Skyline Pigeon

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Summary

Dean and Sam's points of views on their relationships and lives throughout the years. John Winchester is more harmful than good, especially to Dean. Sam struggles with the guilt of what his brother's given up for him over the years. Dean suffers from abuse, low esteem. TRIGGER WARNING for eating disorders/abuse. Pre-series. UPDATED: Periodic point of views from John and Bobby as well. John is a real SOB.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Chapter 1

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Disclaimer: I do not own Supernatural. Go figure.

Pre-series

Sam age 14
Dean age 18

Sam

My older brother Dean has more health problems than anyone I know. He's had pretty much every infection you can think of from pneumonia to tonsillitis, some of them twice over. He was born premature, which I'm told predisposes him to having a weak immune system. That's what I read in my book for health class anyway. Dad says his lungs were underdeveloped which is why he has asthma. Dean's asthma was why Dad was dropping us off at Uncle Bobby's in the first place. Dad was busy hunting, and Dean was busy having one asthma attack after another. He didn't complain much, but I did enough for the both of us. It actually lead to a major drag out fight, causing Dean to literally step in between the two of us, succeeding in only another asthma attack. Truthfully, I think Dad was just tired of shelling out money for my brother's inhaler refills, but regardless, my goal was reached. And that goal was getting my brother out of the dirty, dusty, moldy apartment that were wreaking havoc on his lungs.

I was kind of grateful to know first hand that Bobby's house was nice one. Especially that it was one that came with cleaning products with an identifiable expiration date, and fresh air that pours into the windows. Even though I preferred life a lot better when it was just Dean and me, I was relieved that Bobby would be around to look after us in case my brother needed extra medical attention. My father certainly wasn't going to take care of him. Dean took better care of us, of me, than our father ever did. He made me dinner, took me to school, took care of me when I was sick. He picked on me sure, but he also listened to me. He respected me. Something I could never say for my father. That man just picked on me. He picked on me because I was nothing like him. He picked on Dean too…more so than he did me, but unlike Dean, I didn't bow my head and allow the verbal insults to knock me down. I fought back. Constantly and always. But anyway, Dean took great care of me, but I know it was stressful for him. I loved him more than anyone. However, that didn't stop me from being the typical annoying little brother, who pinned his typical annoying big brother to the ground when he called dibs on the top bunk.

"Ha!" I yelled in victory, "Pinned you!" I was close to passing my brother up in height and far surpassed him in weight since I hit puberty. Okay, weight since I was around ten. Embarrassingly I was a rather chubby kid. But anyway, the first time Dean realized that I could actually pin him, and keep him down he was pissed. He literally mumbled and grumbled around the motel we were staying in for days about how unfair it was. I don't think he spoke more than three words to me for over two weeks.
"Get off of me!" Dean's was was hoarse as from the strain of struggling to get out from underneath me.

"Two things first." I said, grinning down at him, "Say I get the top bunk."

"I don't even care about the stupid top bunk." Dean grumbled, his face twisting into a stubborn scowl, "It's for babies. It's all yours man."

"And two," I said grinning, knowing he'd have a harder time caving over my next demand, "Admit I'm the bigger brother."

"What?" Dean spat, his eyes glowing with anger, and maybe a little embarrassment. "No."

"Then I'm not budging." I said, laughing, feeling a sense of pride that I could pin my older brother by four years down, and hold him down, with ease.

"I'm the big brother." Dean said stubbornly, trying to use his legs to kick me off of him, but it was no use. Finally after several failed attempts Dean let out a frustrated scream, which sent Bobby running into the room. The minute he saw us, he flew at me, grabbing me off of my brother, practically throwing me against the wall.

"What the hell's wrong with you?" He asked, as Dean rolled into a standing position.

"Nothing, Bobby." Dean quickly stepped in between the two of us. "Just fooling around. Listen, can I go into town? No offense, but I was checking out your food supply….it's great and all…but nothing that we actual humans like to eat. You know, like chips and stuff."

"Okay wise ass." Bobby said, reaching in his pocket and tossing Dean the keys, "Go check out the girls. But be back in an hour. I don't want to have to explain to your old man I lost you the first night."

Dean cracked a smirk, winked at me and sauntered out the door. I immediately felt a prang of jealousy. I may be on my way to being bigger and already stronger, but I had to admit, my brother was a one handsome dude. He had that whole bad-boy James Dean thing going for him. I was his brother and I thought he was handsome. I couldn't imagine what people unrelated to him thought.

"So Sam, what was really going on?" Bobby asked motioning for me to follow him out into the kitchen.

"Dean was just trying to act all big and tough." I shrugged, "We were just messing around. I wanted him to admit I was the bigger brother."

"You had to go there, didn't you?" Bobby frowned at me. I frowned back. I was used to butting heads with Dad, but Bobby always seemed pretty cool. He didn't nag Dean or I about training the way Dad did. He didn't make us wake up early and run laps. Especially not in the cold. As much as running in the heat sucked, I hated the cold more. Especially the cold damp weather. This was mainly because I hated watching my brother fight with his lungs and their stubborn refusal to take in air. Running in the damp cold always made Dean wheeze and cough, which in turn made me angry and scared. But this was something I didn't have to worry about at Bobby's, which was a relief because the weather had begun to turn and the mornings were cold. Bobby also didn't get on my case about reading too much, or roll his glare at me when I talked about wanting to go to college. Plus, Dean seemed less tense at Bobby's. He actually acted like his age when we are at Bobby's.

"Sam!" Bobby's voice snapped me out of my thoughts, "What's wrong with you? Did you really
have to pick on Dean about his size?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, "I was just messing around. I was joking."

"Joking around with something that's been your brother's sacrifice is kinda messed up."

"My brother's sacrifice?" I asked, feeling completely out of the dark.

"Why do you think Dean's so much smaller than you, Sam?" Bobby asked, frowning slightly. "I mean, he isn't yet, but it's obvious by the way you're growing, he's going to be."

"I just figured I hit the jack-pot on our family genes." I said shrugging, "That and I know he favored mom's side of the family. Plus, wasn't he born premature or something? I know from health class those babies normally are generally smaller the rest of their lives."

"Those all may be true," Bobby leaned forward shaking his head, "But your brother…your brother…he never really got a chance to be a kid. When your momma died, your daddy, well, as you know he went kind of crazy."

"That's an understatement." I interrupted.

"He became obsessed with hunting that demon..." Bobby continued, clearly ignoring me, "Sometimes….well most times to the detriment of you boys. Especially your brother's. He'd leave you for days to weeks on end with little food or money. Eventually, Dean would have to steal or break down and call me depending on your location. He wanted you fed and happy."

"Little food?" I shook my head, "I don't remember that. I mean, I remember not having a lot of money, we still don't…but food…we always ate. I think you're mistaken."

"You always ate. Your brother…He'd never admit it, even at ten…I'm pretty sure that's when things started to get bad with the money…but I'm sure there are more times than not that boy went to bed hungry."

I fell silent, letting Bobby's words soak into my teenage brain. Slowly things started to make sense. Why growing up Dean was barely bigger than I was. Why he was always so thin, why whenever we went swimming in the lake, the few times dad allowed us to have fun, his ribs stuck out whereas mine never did. Maybe his smaller stature had nothing at all to do with him being premature.

"Are you telling me Dean starved for me?" My voice came out in an embarrassed whisper.

"He wanted you to be strong and healthy," Bobby shrugged, "You were always his first priority. Ever since your dad put you in his arms that awful night when you two lost your momma….Dean made you his priority. You were his little brother. His baby really. I guess he knew he would never get the childhood he was supposed to have, so he figured he'd try to give it to you."

Frowning I got up and went over to the wall where Bobby had a few pictures of us as kids. I picked up the one from Christmas. I was about ten holding up a history book of medieval castles Dean had given me (I was particularly interested in them that year). I winced as I examined the photo further. We had our arms around one another, both of us smiling. I swallowed as a wave of guilt passed through me as I noticed Dean's hands were empty. I vaguely remembered the only present he'd gotten that year was something small Bobby had given him, which sadly enough was received the day after Christmas. Dad didn't get either of us gifts that year. I remember running down to the Christmas tree that morning, at the dingy apartment we were staying in, to find no presents under the tree. Being a selfish ten year old, and not fully understanding Dad's lack of income (although I
do think I always understood his selfishness) I burst into tears. I closed my eyes, the memory of that morning taking over.

"Whatcha crying for Sammy?" Dean asked, tapping me on the shoulder, causing me to turn around.

"There are no presents." I wailed (God, I was so embarrassing...how Dean didn't slug me then and there I don't know). "Dad forgot us. I told you he doesn't like us."

"Dad's just real busy." Dean said calmly, "But Sammy...look, I gotcha something." The hand that Dean had been holding behind his back appeared and he was holding a small (badly) wrapped present.

Eagerly I took it from his hands and begun ripping off the paper. Inside was a kids Explorer book on medieval castles. I yelped in happiness and hugged my brother tightly.

I smiled faintly at the memory, frowning instantly as I studied to photo in front of me further. I saw two other differences that I never noticed before. The first noted fact being that I was slightly pudgy especially next to Dean's thin frame. Was I seriously that needy and greedy of a kid when it came to eating that I allowed my brother to waste away while I stuffed my face? The second major differences were our smiles. Whereas mine sparkled with the happiness and innocence of childhood; Dean's seemed forced, and tired. Can a smile look tired? Or at least a fourteen year old boy's smile?

"I never knew." I said looking up at Bobby, who was now behind me, with a hand on my shoulder. "I never knew that about my brother."

"There's a lot you don't know." Bobby sighed. "But you have to cut your brother some slack. Lay off him about his size."

"Are you girls done with your slumber party yet?" Dean asked, re-entering the kitchen, handing the car keys to Bobby, and tossing me my favorite bag of chips. I noted he had nothing for himself.

"We were just getting to the point where we were going to paint one another's nails." Bobby replied, nudging me, clearly not wanting Dean to clue in on what we'd been discussing.

"Dad call yet?" Dean asked, grabbing an apple from the basket on the table. He sank down in a chair and begun spinning the apple around from hand to hand, looking up at Bobby unexpectedly.

"No." Bobby frowned, "I'm sorry, son. He didn't. He's probably still on the road."

I frowned as I watched Dean's normally tough exterior crack slightly. I bit my tongue to keep the insults from flying out my mouth at our absentee father. As much as I hated our father for the abnormal lifestyle he forced upon us, I hated him even more for the mental anguish he caused Dean on what seemed to be a daily basis. Their relationship was something I never understood. When I was younger I was always somewhat envious of their connection. Dad and I butted heads as far back as I could remember. As soon as I was old enough to talk we fought. Over everything. Dean often said we argued just to argue. I'm pretty positive my first sentence was "I'm not listening to you, Dad". I was never one to pretend to be something I wasn't, and the whole macho-hunter burly man thing just wasn't my thing, and I made it be known. However, it didn't stop me from being jealous from time to time. Dad and Dean always seemed to operate as the perfect team.

Lately though...I don't know, I started wondering if there was something off about the whole father-son perfect-team thing. It just seemed like even though Dad and I fought a lot, he was
awfully freaking hard on Dean. I mean, from where I was standing Dad blamed him for everything. But the more Dad blamed him, the more and more obedient Dean seemed to be. I don't know if it was a mind-trick on Dad's end, or just Dean's incessant need to make our father proud.

"He'll call." Dean replied, glancing at me, as if he was trying to give me some reassurance.

"He'll call." I said, offering a smile. Then I tossed the bag of chips back at Dean. He looked at me dumbfounded. "Eat up." I said. When he opened his mouth to protest, I knew that the best way to get Dean to eat was to poke slightly at his size, hoping Bobby wouldn't beat me over the head on the spot. "Put some meat on those bones. You have to at least give me a challenge when I'm wrestling my older brother. You're skinny-self makes it far too easy.

With that Dean flashed me an annoyed look, ripped open the bag of chips, and began stuffing them in his mouth.

I glanced over at Bobby, who gave me a solemn nod of approval.

I decided from that moment on, I was going to take as good of care of Dean as he did of me.
Dean

From as long back as I can remember I put my little brother Sammy's life above my own. When my mom died, my father was in no shape to take care of either one of us. His life, as well as ours, became consumed with hunting that son of a bitch demon that took her from us. Back in the beginning, my dad was barely able to take care of himself, let alone two little kids. He spent the first year after my mom died drinking himself to death, which meant he'd pass out on the couch, and wouldn't wake to Sam's crying in the middle of the night. In the early days, I'd try to wake him, but that only rewarded me with a rough shove to the ground, and a mumbled, "Get the kid, Dean". So I began to get Sam on my own. I was small for my age, so it took some maneuvering on my end to pull Sam out of his crib. Finally, after a few nights, and a few bruised elbows on my end later, I just settled for putting Sam into bed with me. I learned how to make a bottle, realizing that Sam liked it warm (just like mom made it), and how to change his diaper all on my own.

Sam learned to crawl by following me around the apartment, laughing whenever I allowed him to catch up with me. I always rewarded him when huge hugs. Walking was a bit rougher. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I was only six after all. But finally, finally, one day he got there. I was laying on the floor coloring (yeah, I colored when I was a kid-go ahead bitches, laugh your hearts out) when Sam, who was crawling around suddenly stood up and took a few steps across the room. I watched him, mouth hanging open in complete awe. When Sam finally fell, he looked back at me with a huge grin on his face. I jumped up, and began clapping and cheering for Sam. Sam mimicked my clapping and laughed.

Now, most people would think of this as a completely happy memory, but see, in my excitement, I forgot that our dad was sleeping off a really bad hangover. Yeah, I knew what hangover meant at six. I knew I was in trouble the second I heard Dad's bedroom door burst open.

"Dean!" He barked out, "What the fuck are you doing?"

"Sam took his first steps." I said, my voice falling flat.

"Why the hell are you yelling?" Dad asked again, his eyes bloodshot.

That was the first time I ever remembered getting hit by my dad. Like really hit. Not just a nudge or a shove. But he actually pulled his hand back and smacked me hard across the face. I fell to the floor, smacking into the wall as I went down. I held my hand to my cheek, looking up with my father. It was the first time I ever remembered being afraid of him. I didn't realize it then of course, but it was the beginning of what would be many many slaps across the face.

Sam doesn't remember. He couldn't possibly. But he immediately started crying. Crying and reaching for me.

"Can you shut that kid up!" Dad yelled, punching the wall before going back to his bed, slamming his door behind him.

I scrambled up, going over to my brother, pulling him onto my lap as much as I could.

"It's okay, Sammy." I said softly, kissing my brother gently on the cheek, swallowing back the tears that were threatening to roll down my face. There was no way in hell I was going to cry in front of my little brother. Not ever. I didn't want to scare him more than he was already.
For a while things seemed to improve with Dad. He drank less, was home more, and things seemed almost normal. I actually thought things might go back to normal. Dad started taking real good care of Sam, even though Sam would continuously ask for me with his arm stretched out, yelling "De". But he tried. And that counted. Most days I'd come home from school and Dad would be sitting on the couch, with no beer, and would greet me with a warm smile and a pat on the back. He'd play wrestle with me, take Sam and I out for pizza. He'd tuck me into bed at night, like Mom used to. I began to believe that the drinking, the strange mutterings, and the slap were all just a bad dream.

But then, one night, reality hit. And when I say hit, I mean it hit like a son of a bitch. A yearish had passed since the slap, and I had pretty much put it out of my mind. It was a Friday. I remember because I was going to ask Dad if we could go to the park with Sammy the next day.

I came home from school and the first thing I heard was Sam crying. I dropped my bag in front of the door, and ran to our bedroom. Sam was standing in the middle of our room screeching.

"De! DE!" He cried to me when he saw me.

"Sammy..." I ran to him, trying to pick him up, and failing epically. We both crashed to the floor.

"De." He crawled on top of me, crying harder.

