

## I've got you, Brother.

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# **I've got you, Brother.**

by [Ellasteri](#)

## Summary

Getting lost in the greatest thing that has ever happened to you and hoping it becomes immortal.

What's the reason for all of this if everything can vanish in a second?

Or

In which Aaron's finds himself a brother, and tries his best to become one as well.

## Notes

Hi, my loved ones. I hope you like this.

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

# Fucking lookalike, you'll get me arrested.

## Chapter Summary

In which Aaron meets a pig, and finds out that clones are real.

*Destiny*, it had been called, *fate*.

Something that was meant to happen, no matter what.

If you didn't like it, you were screwed.

The greatest thing you could do was go along with it, do not question it, otherwise you would suffer your whole life.

Aaron thought more of it as *luck*.

Good luck, bad luck.

But perhaps, luck was just a less fancy name for destiny.

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Aaron was a lucky guy.

Which was probably how he found himself in this situation.

The baseball stadium was very crowded, and Aaron was a little below the average height; how did he spot him? A complete mystery. But talking seriously, some crazy shit had always happened to him.

“Do you want some popcorn?” Aaron asked the kid who was clinging onto his hand.

Marcel was the only guy in his current foster home who was shorter than Aaron, but he was also seven years younger.

“Can they be the brown ones?” Marcel looked up at Aaron, he looked ridiculous in his oversized sweater, not cute as Brianna liked to say, but no one ever listened to Aaron.

“The brown ones suck.” He answered, they were also on the other side of the stall, and Aaron was quick, but not stupid.

“The yellow ones then.” Marcel agreed.

Aaron risked a glance towards Gamila, the reason they were all at the Raiders’ game; if they got caught, she’ll be the one blamed, since she was the one in charge, and also the oldest one.

She seemed to be busy, though. Angrily arguing with the dickbag who was her boyfriend, and also the guy who had given them all tickets to the game. If they were bickering right now, they’ll start face-sucking at any moment, something Aaron would very not like to witness again, but something that’ll keep them distracted, the greatest chance they could get.

Aaron looked around and tried to figure out the best way to take a bag of buttered popcorn without anyone noticing; the place was full, he had a lot of coverage, and he could always blame Marcel. Maybe Aaron could tell him to trip over and make a big fuss, so he could grab more things than just a package, and then—

Suddenly, a hand clung onto his upper arm. Aaron turned his head, alarmed, and tightened his hold on Marcel’s hand.

He was looking up right at a policeman.

What the fuck, Aaron hadn’t stolen anything yet! He wasn’t even wearing his suspicious sweatshirt!

“What are you doing here?” The pig asked, he sounded less angry than the other people who had ever caught Aaron taking stuff. He was frowning slightly at Marcel, and Aaron tried to cover the kid with his own body.

“Uh...” Shit, Aaron looked around, searching for help. Some people were staring at them, some with blatant distaste in their faces. But when Aaron turned back at where Gamila had last been, there was nothing.

“Did they switch you?” He looked back at the cop’s eyes, not knowing what the madman was talking about, and then scanned the mass of people again.

And... yes! He saw Bruno, his older foster brother, walking towards them. He had his hands in his pockets, his shoulders hunched slightly and his gaze fixed on the floor in front of his feet. He was probably wondering why they were taking so long, he sometimes was weird when it came to Aaron and Marcel. But he will help him, even if Aaron had no idea why the cop had stopped them.

As if sensing his gaze, Bruno looked up, he froze and his eyes widened. He stood like that for a moment, then turned around and left.

Aaron was left gaping at his back. That fucker! He turned his eyes at Marcel and murmured quickly. “Go and stay with him.”

The kid looked a little spooked and reluctantly left his hand, but obeyed and ran towards the traitor’s back.

Aaron swallowed, put on his most innocent face, and turned back to the confused, ugly cop. The man was watching his foster siblings. “What is going on, Andrew?”

Aaron didn’t know what to answer to that, so he tried to twist his arm out of the man’s hand. “Uh, listen, I wasn’t..”

Instead of releasing him, the cop tightened his grip. “I didn’t know about this, kid, I’m sorry”

“I don’t- I..”

“But, what happened? Andrew?” The cop interrupted him.

Aaron was starting to panic, and he squirmed again, without success, from his hands.

What was the man high on? He looked around again, feeling more and more trapped.

“You know what? You are coming with me, it’s too crowded here.”

Aaron stopped moving, and looked back at the man. Was he being arrested?

“No!” Aaron yelled.

“No?” The cop asked, and had the balls to look more confused. Aaron was very scared.

“Come on, you know you can trust me, kid.” A horde of people began to surround them.

“Let’s go, Andre-“

“Let me go!” Aaron screamed, and squirmed against his grip again.

“Kid?” The cop looked at him weirdly. Then he froze, and paled a little. “You are not Andrew...” He said with wonder. What the hell?

“Uh... “ Aaron thought quickly, “Yes, yes I am, my name is Andrew, yeah.”

“You are not Andrew.” He repeated again, firmly. While the cop seemed busy having a big-ass revelation, Aaron mentally apologized to whoever Andrew was, took his chance and kicked right into the cop’s kneecap. The man groaned but didn’t let go, Aaron quickly got off his jacket, so the man was only left holding it, and ran.

“No! Wait!” He heard him yell. Aaron was already vanishing, walking through the large groups of people. A man tried to grab him, but Aaron hit the spout of his beer with the palm of his hand and ran from the angry words the man cursed as his drink overflowed.

He kept running, and then made a turn and slammed right into Gamila. *She smelled amazing.* “The fuck, Aaron?” She snapped; then she saw his expression. “What did you do?”

Aaron could still listen to the scandal he had left behind, so he grabbed her hand. *He grabbed her hand!* And dragged her behind him. “Hey!” She yelled, but followed him once Aaron let go.

They ran until they found their foster siblings, who were behind a half wall, a little hidden. As soon as they saw them, Marcel let go of Brianna’s hand and plastered himself to Aaron’s side.

Aaron heard Bruno say “*gracias*” to the sky and then kicked him in the kneecap as well.

He cursed harshly in Spanish as he held his leg.

“You left me!” Aaron yelled at him, putting Marcel between the two of them.

“You kicked me!” He screamed back.

“You left me there!” Aaron repeated.

“You don’t go around kicking people, *chaneque*!”

“You looked me in the eyes and left me to die!” He heard Brianna mutter a “Stop yelling, idiots.”

“I panicked!”

“You panicked?!”

“I’m sorry!”

“Enough!” Gamila snapped. Everyone stopped talking, she took a deep breath. “Tell me what happened.”

“I don’t know!” Aaron began “We were coming back from the restroom and then the guy just grabbed me!”

“The guy?” She asked.

“A cop.”

“A cop!?” Gamila yelled.

He heard Will snicker from his place, where he was pretending to not know them.

“How did you get away?” Bruno asked. Aaron looked at Marcel but didn't answer, the kid seemed like was going to cry.

“You are *so* getting arrested.” Bruno said after a moment and turned his gaze back to the sky.

“No!” Marcel cried.

“Quiet!” Gamila snapped again. She ran a hand through her dark locks. “What did you do, Aaron?”

“Nothing, I swear!” Gamila narrowed her eyes at him, and then turned to Marcel, which, rude. “What did he do?”

“Nothing!” He answered, good friend, and then he began to cry, fuck.



“Wait,” Will said, who stopped pretending he was there by himself “Where the hell is my jacket?”

“Uh, the cop stole it.” Aaron answered, truthfully.

“Dude!” Will yelled. “It has my name on it!”

“Who puts their name on their clothes?” Bruno mocked as Brianna said “Stop yelling!”

Will seemed ready to start a fight, but Gamila put herself between the two of them.

“Stop.” She ordered. She waited until Will didn’t seem ready to beat the shit out of Aaron, and then turned around.

“So you did nothing?” She asked, more calmed.

“Nothing, nothing, I swear.” Aaron leaned down a little and then picked up Marcel, so he stopped crying. “He even kept calling me another name.”

“What name, fucker?, it better not be Will, you little piece of—“

“He called me... Andrew?” Aaron told Gamila, ignoring the other guy.

“Andrew?” Bruno asked

Aaron nodded and changed Marcel to his other hip, he was getting heavy a fuck.

“Maybe a lookalike,” Bruno said.

“It’s starting again!” Dani, the youngest girl, screeched, as she ran closer to the field.

“Oh, no.” Brianna ran behind her.

“Listen,” Gamila began, “it was probably nothing, and we didn’t drive here for an hour to leave that easily.”

“I drove.” Bruno murmured; he was the only one, aside from Gamila, old enough to do so.

“So just keep your head down and stay hidden between us.” She kept talking.

“Where is your boyfriend?” Will asked her, even if he seemed as if he was going to start to pretend he didn’t know them again.

