Family First
by Tamuril2

Summary

Phil Sanfino's not an idiot. He knows a cop when he sees one. Warning: Sad ending (no major character death, but still sad).

Notes

So, this is my first attempt at Blue Bloods. I hope I do well. I'm pretty sure there's no character death, but you all need to let me know at the end of chapter 5 (just so I tag this right).
At the Farm

In a backwater farm, on a path near the trees, walks a nervous man. He creeps with all the stealth and silence he can muster, which are not adjectives his friends would tag on him. The ability to be still and not showoff isn’t something Noble is well known for, at all. He’s loud and flamboyant and cocky and happy. He drives fast cars and enjoys loud parties. This man, that sneaks along the old farmyard tree line, is a far cry from the one everyone knows.

No, this man is scared.

Afraid for his life, for his sister’s life, because she’s the one distracting the guards, and frightened for the cop who’s tied up in the basement. Noble’s never been this scared in his life. He’s family with Phil Sanfino. What need does he have to fear anyone…unless, of course, it’s Uncle Phil. Which it is. Uncle Phil, that is.

Uncle Phil is the one Noble’s so brilliantly going against here. And that’s enough to make Noble wonder just when he lost his mind. Risking his life for a cop? Not even to rescue him, just to see him. If Uncle Phil ever found out…well, Noble probably wouldn’t have to worry anymore. He’d be dead. If Uncle Phil was in a generous mood.

Yet Noble still comes out here every other week to see the cop. Because…because the cop didn’t have to save his life that night at the bar. Didn’t have to make sure Uncle Phil knew that Noble and Bianca were squeaky clean when he got busted. Not a lot of cops would do that, Noble’s sure of this. No…no other cop would do that, he’s positive. And, for this reason only, Noble sneaks in to see him. If he were a better man, a braver one, Noble would call the ‘other’ cops and tell them where their golden boy is. He’s seen the news on the TV and the newspapers, begging for anyone to step forward.

And, if he were braver…he’d rat Uncle Phil out and save this cop anymore pain.

But Noble’s a coward.

He knows that. Always has. In fact, this whole sneaking thing was Bianca’s idea, not his. She insisted – and slapped, don’t forget the slapping part – that they owed the cop. Even implied that Noble owed him twice now; once for the bad drugs and once with Uncle Phil. And Noble might be a coward – hence why Bianca cowed him into doing this – but even he can admit when he’s got a debt.

Noble eases the root cellar door up and tiptoes down the new, wooden ladder. The wood creeks a bit as he steps on it, but no one’s down here but the cop tonight, so Noble can breathe easy…well, easier. He lets go of the ladder and turns to face the music. It’s dark and musty, and smells of so much blood that Noble wants to run away. But he promised Bianca he’d see this through. Trust her to get a crush on a captured cop.

“Jamie?” he whispers into the black.

Nothing.

Not that Noble really expected Jamie to say anything. Jamie hasn’t for almost a month now. Uncle Phil broke him good and permanent. Made Noble watch it too. Said it was character building and also a lesson on what happens to nosey cops. Noble just thought it all sick. But he made sure to smile in all the right places and get a few kicks in – he really hates himself for doing that.
“Oh, Jamie,” Noble exhales as he gets closer and sees the fresh damage done from last night. Jamie just stares blankly, his head lolling to the side like a broken puppet doll. There’s nothing left of the bright man Noble knew those few months ago. No, Uncle Phil took great care about that. The older Italian burnt and hit and tortured any resistance out. The only thing Jamie got in before he clocked out was lack of information.

Yeah, that ticked Uncle Phil off big time. Jamie might’ve screamed, he might’ve sobbed, but he never did tell Uncle Phil one lick of data. Kind of made Noble proud, in a twisted way, that the cop spat in Uncle Phil’s face that way. Dangerous thinking, that, but Noble’s since been disillusioned to Uncle Phil’s charms. For all the birthday cars and loads of money the man’s given him, Uncle Phil is still just as sadistic as the cops say he is.

Which sucks.

“Hey, Jamie, brought you some turkey this time,” Noble says, and pulls out the cold bottle of broth Bianca made and poured oh so carefully into the plastic.