I quickly patted him down, searching for a bump, that's when I noted his diaper was completely soaked. Sighing, I pushed Sam off of me, grabbed a new diaper from my dresser and changed him. I then began playing peek-a-boo-which was Sammy's new favorite game, until he was giggling and smiling again. After an hour passed, and many many games of peek-a-boo, and singing the abc's over and over again, I set Sam in front of the TV and began making dinner. Or at least as well as a seven, almost eight year old can make dinner. Sam and I ate on the floor, and watched TV the rest of the night. I put him to bed, then settled on the couch to wait for Dad.

I guess I dozed off, because the next thing I knew, I heard a loud crash, and my father swearing.

"Damnit, Dean." He swore, after he flipped on a light switch and saw me. "How many times have I told you to put your shit away?"

Honestly, I don't ever remember him telling me that, but I also knew now was not the time to tell him that.

"You left Sam." I said getting up.

"And where the hell were you." Dad looked at me, swaying. That's when I clued in that he was drunk.

"School." I said meekly, sitting back down on the couch. He had a look in his eyes that I just didn't trust.

"School" Dad said, mocking me. "I don't know why you bother. You can barely read. It's embarrassing. That's what your teacher told me. That they want you tested for some learning disease shit."

"Dad." I said slowly, "I think you just need to go to bed." As soon as the words left my mouth, Dad sprung on me.

"Who the hell are you to tell me what to do?" Dad snapped, grabbing me by shirt, yanking me off the couch, gripping me up to his eye level.
"I'm sorry." I whimpered.

"Don't cry." Dad spat, his breath reeking, "Man up."

As hard as I tried, I couldn't help the few tears that slipped down my cheeks. Dad flung me down onto the couch and began punching me. I cried out, both in pain and in surprise. I curled up in a ball, and covered my head, doing the best I could to protect myself.

Finally, after what seemed like forever, he stopped.

"Go to bed." He muttered, then turned and went into his room, closing the door behind him. I did as I was told, practically crawling to my room. As I got into bed, Sammy unconsciously, rolled into my side. I clung to him, as silent tears rolled down my face.

I just didn't understand what I did wrong.

Why I was so bad.

After that, everything changed. Dad was home less and less. And let's face it, when he was home, he wasn't really there. He was either drunk or on his way to being there. I learned quickly that his being drunk normally lead to my being hit. I began to assess the amount of damage that would be inflicted by the amount he drank. He spent his days reading books on demons and other supernatural creatures as his obsession kicked into overdrive. He spoke in strange tongues, and constantly was checking outside our windows, as if he were waiting for someone. After he'd smack me around, I'd longed for the Daddy I used to know. The one who loved me. Although I was admittedly my mother's son-I clung to her like glue before everything happened-I hero worshiped my dad. He used to carry me on his shoulders and throw me in the air until Mom would yell that it scared her. Probably which lead to my fear of heights, but who knows. But, he became less and less like the Daddy I'd known and more and more into this person I didn't think I wanted to know. Eventually I began excepting that the Daddy that bought me ice cream from the truck on the street and let me sit on his lap while he drove this super cool car he was working on was gone.

Not to say it was always bad. There were good times. Especially when I showed a knack for hunting. I excelled in having a straight shot when it came to shooting. Plus, I used the observation skills I'd built up over the years watching Dad's temper on a hunt. I'd pick up on stuff Dad would miss. This would lead to praise, a pat on the back, and a "that's my boy" from my father. He sometimes would take me out for pizza afterwards, grinning at me, making me feel like I mattered. I always order some for Sam, who for god knows enjoyed plain cheese. It started a sick cycle. The more Dad praised me, the more I longed for his praise.

It was like a drug.

I couldn't get enough.

But as I was saying, Sam was who mattered most to me. His safety and happiness I held far above my own. Hell, I didn't even give a shit about my own life half the time. I pretty much wrote myself off by the time I was nine, and decided I was an absolute waste of humanity by thirteen. Dad picked up on how much Sam meant to me. You had to be blind, deaf, and stupid not to pick up on it. As I grew older and stronger, he used him against me. He'd threaten to hurt Sam if I didn't allow him to beat me. I'd simply take off my shirt, lean over the sink, and allow my dad to beat me with his belt until whatever anger he was feeling left his system. Granted, I was too afraid to fight back for myself, but using Sam prevented me from even trying. Dad could pretty much make me do anything as long as he used Sam as leverage.
By sixteen, I dropped out of school. Well really Dad signed me out. I failed mostly every subject that year. I couldn't stay focused. I had a hard time understanding and retaining the information, no matter how hard I tried. I never did well at school, so it wasn't too big of a surprise or too big of a letdown. I struggled with academics ever since I could remember. I was bullied for my lack of ability to read out loud. I have a clear memory of being taunted by these band of assholes who imitated my reading ability in front of the entire cafeteria by stuttering and stammering. I responded of course by a sharp hit right to his jaw, which rewarded me with suspension, and a beating from Dad. I became a problem for picking fights, which is why I think I even made it to 10th grade in the first place. I think the teachers pretty much just wanted to pass me along, not wanting to deal with an angry, closed off, stupid, teenage boy.

Sammy on the other hand, excelled in school. He was a straight A student, who was reading far and above his years. He loved school, like I never did. It was just easy for him. I asked him once how it felt to be so smart and he simply shrugged and replied, "I've never been any other way." When I nodded with acceptance, he asked me how it felt to always be so good looking. I grinned and replied, "I've never been any other way." Sam cracked up. He always got my sense of humor.

Dad stepped up my training when I dropped out of school. This entailed me getting up at 5am, and running lap after lap. It was hard with my asthma, especially in the winter. I kept my inhaler in my sweatpants pocket and had to use it more often than not, which rewarded me with a heavy sigh from Dad. My day then continued with showering, making breakfast for myself, Dad, and Sam. Once Sam left for school, Dad would practice different restraints on me, which were painful, although I never allowed myself to cry out. I'd gotten too old to yelp when he hurt me. I also knew that that just lead to more pain. Then Dad would start drinking and go back to his research, or go out hunting. I'd either go with him, or make dinner for me and Sammy.

I actually loved hunting. I loved helping and saving people. I was an epic failure in every other aspect of my life and like I said, I pretty much gave up on myself, so I might as well watch other people get saved. I worried of course if something happened to me, what would become of Sam, so I was careful. More careful than I would be if Sam wasn't around. If Sam wasn't around I would have easily tossed myself on top of whatever being we were fighting. Just to end it. Die a hero's death. And not by the hands of my father, which was looking more and more likely as the years went on.

Sam on the other hand hated hunting. He hated everything our Dad stood for. The two of them fought constantly over everything and anything. I'll never tell Sam, but most of the time, after they fought and Sam would storm off to bed, Dad would take out his anger from Sam on me. He'd beat me senseless, muttering how Sam talked back to him, and how I allowed him to be so outspoken. Sam started picking up something was going on. I know he did. He'd watch me sometimes, with a concerned look on his face, ask me if I was okay, especially after a bad beating. Luckily, when he was younger he never caught on. Or I don't think he did. I figured he would have asked me if he did.

So by seventeen, I was pretty much wrecked. That's where my issue with food came around. It wasn't that hard to start. Not really. I was used to starving. I'd starved before. Whenever we were low on food, I'd give mine to Sam. He needed it more than I did. I was always smaller, always weaker, always weighted less than the other kids my age, so I figured at least give it to Sam who stood a chance of being normal. Plus, he was my kid brother, and I couldn't let him go hungry. But anyway, not eating didn't have anything to do with me looking in the mirror and thinking I was fat. I wasn't pinching my hips and looking at myself like a teenage girl, frowning at my angles and shit like that. I felt bad for those girls. Mine was more about control. I couldn't control how much Dad and Sam fought, or what happened on a hunt, or how badly my dad was going to tan my hide. I felt like I had no sense of control in my life, and not eating gave me power.
Sam started picking up on my weird eating habits though. By the time he was fourteen, he began to watch my every bite at every meal. It was kinda creepy to tell you the truth. I'd begin to feel full after my second or third bite into the mac and cheese I made (listen, I'm no freakin Betty Crocker) and pushed my bowl away. I'd immediately hear a sigh and look up and Sam's eyes would be staring right back at me. That's exactly what happened this afternoon. Sam was home from school, I was home nursing a chest cold, and Dad was out on a hunt.

"What?" I asked self-consciously and I met Sam's normal gaze, which was a look of concern and frustration.

"You're done eating already?" Sam asked, not hesitating. Sam never beat around the bush when he had something to say.

"Yeah." I shrugged, as if it were no big deal. "I had a late lunch."

"Oh yeah?" Sam leaned back in his chair, and crossed his arms, "What did you eat?"

"A sandwich." I said, with a slight smirk.

"Where'd you eat it?" Sam pressed, not pulling his eyes from mine.

"Here?" I replied, suddenly realizing I should have better planned this lie.

Sam got up and went over to the fridge. He opened the door and searched in the fridge, pulling out bread and a small packet of bologna.

"There were exactly two pieces of bread left this morning, Dean." He said calmly, "And this little bit of bologna. Seriously, what's going on with you?"

"Ohh." I said, snapping my fingers, "I meant that I picked up a sandwich from that diner up the street, but I brought it back here to eat."

"Where'd you get the money?"

"Dad." I answered, shrugging, as if it were common sense.

"Really, Dean." Sam tossed the bologna and bread back in the fridge before settling back down in his seat, "What's going on with you, man. I've been watching you for like two weeks now. You hardly eat."

"I eat." I said defensively, "I just don't eat when you eat."

"You're losing weight, Dean." Sam replied, "Yeah, you've always been thin, but like you're really thin."

"Speaking from the chunky kid himself." I replied with an eye roll, "Isn't this called like reverse discrimination or something."

"For one, I stopped being chunky once I hit puberty." Sam replied, "Secondly, this isn't about me. This is about you. I'm worried about you Dean. You're my big brother. You just haven't been looking healthy lately. I'm really concerned."

Truth be told, Sam's empathy and ability to express it was a trait I admired. I was always too busy acting tough, that I didn't give a shit, and using sarcasm to ever let my true guard and feelings be known. Unless of course it was around Sam. And even that was growing to be even less and less
"I've got a chest cold." I replied, coughing to emphasize my point.

"It's more than that." Sam replied, "There's more to it. You've had chest colds our entire lives—"

"No I haven't." I argued defensively, even though I knew it was a lie. Sam himself had to toss me into the Impala and take me to the hospital because I couldn't breathe. Long story short, but basically Dad, who was passed out at the time, had "forgotten" to fill my inhaler prescription. I ended up that week with a particularly bad case of bronchitis with a full blown asthma attack.

Sam replied by sighing and shaking his head.

"I'm here for you Dean." He said solemnly. "Whenever you are ready to talk. I'm here. Just know that, okay?"

"You're such a little bitch." I replied, "You and your chick-flick moments."

Sam didn't reply and just continued eating the rest of his mac and cheese. Once he was done, I tossed the rest, and mine into the fridge, before we both headed into the living room to watch TV.

"You got homework?" I asked coughing, as we both settled on the couch.

"Just some reading." Sam glanced at me, "I'll do it when we go to bed. Did you take anything for that cough? You're good with your inhaler right? It's filled?"

"It's fine." I reached out and patted Sam's knee, "Relax, man."

Sam frowned at me slightly, looking as if he wanted to say more, but then to my relief turned his eyes back to the TV.

I must have nodded off because the next thing I knew, it was dark and Sam was shaking me, telling me that it was late.

"Reading?" I asked drowsily as I stumbled off the couch, tripping over an end table.

"I finished already." Sam said, catching me by the arm. I couldn't help but let out a slight gasp. Dad had gripped me on that arm pretty hard the other day. I don't really even remember what over. Of course Sam picked right up on it. He had the light on and my sleeve pushed up quicker than I could react. Granted I was half asleep still, but I give the kid credit, his reflexes were improving.

"What happened to you?" He asked, clearly referring to the huge bruise on my forearm.

"Damnit with the light." I said, reaching out to turn it back off, but Sam blocked my way, stopping me.

"Don't change the subject." Sam replied, almost snapping. "What happened to your arm, Dean?"

"I umm..." I wracked my brain for an excuse, but son of a bitch, the kid woke me out of a deep sleep, and I can't turn my brain on and off that quickly.

"Don't lie." Sam hissed, his voice sounding almost dangerous. I looked up at him in confusion when suddenly the door burst open and Dad stumbled in, followed by a man I'd never seen before.

"Sammmmy!" Dad exclaimed, "Deannnn my man. What are you twos doin up?"
Sam quickly let go of my arm, and I just as quickly rolled my sleeve down. I glanced at Sam, who was frowning at our father. This was how Dad normally acted before he got mean. One or two beers more—which was sure to happen—and he'd become one of the nastiest sons of bitches you'll ever cross.

"Hank!" Dad came over and gave us both a slap on the back, "These are my boys. Boys, this is Hank. He's in our line of work."

"Your line of work." Sam said under his breath. If Dad heard him, he ignored him. He just grinned and squeezed both of our shoulders pulling us in for a hug.

"So, the little one is the Dean right?" Hank asked. Immediately my cheeks began to flush with embarrassment.

"Yeah." Dad grinned, "Little and kinda dumb, but let me tell you…my boy has a mind for hunting. He's quicker and faster than men who been at the job twice as long."

"Dean's not dumb." Sam said loudly.

"Ah, that one must be Sam." Hank grinned, "You were right, John; kid's a spit fire."

"I said, Dean's not dumb." Sam said louder.

"Aww, Sammy." Dad cracked up. "Always so sensitive."

"Don't call me Sammy." Sam snapped, "Only Dean can call me that."

This made Dad laugh even harder. He just walked away, and sure enough got out two beers, handing one to Hank.

"Let's go to bed, Sam." I said, nudging him slightly. Sam shook his head and went into the bedroom before he climbed into his bed, tossing the covers over him in anger. I turned off the lights, and slipped out of my clothes and into a hoodie and sweatpants.

"How can you let him talk about you like that?" Sam asked, once he heard me slide into bed.

"He's drunk." I said simply, wishing Sam would shut the hell up.

"That's no excuse." I could practically hear Sam frowning in the dark. "You know you're not stupid, right?"

I didn't reply, which made Sam ask again, and of course, he did his normal trick of turning on the light.

"I am actually." I answered honestly, "But it doesn't matter. You're smart. You're going college, Sammy. You have a future outside of this shit. Dad knows I'm not cut out for anything but hunting. I sure in hell won't have a fancy college education like you. I couldn't even make it past tenth grade."

"That's not true, Dean." Sam argued, his eyes filling with tears. "You're the smartest guy I know."

"I can barely read, Sam." I said, my eyes dropping to study the plaid comforter.

"You read." Sam insisted, "You always read to me when I was a kid. You're half the reason I love books so much."
"I made all that shit up." I shook my head, "Sure, I could guess some of the words, but mostly I just told you shit from the pictures. Or made stuff up completely from my own head."

"They are kids' books, Dean. I'm sure you could read them just fine." Sam replied.

I didn't say anything. I knew the flush on my cheeks spoke volumes. Sam fell quiet too. Finally he reached over and turned off the light and we both sank back into our beds. Sam cried himself to sleep that night. And I went to bed feeling like a piece of shit.
Chapter 3

Sam

I woke up the morning after Dean admitted he could barely read feeling sick. I glanced over at my brother who was still sound asleep, his mouth half open, breathing wheezily out of his mouth due to his chest cold. He was half lying on his stomach, and half lying on his side, his arm hanging off of the bed. He looked like he was about ten years old when he slept. I glanced at the clock by my bed, realizing it was only 6am, but I already decided against going to school. Normally I was against skipping school, but I couldn't see myself sitting through classes that I easily excelled in, knowing Dean struggled in the same classrooms and no one ever offered help. Now I understood why my teachers always commented they were shocked I was Dean Winchester's brother. I honestly thought they just meant I wasn't always in trouble like Dean was when he was in school. I laid in bed, lost in my thoughts, wondering about the discomfort and embarrassment Dean must have suffered in school when his alarm clock went off, and he jumped up like a gun had been fired.

"Sam." He muttered, almost incoherently, slapping on the nightstand lamp, "You gotta get up and start getting ready for school. I'm gonna get breakfast ready."

"I'm not going to school." I said, sitting up.

