

This Love Will Never Be Convenient

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This Love Will Never Be Convenient

by [snnycarisi](#)

Summary

“You- you have a daughter? You, Rafael Barba, are the father to a human person?” He knew he sounded stupid, but this really had caught him completely off guard. He racked his brain for any possible time Barba had mentioned a child and he came up empty.

or, when single dad Rafael asks Sonny to babysit for him.

Notes

This is going to be kind of long but I haven't finished writing yet so I'm not sure exactly how long. Anyway. Stay tuned for (hopefully regular) updates!

Thanks to icedcoffeebro for betaing this chapter :^)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

For the first morning in far too long, Sonny had no alarm set to wake him up. Overtime had been kicking his (and everyone at SVU's) ass lately, especially considering his 'new guy' status, and today was to be the day he used some of his well-deserved days off. However, at 6:04am (eleven minutes *before* his alarm would usually go off) his phone began vibrating viciously on the nightstand where he had left it. By the fourth ring, Sonny grumbled to himself and reached for the phone, straining his tired eyes for the 'answer' button. Without looking at the caller I.D. he mumbled out a greeting he hoped was audible.

"You like kids, right?" The voice coming through the speaker was unmistakably Rafael Barba's, and yet Sonny still pulled the phone away from his ear to check. Barba was a man he had only just begun to consider an acquaintance, someone who he had thought hated him at least a little bit, so why he was calling at six o'clock in the morning was very unclear to his barely awake mind.

There was probably a way to express his confusion eloquently, but in the moment Sonny settled for, "huh?"

"I'm in court this morning and my sitter just flaked out on me." Now that Sonny was more awake, he could hear the stress and slightly frantic tone in Barba's voice. He was still, however, completely and utterly confused.

"Sitter? What, you got an incredibly spoiled dog or somethin'?"

Barba huffed through the phone, and Sonny could tell he was attempting to control his frustration and keep his voice neutral. "No, detective, I have a *child* that I can't leave alone all day, and I would appreciate it if you didn't call her spoiled."

Sonny was thankful then, that this conversation was happening over the phone as he swore his jaw hit the floor.

"You- you have a daughter? You, Rafael Barba, are the father to a human person?" He knew he sounded stupid, but this really had caught him completely off guard. He racked his brain

for any possible time Barba had mentioned a child and he came up empty.

“Once again your detective skills astound me.” He was being short, rude almost, but Sonny really wasn’t giving him much to work with and he couldn’t exactly blame him. “Look, I’m desperate and Liv told me you had the day off and I should call you. If you don’t want to help me out, that’s fine. But tell me now so I can stop wasting my time.”

Then, it clicked in his head. “Wait, you’re asking me to babysit for you?”

“No, I’m just telling you about my dilemma because I thought it might amuse you.” Sarcasm dripping through his words- Sonny could just *see* Barba rolling his eyes at him.

He then pulled himself out of bed and started towards the bathroom to get himself ready for the day he hadn’t planned on having. “Alright, alright, relax. Text me your address and I’ll be there as soon as I can, okay?”

“Thank you.” Barba sighed, and hung up.

In the shower, Sonny let the whole exchange wash over him. Barba had a child. A daughter. Sonny had sacrificed his day off to look after this little girl he had never met without even thinking twice about it.

Pretty much everyone in his life told him he was too nice, and too willing to go above and beyond for those who wouldn’t do the same for him solely because he thought it was the right thing to do, but this wasn’t really one of those situations. So maybe he had a little (huge) crush on Barba. But who wouldn’t? He was incredibly smart, passionate about his work, seeking justice for those who needed it, he was confident and clearly had an eye for fashion, and on top of it all he was stunningly handsome.

The fact that Barba teased him and poked fun at him almost constantly, while never showing any signs that he respected Sonny was irrelevant. He was more than willing to drop everything and babysit for this man, maybe it would make them become closer and even earn him the respect he so desperately craved.

But a child, well, that probably meant he was married, and even worse, straight. He probably had a badass lawyer wife and they were raising the future Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He probably had a nice apartment with plenty of room for the kids (maybe there were more than one) to scamper around in and a nice office for Barba and his wife to pour their amazing minds into opening statements. He probably had no interest in Sonny at all, and would be offended by him even thinking it was a possibility. But Barba didn't seem the homophobic type, and Sonny found himself shamefully praying he was divorced.

He did wonder what Barba would be like as a father, though. Obviously they weren't close, but he almost couldn't imagine seeing him with a softer side, at least not soft enough to father a little girl, especially if her mother was out of the picture. But clearly, there was a lot he didn't know about Rafael Barba.

He arrived at Barba's (smaller than he would have expected) apartment at exactly 7:00am. As soon as he pressed the buzzer, he was let in, as if Barba had been standing by the door waiting for him. When he made it up to the front door, Barba threw it open, standing in front of him in his dress shirt, striped, pink suspenders and navy slacks but without a tie or suit jacket- it took everything in Sonny not to start drooling.

"Mornin'." He mumbled, feeling a little uncomfortable as he stepped inside, not-so-subtly scanning the place for signs of another adult living there. But there was only one set of keys in the bowl next to the front door, and the coat rack held Barba's many coats, and two much smaller ones, belonging to his daughter.

"Okay," Barba started, his gaze darting everywhere across the room except for Sonny's eyes as he prepared his speech. "Her name is Alicia and she's four. Her usual babysitter takes her to the park down the street- you can't miss it, Al can probably even give you directions- and let her play for the morning. Bring her back here for lunch and just ask her what she wants, obviously listen to her within reason, if she asks for chocolate cake or something-"

“Barba, I know how kids work, I’ll make sure she’s eating healthy, okay?” He fought to keep the smirk off his face, Barba being so flustered really was a sight for sore eyes and honestly, it was kind of cute.

“Right, yes, you know what you’re doing.” He began pacing around the small living room in which they were standing. “She’s allergic to peanuts, though, so please, for the love of God, do *not* make her a PB&J. Alright, so after lunch just let her play around here, she can read or play with her toys, whatever. But no T.V. until I get home- which should be around five, by the way.”

Sonny mentally took note of all of this, still casually looking around and taking in his surroundings. The place was not what he expected Barba’s home to look like- instead of looking straight out of a catalogue it was well lived in. It was slightly messy, with shoes (both his and Alicia’s) spread throughout the living room and clusters of toys that hadn’t been put away properly, but it wasn’t dirty and really just looked like anyone could have lived there.

“That sounds good, counselor, when do I get to meet her though?”

Rafael nodded, which didn’t really answer his question, and strode off to a room down the corridor he could only assume was Alicia’s room.

A minute or so later, he emerged with a little girl in Spongebob pajamas in his arms. Tight, dark curls clung to her small head and her dark skin stood out against the pale colour of Barba’s shirt. At first glance, one would struggle to see how the pair were related, but looking closer, Sonny saw Alicia’s sleepy eyes shone the exact same colour as her father’s. Her ears peaked into a slightly elfish shape and her nose was so distinctively Barba’s that Sonny felt stupid for not seeing it straight away.

Barba shifted and balanced the little girl on his hip so that her eyes met Sonny’s, until she shied away and buried her face in her father’s shoulder.

“Alicia, this is Sonny, he’s gonna take care of you today because Louisa is busy. Be good, conejita, okay?”

Barba's voice was so soft talking to her that Sonny almost didn't recognise it as his voice. He wouldn't admit it, but hearing that made his heart sing and every small worry he harboured for this child's well-being flew out the window.

"Stay, Papá." She mumbled sleepily, still pressing her face into Barba's shoulder. He shot Sonny a sheepish look, then placed her down on the ground in front of him, kneeling to her level.

"I can't, baby, I'm sorry. Here's a deal: be good for Sonny today and he'll take you to get ice-cream," he paused, looking over at Sonny who smiled and nodded, "and tomorrow night we can stay up past bedtime and watch a movie, what do you think?"

Sonny almost burst out laughing, even at home Barba was such a lawyer. He also reluctantly admitted to himself that he was a little turned on by how incredible Barba was, not that this was news to him.

Alicia considered this proposition for a moment, her weary expression so much like her father's it was a little scary, and then giggled and clapped her hands together.

Barba smiled a real, genuine smile that left butterflies fluttering up in Sonny's stomach, and kissed her on the cheek. "niña buena."

"Thank you, Carisi. I really do appreciate it a lot--"

"It's all good, don't worry about it. Go to work, don't be late."

Barba smiled gratefully and disappeared into his bedroom, emerging fully dressed and with a briefcase in hand.

"I'll see you later." He then directed his gaze to the little girl. "Love you, Al, be good."

The second the door closed behind Barba, the smile left Alicia's face and she once again began to frown wearily at Sonny. He crouched down to her level, still keeping a reasonable amount of distance between them so as not to frighten her.

"Hi Alicia, my name's Sonny and I'm gonna look after you today. I'm a police officer and I work with your papá,"

Her eyes lit up, "like Aunty Liv?"

Sonny had known Barba and Olivia were close, but hearing the lawyer's child call his boss her aunty shocked him momentarily. His smile then began to grow, after all, he knew how much the lieutenant loved children.

"Yeah, just like her. She's my friend too."

She was quiet then, like she was processing this information while still studying his face cautiously. Then, she nodded and tottled off to the box of plastic dinosaurs that sat underneath the television stand. Alicia was so much like her father, Sonny thought, he'd never met a child that held as much middle-aged man energy as her. It was adorable, though, and he was actually excited to spend the day with her.

After an hour or so, Sonny managed to convince Alicia to get dressed into the clothes he'd laid out for her (navy shorts and a frilly yellow top that looked far more expensive than a four-year-old would need, but Sonny wouldn't have expected anything less) and the pair made their way out into the street in search of the park. Alicia seemed to know where she was going and Sonny allowed her to lead the way with her tiny hand in his.

"Is your name Carisi?" She asked, seemingly out of nowhere. Sonny was only slightly taken aback- he figured she must have heard Barba talking to him before he left.

“Yeah it is sweetheart, but that name’s for grown-ups, you can call me Sonny.”

“Sonny,” she started, looking puzzled. “Papá said Carisi was pretty, but you’re a boy, how can you be pretty?”

Sonny froze. “What?” He spluttered out.

Alicia, not understanding that his disbelief didn’t stem from him thinking she was lying, stared indignantly at him. “He did! I heard him talking to Aunty Liv and he said Carisi was ‘too damn pretty’, but damn is a bad word and I’m not meant to say it.”

He felt his face heating up and his guts began to churn as he pictured this scenario in his head. Barba, who he had thought was always annoyed with him because he found his personality irritating, was possibly annoyed about his own attraction to the detective. How could he have missed this? Clearly, what he had learned about human nature in the interrogation room didn’t exactly cover how to tell when a coworker thought you were attractive, and all the teasing he received from the older man had been pigtail-pulling all along.

And the worst part was that his boss had known about it the whole time.

Where before he had thought he didn’t stand a chance with Barba, he was beginning to feel a little more hopeful. Maybe he was reading too much into this, but right now he didn’t care.

“You’re right, ‘damn’ is a bad word and no more sayin’ it, okay?” He replied after momentarily forgetting about the little girl’s presence.

“Okay.”

“Thank you. And Alicia, boys can be pretty too.” Alicia giggled when he said this, her footsteps becoming all the more bouncy. After coming out of her shell a bit more, she really was such a bright and happy kid.

“Does that mean girls can be handsome?” She asked, a sing-song lilt to her voice.

“Of course!” Sonny replied as enthusiastically as possible- it always made him feel good to contribute to breaking down the way all children seemed to think about gender.

“Yay! I’m handsome! I’m handsome, right Sonny?” She began skipping, dragging Sonny along with her towards the playground that was now in sight. Sonny laughed and did his best to make sure she didn’t get too excited and run too far ahead of him.

“You’re the most handsome, Alicia.”

At the playground, Sonny hung back with the other parents, keeping an eye on where Alicia was and chatting with the parents around him- who happened to mostly be older moms, all very interested in how a bright, young thing like him could be anyone’s dad. He was very quick to correct them.

After an hour or so, he decided Barba would probably appreciate some photos of his daughter, just to see that she was alive and well and that he could trust Sonny with her. It wasn’t that he doubted the lawyer’s trust in him, he just knew Barba was a worrier, and a little affirmation couldn’t hurt.

It also gave him a reason to snap some shots of the adorable child to send to his sister with the text attached reading,

S: Hey, Bells. You might not believe this but the guy I’m into has left me with his kid (who I didn’t know existed until this morning) for the day cause he’s working. But look how cute she

is!

A few minutes later his screen lit up with Bella's contact name.

B: OMG!!! No mom?

S: Don't think so

B: Well whatcha doin? Husband him already!

Sonny chuckled at her enthusiasm. It wasn't bad advice, though, and he did intend on putting moves down on Barba sooner rather than later. But for now, he would sit there on the park bench watching Alicia play next to a skinny blonde mother, watching her son hawkishly as he went down the slide.

The rest of the day went smoothly. Alicia played until lunchtime when Sonny took her home and they ate cheese sandwiches together on the apartment's tiny balcony, pointing out all the landmarks they could see from the building. After lunch, Alicia brought out a box full of dolls and dumped them on the floor next to her plastic dinosaurs and begged Sonny to play with her— he, of course, obliged. Later in the afternoon Sonny took her out to get an ice-cream cone; Alicia practically ran the whole way to the shop and it was a wonder he didn't lose her in the crowds of people walking the streets.

By five, when Barba got home, Alicia was happily playing with dolls while Sonny skimmed over some law books he found in the various bookshelves around the apartment, perfectly content with the day-off he'd wasted not studying for his exams.

When Barba opened the door at 5:09pm with a bag of groceries in hand, Alicia jumped up from where she was sitting and barrelled towards the door (the sugar rush from the ice-cream still hadn't worn off, apparently).