Jamie just stares.

Noble sighs and uncaps the bottle. The rich smell of Italian broth wafts up to him and Noble gives a sad smile. Jamie had gushed over this broth the first time he’d tried it. Made Bianca blush like a little girl. That’s when Noble knew he just had to keep Jamie as a friend. There was something clean about the Irish man that Noble wanted to put in himself. That’s why he kept asking Jamie over.

But then Uncle Phil got involved. Found out Jamie was a cop and dragged the man away kicking, and shouting his innocence. Not that it made any difference. Uncle Phil never accused anyone unless he’d all the facts, accompanied by photos this time. Of Jamie getting his badge, of Jamie busting a drug den, of Jamie joking around with his fellow cops.

At first, Noble got angry. The friend he’d trusted more than anything was only an undercover cop. All those late nights, talking about living better, about leaving Uncle Phil, it’d just been a ploy to get details out of him. So, Noble was all ready to let Jamie reap his just rewards. But then Uncle Phil messed up.

Big time.

He made Noble watch.

Everything.

Made Noble see him for what he really was, and what Jamie really was. A hateful man vs a good one. Mob boss vs cop. Noble’s family vs Noble’s friend. All there in black and white, where Noble couldn’t deny it. Where no one could. Well, excepting Bianca. She never doubted Jamie’s friendship. Not even once. She made Noble ask Jamie point blank a few weeks in about it, and, well, let’s just say the blinders and filters were off and Jamie really let him have it, verbally.

“Come on, Bianca will pout if you don’t take any this time,” Noble coaxes as the broth runs into Jamie’s mouth and out the sides. Jamie just stares. Noble wants to cry – hang it all if it’s unmanly – this is his friend chained here. Jamie can’t even think to fight back anymore. There’s just nothing left in him to fight with. Noble hates Uncle Phil for that.

He tilts Jamie’s head back a bit, pretends he doesn’t feel the brittle bones beneath his fingers, and slowly pours some broth down his throat. He only puts little bit in though, mindful of the first time
where Jamie almost choked to death because Noble did too much and too fast. Thankfully, this time Jamie’s body reacts on reflux and swallows the tiny bit of broth before it can drown. Noble repeats the pour-and-wait for a few more minutes, until all the broth is gone.

It’s not enough. It never is. But they can’t risk more because where would Noble hide it? And Uncle Phil would notice if Jamie suddenly got more meat on his bones. Meat. Noble snorts. Yeah, Jamie doesn’t have much of that left on him. Just the way Uncle Phil likes it, or so he says. Noble believes him either way.

“I gotta go now, Jamie,” Noble says as he puts the bottle away. He waits, like he always does, but Jamie still says nothing. He sighs, pats Jamie’s shoulder, and heaves himself up. Time to skedaddle. It’s been, Noble checks his watch, almost half an hour. Anymore and he will run the danger of some guard spotting him. Bianca can only hold their attention for so long.

Outside is warm, cicadas buzzing just out of sight. Noble takes a deep breath, cracks his back, and closes the cellar door. It does not feel like sealing Jamie in his tomb, Noble reminds himself. It does not. That reestablished, Noble scrambles as quietly as he can through the tall grass. He cuts through the clump of trees and meets Bianca waiting by their car, on the side of the road a mile away.

She gives him the kicked puppy look she’s perfected since this all started and Noble shakes his head. It’s never good. Not anymore. She nods, sadly, and goes to start the car. Noble’s in no condition to drive after he visits Jamie. Uncle Phil would say it shows that he needs to toughen up. Bianca says it shows he’s still got a heart. Noble just wishes it would stop. All of it. Just go back to the way it was before.

Bianca clicks the car on, lights off, of course, and slides out onto the road, away from the farmyard and their guilty conscience. They don’t speak for ages. Just drive on dark, bumpy roads until their turn into smooth, bright city ones. Only then does Bianca let out a loud breath and glance at him.

“How is he, Noble, really?”

“Dead.”

The car swerves.

Noble ignores it. “Dead where it counts, anyway.”

“Don’t do that!” Bianca screams, tears in her eyes. “Don’t you ever do that again, Noble!”

