

# ONE

## VINNY

Vinny decided that morning to take the day off from work. He didn't feel like working for a couple of reasons. The first being that he really didn't care for the physical attributes of working construction, where he was part of the crew building the World Financial Center down on West Street in lower Manhattan. It was a good thing that he worked in his Dad's gang, an' that his pop was the foreman, but the old man still cursed Vinny a good piece before saying, *Yeah! Yeah! Get the hell outta here whenever you want! I don' care!* in broken English. That was music to Vinny's ears; his old man cursin' up a storm and telling him to get the hell out.

So here he stood in front of the auto body shop his brother worked at on 18th Avenue in Brooklyn, leaning on an Audi whose side front panel had been mangled in an accident. The Avenue was busy with rush hour traffic (meaning it was getting close to dinner time and there were no leftovers in his parent's home...the animals...meanin' his family...were a bunch of vultures...and it wasn't like Vinny couldn't go to the Chinks and drop twenty bucks, but why should he dip into his pockets when a perfectly good dinner was waiting on his mom's table at home?). The noise of it all was deafening; the buses and the cars and the horns blowing, and people shouting and yelling, and noise coming from the machines of different auto body and car repair shops. It was hot and it all sucked, and all Vinny wanted to do was go home and eat, but he was waiting on his brother, Sonnyboy, to quit work for the day.

Sonnyboy was the other reason he had taken off from work. The kid was makin' a lot of trouble, an' Vinny had to do what he had to do to try an' help. He thought his brother had plans to fuck around again tonight, even though Sonnyboy had been caught three times. The last time saw poor Sonnyboy in jail in Jersey; not even in the City, but Jersey, of all places. Vinny thought his brother was a fucking asshole. No way around it. Sonnyboy was a fucking asshole, and it wasn't like no one knew. The problem was that no one wanted to really see, but the whole family knew something was up with good, old Sonnyboy. The kid comes home with two or three fifteen hundred dollar Alpines and Blauplunkts to use in his own car, an' you gotta figure something...but his parents never figured nothin', or maybe, they were prayin' for the best.

*Don' do nothing to get yourself in trouble!* his father would holler at the top of his lungs. *You betta know what it is you doin'!* the old man would say. But pop never asked what the hell Sonnyboy was doing. That never escaped the guy's lips.

An' their mother never told the kid nothin'. Sonnyboy could do no wrong. The boy was an angel. If Vinny did as much as eat the last chicken cutlet outta the servin' dish on the dinner table, his mother was sure to start yelling, but Sonnyboy...Sonnyboy could get away with bringing hot stereos home right up until he got caught the first time. And the funny thing was...even then. Vinny's parents didn't put the leash on the kid until the very last time. It all hit the fan when Sonnyboy spent those days in the tank. Poor Sonnyboy then. Poor Sonnyboy! Poor Sonnyboy! Fuck poor Sonnyboy. It was a fuckin' disgrace. That's exactly what Vinny thought. It was just a fuckin' disgrace, an' though his heart kept saying otherwise, he knew spendin' time in the tank was just what his brother needed. It really was.

Their father thought so too, an' vowed to *Disown the lousy bastard!* yelling in his broken English, *if the merde bastard ever did it again!* Vinny knew that was a crock of shit too.

Sonnyboy was buffing a small scratch on the front quarter panel of a blue Chrysler Cordova. Vinny figured he'd have to hurry Sonnyboy along. "Hey Sonnyboy...come on...we're already late."

Sonnyboy looked up from the work and stopped buffing. His face was black with dust from the residue of the buffing machine. The thick brows over his eyes went up as he looked at his brother. "Hey Vin...why don't you go home, okay? You don't have t'wait for me. I don't need you t'wait." Sonnyboy went on buffing.

Vinny's eyes flicked quickly up to the ceiling and back down to his brother. His massive shoulders shrugged, and his thick lips whitened beneath his thin, messy mustache. "I'll wait," he said.