“Papá! Me and Sonny had the best day today!” She squealed.

Barba smiled, a real, warm, genuine smile, and scooped up his daughter with the one arm he had free.

“I’m glad, conejita,” he paused and kissed her forehead gently. “I’m gonna start dinner, so I need you to go clean up the living room for me, okay?” The little girl nodded, and trotted off to clean up the explosion of toys that awaited her.

Sonny cleared his throat, feeling as if he was intruding on such a domestic scene, and as though he didn’t belong in the space anymore. His mother had always told him that he feels more comfortable in the presence of children than the other adults, and right now, he guessed she was right.

“Okay, well, I guess I should get going then.” Barba startled slightly at the sound of his voice, like he’d forgotten Sonny was there, further proving that he didn’t belong.

“No, hey, wait, the least I can do is offer you dinner after everything you’ve done for me today,” he started. If Sonny didn’t know better, he’d think the older man was looking for excuses to keep him around. He decided to push it slightly.

“You can cook?”

“Yes, detective, I can. Very well actually,” Feigning offense, Barba scowled in a way that told Sonny he wasn’t really mad. “And now you’re obligated to stay so I can prove how insulting that question really was.”

He didn’t want Sonny to go. He called Sonny that morning in what he claimed was a last resort, but now, he wouldn’t let the detective leave. Sonny fought to keep the grin off his face.

“Well, if you insist. What are we eating?”

“Spaghetti! Spaghetti!” Alicia chimed in from where she was sitting, organising toys into their various boxes. Sonny laughed brightly.

“You got it, kiddo.”

While Barba cooked dinner, Sonny supervised Alicia’s cleaning. He had offered to help in the kitchen, but Barba had just shooed him away, claiming he was a guest and shouldn’t be the one cooking (Sonny suspected the real reason was that he didn’t want the detective’s cooking skills to outshine his own, either way Sonny knew he should probably just do as he was told).

They ate at the dining table, and Sonny had to keep reminding himself that this was real. He was in Rafael Barba’s dining room, eating homemade spaghetti while his four-year-old daughter talked their ears off recounting her day. If anyone had told him yesterday that this is where he would be spending his Wednesday night in domestic Barba bliss, he would have laughed them off.

The way Barba interacted with Alicia just made Sonny want to melt. He was so gentle, he knew exactly how to make the kid feel like she was telling the most interesting story in the world, when really it was just a long-winded account of her run-in with another child at the swing set, he was stern when he needed to be but his love for her just oozed out of him. It only left Sonny wanting to grab him by the collar and pull him into a kiss so passionate, it left them both dizzy.

Safe to say, he didn’t do this.

When they’d all finished eating, Sonny could have left, and Barba probably would have run out of reasons to keep him there. But the prospect of being alone with the older man once Alicia had gone to bed was all too appealing.

That was how he ended up sitting shoulder to shoulder with Barba on the couch, a glass of scotch in hand (not his drink of choice, but it was all there was) and his cheeks turning rosy from the liquor he consumed.

“Thank you again for today, Carisi. I don’t know what I would have done without you.”

Sonny gasped in mock-horror. “Wow, you not knowing something? That’s a big compliment.”

“Don’t get used to it.” Rafael said, a small, warm smile lighting up his face. He was even more beautiful when he was in his own space, comfortable and relaxed.

How they had gone from goading each other and being closer to enemies than friends to being so comfortable around each other in the span of a day, Sonny didn’t know. Crisis just brought people together, he supposed. He still knew little to nothing about the older man, and if they were going to be friends (or hopefully more) he figured he should at least try to get to know him better.

He started with the elephant in the room. “So... Alicia’s mom...” Barba just raised his eyebrows and let Sonny flounder for words. “Uh, is- is she still... y’know... in the picture?”

“Carisi, if you want to ask me about my sexuality can you just ask already?” He deadpanned.

Sonny choked on his scotch and felt his face turning red. “What? No I-”

Cutting him off with a loud chuckle, Barba nudged his shoulder against Sonny’s. “It’s okay. But to answer your question, we’re divorced.” He had thought as much, but simply nodded and let Barba continue. “We have been for almost Alicia’s whole life. We just fought all the time and, I don’t know, I guess I was willing to settle for being unhappy. But when our baby girl was born, I knew I couldn’t bring a child into that environment. I know what it’s like to have a... *turbulent* home life. I just couldn’t do that to her, it wasn’t right.”

His honesty surprised Sonny, but hearing that vulnerability in the other man's voice just made him shift closer, resting a hand on his shoulder as a small comfort.

"But for the record, I'm bi." He added, a smile tugging at the corner of his lips.

"Oh, I didn't-" Sonny spluttered, but stopped when Barba shot him a look that told him he wasn't fooling anyone.

But Barba was bisexual, meaning he was attracted to men, meaning Sonny wasn't reading too much into this and meaning maybe he did have a chance after all. A flush crept up his neck and he decided to change the subject before he could embarrass himself further.

"So, uh, you've got full custody? I'm guessing she didn't take the divorce too well after just having a baby,"

"Hm. She took it well enough. Wasn't like she wasn't just as miserable as I was." He seemed to be nonchalant about this whole ordeal, Sonny couldn't help but wonder if it was just an act or if he really had finished dealing with it all.

"But, she doesn't see her daughter at all?" Sonny pushed further, he knew he probably should be a little more careful around such a sensitive topic, he was just so curious.

"Gwen loves Alicia, this is just the way it is." The openness Barba had displayed moments ago was now gone, and his tone told Sonny that if he wanted this budding relationship to continue, he should shut his mouth. So he did.

For a while they just sat pressed against each other on the couch, drinking scotch and enjoying the comfortable silence that filled the room. It was nice, Sonny felt like he'd done this a million times with the older man, and could do it a million more. He so badly wanted to make a move, to kiss him stupid and drag him off to the bedroom down the hall and think about the consequences later, but it wasn't that simple.

Barba was the sole parent to a little kid, who happened to be in the next room over, which meant he had to be responsible. Sonny really wanted it to work out between them, and wouldn't want to settle for a slightly-drunken one-night-stand anyway, so he decided he would ask Barba out, and they could do this properly. Go on a few dates, see where it goes-date like real adults and not horny college students.

It had gone past 9pm, and Sonny figured now was a good a time as any to reluctantly take himself home.

"I should get going, Barba, I'm working tomorrow. We should do this again though,"

"What, you looking after my kid for me?" Sonny laughed brightly, Barba flashing a small, tired smile back.

"No, us hanging out. But Alicia's a really good kid, and anytime you need an emergency sitter, I'm your guy." Barba nodded, and walked Sonny to the front door.

For a moment, he lingered behind the door, not wanting to walk out and end this incredible day. Barba was so close, the temptation to close the gap between their lips was almost overwhelming. Then Barba was leaning in and Sonny panicked. He would do this right, he would not give in to temptation and kiss him, no matter how badly he wanted to.

"Have a good night, Barba." He choked out, opening the front door and feeling like running as far away from the gorgeous man in front of him as possible.

"You too Carisi. And we're not at work, you can call me Rafael."

"Only if you call me Sonny."

Rafael grinned. "Take care, Sonny."

Sonny was glad a cold shower was waiting for him at home.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

“It’s uh,” Rafael sniffled and Sonny swore that sound shattered his heart into a million peices. “I had to fire my babysitter. An expensive watch was missing from my drawer so I confronted her about it and, yeah, she’d stolen it. She was such a good sitter too, fuck, but I can’t have people in my house that I don’t trust. I just don’t know what to do now.”

“Can I come over? I’ll help you find a new sitter.” He said after a long moment of silence.

For another moment, all Sonny heard down the phone was the sound of Rafael’s quicker-than-usual breathing, then, “okay. Thank you.”

Chapter Notes

thanks to everyone that asked for the second chapter of this! I hope it doesn't disappoint... the angst starts picking up a little here but hopefully it's still fluffy enough for you guys lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Just over a week and a half since Sonny babysat Alicia, and not a day had gone by without him talking to Rafael. They texted throughout the day and, if they didn’t see each other at work, they caught up over the phone at night. It was comfortable, and although it had only been a short time, Sonny felt like this had gone on forever. He loved spending time with Rafael, and they just clicked- they could just talk for hours if it weren’t for the various other responsibilities both men had. Rafael had started helping Sonny with night-school and Sonny loved spending time with Alicia after the babysitter had been relieved, while Rafael ran errands. But, the prospect of them becoming more than just friends kept Sonny awake at night, thinking about how and when he would ask Rafael out.

He was almost certain his feelings were reciprocated; a hell of a lot of their conversations throughout the day were flirting disguised as insults, which may seem strange to someone from the outside, but with Rafael, Sonny couldn’t imagine it any other way.

So at half past eleven at night, when Sonny was just getting into bed and his phone started ringing, displaying Rafael's contact name, he was a little confused.

"Hey, Sonny." Something was... wrong. Rafael's voice sounded strained, like he was holding back tears or trying not to panic. Alarm bells rung in the back of Sonny's mind.

"Hey, what's goin' on, you alright?" He lowered his voice, willing it to be as soft as possible and not let his own panic seep through.

"It's uh," Rafael sniffled and Sonny swore that sound shattered his heart into a million pieces. "I had to fire my babysitter. An expensive watch was missing from my drawer so I confronted her about it and, yeah, she'd stolen it. She was such a good sitter too, fuck, but I can't have people in my house that I don't trust. I just don't know what to do now."

"Rafael, if you're asking me to sit for you-"

"No, I know you're working. I'm just so tired, I don't know what I'm doing anymore."

It confused Sonny why the other man was losing it over something so trivial, and it filled him with sadness to hear that the person he looked up to and respected more than anyone else had so little faith in himself. They had been working pretty hard recently, though, so Sonny prayed this outburst of emotion was due to stress or lack of sleep.

"Hey, listen to me, you're a great dad, okay? You should hear the way Al talks about you. And didn't you hire that sitter anyway? You can do it again, you've got this."

"I didn't hire her, Gwen did." His voice was still shaky, and he rarely mentioned his ex-wife's name, so Sonny wondered if this was really about her- he once again prayed it wasn't.

"Maybe you could ask Gwen to help you out, then?"

“Yeah, no, I can’t.” Rafael said firmly, in a way that told Sonny to stop asking questions.

At this point, Sonny was getting slightly annoyed. He was trying so hard to understand what was really going on but Rafael kept backing him into a corner. He knew he shouldn’t push too hard, but he didn’t know what else to do (and if he was honest, he was pretty goddamn curious to hear about why his ex-wife was so distant).

“Why not? I know she’s not super involved in Alicia’s life but-”

“She’s dead, Sonny.”

This changed everything. Obviously he knew there had been something going on with his ex-wife, but her death had not been something Sonny had predicted. It also made a lot of sense, if he thought about it. The way Rafael makes a point of rarely letting anyone into his life and spending every possible moment with the child he generally pretended didn’t exist- Sonny had thought that was just who he was, but these as a symptom of his grief made everything begin to fall into place.

Losing a babysitter was a small thing, granted, but if this was him clinging to one of the only people in his life who had known her, Sonny’s heart dropped thinking of what the ADA must be going through.

“Can I come over? I’ll help you find a new sitter.” He said after a long moment of silence.

“You don’t have to, I’m just overreacting, it’s fine.” Rafael was backpedaling, probably regretting telling Sonny what he did, but Sonny wasn’t going to let him suffer in silence.

“Please just let me help?”

For another moment, all Sonny heard down the phone was the sound of Rafael’s quicker-than-usual breathing, then, “okay. Thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll be there in 15.”

And so, not even bothering to change out of the ratty t-shirt he was wearing and sweatpants that were probably in need of a wash, Sonny called for an Uber and put on his shoes.

The moment Rafael sheepishly opened the door and invited Sonny inside, he felt the knot of worry he had been harbouring since answering the phone loosen. He appeared much calmer than he had on the phone, whether that was because Sonny had misread the situation or he had just calmed himself down, he didn’t know, but really he didn’t care. Rafael was okay, for now at least, and now Sonny was free to spend as much time as he wanted with his friend, which he much preferred to having whatever was on T.V. playing through his quiet apartment as background noise while he fell asleep.

Quietly, they made their way to Rafael’s office, so as not to wake Alicia up. Once the door was closed behind them, Rafael immediately launched into the apology speech he had clearly been planning.

“I shouldn’t have called so late-”

“It’s fine, I hadn’t gone to bed yet anyway.” Sonny interrupted.

“I would have called Liv but, I don’t know, she thinks I’ve been doing a lot better lately and I don’t want her to worry.” Before Sonny had a chance to ponder on what that could mean, Rafael added, “also, she has responsibilities and stuff. Can’t just drop everything to come out here and help me find a new sitter.” The smallest hint of a smile hid behind his eyes and in the corners of his lips.

“Okay, wow! Don’t hold back!” Sonny chuckled, desperately wanting to pull the other man into a bone-crushing hug, but fearing it would be too weird, and so he settled for playfully

punching his shoulder. He did want to make sure Rafael was really alright, though, so he figured it couldn't hurt to ask. "You wanna talk about it at all?"

Rafael dropped himself down onto the plush office chair behind the desk, and motioned for Sonny to sit down on the smaller one next to it (it was probably just an old chair he hadn't gotten around to throwing out, but Sonny quietly giggled at the idea of Alicia sitting there in the afternoons helping her father with paperwork).

"I guess I probably should, I kinda owe it to you--"

"Hey, you don't owe me anything, Rafael. If you wanna tell me I wanna listen, but don't feel like you have to." Sonny's demeanor turned from playful to serious- he had to make absolutely sure Rafael didn't feel obligated to tell him anything.