"What?" Dean who was fully awake now, turned to face me, "You sick or something?"

"That's the story I'm telling Dad." I shrugged, "But honestly, I just can't go today."

"Why?" Dean frowned slightly, his eyebrow slightly arching in confusion and worry.

"You know why." I replied, "Don't make me say it, Dean."

"Is this because of last night?" Dean sighed, going back over to his bed, sinking down on it. "Damn it Sammy, come on. Don't make a big deal out of that. It's no big deal. I wasn't cut out for that world anyway."

"School failed you, Dean." I replied.

"I wasn't even in that school for more than like two years total." Dean shrugged. "I mean, you can miss if you want, it's Friday, and I'm all for cutting you a break. You study enough you deserve one. But don't make me your reason. I'm not worth it, Sammy."

I grew quiet as I let Dean's words register in my brain. Dean's view of himself was becoming more and more clear. The confident persona I once envied didn't actually exist. I always worshiped his swagger, and his not giving two shits, smart ass attitude, but it was all just a mask.

I think my brother hated himself.

"How about we go do something today, then?" I said, knowing by the weary look on Dean's face, he had enough sentimental conversation for the time being.

Dean opened his mouth to reply when we were interrupted by a loud pounding on our door.

"Dean." Dad barked. It was clear by his voice he was hung over, "I'm starving. What the hell are you doing in there?"
"I'm coming." Dead yelped, his voice strained, getting up quickly.

"Why do you always jump when he says jump?" I asked, "He's a grown man. He can get his own breakfast."

Dean just ignored me, opening the door revealing the figure of our father. "Sammy's sick." He said gruffly.

"What's wrong?" Dad's voice sounded more annoyed than concerned. I didn't hear Dean's response because he shut the door behind him, no doubt going out to bow and serve our father.

I knew better than to venture out for breakfast with our Dad still at home. It was hard because I could smell the bacon that no doubt Dad was making Dean fry up. Dean poked his head in real quick while Dad was in the shower and rubbed his stomach, obviously indicating that he'd told him I had a stomachache. I nodded, sliding down under the covers, preparing myself for the check I knew our Dad would do before he left for his hunt.

Sure enough, Dad came in less than ten min later.

"Sam." I could hear him standing over my bed. I pulled the covers off of my head, doing the best I could to look green and sick. "You alright, son?" I had to resist the urge to point out Dad never reacted this way when Dean was sick. Actually, when Dean was wheezing and coughing, Dad acted anything but concerned. And let's face it, Dean's chest colds and infections, were way more serious than a stupid stomachache.

"My stomach hurts." I said softly. "Kids at school were getting sick. I must have caught the bug going around."

"Well, you just rest today. Dean's home. Let him know if you need anything."

"Thanks." I mumbled sleepily, turning back over on my side, even throwing in a moan for good measure. I then waited until I heard the front door slam before sneaking out of bed and watching through the curtains as the Impala drove off.

I opened the bedroom door and headed out for the kitchen to find Dean hard at work in the kitchen, doing the dishes.

"I'll do that." I said, going over, and nudging him slightly, frowning slightly at the boniness of his hip.

"I got it." Dean replied, glancing at me before plunging his hands back into the soapy water.

"Then I'll dry." I said, grabbing the towel off of my brother's shoulder, and began drying the stack that Dean had already begun piling up.

"Where the hell did all these pans and dishes come from?" I asked.

"Dad wanted bacon and eggs." Dean shrugged.

"And of course you made them without batting an eye."

"He's going to be gone for a few days, Sammy. He wanted a good breakfast. You know his works important. You can't go hunting on an empty stomach."

"I think he treats you like hired help." I said, "I mean, I get the two of us don't get along, but
honestly, what's he have against you? You're like the perfect son. You hero worship the man." I stopped drying and looked at Dean. His mouth twitched slightly, like it always did when he didn't know what to say. Then Dean did what Dean typically does and just continued washing the dishes. Sighing, I followed his lead and continued drying. We worked in silence, and once we finished, I finally couldn't take it anymore.

"What did he do to you, Dean?" I asked. "Honestly, you can't have this much blind trust in the man. What did he do to you?"

"Nothing." Dean looked at me annoyed. I swear I could see terror behind his eyes though. I frowned at him, for what seemed like the tenth time this morning. Dean responded by drying his hands on my tee-shirt, and then went into the living room, turning on the TV.

"Come on, Dean." I said, following him, "I know something's up with you."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Dean replied, kicking his feet up on to the couch, and giving me his famous smirk. "I'm fine."

"You're not fine." I said.

"Cuz you keep bugging me." Dean replied, "I'm just trying to enjoy some peace and quiet and I have my little brother bugging me for two days straight. I'm not some chick you can talk to about your feelings, Sammy. So either, shut the hell up and watch TV or go read a book."

"At least I know how." I spat, before I could stop myself. I immediately regretted my comeback. Dean looked as though I'd slapped him hard across the face. His lower lip quivered slightly and I swear he was about to cry. Then he got up, grabbed his jacket and booked it out of the apartment.

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Dean

I felt bad for running out on Sam. I really did. But when he hit me with the reading slam, I had to get the hell out of the apartment. Basically because I was going to cry like a little bitch, and there was no way I was going to allow myself to do that in front of Sam.

It's not what you think. I'm not that much of an asshole I don't let myself cry. I just knew the guilt Sam would feel if he thought he was the cause of my tears. So I took off instead.

Truth was the reading thing was a huge source of embarrassment. I never could figure out why school was so hard for me and seemed so easy for everyone around me. When I was younger, I didn't care too much. I normally spent most of my time daydreaming up the stories Dad was going to tell once I got home, or itching in my seat to go play army with Sam. Junior high consisted of me making enemies and getting into more fist fights then I'd care to recall.

To the outside world, I just had a smart mouth, and always managed to exercise it around the football or wrestling team.

On the inside I was dying.

The difference between my abilities and my classmates' abilities had begun being more than clear. I hated having to read out loud. Popcorn sucked. You know, where you read out loud in class and then said popcorn and the person's name who was to read next. Once these assholes picked up on the fact that I couldn't read without sputtering and stuttering, I was called pretty much regularly and repeatedly. Then they'd all have a good laugh at my expense. The teachers let it happen, often shaking their heads or ignoring the situation all together. So I either ditched class or picked a fight.
which got me out of class. It of course ended up with me getting my ass kicked by dad at home whenever he had to come and get me in school and I was quickly labeled as "troubled" and a "problem" by my teachers and the damn school.

Sam, of course, picked up something was wrong. He'd do anything to try to make me laugh, telling me the worst jokes and making up the most ridiculous dance moves. We'd walk around for hours in the woods near by exploring. At night, once the lights were out, and I could truly let my guard down, I'd allow myself to cry. I cried myself to sleep more times then I cared to admit. It sucks having kids at school call you stupid, have your father call you stupid, and then know you yourself are stupid. Sam would crawl into my twin bed, and hug me. He'd tell me he loved me or some other mushy stuff he liked to mutter at the time.

We left that school for a good long while, when Dad thought he had a lead, so I was relieved. I could fake it for a few months at different schools as long as we kept moving. I knew I could use my charm and wits to play off the fact that I couldn't read or focus. I was a hit as the class clown and the bad boy. The ladies loved me—I mean seriously, what's not to love- and the guys wanted to be just like me. By the time I started pissing everyone off, and people started catching on I was dumb, Dad would move us. So imagine my discomfort when Dad announced we were moving back and I'd finish off tenth grade here and Sam sixth. The same old bullies were back on my ass, only they were bigger and stronger this time around. I was too of course, but although I was still cocky, I wasn't dumb enough to provoke them. There were way more of them then there were of me. So I did my best to swallow my pride, keep my head down. A couple times I broke of course, landing me with a black eye or a split lip. I give myself credit because I never went down without swinging. Other than that I pretty much used school as one long naptime.

By the time I was sixteen, Dad signed me out of school, saying I was obviously drowning there, and that I was wasting my time. It was the first time in a long time, I agreed with him. I mean, like actually agreed. Dad threw me into a strenuous training program to prepare me what he called, "the battles that were coming". I didn't care. I embraced them. Running until my lungs gave out was better than the relentless taunting I received at school.

So yeah, the reading thing is a sensitive subject. But I couldn't cry in front of Sam because really Sam is the only thing that got me through that time period. Sam's smile, his joy, his love for me, is really the only thing that got me through those years. Plus, I was happy for him that he was so successful in his beloved academia. I didn't want him to feel guilt over my incompetence. And I knew, at the slightest glimmer of a tear, guilt was what my brother would feel. If he hadn't felt it already.

Finally, when I pulled myself together, I headed home. The first thing I noticed that was strange when I got home was the apartment was dark. Sam and I both made it a habit to stay up late whenever Dad was out on a hunt. I shrugged it off, figuring maybe without my wonderful company Sam had gotten bored and went to bed on his own. I let myself in, flipping on the light and nearly jumped out of my skin when I saw Dad sitting on the couch, beer in hand.

"Dad!" I squeaked, dropping my keys.

"Where were you?" Dad got up, and immediately shoved me against the door.

"I umm…I just went on a walk." I winced at the look of anger on my father's face.

"I've been here all night, Dean. Where the hell did you walk? And what the hell? You leave Sammy here alone when he's sick? What if something happened while you were out strutting around? I ask you to do one damn thing and that's protect your brother. You can't even do that right. You're such a failure."
"I'm sorry." I mumbled, knowing there was no way I could talk myself out of what was coming.

"Shirt off." Dad said simply, as he began taking off his belt.

I did as I was told, mainly because I knew it would be way worse if I tried to run. Dad turned on the TV to drown out the sounds of the belt whipping through the air-I knew better that to cry out by now. I think it's been about three years since I've allowed a noise to escape when Dad beat me. The last time I was rewarded with a cigarette burn on my lower rib, so I did everything in my power not to even so much as whimper.

Dad shoved me against the door of the apartment, muttering how I made him do this. I bit my lip as his belt made contact with my back.

God I hated the sound his belt made as it whistled through the air.

I think I hated it more than anything.

Then another blow came and another. By the tenth hit, I had to brace myself against the door to stay standing. Finally, after fifteen swats, he stopped.

"Go to bed, Dean." Dad said.

He didn't have to tell me twice. I grabbed my shirt, and jacket off the floor and practically launched myself into mine and Sammy's bedroom. In the dark I grabbed a new shirt from my drawer, pulled it gingerly over my head. I kicked off my jeans and slowly climbed into bed, making sure not to bump my back.

"Dean." Sam whispered from the other side of the room, scaring me half to death, "I'm sorry for what I said. About the reading. I was just angry. I didn't mean to hurt you. You're super smart. School really means nothing. I—"

"It's okay, Sammy." I replied, knowing he'd keep talking if I didn't stop him. My mood lightened considerably though at the care he showed. "I'm fine. Don't worry about it."

"I guess Dad's hunt ended quicker than he thought." Sam continued, "He was in a bad mood when he came home. I'm guessing it didn't go well. I tried to tell Dad you were going out for ginger ale. I really did. But you were gone so long…he got really pissed off."

"He didn't hurt you, did he?" I asked quickly, panic rushing through me.

"Why would he?" Sam's voice was so baffled by my question I actually let out a sigh of relief. The room fell quiet, and then Sam spoke, his voice trembling, "Did he hurt you?"

"Course not." I replied, a little gruffer then I intended.

"Dean…" Sam began. "If he—"

"I'm tired, Sammy." I cut him off again, but this time for a completely different reason. At this point, I was pretty sure Sam was beginning to put together what was going on between Dad and me. At least on some level. I mean the kid wasn't stupid. That and Dad was getting worse. I still couldn't tell Sam what was happening though. Dad threatened me a long time ago, if I told Sam, he'd beat him too. I'd die before I let that happen. Plus, Sam hated our father enough without having the knowledge that he was beating the hell out of me.

"But Dean, I want—"
"I was wrong to leave you for so long." I said, almost on auto pilot. "I'm glad you're safe. Can we just leave it at that?"

Sam fell silent before he spoke. "Yeah, okay. Night Dean. I love you."

"Love you too, Sammy."
Chapter 4

Sam

After Dean crawled into bed last night, I hardly slept. I couldn't stop worrying. He thinks I didn't notice how he practically limped into bed, but I did. I mean, I couldn't see much, just his shadow, but it was easy to see he was hurt.

I was pretty sure our father was the cause. Actually I was dead sure.

When I was younger, and more naïve, I never understood why my older brother was always sporting a split lip or a bruised face. He'd also winced sometimes when we play wrestled. I remember once when I grabbed him by the ribs to pull him down and he actually yelped, and punched me hard in the face. Back then I just assumed I'd tickled him (Dean's ribs were and still are ticklish) or that I was super strong and could hurt him, but as I got older, I knew Dean's wincing wasn't normal.

Actually, now that I think about it, growing up Dean was hurt all the time. I always asked of course what happened and he and Dad offered up a variety of excuses. Dean's normally being that he got in a fight at school (which I'm sure were mostly true—my brother did have a smart mouth), or that he got beat up during a hunt (which I'm sure were mostly not true, seeing as mostly he was just Dad's back up.).

Dad on the other hand said Dean was clumsy. He'd laugh about it, actually like it was some joke. The funny thing was my brother was far from clumsy. I can't actually ever remember seeing him trip. When we played army he could easily jump from one cut down tree stump to another (the ground was made out of quicksand). He could easily climb Mr. Gregor's fence whenever our ball sailed over into his backyard when we lived in Connecticut for that year. I tried once, and managed to cut up my leg, which ended with me going to the hospital and getting a tetanus shot.

But I was young, and stupid, so I bought it all. But now, that I was older, those excuses weren't making sense.

I knew I needed to talk to my brother. And soon. Before something really bad happened.

The next day, I got my chance. Dad was out of the house early. He left a note that he went to help Hank out on a hunt. I made myself a bowl of cereal, and turned the TV on, muting it so I wouldn't wake Dean. I figured my brother had to be up early every other day of his life, slaving away for my father (and admittedly me), so I wanted to give him the chance to sleep in for once.

I finally heard him get up an hour later, cough his lungs out, and jump in the shower. I waited until the shower stopped before I headed into our bedroom. Dean's back was to me. He was wearing only his boxers as he dug in his drawer for I'm guessing a clean tee-shirt. I couldn't help but gasp when I saw his back. It was full of welts and bruises. Dean must have heard me because he jumped about a foot.

"Don't you know how to knock?" Dean snapped, yanking a tee-shirt quickly over his head.

"It's my room too." I said stubbornly, "What happened to you? Your backs all torn up."

"Don't worry about it." Dean tugged at his tee-shirt, his green eyes blazing with what looked like anger, "It's nothing."
"It's obviously something." I countered, "If it was nothing you wouldn't be so defensive about it."

"Don't you have to go to the library or something?" Dean grumbled, subtly letting me know he wasn't quite over the reading comment, despite what he told me the night before.

"Dean." I said softly, sitting down on my twin bed, directly across from him. This only earned me a slight groan from my brother, "Please talk to me. I've noticed you've been hurt a lot lately."

"I'm a hunter." Dean replied gruffly, "It happens. I ran into a Wendigo last night and—"

"You've never seen one of those." I said calmly, "Let alone fought one. Especially not alone."

"Shows how much you know." Dean replied, doing his best to sound tough, but failing miserably.

"Sure, whatever." I shrugged, "But you've been hurt a lot lately. You've always been getting hurt. Ever since I can remember."

"I'm clumsy." Dean said, throwing out Dad's typical excuse which for some reason pissed me off.

"Stop lying." I said snapping slightly, "I know you're not clumsy like Dad says. You're super agile. I'm the clumsy one."

"Get on with it, Sam." Dean was beginning to sound impatient. So, I sucked in my breath and took the plunge.

"I noticed it happens when Dad's been drinking. Dean, he's been hitting you, hasn't he?"

"Don't say that." Dean sat up, his green eyes locking with mine, "Just let it go, Sammy."

"Not saying it doesn't make it any less true." I said softly, a tear falling down my cheek.