He nods. “Sorry, Sis.”

“We have to do something, Noble,” she says, like always.

“And get caught?” he answers, like always.

Only this time she doesn’t back down. “He’ll die, Noble. Really die. And it’ll be our fault. For once in our lives, let’s do something worthwhile. Let’s save him.”

Maybe Noble just tired, but he doesn’t counteract her. No, he is tired. So very, very tired of all this. He just wants it to go away. Far away. Where Uncle Phil won’t find them. Where no one knows who they are and they can just be brother and sister and nothing else.

“Okay,” he says.
“Okay?”


“No!” he snaps, in an uncharacteristic surge of protectiveness. “If this goes south, you have something packed and run for the cops. Don’t stop until you get that Renzulli guy. He’s decent enough. Then you bug them for some cover and get out of town. Leave this other stuff to me.”

“But Noble…”

They’re at a red light, so Noble leans over and kisses her on the cheek. “Let me be the older brother, okay, Sis? Just this once.”

In a high up office, in the middle of the city sits a tired man. He sits in a comfortable chair, thinking terrifying thoughts. Like how the crime rate has increased by two percent. And how he hardly ever sees Danny at dinner anymore. Or how his youngest son, Jamie, is most likely dead and they’re all just waiting for the phone call to confirm it.

That last one is the most prominent on Franks mind. It has been ever since Jamie got busted on an undercover operation a few months back. He’s gone over multiple times in his head. How they could’ve done things different, better. Like given Jamie backup. Or chose someone with more experience. Or anything that would have kept Jamie out of this sting.

But wishes won’t change this, and Frank knows that.

It’s the reason why Danny stays more often at his precinct than at Sunday dinner. His boy is digging through every dusty files, every grainy video, and any scrap of Intel they can possibly get on Sanfino. All in the hopes of maybe getting Jamie back. Or, at least, his body. It took Frank over two months to admit that to himself. They weren’t looking for Jamie, just his body. No one thought his youngest boy was still alive anymore.

Maybe not even him.

The door to his office swings open and Frank looks up. Erin offers a tentative smile, her heels clicking on the hardwood floor as she crosses over, workbag in hand.

“Any room at the inn?” she asks, her attempt at levity falling flat, but Frank appreciates the idea and gives her a soft smile in return.

“Always.” He waves her over to the couch, moving over there too. “So, how’s my favorite daughter doing?”

“Good.” She pours them both a generous glass of red wine. “Locked a woman away on embezzling charges. Even got a cold case solved.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah. Witness finally came up and fingered the murderer. The best friend. Snowballed from there. Mike’s getting the papers together for tomorrow.”

“Not bad for one New York’s best District Attorneys.”

She smirks a little at that, but sobers far too soon. She twirls her glass in her hands and studies the red liquid with an intensity that would, and has, broken harden criminals. She glances up. “Any news?”

He sighs, staring at his own glass now. “No. Not even a – ”

And then his cell phone rings. He sends Erin an apologetic look. She just smiles in understanding, ready to leave if its work related. He glances down at the number and frowns. Unknown, his phone tells him. Interesting, and not in a good way. He’s the police commissioner. That comes with a few perks. Like knowing hackers who can protect your cell phone against spammer calls. The fact that this call came through is worrying. Frank fingers the ‘accept’ button anyway, his senses tingling like they did back in the day when he’d patrolled the streets. “Hello? Frank Raegan, how can I help
you?"

He expects a ‘Hello. Do not hang up. This is an important call.’ What he gets is heavy breathing and then: “That’s right…you’re the Police Commissioner.”

Frank frowns at that. “Yes. Can I help you?”

“This is a 911 call. I have to get it on the record.”

“…And you are Jamie’s Dad…right? He said this was his Dad’s number…and there were pictures…”

Oh. His mind whites out, and he vaguely hears Erin scramble over to him.

“Dad?” she says from far away.

But it’s enough to recall him to the present. He sits up straighter and puts it on speaker, grabbing a pen and pad. “Yes, this is he. Who, may I ask, is calling?”

‘Jamie’ he mouths to Erin, hand over the speaker. She pales, but nods and disappears out the door. Most likely to get someone in here to record this and marshal the troops.