“He is not my boyfriend anymore.” Bruno looked at Aaron with his eyebrows raised, Gamila didn’t notice. “So we are going to enjoy this shitty game, and throw Aaron to the dogs if the cop finds us.” And with that, she turned and left towards where the girls had gone, with Will in a tow.

Bruno laughed and shook his head at Aaron “Put this on,” He said, giving him his own hoodie, it was going to look ridiculous on Aaron. “Come on, Mickey, it’ll cover you.”

“Don’t call me Mickey.” Aaron said, even as he lowered Marcel to the ground and put the huge-ass clothes on, it was too fucking warm for this.

“But is your name!” Aaron was going to glare at him, but Bruno pulled the hood all over his eyes, then laughed when Aaron fist hit him somewhere.

“I’m just keeping you from the police.”

“Fuck off.” As soon as his hands were free, Marcel held onto him, still scared from the stunt with the pig. They began to walk after their foster siblings.

“So, did you kick the blue as well, Chuck *Enanorris* ?” Bruno said mockingly as he leaned down, a lot, to put his arm around Aaron’s shoulders.

“Fuck off.” Marcel stole the words before Aaron could tell them. They both stared at the kid for a second, and then Aaron laughed out loud. “Good job!” He congratulated Marcel.

“Ugh,” Bruno said, looking at the distance, “I hope your lookalike gets you arrested or something, you are a menace to society.”

Aaron just laughed again.

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Living with the Andersons was not that bad.

The couple had never touched a hair of Aaron’s head. He was pretty sure Mr. Anderson had been calling him ‘the short one’ in his head.

But Aaron kind of liked the place.

He always tried to keep in mind that he could not get used to anything, never. But he could still like it, right?

Even if they fought with each other *all the time*. Aaron couldn’t really understand how two people who seemed to hate each other so badly had ended up together.

Easy enough to ignore, Aaron simply kept along with his day, not paying attention to the ever-lasting screams that echoed in the house.

He knew how to make himself get lost, how to read the room and see when the tension was too sharp, and when it was better to skip dinner and make himself invisible. They had never touched a hair in his head, and he intended on keeping it that way.

Things got a little harder when Marcel came around, around a year later than Aaron. Before that it was just him and Bruno, some kid who came and left, and the girls. But at that time Bruno didn't really like Aaron because he was '*bien rajado*', Aaron never asked what that meant.

Marcel got scared easily, and always cried very, very silently. He didn't know how to read rooms, didn't know how to read at all.

Someone had once protected Aaron when he had needed it, so he decided to take care of Marcel, at least until they inevitably got separated. Once the kid realized that he was safe with Aaron, he never wanted to leave his side.

Therefore, Aaron took the blame for some stuff, got himself into the losing end of some terrifyingly heavy scolding, and kept Marcel as safe as he could.

Bruno told him that he had misjudged him, and for some reason decided that Aaron was worth more than a shit.

Aaron couldn't care less about the older guy, but Aaron was shit at reading, and Marcel needed to learn so he could go to school; at the end, Bruno taught him how to read, and Marcel ended up with a very weird accent.

Well, they were doing what they could.

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"Does it hurt?" Aaron asked. Using his thumb to check the palm of the girl's hand.

She shrugged.

Bruno came in, and Aaron could overhear a discussion starting downstairs. As long as Aaron, Gamila and Marcel were not in the room, he was always the first one to leave once they began.

He looked with disgust at the people in his room, groaned and climbed into his bunk bed. The bed below his was mattress-less; Will had left two weeks before, with some adoption papers signed and two raised middle fingers.

His mattress had been moved to the girls' floor. It's new owner was sitting right in front of Aaron.

She, Ella, hadn't said a single word towards anyone in the whole time she had been in the house. So when she thrust a hand full of splinters right in front of Aaron's eyes and whispered, teary-eyed, a shaky '*help me*', Aaron had sat her beside his bed, took a pair of tweezers and started to slowly take all the wood's little pieces; there were places in the house that were falling apart, but they were mostly hidden by bright white paint and useless decoration objects.

"You need to tell me if you can still feel a splinter, or it could stay in your hand and get infected."

Marcel was tangled around Aaron's back like a monkey, and had a small flashlight pointed at Ella's hand. "Aaron will have to cut your hand off if it gets infected." He said towards the girl solemnly.

Aaron elbowed him and ignored his giggle. "Don't listen to him" he told Ella, who was staring at her hand, terrified. "I won't cut your hand off, but it'll keep hurting if we leave the little shit on it."

"Now," He continued. "Does it hurt?" She nodded sharply and Aaron frowned, pulling her hand closer to his eyes, Marcel moved the light so it was flashing right into her palm. Aaron saw the splinter.

Everyone in this house had, for some reason, started to see him like some kind of cheap nurse. They came to him, and if Aaron felt like it, he helped them. Most of the things he knew about how to ‘cure’ were told by Gamila, but she was too rough and rude for anyone to want to ask for her help, anyone except Aaron.

Aaron didn’t mind it; really, he liked it a little. Every foster kid in the house had slowly been giving him things they had, and Brianna had built a fucked up but functional kit that they all kept hidden under Will’s former bed.

“Aaron” Bruno said from his bed. Aaron didn’t look up, and finally took what seemed to be the last piece of wood. He used his thumb to check again, and looked up to see if it was better.

“Aaron” Bruno repeated. And this time Aaron looked up, but only because Bruno rarely called him by his name, it was weird. Bruno seemed very tense, and was staring outside the window next to Aaron’s and Marcel’s bed.

“What is it?” Aaron asked. He let go of Ella’s hand and poked at Marcel’s side until he untangled himself from around Aaron.

“The Spider is here” Aaron shot up from the floor. At the same time, he heard Gamila and Brianna frantically coming into their room. “Did you see who is outside?” The first one asked in a rush.

The Spider, as everyone but Aaron called her, was actually his assigned social worker; she was a tall, lanky and very skinny woman. She usually came around every month or so to check on him, and she had seen him not more than two weeks ago, since she was also Will’s assigned social worker.

“Maybe they are sending Will back,” Brianna said. “Wouldn’t be surprising.”

“After all the shit they pulled, I don't think so.” Gamila answered.

Aaron looked up from where he had frozen his sight into, and locked eyes with Bruno. Because, aside from the normal check-ups, a social worker visit could only mean another thing.

Aaron didn't think he was ready to leave the house yet.

"Maybe it's something else." Gamila said, and she sounded so weird giving comfort, Aaron couldn't believe her words.

"She seems to like you, even if we don't understand why." She continued.

Aaron did know why. But it was a very bad memory, full of cramped darkness, something he always kept hidden on the very back of his head. It was also kind of embarrassing, and he sure as fuck wouldn't explain it her. Not that she seemed to be expecting an answer.

"What is going on?" Marcel asked, climbing up to their bed so he could see outside the window. Ella had vanished.

"Do you think she heard the Andersons' fighting?" Brianna asked. Aaron shrugged, he had gotten so used to it, he hadn't really been paying attention; he didn't know if it had been loud enough to be heard from outside, he really hoped it hadn't.

"Oh shit!" Bruno gasped, jumped out of his bed and clumsily jumped into Aaron's, almost hitting his nose with the window.

"What is it?!" Aaron tried to take a look around Bruno.

He sat back on his heels, and gaped at the man that was pulling out of his car. *His cop car.*

“What the hell?” Brianna yelled, climbing up to the bed as well, trying to take a better look; in her fast movement, she pushed Marcel out of the bed. He fell from it and landed on his ass. His lip quivered a little, but simply stood up and silently climbed to the bed again, this time holding onto Aaron. “Who is it?”

“Is the cop from the game.” Aaron murmured, starting to feel cold, trying to remember what the hell he could have done for the cop to come into his current house. Was kicking a police officer that bad?

“The one from the baseball game?!” Gamila yelled as well. Then she turned her gaze into Aaron, and glared at him. “You said you hadn’t done a thing!”

“I didn’t” He muttered, “I kicked him a little so I could get away, but before that, I did nothing”

“I told you to don’t go around kicking people, idiot!” This time Bruno told him.

“You said that *after* I kicked you, it doesn’t count!” Aaron angrily said back.

“For fuck’s sake you little piece *de*—“

“Stop this bullshit!” Gamila scolded them both, but her gaze was still on Aaron “If you did nothing, then why is he here?”

“I don’t know!”

“Of course you don’t you—“

“Aaron, could you come downstairs, please?” They all froze when they heard Ms. Anderson calling for him.

Aaron's stomach made a loop as he stood up.



“Maybe if you apologize he won’t arrest you” Brianna offered.

Aaron glared at her and walked to the stairs.

“Oh, no; you need to stay here, *chaparrito*” Aaron looked back, confused, but Bruno was talking to Marcel, who was following him.

“No.” The kid said, Bruno walked towards them and carried Marcel up, even as he began to flail. “No!” He cried out, so Aaron closed the door behind him when he left the room.

