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Disclaimer: I don't own CSI, or any of the characters. So please don't sue me.

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If you still find any mistakes they are all mine!

Chapter three: Condoms

Sara met Grissom in the dining room. The table was laid for breakfast but he hadn't eaten anything yet. He didn't hear her coming and stirred his coffee, with a frown on his face.

"Good morning," she greeted him and sat down. She wanted to sound cheerful but knew at the instant that she failed and that the light notion of uncertainty wouldn't go unnoticed by him.

"Good morning, Sara," he replied rather formal. "Did you sleep well?" he added in what he hoped to be a conversational tone. He avoided looking in her eyes and stared at his coffee pot as if seeing something interesting within.

She sighed inwardly. It couldn't be true that he backed off again, could it? "I slept fine, thanks. And you?" she asked him, reaching for a bagel and then began to cut it open.

"I slept fine, too." He decided for a slice of bread and scrambled eggs.

An awkward silence filled the room while they started with breakfast.

Grissom searched in his mind to find a conversation topic but failed. What could he say that wouldn't be too general or too intimate?

It was the wrong time to tell her that she looked beautiful in her jeans and the blue pullover, her hair pulled back in a ponytail. That he wished she would have slept with him the evening before even if he knew it would have been wrong.

On the other hand, she surely wouldn't want to talk about the weather, work or the seminar. She would think that he made excuses.

He sighed and opened his mouth to finally break the silence as Betty Ann entered the room.

She was in a cheerful mood. She had won her bet with Dottie and told them about her evening.

Half an hour later they were ready to set off for the next part of their journey. Sara agreed to pay their bill while Grissom wanted to stuff their bags into the car.

He stood near the car door and saw that Sara still chatted with Betty Ann. He looked at his watch and found that eight o'clock wasn't late to check in with the lab. Catherine or one of the guys would surely still be there.

He talked to the new daytime receptionist and was connected with Catherine.

"Hi, Grissom. How are you two?"

He had to admit to himself that he was glad about the opportunity to talk with her. Even if their relationship wasn't always easy either, it was another kind of tension unlike the one between Sara

and him. Catherine was one of the best friends he ever had and although she was a complex woman he admired her strength and her honesty.

"Good morning, Catherine. We`re fine. I called to ask if everything is ok at work. Was your jury hearing successful?"

For a few seconds there was silence at the other end of the line. Catherine thought about what she should answer. She hadn't intended to tell him that her hearing was postponed to another day, so she decided that it would be better to distract him from the start.

"Don't tell me you called simply because of work. I know you love your work but whenever you're on business trips we hear next to nothing from you during the first 48 hours. Then you become anxious, but not before. Are you and Sara fighting again?"

She hoped that wouldn't be the case or all her efforts were for nothing.

"No, we aren't fighting," came his reply at that instant. "I only wanted to know how you all are." He knew that this excuse was lame but he didn't want to share the confusion he felt with her. They'd known each other for so long now and she should know that he wouldn't discuss such matters openly with her.

"We`re ok, Grissom. Work is fine and nothing unusual happened during the last few hours." Her voice was unusually soft as if she knew about his inner struggle.

"Nick is here and wants to ask you something so I'll give you through. Grissom, promise me to take care of you." Her tone was earnest.

"I promise," he replied. "Bye, Catherine."

"Bye, Grissom."

She gave the phone to Nick and they talked for a few minutes about some details of Nick's and Warrick's latest case. Afterwards, he shared some words with Warrick too.

As he hung up the phone he thought about his colleagues. He'd known them all for a long time now and acknowledged, probably for the first time, that they were kind of a family for him.

He sighed because he knew that it would be a long way to go for him when he wanted to integrate himself more into the adventure called society.

"What`s wrong, Grissom? Everything all right in Vegas?" Sara stood beside the car and looked at him questioningly.

"Everything's fine. Why do you ask?" He went around the car, opened the door and leaned at the doorframe. He waited for her reply.

"Because of your heavy sigh. It sounded like you have to wear the burden of the world on your shoulders." She smiled lightly.

"Nope it's like I said. Vegas is fine. It's only that you must think that I'm an idiot. Yesterday I tried to kiss you and today I ignore you almost completely."

They both looked surprised at his sudden statement but then Sara started to laugh. It was a hearty laugh, one he hadn't heard for a long time. He looked at her sheepishly and joined in.

