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Title: On the road again

Disclaimer: I don't own CSI, or any of the characters. I only borrow.

A/N: Thanks for all the nice reviews. I appreciate them very much!

I have to thank you my beta and life-saver KmNO4 who beta-ed this chapter in her unique and beautiful style. Without her my muse and I would be lost!

Chapter five: Day four – Evanescence CD

Grissom woke up because of the persistent ringing of the nearby telephone. Tiredly, and without opening his eyes, he grabbed for the receiver.

"Yes."

"Good morning Dr. Grissom. You ordered a wake up call. It's seven o'clock," the cheerful voice of the receptionist greeted him.

"Thank you," was all he managed to get out in reply.

"You're welcome. Have a nice day, Sir," and with that the friendly and obviously wide awake employee hung up.

Grissom slowly put the phone down before allowing himself another five minutes in bed. Usually he had no problems getting up, but today he felt deeply exhausted and to be brutally honest, very old. Yesterday's work with Henry had been strenuous and after his unexpected encounter with the stranger coming out of Sara's room, it had taken him a lot longer than normal to fall asleep.

Instead of taking the shower he had been looking forward to and getting seven hours of undisturbed rest, Grissom had sat on the chair beside his bed with a glass of whiskey gripped tightly in his fist while the same two questions revolved around his aching head.

Who was that guy? And what was he doing in there with Sara?

But both questions had too many possible answers and he allowed himself to brood over the images created by his jealous mind as he listened for the emergence of any tale-tell sounds from her room. *Hadn't he said he'd be back in ten minutes?* But despite his intense listening, Grissom didn't hear the faintest sound. *Was that a good sign, or not?* At two o'clock in the morning he finally conceded defeat and went to bed.

He sincerely hoped that today wouldn't begin with his worst nightmares coming true. After dressing and leaving his room for breakfast, Grissom paused in front of Sara's door wondering if he should knock, but the prospect of finding a half-dressed stranger in there firmly put him off the idea.

When he entered the breakfast room he did a quick scan of his surroundings just in case the woman in question was already up, but Sara was nowhere to be seen. Gil chose a table by one of the wide, bright windows and although it was relatively early, there was still a considerable clientele scattered about the place. He was sure that a few were there for the seminar, but Grissom didn't see any familiar faces.

A friendly, young waitress came to his table and he ordered some coffee and orange juice. When she arrived with the hot, bitter liquid he took a couple fast sips before he got up and went over to the breakfast buffet where he helped himself to scrambled eggs and bacon with two slices of French toast.

He had just started on his eggs when he saw Sara entering the room. In contrast to him she seemed to have slept well and radiated nothing but energy. It reminded him of the first time he saw her after her arrival in Vegas, and a pang of jealousy tightened his stomach. *Wasn't she because of him, or had that changed over the years?*

"Morning Grissom," she smiled, approaching and taking a seat.

"Hello Sara," he returned, "did you sleep well?"

Gil tried to match her friendly tone, but his voice emerged cold and sarcastic. She raised one sceptical brow in response.

"Yes, thank you."

Following this they returned to their token stony silence as Sara ordered a coffee of her own, and made a trip to the buffet table to fetch some toast and fresh fruit. Grissom knew she was angry, but he was too and this ill-temper only escalated as a familiar red haired man came up to their table.

"Hi Sara," Horatio grinned. "How are you?"

"Great," she beamed.

"I guess you must be Gil," the man extended a friendly hand towards Grissom. "I'm Horatio Caine from the Miami Crime lab.

"Pleased to meet you," the slightly older man lied.

"Will you join us?" Sara asked suddenly, ignoring her supervisor's warning glare.

Horatio winked at her as he sat down.

"How could I refuse the invitation of such a beautiful young lady?"

Gil felt his temper begin to rise, and engaging in some kind of dominant stupidity would definitely be a factor if he stayed much longer.

"Excuse me, I have some paperwork to complete before today's seminar," he said before making a hasty exit.

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The seminar started forty minutes later. They gathered in a spacious conference room where the tables had been pushed to the walls to give them room to set up the chairs in a large circle. Sara sat between Grissom and Horatio, counting the participants; she noted that there were exactly twenty people in attendance, fifteen men and five women.

They were in middle of first introductions, but Sara's attention kept on straying. She was dying for a few minutes alone with Grissom. It was obvious that they needed to talk. He had shown his feelings for her over the past couple of days but now it seemed that love had turned to jealousy. *Did he know Horatio had kept her company last night?*

She saw no other reason for his blantly hostile attitude towards an otherwise innocent man.

All of sudden Sara felt Grissom poke her lightly in the ribs. She looked up and saw that every eye in the room was turned towards her. Obviously she was meant to be introducing herself. A light blush crept across her cheeks as she took a deep breath and began to talk. She was used to feeling humiliation and had learned that the best way to overcome it is to just keep trucking on.

After that fiasco was over, Mr. Wood explained their task of the day and he was just as impressive as Sara had expected. Henry was almost seventy years old with a phenomenal stature. His intelligent gaze was a little unsettling at times and in this way he reminded her of Grissom. He paired her with Horatio for the rest of the session to look into the logistics of 'Forensic Anthropology' before reporting their findings back to the group.