"Oh for fucks sake." Dean snapped, turning away from me and laying down on his bed. In his hurry to get away from me, he mistakenly hitting his back off of the bed, yelping in pain.

"Let me help you get cleaned up." I said, going over to him.

"I'll be fine." My brother replied shortly, refusing to face me.

"Really?" I asked. "You'll be fine? How the hell is any of this fine? It's never been less fine. In fact, I thought it was bad before. But this…Damnit, Dean…" I sank down on my brother's bed, burying my head in my hands, bursting into tears. I waited for Dean to make his typical "chick-flick" comment, but instead I felt his hand on my shoulder.

"Sam." Dean's voice was gruff, "Don't cry over me. I'm not worth it."

"Of course you are." I said, jumping up so that I could look Dean in the eyes, "Dean, you're the only reason I'm alive. If it wasn't for you…God, I don't know what would have happened…You're so worth it."

Dean shrugged, biting his bottom lip and watched a moth that was bouncing around back and forth by our nightstand lamp. I hid my sigh. Something told me for as much as I yearned and hoped for a future—which oddly enough was because of the confidence Dean instilled in me—his own self esteem suffered badly.

"Come on. Let me bandage you up." I said, knowing that I was quickly losing my brother to his own dark demons. Dean watched the moth for a second or two longer, then nodded, slowly sliding
off the bed, and walking into the bathroom. I followed behind, wincing with him as he pulled off his tee-shirt.

I slowly and gently began cleaning out my brother's wounds, doing my best not to be sick at the sight of his back. I've seen some awful things over my life, but this...his back all torn up...suspecting our father was the cause...this made my stomach churn more than anything.

"So Dad did this?" I asked, lightly tapping my brother's shoulder.

Dean shrugged, glancing up at me in the mirror. "I got in his way." He said almost automatically.

"You got in his way?" I almost laughed, "You his perfect little soldier? You the perfect obedient son—" Suddenly I stopped talking. Something clicked in my head.

I always assumed that Dean was the good little soldier because he wanted to be like Dad. But maybe, just maybe he was that way because he was afraid of him. Maybe he was so obedient because he was afraid to be any other way.

"Dean...is this the first time this has happened?"

"I told you." Dean shrugged, wincing slightly as I began the process of taping up his back, "I got in his way."

"That's not what I asked." I replied sighing, glancing up at Dean's face in the mirror. His eyes were glued to the floor but I could see the pain and shame that he was doing his best to hide. "How long has he been using you as a punching bag?"

"Here and there?" Dean posed it as a question, as if he wasn't quite sure the answer.

"Are you kidding me?" I breathed out, "So he's hit you before?

"It's not normally this bad." Dean answered.

"I can't believe you're defending him." I snapped.

"Look, normally he's pissed. He needs to shake it off. So he'll hit me a few times, in the stomach, or my back, nothing big. Don't make more out of this than it is."

"Yeah, no big deal." I snapped sarcastically. "It's totally fine dad hits you. No biggie."

"Better me then you." Dean shot back stubbornly.

"Better neither of us." I retorted.

"He's just stressed out, Sam." Dean replied, pulling his shirt back over his head.

"There's people to talk to for that." I replied, putting my hand on Dean's chest, preventing him from scooting past me

"You know Dad's not the type for that." Dean replied looking uncomfortable.

"Well, I'm going to talk to him when he gets home." I answered.

"Don't. You can't." He reached out, grabbing me by my shoulders like he used to when I was a little kid. Not roughly, just like when he had something serious to tell me. Come to think of it, most of those times, it was when he told me we were playing army, and for me to hide in our closet which
was our "bunker". And most of those times Dad was drunk, and most of those times Dean came to find me, with a black eye or swollen lip that wasn't there before.

My mind instantly went back to our childhood. Two occasions in particular stood out.

I couldn't have been more than five. Dad had come home drunk as usual, complaining about the hunt he'd been on. He opened the refrigerator, and began swearing when he saw he was out of beer. Truthfully Dean had dumped it down the sink earlier that day.

We'd been playing legos in the middle of the floor and I clearly remember Dad kicking at the tower I'd just built. I immediately cried, come on, I was five. Dean suddenly turned to me, flashing the smile, I've come to identify as his scared/but not scared one and told me it was time to play army, and to go hide in the bunker until he came back with further instructions. I did as I was told, pulled on my headphones, and waited for my brother so we could continue to play. I must have fallen asleep because the next thing I knew Dean was in front of me, shaking me awake.

"Sammy." Dean's face was in front of mine. Instantly, I felt comforted.

"Where were you?" I asked, rubbing my eyes, frowning when I saw Dean's lip was hurt.

"Dean." I said, reaching up and touching Dean's lip, making him jump, "What happened? You're lips all bleedy?"

"I tripped." My brother shrugged then grinned, "But it's I'm fine. Do you want to play army? I got our orders from headquarters."

"Yeah!" I exclaimed, grabbing my brother in a hug.

"You're such a girl." Dean replied, shoving me off of him lightly. He rolled his eyes, and then offered me his hand. I took it, happy to resume our favorite games.

The other incident, I was about twelve. I was at the library. I'd been there longer than I was supposed to be because I got caught up doing research for a project on Athens, Greece. I came home to find Dad, sitting on the couch, beer in hand of course. Dean was nowhere to be seen. I remember panicking slightly. Dad and I had been fighting more than normal recently and Dean normally had to play the role of mediator.

"Where the hell were you?" Dad asked, looking pissed but weary.

"At the library." I said, shrugging, "I want an A on my project. I would think my father would understand that."

"And I would think my son would understand why his father is concerned with his safety."

"I'm not a baby." I retorted, crossing my arms, "You aren't around enough to notice of course."

"Go to bed, Sam." Dad snapped, "And you're grounded for a week."

"Living with you is like being grounded 247 anyway." I snapped, heading down the hall.

Dean was in our room, laying on his bed, not moving.

"Dean." I said, slamming the door, "Dad's really being unfair. He grounded me for a whole week. I was just doing schoolwork. He acts like getting an A isn't important."

"That sucks, Sam." Dean replied, his back still to me. His voice came out hitched, like it always did
when he had been crying. Dean cried so little, it was easy for me to know when he did so.

"Are you crying?" I asked, going over to his bed, pulling on his shoulder.

"Course not." Dean replied, raising his shoulder slightly to block his face.

"I know you are." I said, "Come on, Dean. You can tell me."

"I just don't feel well, Sam." Dean mumbled.

"What's wrong?" I asked in concern, crawling over my brother, so that we were face to face. It was then I noticed his cheek was swollen and cut. "What happened to you?" I asked.

"I tripped." Dean said, closing his eyes. "I whacked my face off of the table. I wasn't watching where I was going."

"Oh." I said, "It looks like it hurts. Does it?"

"No." Dean opened his eyes, giving me a slight smile, "Not at all. How's your project going?"

I couldn't believe I'd ever been so stupid. The bloody lips, the black eyes, the limping, the wincing. How the long has this been going on?

"Sam." Dean said, snapping me out of my flashbacks, his eyes narrowing, "Sam, just leave it be."

"When I was twelve," I began, completely ignoring him, "I came home from the library later than I was supposed to. Do you remember? I was doing that project for Athens, Greece."

Dean automatically looked away from me, telling me that he did. "Yeah." He said rather impatiently, "What about it?"

"When I came home, Dad and I got into it. I was all pissed off because like always I felt Dad wasn't taking what I care about as important."

"Get to the damn point, Sam." Dean said, his eyes still refusing to meet mine.

"What happened that night?" I watched as Dean's jaw clambered down, as he frowned and let out a loud sigh.

"I don't know what you're talking about Sam."

"He hurt you that night, didn't he?" I pressed, "You were crying when I came home. You never cry. Unless it's about Mom. You're cheek was cut up."

"It's like I told you back then," Dean closed his eyes sighing, "I fell in the woods. I was getting chased by a ghost."

"You said you tripped and hit your face off of the table." I said, knowing that I'd catch Dean in a lie. My brother might be a genius at lying on the spot, but he sucked at remembering his lies.

"Well, whatever." Dean shrugged, grinning slightly, "It was a long time ago. It's not like I wrote in my diary nightly like you did."

"Dean, did he hit you that night?" I asked, refusing to allow him to humor his way out of this.
"I'm done playing twenty questions." Dean cleared his throat, "Besides, does it really matter, now?"

"Of course it does." I sputtered, watching as Dean's eyes narrowed slightly. He let go of me and headed for our room, trying to shut me out, but I threw my weight against the door. It was a struggle for a while. I have to say in admiration, as small as Dean is, he's strong. If it really really came down to it between the two of us, like if we actually came to blows, I'm sure he could take me. But he was wounded, and eventually he gave up, backing away, allowing me to fly into the room, crashing onto the floor.

"Jerk." I said, from the floor.

"Bitch." Dean replied, offering his hand, smirking slightly. I took it, allowing him to help pull me up, but then I gripped onto his shoulder, refusing to let go of him.

"I'm going to confront him, Dean." I replied, overly confidently, even though my heart was beginning to pound. If Dad could beat Dean senseless what the hell would he do to me? But then, I didn't really care. I hoped he'd hit me. I'd punch him back as hard as I could. For me. For Dean. Especially for Dean.

"Just let it be, Sammy." Dean said, his voice dropping to a whisper, a single tear rolling down his cheek, "Please. You're my little brother. I don't want him to hurt you."

"Well, you're my brother too. I promise you, one day he'll pay."

I sighed, looking at the fear in Dean's eyes. The look confirmed my earlier inquiries. He was absolutely terrified of our father. Dean, my big brother, who'd faced his first ghost at twelve, a werewolf at fourteen, and god knows what else, was terrified of the man I thought he wanted to be.
Chapter 5

Dean

So Sam knows.

Or at least he knows bits and pieces.

Either way he knows too much.

Our father will skin me alive if he finds out.

Or worse.

I couldn't really figure out what worse would be off the top of my head, but if I'm concerned there always had to be a worse.

Honestly, all I wanted was my mom.

God, do I miss her. People say it's supposed to get easier with time, or that time heals all wounds, but from where I'm standing that's crap.

She was the most important person in my life. I know I was only four, but I remember everything about her.

Her smile.

How she always smelled of lavender.

How she sang "Hey Jude" to me instead of some other lame lullaby.

I remember how she'd hold me close when I had a nightmare or how good of care of me she took when I was sick.

And, man, was I sick a lot. Maybe that had something to do with our closeness.

I know she quit her job after a while to look after me, which led to a major fight between her and Dad. It was right after Sammy was born. I remember him coming home from the auto shop and being pissed off, yelling about money. I guess she had some sweet job in advertising or something. But anyway, I was having what mom called a "bad couple months". I had one chest cold after another and this cough that just wouldn't go away. So despite Dad's ranting and raving, Mom held her ground, refusing to drop me off at daycare any longer. I wasn't bummed out. I hated that stupid daycare anyway. I was too small to climb on all the playground equipment, which meant I was stuck either playing hopscotch or kicking around a deflating ball. Besides, staying home with Mom, who colored with me, let me help with Sam, and chased me around the backyard, was way more fun.

I also vaguely remember my parents fighting over the lack of time Dad spent with me. It's funny because I never remember looking at it that way. I always thought he spent plenty of time with me. But I was four, so who knows.

Dad moved out for a while after that. I missed him of course, but I had her, so I was okay. She made me feel like I was the most important person in the world. She began helping her friends
come up with designs and stuff for their companies. I felt so important sitting next to her, coloring my own stuff as she worked. She'd push Sam in his stroller, and the three of us would walk around the neighborhood.

Dad would come pick me up and take me out for ice cream or take me to the park to kick around a soccer ball. Sometimes he stayed for dinner and would play with Sam, which made Mom happy.

Eventually, they made up. Mom continued to stay home from work, still continuing her business, but her main focus was taking care of me and Sam. Dad kept spending more time with me, taking me to the auto shop where he worked, which I found totally awesome and cool. I was overly excited anytime Dad would take me to work with him. Sometimes he'd come home with matchbox cars of ones that he was working on, and we'd play for hours, racing around the house.

He also began teaching me how to play baseball. Or t-ball. Whatever it is four year olds play. I sucked at it, which I think embarrassed him, but I tried. I don't know… I never could get into the whole sports thing. I actually always thought it was stupid. I played along for Dad's sake though, and made a point to go to all of Sam's soccer games (and I still do, cuz I'm that awesome of a brother), but to me the whole concept never really made a ton of sense.

But anyway, whenever I'm scared-yeah…Sam knowing about Dad scared the shit out of me-I just like to go to a time or place where I felt the safest and most secure. And like every other time, my thoughts go straight to my mom. When I was little, nothing in the world made me feel as safe and secure as when my mom would hold me close, and rock me to sleep. And nothing since has given me that feeling. Sam does of course to an extent, but it's not the same thing. I've lost count on how many times I wished I could have her hug me one last time. To hear her tell me she loves me. I wished I could see her smile at me over her book as she sat on the porch swing. Hell, I wished I could just see her one last time.

The small amount of people that knew my mom, that we've kept in touch with say that I'm the spitting image of her. I'm not sure what that means, seeing as I'm a dude and she was well, my mother. I keep a picture of her inside my pillow case, and I guess if you looked at it, I did resemble her. I had her eyes, her nose, and her mouth. But like you know, manly ones. I even heard Dad talking to Bobby about it once when he was drunk. Although it ended with him saying something along the lines of "I can't even look at him, Bobby."

Sighing, I looked over at Sam, who was reading a book in his bed. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't trade those four years with my mom for anything, but sometimes, just sometimes, when the hurt got really, I wish I could be like Sam. He was only six months old when that son of a bitch yellow eyed demon killed her. I think sometimes not having the memories, and not knowing is less painful then having them.

He didn't know there was so much to miss about her.

He didn't know how she'd cut off the crusts to my pb&j's, or that she loved dancing in the rain.

He didn't know that she cried when she was both happy and sad.

He just knew he had a mother and that now he didn't.

He didn't know her like I did.

He didn't love her like I did.

He didn't know my mom.
Poor kid never got the chance.

"Dean?" Sam cleared his throat, shaking me out of my thoughts, "You alright? You're looking at me funny?"

"Huh?" I said, blinking a few times, which caused a tear or two to slip out.

"Are you hurting?" Sam asked, closing his book, and sitting up.

"What?" I asked dumbly, "Oh," I shook my head, realizing he must be referring to my back, "No, I'm okay."

"Mom?" Sam asked softly.

"Yeah." I said, feeling no reason to deny it.

"Do you think things would be different if she was here?" Sam asked. "Like I mean with Dad? Like would he be different?"

"I don't know." I sat up, leaning against the wall next to my bed, "I think so. He was different when we were younger. You know…before Mom…before it all happened."

"Was he a good guy back then?"

"He's still a good guy, Sam." I muttered, not believing it, but still feeling the need to defend my father.

"Yeah, he's great." Sam said sarcastically, glaring at me. I looked away from him, picking at a hole in my jeans.

"Mom wouldn't have let him be the way he is." I said, feeling the need to further answer Sam's question. "She was super protective of us. I think she would have killed him if he ever hit us."

"You must miss her a lot." Sam looked at me sympathetically.

"More than anything." I replied.

"I wish I could remember her." Sam said, giving me a sad smile.

"Me too, Sammy." I said softly.
Chapter 6

Sam

Dad called last night and said he’d be away for about four weeks. I think both Dean and I were relieved, and this time it was for the same reason. Before I found out that our father was abusing my big brother, I just wanted him away from me so that he could attempt to live a normal life. Like I said before, the two of us were constantly fighting with one another, so I appreciated the peace and quiet when he was gone.

Dean was always pretty cool as far as big brothers go. All my friends who had older brothers complained about them, how they either ignored them completely or harassed them endlessly. So, I realized early on, as much as Dean got on my nerves, I knew he wasn’t all that bad. He was more protective of me than he needed to be, but the thing I always liked about Dean was when he told me no to something (like the time I wanted to go to this huge party at thirteen where there would be no parents), he always gave me an explanation. I always appreciated his reasoning because they not only made sense, but also made me feel important. But this time, getting word that our father was going to be away for weeks, I was thinking less selfishly. I was glad because it gave Dean the time he needed to heal. That and I knew that my brother would be safe for the time being.