"I want to." He smiled slightly at Sonny, and although he hated to admit it, the sight filled his stomach with butterflies. "I didn't lie to you, by the way. We were divorced. Well, we were separated for about a year before it was final, the week after the papers were signed, she got t-boned, died on impact. That was two years ago in September."

The fact that Sonny knew Rafael had been with the Manhattan DA's office for two years twisted his guts and he could tell his expression was giving away exactly how he was feeling.

"I'm so sorry, Rafael. That must have been really horrible."

"Yeah, it was." He sniffled, then tried to cover up the sound with a cough. If Sonny had wanted to hug him before, he was just itching to now. "Explaining to a two year old why she can't go to Mamá's house anymore? I would not recommend." The saddest smile Sonny had ever seen came across the other man's face; it almost made him want to look away.

Having to go through that all on his own while also single-handedly raising a child- Sonny would be surprised he had managed it if it was anyone but Rafael. Sure, he put him on a bit of a pedestal, but he had so much respect and admiration for the man, he really believed he could do anything.

“I know losing your wife is hard, but no one ever talks about what it’s like to lose an ex-wife. I can’t imagine it’s much easier.” Rafael added, almost as an afterthought.

Sonny was just at a loss for words. He wanted to provide comfort, to express just how much more respect he felt for the other man, to tell him he was proud, but nothing came out. He just sat there, staring at Rafael dumbfounded, undoubtedly looking like he was about to burst into tears himself (he couldn’t help being so empathetic).

“Anyway. It’s in the past, right? I need to find a sitter pronto or I guess I’m taking a sick day tomorrow.”

Sonny knew he was deflecting, but he decided to let him. “Yeah, okay.”

For the next half hour, they searched through hundreds of Craigslist ads, but every time they called the number displayed in the ad, they were sent to voicemail.

“Sonny, this one is clearly a scam- look at it! We’re not calling this one.”

“Ugh, fine! But we’re still not hiring that white lady who wants to charge fifty bucks an hour,”

“Why not? It’s a little over the top, sure, but it just means she’s good.”

“No it doesn’t! It means she’s ripping you off!”

They argued like this for longer than either would like to admit. It also seemed as if they had forgotten about the little girl asleep in the next room as the volume of their voices increased.

That was, until the patter of tiny feet made their way across the hall and into the office. Both Sonny and Rafael fell silent.

“Papá, I had a scary dream.” Alicia muttered, stumbling towards her father and clambering into his lap. She wasn’t crying, which Sonny noted as a good sign, and she seemed to be mostly still asleep, blinking heavily as Rafael pulled her close and pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

“C'mere, conejita.” He muttered, and tiny arms wrapped around his neck as the little girl still adjusted to her surroundings. “Do you remember what the dream was about?”

She shook her head, still clinging to Rafael. Sonny felt like he could melt from just looking at the pair of them.

Then, her heavy eyes wandered across the room and met Sonny’s. Her whole face lit up as Sonny smiled at her.

“Hi, Sonny.” She mumbled into Rafael’s shoulder. Sonny was so overwhelmed by the adorable sight in front of him, he felt as if his soul was leaving his body.

“Hey there, kiddo.” He replied, giving her a wave to make sure she knew she had his attention.

“Okay, Alicia, time to go back to bed,” Rafael started to stand with the little girl in his arms, shooting an apologetic look Sonny’s way for the distraction. He really didn’t understand just how little of a problem it was to Sonny. “Want me to come tuck you in?”

“Can Sonny do it?” Rafael sighed, then looked towards Sonny for confirmation, who just beamed and stood up, opening his arms for the little girl.

“Okay, sweetheart. Sleep well. Love you.”

“Love you, Papá.” Alicia mumbled, close to falling back asleep in his arms but stirring as she was passed into Sonny’s lanky ones.

As soon as Sonny had a good grip on her tiny body, she flopped, arms lax around his neck and head resting on his shoulder. She really was one of the sweetest, most trusting kids he’d ever met. “C’mon, ‘Licia. Let’s go back to bed.”

In the doorway to the office, Sonny hesitated, looking back at Rafael. There was something in his expression that Sonny just couldn’t place. His eyes were soft, as they always were when looking at his daughter (Sonny knew all parents loved their children, but Rafael held so much of that love in his eyes every time he looked at the little girl, it made warmth bloom inside of Sonny to see) but there was something else there that maybe he was reading too much into. When the other man raised his eyebrows at him, Sonny knew he had been staring too long and smiled bashfully as he walked off down the hall towards Alicia’s room.

As soon as he placed her down on the bed, Alicia curled up into a little ball, clutching a stuffed rabbit to her chest. Sonny tucked in the blankets around her, stroking her cheek lovingly before standing to leave- but before he could, a little hand stuck out and grabbed his sleeve.

“Papá always sings me a song before bed.”

Now that was something Sonny would have paid to see. The idea of Rafael singing a soft, sweet lullaby, his voice low enough for only a single pair of ears to hear, sent shivers down his spine. But he pushed those thoughts out of his mind, and thought hard to find a song he could sing to Alicia that would be appropriate. On the wall above her bed, a drawing of a smiling sun hung. Sonny began mumble out some lyrics.

“ Little darlin, it’s been a long, cold, lonely winter,

Little darlin, it feels like years since it's been here.

Here comes the sun, do do do do,

Here comes the sun, and I say,

It's alright ."

By the end of the chorus, Alicia had drifted off again and Sonny smiled affectionately at the child in front of him.

He made sure his footsteps back into the office were quiet so as not to wake the sleeping girl, but also meaning Rafael hadn't heard him approach the room. As Sonny entered, Rafael startled, his eyes wide and full of tears that had not yet fallen down his face- Sonny felt his stomach drop. For a moment, he worried that him taking care of Alicia had upset the other man, but then noticed he had shut down his computer and was clearly unsuccessful in finding a babysitter for the next day.

"You okay?" He asked, somewhat timidly. He still wasn't sure how much he could ask Rafael without him shutting down but desperately wanted to solve all of his problems, however unrealistic that was.

"Just... frustrated, I guess." Rafael sighed. "Sonny, it's after midnight, this is pointless. I'll just have to take the day off tomorrow."

"You're sure? Because I can help you keep looking,"

"No, it's okay. Thank you, but I don't wanna keep you up too late when you're working in the morning." Sonny had almost forgotten that he was due in the precinct in a few hours, so maybe Rafael had a point.

"Alright. Good luck, just call if you need anything." He made a point of looking the other man in the eyes as he said this, so he knew Sonny absolutely meant it. Sonny was pretty sure he got the picture.

But before he could walk out the door, Rafael called out, “oh, hey wait- do you wanna just spend the night? I feel terrible about keeping you here so long for no reason, the least I can do is spare you a trek across the city this late at night. I’m sure you have a suit you can change into in your locker at work tomorrow?”

Looking over at the older man, he seemed apprehensive, as if he was nervous Sonny would reject his offer or be annoyed at him for forcing him to spend more time there. Of course, Sonny didn’t feel this way at all, and slightly suspected this offer was to disguise the fact that Rafael didn’t want to be alone right now but didn’t want to worry Sonny. He also made a pretty good point about the trip back to Sonny’s apartment, which if he was honest, he was dreading.

Sonny smiled lazily. “You know what? Yeah, that’d be nice, actually. I’ll take the couch?”

“No way, you’re a guest you can take my bed, I’ll sleep on the couch.” Rafael said sternly, to stop Sonny from arguing. But it was a stupid idea and Sonny wasn’t going to let him off that easily.

“Rafael, I’m not kicking you out of your own bed for no reason,” he sighed.

“Well, I’m not letting you sleep on the couch, so you’re going to have to.” Rafael, arms folded and head held high was nothing if not stubborn.

Clearly, Sonny was not going to win this argument, so he decided to go about it differently. “Look, we’re both adults, and I’m sure your bed is probably bigger than a twin sized, right?” Rafael nodded. “Right. So I think we can probably handle sharing a bed as friends without it being weird.”

For a moment, Sonny thought he was going to say no. He felt the shame rising in his chest and wondered if his feelings towards the other man had become too obvious and were making him uncomfortable, and he had misread the banter between them as flirting. But after a moment, Rafael agreed.

That was how he ended up curled up under Rafael's plush bedding as the other man turned off the lights and slipped under the covers next to him. Their bodies weren't touching (Sonny had been right about the size of his bed) but he could feel the heat radiating off the other man as they both muttered 'goodnight' to each other.

No matter how hard Sonny tried, sleep would not take him. He just couldn't stop his mind zooming at 100 miles an hour, thinking about the consequences of where he was right now. Rafael's breathing had evened out a while ago, and the peaceful look on his face (not that Sonny had been staring or anything) made it obvious he was asleep. It would be so easy, *so easy* to just shift a little closer, maybe wrap an arm around him and chalk it up to doing it subconsciously while he slept. Maybe they'd wake up in each other's arms and both realise this is where they needed to be. Maybe he'd lean over and kiss Sonny sleepily, not needing words for them both to understand what was going on. Maybe it would lead to the best morning sex Sonny had ever had.

But that would be wrong, it would be taking advantage of the sleeping man and Sonny couldn't do that. And after tonight, Sonny realised that any move he made, whether asleep or awake, would also be plain wrong. Rafael was grieving, he had lost his wife and was obviously still coming to terms with her death and with being alone. He probably didn't know what he wanted, and even if he was sending Sonny signals that he was interested, Sonny doubted he really meant it.

What he needed was support. From the looks of it, the only people in his life were his mother, daughter, Olivia and Sonny. What he needed was a friend, and he had found that in Sonny, and Sonny sure as hell wasn't going to risk one of the only constructive relationships he'd managed to develop after his ex-wife's death. And even if they did get together, who knows how long it would last with the mindset that Rafael was in. Sonny just didn't think he could put the other man through that.

He enjoyed being friends with Rafael, and as he finally felt himself drifting off to sleep, he found it couldn't hurt *too* badly to settle for friendship. It wasn't as if he really had a choice anyway.

Chapter End Notes

don't forget to leave a comment if you enjoyed! predictions on what's to come are also welcomed....

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Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

“Carisi, nice to see you so early,” Olivia started, smirking as he began to squirm under her gaze. “Big night?”

Chapter Notes

This is kind of a filler chapter, but hopefully still enjoyable !!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sonny had miraculously managed to sneak out of Rafael’s apartment that morning without waking anyone. He was especially proud of the way he untangled his legs from Rafael’s (which had become intertwined with his own at some point throughout the night) without the other man even stirring.

His plan was to get into work early, early enough that no one would be there to witness his just-rolled-out-of-bed attire. Once he got to work he would change into the spare suit he kept in his locker and get an hour or so of studying in before everyone else arrived.

This plan fell through, however, when he walked into the precinct at the exact same time as his boss.

“Carisi, nice to see you so early,” Olivia started, smirking as he began to squirm under her gaze. “Big night?”

Together, they stepped into the elevator, and although Sonny had never been claustrophobic, he was feeling it now.

“Uh, no Lieu, I was actually at Rafa- Barba’s place. He had a... situation. With his babysitter. I went over to help out and it got pretty late so...” Sonny trailed off, staring intently at the buttons of the elevator to avoid the look on Olivia’s face. He thankfully didn’t see how her eyebrows shot up her face or how her jaw slackened in surprise.

“You’re changing I assume?” She asked after a moment. Sonny nodded. “Well, when you’re done, my office?”

Before Sonny could answer, Olivia had already stepped out of the elevator, leaving him standing frozen inside, looking like the world’s biggest idiot.

He was sure Olivia knew about his budding friendship with Rafael- after all, she had been the one to suggest he babysit Alicia in the first place- and he just hoped that whatever she wanted to say to him had nothing to do with that. He also remembered what Alicia had told him about Rafael’s conversation with Olivia, the one that the little girl probably shouldn’t have witnessed, when Rafael had grumbled about how pretty the detective was. Sonny felt his face heating up as he walked to the locker room, just praying that the conversation with Olivia wouldn’t be *too* awkward.

“Carisi, this conversation is me talking to you as a friend and not as your boss, okay?” sitting across from Olivia at her desk while she stared into his soul, Sonny just wanted to melt into the floor.

“Of course.” He replied, attempting to keep up the appearance that this didn’t bother him at all. He was pretty sure she wasn’t buying it, though.

“I’ve seen how close you and Rafael have gotten lately and honestly, it makes me very happy to see him hanging out with people that aren’t me,” she joked, while still letting the sincerity of the statement seep through. “I also haven’t seen him so happy in a while, so thank you for that.”

A twinge of pride surged through Sonny at that last comment. He also had been the happiest he could remember himself being in the short amount of time he'd been friends with Rafael, and he was glad it seemed the other man felt the same.

"Uh, your welcome, I guess." He replied, rubbing the back of his neck. He still just couldn't shake the feeling that he was getting a lecture from his mom, like when he was 15 and his mother had first found out he was dating a boy, so she sat him down and gave a whole spiel about acceptance and how proud she was of him for being himself.

"And you don't have to tell me exactly what you're relationship is right now-"

"Oh it's not- we're not- we're just friends." Sonny interrupted, blushing furiously.

Olivia just smiled at him like she didn't quite believe him, and Sonny wished the apocalypse would hurry up and start so he could at least get out of this room.

"Sure. I just wanted to ask if you knew about his family situation." Olivia rest her elbows upon the desk and clasped her fingers together, still staring intently into Sonny's eyes.

"Yeah. Yeah, I do."

"Right. And I'm not sure how much he's told you about the last two years but... just be gentle. Don't push him, let him lean on you if he needs to."

From that, Sonny figured there was probably quite a bit he didn't know, and it saddened him to think of how much Rafael had gone through the past two years, especially if it was enough to warrant a lecture from Olivia. But he was glad that he was on the right track in terms of not pursuing a relationship, because no matter how much it stung, it would be a million times worse if he was holding back for nothing. This just solidified in his mind that Rafael needed him as a friend, and only a friend.

