

THE SAFE HOUSE

by Natasha Solten

*"...knocking on the seams of the
soul,
breaking abandoned things, soaking the darkness..."*

- Pablo Neruda



They had been trapped in the old Rialto theatre for a whole day and on into the next night. It seemed no end was near. No one had found them yet. They were both beaten, still exhausted after having slept for only a few hours practically unconscious on the hard, cold stage, and they had had no food.

After Sonny raided the kitchen and they had what Vinnie thought of as a pretty intense heart to heart, after drinking stolen cheap champagne and sitting around on the floor, Sonny turned to Vinnie with a newer, more broken look, and said, "I can't believe you're a cop!" He got up, then, and started testing more doors, looking for an exit that maybe they had missed.

Vinnie got up and followed him, feeling the uselessness of it all and trying not to succumb to utter and total depression. But this time Sonny's obsessiveness paid off. Suddenly, one of the side exit doors flew open onto the early outside night, and fresh cool autumn air bathed their swollen faces, their bruised bodies.

Without looking behind him, Sonny ran out. Not thinking, Vinnie followed.

Sonny ran up to a few parked cars at the end of the lane, trying the doors. Finally he found one that was unlocked and got into the driver's seat. Vinnie ran up to him. "Where the fuck do ya think you're going?"

Reaching under the steering column, Sonny said, "Away from you."

Vinnie watched as Sonny tore at some wires underneath, attempting to hot wire the car. He almost smiled. He didn't know Sonny knew how to do that. He never showed any interest in cars except for how expensive they were. But as Vinnie watched, he saw Sonny was doing it right. Well, you could take the boy out of the Bronx but never the Bronx out of the boy.

Quickly, Vinnie ran around to the other side of the car, opened the door and got in.

As the car started, Sonny looked over at him. “Get out!”

“No.”

“Get your own car, dammit!”

Vinnie didn't move. Sonny reached over him and opened Vinnie's door, trying to shove Vinnie out, and then they were fighting again, more like wrestling, as Sonny tried to push him into the road. In their struggle, the glove compartment flew open and there, sitting like the Holy Grail itself, was a Smith and Wesson .357 revolver looking brand spanking new, shiny, slick and deadly.

Both men froze. Then both made a grab for it, struggling, shoving. First Vinnie had it, then Sonny, then it fell to the floor. Sonny was already bent over Vinnie trying to shove him out, so he had the better position to grab it off the floor. He got it up and then shoved it, very ungently, into Vinnie's side. Neither of them even knew if it was loaded at this point, but making an assumption that it wasn't was just plain stupid. Sonny said through gritted teeth, “Get out.”

Vinnie stopped everything he was doing, including breathing. He felt his face ache with all the bruises as he frowned, as his teeth bit hard on his lip. He tried to ignore the pain. It radiated through him, from inside, too, and this wasn't just physical. He tried to glare, slowly meeting Sonny's eyes, but instead felt his eyes grow hot, blurry, and he said, very flatly, “Shoot me, then.”

Sonny backed off a little, but his finger was on the trigger, and Vinnie didn't dare make a move. He didn't think Sonny would really shoot him, but they were both so crazy right now that nothing seemed impossible anymore.

“Fine,” Sonny said. “I will. But not here.” He held the gun tightly on Vinnie as he turned toward the steering wheel and with his free hand put the car in ‘drive.’ “Close the fucking door,” Sonny ordered.

Vinnie shut his door and Sonny peeled out into the road.

They drove through dark streets and then finally hit the highway. Vinnie said nothing. He was breathing again, but with shuddery little puffs. He tried to stay quiet, not bring any attention on himself. *Let Sonny drive*, he thought. *There's nowhere to go.*

The night was cold and, once they got outside the city, filled with stars. Shadows arched over them constantly as they drove, distant lights blinking. Vinnie thought that surely there would be road blocks in place. They would hit one of them and eventually be discovered. But Sonny knew his way around. He took an exit Vinnie had never heard of, then got on another highway, then got off again, taking them away from New York City but through more residential sections, then through places that leveled off to empty lots and fields, then further upstate into the country and up and up on back winding roads.