There was something about the constant disapproving looks from Grissom that made Sara want to slap him, and kiss him all at once. Lunch time arrived and she decided to skip it in favour of a short walk, but just as she reached the door of the seminar room a hand fell upon her shoulder.

"Eat with me," a deep voice demanded, "we need to talk."

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Twenty minutes later, Sara found herself in a little niche at the back of a bustling Chinese restaurant. She pretended to be fascinated by the décor, but found her eyes constantly reverted back to the man sitting across from her.

"I'm sorry you think that I'm afraid to be seen with you," Grissom began.

"What—"she attempted to interrupt.

"Just hear me out," he pleaded.

Sara rolled her eyes, but nodded.

"I'm just not very good at personal relationships."

"Me too," she sighed.

A waiter arrived and placed two plates full of spring rolls in front of them, one vegetarian and one with meat. They said nothing but thanks, until he left.

"I wasn't aware you knew Horatio Caine," Gil said quietly.

"Oh, so this is what it's all about!" Sara exclaimed. "It was stupid of me to assume that you actually wanted to discuss the two of us."

"I saw him leave your room last night," Grissom soldiered on.

"I don't believe you!" She huffed. "Are you scared that I made out with you in the morning and jumped in to bed with another guy that night?"

"I'm not saying that," he whispered, trying to encourage Sara to lower her voice also.

"Then what are you bloody saying!" She bellowed, before throwing down her fork and rushing out of the restaurant in her hurry to be rid of Grissom and his infuriating third degree. That man could turn a sane woman crazy and Sara Sidle wasn't about to let that happen to her.

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For the rest of her break Sara wandered around in the small park behind the hotel and tried to clear her head. Even if she forgot about any personal interest in this trip, she had to spend the next seven days with Grissom and it would end in a catastrophe if they couldn't reach some kind of common ground.

Sara had been sitting back in the seminar for half an hour before Grissom snuck back into his seat. He didn't look directly at her, but she felt his gaze whenever he thought she wasn't paying

attention. It was dusk by the time they finished exchanging information on their various topics and tomorrow would signal the beginning of more strenuous outside activities.

"So," Henry began. "We will each use our new area of expertise to investigate the subsequent crime scenes we encounter over the next few days. Every professional will be looking at the case from a different angle---"

Sara didn't hear the rest because Horatio was whispering in her ear. A quick nod and she had accepted his invitation for dinner that night in the hotel's restaurant. Grissom could think what he liked, she was sick of trying to fathom him out and now all she wanted was to try and have a nice uncomplicated meal for once. *Was that too much to ask for?*

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Grissom had been pacing his room for almost twenty minutes and he still hadn't decided what to do. He knew that he had to apologise to Sara, but he feared her reaction. Now that she was sitting at dinner with Horatio, there was no way that he could bring himself to join them. The thought of watching Caine hit on Sara made his skin crawl.

Gil knew he'd been a total jerk earlier, but he blamed it on a bad case of verbal diarrhoea.

He had been so near to getting what his weak little heart had been yearning for and now those hopes were being dashed by his foolishness. Sara was attractive; Grissom knew that more than anyone, of course Horatio would want to go after her. In fact he was surprised that she had stayed single in Vegas for so long, they were certainly queuing up for her attentions at the lab.

He couldn't let his jealous control him or they'd never get anywhere.

In the end, Grissom decided to go with a remodelled form of Catherine's plant suggestion. It had worked then, *why not now?* He went out to a nearby store and came back thirty minutes later with a small package, which he carefully placed in front of Sara's door.

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Sara and Horatio parted company at the elevator. She was looking forward to a nice, hot bath and a long sleep. The message seemed to have gotten across to Horatio loud and clear. He had been sweet about it, but looked a little disappointed.

As she arrived at her room Sara was surprised to find a small parcel lying in front of her door. She picked it up and looked it over with a curious eye, but decided not to open it until she was inside. Sara switched on the light, slipped off her shoes and sat down on the bed to unravel the gift.

A gasp of surprise escaped her, when she saw the shiny cover of a new Discman complete with Evanescence's latest album. *Who could have guessed she was thinking about buying it after getting 'Fallen' stuck in her head?* A white sheet of paper tucked inside the CD revealed all.

Sara,

During the last two days I know I've screwed up too many times to count. I'm so sorry and I wish I could take it all back, but I can't.

Please give me one last chance to explain why I act the way I do. I just want us to understand each other a little better.

I hope you like the CD, I wouldn't know this group from Adam, but if you like it then I'm sure it's great. I have it on good authority that track four is pretty good.

Please come by and see me tonight,

Grissom

Sara read his words at least three times before she laid the piece of paper aside. She was touched by Gil's awkward gesture; he was trying to pay attention and do the right thing. *Maybe it was fair to give him another opportunity to get things right?* But before going over to see him there was time for a quick song and a shower. Track four it was.

When you cried I'd wipe away all of your tears

When you'd scream I'd fight away all of your fears

I held your hand through all of these years

But you still have all of me

TBC