"Yeah, no, I will." He meant it.

“Sonny, I am glad that you’re in his life now.” Then, the serious look on her face melted away and was replaced by a warm smile. “And as his friend, I think it’s my responsibility to say that if you hurt him, you’re going to regret it.”

“I would expect nothing less.” He chuckled.

Olivia was an incredible boss, mother and apparently friend too, so Sonny thought he owed it to her to show a bit of vulnerability.

“I’m going to do my best. I care about him a lot and I just hope that’s enough.”

“It is. Don’t worry.” Olivia reached out and lightly rubbed his arm. Sonny felt like he could cry. So to keep his emotions in check, he shot her a classic Carisi smile and left her office, sitting at his own desk and pulling a textbook out of the bag he’d left there.

He spent the next few minutes reading the same paragraph over and over again, trying to concentrate but not being able to retain any information. He just couldn't stop thinking about Rafael and Olivia and Alicia and just everything that had happened in the past few days. Giving up on studying, he pulled out his phone, only to see a text message notification from the man himself.

R: Did you manage to sneak into the precinct ok?

Sonny chuckled, trying out a response.

S: Nope. I think I just got The Talk from Liv 🚫

Rafael replied almost immediately.

R: Oh God, what did she say?

Sonny wasn't going to tell him the truth, obviously, it was clear that that talk was meant to be kept between him and Olivia, so he decided to bend the truth a little.

S: Basically asked me to not come into the precinct looking like I've just gotten dick because it's 'unprofessional'.

S: I didn't have the heart to tell her 😊

R: Ouch. At least she doesn't think you need to learn about the birds and the bees?

S: I think I'd rather die than talk about my love life with Liv.

R: Join the club.

Still smiling down at his phone, Sonny decided to change the topic before Rafael could ask more about his talk with Olivia.

S: How's Al?

R: Over the fucking moon that I'm home. I should probably take days off more often.

Sonny could just see the little girl in his head, practically bouncing up and down with excitement about getting a day with her father.

S: I can imagine, I'm sure she's gonna have an awesome day. I gotta get back to work, take care xo

He cursed himself for the 'xo' he typed out without even thinking- he couldn't help being the stereotypically affection Italian that he was- and had pressed send before he could retract it.

He hated the thought that now he was leading the other man on, but figured it probably wouldn't do *too* much damage.

R: You too. Stop slacking and put your phone away.

He laughed out loud at that and did as he was told, putting his phone back in his pocket. At the same moment Amanda walked in, sitting at her own desk and muttering a 'good morning' to him. Sonny shook the thoughts of Rafael from his mind and got ready to do some real work.

Chapter End Notes

chapter 4 is taking longer than i expected so not sure when the next update will be.... but I'm not abandoning this fic!

please comment/leave kudos if you enjoyed

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Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

It was Gwen's birthday, and Sonny was to be accompanying Rafael, Alicia and Olivia to the cemetery to visit her. Sonny and Rafael had only really been friends for about a month, and originally he wasn't going to go at all. But Olivia suggested to Rafael that it might be nice for Alicia to have someone to take her off to play while the adults mourned in peace, and so Sonny immediately came to mind.

Chapter Notes

I didn't edit this properly lol so if there are mistakes let me know

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sonny didn't really know what to expect as he made his way over to Rafael's apartment that morning. He drummed his fingers on the car-door next to him and pondered on what he'd be walking into.

It was Gwen's birthday, and Sonny was to be accompanying Rafael, Alicia and Olivia to the cemetery to visit her. Sonny and Rafael had only really been friends for about a month, and originally he wasn't going to go at all. But Olivia suggested to Rafael that it might be nice for Alicia to have someone to take her off to play while the adults mourned in peace, and so Sonny immediately came to mind.

He thanked the Uber driver and made his way to the front door, which was left unlocked, and went inside. Both Olivia and Rafael were seated on the couch talking, and went silent as Sonny walked in the room.

"Hey, guys." He smiled, then kept walking towards Alicia's room so they could continue whatever it was they were talking about.

Rafael seemed reasonably well put together, his suit was wrinkle-free and face clean shaven; he looked how he would any other day, and Sonny was relieved for that at least. He knew that the day would be hard to get through for the older man, even if he didn't let it on, and Sonny just hoped he could provide as much support as was needed.

Moving out of earshot of the living room, he entered Alicia's room. In the middle of the floor, Alicia sat surrounded by loose crayons, hunched over and intently scribbling a picture of what was probably meant to be a fish.

"Whatcha got there?" He asked, making his presence known.

As soon as Alicia heard Sonny's voice, she jumped up from where she was sitting to cling onto his legs. Sonny laughed and picked her up, pulling the little girl into a proper hug. It never failed to make him smile to see her so happy.

Still giggling in his arms (she had such a cute little giggle, which Sonny had recently noticed was almost identical to her father's, not that he laughed that way often) Alicia tugged on Sonny's sleeve and then pat her own cheek. This was something she had learned when Rafael had told her what 'consent' meant, after hearing him use the word when talking about cases; whenever she wanted a kiss on the cheek, she would tap it, to let everyone know she consented. Sonny thought her new system was very clever, and frankly adorable, so of course he planted a big kiss on the little girl's cheek.

"Come look at my fishy, Sonny!" she squealed, squirming out of his grasp.

Sonny gasped, looking at the mass of scribbles as if it belonged in the Met. "Wowie, isn't that cool! Does it have a name?"

"No, silly, it's just a normal fishy, not a pet fishy. Normal fishies don't have names, they just swim around in the ocean all day."

"Oh, of course, my bad."

Sonny knew at some point he would have to talk to Alicia about today, and why he was there and where they were going, but for now he didn't think it could hurt to sit on the floor with her and let her talk his ear off about her favourite sea creatures while he doodled an octopus in the corner of the page.

After a few minutes, he decided to start the conversation. "Hey, Al, do you know what today is?"

"Mhm. It's Mamá's birthday, we're going to visit her." She stated, matter-of-factly, not looking up from her paper.

"Yeah, you're right." Sonny was still a little unsure about how to go about this talk with such a young child, one that he wasn't even sure really understood what death was. "How do you feel about that?"

"I'm excited! I love going to visit Mamá!" Her enthusiasm made him smile. The fact that she was so childishly optimistic would at least ensure that all his worrying could be focused on Rafael- not that he would let that show.

They went back to the drawing, Alicia adding an interesting looking whale to her cluster of fish.

Seemingly out of nowhere Alicia asked, "Sonny, because it's her birthday, are we having a cake for Mamá?"

Sonny considered this. It would be a good way to get Alicia out of her father's hair if he needed some time later in the day to be alone or to talk to Olivia, it would also be a nice thing to do with the little girl on such a dreary day, even if she hadn't quite realised it yet. Maybe it would give her at least one happy memory of her mother's birthday, for her to look back on when she was older.

"Maybe when we get home, you and I can make one." Then as an afterthought he added, "It can be a surprise for Papá, if you want."

Alicia looked up at him, puzzled. “Why do we need to surprise Papá? It’s not his birthday too...”

Sonny sighed and mentally prepared his speech- it was better to explain it to her sooner rather than later, he supposed.

“Alicia, today is a happy day, right?”

“Right.” She replied, so sternly that it almost made Sonny laugh.

“Well sometimes, a happy day can be a sad day when we miss the person we’re happy for.” Alicia still stared at him looking utterly lost, so he did his best to keep his voice soft but not condescending, and continued. “Because Mamá’s not around anymore, Papá is feeling sad. He misses Mamá very much, and the days that were happy when she was with us, hurt, because she isn’t here anymore.”

For a moment, the pair were silent, and Sonny strained his ears in an attempt to hear the conversation in the living room. He knew it was wrong to be eavesdropping, but really he just wanted to know what kind of mood Rafael was in, and how much hand-holding he would need to get through the day.

“Sonny, does that mean I have to be sad too?” Alicia’s voice was so small as she asked, and Sonny just wanted to scoop her up and hold her tight. He didn’t though, because she needed to understand her bubbly optimism really was a good thing.

“No, it’s good that you’re happy, Al. And I think seeing you be happy might make Papá a bit less sad. It just means we have to be nice to him today, okay?”

“I’m always nice to him.” She muttered.

Sonny chuckled. “You are. How could I forget?”

“But I can be nicer by surprising him with cake. We should make a chocolate cake! That’s what we had on his birthday!” Alicia’s face lit up as she described the birthday cake Rafael had on his last birthday. Sonny just smiled warmly as he listened.

“That sounds like a good plan. You’re very smart.” Sonny made sure his tone didn’t imply he was making fun of her, he knew kids could usually tell and usually didn’t appreciate it.

Alicia giggled, and shrieked, “I am!”

Sonny ruffled her tightly coiled hair, and checked his watch, noticing it was almost time to leave.

The group piled into Rafael’s Camry (which Sonny didn’t know he had, he didn’t think Rafael could even drive, but there was apparently a lot about him that Sonny didn’t know) for the drive to the cemetery with Olivia driving, Rafael in the passenger seat, and Sonny in the backseat behind Olivia, next to Alicia’s car seat. The journey was, for the most part, silent with the exception of the smooth jazz playing from the radio. It wasn’t tense per se, but Sonny could definitely feel the weight of the situation bearing down on all of them- apart from Alicia, who had fallen asleep almost the second the car started moving.

Sonny’s seat in the car hadn’t exactly been pure chance. He had put himself there so he could keep all of Rafael in his eyesight. He knew he didn’t *need* to be watching the older man, but he still felt it was his duty to make sure he could be there for Rafael, even if he didn’t ask him to be.

Rafael was still- rigid more like- with one hand gripping his own thigh so hard, Sonny could see his fingernails digging into the flesh under his trousers. Just staring out the window, Sonny wasn’t even sure he knew what he was doing. He was trying so hard to keep himself together, and Sonny didn’t know what to do to help.

He leaned forward slightly, and tapped Rafael's shoulder and then lay his own palm open flat on the ADA's thigh.

"You can squeeze if you want, promise my hands are strong." Sonny said, gently.

For a moment, Rafael just looked at him, still slightly dazed and not fully back from zoning out. Then, he gave a weak smile, taking Sonny's hand in his and squeezing hard.

Sonny tried so hard to fight butterflies jumping around his stomach as he held Rafael's hand. It was selfish of him to be enjoying it, enjoying this stupid, tiny piece of physical contact while Rafael was fighting to stay strong. But he just couldn't help the rush of adrenaline he felt, even with such a small, meaningless intimacy. Well, meaningless was the wrong word. It *was* meaningful. He was sure it meant a lot to Rafael to have someone there, someone who cared about him. But that was all it was- someone to be there for him and care about him, in a platonic way.

Pushing all those thoughts from his mind, Sonny just concentrated on squeezing back.

He could feel Olivia's eyes on him, could tell she wanted to say something but stayed silent. He wished momentarily that she wasn't there to be judging him. But again, that was selfish. Sonny just wished he could stop being so goddamn selfish.

As soon as they arrived, Alicia, having just woken up from her nap, started zooming around the cemetery, attempting to count every headstone in the yard. This, of course, was why Sonny had accompanied them, and happily followed the excited little girl around while Olivia and Rafael made their way to Gwen's resting place. It was a pretty large cemetery, but Sonny made sure Alicia stayed around the Catholic lawn, where her father and aunt were still in view.

By the time Alicia had counted past a hundred (with Sonny's help) and was thoroughly tuckered out, her and Sonny joined the other's in front of the headstone inscribed 'Gwendoline Celia Acevedo'. Rafael's eyes were slightly red, and Olivia had one arm wrapped around his shoulders, but for the most part he seemed to be keeping it together pretty well.

Still, Sonny bent down to whisper into Alicia's ear, "go give Papá a hug."

The little girl obliged, and tugged on her father's trousers so he would pick her up and she could wrap her little arms around his neck. She was his rock, Sonny could tell, and he could just see how much better Rafael felt with her there.

"Do you have anything you want to say to Mamá before we go, conejita?" Rafael asked, his voice thicker than usual.

"Yes!" She enthusiastically replied. "Happy birthday, Mamá, and even though you're in the ground now, me and Papá still love you and we're still gonna visit you all the time," then, almost as an afterthought, she added, "oh! And Sonny's here too, now! Me and Sonny are gonna make a birthday cake for you-" she lowered her voice to a stage whisper, cupping her mouth to hide the movement of her lips from Rafael, "and it's going to be a surprise for Papá as well!"

Rafael chuckled wetly, and kissed her head, still holding her close. Olivia, also seeming a little misty-eyed, kept her friend in a tight, but kind of awkward due to the angle side-hug. Sonny would be lying if he said he didn't feel a little bit out of place, but it wasn't unexpected. Olivia had been practically part of their family for much longer than him, and when he thought about it, it was pretty incredible that he'd even been involved today at all.

They stayed like that for a while; Rafael holding Alicia while Olivia hugged him and Sonny stood to the side, no one talking. But then Alicia started squirming and Rafael decided they'd been there long enough. He muttered a prayer under his breath before nodding to Sonny and heading off towards the car.

Olivia hadn't been able to take the full day off, so she agreed to Uber back to the precinct from the cemetery. Before she left she gave Rafael a long, proper hug, whispering something to him that Sonny couldn't hear before pulling away, also giving Alicia a good, long hug.

Sonny drove the rest of the group back to Rafael's apartment, and couldn't help noticing how tired the older man looked.

As soon as they got inside, Sonny could tell something was off. As the door shut behind the three of them and only the three of them, Rafael dropped his keys into the bowl by the door, and paused, staring into it for longer than would seem necessary. A sob then racked through his chest and his knees gave out- Sonny just grabbed Alicia and carried her into her own bedroom, placing her earphones over her ears and plugging them into Rafael's iPad, starting a movie. She didn't need to be there to see her father breaking down, it wouldn't have been good for either of them.

