

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: Thanks for the reviews! Makes my day.

All Grissom and Sara this chapter.

Chapter 4:

Grissom peered intently at the screen in the DNA lab that showed the results of the CODIS search. Sara was right behind him, looking over his shoulder. The name 'Robert Walker' blinked steadily. He kept checking and double checking, but the result wouldn't change. Only when he felt Sara's presence move away from him, did he turn around.

"So, your missing person is our robber," she said thoughtfully.

"Only he's still missing." Grissom turned his head and stared off into space for a moment.

Sara could actually see him thinking, trying to pull the pieces together, and form a coherent picture in his mind. She loved to watch him think. The intensity of his gaze was the only thing that betrayed his otherwise serene exterior, showing he was far from calm with the prospect of solving this riddle. Grissom's clear blue eyes flickered back and forth before settling on her face.

"Tell me about the robbery."

Sara was all facts. "He got around 200 dollars, from what the kid running the rental that night said. Trashed the place, I mean really trashed it. It looks like his left arm was hurt, hence the blood Warrick collected."

"If he was still bleeding, the wound was relatively fresh, not tended to."

Sara nodded, falling into his thought pattern effortlessly. "He needed the money. He had to do it. That's why he freaked out in the store. He must have been desperate."

Grissom looked at her for a moment, then turned to Greg, who had been watching them quietly. "Anything more about the blood?"

Greg shook his head. "Nothing unusual from my side. I sent a sample to tox."

"What are you thinking?" Sara prodded slightly.

Grissom's gaze focused on her again. "Catherine and I found some drug paraphernalia in Robert Walker's room. Just some papers, and a pipe."

"You think he needed drug money?"

"A little grass here and there wouldn't really warrant a robbery, but it's a possible angle." He smiled softly. "One of many."

Sara smiled back, slipping into their usual ease when working on a case. "And we don't make the evidence fit a theory, we let the evidence determine the truth." At his amused look, she smiled, then rubbed her chin slowly. "I still have the surveillance tape from the robbery. Archie's still with Nick, so I wanted to wait till he comes back, but how about we take a look at it now?"

Grissom turned to Greg. "Give me the tox results soon as you get them." He looked back at Sara. "Set up the tape. I'll tell Catherine to put some names she finds on the phone records through CODIS, see if we get drug related hits. Meet you in the A/V lab."

She watched him walk off towards the breakroom, before looking at Greg. "I think I really should buy you lunch sometime. Thanks, Greg!"

The labtech grinned openly, when she stepped out of the lab.

Sara was rewinding the tape, when she heard Grissom enter, and pull up a chair. She felt his presence settle slightly behind, and to the right of her.

He watched her a moment, not even trying to hide it, and realizing how freeing that felt. "You know, I'm disappointed," he said softly.

Sara frowned and turned around, dreading where this conversation was going, and feeling guilty. Her frown deepened when she saw the sparkle in his eyes.

"Here you bring everyone lunch, and I don't get anything." He nearly laughed when he saw the relief flood her features. He chided himself for teasing her about something this serious. It hadn't really been his intention to lead her on, making her think he was trying to push her about last night, but it elated him too much to see her relieved smile.

"For your information, Grissom," she put on an earnest face. "I bought Warrick lunch to appease him. I should give you the bill, since you put him on the burglary. And Catherine's sandwich was actually mine, but it quitened her up."

"Ahh," Grissom nodded. "Good tactic. I'll keep it in mind. It's not a barking dog can't bite, but a biting dog can't bark."

Sara laughed. "She better never hear that."

"Hm, wouldn't want me to get hurt now, would we?"

If Sara hadn't known better, she would have described his smile as suggestive. But Grissom didn't smile suggestively, did he?

He saw her features darken a bit, and quickly turned the subject back to safe ground, not wanting to push. Leaning forward he put a hand on her shoulder, and started the tape. "Let's see what we can find."

Sara felt his soft touch on her shoulder, the bandaged part a bit colder than the rest of his hand. His hand lingered there for a moment longer than absolutely necessary, before he leaned back in his chair. She was temporarily caught in the moment, and tried to sort the conflicting emotions she felt - mainly elation and warmth, but also a quiet dread, lurking beneath everything. The flickering light from the tv screen before her caught her attention, and she mentally gave herself a shake to focus on the thing at hand.

