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Title: One night in Vegas

Summary: Sara hands in her notice. How will Grissom react?

Rating: PG

Pairing: Grissom/Sara

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Prompt:

*The moments of happiness – not the sense of well being,
Fruition, fulfillment, security or affection,
Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination –
We had the experience but missed the meaning.*

(T.S. Eliot: The Dry Salvages)

A / N: This fic was my contribution to the 'A Thousand Whispers – The CSI T.S. Eliot Challenge.

I want to thank CSIShipperGirl for her help and I really cannot praise her enough. She corrected my uncountable mistakes, told me that the plot sucked in one point and beta-ed the changed parts despite the short time left. Without her I would never had a story to add.

Please read and review! I'm always interested in honest opinions.

Part one: Prologue

It was another night in the city of regrets. At seven p.m. Las Vegas's nightlife was just about to stir.

Darkness had absorbed the last traces of light, allowing daylights harsher sides to be revealed. Now, uncountable illuminated and colored billboards praised the different possibilities to find a change, to forget about the heavy weight of a life ruled by dull daily routines. And that, forgetting, was too often a hard thing to do.

For someone who wanted to forget, Las Vegas was the best place, because the opportunities to find a diversion were numerous.

"Do you want to gamble, enjoy the risk of win or loose?"

"Do you like to see women dance in less than nothing, only for the enjoyment of your eyes and heart?"

"Do you find excitement in spending some quality time with one of the hot ladies, always available, waiting for you?"

"Do you like to watch or participate in illegal car races, to dance in unofficial clubs? Or are you searching for some stuff that let you forget about the crap, called your life?"

"Then come and visit 'Sin City'. We have all of the above and lots more!"

While the cities lights screamed for attention, the paths of different kinds of people crossed, on their way to somewhere.

There were the people that just came home from work, wanting to spend their evening with their families, friends, or alone in front of their television. There were the others, who were on their way to satisfy their darker desires in one of the city's establishments. Then there were the people who lived from other peoples cravings, whose jobs just were just about to begin.

Las Vegas, a city with two faces. Home for over two hundred thousand people, who lived their normal lives. Hideout for the various creatures of the night, impostors and criminals.

So it's no wonder at all, that the delinquency rate in a city like that was high, or that they had the second best crime lab throughout the whole country, is it?

Part two: Can't go on like this any more.

Gil Grissom, supervisor of the Las Vegas crime labs night shift, got out of his car and cursed silently. On his short drive to the lab it had started to rain.

Heavy clouds were darkening the evening sky and big droplets of water were washing down on earth, flooding the ground that wasn't ready to absorb large amounts of water in such a short time. Now and then a lightning bolt lighted the scenery, followed by thunder loud enough to drown out all other noises.

Las Vegas didn't see thunder-storms often but on those rare occasion when the bad weather found its way here, it didn't last long, instead it came with a quick vengeance.

When Grissom reached the entrance of the building, which was only a couple hundred feet away from where he parked his car, he was completely soaked, and he hoped that he still had some clothes to change into in his locker. While he went through the hallway he left a track of small water pools on the fresh polished floor.

'Emilia, will hate me forever, but let's be honest, I don't think I'll be the only one dripping on the floor tonight,' he thought.

Emilia, who worked the last ten years as a cleaner for the crime lab, was obsessive when it came to dry, clean floors.

Once inside the locker room he grabbed a towel and dried his face, glasses, and his hair. With the towel now resting on his shoulders, he opened his locker. He found himself lucky that he remembered to put an extra change of clothes inside. They now lay neatly folded in the back.

He changed into his dry clothes and shut his locker door. As he turned to the exit, a scent in the air caught his attention. It wasn't a perfume because it would hinder crime scene analysis, but it was distinctly female, and it was one he had come to associate with Sara.

'So, she was early again.' He thought. It was almost three hours till start of shift and it wasn't unusual for them to be here already, but he still found it notable.

He thought that it would be better to hide in his office. Although he tried to change his behavior towards her, to restore their relationship, he was still unsure how to proceed.

As he walked around the corner on the way there, he saw Sara coming out of his office, silently closing the door behind her. He slowed his pace not wanting to talk to her right now. She didn't notice him as she walked in the opposite direction.