It seemed they drove for at least two hours. The stolen car even had a full tank of gas, much to Vinnie's dismay.

Vinnie turned slightly to look at him. The light was so dim now, very few streetlights appeared except at intersections, and lots of trees now blotted out the black, starry sky. He tried to read Sonny, but Sonny was driving intently, with no expression, and his hand on the revolver was firm and steady, rarely wavering as he continued to point it at Vinnie.

All his senses seemed suddenly heightened. He smelled his own sourness mixed with expensive aftershave that lingered still under all the blood and sweat and the wine he'd drunk. He heard the car's engine purring softly, in good rhythm, not about to break down any time soon, that was for sure. He tasted blood in his mouth again, swallowing dryly, felt his skin prickle from coldness, from clamminess. He was too hot, but he also felt like he was freezing. Was he going into shock? After all these hours?

His stomach was queasy. He turned to Sonny. "Could you stop, please?" he said in a tightly controlled voice.

"No."

Vinnie felt his chest shiver. He looked at the road, leading up to more darkness, trees, no lights.

"I have to throw up," Vinnie said.

"Use the floor. I don't care. It's not my car."

"Please," Vinnie said.

Coldly, Sonny said, "You don't get to ask me anything anymore, got it?"

Tired of the game, Vinnie said, "Fuck, Sonny! I'm gonna be sick!"

"Be sick, then. We're almost there."

"Where?" Vinnie asked.

"Shut up."

Vinnie glanced at Sonny again. He looked turned inward, eyes almost glazed, unreadable, but deadly calm. Vinnie thought he might not have ever seen him look that way before. His heart skipped. This man was someone he actually cared about. He didn't know exactly why, maybe it was because in many ways they were so alike, but he'd very much grown to love Sonny. He knew Sonny loved him. Hell, Sonny had told him, shown him in so many ways, including today. They'd been close as brothers, maybe even closer yet nothing had come

of that...though a few times Vinnie had thought it might, had felt a mutual heat between them. Even with Theresa there, Sonny and Vinnie had still shared something sacred, special. Impending marriage didn't dissolve it. Didn't stop Sonny from touching him often, on the back or shoulder, petting his arm, even his hair as if he were a favorite puppy. They gravitated to each other. They traded long looks across crowded rooms.

Slowly, Vinnie began to realize that all that closeness, nice as it was, was making things worse now. If they hadn't become fast friends so completely attuned to one another, then there wouldn't be so much at stake, so much to lose. Or so much pain.

Sonny turning inward was a bad sign. Real bad. That meant he was hurting beyond comprehension. Physical bruises were one thing. But he and Vinnie had pelted each other with emotional bruises, too. And their little heart to heart back at the theatre by the jukebox did not solve anything. In fact, it did make things worse now that they'd gotten out and Sonny had the gun and Vinnie had no cavalry coming anymore.

Sonny turned off unexpectedly onto a dirt road. Vinnie felt his stomach lurch. He coughed, covering his mouth with one hand, trying to stay alert and not give in to the encroaching sickness he felt, the shivers, the anxiety.

The car stopped in front of a dark house. They were in the middle of nowhere. In the trees, nestled like some fairytale cabin, was a two-story wood house with wide big windows and an open front porch.

"Get out!" Sonny demanded.

Vinnie opened his door, struggling to stand, feeling the cold country air hit him, wake him a little. He rocked unsteadily, then found he could walk and moved forward.

Sonny motioned him with the gun toward the porch and front door. "Move," he said.

Once on the porch, Sonny lifted the welcome mat and produced a key. He opened the front door and used the gun aimed at Vinnie's waist to shove him inside. Vinnie tripped over the threshold and practically fell. Sonny ignored him. Then turned on a light.

Vinnie saw a huge front room filled with comfortable furniture.

"What is this place?"

"It's mine but not under my name so no one will find us here," Sonny replied and did not elaborate further.