He stood for a second on the top of the stairs, took a deep breath, and began to climb down.

Everyone was staring at him, like he was an exotic animal behind the bars of a cage. The kind of attention that made Aaron’s skin crawl, and he stomped down on the impulse of climbing up back the stairs and then try to pretend that his name wasn’t his.

“Hello, Miss Merena.” He said instead, because she had always been kind to him, no matter what her harsh-looking brown eyes and deep voice told the others.

“Good afternoon, Aaron. This is Officer Higgins” She always went straight to the point, probably noticing the tense energy of his body.

Said officer Higgins was staring at Aaron. He was looking at him the same way people gazed at those who swallowed swords and spitted fire. With wonder, as if Aaron was something marvelous and imposible.

But Aaron wasn't part of a circus, he just wanted to bolt out of the place and hide; just that there was no escape. So he said.

“I’m sorry I kicked you”

And the man began to laugh.

It was enough to shift the nervousness in his belly to fury, and he couldn't help the scowl that appeared on his face. Perhaps Aaron was the clown of this fucking circus.

He turned to Miss Merena, who had a displeased expression as she frowned at the pig.

"Officer." She snapped.

"Sorry, sorry," He said, still smiling, cleaning tears from his eyes. "God, is just that, you are so different." Aaron had no idea of what the hell that meant.

"I quit the apology, respectfully, fuck off." He turned around to stomp back upstairs, but Mr. Anderson's heavy voice stopped him.

"Aaron, stay here." Aaron wasn't in the mood to be yelled at, so he turned around and crossed his arms in front of his chest, looking at the wall behind his social worker.

Miss Merena was still frowning, but now at the Andersons.

"Come and sit with Officer Higgins and me, please." She said after a moment.

Aaron walked past them and sat at the very edge of a chair in the giant table of the dining room.

"I'm sorry about that, kid." He said, but Aaron ignored him. He heard a sigh.

"Aaron," Miss Merena began, "Officer Higgins said that he saw you at the Raiders' game, in Oakland, just before classes started. Do you remember that?"

And how could he forget? "I didn't do anything, he just grabbed me." He answered defensively.

“Oh, kid, I wa—“

“We aren’t saying that you did something wrong, Aaron.” She interrupted him, which was great, because listening to the cop talking was annoying. “But he saw *you* right?”

Aaron looked at her, confused by her tone of voice, and narrowed his eyes.

There was an unknown emotion in her face, a certain eagerness in the way she was slightly leaning forwards, Aaron shifted a little so the very tip of his toes could graze the floor. He gave a quick look at Higgins, who looked the same, but blunter. Aaron nodded, cautiously.

“He grabbed you because he mistook you for someone else” She said.

“Andrew.” Aaron stated.

The cop sat up straighter, and Aaron leaned back from him. “Do you know him?!” He asked.

Aaron scowled again, “You kept saying fucking his name, pig.”

“Aaron.” Miss Merena scolded him.

But the pig had the same expression from before. “Not so different, then.” He murmured with wonder. Again with this shit?

“So what, this lookalike is wanted or what? Do you have a point?” He shifted in his chair.

“We think that, maybe, you two were separated in the system” Miss Mercedes stated.

Aaron looked between the two of them. She had said the words slowly, and Aaron repeated them in his mind, but they didn't make sense, just like words never did. Both of them were watching him as if they expected him to jump with joy or something, he didn't understand.

“What the fuck? So this- so this guy he-” Aaron stood up and walked backwards until he could see the stairs again.

Miss Merena stood up as well. “Aaron, wait, please sit down with us.”

He glanced briefly at the stairs and then slowly sat down again.

“What you are trying to say, is that this lookalike-“

“He's not just a lookalike.” Officer Higgins interrupted him.

“Officer, please let me do-“

“Here, look.” He interrupted her as well. He took a paper from his pocket and gave it to Aaron, when he didn't take it, he unfolded it and put it on the table.

Aaron looked down at it, and froze.

Because it was a picture of him.

In the picture, Aaron was standing with a bored expression, surrounded by people he didn't know. He studied everyone in it trying without success to recognize their faces, then looked back at his own face.

“Aaron.” He heard the woman say a moment later, when he was still trying to make sense of this.

“What is this?” He asked, looking up. Miss Merena was shaking her head at the cop, who looked smug.

Maybe Aaron had simply forgotten all the people in the photo, along with when it was taken. It was likely, more likely that the alternative. The alternative had to be a lie.

“We think that Andrew is your brother, and that you two were separated when you were younger.” She said.

Aaron looked back at the picture, he knocked his sneakers together twice, opened and closed his hands. *Brother?* He thought. *Family?* The nervousness was back, stronger, but it had a different shade.

*Excitement.* He swallowed, and opened his mouth again. He closed it.

“Is this some kind of prank?” He asked because it sounded surreal, if it was, it was a very cruel one. He didn’t want to think that Miss Merena was a cruel person.

“No, Aaron, it is not a prank.”

*Oh .*

*Brother?*

“Do- do you... do you know him?” He asked Officer Higgins, the man was smiling.

“Yes I do,” He answered. “And I really want you to meet him as well.”

Aaron took a deep breath, and tried to fight against the little pull on the corner of his mouth. *Brother.* How impossible was that?

“But,” Miss Mercedes interrupted, “We have to make sure he wants to meet as well” *Oh.*

Officer Higgins hit the table with his hands. “Why would you-“

“We have to make sure both of them want to meet each other, it is fair, and you said that Andrew's family was going to adopt him, something like this could have a big impact on both of their lives.”

“I said they were *looking* into adoption, but I am very sure they, obviously, would want them to meet each other.”

Aaron thought he understood, his social worker didn't want to give him big expectations, big hopes, only to betray them. He tried telling himself that, but the humming thrill that he felt through his veins, and the way his thoughts went back to *brother* over and over again wouldn't stop.

He swallowed and hid his slightly trembling fingers under the table.

“Maybe you could ask him?” He told the adults in front of him. Then cleared his throat, he hated when his voice sounded so damn small. “And then let me know if he wants to meet me.”

The cop smiled, but it was smaller than earlier, and the fold of his eyebrows was a little pained. Miss Merena simply said that it was a great idea.

Later, as Aaron went back upstairs, he couldn't help but think, again.

*Brother?*

---

Family was an unknown concept to Aaron.

There were maybe three people in the world who he would have dared to call family, but he didn't know if they'd call him family back.

Family, a beautiful, shiny thing that had always been outside his reach, behind a clean glass like the things behind a sideboard that said 'admire, do not touch'

Perhaps, this was Aaron's fault. *'Only 13 percent of the people in foster care get adopted, ' Will enjoyed to say the days before he was taken by his new family 'the fact that you are part of the majority is no one's fault but yours.'*

Fair enough, but Aaron had Marcel, and Bruno. And *maybe*, he'll have Andrew as well, a real brother.

No matter how hard Aaron tried to rein in his excitement, stomp it down and ready himself for yet another disappointment, he couldn't wait to get Andrew's answer.

---

Aaron didn't have a father.

He didn't have a mother.

He had no one, that was it.

A default last name and no story to tell at all.

But, apparently, he had a brother.

And apparently, this brother wanted nothing to do with him.

In those exact words. There went all his fucking excitement.

It really shouldn't have surprised him, it certainly shouldn't have hurt so fucking bad. It did.

Because one thing was knowing that his family, who had probably given him up, couldn't care less about him. And another one was being told this, in a short letter that had written a big 'fuck off' with big bold, capital letters.

It was kind of obvious, now that he thought about it. Why the hell would anyone want anything to do with Aaron?

Higgins, the pig, had said that Andrew's current foster family had been looking into adoption.

But Aaron sometimes was a fool. No, he liked to fool himself.

Which was how he found himself sitting on his bedroom floor, staring in vain at the letter in his hands, trying not to throw a ridiculous temper tantrum.

He was not paying attention, he didn't see Bruno coming in until he was looming right behind him.

"Is that a love letter, *chaparro*?"

He slipped the letter from Aaron's slow hands and held it high.

"Hey!" Aaron yelled "give that back, fucker!" Bruno laughed and stretched his long-ass arms to the ceiling, Aaron climbed into the bed so he could get the letter outside of Bruno's filthy hands, but Bruno easily pushed him away, so he landed on his ass on the bed.

Aaron saw how the donkey smile slowly vanished from Bruno's face, and saw his eyes move from side to side as he reread the letter.

Once he turned back to Aaron, he took the opportunity and stole back the letter; then he, ashamed, didn't meet his eyes.



“This is from the lookalike that the blue confused you for, right?” Aaron sat on his bed and didn’t answer.

He saw Bruno run a hand through his hair and lick his lips, looking very uncomfortable. He heard him sigh, and then he squatted in front of Aaron, so they were eye-to-eye. Aaron scowled at him.