Vinny watched his brother buff. Sonnyboy's hands skillfully maneuvered the large machine in symmetric circles, and the dust clouded in plumes around his face. The kid had a talent. He had a God given talent with his work, an' he was willing to throw it all away. The kid was mechanically inclined too. He was a natural money maker, but Sonnyboy did what he did. His brother was a jerk. Vinny'd give his left arm for the natural ability his brother had. Vinny hated to work, but he'd work six days a week for the money he could make with the skills his brother was born with. Fuckin' kid. The more Vinny thought about it, the bigger the asshole he figured Sonnyboy was.

After the shit hit the fan, his family tried to keep the whole situation quiet. His mom and pop didn't want outsiders to know. It made the family look bad, an' the shitheads in the neighborhood loved to talk, especially about bad things happening to other people. Gossip always ran down hill, but fuck the neighbors. Fuck his brother too, that's what Vinny thought, but Sonnyboy was his only brother. The shithead was his blood. He couldn't deny that, even though Sonnyboy was a shithead. It was fuckin' hard.

"How long ya gonna be, Sonnyboy?" Vinny asked.

Sonnyboy stopped buffing, removing the goggles from his eyes. "Vin...would you just go home? I don't need you here."

"Yeah. And then I'm gonna have t'come back an' pick you up anyway after you call Mommy, an' tell'er you're ready t'come home."

"I ain't gonna call nobody."

"I'll just wait," Vinny told him.

"I don't need you, Vin. I'll take the bus home," Sonnyboy said, slamming the goggles back over his eyes, and started the machine buffing again.

"Yeah..." Vinny said under his breath. He shrugged his huge shoulders and turned from his brother. "I'll

wait."

Vinny went back outside to the Avenue and lit a cigarette. He watched some girls walk up the street after getting off the B train at the 18th Avenue and New Utrecht station. It had been a while since his last girl friend, and there were no eligible prospects anywhere in sight. Not for him, anyway. Not that he wasn't lookin', but no broad was exactly lookin' for him either. Their hard luck.

Vinny dragged on the cigarette as he leaned against the face of the building. It was Thursday night and the weekend was coming up. He would go out like he did every weekend with his best friend, Sally, an' a couple of the other guys. They would go to a club and then maybe a diner, and try to pick up some broads an' bullshit a lot. Sometimes they just drove around the neighborhood looking for something to do, or maybe shoot some pool. Something. A lot of times Vinny just stayed home cause there was nothin' to do. That was okay too. Watching TV and videos were his big pastime. He must've rented every Chuck Norris movie ever released on video, not that he saw them all, but he definitely rented them all one time or another. Chuck and Kung fu pictures were his favorite; seein' them crazy gooks knockin' the shit out of each other. Vinny fantasized about being able to knock the shit out of someone with his karate skills. The only thing was...he didn't have any.

The thing about staying home and watching videos was that he had to deal with his parents...which was okay. He dealt with 'em. It all depended on their mood, an' if he was confrontational. His pop would rip in a lot easier than his mother, but when she got started...it was all he could do to just deal with it. He could yell and shout, but then he had to shut his mouth. It was frustratin' as hell. He was a grown man, not some kid. He didn't cause too much trouble (nothin' like Sonnyboy) but when he had something to say, he said it. Fuck 'em! He had a right to voice his opinion. Vinny wasn't shy about that.

But now he was missing dinner. He gave the cigarette a last drag, flicked it to the ground still lit, and walked toward his brother. "Come on, Sonnyboy, we're late for dinner an' Mommy'll be pissed."

Sonnyboy had already removed the goggles from his dusty face and was looking at his work. He had a cigarette in his hand, and the buffer was on the floor by his feet. "Okay, Vin. Okay!" he said.

Vinny watched as his brother picked up the buffer, and saw the lousy glare Sonnyboy shot at him. Well, fuck him. It was for his own good.

"Just let me change, an' I'll be right out," Sonnyboy said, as he put the buffer in its place on the shelf.

"I'll wait in the car," Vinny said, hoping his parents appreciated what he had done, but knowing they wouldn't even figure it out.