The place was furnished nicely, with colorful pillows and rugs. There was a kitchen off to one side, and a wood staircase that led up to what seemed to be loft rooms, more than one.

Sonny seemed to know his way around. He kept the gun on Vinnie, but went around turning on more lights.

Vinnie thought, *He can't keep the gun on me forever.* But he didn't say anything.

Finally Sonny turned to look at him. "Still gonna be sick?"

Vinnie tried to show no emotion. He met his stare, shrugged.

Sonny said, "There's a bathroom through there. You try anything, I'll kill you! You hear me?"

Vinnie did not reply. He simply turned in the direction Sonny indicated, found the bathroom and closed the door. He wasn't sick. Not now. But it did feel good to finally have a moment to take care of necessities, including washing his face and hands, feeling the warming water on his cuts and bruises, on the bite on his hand that Sonny had given him. He found washcloths and towels and used them. He soaked his face. He drank some cool water.

Being who he was, he couldn't not search the room. He looked for anything he might be able to use as a weapon, but didn't even find a straight razor.

After awhile, Sonny yelled at him. "Done yet?"

"Coming," Vinnie said.

"Get out here!" Sonny's voice held a strained hint of madness.

Vinnie's skin went cold. Maybe Sonny would kill him. Bury him out here in the middle of nowhere and no one would ever know it. Where were his wits now? What could he use to save himself? It seemed there were no more arguments left, no more energy for it, either.

Vinnie opened the door. Sonny was waiting for him, gun raised. And then Vinnie realized: now or never. He didn't want to play Sonny's games anymore.

He threw himself on Sonny and Sonny let out a yell as he went down. Now they were struggling again, Vinnie on top, trying to pry the gun from Sonny's fingers. There was a very high danger the gun would go off, but Vinnie felt the chance was worth the risk. He wasn't going to be stuck here against his will. Not if he could help it.

They moaned and struggled, fighting over a gun that might have been empty. Although now Vinnie figured Sonny had probably checked it while he was in the bathroom. But whatever Sonny found out about that, he wasn't going to let on. And he fought for the handle like a wildcat.

Finally, Sonny gave a yell and pushed Vinnie hard in the groin with his knee. Vinnie fell back on his ass and the gun was now pointed at his head. Both men were panting. Vinnie was

suddenly seeing stars, as if he'd hit his head again. Then all of a sudden Sonny raised the gun high over Vinnie's head. It came down slow, as if in a dream. And there was nothing.

* * *

When Vinnie came to he was lying on top of a quilt on a soft bed. The room had wood walls. He saw nothing else for a moment. Then Sonny came into his view.

Vinnie looked at him from flat on his back on the bed. "Did you knock me out?" he asked. He looked around again. "How'd I get in here?"

Sonny still wore his bloody white tux shirt, his black trousers. He looked down at Vinnie with a cold gaze. "You fainted. I fucking broke my back carrying you. You're heavy."

Vinnie blinked against a roaring headache. "I don't believe you. You hit me with that fucking gun." He lifted his hand to the side of his head, but felt no blood or bruise or wound.

"Oh, and who's the liar here?" Sonny asked, mouth twisting.

Feeling sudden anger surge, Vinnie tried to sit up amid dizziness and despair. "You do *not* get to tell me you're the better man!"

"I don't whore myself to some twisted government ploy!"

"And I don't pay off people to be on my side!"

"I don't pretend I'm anyone's friend when I'm not!"

"I don't give people expensive gifts to *be* my friend!"

Sonny hit him. But with his fist, not the gun. Vinnie fell back, almost passing out again. But Sonny hadn't hit him hard. Maybe he had a concussion from their earlier fight? Maybe he actually did faint....

"You are a fucking asshole!" Vinnie cursed under his breath. His head pounded.

"What's it feel like to be a traitor, Vinnie! HUH?"

"It feels a hell of a lot better than being a sociopathic thug!"

"I fucking loved you!"

"You don't know anything about love!"

"Guess not! Do you?"

“Fuck you!”

“Fuck you!”

