

(This is a companion, mirror piece to “A Statement of Fact,” because I just had to show what the hell Sonny was thinking in that previous story. #12 in my “Pennsylvania Series.” 1569 words.)

LOOKING FOR VINNIE

by

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Sonny woke abruptly, disoriented in the night. It was raining and he could not figure out where he was. He thought he should know. He thought not remembering where one had fallen asleep was pretty fucked up. At first he automatically looked for familiar shapes from his penthouse bedroom at the Royal Diamond. Quite quickly he knew he was not there. Then he tried to remember if he'd fallen asleep in Vinnie's rooms downstairs. But again, this was not Vinnie's suite. And where was Vinnie?

A part of him remembered, with a sudden stabbing panic, that Vinnie had betrayed him. Vinnie was not who Sonny thought he was. The pain in his chest widened. He clamped down on it.

He tried to remember. Had Vinnie left? Where would he go? And where the fuck was this room?

It was very dark. Without thinking, he got up and put on his robe and slippers. He didn't even glance at the bed. It felt cold anyway, and the darkness there was foreboding.

Wherever this was, maybe Vinnie had been here. Maybe Vinnie had left clues. Or could Vinnie still be here even in the face of betrayal? Even knowing Sonny's unpredictable nature?

There was a moment when Sonny thought maybe he had hurt Vinnie. Maybe he had really hurt him...or even killed him. But then how could he forget something like that? And no, he never wanted to hurt Vinnie. Not even after he found out Vinnie was a cop. He might've wanted distance from him, maybe even impulsive revenge, but he did not want him dead. God help him, but he loved Vinnie. Even now. He did not think he would ever be capable of killing Vinnie.

Coming into the hall, he softly called out into the shadows. “Vinnie?”

No answer.

He saw stairs and moved quietly down them. This was a house. Some of it looked familiar but he still could not quite place it. In the living room he called out again. “Vinnie?”

No answer.

The pain in his chest tightened. He took deep breaths. This was fucked up. What was going on?

The front door was red with a little crystal window in the upper half of the wood. For some reason he knew the door was new, but he didn’t recall how he would know that. He went to it, opened it. Outside the night glowed with liquid rivers. Rain fell like diamonds through the dim glaze of distant streetlights. There was snow on the sides of the road, in the yard, but the drifts were shrinking even as he watched, melting.

He stepped outside, crossed the small porch, went into the yard. Everything smelled fresh and new. Not Atlantic City, then. Definitely not AC. Immediately the rain pelted him, cold, shocking. But it was soft rain. It flooded his forehead, cheeks, neck. The water moved icily under his robe, dripped down into his slippers.

The shadows from the dead trees were dark and shiny. They might make good hiding places. “Vinnie?”

But nothing moved. Only the rain. Only the sound of it beating the ground, the bare branches, the house roof.

He moved to the side of the house. “Vinnie?” He went to the gate, opened it, and let himself into the backyard. Apprehension nearly froze him. What if he found Vinnie lying face down in the rain on the ground? What if Vinnie was unmoving, soaked, bloody, dead?

What if, somehow, he had failed to help him? Failed to protect him?

His throat swelled up, nearly choking him at the thought. He blinked through the water drops that filled his eyes.

“Vinnie?”

But there was still just the rain. And more cold liquid trickling all over his body. He started to shake.

It was then he realized this was quite stupid, to wander in rain looking for answers in the middle of the night. What was wrong with him?

He moved back to the front of the house and re-entered, closing and automatically locking the front door. That he knew where all the locks were occurred to him as strange. He *was* familiar with this place, then. He knew his way around.

The pain in his chest lessened a bit as he had that thought. Could it be that he belonged here?

He wiped at his wet face with the soaked sleeve of his robe. His fingers pushed back his damp hair. There was barely any light, but he could see the stairs. He'd been up there, in a bedroom, sleeping soundly. Everything seemed peaceful. There were no disturbances, no bodies in the yard, no broken glass or turned over furniture here in the living room.

He crossed his arms tight, closed his eyes. *Vinnie*. In his mind's eye he saw him, coming down the stairs, in the kitchen off to the left making a sandwich, in the living room on the couch. He saw Vinnie smiling at him from that couch, then lying down as Sonny came over to him, as Sonny leaned down very slowly, breathing softly, touching his lips to Vinnie's waiting smile. Vinnie's arms came around him tightly. Vinnie's mouth opened. They started to move together.