Sonny ran back into the other room and his heart shattered at the sight. Sitting on the floor of the hallway, his knees clutched tightly to his chest, Rafael just shook and sobbed. Sonny didn't think he himself had ever cried as hard as Rafael was crying and it just broke him to witness.

A little unsure of how to help, Sonny sat down on the floor next to Rafael, not touching him for fear of making it worse. But as soon as he was sitting, Rafael collapsed onto him, clutching his shirt and crying into his shoulder. Sonny pulled him even closer and held him, one hand rubbing up and down his back, the other lightly petting his hair.

The iron grip Rafael had on Sonny's shirt seemed to ground him, and the warmth of Sonny's body stilled his shaking. After a while, his sobs ebbed and eventually he wiped away the steady stream of tears travelling down his face. It was clear that all his energy had been taken out of him, and he still relied on Sonny to keep him upright- this wasn't a problem for Sonny, who was willing to sit there on the floor holding him all day and all night if he needed to.

"I'm sorry, I don't know where that came from." Rafael muttered into Sonny's shoulder after the long period of silence.

"Hey," Sonny started, shifting so he could look the other man in the eyes. "Don't be sorry. It's why I'm here, right?"

“I mean, you’re here to look after Alicia and make sure she’s getting enough attention today, but I’ve done a pretty good job of fucking that up.”

“Raf, she’s fine. She’s in her room watching Star Wars on the iPad right now, I’ll go check on her if you want.” Sonny really didn’t want to leave him, but if it would make him feel better, he would do it.

“Yes please.”

Sonny put on a reassuring smile and rubbed Rafael’s shoulder before standing up and leaving the room.

As he suspected, Alicia still had her headphones on and was intently watching the movie on the little screen in front of her. It took Sonny sitting on the bed next to her and tapping her shoulder for her to even realise he was in the room.

“Is Papá okay?” she asked straight away- she’d been more observational than Sonny had thought, but it didn’t surprise him, she was a Barba after all.

“Yeah, sweetheart, he’s alright. Let’s give him some space, though.”

She nodded. “Okay. Can we make the cake soon? I want him to be happy again.”

Sonny practically melted at this, and grinned at the child, ruffling her hair. “Soon. I’ll come and get you, okay? For now just keep watching your movie.”

Sonny left the room, shutting the door behind him in case Rafael lost it again. He was pretty sure the other man would be okay though, he knew he was strong and he also knew how much he hated being vulnerable.

Rafael had moved from the hallway to the couch and was just sitting there, staring into space. Sonny went into the kitchen to get him a glass of water before joining him on the couch, keeping a comfortable distance between the two of them that gave Rafael space, but close enough that the opportunity to be held again was there if he needed it.

“She’s fine. She just wants to start making a cake to make you happy.” He said.

Rafael’s eyes filled with tears again, but they didn’t fall. “I don’t know where she gets all that kindness from.” It was barely a whisper, but Sonny heard it.

“I don’t think you’re giving yourself enough credit.”

“You know,” he started, turning to face Sonny. “One of the last big fights Gwen and I had before separating was on her birthday. I had to work and I didn’t understand why she was so pissed- she had a baby at home and just wanted one day where she didn’t have to do absolutely everything to keep the family functioning. I mean, cooking, cleaning, raising Alicia, all while I was at work. And I didn’t get why that was an issue.”

Sonny nodded, encouraging him to continue.

“And still, even now, I barely see my baby for more than a couple hours a day. All she’s ever going to have is me, and that’s just so fucking unfair to her.” By the last sentence, his voice was shaking and tears threatened to once again spill down his reddened cheeks.

“Listen to me,” Sonny locked eyes with the other man, his voice commanding but still kind. “Alicia is lucky to have you. All I can ever see when you look at her is love, it practically pours out of you. And I know you think that’s not enough, it’s not enough to just love her, but think about it, Rafael, you’re the one that puts her to bed every night and wakes her up every morning, you cook her dinner and make her breakfast, when she has a nightmare she goes to you, when she’s sick or she hurts herself she goes to you- I promise that’s enough.”

Rafael just looked completely overwhelmed with emotion- he was crying again, but not in the same way he had been before, and he was smiling gratefully as he hiccuped.

Sonny once again lay his open palm on Rafael's thigh, an invitation Rafael gladly took, clutching Sonny's hand in both of his significantly larger ones. Sitting close enough to Rafael that he could feel his body heat, holding his hand- it just felt so right, and Sonny wished that feeling would go away.

"You should go make that cake with Al before she eats me instead." Rafael said, cracking a wider smile, trying to hide the fact that he was still in tears. Sonny laughed nonetheless.

"Wanna come help?" he offered.

Rafael thought for a moment, and then nodded. "Yeah, actually, sounds like fun." He still made no attempt to let go of Sonny's hand.

With his free hand, Sonny leant over and wiped a tear from under Rafael's eye, then almost immediately cursed himself for doing so, pulling the hand away as if Rafael's skin had burned him. He smiled sheepishly, and stood up in an attempt to call Alicia in, tugging his other hand out from Rafael's grasp.

The rest of the afternoon was surprisingly enjoyable. After Sonny was confident Rafael had properly calmed himself down, he took Alicia to buy supplies for their cake, giving Rafael a few minutes of peace. Chocolate cake still seemed to be the winning choice, and Sonny let himself fall for the puppy dog eyes Alicia gave him when he said they would only buy one kind of chocolate (they came home with all three, much to Alicia's delight).

By the time they got home, Rafael was back to his usual self, maybe looking more tired than usual but otherwise fine.

When the dry ingredients were measured, Sonny lifted Alicia up to the counter to mix them, which resulted in a puff of flour covering both her and Sonny. Sonny flashed Rafael a

dimpled grin and wiped his dirty hands on the ADA's sweater. He just smiled back, rolling his eyes.

There was something about the look Rafael was giving Sonny as he held Alicia that scared him a little. His eyes were so full of affection, and his smile became just that little bit more lopsided- Sonny didn't want to say it looked like he *loved* him, but that was what it was like. But he could worry about that later, for now, all that mattered was keeping both Rafael and Alicia happy, that was all he cared about.

He couldn't really deny how much fun it was, and Sonny found there wasn't anything that made him happier than spending time with both Barbas.

Chapter End Notes

comment & leave kudos if u enjoyed :)

twitter: @transcarisi

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Rafael laughed, rolling his eyes. “I bet you’re ‘waiting for love’, right?” He said, making no effort to hide his condescending tone.

“What’s wrong with that?” Sonny replied, far too defensively, blushing slightly.

Chapter Notes

So this has gone 100 kudos and 1000 hits since last update! exciting! thanks to everyone reading ily all

this isn't betaed or edited properly so let me know if there are mistakes

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As the weather got warmer, Rafael had begun spending more and more of his spare time at the park with Alicia. Sonny joined them every now and then; he loved spending the afternoon chatting with Rafael on a park bench and watching Alicia play with the other children. He and Rafael had become quite good friends over the past few weeks, and although they weren’t spending every waking moment together, a good portion of Sonny’s week was dedicated to not only being with Rafael, but his daughter as well. They were family to him now, and he loved Alicia as much as he loved his nieces. It still took some effort to pretend he didn’t notice the way the sun hit Rafael’s shiny, green eyes, making them sparkle, or how his skin glowed under the golden light of the sun as it set, but he figured those feelings would go away on their own with more time, he just hoped that time would come quicker.

This particular day was a Saturday afternoon, and the children and parents practically swarmed the playground. Rafael and Sonny hung back, sitting on a grassy hill, still close enough to see Alicia but further enough away that they could hear each other talk.

That was, until a small, mousy looking woman approached them, smiling far too widely for Sonny’s comfort. Rafael grumbled something about “Jacob’s mom” as she planted herself right in front of them both, sitting cross legged and completely obscuring their view of the playground. Sonny smiled politely.

“Would you two happen to be Alicia’s parents?” She asked. Sonny noticing her accent was distinctively southern but not particularly thick, pretty similar to Amanda’s.

Sonny chuckled at her question, taken aback by the implication that he was around enough for a stranger to assume he was part of the family. He refused to let himself dwell on the warm feeling that thought gave him.

“He is,” Sonny jerked his thumb in Rafael’s direction, “but I’m not.” Rafael gave her a tight-lipped smile in response.

The woman beamed at Sonny. “See, now, I did wonder how a handsome, young thing like you could already be a daddy.”

Suddenly, the intention behind her overpoweringly sweet perfume and the way she continued to lean closer to Sonny, flashing a pearly white smile between coral pink lips became clear. The conversation had gone from being mildly annoying to plain uncomfortable with just that one sentence. Sonny hoped the way his smile visibly faltered would deter her, but she stayed put.

“Ouch.” Rafael deadpanned. If he wasn’t feeling like crawling out of his own skin from discomfort, Sonny would have laughed.

The woman barely looked at Rafael, huffing out a short, obviously fake laugh at his remark. “The name’s Claire, you?” her hand extended towards Sonny’s, waiting for him to shake it.

“It’s Sonny.” He offered. “And this is Rafael.” He hoped drawing her attention back to Rafael would help, but ended up being another unsuccessful attempt as she scooted closer, touching his arm lightly.

The conversation continued for another few minutes, much to Sonny’s dismay, with Claire persistently flirting with him and Sonny awkwardly laughing it off. Rafael just sulked next to him, ignoring both Sonny and Claire as he stared off into space, only occasionally being

drawn in by Sonny's attempts to include him, only to respond with some non-committal hum. Sonny chalked up Rafael's moodiness to be an ego thing- he was just butthurt about Sonny getting attention instead of himself for some reason. That had to be all it was. Either way, Sonny was pretty damn ready for Claire to leave them alone.

Then, like some kind of miracle, Alicia ran over to them, collapsing in the tiny space between Sonny and Rafael's bodies.

"Papá, El's mommy says I can go over to their house to play when they go home from the playground," Sonny saw a woman standing near the slide waving at them, and assumed this was El's mother. "Can I go please, Papá?"

"Sure, baby. Tell El's mommy to call me when I need to come get you, okay?" as Rafael smiled at her the afternoon sun reflected off his teeth, making his lopsided grin look all the more dorky. Sonny hated the urge to just reach over and grab him by the collar, pulling him in for a searing kiss. He was honestly exhausted of having such strong feelings for the man that had quickly become his best friend- he wished he could want to accept Claire's advances.

Speaking of, Claire stayed put as Alicia gave her father and Sonny a hug before running off with the other family. At least now, Rafael and Sonny had a reason to leave.

"Well, we really should be going, Claire. It was lovely to meet you." Sonny plastered a fake smile back to his face as he stood up, pulling Rafael with him.

"Oh, the pleasure is mine, really." Claire said, also standing. She stepped closer to Sonny, once again caressing his arm, and it took everything in him not to take a step back. Her voice dropped to a whisper as she said, "you know, my husband is out of town this weekend, so if you're looking for a bit of fun, you just give me a call, alright darlin'?"

Before Sonny could even respond, she slipped a business card into his front pocket and walked away. There were no words to describe how uncomfortable he felt in that moment, and he was sure his face was bright red.

Rafael rolled his eyes and shot daggers into the back of her head with his eyes. Sonny couldn't blame him.

For the rest of the afternoon into the evening, Sonny actively shook thoughts about family and belonging from his mind. He was so pissed off at Claire for putting the idea of him as part of the Barba family into his head, among other things, and channelled his pining for Rafael through silent rage towards her.

It didn't help that he and Rafael were having a 'lazy afternoon' where they sat around Sonny's apartment, watching whatever shitty movies were on the TV, just hanging out in domestic bliss. At around six, they ordered some curries from Sonny's favourite Indian restaurant, and when the food arrived they turned off the TV and sat next to each other at the table together to eat- Sonny's mother had raised him well, and eating on the couch was reserved for only special occasions, not just any Saturday night.

"Sonny, I don't understand how you're still single. I really don't get it- women literally throw themselves at you." Rafael said through a mouthful of daal.

It caught Sonny off guard, and he realised he'd never actually *told* Rafael he was gay- he just assumed the other man would figure it out. Maybe he had been wrong, and Rafael had thought he was straight this whole time. Or maybe he had assumed, and this was just his way of getting confirmation, confirmation Sonny would gladly provide.

"Okay, well first of all I don't *want* women 'throwing themselves at me', kinda comes with the territory of, y'know, being gay?" he paused, waiting for Rafael to react. When he didn't look shocked or surprised or anything really, Sonny continued, "also, I'm really not interested in a sleazy one-night-stand behind some poor bastard's back, not really my thing."

Rafael laughed, rolling his eyes. "I bet you're 'waiting for love', right?" He said, making no effort to hide his condescending tone.

"What's wrong with that?" Sonny replied, far too defensively, blushing slightly.

With that patronizing smirk that was still glued to Rafael's face, Sonny felt the annoyance inside him growing. "Nothing, nothing." Rafael waved his hand in an attempt to dismiss Sonny's question. "But come on, you're telling me you've never just had sex with someone just for the sake of having sex?"

"Honestly? No." He said defiantly. It was true, and he had no reason to be ashamed of it, no matter what Rafael thought.

They were moving into dangerous territory with this conversation, and as much as Sonny didn't want to know about Rafael's sex-life, a part of him did want to.

"You're such a sap." Rafael teased, no longer seeming to be belittling Sonny, and more so just playfully poking him. Sonny could deal with that.

"Sorry that I'm not a slut like you." He said back, the corners of his lips fighting to curl upwards into a smile.

Rafael gasped and slapped his own chest in mock-horror. "I thought being in Liv's squad changed you, Sonny. Don't you know it's wrong to slut-shame?"

