It was Friday night and Theo was in her room. Her dad was out with the squad and Sonny. She had told him she was going to hang out with some friends from school. Technically, she had, but she wasn’t overly close to anyone in the city yet so once they had suggested going to someone’s apartment to party she had bowed out gracefully. Partying wasn’t her scene, especially given her dad and Sonny’s jobs.

She was ignoring her phone for the most part, because her dad and Sonny both had personalized ringtones so really she didn’t need to pay attention to it unless either of those tones rang. So, the knock at the door was definitely unexpected.

Theo looked through the peephole and blinked in surprise.

She unlocked the door and cocked her hip, “Grayson? Michaels? Ryder? What are you doing here?”

“To visit you, Barba” Tiffany Grayson fixing her friend with a smile, “May we come in?”

Theo paused. Tiffany put up her hands in a placating gesture, “No pressure.”
“Yeah, of course,” Theo stepped back to let them into her NYC life, “Let me just text my dad.”

Theo sent a short text off to him to tell him that she had a few friends over, but that they would be quiet and that nothing was in peril. “What’re you all doing here?”

“Well, we figured that since our favourite roomie moved out she deserved a visit,” Anita Michaels remarked, moving in to hug Theo.

“Plus, these two are visiting colleges,” interjected Jamie Ryder, nodding at Tiffany and Anita.

“Which colleges are you looking at?”

“NYU, Columbia, Fordham, you know — everywhere,” replied Tiffany as Jamie hugged Theo too. When Jamie moved away Tiffany went in and swept Theo literally off her feet, twirling her around to make her giggle.

“You’re so extra, Grayson,” Theo said, shaking her head at her friend as she smiled, “So, I suppose a warning would have been out the question right?”

“Where’s the fun in that?” Anita commented, “Nice place, you’ve got here Barba.”

“It’s a bit more lived in since my Dad’s boyfriend started stayed over more frequently.”

They made their way to the kitchen where Jamie helped Theo make tea for the group. “So, how’s it going…” An alarm sounded on Tiff’s phone, “Shoot, Bailey wanted us to Skype her for a bit. She misses you!”

“Oh, that’d be great! I miss her too!” Theo went to grab her laptop and pulled up Skype. Soon Tiff’s little sister, Bailey popped up on the screen and the girls all started chatting. Friday nights had been theirs at Halton, or Hallie’s, because their all girls boarding school was in the middle of nowhere. They basically spent most of their time bonding, doing homework, and exploring various hobbies — videography, music, shooting — normal things.

As Bailey, who was two years younger than Tiffany caught Theo up on life at Hallie’s Anita and Jamie tossed in their own anecdotes. An hour slipped by before Bailey told them that she really needed to get to her friend’s room for a movie marathon.

“But, before I go, ummm…” Bailey twisted her braids in her hands.

“What’s up B?” Theo asked.

“I was wondering if… never mind…”

“B, just ask me.”

“Would you sing something for me before I go?”

“Of course, sweetie, but I don’t have my usual accompaniment you know.”

“Well,” Anita said, “I actually have a recording of the guitar for some of your songs on my phone.”

“You’re getting the whole shebang tonight then B!” commented Theo, “You got a song in mind?”

“Love Triangle,” asked Bailey, her voice small. Tiff murmured something intelligible.

Theo looked at her, but it was Bailey who answered her unasked question, “Mom and Dad are
Theo looked at Tiff, then held out her hand to her friend who took it gladly. Turning back to Bailey Theo said, “You know both of your parents love you very much. They won’t leave you alone. You’ll still have them and Tiff, it’ll just be different geographically.” She looked at Tiff for confirmation. The older girl nodded, “She still loves your song though.”

As they were talking and Anita was cuing up the music on her phone, Jamie collected their cups to clean up. The clattering covered the noise of the apartment door opening as Raf and Sonny arrived home.

Raf was about to call out to Theo when Anita started up the music and his curiosity got the better of him. They stopped to listen.

When the end of the song approached and Theo got to the lyrics: “And some mommas and daddies ran out of love in ‘94 and some mommas and daddies don’t even talk no more!” Raf turned and let Sonny pull him into a hug. The heartbreak in his daughter’s voice was still so raw and so painful.

A sniff sounded, and then Theo’s voice came through, “B, Bailey, sweetheart, don’t cry. This divorce isn’t about you. They love you, but some people just aren’t meant to be together.”

Another sniff, “She’s right, lil’ sis,” Tiff added, “Mom and Dad love us and they’re getting houses close to each other so we don’t have far to go in between.”

“I know,” replied Bailey, sniffing again, “Thanks Teddy; I should get to Shannon’s now. We miss you!”

The call disconnected, “Damn Tiff, you couldn’t have warned me?” Theo asked her friend, “Also, Bailey’s lucky she’s cute because you’re the only who gets to call me Teddy and that’s due to prolonged duress.”

“Sorry, I didn’t say anything before now. We just found out a few days ago,” Tiff replied, “And well, Bailey was freaking out. She…”

“Tiff?”

“She was afraid that Mom or Dad were going to leave, like, well,”

“Like my mom,” Theo filled in what Tiff wouldn’t say, “I suppose that’s the one real example she has of things like this. My situation’s not typical though — you told her that right?”

“Of course,” Tiff replied, “She just really wanted to talk to you too. To see that you’re okay here.”

“That’s why you’re all here right?”

Jamie and Anita nodded, “So?” Jamie asked.

“So what?”

“Come on, Barba,” Jamie admonished her, “You doing okay here?”
Theo sighed and Tiff leaned forward, “It’ll be okay. It’s tough to readjust. This doesn’t feel like my life anymore. I’m making the best of it.”

“And your dad?” Tiff asked, her voice cool.

“What about him?” Theo asked, calmly.

“Don’t play dumb, it doesn’t suit you,” Anita interjected, “The first few months with us if you weren’t crying over your mom at night you were crying about your dad. The mom stuff petered out, but him, you do everything to make him proud. Don’t dick us around, Barba.”

Theo laughed and then sniffed, “Yeah, I guess that’s what happened to a T, right? It’s good here, guys. He…” she broke off, “he loves me…”

“So, I don’t need to ruin him?” Anita asked, seriously.

Theo shook her head.

“Do you believe him?” Tiff asked.

At that point, Sonny didn’t think Raf could take anymore of their hiding but as he went to move back to the door so that they could pretend to reenter the apartment, his partner gripped his hand, eyes pleading to stay still for just a moment.

“I love him. And I want to believe him.” Theo finally said, “I believe it more than I did. He’s going above and beyond for me, I promise.”

Sonny chose that moment to reopen the door and shut it more loudly than usual.

Raf was no longer clinging to him though. He was smiling. He was so proud of his daughter.

“Theo?” he called and he watched as his daughter exited the kitchen, flanked by a motley group of young women. He put out a hand to the one closest to him, “Rafael Barba, it’s good to meet some of Theo’s friends.”

“We’re not just her friends, we’re her ride or die crew,” remarked Anita, “We’re from Halton,” she shook his hand and paused, “Mr. Barba.”

“Now who’s extra?” Tiff whispered under her breath to Theo.

Theo rolled her eyes and started to introduce her friends to her dad and his partner. Sonny and Raf shook hands and exchanged pleasantries as the girls seemed to size them up, eventually though they left after extracting a promise from Theo to meet them at NYU to help Anita and Tiff explore their potential future campuses.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!