." Brass cast a soft glance at her. "Body's beat up pretty bad. They really did a number on him. White male, young, that's all we have for now."

Grissom nodded. "I take it no ID was found on him?"

"No. David patted him down - nothing. Pronounced a few minutes ago. Listen, Gil," Brass's tongue darted out and he moistened his lips before looking at Grissom. "Technically this would be Ecklie's case. He'll be all over this. You better..."

But Grissom had started walking already. "If it pertains to our case, it's our crime scene."

Sara picked up her kit and shot Brass an apologetic glance before starting to jog after Grissom to catch up with him. It was somewhat unusual to approach a crime scene in broad daylight. In a way the darkness they usually dealt with during the Nightshift and that she had gotten used to since moving to Vegas seemed strangely more appropriate and comforting. Bad things were supposed to happen at night, not in the bright sunlight.

As it was, Sara could see the feet of the body poking out behind the dumpster clearly. Walking closer and circling the dumpster, the body came fully into view, sunshine hitting his legs before Grissom blocked out the light when he put down his kit. Sara walked up to him and grimaced. Brass hadn't been exaggerating, the vic was beaten up badly.

Grissom snapped on gloves and slowly circled the body, showing no overt reaction to the gruesome find before him, but to Sara the slight stiffness in his movements and the tightness around his mouth spoke volumes. He tilted his head slightly and kneeled down.

Sara peered at the area surrounding the body, but couldn't see anything out of the ordinary. They would do a thorough search when David had picked up the victim, but she already knew that there was no chance of getting any shoe prints on the asphalt. She let her gaze travel over the body, meticulously noting every detail to make sure she wouldn't miss anything in her pictures. Putting her kit down, she put on her gloves and got to work, lifting the camera around her neck.

Starting with some general locator shots, she worked her way closer to the body, circling it slowly. She made triples, just to be sure. Finally getting to the close-ups, she started at the feet. Worn-out sneakers, dusty and unkempt. Jeans, blue, ripped around the knees and dotted with blood drops. The t-shirt was nearly completely torn up, the remaining shreds bloody.

Sara took a quick look around, but didn't notice any shreds of clothing close to the body, only pools of blood by the head. Dark bruising was already starting to show all over the torso and neck, though the majority of blows seemed to have been delivered to the victim's head. Snapping the last close-up of the face, she looked back at Grissom who was still kneeling and regarding her with a calm look in his eyes.

"What do you think?"

She put her camera down. "I'm not sure." Furrowing her brows she kneeled down opposite of Grissom to get a closer look. "Looks like the age could be about right. And he's male... beyond that..." Sara forced her gaze to wander over the bloated and bloody face, the swelling horrible and making any visual ID virtually impossible. She sighed and shook her head softly. "Never ceases to amaze me..."

"Human nature. I have long given up to expect anything else." Grissom's gentle and resigned voice made her look up, and she caught something in his downcast eyes that made her heart clench.

Grissom looked at the body a moment longer, his jaw muscles clenching, before catching Sara's gaze. He felt comforted by the fact that he could share this short moment of pain with Sara, before steeling himself again. "We'll have to wait till Doc Robbins or Greg can tell us for sure. Till then, let's work this as any other DB." He rose and went to his kit, walking out of the ray of light coming from outside the alleyway.

Sara looked at the left side of the victim as Grissom's shadow moved away, thinking she saw something on the left arm. Gently lifting the arm she turned it slightly and grimaced when her suspicions were confirmed. "Grissom!"

He turned at Sara's voice to look at what she had found. Grissom saw her lifting the victim's left arm and turning it so he could see more clearly what had caught her eye. Seeing what Sara had found, he sighed, closed his eyes and turned away.

**TBC**