“You need to talk to him.” He ordered.

Aaron felt rage blooming up his chest, and fisted the hand that didn’t have the letter. “You can’t read or what!?” Aaron barked “Didn’t you see wha—“

“Let me finish, *mocoso*” Bruno said, without really raising his voice, Bruno had a voice like that. Aaron shut up, even if he still felt as if something was boiling inside of him.

“You need to talk to him, face to face.”

“Wha- why?” Aaron asked.

Bruno shifted so one of his feet was planted in the ground and slowly reached towards the letter. “You see this?” He pointed at something with his finger, and Aaron looked at it, but found nothing, he squinted his eyes and brought it closer, but he couldn’t see shit.

He turned back to Bruno, who had his ‘you are an idiot’ face, he sighed again.

“The handwriting is shaky, and a little... smudged?” Aaron reviewed the letter again, how could one know if the words were shaky? “As if it was written in a rush”

“How can you know that?” Aaron asked. Yes, it was a little dirty, but all of Aaron's notes were always like that, scratched, striped and dirty letters that piled up with each other. Andrew’s handwriting was still tidier, perhaps, prettier.

Bruno scratched the back of his head and looked to the door, then sighed, yet again. “Back when I was... there,” He was talking from his time before the system “sometimes we used to get into... big shit? Dangerous stuff, so when we needed... uh... people to stay away, sometimes we sent texts or, well, letters to keep them away. When, uh, hostage situations for example?”

“You think he is being held hostage?!” Aaron made to stand from the bed, but Bruno pushed him back “Sit your idiotic midgety ass down!” He said, a little louder.

Bruno ran a hand through his face. “What I was trying to say is, these kind of stuff” he pointed to the paper “is not safe to trust”

“I mean, imagine if he came here, where would he stay, in the bed with you and Marcel?”

Aaron thought about it, if they ever met, which Andrew seemed against to, what would happen then?

“You would really want him to stay *here* with us?” He said as if he already knew the answer, and the house was something nasty.

Aaron didn’t understand “What’s wrong with this place?” He asked, genuinely confused. Bruno gave him a searching look, opened his mouth, but said nothing; he made a face that Aaron couldn’t really read “There are better places” He seemed to settle for at the end.

Aaron guessed there were, but he could see what Bruno was trying to tell. “What you are saying is, maybe Andrew is in... danger?”

Bruno nodded, his pale eyes looking less uncomfortable “But,” Aaron continued “Piggins said that his fosters wanted to adopt him”

“Piggins?” Bruno asked, smirking.

“Bruno.” Aaron pleaded.

“Alright, alright. We don’t know shit about him, or his house. Maybe they are good lads, maybe they’re cunts, you know how fucked up and blind this system is. But,” He looked at Aaron in the eyes “he *can* be your family. Which is why you need to talk to him.” Aaron nodded.

“If he can’t say that shit to your face, ” Bruno continued “he was either lying or a coward” And then he smiled. “And we don’t friend with cowards, do we?”

Aaron couldn’t help but smile a little and shake his head.

“So we are going to find a way to talk to the little shit, and ask him if he really wants to be friends with us, or if we are going to fuck off, alright? But remember, Ren-ren, you don’t need him.”

“Don’t call me that.” Aaron snapped.

Bruno threw his head back and laughed. He slapped his legs and stood up.

“Now,” he said “as much as I love sharing my invaluable knowledge with you, my little fella,-”

“Fuck you”

“-Dani fell from the stairs”

Aaron groaned “Argh, man. Again?” He stood up and began walking behind Bruno towards the door.

“What can I say, you gotta use your kids-charm and patch her up again, she never cries with you, crazy shit if I have a say. Meanwhile, me and Gamila, your habibi-“

“Fuck you!”

“Amazing variety of language you have there, bro; we are going to Walmart to... borrow a lamp that looks like the one the beast broke with her big-ass forehead, no beatings tonight, hell yeah, that’s my motto.” Aaron laughed again.

As they walked to the crying kid, Aaron folded neatly the letter and put it in his pocket; Oakland, which wasn't very far from San Jose. Maybe Bruno was right.

There was only one way to know.

# Meetings, greetings; Hello!

## Chapter Summary

In which Aaron meets his clone.

## Chapter Notes

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

He didn't let himself be hopeful, it would only be worse once he got disappointed.

---

Aaron tangled and untangled his hands from the phone's wire. He twisted it around his hand and then let it go.

He was trying to decide if it was a good idea.

Couldn't stop himself from thinking all the ways this could possibly go wrong.

*Fuck it*, he decided. He took an unnecessary look at the yellow, crumbled card in his hand, put the phone between his ear and shoulder and started to punch the numbers with his fingers.

There were five tones, the sound of someone answering and then Aaron hung the fucking call.

He regretted it immediately, then tried to throw the phone away, but it was tangled around his arm.

*Fucking idiot.*

He cursed, had to put another wasted coin into the telephone and dialed again.

He was just going to ask, and then hang up again. Ask, hang up. Easy.

“Higgins.” Was what the monotonous voice that answered from the phone said.

Who the hell answered their phones like that?

What was Aaron doing, again?

“Uh... hello?” Aaron tangled his hand around the cable as he answered, untangled it. There was the sound of someone moving around a little, and the voice came back, sounding gentler than before.

“Hello, who is this?”

Aaron gulped some air. The words didn’t really want to come out of his throat.

What if Higgins already knew about the letter? Maybe he would tell Aaron to stop looking. This probably wasn’t why the cop had given him, behind Miss Merena’s back, a card with his number. *If you need anything*, he had said.

“Hey, it’s alright. Are you a kid?” He sounded like he was trying to calm Aaron down, something very annoying, since he was already calm. His hand stilled around the wire.

“Yeah.” Aaron answered, more quietly than he had intended. “It's Aaron, Doe, Aaron Doe.” He added, louder. The officer hummed, Aaron wondered how many kids he had ever helped, if he had ever truthfully *helped*. At the end he seemed to remember who he was.

“Andrew’s brother.” It sounded like a fact.

And that, that was wrong. They were not brothers, not yet. Maybe never if Andrew could help it. Maybe yes if Aaron could. But first things first, he had to know why; if the reason was good enough, he'd try to vanish like everything else always did.

He muttered an agreement, nevertheless. Because he doubted the police officer would understand.

"What can I help you with, boy?" Aaron could hear a smile in his voice, but couldn't understand why the hell he would be smiling.

"Yeah. I, uh, I wanted to know if you..." He trailed off, staring at the brick wall in front of him. It was dirty. He just had to get it out!

"Yes?"

"Do you know where he goes to school?" He asked bluntly.

"Andrew?" *Who the hell else?* Aaron swallowed the words. He was trying to get something here, and being rude wouldn't help. He still rolled his eyes, though.

"Yeah." There was silence on the line.

"Why would you want to know?"

"I want to see him."

"Oh!" Higgins said, "that's amazing!"

But, was it?

"Yeah."

“I’m pretty sure he is in Roosevelt, a very nice school, amazing teachers; is Merena going with you?”

“Yeah.” Aaron lied. Miss Merena *had* read the letter.

“Awesome!” Then he stopped. “Do you want me to come with?”

“No!” Aaron panicked. “I mean, no offense, sir, but you are a cop, y’know? and I-I, uh...” A loud laugh came from the phone and Aaron winced, then scowled to the brick wall.

“No worries, I understand, no worries. Just don’t go by yourself, alright?”

“Ok,” he lied again. “Well, thanks.”

“You are welcome kiddo, it’s a pleasure to help.”

“Yeah, bye.” And he hung up.

---

So much for not letting himself hope.

---

The bus was very crowded.



Aaron had gotten used to being always surrounded by people.

In the house, in the school, in the street, walking home, in his bed.

If it wasn't Marcel it was Bruno. Bruno hated when Aaron went to places alone.

Which was why he didn't know that Aaron had taken a bus to go all the way to Oakland by himself.

It wasn't *that* far away.

But the bus was *very crowded*.

Aaron looked through the window, willing himself to not miss his stop, and ignored the angry glare of the lady that possibly wanted his seat. It wasn't as if Aaron could reach the handles on the top of the aisle, was it?

It had been too easy to skip his last clases, so easy it left him wondering why he had never done it before. He thought of excuses he would have to give Bruno for why he wasn't there when they all were supposed to leave their school.

He would just tell him he wasn't feeling very good. Brianna knew where he was, and she had agreed to cover him.

Aaron certainly wouldn't have to do her homework if he had simply told Bruno, but his foster brother would have wanted to come with him, and Aaron had to be by himself for this.

He didn't know what Andrew was going to do, or how Aaron would react to it.

The best thing he could do was to do Brianna's homework wrong.

The lady put her huge purse full of things against Aaron's shoulder and headrest. He felt something cold touch his neck and quickly leaned forward, without looking at her or standing from his seat. She cursed while everything fell to the floor and rolled sideways. The bus came to a stop, his stop.