And Sonny was on him, the gun seemingly forgotten, although he held tightly to it. Vinnie made a grab for it as Sonny was trying to hit him again. Then Sonny brought it up to his face, hand all too steady for comfort. Vinnie froze. The room spun. “Do it,” he said softly.

Sonny’s mouth was twisted and he shook his head. “You’re a fucked up piece of work.”

“Go to hell.” Vinnie didn’t care anymore. He was done. This game had to end.

“You keep pushing me, you’re gonna find out that I really can do it, that it’s not that hard for me. You think killing another man is hard? Yeah, sometimes, maybe, when it’s not personal, when you just do it for the money or something. That’s harder. Does that shock you? But if it’s personal, like between you and me, that’s not so hard. That’s easy. That’s deserved. That’s when it feels real good, you know, like the throbbing between your legs, like everything is juiced up all sweet and nice so you just take care of it easy like that, one pull of the trigger, and make it all feel better again, make all your problems just go the fuck away!”

“You’re a crazy fuck.” But Vinnie said it softly. Because he knew Sonny spoke the truth. And now he really did think that Sonny just might do it. There was enough between them to justify it in Sonny’s mind. And the pain...that was too hard. And knowing who Sonny was, Vinnie knew Sonny did not take well to pain, not the kind that was between them. The betrayal of love. And Sonny’s ideas about honor.

“You deserve nothing good!” Sonny was deadly in his tone, but it was slightly higher pitched, tinged with grief.

“And you’re the one to deliver it,” Vinnie retorted hotly.

Sonny grabbed his shirt hard, tearing it, pulling Vinnie up from the pillow by the collar, gun in his face. Vinnie knew his smart mouth would get him dead one day. Maybe this was the day. “I’m holding the gun. You don’t get to talk to me like that!”

“I’m about to die. I can talk any way I want.”

Sonny’s fist grabbed harder and jerked up. Vinnie’s tuxedo shirt ripped at the shoulder, the rest of the buttons popped off, and Sonny jerked again and the whole thing came away from his body yanking at his arms. “You’re gonna go out,” Sonny said. “Yeah. But not with dignity. Not with any fucking shred of decency. Because what you are is scum. A bottom feeder. Yeah. I’ll take you out. But not before I tear you apart.”

“The fuck you will.” Vinnie ignored the gun and pushed him until Sonny let go of what was left of his shirt and it fell to the floor.

Sonny shoved the gun into Vinnie's cheek. "Shut up and don't move!" He surveyed him, a mean look overtaking his already enraged eyes, then grabbed the waistband of Vinnie's black trousers. "You don't get these, either." He tugged, breaking the buttons off easily, pulling them down. "You don't get clothes, you don't get food or anything! You hear me?"

This was getting way out of hand. Sonny might have been a lot of things, but he wasn't an out and out sadist. All of a sudden, Vinnie felt such pain in his chest he thought he was having a heart attack. He looked at Sonny, the man he'd felt so deeply for, and saw a stranger. A madman. A demon. Sonny tugged the trousers off him and Vinnie couldn't breathe. Felt dizzy again. Yeah, Sonny might kill him, but what was this? He tried to speak but couldn't. And the gun was still pointed right at his face.

Underneath his trousers, he had on black silk boxers. Everything was formal for that fucking bachelor party. They were the best money could buy. Sonny grabbed at them, pulling.

Vinnie gasped, grabbing back at the waistband with his own hands, keeping them up. "Sonny...!"

"Yeah? What?" He shoved the gun harder in Vinnie's face. Vinnie stared at those flat, dark eyes, and his whole body started to tremble. Sonny's eyes narrowed. He said, "This might've gone differently some day. It might've been nice to get to this point without all the bullshit...you and me, Vinnie, you and me. Too late, huh?"

Amid the shock of that statement, something tore at Vinnie's heart. He couldn't believe Sonny had just said that. It was as good a confession for love as any he had made today or ever. And it made Vinnie ache all the more. Vinnie had thought about being with Sonny, had actually wanted that in his darker dreams. But despite noticing there could be something more, noticing that Sonny wasn't completely oblivious to it either, it was so unusual, so unlike him that he hadn't ever dared to act. Now Sonny was using that vulnerability between them as a weapon? "Sonny, dammit, don't..."