"You're absolutely right." She smiled a last time and got into the car. "I think we should start now. It's still a long way to go today."

He nodded even if she couldn't see it and got into the passenger seat. They had agreed that Sara would drive the first part of their journey yesterday.

This time they shared a comfortable silence. He looked out of the window and let his thoughts flow freely.

It was a beautiful morning. The first rays of sunshine illuminated the vicinity of the small city. A light breeze rustled through the remaining leaves on the trees. He could see the dew that moistened the fields. It was a peaceful atmosphere that someone could only find in rural areas. Were he to have a family, he would buy a house in the countryside where he could enjoy such mornings with them.

They were back on the highway as he turned to Sara. "Do you really think that I'm an idiot?"

She turned to him, surprised again but had to focus her attention back on the streets. He could see in her face that she was thinking about how to answer him.

"You can be honest with me, Sara. I'm really interested in your answer," he said quietly.

"Ok let's be honest." Her voice was steady but there was an aggressive undertone.

"I don't think that you're an idiot Grissom, not literally, but sometimes you act like one. I'm so tired of your games. And don't tell me you don't know what I'm talking about."

He wanted to raise an objection but she lifted her right hand in a gesture to be still and listen to her.

"I wish to know how you feel for me and how you want us to proceed in the future. That'll be our last chance, Grissom. I cannot suffer that pain another time. If we don't find a solution for 'this' I'll leave Vegas, although I don't want to." She sounded sad now.

He was quiet for some time, unsure how to react. He knew she was right and that she deserved a far better treatment than what he'd given her the last several months.

"What do you want me to do?" he kept his voice neutral.

"Grissom, I don't want you to do something. I want to talk to you, understand why you acted like you did. What would you do anyway? Raise your magic wand and everything would be fine." She looked at him and shook her head. Her ponytail swung in the rhythm of her movements.

"I have to know what you're feelings are, if you played games with me in the past. I want to know the true reason for your rejections. If you would be honest with me this one time you could give me back a great deal of my inner peace. I'm tired of asking myself the same questions again and again."

A single tear rolled down her cheek. If sadness or anger was the cause, he couldn't decide. He wanted to wipe it away but didn't dare to.

"Sara, I'm so sorry. I never wanted to hurt you." He sounded rueful.

She remained silent so he proceeded.

"You want to know what I feel and so I'll tell you. You know that men are not used to talking about their feelings, don't you?" He tried to ask lightheartedly.

"Yeah I know that and I cannot force you to tell me anything but after all this time I'm desperate. I cannot explain your behavior against me anymore. I have to know what your reason is, Grissom." There was a determination in her eyes that left no place for excuses.

"Ok, let's make a bargain. We'll make a stop at the next service station and then we'll talk. I think that's better than trying to talk when you have to concentrate on traffic. I think I've seen a sign that the next opportunity will be in ten miles."

She nodded in agreement.

After fifteen tense minutes, they reached the service station and Sara parked the car. They got out of the vehicle and started to walk in silence till Grissom started to talk.

He started with a question, "Did you know when you first got my attention?" She shook her head and he continued.

"It wasn't when you asked questions and more questions during the seminar. You were very eager to learn but there had been others like you before." He chuckled lightly and stopped to look at her. The wind, heavier out there, played with some loose strands of her hair.

"It was when you talked to me afterwards; when I saw the same fire of interest burning in your eyes, the interest for science that came from the heart. When I saw how beautiful you are. I knew right then that you were a precious and rare woman. Beautiful, smart, independent, kind and so

much more. You have kind eyes, did you know that?" His gaze was intense and gentle at the same time.

She had difficulty taking her eyes away from his. She would love to tell him how beautiful his eyes were but it was his time to talk and hers to listen.

"I was fascinated with you since then and although we didn't call each other often I thought of you regularly. I dreamed of you Sara, because you were that kind of woman that attracted me. I knew that I was too old for you but I was allowed to dream because you were far away."

He made another pause and looked at the earth. It was as if he had forgotten about her presence, so absorbed he seemed to be in his thoughts.

"But then you came to Vegas and everything changed. You were near me, you were real and so often I had the impression that you were attracted to me too. But that couldn't be, it mustn't be. I was your supervisor and too damned old. What could I offer you? I'm socially inept, not very attractive, stubborn and so much else what a young woman like you should not endure."

He looked at her again, his gaze pleading her to understand.