He stood up and made sure to kick away something from the floor.

He thanked the driver and jumped out, there were goosebumps across his neck and arms.

He had always hated buses.

Aaron shook his head and started to walk. He had in his mind the map he had taken a look at earlier.

He didn't really have a plan. He had just dived headfirst into the situation. All the cards were on how Andrew would react. Aaron was readying himself to even be punched. Who knew? Better be prepared.

The heat was blistering. The back of his neck felt as clammy as his stomach loopy. Aaron tried to not feel nervous. He failed.

Andrew's school was small, compared to Aaron's. But the building felt imposing, the main gate was high and empty. Maybe he was nervous, what if he was already late?

Just some minutes later, students started to come out from it and climb down many steps to go to their houses. Some simply walked away, others were picked up, nobody paid attention to Aaron.

When it happened, he almost missed it.

But it wasn't his fault at all, it seemed like Andrew was trying very hard to become invisible between the mass of students.

He started down the stairs, and Aaron's fingers shook when he recognized the features beneath the huge black hoodie that nearly swallowed Andrew's entire body; they were his own very features, after all, even hidden in the shadows.

Aaron took a deep breath, and held it. All the times he had recently seen himself in a mirror blinked in the back of his head when he saw Andrew. It was very weird, kind of terrifying.

He probably felt a gaze on him, because Andrew's eyes snapped up sharply, scowling.

Aaron had mentally prepared himself for some possible reactions, a rejection the greatest one, ignorance another one, maybe Andrew would simply walk by.

He hadn't thought that Andrew would completely *freeze*.

Mid-step in the core of the stairs, looking breathless, panicked and wide-eyed, stood Aaron's supposed twin brother.

Aaron had seen the picture, he had! But *it was so different*.

Time stopped for a second, and Aaron began to climb up once he realized that Andrew *couldn't* come down; although after some steps, he started to very slowly climb down as well. It was fine, they would meet in the middle.

Once they were a feet apart, Andrew went still again, and Aaron could almost see how all the air left his lungs. This close, it was definitely scary how much they looked alike. The upwards tilt of his eyebrows, the shape of his nose, his eyes, everything looked like Aaron.

*Hello, brother.*

Stand in the middle of the stairs? A very bad idea.

A big guy stumbled into Andrew, whose shoulders went up to his ears, and made a shadow that looked like fear cross his face, slaughtering the little bubble they had locked themselves in without realizing.

“Watch where the fuck you are going, gnome.”

Aaron waited for the dickhead to go away, but apparently he was looking for some easy trouble. Anger rose up in him once the guy didn't back off from Andrew's space, instead trying to crowd him with his bigger height and a nasty smirk.

Aaron felt his lip curl, disgusted, the nervousness from all the trip making his skin crawl, and grabbed the front of his shirt, pulling down hard. The piece of shit clumsily stumbled on the pair of steps between them, and grabbed Aaron's wrists to not fall.

"Keep walking." He barked, and pushed him harshly backwards.

The guy probably wasn't expecting them to bite back, because he raised his hands, turned around and flipped them off with his back still to them.

Aaron tried to calm himself and returned his attention to Andrew.

If Aaron hadn't even touched Andrew, then why was he looking at him as if he had just punched him?

Confused and wary, Aaron shifted on his feet, looked at the people who walked around them and then said. "Come with me."

Andrew took breath, his shoulders moving fast and then his face wiped out. He went from looking panicked and scared to looking *almost bored* in seconds. Aaron was a little stunned, and turned around, wondering if Andrew had stopped feeling completely, or if he was just very good at hiding it all.

They began to walk away from the school, without a destination in Aaron's mind, and some minutes later, Andrew began to walk right next to him.

Their steps were the exact same length, since they were the exact same height. Aaron didn't have to walk faster, like he had to with Bruno, or slower, like with Marcel, because *their steps were the exact same length* .

“This is so weird.” Aaron muttered, looking at their feet, he could feel Andrew’s eyes on the side of his face. He was quiet. Aaron began to talk.

“Not gonna lie to you, when Piggins tried to grab me, I kind of hated you, because, you know, I thought I was being arrested.”

“Piggins?” Andrew whispered, and Aaron left a small huff of laughter come from his mouth, still staring at the ground.

“You know, the cop.” He raised a shoulder. “He came from nowhere and scared the shit out of Marcel, I kind of kicked him, it was a very strange day.” Andrew said nothing.

“Imagine my surprise, when he came to the house later and told me he had confused me for you. I didn’t believe him, of course I didn’t, but then he showed me your picture and *damn*.

I really thought he was shitting on me, even after that, because that wasn’t *me* . So I had to see if you were, uh, real. That’s why I’m here.”

Andrew was still just staring at him, saying no words. Aaron stopped completely, turned around and looked at his eyes, his own eyes, *fuck* . They looked at each other for some time, and Aaron took some air, chewing on his cheek.

“Listen,” he began. “I know you have a family.” Andrew frowned. “And that... that’s great, amazing.” It must be, he thought. “They- they don’t even have to know you have seen me, or- yeah, it’s alright.” It had to be. “We, uh, you and I, we don’t *have* to be family, we can just, you know, be friends?” This was not going great, but Aaron had never been too good with words. Andrew’s expression was pinched, and his eyes ran over Aaron’s face, still fucking quiet.

“It’s just- weird not knowing you” And more silence. Aaron hardened his expression a little, but probably failed.

“Bruno told me to ask you, if you *really* wanted me to fuck off, or if that was... something else” Andrew eyes finally locked in Aaron’s. “So, am I?”

The long silence added bricks to his shoulders, and Aaron could feel his heart in his ears, he almost missed the answer.

“No.” Andrew muttered.

“No what?” He asked, louder.

“Don’t fuck off.”

Aaron let out a breath he wasn’t aware of holding; he nodded, dumbfounded and looked away.

The ashes of happiness and excitement that he had tried so hard to kill started to reborn, he felt slightly giddy and winded, but still quite wary.

Aaron continued walking, and Andrew fell into step beside him immediately.

*What now?* Aaron simply hadn’t planned so far ahead, he had no idea how to make this silent walk less fucking uncomfortable. He was just glad that *he didn’t have to fuck off!*

“Who’s Bruno?” Andrew suddenly asked.

Aaron didn’t try to hide his smile.

---

Most of the time, Aaron felt like time was a slippery but sticky thing.

It gets stuck, but it also flies away.

And Aaron was always waiting. For what? He didn't know. *For something.*

A constant state of awareness. He waited and waited. There were moments where time seemed to have stopped.

But it didn't stop. He had to do something. The clock was always ticking.

But it felt worthless, it felt like he was always wasting it, and all the years he had lived, where in vain.

---

Marcel was the best bud anyone could ask for.

"I'll be back later, alright?" Aaron said, walking outside their room. Marcel nodded and waved, smiling.

Aaron would have felt bad for lying to him if he wasn't smiling.

He couldn't help but smile too.

Gamila and Bruno were fighting downstairs.

And by fighting, it was them barking at each other, but not completely yelling. Because Bruno hated yelling.

Aaron tried to be as unnoticeable as possible, crossing his fingers so that they wouldn't see him leaving, he was already going late. Andrew had never said anything about having to wait, but even the most patient person could get desperate.

He failed when he saw Gamila.

For starters, she looked furious, and she also had a bloody split lip.

Those kinds of wounds were not very uncommon, Aaron already knew how to make them better, she had been the one who taught him how; but they were weird in Gamila's face, everyone said she was too fast to get hit.

Her dark skin was angry red and her words sounded sharp, but Bruno had that stern look on his face that made him look unstoppable. Aaron wouldn't bet on any of them.

"Who are you trying to convince here?" Bruno was asking,

"I have nothing to prove to you!" She shouted.

"You know better than to continue with his bullshit."

"Stop treating me like a child!" She pushed him backwards, Bruno stumbled.

"You are not a fucking kid." His heavy accent came stronger.

Aaron wandered very quietly to the door, maybe they wouldn't notice...

"Where are you going Ren?" Bruno asked him.

"Out." He answered, walking faster.

"Whe—"



“Stop trying to control his fucking life!” Gamila interrupted him. “Stop trying to control everything! You are not his fucking father!”

Aaron stumbled a little, taken back by her aggression. She and Bruno were as close as Marcel and Aaron were; if Aaron didn't know better, he would have guessed they were a couple. Watching them fighting like this left him cold and worried; besides, he didn't really think that Bruno tried to control everything in his life.

Judging by the hurt that flickered in Bruno's eyes, he thought the same.

Not wanting to have to take a side between his foster siblings, he quickly ran outside and closed the door behind him. He didn't want to make Andrew wait very long.

Things were slowly getting better between the two of them.