“No time,” comes a young man’s voice. “Look...(heavy breathing again)...look. Dang it! (something crashes) Quiet, you wanna get us killed?”

Silence on both ends. Frank doesn’t even dare to breathe. Two officers, whose names Frank can’t be bothered to recall right now, slide into the room. One sets up the monitoring gear while the other quietly takes his phone and hooks it up. Frank pays it all no mind.

“Is everything all right, son?” he asks the mystery caller.

“Look. Jamie’s at an old farmhouse outside town. Address is 2734 Cockshill Road. Zip…dang it, I dunno the zip. Bianca! Do you know the zip?”

There’s a woman’s voice in the background. The man curses. He’s panicking. Erin’s back in the room now, her eyes wide. But Frank can’t allow himself either luxury. “Listen, son, calm down. Everything –”

“Calm down!” the man chuckles darkly. “Calm down, he says. Do you have any idea what he’ll do to us if he finds out we ratted on him? We’ll be lucky to get Jamie’s treatment….oh…um…that was in poor taste. My bad. You’re his Dad, shouldn’t have said that. Sorry.”

“It’s all right,” he says, even though it really isn’t, but he can tell this man is scared and understands what betraying Sanfino might mean to him, and whoever this Bianca…wait! Bianca? They only know of one Bianca. Does that mean this is…? Frank takes a breath and takes a chance. “Noble?”

There’s another curse. The officers’ eyes are wide now too. Something else crashes on the other side of the phone call. And then the man laughs again, shaky and like he’s about to cry. “That bad, huh? I told Jamie I wasn’t cut out for this.”

“How is he?” Frank asks.

Another shaky breath. “Not good, man. Which is why we’re calling you. You need to get him out of there. Now. Tonight. Uncle Phil’s…he’s been getting ragged on. Told me killing ‘the cop’ would up his status. Didn’t say when though. You getting all this on tape?”
“Yes.”

“Good.” Noble sighs. “Good, cause I’m not sure I’ll be here when it’s all said and done. Uncle Phil…(a dry sob)…he doesn’t…he doesn’t take betrayal well, man.”

That’s an understatement.

“We can offer you amnesty. Witness protection. New names and faces,” Frank offers before he can really think of it. All he can remember is how Jamie was so sure Noble and Bianca were savable. That if they were given a chance, they’d rise to the occasion. Well, here’s the occasion, and, look, they’re rising to it. Frank can’t just leave them out to take the fall. Jamie would never forgive him. He would never forgive himself.

“You’d….you’d do that for us?” Noble says, his voice wobbling. “You know who we are, right? What Uncle Phil’s done?”

“Yes.” Frank sees one of the officers’ – David, Frank recalls – nod and leave the room, address in hand. “But something tells me you don’t want that life, son. Do you?”


The call ends just like that. Frank stares at the phone on the table, unbelieving this really did happen. His boy is within their reach. Erin slips a hand onto his shoulder and Frank reaches back to hold it.

After so long, Jamie’s coming home.
In a snug, white house, on a common street paces a woman. As Linda speeds through her home, her eyes glance out occasionally to her two young boys in the backyard. Jack’s got his little brother in a headlock, her youngest squirming against the hold. She smiles softly. They’re her joy, her life, after Danny. They mean the world to her, and she can’t even imagine what Frank’s going through right now. She’s tried to put her boys in Jamie’s place, and she in Franks, but that only ended in nightmares.

She never tried again.

“Take care, Linda,” Frank says over the cell, and Linda freezes.

Why take care of herself? Frank hasn’t said that line since Danny came back from Iraq. Oh, Frank cares about her, she knows this, but his boys come first. It’s a parent thing. She’s done it a thousand times with her own two.

“Oh, okay,” she says. “But when are you telling Danny?”

A pause, and then: “Who says I haven’t?”

“You.” Linda knows Frank hasn’t told Danny yet. It was all in the words left unsaid. “You didn’t say “And take care of Danny” or “Make sure Danny doesn’t beat himself up, Linda”. You always says something like that after Danny’s been told something bad.”

Frank knows she can handle his son better than anyone.