"You don't get to talk. You don't get to say nothing! Let go!" Sonny's tone echoed in a kind of pained, panicked quaver. He yanked on the silk, succeeding in pulling it away down past Vinnie's feet.

Feeling totally exposed, Vinnie tried to roll onto his side, but he couldn't breathe, and he still felt dizzy, his vision blurring.

Sonny said, voice breaking, weakening toward the end, "Fine! Roll over. That's good. On your stomach...."

Realizing what Sonny had just implied, Vinnie took a huge breath finally, found new strength, and blurted out in disbelief, "You can't do this!"

"Hey! I got the gun!"

“No! You can’t! *Sonny!*”

“Fucking shut up!” Sonny’s voice sounded devastated. He stood, then, looking down at Vinnie. His free hand undid his pants, unzipped them.

“Sonny....” He tried not to see the despair in Sonny’s now hooded eyes, tried not to sob. The room was reeling.

“Don’t look at me like that, or I will shoot you now!” There was a desperate cry in Sonny’s voice as he grabbed the back of Vinnie’s neck, pushing his face into the pillow.

Vinnie scrambled, trying to move aside. This was crazy. Sonny, dressed in just silk boxers and his shirt now, knelt on the bed beside him and leaned over him. He could not believe Sonny was doing this, would not allow himself to believe it. He let all his muscles go slack at the undisputed knowledge of how much Sonny had really loved him, then said resolutely, between breaths, “You can’t do this against my will!”

“Shut up. I can!”

“No,” Vinnie said quietly, lifting his head up, trying to turn his body. He felt tears sting his lower lids, fall unbidden down his face; he didn’t care. He whispered, “You can’t. Because I consent.”

Looking totally pole-axed, Sonny said, “Wh...what?”

Vinnie caught his breath, embarrassed himself by gasping again and again as he tried to let it out. He said, as clearly as he could, “I consent.”

Sonny jerked his hand from Vinnie’s back and sat up, looking dizzy, confused. Finally, he set the gun down on the nightstand. Then he looked back at Vinnie, who had turned more onto his side again, one knee drawn up. Vinnie’s breath was hitching as he stared at Sonny, unmoving.

Sonny got a weird look, then his mouth flattened and his eyes flickered, grew full. His body started to tremble. “You don’t have to say that, Vinnie,” he said, voice strangled. Both hands free now, he lay them flat on his thighs, looking nervously away. “I was just trying to scare you. I wouldn’t of....”

At those words, Vinnie’s breaths started to tighten again. He stifled a moan.

Sonny started to reach out with one hand. “Vinnie, Christ....”

Vinnie closed his eyes, curled around his fists pressed against his stomach, feeling himself start to totally lose it.

“Fucking hell,” Sonny said softly. “I wouldn’t of.” With shaking hands, Sonny brought the quilt up from the side of the bed and over Vinnie, tucking it around him. He left his hand resting on Vinnie’s shoulder. “Vinnie,” he whispered, “I wouldn’t of.”

The tender gesture and touch made Vinnie feel even more vulnerable, and he buried his face in the pillow, shaking.

“Jesus,” Sonny whispered. “Please stop. Please. Let’s start this whole day over.”

All of a sudden, Vinnie felt him lie down next to him, hesitantly touch his hair. Sonny said it again. “Stop.” Vinnie felt him move closer, felt Sonny’s hand on his back over the quilt, felt himself grabbed and rocked forward until he was surrounded by the quilt and the warmth that was Sonny. Sonny put his other arm under Vinnie’s head, and pulled him hard to his chest. “Jesus, Vinnie. Please,” Sonny said softly.

It was a strange thing to be shaking so hard, so pissed off, so angry, and now the man he’d been fighting with for over 24 hours was holding him, and he wanted it. Nothing had ever felt better.