The too stretched awkward silences had been making less appearances. Andrew probably was a silent guy by nature, but at least until the moment, Aaron had enough words for both of them.

He climbed up the bus and checked his backpack. He had taken a couple of Mrs. Anderson's Snickers, and kept them in an old glasses case so they wouldn't get smashed.

There were days where Andrew acted like he had a fire inside of him. Burning and desperate. His face went blank and his answers shorter, his eyes traveled far away.

Aaron, in the few weeks he'd been meeting with him, had not exactly figured out what to do in these unnerving moments. What he had figured out though, was that Andrew had a nasty sweet tooth, hence, the chocolates.

They always met at the same place. Andrew had a phone, but Aaron didn't; and Oakland was a place where people could get very easily lost.

Aaron knew he wouldn't, but didn't risk it.

He kept his eyes open and attentive. He tried to not be outside alone when it was dark, and he had nothing worth mugging for; but some of Bruno's stories, the ones about his past that he told Aaron when neither of them could sleep, let him know there were worst nightmares that happened in broad daylight.

He genuinely didn't think that Bruno tried to control everything in his life, that was simply impossible.

He entertained himself in the long ride by watching around him, and sometimes pickpocketing unaware people.

He had not been caught yet. *Enjoy it while it lasts* , he thought.

---

Aaron didn't know what to think of Cass Spear.

He never wanted to hate her, because she was going to be, or already was, Andrew's mother.

But he couldn't help being angry at her; he tried very hard not to, especially when she did nice things like this.

Andrew's absence in her house was not being overlooked. Aaron was just a little surprised, since Andrew always arrived before him wherever they were meeting.

Cass had noticed, and asked. Andrew told her the truth, he was meeting with a friend. And she had sent fucking cookies.

They were sitting in the empty stairs of the public library, it was a great spot to hang out. The sun didn't hit badly, the air passed through the hallway refreshingly.

The cookies were in a blue Tupperware, covered in aluminum foil, they were still warm and smelled good, but Aaron already knew he wouldn't like them.

The thing was, Andrew was staring at him intently. He was sitting crossed legged in front of Aaron, across the step they were on; he looked down at the cookies in front of him, and back again to Aaron's eyes.

Aaron sighed and grabbed one; he took a small bite and tasted the dessert, pain stung in the corners of his jaw for the sweetness and he could feel the chocolate melting against his tongue. Aaron tried to hide his grimace, and by the scowl Andrew gave him, he failed. "What the fuck is wrong with you?" He asked.

Aaron barked a laugh and shrugged his shoulders. He swallowed, using his tongue to clean his teeth, and cleaned his mouth with a hand.

"I mean it," Andrew said "What the hell is wrong with you?"

Aaron laughed out loud again and leaned back against the wall. "I think they are good."

"Don't fucking lie to me" He snatched the Tupperware up to his legs.

"I don't like sweets, man." Aaron cleaned his hands on his pants. "You can have them."

"I didn't ask." And he ate a whole cookie. Aaron could help but chuckle again.

"Tell her I liked them though, I don't want her to hate me."

“You deserve hate.”

He laughed again. Andrew finished the whole thing quickly, and they started to walk downstairs. It was getting late again, time traveled too quickly.

Andrew had the huge black hoodie back on, and it covered all the way to the beginning of his thumbs.

It was starting to get cool around, not cold, it was never really cold in California, but it was easier to breathe.

They arrived at the bus stop, and Andrew waited for Aaron's, like he always did.

People stood besides them, others walked around.

Aaron remembered he hadn't given today's chocolate to Andrew, and turned, putting his backpack on a bank, looking through his stuff.

He heard steps running towards him and a familiar voice yelled “I knew it!”

Before Aaron could even turn around, a hand, Andrew's hand, gripped him by the arm and *pulled* . Suddenly, Aaron was completely shielded from the person with Andrew's body. He had changed his stand, he looked ready for a fight. The speaker didn't seem to mind.

“Oh no, Aaron. Don't try to shield the little shit, I knew it! You are doing drugs!”

Aaron tried to be angry with Bruno, he really tried. But god, he was *so ridiculous* . Aaron couldn't really help his hearty laugh, and stepped around Andrew to face Bruno.

He saw the moment he realized. His angry face turned into confusion, and he gaped at both of them.

“Drugs?” Aaron managed to choke between laughs.

“What the fuck?”

Aaron's stomach was starting to hurt, *drugs*? "Who the hell is who?"

Aaron couldn't stop laughing. "The fuck I'm asking, of course I know who is you. Stop laughing, bitch!" He could see when Bruno was going to punch him on the arm, but Andrew, scowling, pulled him back again.

Bruno blinked at him and Aaron managed to stop his laugh, but not his smile. "Why the fuck would you say something like that?"

"You were going through your bag! And had your back to me! What was I supposed to think?"

"You are a very smart Bruno"

"Shut the fuck up." But smiled back; then he looked at Andrew, uncomfortable. "Sorry 'bout that, bro. I kinda freaked out"

"Kind of?" Aaron asked, Andrew still had his hand around his shirt, but now he was just frowning.

"Bite me." Bruno said. Then he smiled awkwardly at Andrew. "Hi, I'm Bruno. You must be Andrew"

He saw when Andrew recognized the name, he turned to Aaron and raised an eyebrow. "*This* is Bruno?"

"He is not always this much of an idiot."

"Hey!"

“What are you doing here?” Aaron told his foster brother.

“I was looking for you”

“How the fuck you knew I was here?” He asked, defensively, had Brianna betrayed him? He had already done her homework!

“Alli told me he saw you at the library” And *oh*.

“ *That* Alli?” Aaron asked, smirking.

Bruno looked at the sky. “No, minion, the other Alli.”

“Damn.”

“Stop it.”

Aaron laughed, but wondered. “And why are you here?”

“What am I- I was looking for you! You are always leaving. And Brianna knew, Marcel knew!” He sounded more hurt than angry, fuck. “They wouldn’t say anything.”

“That’s ‘cause they are good bro’s”

“Ren.” He let out some air, “Mister Anderson was looking for you”

And just like that, all the good mood left his body; he felt himself getting still.

“He- Wha- Why?!” Shit! Nothing could be wrong, Aaron hadn’t done anything bad, had he?

Bruno stepped forward a little, and his expression became gentler. “Calm down, *chaparrito*, I covered for you”

“Oh, thanks man. What did you tell ’em?” Aaron was grateful for such a wonderful friend, he had been saved.

“I told him you were trying out for the basketball team.”

Aaron waited for the punchline, for a smile or *anything*. But Bruno’s face was honest.

“You are serious.”

“Yep.” He answered solemnly.

“You are fucking serious.” And Bruno started to laugh, but he had to be lying.

“I had to think fast, you could’ve warned a guy.”

“What the hell Bruno?!”

“I saved your sorry ass.”

“The heck would I try the basketball team!? Did he really fucking believed that?!”

“You can have great dreams, my little giant.” Aaron could just gape at him.

What! How could- He listened to a quiet sound and turned around. Was Andrew laughing at him?!

“You are not any taller than me, idiot!”

“Whatever you say, little giant” Bruno said.

“Fuck off.”

“Eloquent.”

“Fuck you.” Damn it!

He looked at the buses; beyond the stop, Bruno had parked the car. He had driven forty minutes to get Aaron, even if he was a little upset, he couldn't be happier for not having to use the bus.

“You are a quiet one, aren't you?” Aaron turned his attention back to them, Bruno was talking to Andrew, who ignored him, but did not look away. “It's alright,” he continued, and smiled softly. “It's a balance, I can never get Aaron to shut up”

“Fuck you.”

“See?” And he laughed. Then looked around, and his expression sobered. “Andrew,” he asked quietly, “Is it safe for them to know that Aaron was here?”



Aaron looked at both of them, confused, and it took him some moments to realize that by *them*, he was probably talking about Andrew's family.

Andrew looked him up and down, glared at Bruno's eyes and then stared at the street, setting his jaw hard. After a few moments, he shook his head, almost imperceptible. Aaron heard Bruno's intake of air. "Is it safe for you to go back there?"

Andrew nodded immediately.

"You sure?"

"Yes."

Cass Spear, after all, did seem like a nice lady.

"Ok." He didn't sound very sure. "Do you need a ride?"

"No."

"Alright." he smiled a little. "We better get going then, before it's too dark." He reached forward, as if to ruffle Aaron's hair, but Andrew pulled him back by his shirt again.

Aaron was a bit surprised, stunned. He stared at Andrew for a moment, who was scowling again, and then turned back at Bruno. He had his hands up, and a weird glint in his eyes.

"Woah, ok, alright; no touching, I swear." He slowly brought his hands down, "But you must know, I will never, *ever* hurt him."

Aaron watched how they looked at each other, neither of them backing off, and eventually Andrew let go of his shirt.

There was silence for a few seconds.