Something about her behavior caught his eye. She walked slowly, her shoulders were slumped as if she had a heavy weight on them. Grissom reconsidered talking to her, to ask her what was bothering her, but she disappeared around the next corner before he'd decided what to do.

'Someday you'll have to speak to her.' Grissom thought. He cursed himself for being a coward again. There had been a time when he would have followed her, when their relationship was still intact.

Opening the door to his office, he could smell her scent and he allowed himself a moment to enjoy the feeling that it awoke in him. He was curious about what she wanted in here, and after he switched on the light he scanned the room attentively.

He saw the envelope on his desk at once. He could immediately feel his heart beating faster in his chest as a sense of dread overtook him.

"No, not again. Sara, why?" he softly spoke.

He went slowly to his desk and sat down on his chair. He reached for the envelope and studied it absentmindedly from all sides. Finally he sighed and opened it.

Although he had had known what to expect, it was like a shock to see the words black on white. Sara had handed in her resignation.

His hands trembled lightly and he saw another small slip of paper hiding in the envelope.

His brows furrowed as he read the contents.

***The moments of happiness – not the sense of well being,
Fruition, fulfillment, security or affection,
Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination –
We had the experience but missed the meaning.***

Grissom; I can't go on like this any more.
I'm sorry.

Part three: Memories

He sat motionless for a long time. While his outer appearance was calm, almost like a statue, a storm of emotions were running through his insides, torturing his mind and soul.

He didn't want to acknowledge it, didn't want to feel the guilt; but he knew why Sara had gone and he knew that she wouldn't be coming back this time, not for a plant, or some meaningless words. This time she was serious.

He looked at the poem and he knew that it was an excerpt of T.S. Eliot's 'The Dry Salvages.'

He had always liked to recite the famous words of spirited minds and he used them often to comment on a situation, to describe human behavior. Some people thought that he was good with words but he wasn't. He could talk about science for hours but science was safe territory. When he talked about entomology the topic of interest to him, he spoke with the passion of someone who loves what he does. It was easy because he knew his feelings weren't in danger of being harmed.

When it came to people Grissom felt completely lost. He was unsure how to connect to them. When he was young he got the impression that people weren't interested in him, that they didn't even want to understand him and his hunger for knowledge. He had tried to make friends with them but eventually gave up. Since then, his early teens, he'd been a loner, unwilling to talk about himself, hiding behind phrases of other people.

Now Sara had beaten him with his own weapons. He couldn't pretend to not know what it was she was saying.

The moments of happiness; there had been so many and he could remember them like it happened yesterday.

'I don't even have to turn around. Sara Sidle.'

It had been so good to see her again. She had been more beautiful than he remembered her, a wide grin lightening her face and, like always, it made him feel special. He had missed her, the rare calls were not enough to fulfill his need to talk to her. He wanted to have her around for so long and now he finally had the opportunity to enjoy her presence.

'Since I met you.'

Grissom had been taken aback by his own statement, he didn't know where it came from. Although it was true, he didn't mean to tell her that. How could he explain her that it wasn't only her outer appearance that made him want to be with her, that it was the mixture of her delicate features, together with a friendly and caring soul and a sharp mind. It was one of the rare moments where he had been clear on what it was that he truly wanted, and he'd voiced that thought without

thinking twice.

After that day he often thought that he should have told her about his feelings towards her but he was her boss, much older and there was no way that she could possibly return his feelings. 'Was there?'

'When we stayed up that night with that dead pig.'

He would never forget that night. Sara was so upset, almost despaired, that they weren't able to charge Scott Shelton with the murder of his wife. He understood her, knew she was right, and so he decided to have a last try. He took a dead pig, rolled it up in a blanket and placed it outside behind the CSI building, then he watched how long it took the insects to infest the body. In the end they had been able to prove that the husband not only had a motive, but he also had the opportunity to kill his wife.

He had been so surprised as he saw her coming, loaded with warm blankets and hot coffee. She'd wrapped one blanket around his shoulders and taken the other one for herself. Then she sat down beside him.

It had felt so right to be there together with her. They had talked silently about all and nothing, were content to simply be with each other.

Since then he had often remembered that night and wished that he could be more comfortable with her again

These were only three of the many memories he had with her. If he was honest he had always been happy when he was around her. They had a natural chemistry, let's face it; they were drawn to each other, like a moth to a flame.