He felt Sonny’s own breathing, shaky, uncontrolled. Sonny’s chest shuddered. Then his arms tightened around Vinnie and Vinnie leaned against that strength, took a huge breath, the best breath he’d taken all day, and let it out slow, feeling himself re-orient again, feeling himself relax with a kind of tiredness he’d never known before.

His breathing grew normal as he allowed his head to fall back onto Sonny’s forearm. He let his damp eyes close, his mind ease. Sonny was murmuring something over the top of his head, into his hair, that sounded like, “...okay, fuck, it’s okay, I’m not gonna hurt you, I’m not gonna hurt you,” and something released, a tension, a pain. It was ironic that he felt safer than he’d ever felt in his life. He whispered Sonny’s name twice, felt himself gripped tighter, heard Sonny whisper “hush.”

The calmness he started to feel turned into a tension again, but this time it was a different kind of tension. It included frustration, desperation and even a kind of anger and pain, but the objective was a narrower focus, the solution a mere millimeter away. Vinnie felt a new strength surge in him, electric, fiery, kindling against his skin. A strange resentment and desire fueled it. He did not deny he loved Sonny. But this...this was almost like feeling you had had something stolen from you. The aggressive thought went through his head: ‘This is mine. I want it back.’

He pushed hard against the quilt and Sonny’s grip, freeing his arms while at the same time moving his head up, his nose bumping Sonny’s chin. In seconds he had turned and grabbed him, holding him down at the shoulders, pushing Sonny’s head back into the pillow, then covered his mouth with his own. He pressed hard, engulfing his lips, tasting dried blood and his own tears. At the sudden intimate touch, an anguish started up again from his solar plexus moving into his chest, his throat. He sobbed into that kiss, refusing to pull back for breath, practically suffocating them both. Sonny’s hands pushed at him uselessly. His body squirmed. Vinnie felt his own body shaking hard but also coming ruthlessly alive.

Finally, he let up; fresh tears burning his cheeks. Sonny was panting, staring at him in shock and surprising concern. He said, "Vinnie, wait..." His hands pressed against Vinnie's chest.

The fire in him was black desire. It could've doubled as rage. He said, "You don't get to push me away now, dammit!" He felt another sob come up in his throat and stifled it by pressing his mouth to Sonny's again, hard, harder. The kiss ensnared him, encompassed him, collapsed him. He couldn't let up and desperate noises came from him, pitched in sorrow and a whirling, churning cataclysmic need that fired through his whole body. He clutched at Sonny's shoulders with a vise-grip.

Slowly, he felt Sonny's hands slide around his chest, loosely holding him. The embrace was not enough. He pulled back. "Touch me like you fucking mean it!" Sonny's face was damp with Vinnie's own tears. Vinnie didn't care. He licked blood from his split lip. Sonny looked like death, his left eye almost swollen closed, his bangs plastered to his forehead.

Sonny's arms tightened at the same time his eyes hardened.

Vinnie pressed his mouth again, damp, salty, then pulled up. "Tell me you want me!" he demanded.

Sonny stared at him, eyes flickering but face still impassive.

Giving him a frustrated shake, Vinnie let out another sob. "Tell me!"

Sonny winced, then suddenly groaned. He said, soft, "Okay..."

"No! Say it!" Vinnie was breathing hard into his face.

Sonny's face crumpled. He tried to look away. Vinnie held him tight. "Look at me!"

Sonny groaned again, and his face flushed. Vinnie saw frustration flare, but also something else.

"Damn you..." Vinnie kissed him hard again. He pulled on Sonny's arms, trying to tighten the embrace.

When he let up, Sonny inhaled sharply. "I want you."

"Say it louder!"

"I *want* you!" The word "want" came out as a broken toned, two syllable sound, with that desperate edginess Vinnie had longed to hear. Sonny pushed up hard, his arms coming up under Vinnie's shoulders, hands clasping at the back of Vinnie's neck, pulling Vinnie down. Their faces collided and Sonny kissed him this time, open-mouthed, savage, searing.