"I'm drawn to you Sara. You mesmerize me to no end. But I'm afraid. Afraid to do anything wrong, to hurt you. That's why I reject you. I want you to be happy but I'm persuaded that I could never give you that." He turned around, didn't want to look her in the eyes anymore.

Sara was speechless. She may have begged Grissom to be honest with her, but she would never have expected him to answer her so openly. She had thought of so many reasons why he kept a distance between them but she would never have guessed that he was afraid. It was sad, he had always wanted her to be happy but had hurt her with his efforts.

She made two steps into his direction and stood almost directly behind him. Her hand reached out for him. She gently touched his shoulder.

"Thank you." Her voice low and trembling. Her soft touch sent a shiver running down his spine. She had an effect on him like no woman he had known before. Even such a light touch could wake a longing in him.

"You deserve to know the truth and so much more." His voice was hoarse.

He turned around to tell her that they should head back to the car but hadn't considered that she stood so near. She looked so beautiful and vulnerable. Before he could think about it any further he leaned forward and placed a light kiss on her lips. For a short moment he let his lips rest on hers.

It took all of his will but he pulled away from her.

"We have to go." She could hear the regret in his voice.

"Yeah you're right. Let's go." In silence, they walked to the car. She could still feel the soft sensation of his lips on hers.

He had his hands in his pocket and was silent. He felt emotionally drained by his confession. He felt vulnerable. She could use her knowledge to hurt him and he didn't know if he could bear it. There he was, a man of 47 years who had less experience with matters of the heart than the average teenager.

They reached the car and merged back into traffic. As if they had made a silent agreement they didn't talk about their conversation for the rest of the morning.

Instead, he told her about his teaching experiences and they tried to find a topic for Sara's lecture.

He suggested she should talk about the problems that forensic squads had to face when they had to process a scene in open fields especially when a lot of people were involved.

They reached their destination late in the afternoon. Although the city was bigger than Stockton had been it had a more rural touch. The houses were spread about a greater area and the atmosphere was somewhat dull. Heavy, dark clouds darkened the sky. It was nearly calm.

"Do you think there will be a storm?" Sara asked.

"I'm not sure but it shouldn't make any differences. We'll hide in our hotel and make ourselves a comfortable evening." He smiled at her.

Their accommodation for the night was a small hotel.

"It probably won't have the cozy atmosphere of Betty Ann's but I think it will be sufficient for one night," Grissom stated.

She raised an eyebrow at his dry remark. "Forget about the cozy atmosphere. I'll be content when they have a room with a bed and shower."

They found their hotel without problems for it was directly near the main street. The building had five stories and looked functional without the slightest personal touch.

They parked at the hotels parking lot and took their baggage. The clerk scrutinized them uninterested. He was obviously more enthralled by forcing his chewing gum into different shapes. He was around thirty years and his skin was mouse colored.

Grissom and Sara looked at each other and could see the same disgust at such a view in each others eyes.

Although it seemed that the man didn't know more than three words: jope, nope and something that sounded like: mmpf they finished the formalities in less than five minutes.

Before they departed they agreed to meet at the reception in one hour and to search for a restaurant where they could grab themselves something to eat. They both didn't want to taste the hotel's kitchen.

The interior of their rooms at the third floor were better than they had assumed. They both had comfortable looking beds, a dresser as well as a little sideboard with a television. The bathroom

contained a washbasin and a shower. The rooms were painted in a light yellow and the bathrooms were tiled in azure.

While Sara took a shower, Grissom decided to drive into town to find a pharmacy. He'd a strong headache for few hours now. It wasn't a migraine yet but the pain was heavy enough to disturb him.

He asked the clerk for directions and used the few minutes during the drive to think about what had happened this morning. He never had been so open since his childhood when his mother was able to get everything out of him. He was unsure what the future would bring them, what would happen during the next days. He felt like he had lost control about this situation.

At the pharmacy he grabbed himself a package of Advil and got in line. There were at least five persons in front of him. There had to be a series of cold in town because the people were coughing and sneezing. He let his thoughts wander.

He was still afraid that he could hurt Sara or she him, but on the other side, the wish to be with her grew stronger with every passing hour.

He thought about her look, her soft brown eyes, her generous mouth, her curly hair and her slim and wonderful body. The kiss this morning had felt so right and he would love to repeat that experience.