Then why not tell him? It’s this question that causes Linda to again start up her frantic walk around the house. What could be as bad as to warrant not telling Danny? The smell of Fra Breeze hits her nose and she swallows thickly. Not a dead body, that wouldn’t do it. Frank never shied from telling Danny about Joe. Then what? That Jamie’s alive? Surely, Frank would trust Danny with that.

A sigh interrupts her panicked thoughts.

“I’m getting that predictable, am I?” Frank asks mournfully.

“A bit,” Linda admits, and almost stumbles over her purse (why’s it in the middle of the hallway?). She picks it up and puts it on the stairs instead. “But I doubt Danny’s noticed, or Henry.”

A strained chuckle. “There’d have been a lecture if Dad knew.”

“Pretty much,” Linda grins weakly, her thoughts not at all soothed. She rounds into the kitchen again and looks out the window at her boys. “So, why haven’t you told him? What’s wrong, Frank?”

More silence.

“Frank, I can’t help if you don’t give me all the facts,” Linda pushes. Hey, she’s married a cop, she knows what words work and when to press a little harder.

“Jamie might die tonight. Sanfino’s being pressured.”

Oh. Linda grips the kitchen counter hard. “Danny could walk in on his baby brother’s execution.”
“Precisely.”

“He’s not on the taskforce, is he?” Linda almost whispers this.

“No.”

“Frank, this’ll kill him. He loves Jamie. He’s been worried sick about him. He…” She sighs. “Would never recover from that.”

Frank, God bless him, doesn’t say anything. He’s good like that. Doesn’t gloat when you get to his way of thinking (sometimes he’s wrong, but it’s not that often…he’s police commissioner for a reason). He just calmly gives you the facts and let’s your mind do his work for him. Says it’s the way Henry taught him to think for himself. It sounds a little conceited to an outsider, but Linda appreciates it. She’d rather find the path herself than be handheld every time.

Now, that’d be arrogant. She slumps, hand still holding the cell to her ear. “I get it.”

“He’ll need you, Linda. Badly.”

“Is he your next call?”

“…yes…”

“I’m getting the boys and going to the precinct,” Linda tells him as she whirls around and searches for her purse. “He shouldn’t be alone.”

“Danny’s lucky to have you,” Frank says, and Linda can her the tears behind it.

“Well, someone raised him right.”
In a precinct, on a bright afternoon, a man snaps his pen in half. He stares at his lieutenant as if he’s grown two heads, or said that Jamie has been found dead. Which he could very well be. That doesn’t mean he shouldn’t be on the task force! The opposite, in fact. He needs to be there. Who else will make sure to treat Jamie right, dead or alive.

“I’m going,” he tells the older man. Everyone else outside the room is trying their hardest to look like they’re not peeking over or casually walking by. Danny ignores them all, as does Gormley.

His boss’ eyebrows curl down. “It’s an order, Danny.”

“And if it were your brother?”

The silence itself answers the question. Of course Gormley would go anyway. Family comes first, second, and last. Anyone knows that. They especially know it to be true for the Reagan family. You do not mess with them, unless you’re prepared to face them all.

“Danny,” Linda says softly, her hand brushing against his arm.

Danny glares at her, though they both know it’s not her he’s mad at. Never her. But his Dad? Oh, Danny will have quite a few words to say to him when this is all over with.

Danny can see why his Dad would want him far away from all this. Danny could literally walk in on Sanfino shooting his little brother in the head. And some part of Danny doesn’t want to go, just to avoid that. But he won’t. He can’t. Jamie needs him, and Danny will do anything – even going against the police commissioner – to do give that.

“I’m going,” he says again, grabbing his gun out of his desk and holsters it. He shoots Linda an apologetic look, which she answers with a sigh and a loving, worried smile.

“You’re an idiot,” she tells him.

He offers a tentative grin. “Love you too.”

“Dad?” Sean says hesitantly.

Danny looks down at his two boys, who have been silent and in the background through all this. “I’ll be fine, you guys. Promise.”

“Will Uncle Jamie be dead?” Jack asks, tackles as always.

“Jack!” Linda hisses.

“I think we’ve a right to know,” he insists. Sean nods in agreement.

