

**Title:** Slipping

**Author:** Frumpy

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

**Disclaimer:** I still don't own CSI for some reason. And it's still not on HBO.

**A/N:** Sorry for last chapter's cliffhanger, I couldn't resist. More Grissom and Sara, but geez, these two really need to talk. Don't worry, I haven't lost sight of the case, we'll pick it up with the next chapter.

A big thank you to ScienceGeek for being a great beta! Thanks! And thank you again for the reviews - they truly make this so much more fun.

## **Chapter 9:**

Sara watched him sip his coffee cautiously. She could see the uncertainty in his eyes, as he didn't try to hide it in front of her anymore. This must be hell for him. In previous months he probably would have tried to diffuse a situation like this by making a comment about work, or throw her one of his ambiguous lines that would baffle her so he could take control of the direction of the talk again. Not anymore, though. He was ready to listen.

She inclined her head in an appreciative manner. "Thank you." Seeing his raised eyebrow, she was reminded of the fact that he wasn't always the quickest when it came to subtleties in personal matters. "For listening, I mean."

He smiled faintly. "It's the least I can do." He leaned forward placing his arms on the table. "Whatever you're comfortable with."

Sara gathered her thoughts before plunging right in. "You... you know I have wanted a relationship from the start. And I was angry with you for complicating things and for blocking it again and again." She ran a hand through her hair. "So much has happened. I learned you valued your work more than me, or even the chance of being with me. And then the promotion... I was devastated. I was disappointed."

"I know."

She looked into his warm and nonjudgmental eyes, and found strength in them. "Not only that I didn't get it. That was one part of it. I was disappointed in you. As a person. I had to learn of it from Nick of all people. You couldn't even tell me to my face. And then you didn't even have the decency to offer me a real explanation. It made me feel like I didn't have your respect."

"It's never been about that, Sara."

"I know that. Now." She looked down and started to toy with the hem of her blouse self-consciously. "I took things too personally. After the promotion I thought I was ready to pull away, and get onto my own two feet. I wanted to be ready."

Grissom shifted slightly back, pursing his mouth. "It has always been my fear that we wouldn't be able to separate the work from private."

"And you were right." At his surprised look she shrugged slightly. "I think I was the one who refused to see things for what they were. I didn't want to see that 'this' was indeed more complicated than I wanted it to be. The sessions with the counselor made me realize some things." She looked up again. "I relate things too much to my private life. All the setbacks I experienced at work, which tie into you mostly, I also saw as setbacks in my personal life. When you passed me over for the promotion, it was like you passed me over as a person, when in truth it wasn't that simple."

"Things were never simple between us."

That made her chuckle, though his almost wistful look at the words mirrored her feelings about so many chances missed, opportunities lost. "No, they weren't. But I see them for what they are now. And I realize that was an important and needed step towards... more."

His intense gaze bored into her. She could see the battle raging on in him. A hope he desperately tried not to feel, and a dread that screamed at him to retreat, to not get hurt. "How about some peach cobbler?"

"W... what?" That completely threw her.

Her bewilderment must have shown, as he smiled gently. "Don't worry. I'm not trying to change the subject or avoid this. I just have the feeling I need something to hold onto for whatever will come."

She nodded, and watched him get up and walk to the kitchen. She actually appreciated the fact that he had given her some time. As if he wanted to make sure she truly meant what she was about to say.

A plate materialized in front of her, and she smiled up at him. The piece was still warm enough to have that sensuous smell of freshly baked things and to make the vanilla ice cream he had put on top of it melt slightly. She took a bite and had to close her eyes.

"Oooh, god. That's delicious."

Grissom smiled and took a bite himself. "Family recipe. I'm glad you like it."

"Like it? I love it." She let another bite melt on her tongue, savoring the different flavors - sweet and sour, hot and cold. The opposite tastes distinct yet blending in perfectly. 'In a way like Grissom himself', she thought amused.

Grissom watched Sara surreptitiously. She looked almost sensual in the way she cherished each bite, closing her eyes, an almost blissful expression on her face.

"Simple things."

He looked up at that. "I'm sorry?"

"Another thing I'm trying to achieve." She motioned to her piece with the fork. "Take pleasure from the simple things in life."

"Another advice from the counselor?"

Sara smiled. "No. From you. In a way."

Grissom frowned. "I said that?"

"Well," she smirked slightly. "Not directly. You never say things directly, Grissom."

"I thought I was on my way to changing that."

"You are. And you deserve a direct answer for that."

He leaned back in his chair again, looking at her calmly, as if he had made his peace with himself.

"I do want more, Grissom. I just think that we have to take things slow. I know now that you want the same, and believe me, you have no clue how much that means."

He shook his head slightly. "Believe me, I do." He realized he had to explain himself better. "It sort of ties in to what you said, how your personal life and how your self-image was too tied to your work. I never knew whether you wanted me as someone you desired because of what I represented to you, or if you wanted, well, me."

"You, Gil. Only you." She could practically see the weight being lifted off him and the relief flooding his every fibre. "At the same time - this literally is your last chance. I trust you to stay true to your word. Betray that, and I am gone. I cannot say all my doubts and fears are gone, but I want to give this a chance. I know I'm asking a lot, and it must look like I put the burden solely on you, but this is just as much of a risk for me."

Grissom nodded. "I do not fault you for this, know that." A huge smile appeared on his face. Sara had never seen him so completely at ease and open, and it was beautiful.

Sara opened her mouth to reply, when a faint beeping sound made her falter. Groaning inwardly she looked at Grissom and saw that he knew, too.

His hand reached into his pocket to pull out the cell phone. "So much for separating work and private, I guess."

TBC.