He leaned back in his chair and a sigh escaped his lips. Why had he rejected her so often in the past three years? Would he still have done it, if it wasn't for his hearing.

'Sara, what do you see in me? I am older, I am your boss, and yet still...'

He couldn't count how often he had asked himself this question in the past.

Deep inside he knew that it was now or never, that he had to decide which path to choose. In the past he had always done what his mind told him to do and it hadn't made him happy. Perhaps it was time to listen to his heart.

What did he have to lose, hadn't Sara already chosen to move on?

Although he was afraid that it was too late, that she could reject him and that this pain would be too much to bear, he decided to fight. Fight for a chance.

He got up and left his office determined. He had to tell Catherine to take over shift and then he could go and search for Sara.

Part four: I need you in my life

As he reached the break room, he saw that it was still empty. He looked at his watch and noticed that it was still one hour till the start of shift, so he pulled out his cell phone and told Catherine that she would be lead CIS tonight and that Sara had the night off.

He went back his office and grabbed his car keys. There was a part of him that was convinced that she wasn't gone yet, that she was still somewhere in the city, to bid this part of her life a silent farewell. He knew that he had one chance, and maybe not even one chance at all, to find her before she would be gone for good and he prayed that he wouldn't be too late.

He had an idea where she was and he hoped that he wouldn't be mistaken, that the chasm between them hadn't become too big, for him to stop being able to guess where she was when she felt down.

As he left the building he hardly noticed that the heavy rain was still pouring down. He was soaked

when he entered his car and it caused his windows to steam up. He turned on the heater and started the car. He had to drive cautiously because of the weather, so it took him almost thirty minutes to reach the 'Strip' and park the car as close as possible. Even on a wet day like today, the city was crowded with tourists.

Under normal circumstances he would have enjoyed the walk through the city's nightlife. This city never ceased to amaze him, even after almost two decades of living here. Vegas was the best example of human megalomania. Where else could someone find the Eiffel tower, the Brooklyn Bridge and the world's third largest pyramid in one spot?

This night he had no eyes for the wonders of the city though. He passed the Bellagio in a hurry and crossed the street, heading for the Aladdin that was placed diagonally opposite.

He entered the building and passed the various slot machines that tempted people with stakes ranging from one nickel up to twenty dollars or more. For a brief moment he asked himself if people would ever realize that there was hardly a chance to win anything significant.

He reached his destination and stopped in his tracks. He felt suddenly nervous, for in a few moments he would learn if he knew Sara at all. He took a deep breath and went on. Two steps later he saw her and as he expected she was sitting at one of the tables at Starbucks.

When she had been in Vegas for some months she had confided to Grissom that she loved that place. She had told him it place held two advantages she could find nowhere else in Vegas. First of all, the coffee. Like all members of the graveyard shift she was addicted to coffee, but in her case it wasn't a special Blue Hawaiian brand that her heart belonged to, but Starbucks' Caramel Machiatto. The other reason for her to love Starbucks was that she felt that she could be alone there.

"Where can you be better alone than in a crowd of people? No one will ever search for you in the midst of a casino, and none of the people in there pays you any attention at all because you are only one of many." Sara had said.

He remembered agreeing, saying, "It isn't the most popular casino either, so it's the best place to find some peace of mind and watch the strange behavior of people in such temples of folly."

He still remembered the expression she wore that day. She had a sad smile on her face, her eyes were clouded. Did he tried to comfort her, tried to talk about her feelings of loneliness? Of course not. He had simply nodded and changed the subject.

Tonight Sara seemed to be absorbed in her own thoughts. Her gaze was resting on the table, her right hand enclosing the cup of coffee, the other one drawing imaginary circles on a napkin.

He approached her table slowly but she didn't seem to have heard him. Unsure of what to do he reached out and touched her shoulder lightly. She jumped in her chair and almost knocked over the coffee.

She looked up at him, startled at first but then her facial expression changed to surprise and a good deal of disbelief. He knew that he was irrational but it hurt him to see that she thought he was capable of simply letting her go.

"Hi, Sara."

He wished that he wouldn't sound so cold but couldn't help it. He was almost fifty years old and whenever he had felt insecure about something in his life he had turned to a professional manner and hid behind it.