Danny hunches down to their level and puts a hand on both their shoulders. “I’m not going to lie to you, he might be, but we’re going to do everything in our power to make sure he doesn’t. Kay?”

“Kay,” both boys echo back. Neither are very confident, but Danny didn’t expect them to be. He certainly isn’t. He stands back up and turns to --- again.

“We good?” he asks.
His boss sighs. “Fine, but I didn’t see you leave and we never had this conversation.”

“Got it.” Danny glances over at Jackie. “You coming, partner?”

“Of course,” she says, her voice somehow sympathetic and strong at the same time.

They leave without looking back.
On a bumpy road, in the dark of night, crawls a police car. The gravel on the country lane crunches and pops as the car moves slowly forward. Ahead, around, and behind it are even more police cruisers. Each one is filled with men and women who wear the uniform. There’s dozens of them, creeping up the road to the little farmhouse. And it fills Renzulli with pride. This is what it’s all about; taking out the bad guy and showing him who the boss really is. And boy, does Sanfino need that wake up call.

Renzulli grips the steering wheel. Part of him hopes Sanfino, himself, is there tonight. Just so they can throw his butt in jail. Rid the streets of one more scumbag. But, Renzulli also knows that Sanfino being there would probably mean Jamie is already dead. That’s what Commissioner Reagan said. Their informant told them that Sanfino was getting pressured into showing his muscle. Thus, a cop needed to die.

Ergo, why they’re all here tonight.

Time’s run out.

They stop half a mile from the farmhouse. No need to make any more noise than necessary. Renzulli signals the troops in. Commissioner Reagan gave him the honor of leading this charge. Said Jamie would want it. Renzulli thinks it’s more to do with not letting Danny come, but he’ll take it.

Not that it really did any good, forbidding Danny to go. Renzulli caught sight of the older Reagan getting to a patrol car before they left. He can see the man with his partner a few guys back right now. But he’s not going to get into that mud pile. Nope. He’ll leave that to Danny’s CO and his father.

Besides, it’s not as if Renzulli can’t say he doesn’t understand. He wouldn’t want to be left behind if it were, say, his wife being held hostage out here.

So, he’ll just ignore the fact that Danny’s tagged along. Claim he didn’t see him in the dark.

It’s a lame excuse, but stranger ones have been told, so Renzulli knows he’ll get away with it.

But God knows he wishes it were anyone else heading this op.

What if Jamie is dead? Then Renzulli’s gotta be the one to tell the Commissioner then that his youngest son didn’t make it. Yeah. Not fun. But the job’s not about being fun. You do what you have to, keeping the streets clean.

Renzulli points his assault gun at the ground. “Right. So half of you head to the house. Pop off any guards, except one or two. Need them to talk. I’ll take the other half to the cellar. All clear?”

A jumble of ‘yessir’ and ‘yes’ whisper back.

Renzulli head off into the woods, careful not to step on too many dry twigs along the way. They slushed across a mini marsh (who knew the things lived this far from Miami?) and crept past the house, where only two rooms had light on. Renzulli sees the shadows of his men surrounding the
place and allows himself one moment of pure snugness. These guys have no idea what’s about to hit the fan.

Then he moves on and tries to find this root cellar their informant talked about.

It takes a few passes, but a new recruit finds it, wedged in-between an oak and pine tree. She hisses a ‘sir!’ and they all circle back round. She shrugs at their looks and just says ‘beginners luck’. Huh. No pride or arrogance. Renzulli will be sure to remember that in his report to the commissioner. They need more cops like that out on the streets. Ones who aren’t in it for the glory or praise.

Two officers ease the door up, right as shots are fired from behind them. They all jump ten feet in the air and whirl around. The cellar door slams shut. They all gear ready to face Sanfino…only to find that it’s the echoes from the farmhouse raid. Chuckles sound and guns lower. They’re all a bit high strung tonight, Renzulli admits. Best get this done before someone ends up shooting a tree or something.

Renzulli signals. “Get it open.”

