

**Title:** Slipping

**Author:** Frumpy

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

**Disclaimer:** If I'd own CSI, we'd have it on HBO by now.

**A/N:** I hadn't really planned on making this more than one chapter, but your wish is my command ;)

Sara starting to doubt, so a bit more angst, and more cases. No worries, plenty of G/S ahead, too.

Also, for me, Greg is still in the lab (where he belongs), and the shift split from Mea Culpa never happened.

Not beta read again, so apologies for any mistakes in advance.

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## **Chapter 2:**

Sara woke slowly from a deep sleep. The first thing she noticed was a kink in her back from the unnatural position she had slept in. The second was the weight of Grissom's head still on her shoulder, his soft breath fanning across her collarbone, and the warmth from his body. They hadn't moved at all since falling asleep a few hours earlier. Sara had held Grissom and stroked his hair softly, while he calmed and his breathing pattern grew regular. He had moved his right arm, so that he had it curled around her hip protectively. She looked at the stark white bandage, and again thought about what has happened. 'Where do we go from here?'

Grissom stirred slightly, but continued sleeping, so Sara didn't dare to move much, for fear of waking him up. She was scared. Last night had been huge, right? But where would they go from here? She was scared she would be overwhelmed. She was scared that Grissom might retreat back behind his walls, ashamed by having shown his vulnerability as openly. Scared that he would let his fears rule him again. And scared that this could be everything she had wished for, and so much more.

She felt him move slightly, and looked down, seeing two clear blue eyes peering at her.

"Hi."

He smiled tentatively, as if testing if the muscles around his mouth still worked. "Hi."

She smiled gently at his small voice, and the uncertainty she saw in his blue eyes, mirroring her own, but was encouraged by the fact that they were unguarded, and he wasn't trying to put on his usual mask. Sara ran her hand through his hair, and his eyes closed briefly. "Slept well?"

"Hmm, mmm," he nodded softly, before shifting to a more comfortable position. "Sara?"

"How about breakfast?"

His brow creased slightly, but he lifted his head. "Sure. Let me get cleaned up and changed first, then I'll make you something."

"Okay." She lifted her hand from his head to let him get up, and watched him walk to his bathroom, already missing his warmth. Why was she so reluctant to talk? It was like a role reversal, but she needed to reflect on everything first.

Sara sat up and stretched, then picked up Grissom's cup from the table, and went to the kitchen. She needed to do something.

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Grissom looked at himself in the mirror after he had changed. He looked rested. Still a bit haunted, but much better. Last night had been the first time he hadn't woken up in the middle of the night. The first time he slept trully peacefully. Not hard to guess what the reason for that had been.

He was unsure where to go from here on. He had never been good at that, but Sara's insistence to change the topic before he could actually begin it, had unnerved him. Did she regret it already? 'Do you regret it?' He banished that thought from his mind quickly, and ran a hand through his hair.

With one last look at himself, he stepped out of the bathroom, and went to the living room. He found Sara in the kitchen, washing the cup.

"Let me do that."

She looked up a bit startled, as if she had been thinking, then shook her hand. "You can't get the bandage wet."

Grissom looked at his hand as if he had forgotten about it. "Oh. Yes. I..."

"I didn't see any more bandages in your bathroom yesterday, so I'll make a quick run by the pharmacy to get some new ones after breakfast."

"You don't..."

"I know I don't have to do that, but your car's still at the lab." She put the cup away, and placed the dish towel back on the hook.

"Sara... thank you for..."

"What about breakfast?" She smiled too brightly, and raised her eyebrows.

This was really unnerving Grissom. Why wouldn't she even let him thank her? It must have shown on his face, because Sara stepped to him and took his hand in hers.

"Grissom... I..., "she sighed. "I need some time, okay? Everything... everything is a complete chaos right now. It's not about you, okay?"

He smiled relieved. "I'm chaos?"

Sara chuckled. "You're an awful host. Breakfast?"

He squeezed her hand before moving fully into the kitchen. "I laid out a towel in the bathroom for you. You can take a shower if you like while I fix us something."

"Thanks!" She turned to get her purse, and then went to the bathroom.

Grissom shook his head, still wondering what exactly was going on, but turned to the fridge to get out everything for some pancakes.

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Sara walked through the aisles in the pharmacy slowly, not really looking. She had already picked up the bandages, and now was buying herself some time.

Grissom had tried to talk again over breakfast, but she just wasn't ready, yet. And that was frustrating. Here there was everything she'd hoped for within her reach, and she hesitated to take the necessary step. If it weren't so frustrating, she'd laugh at the irony. She told herself that she actually wanted to give Grissom the time to retreat again, to regret everything, and she didn't want to open herself up to more pain quite yet. But Grissom wasn't the one who was stalling. It was her.

She went to the register, and paid for her purchase. It was afternoon, and the heat was oppressive. Sara waited for the AC in her car to cool the interior down before starting to drive. Just as she was about to take the turn towards Grissom's townhouse, she changed her mind and drove right by it. She needed time to think. She hated the coward she discovered in herself.

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Grissom had just finished showering, struggling with the plastic bag he had put over his bandaged hand as to not get it wet, when the doorbell rang. He realized that he was actually happy that Sara was back, and hurried to the living room. He had a hard time not looking disappointed when Brass was standing on his doorstep.

"Grissom..." Brass shifted a bit nervously. "Can I come in?"

"Of course, Jim." Grissom stepped aside and let the detective in. "Coffee?"

"Sure, sure." Brass followed Grissom to the kitchen counter, his gaze stopping on the breakfast dishes. Two sets of breakfast dishes. "Sara drop you off at home?"