Dean generally seemed more relaxed and less tense after he hung up the phone. We began to act more like brothers and less like father and son. Dean’s leash on me was way more slack than Dad’s, and he allowed me to do things Dad would never let me do. I went to go to the movies with friends (he did insist on walking me there and then walking me home, but I wasn’t going to complain), and even allowed me go out after my soccer game for pizza.

The two of us bonded as brothers too. For the first time, I saw as equals and not as big brother, little brother. We tried beer (well, I had a sip and spit it out), and just got to be like normal kids. We played catch in the back yard and watched movies until the sun came up. We’d crack up over the dumbest things, laughing until our sides hurt. We’d joke between us that Dad would be impressed we were “training” by sparing and wrestling around the apartment. Normally Dean would have the upper hand- I told you he’s little, but mighty-and would pin me, but all I had to do was prod at his ribs a bit-just enough to get him to protect himself-and he’d drop, giving me the chance to pin him. He’d curse, yelling that I was cheating, and that my pin didn’t count. I’d just laugh and sit on his chest, claiming victory, before helping him up. But it was all in fun. He was happy and relaxed, which in turn made me happy and relaxed. The color began to return to his cheeks and he seemed to even eat more. He was more carefree than he’s been in a long time. We both were.

He even opened up to me. Well, I mean let me open up to him. But he lowered his guard, dropping the tough guy act. He let me talk about how much Dad scared me and how much I didn’t want to live the hunter lifestyle. He didn’t comment, but just allowed me to vent. And he didn’t smirk, joke, or roll his eyes once when I brought up the subject of college. I even asked for him to share a story or two about Mom. I was hesitant at first, because I knew the subject was a delicate one.

Normally, when I asked about her, Dean would suddenly go mute. He’d either walk away from me and would curl up into himself, or would just stand there looking as though I’d slapped him, tears rolling down his cheeks. Even after all these years, it was clear that the memory of what happened to her was enough to swallow him whole. Mom was really the only thing that made Dean cry. I knew that my brother was actually a really sensitive person, but he kept a lot in. Just the fact that
he allowed himself to shed the tears when it came to Mom showed me how much he missed her. On rare occasion he’d mention her, but then he’d drop the subject, and act strange the rest of the day. Part of me felt bad even asking him to talk about her, but I also was aching to know something about my mother.

At first, Dean, fell silent. For a split second I thought I’d lost him, but then he smiled. Clearing his throat, he told me how happy she was when she found out she was pregnant with me, and how she and he worked on my nursery together. It made me feel important because I never knew if she wanted me or not. I always figured she loved Dean so much, there was barely any room left for her to love me. When I told him this, Dean just shook his head.

“Mom had the biggest heart of anyone I ever met. She would have loved you just fine, Sammy.”

“Mom sounds a lot like you.” I observed.

“Like me?” Dean gave me a strange look, “Really? Sam, I don’t know if you realize this, but I’m kind of an asshole.”

“You’re not really though.” I shrugged, “You act like one, but you’re not.”

Dean paused for a second before grinning, “Guess you know me too well, Sammy.”

“I’m glad you’re like her.” I said. “At least I kinda get to know her a little bit.”

“Aright, alright. Enough with the day time talk show shit.” Dean reached out and gave me a slight shove before he headed out the door, “Let’s go get some pie, Sam. I’m hungry.”

“Love you Dean.” I said in reply, following my brother.

The next few days went just as smoothly as the last few weeks. Dean and I fell into a comfortable pattern of sleeping in on the weekends—I refused to let him get up and make me breakfast—and hanging out on weeknights. I was given the book *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain at school as an English assignment, and I began reading it out loud at night. I admit, my brother did squirm slightly when I read about Pap beating Huck—if I’d known that was in the book I would have made something up—but despite Dean's eye rolls and protests, I knew he enjoyed it. I also knew one thing for certain. He was no dummy. He wondered constantly about Jim's well-being long after I'd closed the book and we were lying in our beds. He thought Huck was the hero of all heroes. He asked questions that my mind didn’t even comprehend. But, like the last few weeks, it was a nice change of pace. Our lives became comfortable and normal. Dean stopped focusing on wanting to hunt like Dad and seemed content to just relax and chill.

So, you can understand both of our disappointments when we walked home from the movies one evening—we’d snuck in just for the fun of sneaking in-and saw the Impala parked out front of the apartment building.

“Sonofabitch.” Dean swore, stopping short.

“Maybe we can stay out a bit longer.” I said quickly. Fear settled into my stomach. If I felt this way, I couldn’t imagine what my brother was feeling.

“No.” Dean glanced at me warily, “He’ll be pissed if we aren’t home before dark. The sun is already starting to set.”

“Then that’s not go in at all.” I pleaded, “Come on, Dean. Let’s just leave. For good.”
“We can’t.” Dean sighed heavily, “He’ll find us. You know he will.”

“Dean…” I began, but my brother just headed towards the apartment. I reached out to grab him by the arm, but he sensed it coming and blocked me. I had no other choice but to follow my brother. There was no way I was going to let him walk in there alone.

“Hey boys.” Dad said, looking up from the couch. He was watching TV, drinking a beer, but he seemed calm.

“Hey, Dad.” Dean’s posture noticeably stiffened. “How was the hunt?”

“It was excellent.” Dad grinned, shutting off the TV. “Killed off a whole pack of werewolves. I wish you could have been there, son.”

“Yeah,” Dean cleared his throat, almost sounding wishful “Me too.”

At this point I didn’t know who I wanted to scream at more. I hated how Dad could call Dean “son”, and pacify things with a few kind words. And I hated how Dean just melted whenever Dad gave him the least amount of positive acknowledgement.

“Would you guys like to go get burgers at the diner?” Dad asked, “I’m feeling like treating my sons to a great dinner.”

“I’m not hungry.” I said, at the same time as Dean said, “Sure.”

“Come on, Sammy.” Dad said, getting up, pausing to squeeze my shoulder, as he grabbed his wallet on the counter behind us, “I’ll get you a milkshake.”

“I don’t want a milkshake.” I said stubbornly.

“Okay,” Dad said shrugging, “If you don’t want to go, then don’t. I mean, that’s fine. Dean and I will go alone. We can bring you something back. Just salt and lock the door.”

I paused. Dad had me. And he didn’t even know it. There was no way that Dad was going to take Dean alone to the diner. He was unpredictable. There was no telling if or when he’d snap.

“I guess I’ll go after all.” I said reluctantly.

“Great.” Dad smiled, “Let’s head out then.”

He clapped Dean on the shoulder, and walked out the door. Dean met my eyes, giving me a small smile, before following Dad. I swallowed hard, doing my best to keep from screaming at the top of my lungs, and yanking Dean back with me.

Dinner was annoying. Dad talked non-stop about his hunt. Dean hung off of his every word, like he was some rock star. I, on the other hand, shook my head, feeling that Dad was embellishing his skills. He caught me at one point, right when he was saying how he saved Hanks life, by jumping in front of him right as the werewolf they had been fighting was about to bite him, and stabbing him with his silver knife.

“You have something you want to say to me, Sammy?” Dad asked, pausing.

“Yeah.” I said, slamming down my hamburger, “I do.” I jumped as Dean pinched me hard in the side from underneath the table.

“And what’s that?” Dad frowned slightly. Next to me, I could feel Dean’s breathing hitch slightly.
“I ummm…” I stammered, suddenly feeling small. I wanted so badly to tell my father no matter how many monsters he killed, he’d never be a hero. But Dean’s suddenly clamp on my hand reminded me of my promise. “I just…I’m just glad you’re home safe.”

“Oh.” Dad’s face relaxed, “Well, thanks Sammy.”

“Yep.” I said, feeling Dean release his death grip, and relax next to me.

The rest of dinner went by without much interruption. Dad even asked me how school was going. I answered him, mostly because I felt he would think it find it strange if I didn’t.

It was only when the waitress came and asked Dean if he needed a box, did I realize my brother hardly touched any of his meal.
Chapter 7

Thank you so much for all of your wonderful reviews. I truly cherish each and everyone. Thank you for all the wonderful compliments. Let me know how I can improve, make things clearer, easier to follow, or what you would like to see more of. I always appreciate your feedback. <3

Dean

“Did you really have to pinch me that hard?” Sam asked, as we got ready for bed that night. “I’m pretty sure you left a welt.” Sam pulled up his tee-shirt, looking both shocked and disappointed there was no mark.

“Were you going to say something stupid?” I asked, looking pointedly at my brother.

“Yeah.” Sam answered honestly, his cheeks flushing red.

“Well, then you needed to get pinched.” I shrugged sliding under my covers.

“Dean.” Sam said, getting up and sitting on my bed, “What about calling Bobby? He’ll protect you. He loves us like we’re his sons. He treats us better than Dad ever did.”

“Sammy…” I cleared my throat, “Look, I didn’t tell you about Dad so we can have nightly pillow talk about it. I didn’t even really tell you about him. Just let it go. Everything’s fine tonight.”

“But Dean, you’re not—”

“Sam.” I said, “I’m trying really hard not to snap out here. So shut up. Stop with the therapy session and go the hell to sleep.” I rolled over, pulling the covers slightly over my head, breathing a sigh of relief when I felt my brother’s extra weight lift off of my bed.

“I had a good time over the last few weeks.” Sam said finally.

“Be sure to write about it in your diary.” I replied.

I heard Sam chuckle. “Night, Dean.” He said, turning off the light.

Hours later, I was still wide awake. I sighed, glancing at the clock that now read 2:30 am. Whereas the last couple of weeks I was able to fall asleep with ease, tonight I was completely restless. I rolled over, looking at Sam, who was sound asleep, lying flat on his back, snoring loudly. I shook my head, not understanding how he was able to sleep that way. Whereas I rotate from sleeping on my side, or my stomach, Sam was purely someone who was only comfortable lying flat out on his back. I often teased him that he looked like a stiff. And, being an obnoxious older brother, I’ve occasionally even laid things, like a toy rubber ducky, or fruit, on his chest, just to see how still he stayed throughout the night. And to my surprise, and Sam’s shock (it’s not like I
told him I was pranking him—what’s the fun in that?), they were still sitting on his chest when he woke up in the morning.

But anyway, my nerves were completely all over the place. I felt all jittery, as though I’d downed four cups of coffee. Finally, after laying there for another thirty minutes or so, I finally got up, heading into the kitchen. I needed something to calm my nerves. I immediately thought about how good I felt the night Sammy and I drank those beers. Whereas Sam had spit his out, I’d downed three, as well as his, with ease. I remember the wave of peacefulness that washed over me, and the feeling of complete calm I felt. Longing for the feeling, I opened up the fridge I saw it was fully stalked with beer. I went to grab one when my smarts kicked in and I realized that they were two six packs, with only one beer missing. As far as I knew, Dad hadn’t left for the bar since we got back from the diner. This meant he would be sober enough to remember how much he drank. He’d be sure to notice if another beer or two were missing. Sighing, I slammed the door shut. That’s when my eyes fell upon the whisky sitting on top of the fridge. I immediately grabbed it, smiling when I saw that it was more than three fourths the ways full. I figured reasonably that taking a swig or two wouldn’t be noticeable. So, that’s what I did. I took two big, long swigs, shuddering slightly at the taste, and at the burn of the alcohol as it hit my throat.

Now, I’m sure two swigs of whisky wouldn’t be enough to put someone like Dad on their ass, but I’m admittedly a lightweight. Those beers with Sam were the first time I’d ever tasted alcohol before. Not that I hadn’t had the chance. I’d always had the access to it, with my dad and his buddies drinking like they did. Not to mention the very very small amount of school parties I attended. But, I always swore to myself that I wouldn’t drink.

Not ever.

Mainly because I saw first-hand what drinking could do to a person.

How it could make them crave it as much as water and air.

How it could change them from hero to a villain.

And from a father to a monster.

I broke that promise to myself that afternoon with Sammy.

I don’t really know why.

The whole thing had even been my idea. I guess I was curious what the big deal was. I guess I felt safe doing it with my little brother sitting next to me.

Sounds a bit ridiculous now.

But, even though that time with Sam had been meant just as fun, the feeling and rush that it provided had stuck with me.

So, anyway, I took those two swigs and being the lightweight that I am, I immediately felt the effects. I put the whisky bottle back and then half walked, half stumbled back to bed.

“Dean!” Sam was shaking me, “Dean. Get up.”

“What?” I mumbled sleepily, turning over, pulling the cover over my head.

“You’re supposed to be up training with Dad.” Sam said, “He’s already knocked once. I told him
you were in the bathroom.”

“Oh.” I said, feeling overly tired as I slid out of bed, rubbing my eyes. “I guess I forgot to set my
alarm.”

“I turned it off.” Sam replied, “You were thrashing all around last night. I figured I’d give you an
extra ten minutes or so.”

“I thought you slept through it.” I replied, pulling on a pair of sweatpants.

“I did, I guess. But I woke up here and there. I heard you leave the room.”

“I was hungry.” I said, a little too quickly. Sam of course picked up on my hurried response,
because he gave me a funny look. We were however interrupted by Dad who opened the door,
looking impatient.

“What the hell are you doing?” He asked, grumbling at me, “Let’s go. Sam, why the hell are you
up already? Go back to bed.”

“I’m coming.” I said, yanking on a pair of socks, giving Sam a look before shutting the door
behind me.

“I take it you’ve been slacking off since I’ve been gone.” Dad asked, turning back to face me, as I
shoved my feet into my tennis shoes.

“No.” I shook my head, “I’ve been training. Running every morning. I’ve—”

“Don’t.” Dad reeled back his hand and backhanded me, “Lie to me.” I could feel the blood begin
to spring from my nose, but I knew better than to wipe it without his permission. He then grabbed
onto my shoulder, squeezing hard. I jumped about a foot, hopping up and down, both because of
pain and because I was trying to shake him off a little. “You think I can’t tell your shoulders are
smaller than ever. You’re pathetic. Your little brother’s shoulders are broader than yours. I’ve
told you time and time again, you’re a freakin runt Dean. You’re weak. You always have been.
You always will be. You need to work twice as hard as everyone else to even be in the same
running as they are. So, I’m going to ask you again. Have you been training when I was gone?”
He held his hand back threateningly.

“No.” I said, hanging my head, waiting for the second blow to come. “I haven’t.”

“You little—” Dad began, but he was stopped by the sound of a door opening and Sam poking his
head out. Dad immediately moved so that he was blocking me from my brother’s view.

“Can I come train today?” Sam asked, stepping into the hallway, fully dressed.

“You want to train?” Dad asked, releasing his grip on me. He turned to face Sam, but still hiding
me.

“Yeah.” Sam said, shrugging slightly.

“Why?” Dad asked, sounding-and I’m sure looking-confused. “I know that we are agreed to train
five days out of every month, but normally you choose the night before.”

“I like this girl at school.” Sam said, shyly. “I just wanted to build some muscle.”

“Oh.” Dad sounded stunned. Whenever Sam did train, he complained the entire time. “Well,
yeah, sure. Just grab an extra sweatshirt. It’s cold out.”

“Okay.” Sam turned and headed back to our room.

“Wipe that blood off your face.” Dad snapped turned back to me. “And keep your damn mouth shut.” I nodded, quickly wiping my nose with my sleeve, just in time for Sam to reappear.

Dad turned and walked out the door without another word. Sam gave me a small sad smile. By the look on his face, I could tell he must have been standing in our bedroom with his ear pressed against the wall.

Which meant he heard everything.

He heard what a loser I am.

“You don’t have to do this, Sammy.” I said once we got to the spot in the woods where we trained and began our stretches. Dad was on the phone talking to someone. Part of me hoped it was a hunt.

“Sure I did.” Sam said, giving me a huge grin, “You’d do the same for me.”

“Yeah, but…” I began, but clamped my mouth shut when Dad began motioning for us to begin running.

“Just so thank you, you’re the best little brother ever, and try to keep up.” Sam said, winking at me, sprinting ahead.