The door’s pulled up again and Renzulli flicks on the flashlight at the top of his gun. Danny’s right at his side, breathing hard, but shallow. His torch is aimed down there too. Thin beams of light shoot down into the darkness, revealing a wooden ladder of stairs and a dirt floor. Renzulli crouches down, but can’t see anyone waiting in the wings to off them. He straightens. “Right. I’m going in. You four follow me. If something happens, shut this door and don’t let anyone out. Even if I beg ya.”

“Yessir.”

“Good.”

“I’m going with you,” Danny says, and now Renzulli can’t ignore him.

Great.

He raises an eyebrow to convey his annoyance, but nods. “You listen to me, Reagan, got that?”

“Yeah, got it.”

The tone doesn’t inspire much confidence. Renzulli knows it’s the best he’ll get in a situation like this.

Both of them storm down the steps like there’s no tomorrow, and for Jamie that last one’s not a joke. Jamie could not see tomorrow, or any other day for that matter. Renzulli shakes off that morbid thought. The cellar, itself, is pretty small, but it’s the sight that meets that at the end that brings them up short. No, there’s no goons or Sanfino waiting for them. Just Jamie.

Or what’s left of him.

It’s a sight that will haunt Renzulli’s nightmares for years to come. He knows it. It’s like looking at a picture of a terrorist hostage. And he’s not just talking about the physical injuries, because those are awful in and of themselves. He’s not even talking about the bone-thin stretch of his skin. No… he’s talking about the empty look in Jamie’s eyes. The look that says nobody’s home and hasn’t been for a long time now.

Danny’s sharp intake of breath tells Renzulli the man’s recognized the damage done.
They got to Jamie all right, but Renzulli’s not sure there’s anything left of Jamie to save.

Chapter End Notes

Please, someone review. I love getting reviews/comments.
Comforting Dark

In a dark place, without a comfort or light, lies a man. He’s young. That much is obvious by his soft hair and boyish looks. He’s also dressed in a policeman’s uniform. He lies on his side, almost curled in on himself. He waits. For what, he’s not quite sure. He’s forgotten. But he waits anyway. Because someone told them it’d get better. Someone promised they’d come for him if ever he got taken.

And so the man waits in the dark.
In a bright hospital, in a small room stands a sea of blue. Police officers. They wait for the verdict from the doctors working on their missing officer. To see if their hard work has paid off even a little. To know if Officer Jamie Reagan will make it through the night. Live, and maybe come back to them one day. It breaks Henry’s heart to be sitting in a situation like this again.

Bad enough when it happened with Joe. Back then, it’d been the shock of a raid gone bad and the sudden death of a nephew, son, and brother. This, this is torture. Knowing they got Jamie in time, knowing he might still make it, and also knowing his mind’s just not here.

Henry scans the waiting room and sees his family huddled close to each other for comfort. Well, excepting Danny. Poor boy can’t stop pacing, or going outside to hide his sobs from his sons (who aren’t fooled in the least). Henry wishes he could do the same, but this family needs someone to be strong, and it’s not fair to put that on Francis. Not now. Right now, his boy needs the leeway to grieve like a father.

Once the troops are gone.

Until then, Frank has to be a pillar of wisdom and unbending fortitude. One that all the other policemen and women can gather around. It’s a hard job, but Henry knows Francis is up to the task. He wouldn’t have put him in on the list for commission otherwise. It’s a heavy burden to bear, and not many can take it.

Francis can, and has.

“Excuse me, Commissioner?” an greying doctor says from the doorway.

All eyes focus on him, and Henry gives the man credit for not even flinching under the judging eyes.

“Yes, doctor?” Francis says, pulling himself up tall.

“We just got through with Officer Reagan.” The doctor clutches his board and papers. “You got to him just in time, Commissioner. He’ll live.”

A wave of relief goes through the crowd, but there’s a flat inflection in that last word. One which Henry catches, as does Francis.

“Doctor?” his boy asks.

“He was bad, Commissioner. Very bad. Multiple lesions, dehydration, starvation, contusions, to name a few. We hooked him up to an IV drip. Given time, his body will recover itself.”

“But his mind,” Francis supplies for the doctor.
“His mind…I’ll be frank, sir, he might never come out of it. It’s too soon to tell though.” The doctor sighs. “I’m sorry, sir.”