And Sonny remembered that once in that room there'd been a hearth fire, a snowstorm outside, and a bottle of Vodka.

Now he glanced at the shadowed stairs. Vinnie was up there. He had to be. He could almost hear him breathing.

Taking the steps two at a time, Sonny moved back into the bedroom. He stripped off his wet robe and threw it toward the bathroom. He kicked his slippers off.

The bed was before him. There was its large, square shape covered in pillows, blankets, and to one side a warm body.

Sonny lifted the covers on the empty side of the bed. He was shivering, freezing, actually. The bed was warm, almost steamy. He crawled under the blankets and reached out and there he was. Vinnie. He touched his side, his arm, very lightly, before moving closer. Yes, it was Vinnie. He'd know that body anywhere.

Vinnie was slightly on his side. Sonny pushed a pillow toward Vinnie's shoulder, then lay down, curling against that so familiar warmth. So Vinnie had been here all along, in the bed. Why hadn't he remembered that? They lived here. Together.

This was not something he should have forgotten.

Freezing, he moved closer, his palm touching Vinnie's chest. "Vinnie?" His voice came out almost sore-sounding, rough-edged.

Vinnie moved very slightly, grunted softly.

Sonny curled into that warmth. He said, “I couldn’t find you.” *Dammit!* That sounded so dumb.

Now Vinnie woke a little more. “Huh?”

“I didn’t know where...you...were...” That sounded even dumber. He gritted his teeth, shut his eyes, pressed his face toward Vinnie’s neck.

Vinnie turned toward him on his side, snaking one arm around Sonny’s waist. Now the pain finally receded. He sighed in relief. Vinnie was his. There was no longer any dispute. And the betrayal? That had long passed.

“What do you mean? I’ve been here beside you all night. And before that, *inside* you.”

That made Sonny smile as remembered all of it, and he felt his body start to finally warm up. He smacked Vinnie lightly on the chest. “Shut *up*. Fuck. That nasty mouth of yours...”

But now everything was okay. Vinnie was here. Vinnie was fine. Hell, Vinnie was more than fine.

“Well, it’s true. Why are you so cold?” Vinnie asked.

“I was looking for you.” Now Sonny felt like an idiot. But Vinnie understood. Vinnie always understood him.

Vinnie gently stroked Sonny’s head. “And your hair is wet. What’d you do, go outside?”

Best to be honest. Vinnie would get it out of him anyway. “Yeah. It was raining. The snow is all melting.” He winced as he felt Vinnie tense. “My robe is soaked. And my slippers.”

“What were you doing?”

Sonny shrugged, whispered, “Looking for you.”

“Sonny...”

“I know,” he interrupted. His palm moved up, gripping Vinnie’s shoulder. “I’m fucked up.”

Vinnie’s arm tightened around him. He felt Vinnie’s breathing catch, then slowly release. Vinnie’s head moved, his mouth almost touching Sonny’s damp forehead. The breath on his skin was warm. “It’s okay now. You found me.”

Another cold spasm went through Sonny. Vinnie scooted his other arm underneath him, pulling him even closer. He kissed his forehead. Sonny felt a pang of pleasure course through him. *Ah, Vinnie.* He could always respond to this man. Always.

“It’s okay. You found me,” Vinnie repeated, softer now, stroking his hair.

Sonny basked in that warmth for awhile. Vinnie didn’t say anything more. Didn’t pressure him. He was just there. And it was enough. It was everything.

Finally Sonny felt pretty normal again. He hated that he got so confused sometimes. He hated that he was so freaked out sometimes that he lost his way. Vinnie called it Post Traumatic Stress. Sonny couldn’t disagree, but he still hated it, hated the very term.

But Vinnie was so patient. Vinnie was so good to him. Sonny gripped him hard wanting everything to be right, to be normal, then casually said, “You really do have a dirty mouth, Vincent.” He was good at changing the subject. Good at avoidance. For him, it worked.

“My mouth is creative and enthusiastic and you love it,” Vinnie replied without hesitation.

Sonny felt himself grin. God he loved this guy.