“Bitch.” I replied under my breath

“Jerk.” Sam called over his shoulder.

I caught up with him and we jogged around the track together. Whoever was on the phone must have been awfully important because Dad put himself into the impala and wasn’t paying us any attention. Normally training consists of him critiquing our every move.

“So is there a girl?” I teased slightly, pausing for a second when I was out of Dad’s line of vision and used my inhaler.

“No.” Sam grinned, stopping too. “Pretty convincing lie, wasn’t it?”

“You’re getting scary, kid.” I said, coughing slightly as the medicine hit my lungs.

“You are an excellent teacher.” Sam gestured towards my inhaler, “You okay?”

“Yeah.” I shoved it back into my sweatpants pocket, “You know how it goes; damn cold air, running, and freakin asthma. Don’t exactly go together.”

“Maybe we should stop.” Sam replied, “I mean, Dad’s not even paying attention to us. I’ll argue for you. I mean, it’s a medical risk, right? He’s the one who hates shelling out money for hospital visits, right?”

I have to admit, I was beginning to feel different about this whole Sam knowing the truth about Dad thing. Whereas before, I wanted Sam as far away from this situation as possible, now there was small part of me that was relieved he knew.
And it made me feel guilty as fuck.

How much of a coward was I to feel safe to have my little brother by my side?

I was on the verge of manhood, but I was no man.

There was no way I was anywhere close.

I was the one who was supposed to take care of him. Not the other way around.

“I’m fine.” I said again, beginning to jog ahead, motioning for Sam to do the same.
Sam

A few weeks after I volunteered to train, Dad decided he was going to put me on as rigorous of a training schedule as Dean. I guess I should consider myself lucky because Dean started training to this extent around twelve. I remember because I used to watch him get ready and cry that I didn’t want him to leave. Dean always sat on my bed, and told me everything would be okay and to go back to sleep. He’d cover me back up and tell me he’d be back by the time I woke up. I never told him, but I never went back to sleep. I would just lay there, waiting for him to return. I remember him coming back, day after day exhausted, and covered in mud. I’d always fly out of bed, hugging him, telling him I missed him. He’d laugh, ruffle my hair, and then jump in the shower. We followed this routine until I hit about twelve when it was kind of uncool for me to fly out of bed and hug him. Then it changed to me getting up, giving him a slight pat on the back. His laugh changed too over the years to a tired smile, before he’d head for the shower.

For no real explanation Dad never pushed me to train like he did Dean. Maybe he didn’t think I was as talented as my brother. Or maybe he knew that I wasn’t as obedient as Dean was. That I wasn’t willing or able to break quite so easily. Maybe he just didn’t want to fight against my stubbornness. I’m not really sure. He still expected me to of course, but until now, he’d left it up to me to pick and choose my training schedule. The standard agreement was as long as I did five days out of every month, he pretty much left me alone.

I have to admit, I was pretty pissed Dad decided out of nowhere my training was going from practically nothing to full blown job status. This change meant, getting up at dawn, and doing laps, five days a week, no matter what. Even though I would be with my brother, and able to watch over him, and protect him, spending time with my dad was the last thing on earth I wanted to do.

“This sucks.” I grumbled to Dean as we both got dressed. I winced as I watched my brother yank a tee-shirt over a well formed bruise on his side, which vaguely resembled a hand print.

“If you complain it’ll just be worse.” Dean said, glancing at me.

“We shouldn’t have to do this at all.” I said. “And yes, I saw your side. When did that happen?”

“Sometime yesterday.” Dean shrugged.

“Are you really going to make me ask you how?” I grabbed a fresh pair of sweatpants, pulling them on angrily.

“Slow dancing.” Dean replied without batting an eye, “Dad gets all handsy once they start playing our song.”

“You’re ridiculous.” I said, following Dean out into the living room. I sat down next to Dean as we both laced up our boots in silence.

“Can’t we protest this five days a week thing now that there are two of us.” I whined finally, making one final complaint.

Dean gave me a knowing look before he headed out the door, getting into the passenger’s seat, next to Dad, who was already waiting for us. I climbed into the backseat, slamming the door behind me, unable to hide my frown.
“What’s wrong, Sam?” Dad asked, glaring at me in the review mirror.

“He’s just tired, Dad.” Dean said quickly.

“You’ll adjust.” Dad said looking back at me. He reached out and ruffled my brother’s hair. “Dean here did.” I literally had to stop myself from screaming at my father. How dare he touch Dean in such a loving “wait to go champ” kind of way, when he used that same hand to beat him.

“So we’re going to do things a little different starting today.” Dad said, “We’re going to start sparing. First we’ll start with just hand on hand combat, and then we’ll start training with weapons.”

“Who are we going to spar with?” Dean asked, looking slightly confused. I however knew exactly what Dad meant. I couldn’t believe what he was suggesting.

“Thank god, I pulled you out of school.” Dad said, laughing at Dean, who immediately dropped his eyes and looked at the ground, “Thank god you have your looks and talent as a hunter.” He turned to me, clearly knowing that I understood what he’d been insinuating, “Sam, do you want to explain to your big brother here what I’m talking about?”

“He wants us to fight each other.” I said shortly, glaring at Dad who just laughed some more.

“You can’t be serious.” Dean looked up at Dad and then me, his green eyes widening, “Dad, I’m not going to fight Sammy. No way.”

“You can’t tell me you never wanted to kick his ass.” Dad said, leaning out and slapping Dean hard on the back. “Doesn’t it tick you off he’s almost bigger than you are? Come on, you don’t want to get a few punches in there?”

“Sure.” Dean shrugged, keeping his eyes on me, “But not like fight him, fight him. Not like you’re talking.”

“Sam,” Dad said, turning to me, “Haven’t you ever wanted to lay out your big bro. You know, for bossing you around? Making you do things you don’t want to do? For just being his normal over-protective controlling self?”

“Not really.” I said. The few times we did get into it, it ended as quickly as it started. Mainly because Dean couldn’t stay mad at me for long, and the only person I could hold a grudge with was Dad.

“I didn’t know I was raising such a bunch of sissies.” Dad said, reaching out and shoving Dean towards me. “So here’s the deal, you’re going to fight. You’re going to figure out one another’s weaknesses. Then, you’re going to work on overcoming it. You’ll thank me one day when you’re fighting off a demon or some other sonofabitch that’s looking to destroy you.”

“What if we say no?” I asked, folding my arms across my chest. “It’s not like you can make us fight.”

“Then you’ll have to go up against me.” Dad grinned, “And I don’t think either of you want that.”

“I’m not fighting either of you.” I said stubbornly. “But don’t kid yourself. I won’t fight for two entirely two different reasons. Dean I actually don’t want to fight. You I just don’t care to.”

“Then, good old Dean, here.” Dad said, clamping his hands down on Dean’s shoulders “Will have
“to pull double duty.”

“No way.” I said as the same time Dean replied, “That’s fine.”

“Obviously you two need a moment or two to decide.” Dad grinned, clearly enjoying whatever mind game he was bestowing on us, “I’m going to go to the car for a few minutes. When I get back, I want an answer.”

“Dean.” I said the second Dad was out of ear shot, “I’m not letting you do this. He’ll flatten you. This is going to be an excuse just to hurt you.”

“Well, I’m not letting you fight Dad.” Dean said, “And I really don’t want to take an actual swing at you.”

“I think though fighting each other is the best option.” I said, “Logically speaking, right?”

“What the hell are you talking about Sammy?” Dean said, looking at me, his eyes narrowing, his mouth dropping open in complete shock.

“Shut up, and listen.” I snapped, knowing that I had to explain this right the first time to sell my brother on the idea, “If we fight each other, at least we’d have some control, right? We have an advantage over him he doesn’t realize. We already know one another’s weaknesses. You know my right knee gives out quickly, and I know your ribs are…well…sensitive. So we stay away from those areas-I’m assuming neither one of us wants Dad to know about either-so we fake it.”

“Alright…” Dean said slowly, “But I really don’t want to hurt you, Sam.”

“Well, I don’t want to hurt you either, but as messed up as it is, we really have no other choice. He said it. It’s either us against each other, or us against him. I know you won’t let him fight me, and I’m not letting him hurt you more than he already does. So we’ll give one another a bloody lip or a bruise or two. We just have to agree it’s not personal.”

“Alright.” Dean said again, shoving his hands in the pocket of his hoodie, looking uncomfortable, “I guess there really is no other choice.”

“Hey.” I said, offering him a small smile, “The weapons training probably won’t be so bad. If anyone’s going to be on the other side of a blade when I’m learning, I’d want it to be you.”

“He’s coming back.” Dean said, straightening his posture.

“What you girls decide?” Dad said, clearly getting a sick pleasure out of his little game.

“We’ll fight each other.” Dean said while I nodded.

“Good choice.” Dad grinned, “Alright, so what do you already know about one another? Any weak spots?”

“Not really?” We said together, both of us shrugging.

“Dean.” Dad sounded exasperated, “You’re the big bro here. You’re telling me you never tortured Sam when I was gone?”

“Ummm…” Dean shrugged, “Sam doesn’t like birds.”

“Birds?” Dad frowned at me, “Really?”
“Yeah.” I said, swallowing, “Something about the flying…I don’t know. It just freaks me out.”

Truth was of course, I had no problem with birds. It was clowns I hated. But Dean knew better than to divulge that, even if it wasn’t exactly a physical weakness.

“You’re one strange kid.” Dad shook his head, “I mean, physically Dean.”

“He’s got a bad shoulder.” Dean said almost bashfully, totally staying in his typical big brother character. “He fell on it when he was playing soccer.”

“Good.” Dad grinned, slapping Dean hard on the back. Dean glanced at me, not daring to smile. My shoulder of course was fine.

“And Sam.” Dad said, turning to face me like I knew he would, “What about your big brother? I’m sure there’s pent up aggression in there you’ve been waiting to unleash.”

“Dean’s knee.” I said, using my own injury. “He hurt it last summer. I always wanted to kick him there. For always being so annoying.”

“Ha!” Dad reached out and squeezed my shoulder. I immediately winced, pretending it was my “bad” one. “Have at it boys.”

So Dean and I squared off and fought one another. We watched each other’s eyes trying to give signals where we were going to punch and slam so we could adequately brace ourselves. I ended up giving Dean what would turn out to be a black eye, and he split my lip open. When that happened, his eyes almost gave us away. As soon as the blood dripped down my face, they widened, wielding with emotion and guilt. I briefly shook my head, trying to snap him out of it. Knowing he would crack if we went at it much longer, I kicked his legs out from under him, pinning him to the ground. Dean seemed to understand what I was doing, and just accepted defeat, lying on the ground, not even struggling to get up. I put my foot on his chest in victory, giving Dad the fakest satisfied grin I could muster.

“Well, done, Sammy.” Dad said, patting me on the back, “Pathetic as always, Dean. That’s all for today boys.” He headed towards the car. I quickly stuck my hand out, pulling Dean to his feet. He gave me a quick grin, and a slight wink, before walking off towards the car himself. Then he paused, turned, and pointed to his lips mouthing that he was sorry.

That’s when my stomach dropped. I realized Dean had no real physical weakness. It wasn’t his ribs, his size, or even his asthma. It wasn’t how much he ate or didn’t eat. It wasn’t how much Dad beat him.

Dean’s real weakness was me.
Dean

“That was a nice touch with the shoulder.” I said, once Sammy and I were alone in our room. Dad had dropped us off to go out to breakfast then meet up to do research and hunt with Hank. “Nice thinking, Sammy.”

“I thought so.” Sam grinned at me, “Thanks by the way for not spilling the beans about the clown thing. I’m sure he’d have a field day with that.”

“Just remember to act all freaked out when he brings you home a bird.” I replied, throwing my dirty tee-shirt at him, laughing as I heard Sam yell in disgust. I headed into the bathroom where I stripped out of the rest of my clothes before jumping in the shower.

I had to grin as I saw the bruises on my leg. Sam sure in hell wasn’t the wimp I always teased him about being. If I had had a bad knee, I’m sure I’d be almost crippled by now. I had to admit, he got me good there a few times.

As I shampooed my hair, I got to thinking how smart Sammy was. If I would have had my way, I would have fought my dad twice, once for myself, and then again for Sam, but because of his quick thinking I was no worse for the wear.

He was especially smart to have us come up with two things that didn’t bother either of us at all. Although I had my doubts that Dad would actually use anything against Sam, like he would me, why risk it? Whereas my ribs being sensitive were more an annoyance and embarrassment than anything, his knee was a legit physical problem.

I remember when Sam hurt his knee. It was last summer during one of those lame soccer camps he made me drag him to. I don’t think I’d ever see the kid cry so much. I had to practically carry him to and from the bathroom for like two weeks, and with a brother, who at that time was almost my size, it was no easy feat. Dad, who was away at the time, had our fake ID’s with him…he kept them I guess as a precaution so we wouldn’t get any ideas and run out on him. Our real health insurance was super expensive and it was always made very clear that was to be used for my asthma and only death threatening injuries only. So, I had no other option but to drag Sam to a free clinic and have them check out his knee. They splinted it, or whatever it is they do for knees, but whatever they did they didn’t do it correctly, so his knee was never the same. He got around okay. I mean, you’d never know it by looking at him; he could walk and run normally. He still played soccer of course. He loved that sport. But, he didn’t have the power behind him he used to have. That’s what he says at least.

I finished my shower, and got dressed, in a tee-shirt and boxers, and wandered into the kitchen to find Sam stuffing his face in front of the fridge.

“Showers free.” I said, turning on the coffee pot.

“So, I’ve been thinking.” Sam said, turning to face me, “Dad’s getting crazier in his techniques. I think he’s trying to come between us.”

“Come between us?” I had to laugh at that, “That’s not gonna happen, Sam.”

“I don’t think so either.” Sam said, sitting down, chomping away at the piece of toast that was in
his hand, making my stomach growl slightly, “But we have to be prepared. Look at today. He’s making us fight each other. He wanted us to use information against the other. That doesn’t sound a bit deranged to you?”

“Course it does.” I said, shrugging, “But we figured it out. Or you did. I don’t know what more we can do, Sammy but to take it as it comes. That and not let him play us against each other.”

“I think we should call Bobby.” Sam suggested, “I think we should tell him what’s been going on.”

“Sam.” I groaned, “Don’t start with that again. We aren’t calling Bobby.”

“Bobby will side with us.” Sam said, “Especially since you’re mainly the one getting hurt.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” I asked, feeling slightly insulted by his comment

“What?” Sam asked, confused.

“The whole ‘especially since you’re the one getting hurt’, Dean”. I repeated, crossing my arms, and glaring at my baby brother.

Did he seriously think I was that weak?

Was Sam implying that if he was the one Dad was pounding on he would handle it differently?

Handle it better?

Be stronger than I was?

“I didn’t mean it like that.” Sam said, looking at me somewhat exasperatedly, “I didn’t mean like, ‘aw dean, I’m so much tougher than you’. I just meant since it’s you Bobby would flip out. I’m telling you if he knew what was happening here, he’d definitely have something to say about it.”

“Since it’s me?” I let out a short laugh, “You’re the baby. Bobby would be more pissed if it were you.”

“Oh, come on Dean.” Sam grinned, “You can’t tell me you don’t know that you’re Bobby’s favorite?”

“I doubt that.” I said, shrugging, “He likes us both the same.”

“He likes us both, sure.” Sam nodded, getting up and pouring each of us a coffee, pausing to grab the cream from the fridge, “But you’re the one he really looks out for.”

“What the hell are you talking about?” I asked, frowning at my brother.

“How about all the times he took care of you when we were little and you were sick?”

See, when we were younger most of the time we spent at Bobby’s was when I was sick. I’d begin coughing and wheezing, and sometimes running a fever. Dad would start out taking care of me okay. Then, he’d get annoyed with my inability to get better fast enough and would get the itch to hunt. The next thing we knew, he’d be driving the impala at high speeds away from Bobby’s, leaving us in the driveway. Sam used to cry, but he stopped doing this after he hit about the age of five.