Vinnie's head spun. He pushed against Sonny, lining his body up with his, pressing into his solid warmth. The quilt fell to his waist. Sonny's hands were all over his back, up and down, pressing hard. Sonny's mouth gasped into his, searching for breath but not letting up for it. Vinnie sobbed again, full, loud, but muffled by Sonny's lips. Neither of them cared about air right now.

With renewed power, Sonny pushed Vinnie into his side, his hands moving. One hand was trapped but the other explored his side, his stomach, his chest, pushing Vinnie onto his back, covering him, kissing him again.

Vinnie moaned, arching up. When Sonny finally let up for air, Vinnie gasped. "Damn you! Touch me!" He grabbed Sonny's hand, pushing it down, down.

Sonny tensed but did not fight him. His breath came out in a half-choked, half exclamation of surprise, and he said breathlessly, "I will, baby, I will." He tore his hand from Vinnie's and rubbed hard down his abdomen, down his leg, then up his inner thigh, pushing Vinnie's leg aside. He grabbed hard at Vinnie's groin, then pulled up.

"Fuck!" Vinnie yelled, arching up, head back, eyes rolling.

And Sonny was on him, half kneeling at his hip. Hand on his chest, hand on his swollen cock, lips sliding down from Vinnie's mouth to his neck, to his shoulder, nipping. And he was moaning as he nuzzled him, murmuring over and over, "It's okay, I want you, I want you, I want you."

The quilt was in a pile at his hips. Sonny's mouth was on his chest now, biting, licking, sucking. Vinnie cried out as Sonny's firm hand stroked him up, then down, rough, then painfully gentle. Vinnie arched up again. Sonny's hand suddenly let go and pressed warmly, firmly down on his hip. He looked up at Vinnie, his pupils dilated, his lips bruised and swollen. He looked flushed, impassioned, devoted. The look made Vinnie hotter, even more impatient. Now he really felt it, felt wanted. It was all he'd asked. He choked out, "Ah, god, Sonny!"

Sonny's eyes became sly, his mouth quirked, and he said, "You're too fucking wild to be a cop."

"Fuck you, don't even...just...ah...." But his voice came out soft, pained.

Sonny crawled up higher, leaned down, kissed him slowly, long, hard, then said, "Just what?"

Vinnie groaned.

Hand still on Vinnie's hip, Sonny said, breath hot in his face, "What do you want me to do?"

Vinnie turned his head away and squirmed, trying to grab Sonny's wrist at his hip. But Sonny lifted his hand away and Vinnie's fingers clasped air. His hand fell to his cock, then, and Sonny grabbed it fast and pulled it away.

"Dammit!"

"Say it!" Sonny's tone was menacing.

"Fuck you."

"That what you want to do?"

Vinnie pushed up, his eyes opened, still damp but hot with passion now, not tears. Vinnie smirked. "Yah, eventually." He already felt like he'd been fucking Sonny non-stop for 24 hours. Their fighting had been one step away from it, the exhaustion of it disintegrating, transformative.

Sonny laughed. Then he bent and kissed him, his hand going back to his cock, encasing, holding but not moving.

Vinnie groaned, tried to thrust, but Sonny said, "Wait. Wait. You want me? You want me?"

He let out a harsh breath through his teeth. "Just you. Just you....uh...." And he was gasping again as Sonny's hand began to move and Sonny turned, kissing his way down his chest to his stomach. Then he licked the head of Vinnie's erection and Vinnie thought he would die.

Sonny's grip tightened. "That what you want?"

Vinnie cried out.

"Say it!"

"Yes!"

Then Sonny's mouth was on him, moving slowly, the tongue doing dangerously crazy things, making him so turned on he thought he could take no more. Vinnie thrashed. "Oh god Sonny, yes, Sonny, ah yes!"

Sonny pulled up, sucking the tip, then lifted his head. He said, "I want to taste more." His tone was assured, firm. He grabbed Vinnie under the hips, hands on his ass now, and Vinnie thrust up as Sonny sucked down. He bucked, not caring about anything in that second, just the radiating pleasure, the tide coming over him hard, hot, quick. He came fast, the orgasm more jolting and convulsive than any he'd ever felt in his life. Sonny's mouth never retreated. And Vinnie jerked, moaned, cried out his name until finally all his muscles felt like water and he couldn't move.