“I’ll see you, then.” Bruno said.

Aaron felt weird by leaving, but it was getting late, and Bruno would get anxious soon. He said goodbye, then remembered he hadn't given Andrew his chocolate and opened his bag.

“How have you been getting here, by the way?” Bruno asked. Andrew pointed at the bus station sign.

“Oh.” Aaron gave Andrew the Snickers. “See ya.” he said. Bruno waved and walked towards the car

“Really? But it’s like, an hour and a half, dude.” Aaron rushed to follow him.

“A *what!* ?” He heard Andrew gasp, but they were already in the car. Aaron looked back, frowning, but only had time to wave before they were leaving.

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Later that night, he had to tell, pretending to be sad, that *no, he didn’t make it to the team.*

Bruno laughed, the Andersons pretended to care. Gamila had her long dark hair uncommonly loose, she looked *beautiful* , but the joy was shattered since she only wore it like that in a feeble attempt to cover a new bruise in her jaw.

She said, after mocking Aaron because, *basketball*,

“You should try the Exy team.”

## Chapter End Notes

Lots of love, as always.

# **Growth beneath our silences, are we really here?**

## Chapter Summary

Getting to know each other. Forcing open somebody's eyes can be very painful, don't you think?

Also, birthdays happen.

## Chapter Notes

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

Aaron never asked Andrew how living with the Spears was, even if it was not the same the other way around.

There were two options here.

The first one, it was a great place, with all he deserved.

The second one, it wasn't.

Aaron was selfish.

Even if the former one would probably hurt him, making him just a useless, terrible stain in Andrew's possible good life; the latter was a thousand times worse, since there was nothing Aaron could do to stop it. They didn't own themselves.

So, Aaron never asked.

Was it a cowardly move to decide to stay with the doubt?

The day when Bruno went to pick up Aaron the first time from Oakland, the ride was calm, but not silent. Aaron liked to talk with him, even if it was just useless bickering.

Halfway back to San Jose, Bruno asked.

“What did he tell you about the letter?” He was driving fast, to not get caught in the nightfall, but he had let the windows down, to keep Aaron calm, and he hadn't told him to get his feet off the seat yet.

“Nothing.” Aaron answered, putting his head sideways on the headrest.

“Nothing?” Bruno looked at him briefly, eyebrows raised, before returning his eyes to the front.

“I didn't ask.”

There was silence in the car for a moment, and Bruno drummed his fingers in the steering wheel.

“What?” Aaron snapped, narrowing his eyes.

“No, nothing. It's just that...” He took a breath. “These are the kind of things that come and bite you in the ass later, Ren. ”

Aaron sighed and turned away. “But, it 's okay.” Bruno added then, “It's your decision, I'm not trying to...”

And then he went quiet, a weird thing in front of Aaron, who turned back at him, trying to guess what was going on in his mind.

“You don’t try to control everything, Bruno.” He said.

The way his hands tightened around the wheel, and his shoulders slouched, meant that Aaron was right about what was upsetting him. Aaron wanted to be upset on his behalf, but didn't really understand what was happening.

“What is going on with Gamila?” Aaron asked.

Bruno leaned into the seat, stretching his arms in front of him, and tilted his head back, eyes still on the highway.

“It’s her boyfriend.”

Aaron wondered if it was still the same one, then decided that didn’t really matter.

“Why does she let him do it?”

Bruno tilted his head, and it took him some time to answer, when he did so, it was with a tired voice.

“She thinks... that he loves her” Aaron let his feet fall down, and turned around to face Bruno. “And he thinks the same as well. He says so.”

“But... he hits her.”

“I know.” He drummed his fingers again. “I’ve tried to tell her, but it won’t do any good If she doesn’t see it herself. I guess... I guess she doesn’t really know any better.”

Aaron thought for a second. “Are you going to do something about it?”

“Well, I really, *really* want to mash the guy’s face. You know? A man who hits a woman is nothing but a coward.”

Aaron's mind flashed back to cramped spaces and running, darkness and screams, and couldn't help but wonder. “What if the woman hits him first?” Gamila had once said she usually never threw a first punch, but Gamila was also amazing.

Bruno left out a small laugh. “Not everything is black and white, Ren. Also, I said men.” And he threw a tired smile in his direction.

“What?”

He shook his head. “I would love to beat the life out of him. But, what do you think Gami would do if she knew I made a decision for her?”

“She’ll hate you,” Aaron said, and she probably would.

“Exactly,” Bruno sighed. “You can’t force someone’s eyes open without hurting ‘em.”

“And you won’t hurt her,” Aaron stated.

“That’s the last thing I want to do,” They were entering the city. “But I will take her hate, if it means she’s safe.” He glanced briefly at Aaron. “We must protect those who are *it* , or there’ll be nothing left for us.”

Aaron thought of Bruno driving an hour to get him, of cookies and himself standing between Marcel and screams.

“You are a fucking sap.” Couldn’t help but say. Bruno laughed out loud. They were quiet for a while.

“But she hurt you as well.” Aaron realized. Bruno opened his mouth, and then closed it. “Why?”

They stopped at a red light, and his foster brother leaned his head in the wheel.

“There are people.” He said finally, quietly, firmly. “Who hurt others when they are hurting.”

“I don’t think it’s on purpose,” He continued. “But,” He then looked Aaron in the eyes. “There are also people who will hurt others, just because they can and want to. You gotta stay away from those, Aaron, never forget that.”

He nodded, somewhat absentmindedly, and tried to put it all together. He looked outside through the open window.

“And how do you know?” Aaron asked. “How can you know how to- to tell them apart?” When was the time to give someone up? Everyone would hurt someone at some point, wouldn’t they? So how?

Bruno seemed lost of words again. And he said nothing until they were outside of the house, with the car still on.

“You always ask the best of questions, *chaparrito*. ” Then he looked up, and his eyes were *so sad*. “But I don’t know the answer to that one yet.”

Aaron wondered if there was an answer, and hoped that someday, his life stoppped feeling like he was walking right into a room filled with darkness.



Andrew was very confusing.

At times, he had a bad temper; at others, he became something resembling a doll, lifeless and careless about everything surrounding him. But he was never late, or not there. Aaron guessed that if he really did hate him, then he wouldn't be so persistent.

Sometimes it was like walking around tangled wires. But Aaron had survived long with his eyes, learning to sense moods and knowing when to press, so he did not get shocked.

Still confusing, tough.

One day for example, he could tell something was off. Andrew was angry, and gave him a silent treatment, answering with grunts and not looking him in the eye.

"Listen," Aaron said, some time after he began to feel really uncomfortable. "If you can't- or don't wanna be here today, it's alright, we can leave and meet later."

Andrew gave his shoes a weird look.

Aaron rubbed a hand across his face. His head hurt. The nights were starting to get longer, as the screams grew louder downstairs. He had genuinely thought they were as bad as they could get, but surprise! they weren't. Fear always blossomed when there were things, *people*, to lose. He felt exhausted, he said as much and also added. "You look very tired too, you could go home and sleep or something."

Andrew, who had been stiffly standing next to where he was sitting, just stared at his cheekbone, and finally said. "There are worse things waiting than being with different versions of ourselves."

Aaron furrowed his eyebrows and stared silently at him, he didn't have the mind to decode what the fuck that meant. "...What?"

“You don’t get it, don’t you?” No, Aaron didn’t understand why Andrew suddenly was so riled up, why he was talking so sharp. Was that shame on his eyes, or was it anger? How could two people with the same face could be so different?

When he didn't answer anything, Andrew continued. “Of course you don’t. How could you? You’ve got it the other way around!” And his hands pointed savagely towards the car; Aaron looked at it, and then back, but it didn't make things clearer, maybe he was too slow, what was he supposed to understand?

Something inside of him wanted to yell back, to cuss at him and tell him to fuck off; but instead he asked.

“Are you hurt?”

And the anger seemed to have frozen. It was a normal question, wasn’t it? There was something simmering in Andrew’s eyes, Aaron asked himself if he should really look for answers.

Before anything could happen, they were interrupted.

Marcel ran towards them and almost latched himself at Andrew before he sharply turned around and pushed him backwards, hard.

He fell to the ground, surprised. Aaron saw that not very uncommon shadow of fear that tended to cloud Andrew’s face before going around him and picking a shaking Marcel up, giving his back to Andrew, giving him time to collect himself.

Marcel, upon seeing that he had almost thrown himself into the wrong person, got more scared.

“You can’t just jump at people like that, bud.” He told him, even if he wanted to say, *it’s alright, there’s no reason to be scared, it’s just Andrew.*

Marcel didn't apologize, he just hid his face on Aaron's shoulder, who turned around to see an already composed Andrew. It was always like that, as fast as lighting.

Aaron smiled a little and looked down at Marcel. "Remember Andrew?"

Marcel, albeit shy, raised his eyes, which widened once he saw him. "Hi Andrew," he said.