Despite the lack of notice, Bobby always made us feel welcome. He’d put on cartoons, bundle me
up in a blanket on the couch, and give Sam chocolate milk. He’d make me this special really spicy tea and rub this super smelly stuff over my chest. I’d bitch and complain of course, but it always worked. By the time Dad came back to get us I’d be healthy again and would be playing with Sam in Bobby’s car lot like I was never sick in the first place.

“He was just being a good guy.” I shrugged.

“It’s more than that Dean.” Sam said, his eyes locking with mine, “It was two years ago. Dad had dropped us off at Uncle Bobby’s. You ended up in the hospital with pneumonia. Bobby almost killed the doctor when he told us you were just born with awful lungs. I’ve never seen Bobby so pissed. He grabbed the poor guy, slammed him into the wall, and yelled, ‘You went to medical school and got some fancy degree just to tell us that my nephew has bad lungs? Your job is to figure out a way to fix them. Go do your freakin job before I smash your skull into the wall’. I swear, it didn’t even sound like Bobby.” Sam imitated Bobby’s voice so well, I started cracking up.

“He was just hoping for a cure so he could get let off the hook for having to take care of me and my shitty lungs.” I said rolling my eyes.

“Seriously though, Dean,” Sam said, his voice growing serious, “He didn’t leave your bedside other than to shower, eat, and go to the bathroom. And to call Dad and yell at him that he better come to the hospital or he’ll break his jaw next time he saw him. You were really sick. I’d never been so scared.”

Truth was Sam was right; I had been really sick. What started out as a small chest cold, turned into a life threatening battle with pneumonia in under a week. I’d kept insisting that I was fine, but Sam knew better. He’d been adamant that entire week that we go to Bobby’s, claiming until he was blue in the face, and until Dad couldn’t take his constant whining anymore, that he had a really bad feeling. I guess he was right. Two nights after Dad dropped us off at Bobby’s; they found me passed out cold in the bathtub (gross, I know) and rushed me to the hospital. I had a fever of like 103 and my lungs were rattling like a car with something stuff under the hood.

“I don’t remember that.” I said, frowning slightly.

“You were really out of it.” Sam shrugged, “They had you on all these machines, ones to help you breathe and stuff. And you were all drugged up on all these pain medication and antibiotics and steroids.”

“I’d naturally have to be asleep to be high.” I said somewhat wistfully.

“Dean…” Sam shook his head, “Focus.”

“Bobby would have done the same for you.” I said, shrugging slightly.

“Maybe.” Sam shrugged, “But he wouldn’t have said to me what he said to you. It was night three of you being really sick. I went down to the cafeteria to get Bobby and me food. You were asleep for like the fifteenth hour straight. I came back up to your room and Bobby was sitting in a chair, holding your hand. The man was sobbing Dean. I heard him clearly talking to you, telling you how he loved you more than anything. That you were the son he never had, and that if he had a son he would want him to be just like you. That you had to pull through because he couldn’t say goodbye yet. That I needed you. That Dad needed you. Then he said that you’ve always been his favorite.”

“Sam…” I began, feeling a surge of emotions. I felt honored that Bobby loved me so much. No
one ever loved me like that since Mom died. It was nice knowing that someone cared. It was actually kinda shocking. I really didn’t see what about me that was so worth loving.

But then, I felt bad.

I felt bad that Sam overheard everything Bobby had said.

And I didn’t understand.

Why Bobby would love me so much.

Everyone always liked Sam more than me.

Teachers.

The damn lady in the deli.

Dad.

Me.

My little brother deserves so much more than I do.

“Dean,” Sam laughed, reaching out and punching my knee lightly, “I’m not hurt. Just take the compliment and be happy about it. Bobby loves us both, but you’re special to him. I think it’s cool. You’re the one he looks out for the most. Even when we were little he was always more careful with you. I know he loves me, but come on; even you have to admit sometimes things are awkward with us. We just aren’t naturally comfortable like you guys are. And that’s okay.”

I shrugged. I guess Sam had a point. I’ve always known Bobby and I had a connection deeper than the one he and Sam shared. When we were really little and Dad was hunting close to Bobby’s place—and by close I mean anywhere within a two hour long drive—Dad would drop us off to spend a few days to a week with him. I loved going because Bobby always helped me with Sam, who was about one or two at the time. I trusted him with Sam which says a lot. I didn’t trust anyone with my little brother. Most people I wouldn’t let near Sammy. On the rare times Dad hired a babysitter, I’d hover over them, watching their every move, not really sure what I was supposed to be looking for, but knowing I was supposed to be looking for something. But with Bobby, I never worried. He was cool.

When he was little, Sam didn’t seem to notice a major change, other than he lived with me and Bobby for a week, instead of me and Dad. He would spend most of his time at Bobby’s pretty much doing what he did at home, reading and watching tv. If I wasn’t sick, we’d go exploring.

But Sam was always Sam no matter where we were.

Nerdy, goofy, and overly affectionate.

As he got older however, Sam seemed to crave the time we spent at Bobby’s. He’d actually ask Dad if we could stop by for a visit whenever we were in the area. He’d gotten (and stayed) into this whole, stability phase, which was right when we started moving around a whole ton. I’m guessing Bobby’s home was the closest thing to a home he really knew. Even the rare times when we lived in an apartment, it was only for a couple of years. Bobby’s home was always the same. I guess I felt the same way too to a certain extent. But by this point in my life, I knew no matter what I said to Dad it was going to be wrong. Either way I was going to get hit, so I decided to just keep my mouth shut and let Sam nag Dad, deciding only to step in if they began to fight.
But Sam was right. His and Bobby’s relationship was always kind of weird. When Sam was little he’d cling to me for the first day or two, and then would eventually allow Bobby to read to him. When he got older and finished whatever book he’d brought with him, he’d venture into Bobby’s library, pick out a book, and begin to read it. He’d then sit outside where Bobby and I were and quietly ask Bobby a question here and there, before he’d return to his reading.

This time for me was basically spent learning how to fix cars. Bobby would show me the different parts of the engine slowly and calmly. He’d fix something and then take it apart and allowed me to fix it right after him. If I screwed up he never yelled at me like Dad did. He just would gently take my hand in his and we’d do it together. I totally expected a good belt across the face the first few times I messed up, but after a while I relaxed. I realized pretty quickly the more at ease I was, the easier I learned.

As Sam got older, their relationship seemed to become a bit strained. Not that they fought like Sam and Dad. It wasn’t anything like that. They got along fine. Sometimes it just seemed like Sam and Bobby made conversation just because it was awkward for them not to. I’d always listen to their incessant babble, chuckling to myself until one of them would make an excuse to leave the room. Bobby and I on the other hand could hang out for hours not talking, and it was never weird or uncomfortable. Of course, it wasn’t always like that between them. There were times, more often than not, they had great conversation. Bobby, like Sam, was a book guy. They appreciated one another in a way Dad and I never could. Often times at dinner, Sam and Bobby would discuss the meanings of certain conjuring spells and how they could come in handy. I’d pay attention, and try to store it in my head for later use.

“I’m your favorite person Dean.” Sam grinned at me, his dimples showing, “That’s enough for me. I don’t really need to be anyone else’s. Now, I’m gonna jump in the shower. When I’m done want to go to lunch? Dad left us sixty dollars.”

“We don’t know how long he’s going to be gone.” I said almost robotically. “It would be so much easier if he’d just let me get a job.” Dad didn’t let me work. He allowed me to hustle pool with him, but only when he was home. I wasn’t allowed to work. I had a job once, when I was sixteen, but Dad made me give him all my money. Once he caught me storing home under my mattress I got a pretty bad beating then was banded from having any job other than hunting with him or taking care of Sam. I’m guessing he figured if I got enough money saved up, I’d take Sam and run. I can’t say he was wrong.

“Who cares?” Sam said, “We’ve gotten by before, we’ll get by again.”

“Fine.” I said, after reasoning sixty dollars normally meant four days to a week, “As long as we each only spend under ten dollars.”

“I’ll spend under ten if you spend ten.” Sam said.

“You drive a tough bargain kid.” I said laughing.

“I learned from the best.” Sam replied, replicating my smirk before disappearing into the hallway.
Chapter Notes

So I'm playing with the idea of every few chapters doing a full section of memories from both Dean and Sam that are important parts of building who they are and who they will become. Let me know if you guys like this idea....I'm not totally sold on doing this idea or not. Please let me know what you think!

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Also thank you to all the kuddos and bookmarks! They mean so much.

Memories

Sam

One of my favorite memories childhood memoires comes from a bad memory from Dad. I was about nine years old at the time. It was right after Dad sat me down and told me what he really did for a living. Of course, I’d known for some time-Dean told me when I was around seven-but he told me in a fairy-tale, “Dad’s a hero knight sort of way. Dad’s version was dark and completely frightening. Especially when he announced that Dean was already training to be a hunter, and that one day I would train too. As a result, I became completely and utterly terrified of the dark. Needless to say at this point in my life I was having nightmares pretty much every night-I’d wake up screaming and crying-only to have Dean shaking me until I snapped out of it.

One of my worst nightmares was that I was scared beyond belief that there was a monster in my closet. I woke up screaming bloody murder one night, to the point that Dean, turning on the lamp, and hugging me close couldn’t calm me down. I screamed loud enough and long enough that Dad heard me, thought something was actually wrong, came barreling into our room.

“Sammy!” He said in concern, and what I guess fear, “What is it? Why are you screaming?”

“There’s a monster in our closet.” I wailed, burying my head into Dean’s pjs. “It has sharp teeth. It’s going to eat Dean and me.”

“There’s no monster, Sammy.” Dean said steadily, brushing back my bangs. “And if there was something in our closet, I wouldn’t let it get to you. I checked before we went to bed, remember?”

“Yes,” I said, beginning to feel calm, leaning back against Dean’s chest.

“Don’t lie to him.” Dad snapped, “Hang on, Sammy. I’ll be right back. Dean, get in your own bed. You’re getting too old to be climbing into bed with your brother every time something goes bump in the night.” Dad left and Dean did as he was told. I wanted to cry as my brother slid into his own bed, almost hiding himself under the covers.

Dad returned with a .45. “Here son, sleep with this under your bed. You’ll feel safer. There are monsters out there. You know I hunt them. We’ve had this talk when you were eight, right?”
“Dad!” Dean shot up from under his covers, “You can’t be serious! Sammy’s only nine! He can’t sleep with a gun.”

“I didn’t ask you!” Dad snapped, “Besides, you held a gun at nine. And you were way smaller than Sammy is now. I’m his father. So he’ll do as I say. No more of this baby nightmare crap. I’ll show you how to use that tomorrow Sam. You’ve got big hands. You’ll be fine. Unlike your brother over there. His hands could barely hold the gun up. Good night boys.” And with that, Dad turned to leave, stopping first to unscrew the light bulb from the ceiling fan of course as well as our lamp. He then slammed the door shut, putting in front of it what sounded like a chair.

“He took the lights, Dean.” I whimpered. “He took what makes the monster go away.”

“It’s okay, Sammy.” Dean said calmly, “It’ll be okay.”

It was then I felt my brother take the gun from my hands and slid next to me in bed.

“Dean, Dad said—”

“I don’t care.” Dean said softly, “I’ll stay with you until you fall asleep. I’ll be okay, Sam. I promise I’ll keep you safe.”

I came home from school the next day to find Dean pounding away with a hammer and these weird hook-like nail things in our closet.

“What are you doing?” I asked, dropping my backpack and going up to him.

“Just wait.” Dean said, “It’s a surprise. You’ll see tonight. Go do your homework Sam. Then watch tv. Be my look out though. Dad shouldn’t be home tonight, but let me know if you hear him pull up. He won’t like my idea. So it’ll have to be our secret.”

“Okay.” I said happily. I couldn’t wait to see Dean’s surprise.

Dean came out of our room eventually, I watched as he carefully put away Dad’s hammer and whatever else tools he borrowed. Then he made us both a pb and j, before sitting down on the couch.

“Homework?” He asked.

“It’s done.” I said. I glanced at Dean’s unopen book bag sitting by the dining room table.

“Yours?”

“Didn’t have any.” Dean shrugged.

“You never have any.” I replied, “You’re lucky.”

“I thought you liked school, Sammy.” Dean said, giving me a funny look.

“I do like school.” I grinned, “But I hate homework.”

“The school part is the more important part.” Dean shrugged, turning back to the tv.

I have to admit, I was unable to concentrate on the tv show. I was too excited to see the surprise Dean had for me.

“Is it time for bed yet?” I asked, finally.
“Sure, Sam.” Dean said, laughing. “Get your pjs on. Then I’ll show you your surprise.”

I did as I was told, dressing in the bathroom that the three of us shared. Then I bounded back into our room, happy to see my brother was already waiting for me.

“Ready, Sammy?” Dean asked.

“Ready.” I replied, going over to my bed.

“Okay.” Dean bent down and plugged something in next to his bed. Suddenly our entire closet lit up with colorful Christmas lights. One row after another after another. The entire closet was able to be seen. There was no more darkness.

“Wooowwwww!” I yelled, jumping up and down on my bed, “Dean! No more monsters!”

“Yep.” Dean grinned; his face lit up due to the lights, “No more monsters.”

“You’re the best big brother ever!” I said, launching myself on top of him, knocking Dean to the ground and kissing his cheeks until he started to laugh.

“Okay, okay.” He said, shoving me off of him, “You don’t have to lick my face off.

Needless to say, I slept better that night then I have in a long time. It really helped I was able to face the closet and not only see inside but that it was colorful and beautiful. Dean had been really thoughtful in his surprise and that also made me feel safe. Before I fell asleep, I glanced over to the bed next to me at Dean, who was curled up in a small ball, sleeping soundly. I couldn’t believe I was so lucky to have such a great brother.

Dean

I always loved being a big brother. Even before everything happened. When Mom told me that she was pregnant I was super excited. I remember hoping I’d have a brother to play with. So when Sam came along, I felt like the luckiest kid in the world. Sure, sometimes it was a pain in the ass, but mostly I loved it. I wasn’t one to make friends. Dad always warned me to keep people at a distance so that they wouldn’t find about what he actually did for a living. I did as I was told, but also so that they wouldn’t discover the awful truth of what Dad was doing to me. So Sammy, was pretty much all I really had.

I don’t think I was ever really that social though. Even before Mom died. I know at daycare I was picked on for my size. I remember being shoved into a cubby pretty much every day by this group of older preschoolers. I was small enough to easily fit into one, but too short to be able to easily stand up to get out. I never said anything partly because I was already learning from my dad that being picked on was a weakness. Earlier that summer a kid had shoved me down, calling me a baby. I’d come running home, with my knee bleeding, crying. Mom wasn’t home at the time, and Dad cleaned me up, yelling in my face that I was a wimp and no one wanted to hear about my problems. So, when the cubby thing began happening, I kept my mouth shut. But as luck would have it, one day I forgot my lunch and Mom brought it into the school to deliver it. I guess she witnessed these kids shoving me into my cubby and laughing before walking away. In typical “how dare you hurt my baby” fashion, she pulled me out of the cubby, tied all those boys shoe laces together, then took me out for the day. I was never shoved into a cubby after that and those boys who had picked on me kept their distance. So needless to say, I didn’t exactly start off life rolling in popularity.
Sam however longed to have friends. Where I was content with it just being me and Sam, I knew Sam wanted more. He just wanted to be normal. And he was just more social by nature. I always encouraged him to invite them over. Not when Dad was around of course. But that was hardly ever, so I always let him have whatever friend he made in whatever town we were in over when Dad was gone. They’d always ask of course why we lived in a motel room, or where our parents were. Sam would always look at me helplessly. I’d give some bullshit answer.

Sam would always reward me by blowing me off. I didn’t mind. Not too much. Normally the friends he picked were geeks anyway. They enjoyed discussing stuff I knew nothing about from whatever crap they were learning in their classes to what books they read.

Sometimes I was lonely. But, I also knew that the real reason I didn’t have friends was mostly my own fault. I was admittedly an asshole on purpose once people got too close.

Once though, when we were staying in this little town in Wisconsin for about six months, I did make a friend.

Or maybe he was more than a friend.

I don’t know.

