

SONNY DAYZ the HERMIT CRAB
by Scott Delaney

Sonny Dayz was the nicest of his hermit crab family. He was not very big, but his mother had taught him to be strong.

Sonny was lounging in the back seat of the Nissan Rogue watching the beach slip away behind him. He was on his way to Old Town Alexandria to meet his new friend Frederica. Sonny was going to miss the sun and the sand, but he was positive he was going somewhere better. The people who found him had assured him of that.

Sonny had packed up his favorite toys - a lime-green plastic tree that reminded him of Sunset Beach, his orange coconut hut and a soccer ball shell. The last had been picked specifically because he heard his new family liked the World's number one sport. Sonny wasn't a great "futbol" player - with all his padding Sonny's game was American football - but he loved watching soccer. He had heard Frederica was pretty good too, so Sonny was excited to hear stories of goals, assists and defensive gems.

Being a hermit crab, Sonny liked having a variety of shells. His current one had an alligator painted on it. Some people thought he was a Florida fan, but really it was because his close friends called him "Gator."

Sonny earned the nickname when a ring-billed seagull teased his cousin, Fifi. Sonny was very nice, but he never hesitated to stand up to anyone who messed with his cast (what crab-folk call family).

This past summer, LooLoo the seagull thought it'd be funny to take Fifi's pink shell. His cousin was a few years younger, so Sonny looked out for her. When LooLoo tried to grab her shell, Sonny warned the bird:

"LooLoo, leave my cuz alone."

"C'mon, Sonny. What are you going to do? You're the nicest of the crustaceans. And besides, you're a puny little hermit crab. I'm ten times your size. I can do whatever I like."

"I'm warning you LooLoo. Fifi is my responsibility. If you're going to pick on her, you're going to have to pick on me." Sonny stood to his full two inches. The gull responded by towering over the young hermit crab.

"Ha! I'm not scared of you, Sonny. I'll do what I please." LooLoo turned and picked at Fifi's shell, trying to knock it free. Fifi started to cry. A crowd of seafaring folk gathered. Unbothered, LooLoo continued to peck.

Then out of nowhere, Sonny had the big bird tied up in a fancy wrestling move. The gull tried to get free, but Sonny had him tight. LooLoo wasn't hurt, but he couldn't move.

"Let me go!" the gull bellowed. LooLoo tried to puff up, roll around and shake free, but nothing worked.

"Are you going to leave my cuz alone?" Sonny asked.

"Once you let me free, I'm going to have me some Sonny Dayz."

"Then I'm not letting you go," replied the young hermit crab.

LooLoo tried to escape, but Sonny wouldn't let go. Finally, the gull gave in.

"Ok, ok, I give up." The gull tapped Sonny on his claw.

"Are you going to leave Fifi alone?" Sonny warned.

"Yes! I'll leave her alone," pleaded LooLoo.

"And you're not going to take her shell?"

"No, no, no. I won't touch her shell."

"Ok, then you're free to go." Sonny released LooLoo. Unhurt, the bird stood up and brushed himself off.

"Wow, Sonny. That was some kinda move. Where'd you learn that?" LooLoo was clearly impressed.

"My mom taught me. It's called a 'Gator Roll,'" Sonny said proudly.

"A gator roll, eh? Well, I'm calling you Gator from now on. You're something fierce!"

LooLoo extended his wing. Sonny looked at him cautiously.

"I just want to shake and say you beat me fair and square, Sonny. Or should I say, Gator?" The two opponents shook wing and claw.

From that point on Sonny was called Gator by everyone who knew him. His kid cousin even got him the fancy shell he was wearing today, complete with a painted gator. With today being his first day to meet his new friend Frederica in Old Town Alexandria, Sonny wanted to look his best. He wore the shell with pride.

Before leaving Sunset Beach, Sonny taught Fifi the gator move so no one would bug her. He didn't think he'd have to use it up north – Sonny knew he and Frederica would protect each other.

Sonny turned his attention back to the road. *Old Town Alexandria*, he thought. *Sounds exciting!* Sonny smiled, daydreaming of the adventures he would have with Frederica and his new cast.

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