Aaron continued, "The CIA is still looking for him, though, so you can't say a thing."

Marcel nodded, seriously, and Aaron couldn't help but laugh at that. Andrew was still deathly quiet, so he asked. "What are you doing here?"

Marcel put his head against his shoulder again. "He was singing too loud," He answered "The girly songs."

Aaron laughed again and rested his head on top of Marcel's, glad that the kid wasn't shaking anymore.

He could understand why he had run away. Just a few days before, when he had driven Aaron to see Andrew, Bruno had started singing an awful song, with the windows down, *very loudly*. Aaron had to quickly walk away, trying to hide himself with a hand, but for some reason Andrew hadn't seemed upset about it. But again, Aaron did not completely understand Andrew.

Marcel raised his head so abruptly that he hit his jaw. Aaron grunted, and then put him down, but Marcel just started asking. "Is he going to come?!" He looked at them expectantly. And it took Aaron a few seconds to understand.

"Go ask Bruno." He said, so he could talk to Andrew alone. Marcel, seemingly having forgotten about the awful songs, happily runned towards the car again.

Aaron watched him go and then turned back to Andrew, who was back to staring at nothing. “Gamila wants to take us somewhere for Friday,” Friday, November fourth, their thirteenth birthday, although she has really just said, *‘We are going out on Friday, tell Andrew.’*

“I don’t really know where, but it probably won’t be bad.”

He wasn’t sure that Andrew was listening, with the empty way he stared at the cracks of the street. Was his head empty, or very loud? “Why?” He muttered.

*Why* what? *Why* were they doing that? *Why* was telling him? *Why* was he inviting him? Aaron needed something to work with, but he could always try with crumbs.

“Do you want to come with us? It’s our birthday.” He settled for.

“It’s not.” Andrew turned his eyes back at him at last.

“Yes it is. November fourth, at four o’five, it’s on my birth certificate. Did they give you a new one? Maybe yours got lost.”

He saw Andrew working the words *November fourth* in his mouth.

“Who?” He asked.

*Who* was going? “Just us five.”

Things were like quicksand in the house. There were already new kids in old beds. Aaron was sure he’d never see Ella or Brianna ever again. He hoped that wherever they were, they were fine. He would always have the image of their faces in his mind; he would never forget them, and he hoped that they didn’t forget him either.

Marcel was suddenly back, very obviously walking around Andrew, until he came to Aaron's side. "He said. 'Do whatever the fuck you want', is he coming?" And then he smiled brightly.

Aaron turned back to Andrew.

He shrugged, and Aaron took it as an *alright*.

Gamila tried to boss Andrew around, as she did with everyone in the house, and failed miserably. Bruno openly laughed in her face, and almost lost control of the car when she punched him in the ribs.

"Stop trying to order him, Gami," Aaron muttered to her as he turned around and buckled Marcel up.

He was sitting in the middle, between his foster brother and Andrew, who they had picked up from their usual place. They had all the windows down and the air messed up everyone's hair.

"Why you not use it?" Marcel asked, once Aaron was done.

"Don't use it." Bruno corrected from the front, then threw his arm out his window to flip off someone in a white car.

"Because I'm old enough to do what I want."

"You are thirteen today." Marcel said, and made it sound like being thirteen was a great age.

"Yes, we are."

"Still as short as a kindergarten kid Ren-ren."

Aaron kicked the back of his seat, and Bruno turned around to point a finger at his face.

“Kick my seat again and I’ma kick your ass.”

“Try it.”

Bruno narrowed his eyes at him “You think I won’t do it because you were born on this day? Hell nah, Andrew has all birthday boy privileges now, just him. Not you.”

Gamila forcefully turned his head to the front once again. “If you keep driving like this, you won’t drive again.”

“So bossy.”

In the morning, Bruno and Marcel had woken him up, (or he had pretended they did after Marcel had woken him up with a knee to his stomach while he crawled out from their bed), with a big bag full of salty chips and a birthday song that he couldn’t really understand. It was awesome.

The new kids in the house didn’t know that it was his birthday and the Anderson’s didn’t remember; Aaron didn’t care about that, he was good enough with the people who were in the car with him.

Aaron wasn’t sure where they were driving, but he was just glad to be outside the house, and that Andrew was going with them, even if he was just as quiet as always.

At the end, they stopped in a small, green park with a food truck, which Aaron quickly realized was of ice cream. He almost complained about it, then he remembered that Andrew *did* like sweets, so he kept quiet.

The place was packed, crowded enough that most people were sitting sprawled across the grass.

“Don’t stray too far from us.” Bruno said, looking at them.

“I do what I want.” Aaron said back.

“Should we hide from him?” Andrew muttered from his left.

“He’s going to cry again.” Gamila scoffed before getting out of the car. Bruno went after her, complaining loudly.

Aaron stayed close to them, either way, Marcel grabbing his hand and Andrew close to his heels. He didn’t know how to make Bruno understand that they wouldn’t be swiped up from under his nose to never be seen again, but he could at least help by giving him some peace of mind.

He didn’t feel any different than he did the day before. He wondered if Andrew did. Another year lived by, and at least five more to go until he turned eighteen and out of the system.

It should have been an exciting thought, he knew how much Gamila was expecting her eighteenth birthday. But truthfully, Aaron was *terrified* of simply thinking about it, he despised the uncertainty. Would he be completely by himself by then? Would they just drop him outside and hope the best for him? Hope for Aaron to be able to handle himself?

No use thinking about it, either way. A lot of things could happen in five years.

They sat under the shadow of a big tree, and Bruno snatched a chair from somewhere for Gamila, who came back with all their ice creams. Plain yogurt for Aaron, chocolate with more melted chocolate on top for Andrew; she sat at her chair and then she and Bruno started playing a game that only they understood, but Aaron guessed it was about criticizing the people around them.

They were there for hours. Time went slower at moments like those; things seemed to take a hazel tint like the caramel that fell into Marcel's shirt. At a certain time, Andrew stood up and Bruno, who was laying down with his head pillowed in Gamila's boots, looked up at him. "Where goin'?" He asked sleepily.

"Restroom," Andrew answered and pointed his head to the buildings across the street.

Bruno looked around, at the people splattered around in the park, and twisted his head back to tell Aaron, "Go with him, Ren."

"It's just across the street," Aaron groaned, rolling his eyes, but got up to follow Andrew, who had begun to walk ahead of him.

"It's not like I'm going to run away," he complained once Aaron caught up with him. He looked back at his foster family.

"Bruno has had siblings stolen from him," he explained, as they crossed the street "He just worries."

"But it's just me." Andrew said, so painfully honest that Aaron had to stop, at least until Andrew dragged him and pulled him out of the way of an oncoming car that honked at them.

Aaron locked eyes with him. Just him? What was that supposed to mean? He was getting better at understanding Andrew's words now, but he couldn't see what those words actually meant. Maybe it was as simple as that, he guessed it was just Andrew. How to make him understand that for them, he was not just another random kid? Bruno already had his nickname, Gamila knew his favorite icecream flavor and Aaron, well, Aaron... How to explain and put that into words?

"You kinda look like me," he said while going inside the building.



When they came back, safe and sound, because it was just across the street, Marcel was happily telling everyone something.

“He’s telling us how you met Andrew, Ren.” Bruno whispered, awed, once they arrived. “Something about an alien-face-thief? Where the fuck do you get those stories?”

Aaron smiled and Andrew sat close to him. Marcel kept going, while Gamila reached down to give Andrew what was left from her strawberry ice cream, who took it without a word.

And Aaron realized, in that moment, that he was happy. Very happy.

Perhaps they didn’t own themselves, but they could still own moments like this, with Marcel talking loudly, fresh grass underneath them, Bruno laughing and Andrew sitting close to him.

The sun was setting at their left and Aaron hoped for one thing; an onley birthday gift, if it must be called like that. He wanted for time to stop, and to stay forever in that moment. He wanted *that* happiness to be eternal, to not look back, don’t look forward but just at that moment.

It was all he wanted.

## Chapter End Notes

\*crawls back from hell\* I LIIIIIVE

Would you look at that, almost a year. terribly sorry.

As always, no beta, or any real knowledge of English, just lots of caffeine and my sleep-deprived self :D

And love, don't miss my love.

I should be studying for my finals, but I'd rather write instead. Tell me what you think about it.

I have a [twitter](#) , which i'm finally learning how to use

\*Falls back to hell\*

-your star ●

## End Notes

Careful with your kneecaps around Aaron.

This was the first chapter, there are a lot more to come!

Always be mindful with the triggers, things will get difficult.

Show me some love. Thank you for reading!

Chaparro/chaparrito: Is an affectionate way to call oh the short ones.

Chaneque: They are some ugly little creatures, who are very small.

Mocoso: Brat

Bien rajado: Coooowaaaard.

See you soon!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!