Sonny laughed loudly and went back for a forkful of his own malai kofta. But Rafael hadn't denied the 'slut' allegation, even if it was a joke, and Sonny wondered how much Rafael was actually getting. Curiosity got the better of him and he asked, "Okay, but seriously, you really don't care about sex being special or not? You're happy to just sleep around?"

"If I did, I'd have been celibate for the past four years."

He hadn't really thought about that until now. All Sonny could see inside his head was Rafael prowling some dirty nightclub, buying drinks for the prettiest men and women he could find and going home with them, then leaving the next morning to pick his daughter up from wherever he'd dropped her for the night. He thought of Rafael figuring out how to use Tinder, and meeting up with his date in a cheap hotel. He tried to stop thinking, to leave these thoughts for when he could be alone, but he couldn't stop himself from seeing the lawyer on his back, on his knees, on top-

Sonny shook his head subtly and thought of his Nonna, blocking out all the impure thoughts.

“But also,” Rafael said, interrupting Sonny’s spiralling, “does everything have to be that black and white? Why not have both loving intimacy and a casual fuck every now and then?”

“You’re such a fucking lawyer.” Sonny groaned.

“And you’re deflecting, because you’re tired of me making fun of you for waiting for your soulmate or whatever bullshit it is.” There Rafael went again, talking to Sonny like he was some inexperienced teenager. Sonny knew it was kind of just in Rafael’s nature to be a cocky asshole, but he really thought they were past the point in their relationship where the older man put him down any chance he got. He had thought that Rafael now respected him, and that respect meant he would no longer belittle him. Sonny guessed he was wrong, but he would be lying if he said it didn’t sting.

“Why *do* you have to make fun of me? I mean, out of everyone in this room, only one of us has been married. You say *I’m* stupid for believing in love...” Sonny was also past the point where he would just take Rafael’s jabs. He wasn’t afraid to clap back anymore.

“Yeah, and look at how well that turned out.” Rafael scoffed. “Your parents are still married, right?” Sonny nodded hesitantly. “Thought so. And for the record, I never said you were stupid, you’re not. Naive, maybe, but-”

“Naive?” Sonny interrupted. He was pissed off, and he wasn’t going to try to hide it. “If having a little faith is what you call ‘naive’ then I feel sorry for you, Rafael, really. Just because it didn’t work out for you once, suddenly love isn’t real and I’m just an idiot for wanting to find someone? I mean, what kind of example is that for Alicia?”

Rafael’s expression contorted into something dangerous, the face Sonny was sure he used in front of defense attorneys, his ‘don’t fuck with me’ face. “Don’t bring her into this. And again, you’re putting words in my mouth, I never called you an idiot.”

Sonny huffed out a hysterical laugh and stood up, beginning to pace the dining room. “You just brought up my parents! How is it different?” at this point he was yelling, and paused for a moment to regain control over himself, lowering his voice. “You didn’t call me an idiot but you sure as hell implied it.”

In his anger, Sonny hadn’t bothered to look over at Rafael. Still sitting in his chair at the table, Rafael had gone quiet, and there was such a sadness in his expression it almost made Sonny feel bad for his own outburst. He looked to be choosing his words carefully, so Sonny stopped and waited to listen.

“I would never imply that you’re an idiot, or you’re stupid or whatever you think I’m saying- I think you’re incredible, one of the smartest, kindest people I know.”

Sonny was then hit with the overwhelming urge to hug him. He sighed and sat back down, moving his chair closer to Rafael, so their legs were touching. He knew he had a right to be annoyed, but it also wouldn’t hurt to be the bigger person and apologise.

“I’m sorry, Raf. This is ridiculous, and I shouldn’t have said all that. I think we’ve just got to accept we’ve got different views and move on, I don’t wanna fight about something so stupid.” He placed a hand over Rafael’s shoulder, really just feeling the need to touch him.

“You’re right. I’m sorry too. And I meant what I said a second ago, you’ve just got such a good heart it pisses me off sometimes.” Rafael was now grinning, and Sonny felt his own smile growing too.

“Jeez, you’re not so bad yourself y’know.”

Sonny hadn’t realised quite how close they both were until it happened. One second they were sitting there smiling at each other, and the next Rafael’s lips were on Sonny’s, his hand cupping the back of the younger man’s neck.

In books and movies, the protagonist describes The Kiss as breathtaking, making their knees weak, or flooding their stomach with butterflies. But this was different. Kissing Rafael felt comfortable, warm and safe. It was like getting home in winter and sitting in front of the

heater, feeling the warmth on your numb feet. Like taking the first sip of hot coffee after a restless night of sleep. Rafael tasted like curry and beer but Sonny didn't even care, he just melted under Rafael's hands and kissed back.

But then it hit him- he shouldn't be doing this, he shouldn't be allowing it to happen. Had they not been arguing a few seconds before? How could that be the healthy basis of a relationship? And whos to say what was happening would even turn into a relationship. Rafael had said it himself, he wasn't opposed to an air of casualty, which Sonny definitely would not be about to handle.

Sonny had promised himself that he wouldn't be making moves on Rafael, and even though technically this was Rafael's doing, he couldn't let it go on any further.

He wrenched himself away and stood up, putting as much distance between himself and Rafael as possible. He couldn't risk looking at Rafael and seeing the confusion or hurt that took over his expression.

"Fuck, Rafael, I'm sorry, I can't." Sonny kept pacing, looking at the floor, the walls- everywhere except the dining chair the other man sat in.

"What, because you don't think it means anything?" Sonny stopped, and finally looked over at Rafael. His arms were crossed over his chest, and Sonny could tell how much effort he had put into making his voice sound simultaneously defensive and nonchalant. Despite his efforts, Sonny could still see the hurt in his eyes, and all he wanted to do was pull Rafael into his arms and make it all better.

As much as he needed this not to develop, Sonny couldn't live with the idea that Rafael thought he didn't care for him, so he prepared a response. "No. No not in the slightest. I just- I just can't. Not right now."

"Not right now'?" Rafael sounded almost desperate now. Sonny racked his brain for a way to respond that wouldn't cause more problems than it solved, so he stayed silent.

For a few moments, he just continued to pace the room, watching Rafael intently. The facade he'd built was slowly disintegrating, and Sonny could tell how much he was hurting. He couldn't stop the panic inside his own head- hadn't keeping his distance meant to be to protect Rafael anyway? No matter what he did, he knew he would be hurting him, and that just made him feel like such a monster. Part of him wished they had never become friends, never become closer than colleagues, and that none of this had happened. Another, more selfish, part of him wanted to cave and sit back down and kiss the life out of him.

"So uh. Can we just forget about this then? Go back to being friends?" Rafael asked, interrupting his thoughts.

"Yeah. Yeah, I'd like that." The lie hurt far more than he had anticipated.

The whole situation was so shitty and he couldn't fight that immature feeling of indignation at just how unfair it was. To top it all off, the guilt he felt about hurting Rafael just made him angrier. Not just angry at the world or angry at God for putting him through this, but angry at himself for taking Rafael down with him. He could have handled having feelings for Rafael if they weren't requited- he was doing a pretty good job of repressing them until now- but knowing that the man he cared so much for was probably feeling as terrible as him? It felt like tiny knives were stabbing into his chest.

"I should probably go now, though." Rafael started, standing up and avoiding meeting Sonny's eyes as he made his way for the door. "Alicia will need to be picked up soon." He offered, a weak excuse as Sonny knew she wouldn't need to be picked up for at least another hour, but better than nothing.

If he was honest, Sonny was glad he was leaving- all he wanted to do was sulk, but he couldn't with Rafael still there.

"Okay." He gave Rafael a weak smile and followed him to the front door to show him out.

At the door, Rafael lingered. "Promise you won't shut me out after this?" he said, almost in a whisper. Sonny just looked at him confused. "I can't lose you, Sonny." he added.

Sonny blinked fast to keep the tears from forming in his eyes. Without even thinking, he pulled Rafael into a hug, holding him tight. He also couldn't stand the thought of losing Rafael, it was just too much.

"You're not going to lose me, I'll call you in the morning, okay?" Sonny said into Rafael's shoulder, and felt him nod in response.

Rafael left, leaving Sonny alone in his apartment that had never felt so empty. As he sat down on the couch with his first of many beers in hand, he felt the tears once again brimming in his eyes, but this time he let them fall.

Chapter End Notes

not sure how regular updates will be from now on because I have exams coming up but I promise I won't give up on this story, it might just take me longer to finish (right now I'm thinking there will be eight chapters, but I haven't decided yet lol)

I'm loving all of your comments so keep them coming, leave kudos if you haven't already pleaseee

twitter is @transcarisi

Chapter 6- Rafael's POV

Chapter Summary

It was just so frustrating. He was finally letting himself take a step forward, but just felt Sonny take one back, and he just couldn't understand why. He finally, for the first time in four years, felt ready to move on and put his marriage behind him, but Sonny wouldn't let him.

Chapter Notes

Hiya it's been a while... sorry about that hehe

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

On the drive home from Sonny's apartment, Rafael just felt numb. He knew if he allowed his mind to wander while he drove, he would probably crash, and driving at night filled him with anxiety anyway, so he pushed his thoughts down and concentrated on the road. He would not go over his frustration with Sonny, or his confusion, or his hurt. He would ignore it all, and just focus on getting home safely.

Once he was home, he sat down on the couch and rest his head in his hands, letting everything he was feeling wash over him. He'd felt more in the past few months than he had in the four years previous. That was all thanks to Sonny. When he said Sonny had saved his life by showing up that day to look after Alicia, he wasn't just being dramatic. Yeah, he would have lived without everything Sonny had given him, but he wouldn't have been happy. Sonny came into his life and swept him up, carrying him out of the darkness he had once felt so comfortable in and bringing him into the daylight. That sounded cheesy, when he thought about it, but he had grown and enjoyed life so much more in the past few months, it really was like this man was his sunlight.

His feelings start off pretty insignificant- if you asked him, he would have said it was just infatuation, Sonny was attractive and he wouldn't have denied that, but he didn't want anything more. But the closer they became, the stronger the feelings became. It had gotten to the point where a flash of those dimples was enough to leave Rafael feeling giddy, and those mile-long legs kept him up at night more often than he would have liked to admit.

It wasn't just his looks- though, they should be enough to leave any sensible person weak at the knees- it was absolutely everything else. He was incredibly smart and determined, genuine, strong, too kind for his own good, and he cared so much about Rafael and Alicia even though he had no obligation to, it almost didn't seem real. He had so much love in his heart, and that love was spread between so many people, Rafael wondered how he wasn't already burned out. He had, at first, assumed this was a facade, but after getting to know him outside of work, Rafael learned that that was just Sonny, it was just who he was.

He thought about the encounter in the playground that afternoon with one of the mothers. Despite being uncomfortable (he never said it, but it was obvious, at least it was to Rafael) Sonny was still courteous and still gave the woman her time of day. All Rafael could think throughout the conversation, in which he was mostly ignored, was that he hated her guts. He wanted Sonny all to himself, and as soon as that thought came into his head, he knew he was fucked.

For a long time, he was pretty sure his feelings for Sonny were reciprocated. Honestly, he had assumed Sonny had a bit of a crush on him as soon as they started working together; admiration only went so far and Sonny constantly going above and beyond to impress him had made him think there was maybe something there. Even as they became closer, the relentless flirting between them seemed more than just friendly, and the way Sonny got all flustered after a compliment or any indication that they were together- it all pointed towards him wanting more than a friendship.

And then there was the way he looked at Rafael. It wasn't all the time, and only when Rafael knew Sonny thought he wasn't looking, but sometimes he just looked at Rafael like he not only hung the stars, but the moon and the sun and probably the Earth too. His ocean blue eyes would sparkle and go so soft, it made Rafael's heart pound.

It couldn't have just been Rafael's ego- but then again, what else could it have been? He had been so sure of Sonny having feelings for him, so sure that the kiss was something he had been too nervous to do himself, and Rafael initiating it was what needed to happen for their happily ever after. Rafael hadn't even considered what would happen if he rejected him. He still wasn't sure what was going to happen.

He didn't even really understand *why* Sonny had rejected him. He could think of a whole list in his mind of why a person wouldn't want him, but Sonny had seemed so into it at first, then

all of a sudden was across the room like Rafael's lips had spurted fire and burned him. The mixed messages through it all were just driving him insane.

Sonny probably never actually gave a shit about him. He felt sorry for him, and was worried for his and Alicia's wellbeing, so he stuck around, but he was probably really fucking bored of all the drama in Rafael's life. He was in too deep, and couldn't leave without a reason, so he stuck around. And now he probably hated Rafael even more- of course he had to go and make things weird between them by kissing him- but at least now Sonny had a reason to leave.

Rafael felt his breath quickening, and his chest getting tighter and so he sat up a bit straighter, focusing on his breathing and trying to not let himself lose control. He couldn't think like that- Sonny was a good person and, logically, he knew he didn't hate him. This whole situation was just so confusing and it was hard not to spiral.

When he thought about it, though, there really were lots of reasons why Sonny might be hesitant to start something with him. For one, his emotional baggage was heavier than most, and while Sonny appeared to be willing and ready to help him deal with it, he might not want to have to do that in a relationship. Rafael completely understood this angle. He himself wouldn't want to have to coddle his partner constantly or have them solely rely on him emotionally. Not that this was how Rafael felt he would be with Sonny, but he could see why Sonny would think he would.

He also had Alicia. And he knew Sonny loved his daughter, but maybe he didn't want to take on dating a parent. Sonny was so good with kids, especially his kid, and it made Rafael so happy to see Alicia's face light up whenever he came into the house. But he also knew that Sonny wanted a family of his own, he wanted his white picket fence so badly, and stepping into Rafael's already existing family was probably less than desirable to him. Sonny was going to be an amazing father one day and the last thing Rafael wanted to do was to take that away from him.