Sonny came up and embraced him. He thought he would start to lose it again as Sonny held him close to his chest, hands in his hair, mouth on his forehead.

Then Sonny said, in utter amazement, “You crazy crazy beautiful guy.” His lips moved down and caught Vinnie’s in a sweet kiss that left no question now in his mind that Sonny not only wanted him, he was in love with him.

Vinnie’s arms came around him and he held tight. It took a long time for the dizziness to pass, the room to right itself again, the world to reassemble. Sonny’s hands caressed him from shoulders to ass. Vinnie stayed curved into him. He felt like they fit perfectly.

When he could see right again, he pushed Sonny over onto his back and started taking off his clothes. “You don’t get to have these,” he said with a grin.

Sonny just closed his eyes in response as Vinnie ripped his shimmery shorts down and kicked them away. Sonny’s bloody white shirt got thrown toward the far wall. His skin was a golden brown but there were angry bruises at his ribs and on his knees. Vinnie leaned down and kissed the bruises above his stomach.

Sonny cuffed him lightly on the back of the head. “That’s *not* where I want your mouth,” he complained.

Vinnie chuckled. “Yeah? I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Fuckin’ bastard,” Sonny murmured, undulating his body against Vinnie’s, trying to get some attention.

“This fuckin’ bastard is gonna make you see stars.”

Sonny’s cock was a handsome one, all rosy flushed and glistening at the perfectly rounded tip, the swollen shaft dark as old bronze. He was hard and quivering as Vinnie grasped him, fevered to the touch, and velvet smooth. He lowered his head.

Sonny made a strangled noise that sounded like a combination of a sob, a laugh and the word “fuckandhell.”

Vinnie’s blood thrummed in his veins in empathy, and he took pity and went to work. It really was too easy. Sonny could not hold onto any semblance of control. Vinnie put one hand between his legs, caressing his balls, and one hand under his hip, kneading his slim, curved ass. He did dastardly things with his tongue and his lips and Sonny came so hard and so sweet that Vinnie could not help but be smug. In fact, it was wonderful. He never gave it a second thought that he hadn’t done anything like this in his whole life.

Now Vinnie lay half on top of him kissing him. He lifted his head and put his hand on the side of Sonny’s face, softly caressing the nasty cut by his left eye. He remembered

delivering that punch. He kissed Sonny's eyebrow, then the swollen cheek beneath the cut. He said softly, "Why didn't you duck?"

Sonny smiled tiredly. "You're too fast for me, pal."

Vinnie kissed his lips again, soft, gentle. Sonny was a lot more banged up than he was, but Vinnie had taken his share of hits. His head had hurt a lot, although he hadn't felt that pain for the last half hour. And the teeth marks on his hand created a vicious throb.

His hand moved against Sonny's hair as he looked into those hazy brown eyes. He didn't think he'd ever loved anyone more than he loved Sonny right here, right now. Sonny watched him, his teeth catching at his lower lip as if to bite at his smile. His body shivered under Vinnie's.

"Cold?" Vinnie asked softly.

Sonny just sighed, never taking his eyes off him. Finally, Vinnie reached over and brought the quilt over them both, tucking it around them. Sonny stroked Vinnie's waist, caught his eye again and said, "It was never loaded."

Vinnie shut his eyes hard.

Sonny leaned until their foreheads touched. "I never wanted to hurt you, Vinnie. Ever."

Vinnie opened his eyes and nodded.

Sonny pulled him against him. "All along, I only ever loved you, Vincenzo. Even through yesterday and last night. I never stopped."

Vinnie's breath caught. He said, "Steelgrave. You lunatic. Why do you think I kept running after you? You're not gonna try to go anywhere without me ever again, right?"

Sonny grinned. Later, they fell asleep in a tangle of bruised and muscle-sore limbs on Sonny's safe house bed.



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