Grissom was pouring water into the coffee machine. "Yes, she did."

Brass smiled slightly. "Sure." He cleared his throat. "Grissom, I..."

"Jim. No need to say anything. I lost my temper, I'm sorry."

A bit surprised by the apology, Brass looked at Grissom while the other turned the coffee machine on, and got out two cups. "No, Gil. I have to apologize." He held out his hand when he saw Grissom was about to interrupt him. "I pushed when I shouldn't have pushed. I'm sorry."

Grissom regarded Brass for a moment, then nodded slightly. "Don't worry about it, Jim. I... I wasn't..." he sighed. "It was bound to happen, you were the unlucky one. Don't think about it again."

"How's your hand?"

Grissom looked at his right hand. "Fine. Sa... I redressed it last night. Nothing serious." He busied himself with pouring the coffee and handing Jim a cup.

Brass smiled into his cup at the near-slip, and took a sip. "Of course."

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Sara walked into the lab apprehensively. For once she wasn't at work early, and she felt guilty for not coming back to Grissom's house earlier that day. She had driven around aimlessly for a couple of hours, before going home, grabbing her gym bag, and working out at her usual gym. Exhausting herself on the treadmill had allowed her to get into her usual calm and focused mindset. It also meant she didn't have to think about everything quite yet. She was procrastinating, she knew it.

Everybody was in the breakroom when she walked in, and she furtively stole a glance at Grissom. She had expected to see disappointment or hurt, but instead only saw concern and a slight flicker of amusement.

"Sara, good, you're here." Grissom sat down with his cup of coffee, and picked up the assignment slips.

The mood in the room was colored mostly by a mild surprise and uncertainty, but none of the members of the Nightshift wanted to graze the topic of Grissom's outburst last night, news of which had traveled through the lab like a wildfire. Everyone had expected a sour and moody Grissom, instead they got a relaxed and upbeat supervisor.

"Nick," Grissom handed him a slip, "suspicious circs at the Circus, Circus. Couple didn't check out on the set date, so hotel security checked their room. Husband dead, wife missing. Take Archie with you, you're gonna watch a lot of surveillance tapes."

Nick smiled and took the slip.

"We got one burglary in a Henderson video rental, and one missing persons case. Any takers?"

"I'll take the burglary."

All eyes in the room settled on Sara, and she shifted uncomfortably.

Grissom handed her the slip. "Take Warrick with you. And stock up on extra fingerprint powder." He looked at Warrick. "If the case looks cut and dry, you'll join Catherine and me on the missing person." He got up and looked at Catherine. "Shall we?"

Sara watched everyone leave, and turned to Warrick. "Sorry, I didn't mean to get you stuck on the burglary, too."

Warrick considered her for a moment. "You aiming low tonight."

"What... I like burglaries." She got up. "I'll get the powder, meet me in five!"

Warrick shook his head, and drained his coffee. It would be a long night.

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"Who are you, and what have you done with Grissom?"

Grissom pursed his mouth slightly, then glanced at Catherine. "I'm fine." He turned back to watching the road as he drove.

"Of course you are." She shook her head. "There I was expecting moody Grissom, and I get Grissom on drugs. Are you in denial?"

"I truly am fine, Catherine." Sensing she was about to speak again, he sighed. "Look, I... lost my temper. Happens. I don't deny it, I worked through it."

"Yeah, tell me often enough, and I might believe it." Knowing from experience that this would lead nowhere, she moved to the next subject on her list. "What's up with Sara?"

"What?"

"Oh Gil, come on!" She whipped her head around. "When has she ever taken a burglary voluntarily?"

"We don't distinguish between cases, they are all important and..."

"Oh cut the crap, Gil." She looked at Grissom in the driver's seat. "She took the case you wouldn't work, and you know that." When she got no response whatsoever, she sighed. "Fine. Keep on pretending you don't notice. This is getting ridiculous."

"Catherine...", he said wearily.

"What? You pretend you are all right, when clearly you're not, as yesterday has proven. Whatever it is between you and Sara..."

He interrupted her with a stern look. "I don't want to talk about it."

"So it's you after all...", she murmured. She pulled out the file with preliminary info on the missing person, busying herself with reading it again. Robert Walker, 17. Hadn't come home two nights in a row, the parents had alerted the police three hours ago. A call to the

highschool had confirmed that he hadn't been there all day, though the secretary hadn't seemed surprised. Catherine had a bad feeling about this.

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"Holy crap..." Warrick looked around the chaos that used to be a video rental. "You so owe me lunch!"

"It's not like I broke in here, Warrick." Sara gingerly stepped over a pile of videos on the floor, trying to decide where to begin. The store was well stocked, three walls with shelves of videos and DVDs, and six more rows throughout the room. Movie posters and movie paraphernalia were everywhere. As were the video and DVD cases, the few still standing in their places looked rather forlorn amidst the piles on the floor.

Warrick had moved to the register, the actual tapes from the drawers behind the counter were strewn all over the place. "This is a hate crime!"

Sara suppressed a chuckle. "I'll check for surveillance while you print the register, okay?"

"Yeah, whatever...." He got out the fingerprint powder and brush, and started dusting the front of the counter, cursing silently at the plethora of fingerprints and smudges that appeared. Burglaries were always tedious work. The biggest video rental in Henderson would mean a long night indeed. Working through his lunch choices in his head, he moved towards the register, and froze.

"Hey Sara?"

"Yeah?" came the faint reply from the backroom.

"This was just a burglary, right?"

He head poked around the corner. "That's what the kid working here said. What do you mean?"

"How come there's blood behind the counter?"

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**TBC.**