If he had been successful in his attempt to win Sonny over, he would just be weighing him down, holding him back from the life he wanted and deserved. It wouldn't be fair. Sonny deserved the whole goddamn world, and Rafael just couldn't give him that. He did love Sonny, whether or not he was *in love* with him, he wasn't sure yet, but he loved him and wanted what was best for him. Thinking about it, he knew that he was not what was best for Sonny. But fuck that, he was tired of being noble and doing shit for other people. His own life was miserable and it wasn't fair to him to have to hold back.

He just wanted to know how Sonny felt, but he also got the impression that Sonny would not willingly tell him. It would take a lot of prodding and pushing to get what he wanted out of him, but he was willing to do it. It was just so frustrating. He was finally letting himself take a step forward, but just felt Sonny take one back, and he just couldn't understand why. He finally, for the first time in four years, felt ready to move on and put his marriage behind him, but Sonny wouldn't let him. If he thought Sonny just didn't feel the same way, it would be different. But he *knew* there was something more going on here, he just knew it, and it was driving him up the wall.

His phone pinged, and he opened it to see a message from the mother of the child Alicia was playing with, telling him she was ready to be picked up. He sighed and found his keys, pushing Sonny out of his head and preparing himself to drive over and collect his daughter.

Rafael tapped on the steering wheel as he waited outside the house for Alicia to come out. A few moments later, she ran out and clambered into the backseat. The mother of the other little girl stood in the doorway, making sure she got into the right car safely, so Rafael waved to her and she went back inside.

"Hi Papá!" Alicia squealed, still excited from her time at her friend's house. Rafael smiled warmly and reached over to do up her seatbelt.

"Hey! Did you have fun?"

"Yes! El got a new swingset and it was so so fun and I went sooooo high!"

Now that both in the car had their seatbelts done, Rafael took the car out of park and started the drive home.

"I'm glad." He replied. "Did you have something to eat?"

“We had pizza for dinner!” Rafael chuckled, knowing that pizza was a delicacy to four-year-olds, especially with how little he and Alicia ordered out.

“Wow, sounds yummy. What’d you get?” He asked, only half listening to the long winded description she gave of all the different pizzas the family had had, and half listening to the radio.

“Papá, is Sonny still at home?” Alicia asked after a few moments of silence. Hearing his name just sent a pang through his chest.

“No, conejita, he’s busy so it’s just you and me tonight.” Rafael ignored the disappointed hum and pout he couldn’t see, but knew was on Alicia’s face.

When they got home it was just past 7:30pm, and Alicia begged Rafael to put a movie on. He scrolled through Netflix and put an old Spiderman movie on, curling up on one end of the couch while Alicia squirmed around at the other end. Her excitement would wear off soon, and as she got engrossed in the movie she would be still- at least, Rafael hoped.

Rafael only partly paid attention to the movie, the rest of his mind still preoccupied with Sonny. His words kept swirling through Rafael’s mind, “I just can’t. Not right now.” Not right now. Why not now? It just didn’t make sense, there was nothing Rafael could think of that would make Sonny want to wait- he wasn’t going undercover any time soon, neither he nor Sonny was going anywhere or doing anything outside of what they normally would be doing so *why* the hesitation? He heard his own words, asking Sonny bitterly if he thought it was meaningless, along with Sonny’s reply of, “No. Not in the slightest.”

Maybe he was already seeing someone. It would make sense; Sonny was beautiful inside and out, and if he was already committed to someone, Rafael would understand why he would feel guilty about kissing someone else. He hadn’t mentioned seeing anyone, but if he was, he could have posted about it on social media. Rafael didn’t stop to think about how, if this relationship was secret enough to be kept from him, it seemed pretty unlikely that Sonny

would be broadcasting it to the world, and so he pulled out his laptop and opened Facebook, searching for Sonny's profile.

Sonny didn't use Facebook much (Rafael couldn't blame him, he rarely used it either) but his Instagram account was linked to it, and surprisingly for a cop, he had no privacy settings in place. Rafael scrolled through pictures of food, his niece, even one of Alicia and himself he didn't know Sonny had taken, but made him smile. He had scrolled to the pictures from just over a year ago, and found a collection of Sonny at the pride parade.

The first picture in the post was of Sonny's sign, 'Jesus had two dads and he turned out alright', which was just so *Sonny*, Rafael found himself rolling his eyes. The next was what looked like a candid shot of Sonny, and it took all his willpower for Rafael not to start salivating. He was wearing a tight fitting white t-shirt that perfectly hugged his biceps and chest, with a rainbow flag printed across the front, along with denim shorts that only just covered his ass, exposing those gorgeous legs of his. He had light blue glitter dusted over his cheekbones, making his eyes of the same colour pop out even more than they usually would, and the grin on his face just made him look ethereal. He looked so dorky and so sexy at the same time- so *Sonny* - and if it were possible, Rafael thought it made him fall even harder for that man.

He swiped to the next picture, and the warm feeling inside of him was snuffed out. A man stood next to Sonny- he was tall, taller than Sonny and had these huge, brown doe eyes and a splatter of freckles across the bridge of his nose, giving him a youthful appearance- with an arm slung around his waist as Sonny rest his head on the man's shoulder. The way they were standing, Rafael could tell this wasn't just a friend. He swiped again to the last picture, this one of the man kissing Sonny on the cheek and Sonny grinning like an idiot. Rafael just turned off his phone and slipped it back into his pocket, feeling the familiar burn of tears in his eyes.

This was ridiculous. He shouldn't be letting himself get so upset over nothing. The pictures were old, and a lot could have changed since then. Even if it hadn't, it wasn't as if Rafael was entitled to know every detail of Sonny's life. If they were still together, Sonny should be able to tell him in his own time, and it wasn't up to Rafael when that time was. It still stung, though, and he just wished he could really know what was going on.

As if the universe was playing some cruel joke on him, Rafael's phone buzzed, and when he pulled it out he saw a text message from Sonny. Sighing, he opened it.

S: Are yoy pissed oft at me?

Rafael raised his eyebrows. It wasn't like Sonny to not correct his typos or to ask Rafael so point blank about his feelings. He suspected alcohol was involved here. Obviously, he was kind of pissed off with Sonny, but he thought now was not the time nor place to have that conversation.

R: No, of course not.

Sonny replied almost instantly.

S: Ok goof

*S: *good*

S: You're my vest frend Rafi and I loce you

*S: *love*

Rafael hated the way the corners of his lips tugged into a smile and his heart sped up. Sonny was drunk, he didn't mean any of it, and it wasn't as if he had said anything particularly scandalous. Still, Rafael doubted he would be saying it if he were sober.

R: Have you been drinking?

It couldn't hurt to ask, he figured, plus, it was an effective way to avoid responding to Sonny's proclamation of love.

S: Yea a little

S: It's still true thouhh

Rafael didn't doubt that it was true, but Sonny's openness being a product of his intoxication was beginning to make him uncomfortable. He didn't want to feel like he was taking advantage of the younger man, and feared for what Sonny would tell him next. He looked at the time on his phone and saw it had gone past nine.

R: Go get a drink of water and go to sleep, you'll thank me tomorrow.

S: But I wanna stay up talking to you :(

Damn Sonny for being so adorable- who the hell let a grown man be so *cute* ? It wasn't fair, and it definitely wasn't helping Rafael's situation. He wouldn't let himself engage with the obvious flirting, however much he wanted to.

R: Go to sleep Sonny. You said you'd call me tomorrow, remember?

He figured reminding Sonny of his promise to call in the morning would work to get him to ditch his phone and pass out.

S: No I don't remember

S: But I will

S: Goodnight I love you

R: Night, Sonny.

Rafael typed out his response and turned his phone off, so if Sonny did text him again, he would have an excuse for not responding.

He would be lying if he said it hadn't pissed him off to be drunk texted by the man who had just rejected him. Talk about mixed messages, a few hours ago he had told Rafael he couldn't pursue anything past friendship, and now he wanted to stay up all night telling him he loves him? It just made Rafael even more confused than he already was, and that was saying

something. It also raised the question as to why Sonny had felt the need to start drinking. He could have been out with friends, but Rafael knew he hadn't made plans that night. Still, maybe it was a last minute get together. Maybe he was drinking his feelings. Rafael cursed himself for thinking such a thing- Sonny didn't have feelings for him, this was evident, and he was just getting his hopes up over nothing. If Sonny did have feelings for him, then why would he have rejected him? Maybe, and this seemed the most realistic, Sonny really did feel guilty about letting Rafael down, and was worried about losing him as a friend. Rafael hated the disappointment he felt coming to this conclusion, but it was just logical.

He realised now that the room was silent. The movie must have finished a few minutes ago, and at some point Alicia had fallen asleep on the couch. Despite how shitty he felt, looking over at the peacefully sleeping child filled him with warmth. Her face was smooshed into the couch cushion, and he smiled thinking about the pattern that was probably imprinted into her cheek. Her tiny fist curled around a blanket, and she snored gently.

This here was all Rafael needed to think about. Just him and his beautiful daughter, who he really loved more than anything else in the world. He didn't need Sonny, and Sonny certainly didn't need him. But Alicia did. So, he stretched for a moment before standing up off the couch and lifted the little girl into his arms as gently as possible so as not to wake her, and carried her off to her bedroom. Before he shut Alicia's bedroom door, he peered inside and watched the sleeping child for a moment. *His* sleeping child. Shutting the door and walking down the hall to retire to his own bedroom for the night, his yearning for Sonny became just a dull ache in the back of his mind. He could deal with that later.

Chapter End Notes

this is, again, not edited well so if you see mistake or something doesn't make sense please let me know !!

i still have exams and shit so i can't promise the next update will be anytime soon but i promise I'm trying and it is being written.

leave kudos/comments if you enjoyed! all of your lovely comments keep me writing this and not giving up on it !!

twitter is @transcarisi

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Sonny waited patiently as her little face scrunched up with thought.

“Sonny, when you and Papá get married, are you going to be my new Mamá?”

Chapter Notes

Um hi it's been a while. Oops. As per usual I was lazy and didn't edit properly so lmk if there are any mistakes/things that don't make sense

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sonny awoke the next morning with an overwhelming feeling of nausea that wasn't exclusively due to the alcohol he had consumed. Drunk texting Rafael was probably the stupidest thing he could have done that night, and he was almost impressed he had managed to fuck up that spectacularly. It wasn't like he had said anything incriminating, or even *that* stupid, but even he could admit that telling a guy you love him just after kicking him out of your place after he kissed you, well, it doesn't exactly give the guy a clear message.

After a couple of hours nursing his hangover, Sonny thought he should probably call Rafael. The call went fine; they talked how they normally would, maybe with a little more tension in the air but not enough to be painful, and mostly ignored the events of the day before. It ended with Sonny practically begging to come over that night to cook dinner for Rafael and Alicia. Sure, this was him overcompensating for the guilt he felt about rejecting Rafael and for confusing him and upsetting him, but Rafael either didn't notice or didn't care.

So, by seven o'clock, Sonny was in the Barba's kitchen peeling potatoes for the roast he was cooking, while Rafael prepared his opening statements for the next day in the adjoining dining room. He had gotten all the ingredients on the way over, and went over his mother's recipe for the perfect roast as he did so. Usually he only cooked for himself, and when he did cook for others it was usually plastic boxes of leftovers to give to his friends (mostly Amanda) that seemed to live on take-out. You couldn't exactly fit a whole roast dinner inside an old take-out container, so he was a little out of practise. Still, it meant spending more time

in the kitchen, where he felt at peace, and not spending the whole night riddled with guilt and anxiety about the day before.

After a while, he had managed to get the lamb, potatoes and carrots into the oven and the gravy in a saucepan on the stove, and so he began to prepare the salad. As he got the ingredients out of the fridge, Alicia came barrelling into the kitchen to see what was going on. When she asked to help Sonny cook, he just couldn't say no- he was too much of a sucker for those big green eyes of hers. Sonny lifted her up to the counter and together they slowly mixed the greens together, and Sonny let Alicia toss it once he had poured in the dressing and thrown in slices of tomato.

When he put her back down, Alicia had gone quiet. Not in the way she was quiet right before starting to cry, or quiet in the way she was when she was tired, but quiet as in pensive, like she had a question to ask she was still figuring out the wording of. Sonny waited patiently as her little face scrunched up with thought.

“Sonny, when you and Papá get married, are you going to be my new Mamá?”

To say this was not the question Sonny anticipated was an understatement. Freezing, and staring open-mouthed at the child out of shock was perhaps not the smartest move, but it really had shaken him. Making things worse, Sonny could see Rafael in the dining room, head perked up like a meerkat and looking equally as surprised as Sonny.

Collecting himself slightly, Sonny realised he couldn't just say nothing, so asked back, “what do you mean, sweetheart?” in the hopes that playing dumb would work on her.

“Well if boys can be pretty, they can also be Mamás, right? And you and Papá are in love so you have to get married, then you'll be my new Mamá.” The way she said it, so matter-of-factly, like it was just *obvious* that this was how things should be- well, it freaked Sonny the fuck out.

For one, he was again thrown back into the thought pattern of, *look you moron, this is what you could have had but you threw it away because you think you're so fucking noble, and for what? What's it gonna get you?* He hated it and hated how selfish it made him feel, but he just couldn't help it. He *wanted* this so badly, he *wanted* to be a part of this family and the only thing standing in the way was himself and his own stupid morals. He was becoming less

and less sure of how worth it it was, but also knew he had made his decision and couldn't go back on it.

It also hurt him to think that he was confusing Alicia. The poor kid had already been through so much in her short life, and had already withstood so much instability within her family, Sonny really did not want to be the cause of even more uncertainty.