“Not your fault,” Francis says. The doctor nods and Francis turns to the officers. “You all did above and beyond tonight. And I thank you for that. My family, personally thanks you for it.”

Everyone looks at each other, probably wanting to say something, but not knowing what. Hoping someone else will. At last, Renzulli steps forward. That doesn’t surprise Henry. The man is a leader through and through. He’ll do the difficult things, so his men and women can have resolution, justice.


“Thank you,” Francis says, and his voice wavers for just a moment. Something Henry can see the officers’ notice. They shuffle nervously and then, as if led by an unseen hand, they all start to leave. Bits of ‘call us if you need to, sir’ and ‘he’s strong’ are whispered by a few. Most have trouble just looking at Francis, standing big and unmoving. It’s an impressive sight that lasts for as long as the officers are there.

As soon as they’re gone, Francis sags, his broad shoulders hunched in. He barely makes it into a seat before his legs give out. This isn’t the commission anymore. No, this is a father. A father who can take no more losses in his family. First his wife, then his son, Joe, now Jamie. Henry isn’t sure Francis will be able to handle it, if Jamie doesn’t wake up.

Henry’s not sure he will.

There’s only so much heartache a person, a family, cope with before enough is enough. And Henry’s pretty sure the Reagan family’s just met their limit.

“I’ll go see if they’re allowing visitors,” Linda says quietly. Henry blesses her for it. Right now, she’s the only one of them that can really do anything. But Danny’s eyes get that determined light in them again. He’s found a new mission to distract him. Henry won’t stop him. He knows the need for action. He’s spent years trying to get rid of it.

“I’m coming with you,” Danny says. Linda nods with a sad smile and they both leave. Nickie pulls her two cousins close. They huddle in and whisper things too low for Henry to catch. He lets them be. Francis is the one who will need him the most right now.

“Francis,” he says, sitting in the chair next to him.

His boy lifts tired, tired eyes to meet his. “He has to wake up, Pop.”

“He will.”

Francis glances at the kids. “Of course.”

Henry gets the message loud and clear. Francis doesn’t think Jamie will be waking up anytime soon, if at all, but he won’t say it in earshot of his niece and nephews. Henry reaches over and lays a firm hand on Francis’ arm. It’s shaking. Henry squeezes it. “He will make it, Francis.”

And he believes that with all his heart.

Jamie is their steady rock. The one in the family who is the peacemaker, the diplomat. He keeps Danny and Erin from ripping into each other too much. He gives Nickie, Sean, and Jack someone to look up to at any time (Danny’s good, but he’s no white sheep and the kids know it). He’s the
last reminder Francis has of his wife. He gives Henry hope for this generation.

And now all of that might never be seen again?

Henry just can’t accept that.

He won’t.

Jamie’s needed too much for God to call him home now.

“Frank,” Linda says, suddenly beside them. “They’ll let you in for a little bit. Room 207. I tried to get us all, but they’re still wary of Jamie’s condition.”

Francis nods and pushes out of the chair. No one begrudges him the right to see Jamie. No one’s going to complain about the restrictions, though everyone’s eyes follow Francis as he leaves the waiting room. Henry does more than that. He walks with Francis to the door of room 207.

Francis freezes at the sight of it. His large hands curl into fists that tremble. Not a word escapes. Henry moves closer anyway. He can read the sorrow and fear in the tense set of his son’s shoulders. And who wouldn’t be afraid?

It’s such a simple door to hold so much meaning. To open it will mean seeing exactly what Sanfino has done. It’s one thing to hear about it, but to see it makes it real. There’ll be no going back after this. Henry knows that all too well. He gently pushes Francis toward the plain door.

“He’s going to need you, son,” Henry tells him.

Francis stiffens at those words, takes in a deep breath, takes another one (slower), and then pulls the door open. He steps inside, leaving the door open, probably so Henry can look in too. Henry stays where he is. This is Francis’ turn. Henry will stand here to support him, but Francis has to do this on his own right now.

His boy stops a few feet in, hands unclenching, limp. “Hey, Jamie,” he says.

He stands there for a couple of minutes, taking in God only knows what. At last:

“We missed you, son,” Francis says as he disappears the entire way in.