They watched the jerky motions of the people caught on a camera running at 1/4th speed of a normal recording. It gave everything an almost comical look, but only until they saw Robert Walker storm in. He had evidently waited till no one was in the store before making his move. Sara saw the fright in the kid behind the counter. The image was too blurry to make out facial expressions, but his every move spoke of fear. It was strange to watch the havoc the robber was wreaking on the shop without any sound, and her mind supplemented her with the crashing noise she imagined would normally accompany the picture.

Focused completely on the tape now, Sara tried to catch anything unusual, anything that might provide them with a clue. They watched the sequence of the robbery several times, silent, absorbing. After Robert ran out of the rental for the ninth time, she turned to Grissom, finding his eyes already on her.

"Anything?"

He pursed his mouth, then shook his head. "Not really. We could see if he already had the ski mask he used. I'll ask Brass to check with the parents."

"If he bought it, there aren't that many stores selling them. We could get lucky."

Grissom nodded. "It looked like his left arm was definitely hurt. He cradled it in his right hand after he hit the register. Other than that," he rubbed his eyes, "I didn't see anything that might help."

Sara popped out the tape, and put it back into the evidence bag. "I'll ask Archie to have a look at it when he gets back. And if his eyes aren't bleeding by now." She thought for a moment. "So we have the phone records, maybe a ski mask, and maybe tox finds something in the blood..." she trailed off.

"Hm," he got up and placed the chair back where he had taken it from. "See if you can help Catherine with the phone lists. I'll call Brass and ask him to check about the ski mask in the morning. He wanted to go to the school, might as well swing by the parents."

"Okay. Beep me when you get anything from Greg." She picked up the evidence bag, and walked to the evidence vault, hearing Grissom walk into the opposite direction towards his office.

Grissom put down the phone after telling Brass about the new developments in the cases, and how they had turned into one. He would put Warrick with Nick, and let Catherine do the phone records. There was nothing he could really do now. Tox would need a while, and Brass would take care of the rest in the morning.

Pulling one drawer on his desk open, he got out the bag Sara had brought earlier. He got one bandage, and placed it on the table. Unwrapping the old bandage on his right hand, he hissed softly at how tender his knuckles still were. He flexed the hand carefully, but quickly thought better of it when the motion stretched the skin painfully. Tearing the clear plastic around the new bandage with his teeth, he tried to redress his hand, but couldn't get it tight enough. It kept slipping, rubbing over the still cracked skin painfully. "Damn."

"Need help?"

Grissom looked up as Sara walked into the room. She motioned to the mess that he had made of the bandage.

"You're not doing too good a job with this."

"I'd appreciate it." He picked up the unrolled pile of gauze, tossing it into the trash can, and got out a new one from his desk drawer, handing it to Sara.

She held his hand gingerly, applying the first layer carefully, as to not hurt him more than necessary. "Catherine went home."

Grissom looked at the clock in his office, and noticed that the shift had ended half an hour ago. "Oh." Sara tugged on the bandage to secure it, and Grissom couldn't suppress a hiss.

"Sorry." She fixed the bandage in place, and looked at her work

"No, you're good. My own fault anyway." He turned his hand, and flexed it again. "Thank you. Did Catherine find anything?"

Sara moved away from his desk, and sat down. "Nothing, yet. She's about halfway through from what I saw, but I didn't want to pick up where she left. You know how territorial she can get."

Grissom smiled knowingly. "So we'll have to wait till tonight. Go home, Sara. Get some rest. I doubt my couch was the best place for a good night's sleep."

"You looked rested." Sara smiled. She appreciated that Grissom didn't try to push her, but was a bit amused at the fact that he didn't seem to be able to drop it completely.

"I am. Thanks to you."

His openness was uncharacteristic, and unarmed her. Sara didn't really know how to deal with it. Getting up from the chair, she went to the door. "Don't be too long yourself."

Nodding, Grissom picked up Nick's report again, and started to read it.

"Grissom?"

He looked up to see her linger at the door.

"Would you like some breakfast tomorrow?" At his open smile she backpedalled a little. "I owe you one, you know, for the pancakes and all."

"I'd love some breakfast, Sara. Thank you." He chuckled softly as she turned and walked away.

TBC.