He stopped his thoughts, it was hard enough not to rush things as it was. He focussed back on his surroundings. Only two people stood before him now. His eyes wandered about the different products, the medicines in the shelves, the different kinds of bonbons and bath essences.

His eyes got stuck on the condoms and he blushed. The thought to sleep with Sara had crossed his mind several times, but more like a dream not like an experience he could make in the future.

On the other hand things had developed so fast in the last days that he couldn't rule out the possibility that it would eventually happen sometime soon. He was startled by the mere thought

but it was definitely possible. He didn't know if Sara used some kind of protection but didn't suppose that she did.

Should something happen between them he would like to be prepared. Before he could argue any further he grabbed for a package of condoms and tried to steady his breathing. He could feel his heart beating faster than normally.

"You can hand me the condoms now. Do you wish something else?" The young woman behind the counter looked at Grissom. Her eyes twinkled.

He looked through the room and saw that it was indeed his turn. There were three persons behind him that grinned at the woman's remark.

He blushed and had to clear his throat. He laid the condoms on the counter.

"No thank you."

The shop assistant grinned at him and he paid both products and went out of the shop as fast as he could. The condoms seemed to burn holes into his trousers.

He drove back to the hotel to take a quick shower before he would meet with Sara. He put the condoms into his travel bag, but stuffed one into his wallet.

He took one of his headache pills and left the room.

Sara already waited for him downstairs. They decided to walk to the Indian Restaurant that was located only two blocks away. From the moment he met her in the lobby he was too embarrassed to look her in the eye.

He was a fool to believe that she could want him.

She noticed his strange behavior and wondered what had happened in the last hour. She assumed that he felt still uncertain about their un-relationship or whatever she should call it. She was unsure herself.

She thought that an action sometimes could tell more than words and took his arm. He stiffened beside her.

"Grissom what's the matter?" she watched him curious.

"It's nothing. I've a headache and don't feel all too good." He smiled at her apologetically and hoped that she wouldn't see that he was more embarrassed than ill.

"Do you need some headache pills? I have some at the hotel?" she asked compassionately and squeezed his arm gently.

"No, thanks. I drove to a pharmacy and bought a package myself. I didn't want to disturb you because I thought you would most probably take a shower."

He felt relieved that she believed him the story with the headache and to be honest it wasn't a lie. There was no way that he would tell her the whole story.

"What a pity. That would have been your chance to see me in nothing other than a thin towel," she joked. Her eyes twinkled mischievously.

He knew that she only made fun of him but didn't know how to respond. He would love to see her slim body wrapped in a towel or even without it but he knew that it wasn't the time or the place to tell her that.

"I'll try to remember it next time," he said finally.

She laughed and let go of his arm. They had reached their destination.

The restaurant was small but comfortable and they both decided for a vegetarian meal. Grissom was surprised how good it tasted. Their conversation flowed easily.

Because she had told him about her childhood in the B&B during their drive yesterday he decided to tell her about his childhood in return. It hadn't always been easy. His mother as a single parent had to work hard but she was always there when he needed her.

Things became more complicated when she became deaf but like everything else they coped with the new situation. All in all he had been an easy child, strange but never aggressive. Strange because of his fascination with bugs. Even as a small child he could always be distracted by bugs and flies. No toy could be as interesting as his small living creatures.

Sara was a good listener and he enjoyed sharing the stories of his past with her. She laughed when he told her about the various presents he gave his mother, most often they had six or eight legs. Back then he couldn't understand why his mother wasn't as fond of insects like he was.

She had tears in her eyes when he told her about the beginning of his mothers deafness when he was almost five. They both were still beginning to learn ALS and sometimes the only form of conversation were looks and gestures because he couldn't write yet.

It was late and they went back to the hotel. Grissom had the feeling that he had done the right thing. It was necessary that they got to know each other better if they wanted to find a way into the future together.

Before her room Sara turned to him. Her eyes were gleaming. He was unsure what she expected from him.

She smiled a small smile and this time it was she who kissed him. He could feel her soft lips on his. His skin tingled where her lips had touched him. The kiss was only little longer than the one this morning.

He wanted to kiss her back but didn't do it. He knew that he would want more if he did.

She slowly pulled away from him.

"Good night, Grissom." She turned around and opened her door.

"Good night, Sara," he said to a half closed door.

He went to his own rooms, his thoughts circling around the most precious thing in his life, Sara.

TBC