"Grissom, what are you doing here?"

She sounded angry.

"May I sit down? I want to talk with you. Please."

He gave her what he hoped was his best pleading look.

"Talk about what?"

Her eyes held a challenge, telling him that she didn't believe that he had the nerve to discuss personal matters with her. All of her experiences with him in the past were living proof for such an assumption, but this time he wouldn't back down.

"About us."

He sat down opposite of her, holding her gaze. Sara sighed and looked down on her hands.

"Us? There is no 'Us' and never has been."

Her voice was hollow and when she looked up again he could see that all her features emanated exhaustion. She had dark rings under her eyes, her skin was pale and her shoulders were slumped.

He reached for her right hand and as she didn't withdraw it from him he held it with his left hand and began to gently caress it with the thumb of his other hand.

"There is an 'Us' Sara and you know that. Yes, I know that I did everything to ignore you these last few years and that I rejected you more than once. I was a fool. You know, I felt desperate when I saw the papers lying on my desk. I saw you just moments before, when you left my office, and you looked so defeated, tired. I wondered what you had done in there and as I entered my office and saw what you left I was sure to know what it was."

He started slow, as if testing the unknown feeling of speaking words that came from his heart and not his head.

"Grissom, I am tired. Tired of your games and too tired to feel any hope at all."

For a moment, as her face darkened, he saw what he had seen just minutes before. He felt guilty because he knew that he was the reason for her exhaustion.

"Sara, I'm really sorry. You know, I felt so confused when I read the notice, but as I read the other paper with the poem I understood at once what it was you wanted to tell me. Maybe poetry is a kind of language I understand."

He shrugged his shoulders and looked at her. His face bore an expression of self-irony.

"You have to know that I don't know what you see in me. I'm too old for you. I'm your boss and not allowed to date subordinates, but Sara, I... I don't want to lose you."

He nervously cleared his throat.

"I can understand if you still decide to leave. You deserve to be happy and that's all I wish for. You deserve only the best and when it's best to start anew I wouldn't hinder you, but...but I hope that you'll give me... us a last chance. Sara, I need you in my life."

It was the first time that he had opened up like this and now it was his turn to stare at the table. He was afraid of her reaction, afraid to be rejected.

Finally he looked up and he saw that she was crying silently. He waited for her reaction and finally she gave him a gentle smile.

"I really hope that the games have finally come to an end now. You know, every end is a beginning at the same time. Let's try to have a new beginning together."

He gave her a soft smile in return.

"As I gave us both the evening off, would you give me the honor to go to dinner with me?"

He watched her nervously, afraid that she might say 'no'.

Instead she showed him her special tooth gaped grin in response.

"I would love that."

Part five: Epilogue

It was early in the morning and the first rays of sunshine announced the beginning of a new day.

Slowly the shadows of the night disappeared and people who worked the different nightshifts in Vegas were on their way home, exhausted from another night of hard work, only thinking of getting some food and crawling into their waiting beds.

Among those people where the CSIs, who after another night of searching for evidence only want to go home.

Nick, who had spent the whole night analyzing fibers, drove home, sank into his favorite armchair and waited for the arrival of Greg and Warrick. He had invited them along to watch a football game on one of his countless television channels.

Catherine drove to her sister's to fetch Lindsey. She knew that she hadn't spent enough time with her daughter in the last months and she decided that she would drive to the cinema with her that afternoon, for her little munchkin loved watching movies.

Brass still sat in his office. Why should he bother to drive home, apart for some hours of sleep and a quick shower? He knew that he would, once there, be hunted with nightmares of Ellie, his daughter who he loved desperately but who had left town over two years ago.

Grissom and Sara were already home, lying in bed, sleeping peacefully.

After dinner the night before, they had gone to Grissom's town house, where they talked for hours, drank some excellent wine and listened to Pink Floyd.

Then when Sara told Grissom that she wanted to drive home, he acted on his feelings for another time that night. His intention was to kiss her goodbye but soon he realized that he couldn't stop kissing her, touching her, feeling her.

So they were lying in his bed now, snuggled together, Sara's head resting on his chest .

The world hadn't changed last night but Gil Grissom and Sara Sidle had let the hope back into their hearts and had opened the door for a life full of possibilities.

The End