And then there was Rafael. The way Alicia had so nonchalantly suggested a replacement for her mother may not have meant much to her, but Sonny was sure it was a stab in the gut for Rafael. He had already put that man through enough hurt and confusion, and hated himself for it, and the idea that he was continuing to hurt him made Sonny feel queasy again.

"Sorry, hon, that's not happening." Sonny said to Alicia, having realised he still hadn't answered her question. He tried to keep the shakiness out of his voice, but didn't think he had been successful. He refused to look over at Rafael again, thinking he might burst into tears if he saw a fraction of pain on the other man's face. Suddenly he didn't want to be here, and just wanted to curl up in bed alone and sulk over this whole situation. But he couldn't do that, he had the roast in the oven after all, so he just had to get through dinner and then he could fuck off and leave this family alone before he caused even more damage.

Sonny was moody for the rest of the night, he knew this and he really couldn't bring himself to care. The idea of just leaving the Barba household and not coming back after tonight grew more appealing as the minutes went by. It wasn't that he wanted to, far from it, but felt like, for everyone else's sake, he needed to. He was unnecessarily short with both Rafael and Alicia through the whole meal. They didn't deserve it, but again, he felt like he needed to make them mad at him, so the break would be cleaner. It also meant he wouldn't be able to pussy-out last minute and end up crawling back to them.

Rafael watched him closely for the rest of the evening, he didn't even try to hide it. Sonny couldn't tell what he was thinking, as his courtroom poker face was firmly glued on. He doubted it was good, though, as his gaze just intensified everytime Sonny replied to Alicia's various questions about everything and nothing with unenthusiastic one-word answers.

When they had all finished eating, Rafael stacked all the plates and took them over to the sink to wash up, then sat back down and said to Alicia, "Al, do you wanna go watch a movie on the iPad? With your earphones in?" Sonny could tell this wasn't a question, and definitely not

up for discussion. The little girl nodded and scampered off to her room, closing the door gently behind her.

For a few moments, Sonny and Rafael just sat across from each other at the dining table, far more hostile than the night before, just staring each other down. Both were too stubborn to speak first.

Finally, broke the silence. “Okay. If it really makes you *that* uncomfortable, then I get it, whatever. But please. Don’t take it out on her, it’s not fair.”

“What are you talking about?” Sonny replied, confused as to what exactly Rafael was referring to.

Rafael scoffed and rolled his eyes, like Sonny was fucking with him, and just playing dumb instead of actually not knowing. This made Sonny nervous- he got the feeling that maybe this went a little deeper than him just snapping at Alicia over dinner.

“Ever since she asked you about you and me, you’ve just been pissy with both of us,” Rafael started. “If you’re mad at me, or my feelings for you make you uncomfortable, then just fucking take it out on *me* .”

When Rafael got angry, he didn’t yell or make a scene. What happened instead, was his eyes grew darker and his voice dropped lower. His gaze and his tone became just that bit more intense, almost threatening. This is what was happening now, and Sonny could tell Rafael was full of pure rage. But underneath that, he could still hear the fear and the desperation- but he could worry about that later.

Right now Rafael was pissed at him. Not just pissed, angry. Really angry. And he couldn’t understand why. It only made Sonny’s own anger (more directed at himself than anyone else, but right then it didn’t matter) grow.

“Okay, well first of all, I’m not *pissy* , I’m not even mad or anything it’s just... a lot to hear. How the fuck do you want me to react?” Sonny waved his hands around wildly as he spoke.

Rafael didn't respond, and although Sonny could tell he was still mad, he seemed to understand this point.

Sonny just let it all wash over him. Everything he was feeling and thinking and doing, and then everything he was *not* doing. It all just became so overwhelming, if he wasn't already sitting down, he would need to. He wanted to run and he wanted to leave this all behind, because honestly, the weight of it all was becoming too heavy for him to carry.

"I don't know if I can keep coming 'round here, Raf." he started, barely a whisper. "I mean, I don't wanna keep imposing on your family; we aren't even together so I really don't want to be replacing your kid's mother for Christ's sake. I think I should take a step back, you know?" Obviously he did mean all of this, but it was still kind of just an excuse. He refused to acknowledge his own feelings and his own confusion- it would just muddy the waters.

Rafael looked taken aback, clearly this is not what he had expected Sonny to say. He just sat there, looking at Sonny. If Sonny had wanted to know what he was feeling, he would have seen the sadness inside Rafael's eyes and in the slight downwards curl of his lip, and then the panic hidden beneath it all. But Sonny didn't want to know. He didn't want to see more of the pain and confusion he was causing, he just wanted to bury his head in the sand.

After a while, Rafael simply said, "so why aren't we together?" his expression naturalised, so that even if Sonny hadn't been ignoring it, he wouldn't have been able to read him.

"What?" Sonny said before he had even processed Rafael's words. Feeling betrayed by his own tongue, Sonny clamped his lips shut and his frown deepened.

"You just said, 'we aren't even together' but why not?"

Oh, if only he knew. Sonny could have written a list of all the reasons they weren't together, and the list would probably have been longer than the shopping list his mother had carried around with her around Christmas time when Sonny was a child. But all these reasons, they were just excuses. They were ridiculous and at this point, only doing more damage than good. But Sonny was nothing if not stubborn, and still did not trust his tongue to speak reasonably, and instead sat there staring at Rafael like a dazed idiot.

He could feel Rafael's frustration with him growing with every second he wasn't speaking.

"Sonny, do you or do you not have feelings for me? Because if I don't figure it out in the next five minutes, I think I'm gonna lose it." At this point, it seemed Rafael had given up keeping the desperation out of his voice. He laughed almost nervously, and ran a hand through his hair- all Sonny could think was how adorable he looked, and how much he wished that were his own hand instead.

Sonny thought about it, and decided he couldn't lie anymore. He just couldn't. It wasn't like it was helping at all, anyway. "Yeah, I do." He answered, simply.

For a moment, Rafael looked so damn relieved, and almost happy, that it made Sonny began to smile. That moment, however, was brief, and the relief was replaced, once again, with confusion.

"So what's the issue then?" Sonny hated how small his voice sounded.

He deserved to know, Sonny thought. He deserved to know why Sonny had been keeping his distance, and maybe he would understand. For a frantic second, Sonny planned his speech out in his mind, then let the words flow out from his mouth.

"The issue is that I care about you too damn much for that, Rafael. You're still grieving and, honestly, I don't think you know what you want, and I don't want to put either of us through something I don't think you're ready for. We'd both just end up hurt and I don't think I can do that to you- it wouldn't be fair, not to you and not to me. And then there's Alicia, and she deserves stability and I'm not sure that's something the two of us together could give her."

To say the way Sonny had expected Rafael to react and how he really reacted were different would be an understatement. He had expected understanding, maybe. Or agreement. Or even for Rafael to have burst out laughing, and expressing how this had all been a great misunderstanding would have seemed more normal than this. What really happened was Rafael shooting him a look of blind, murderous rage. Sonny had never seen him so angry, and that was saying something.

“Wow. Do you think you could be a little more condescending? No, really, I’m curious, could you?” He spat. Sonny just sat there dumbfounded as Rafael repeatedly ran his hands through his hair, trying to calm himself down enough to say something. Sonny had never felt so nervous for a talk since he kicked his football through his Nonna’s living room window when he was twelve.

“How do you know? How do you know when I’m ready? This kind of thing doesn’t just go away,” he started, relatively calmly. “Of course I’m still grieving but what do you want me to do? Spend the rest of my life alone and miserable? I’ll fucking tell you when I’m ready, and I’m telling you now, I want to move on and I *am* over her. That doesn’t mean it doesn’t still hurt that she’s fucking *dead*, Jesus!” Sonny could tell he was getting more and more worked up as he kept talking, but he didn’t seem to be able to stop himself. So Sonny just let him talk. “It hurts so fucking much. But you know what? Every day it’s started to hurt a little less and I’m pretty goddamn proud of how far I’ve come-” he paused, looking Sonny dead in the eyes, and Sonny would be lying if he said it didn’t send a chill down his spine. “I know you’re not trying to be an asshole, Sonny, I know you’re doing all of this with the best of intentions but I just need you to understand how fucking insulting that sounds.”

So, yeah, he was definitely right, and Sonny definitely deserved an award for asshole-of-the-year. All that nobility and ‘good’ he had thought he was doing, and for what? If he was a better man and not still so full of pride, he would probably be on his knees begging for forgiveness. Instead, he just felt tears brimming in his eyes as he continued to just sit there looking at Rafael, who, at this point, probably hated him. But Rafael wasn’t finished, he could see it in his face, and so Sonny forced his tears back and prepared himself for more.

“And you say Al deserves stability, then what the fuck do you think you’re giving her? She literally told you she sees you as a parent figure *already*, even if we do just stay friends that’s not going to change.” Rafael’s voice had softened now, like he could tell that Sonny understood the gravity of his own actions and no longer felt the need for harshness. He also seemed as if his anger had dwindled away, and for that, at least, Sonny was grateful.

Sonny had never felt so shitty in his life.

“I’m sorry. I was wrong, I didn’t realise how insensitive that would sound, and I probably should have just spoken to you about it, huh?” He choked out.

“Yeah. You should have.” Rafael replied, sternly but not angrily. Sonny figured this was probably how he chastised Alicia (which almost made him smile), and assumed the older man was probably still looking for more of an apology. The least Sonny could do was comply.

“I’ve put you through a lot these past few months, and I’m just so sorry for hurting you, Raf.” He really meant it. Again, Sonny felt the tears welling in his eyes and willed them not to fall.

Rafael no longer looked mad, it was obvious he could see how upset Sonny was, and how much Sonny meant what he said. At the end of the day, they loved each other. Even if there were no romantic feelings involved, even if one of them hurt the other, there was still so much love between them, Sonny figured they would always end up coming around and forgiving. At least he hoped. And this is what Rafael seemed to be doing now- sucking in his pride and accepting that Sonny made a mistake, because he’s human and that’s what humans do, and was preparing himself to accept the apology and move on. At least Sonny hoped.

“I’m not going to say it’s okay, because it was pretty shitty and, goddamn it Sonny, I’ve been so *confused* , but I forgive you.” Sincerity shone in Rafael’s eyes, and that soft tone in his voice just made Sonny want to cry even more. He truly didn’t deserve this man. “You’re just too fucking noble for your own good.” He added, making Sonny laugh wetly and a soft smile appeared on his own face.

Then, Rafael reached out and took his hand. Sonny felt that familiar jolt of nerves he experienced every time the other man touched him, and honestly, it did make him feel a little bit better.

“Hey, don’t be upset, okay?” He started, that softness even more present in his voice. “I’m not mad. I know you did everything because you thought it was best for me, and I know you put your own feelings aside because you wanted to make sure I was okay, and Sonny, I really am thankful.”

Sonny felt himself blushing. *Blushing* , Jesus, what was happening to him? “Nah, you don’t have to say that. I know I fucked up, you don’t gotta sugarcoat it.”

“I’m not sugarcoating anything, I mean it.”

Although he still didn't really believe him, Sonny was thankful for the lie. Even if it was more for his own pride than anything else, he appreciated the way Rafael was obviously making an effort to keep their relationship in tact.

Sitting across from each other at the dining table, hands connected, Sonny no longer felt like he was on the other end of an interrogation. It was warm, and felt safe, and for the first time in months, Sonny allowed himself to feel excited about what was to come.

"So, what happens now?" He asked, breaking the comfortable silence.

Rafael began to grin. "Well, I think to start with you should ask me out."

"Oh really?" Sonny chuckled, subconsciously shifting closer and leaning in across the table, "And why can't *you* ask *me* out?"

Rafael plastered a stone-cold serious to his face, but Sonny could still see the smile behind his eyes. "Because it's your fault this hasn't happened already, so you're going to be the one paying."

"And I thought chivalry was dead."

By now, both men were grinning like idiots, and Sonny hadn't felt so much genuine joy in a good long while.

"I'll text you the details, are you free tomorrow night?" He asked, perhaps a little too much enthusiasm in his voice.

"Someone's eager," Rafael replied, his smile growing wider than Sonny had thought possible. "I think so. I'll need to make sure Liv can take Al for the night, but it should be fine."

“Good.” he paused for a moment, knowing this was probably a good time to call it a night, but not wanting to leave. He sighed reluctantly and began to stand. “I should probably head home now, though.”

Rafael walked him to the door like he had dozens of times before, but this time it felt different. This time the air was full of promise, despite how cheesy it sounded, and nerves bounced around inside his gut.

It seemed Rafael had the same thought, because as he stepped over the threshold of the Barba apartment and into the hallway, instead of the front door closing behind him, Rafael lips were on his. Sonny fought the urge to grin like a maniac and kissed him back, one hand curled around the back of his neck, the other resting comfortably on his hip. It occurred to Sonny that from now on, he could kiss Rafael whenever he wanted to, and with that thought it became impossible to fight his own lips curling up into a smile. He pulled away, but rest his forehead against Rafael’s, still holding him close and looking into his big, beautiful eyes.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, okay?” He whispered. They were so close, Sonny swore he felt the tickle of Rafael’s eyelashes brushing against his skin as he blinked.

Pressing one more peck to Sonny’s lips, Rafael pulled away properly. “Of course.”

Before walking off down the corridor and leaving the building, Sonny turned around to get one more look at Rafael, and couldn’t help the feeling that this was the beginning of the rest of his life. Tomorrow night couldn’t come quick enough.

Chapter End Notes

So uh this is the last official chapter... there's an epilogue that I hopefully won't take too long to write (and I'll say all my sappy shit in the notes for that chapter hehe) but yeah! They kissed! They're happy! Woohoo!

I love all your comments and kudos too so keep them coming ;)

follow me on twitter @transcarisi but I'm more active on @sstanuris (I also have a reddie twitter au on there so... check it out maybe !!)

ok thanks love you all !!!!

End Notes

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