I was only fifteen at the time.

Anyway, his name was Donny. We had been signed up took together on some stupid English assignment where we had to turn in a book report of the themes and chapters of some lame book. I of course, did my whole typical “who gives a fuck” act, making cracks left and right about how stupid books were, and why not go rent the movie version of the book, when Donny pointedly looked at me.

“It’s okay if you can’t read, you know?” He said quietly, leaning forward so no one else could hear him. “I’ll read the book and explain the chapters to you, but you have to stop drop the attitude.”

“I can read.” I began to protest, stopping when Donny gave me a look that told me he wasn’t buying my bullshit for one minute.

“Just because you can’t read doesn’t mean you aren’t smart.” Donny shrugged, “So let’s just work together. Pull out a good grade. What do you say?”

“Ah, sure.” I said, a little uncertain why the hell this kid was being so nice to me.

So we did just as Donny said. He explained the chapters of the book to me, and I used my gift of observational skills to come up with good discussion questions to turn into our teacher. I even was able to come up with some themes of the book on my own.

Donny and I continued to chill long after the book report was turned in. We ate lunch together every day. It turned out we had a lot in common. His mom died from cancer when he was ten and he ever since he had to take care of his little sister, Karen. They weren’t close like Sam and I, but he was trying and I told him that’s what mattered most.

We also had another thing in common; our fathers. Donny was the first person ever told about my father’s abuse. It happened by complete accident. The night before Dad bruised me up pretty good. I accidently had dropped the pot of heated spaghetti-os, all over the floor, ruining dinner. Dad had to order a pizza as a result. I knew by the side looks he was giving me I was in deep shit. Sure enough, when Sam went to bed that night, Dad kicked me around the kitchen pretty good. I
remember at one point he drove his boot hard into the area right between my shoulder blades. It hurt like a bitch.

The day after I got my ass kicked, Dad left to go hunting some ghoul a few hours away. I remember feeling relieved because I knew he would be gone for a few days. I guess for once in my life, just wanted to feel normal. So, I actually stepped out of my comfort zone and invited Donny over.

“I’d love to come Dean.” He said, almost shyly, “But I have to take care of Karen.”

“Why don’t you just bring her?” I shrugged, “I mean her and Sam are the same age. They can chill and we can chill. No biggie.”

“Okay…” Donny said slowly, “But just to let you know, Karen’s kind of a tough kid to be around. She’s just kind of angry. She’s smoking and stuff.”

“At eleven?” I couldn’t help but ask.

“Yeah.” Donny looked at me, guilt displayed all over his face, “When Mom got sick, Karen just started acting up. She was always rebellious. But, I this past year has been really hard on her. I’m trying to help, but I just don’t know what to do.”

“You’re a kid, Donny.” I said, reaching out and lightly punching his shoulder, “I’m sure you and your dad are trying the best that you can. She’ll come around. Besides, Sammy’s a freakin nerd. Kid’s never done a bad thing in his life. He gives my dad a hard time, but that’s about it. The two of them argue like they each have a word quota to meet every day. But Sammy’s almost so good he’s boring. Maybe he’ll rub off on your sister.”

“Let’s hope.” Donny grinned, “Why do your brother and dad fight so much?”

“I don’t know.” I shrugged. “Sometimes I think they both just like to argue.”

We picked up Sam and Karen together from school and made our way to the apartment we were living in. We set up our siblings in front of the TV and we went and sat out on the back balcony. It could barely fit two chairs, so we squished together, our knees touching. I can’t remember exactly what happened but I know I made a smart remark about the new glasses Donny was sporting. He reached out to put me in a headlock and somehow ended up hitting my back by accident. I yelped and jumped about a foot, knocking over my chair in the process.

“Come here.” Donny said roughly, grabbing me by my wrist and pulling me inside. He then dragged me into mine and Sam’s room closing the door behind him. Before I knew what the hell was happening, he had me pinned to the bed and was yanking off my shirt. I was caught off guard so it wasn’t much of a struggle. I quickly folded my arms across my chest, backing up into the wall, but there was no way I could hide all the bruises that littered my upper body.

“My dad hits me too, you know.” Donny said, looking into my eyes. “He hasn’t always. But when my mom got sick, he just kind of lost it. He hits my sister too. Does he hit Sam?”

“No.” I said, my voice shaking more than I’d like to admit. “Sammy doesn’t even know.”

“I’m guessing you take it for both of you.” Donny said softly.

I shrugged, looking away. “I’d kill him if he ever touched Sam.” I said simply.

The room fell silent. You could hear the echo of the TV through the thin walls.
“You’re beautiful Dean Winchester.” Donny replied finally.

That’s when it happened.

He reached out, lightly taking my face in his hands and kissed me.

It was only when I was wrapped fully in his arms did I realize I was kissing him back.
Chapter Notes

I might re-edit this chapter. I just kind of wanted to put it up.

Sam

A few weeks went by without any major incidences. School for me was going well. My teachers were beginning to suggest with my grades I’d be able to get a full scholarship to mostly any school of my choosing. I began checking schools out, keeping them a secret from Dad because I knew he wouldn’t understand. I kept it from Dean too, but for reasons I wasn’t quite sure of.

Things at home settled down. Dad was away a lot, so despite his rigorous training schedule, things were decently calm. It seemed to help that I was closing in on the alone time Dean spent with Dad. There was no doubt Dad was still emotionally abusing my brother—he berated him any chance he got—but at least the physical beatings died down a bit. Dad’s new favorite game was to compare us, normally to Dean’s detriment. He’d laugh at the rapid way I was growing and the muscle I was putting on in comparison to Dean’s diminutive size and smaller frame. I’d constantly retort that for someone Dean’s size he was awfully strong, but Dad always acted like he didn’t hear me.

I wouldn’t exactly describe the time as relaxing. I always felt as though we were waiting for the other shoe to drop and Dad to just suddenly start snapping out again. I knew eventually he wouldn’t care that I had suddenly become a permanent fixture on my brother’s side. I knew it was only a matter of time until he cracked and hit Dean in front of me. Especially once he found out I knew he’d been hitting him most of our lives. I knew it was only a matter of time until he cracked and hit Dean in front of me. Especially once he found out I knew he’d been hitting him most of our lives. I suspected he knew something was up. I caught him watching our interactions with one another with a half sneer on his face, one that I can’t recall ever seeing before. It was like suddenly our closeness with each other suddenly bothered him. Which was weird…he’d always known Dean and I were close. He was the one who set it up that way. He had to know that I considered Dean to me more of a father than he ever was. He had to know Dean was really the one who I turned to when I was hurt or scared. Just like I knew that he was an abusive asshole, and that abusive people didn’t change overnight. Not without therapy. I’ve done enough research on the subject ever since I found out about my brother to know that.

So, even though things were going okay at home, I was relieved when the three of us were on our way to Bobby’s for Thanksgiving. We always spent the week before and then the holiday with him. Mostly because Bobby was a great cook and our expertise in the area only went as far as Dean’s marshmallow mac and cheese. This year I didn’t care as much about the food but in keeping my brother safe. I knew that Dad wouldn’t dare touch Dean when we were at Bobby’s. If I knew about Bobby’s protectiveness over him, Dad surely had to know. Plus it also meant training was off the table for a few days. Bobby was all about hunting, but he was also all about letting kids be kids. This meant sleeping in, watching tv, kicking around a soccer ball, and doing whatever normal kids do. Even for Dean, who was never really allowed to be a kid in the first place. Maybe that’s why Bobby was so big on pushing the whole, “be kids while you can” speech all of our lives. Bobby had to have known it had been demanded of Dean to grow up way before his time. That he’d been forced to let go of his childhood long ago.

Anyway, the car ride to Bobby’s was a bit awkward. Dad and I had an argument about the amount
of books I wanted to take (me arguing for more, Dad for less), so we weren’t speaking. Dean, our ironic mediator, was passed out next to me, his chest rattling. He spent the night before coughing and wheezing. I stayed up with him, despite his protests. I had sat with him on the bathroom floor, letting the shower run on hot, trying to get the steam to help open his lungs. At one point, he fell asleep on my shoulder, his mouth open wide, sucking in air like he was gasping painfully for his last breath.

“Your brother okay back there?” Dad’s low voice asked, shocking me.

“Yeah.” I couldn’t help the surprise in my voice, “He’s sleeping.”

“I can hear his breathing whistling all the way up here, even over the music.” Dad said, “Did he bring his inhaler?”

“Yes. I double checked him.” I said, “It’s in his pocket. He has another one in his duffle bag.”

“Good.” Dad said simply.

We once again fell into an uncomfortable silence and stayed that way until Dean woke up.

“Where are we?” He said groggily, glancing at me, rubbing his eyes.

“Going to Bobby’s.” I reminded him. “We’re almost there. We past the halfway mark more than an hour ago.”

“Oh.” Dean replied, curling into himself, clearing his throat, and shivering slightly.

“How you doing Dean?” Dad asked, making my brother cringe slightly.

“Fine.” Dean replied. Of course, his lungs picked that moment to spasm and he began coughing. When his coughing didn’t let up and it turned into a definite gasp, He reached into his pocket, pulling out his inhaler. He finally leaned back against his seat, seemed noticeably more relaxed once he took it and the medicine reached his lungs.

Dean and I then made small talk between the two of us the rest of the way. About nothing particularly important. Dean asked me about school and the paper I was working on for my biology class. He purposely asked me if I’d gotten my political science paper back. He of course knew that I had, but I decided to play along with his little game.

“I did.” I said, glancing at him. He winked at me, smirking slightly.

“What were you supposed to do again?”

“Pick a topic that I’m adamantly opposed to and defend the opposite side.” I replied.

“That’s right.” Dean snapped his fingers, as though I’d just reminded him, “That sounds tough. What grade did you get?”

“An A.” I couldn’t help but roll my eyes slightly.

“That’s great, Sammy.” Dean reached out, slugging me lightly on the shoulder, “You worked hard on that. That’s awesome. Did you hear that, Dad. Sam got an A on this really tough paper.”

“That’s great, Sam.” Dad replied, sounding less than enthused.

I looked at Dean, giving him a pointed look, but Dean shrugged, “I’m real proud of you, Sammy.”
He said, before turning to look out his window.

We arrived at Bobby’s about an hour later. He greeted Dad with a handshake and then pulled both Dean and I in for a hug. Dad immediately skipped out for what he called “food shopping” but what I’m guessing was actually “bar hopping”. Once the impala was out of sight, Bobby turned back to us, frowning at my brother.

“You alright, Dean?” He asked, putting his hand to Dean’s cheek, “You look awful.”

“Back at you, Bobby.” Dean grinned, “You’ve clearly missed your calling in the modeling industry. And I’m fine. I got a cold.”

“You look a little worse off than just having a cold.” Bobby replied, reaching down and grabbing Dean’s duffle bag, “Let’s get you guys settled. And then you’re going to bed.”

“Bobby,” Dean began to whine, following him in, glancing at me. “I’m fine, really. I don’t need to go to bed. I’m not four. Sammy, tell him I’m fine.”

“I’m staying out of this one, Dean.” I said, pulling my duffle bag over my shoulder, ignoring the clear, “screw you” look Dean was flashing me.

“From what I can tell you have a fever, Dean.” Bobby cut in, “And I can hear your chest rasping from about a mile away. You’re going to bed whether I have to sit in the room with you myself.”

Dean let out a mumble of what I’m guessing was a string of swear words. Bobby, who had to have heard him, chose to ignore him.

Dean did get into bed however, crawling into the bottom bunk. It was only when I really got a good look at him did I really see how sick was. I wanted to kick myself for not noticing earlier in the car. Dean continued to complain that he wasn’t a baby and could take care of himself. Bobby just ignored him as he set him up with a tv, remote control, and humidifier, finally telling him if he continued to whine he’d take the tv. Dean seemed to know that Bobby meant business because he clamped his mouth shut and settled on glaring instead. I had to bite my lip to keep from laughing. When Dean narrowed his eyes and crossed his arms like that he looked like he was a toddler, throwing a tantrum. He lightened up a bit when Bobby reappeared with pizza-pepperoni for Dean, cheese for me—that he must have picked it up right before we arrived (it was still hot). I was happy and relieved to see Dean ate not only one piece but three pieces. Once we were convinced Dean would stay put in bed, Bobby and I headed downstairs.

“Your brother and those damn lungs.” Bobby said, as we sat down at the kitchen table. “They’ve given him trouble ever since he was a grub. I feel for him. Don’t know what it’s like to have a normal set. Kid deserves a break. Must be hell not being able to breathe on your own from time to time.”

“Yeah.” I nodded, “He’ll do alright for a while, but once he gets a cold, it’s like he can’t kick it.”

“I keep telling John he needs to do a good cleaning of that apartment you all are staying in, but you know how stubborn your dad is.”

“Do I ever.” I said, rolling my eyes, instantly feeling pissed. “It was worse when he used to drag us around from town to town all the time. Those motels were gross. Dean was always choking up something back then.”

“Yeah, we hunters aren’t known for our five-star motel choices.” Bobby laughed. But I could see,
behind the joke he was pissed.

“I want to talk to you about something.” I said, feeling I should respect my promise to Dean, but also feeling like this was my only chance to help my brother.

“I figured.” Bobby smiled at me, “It looks like ever since you three showed up yous been wanting to talk to me.”

“I know Dean has always been your favorite.” I began, not knowing how else to start. When Bobby began to protest I shook my head, “Don’t worry about it. I know you still care about me. But I also know you’ve got a soft spot for my brother. He doesn’t realize it, but he has that effect on people.”

“That he does.” Bobby laughed, “He doesn’t realize that tough guy act only works till you get to know him. Then you see he’s just a little guy with a mushy heart. He makes you just want to root for him. Once you get past the sarcasm and smart ass comments of course. Idjit.”

“You’ve known him since he was born, right?” I smiled, glad that Bobby saw Dean the way I did.

“Sure did. Your brother was just such a little rugrat.” Bobby laughed, “God, he could run clear under my dining room table until he was about three years old. I used to carry him on my shoulders and I aint no big guy myself. I know these big wheel doctors were always worried about his size and weight, but your mom basically told them where to stick it. She took care of his asthma of course, but refused to put him on any growth hormones that the doctors were pushing at the time. She fully believed her son was perfect and that he would grow and thrive at his own rate. Which, he did. She always said she was raising a little boy not a thoroughbred. Her concern was just that he was healthy and happy. Which, he was. Full of mischief of course, but he was always cheerful and carefree.”

“Dean was cheerful and carefree?” I was shocked. My brother may be a lot of things, but cheerful and carefree were not one of them.

“Yeah.” Bobby smiled in remembrance, “Your brother was a completely different kid before your Mom died. He smiled and laughed all the time. He was probably the most loving kid I’d ever met. He always made me feel like a million dollars. Whenever your parents would stop over, he’d jump on my lap and tell me all about the adventures he pretended to go on. I’d sworn off liking kids, for my own reasons, but he opened my cold heart up. His laugh was enough to make any bad day I was having into a good one.”

“I wish I would have known that Dean.” I couldn’t help but feel a sudden loss. Don’t get me wrong, I loved my brother. He raised me with understanding and compassion. He took better care of me than any two parents could. But I wonder what our relationship would have been like if he’d continued to be the cheerful, carefree, energetic kid Bobby described. If we would have been able to be brothers, instead of practically father and son.

“Well, your mom’s death was hard.” Bobby sighed, “I think even under normal circumstances it would have changed him. He was so close to her. I mean wherever she was, he was. I used to call him her twin.”

“I know they were close.” I frowned, “It’s hard because I know he still misses her, but I don’t remember her so I never know what to say. I just don’t know how to help him.”

“It’s okay, Sam.” Bobby said, giving me a slight nod, “I think your just being there has been a big help. Your brother doesn’t expect you to make it better. Just make sure he knows you love him.”
“I know and I do.” I replied softly. “It just is hard when he’s hurting over someone I’m supposed to know, but can’t remember.” I cleared my throat then asked the other question that was on my mind, “How was Dad back then? When Dean was little and Mom was still alive?”

Bobby fell silent as he thought about my question. “Sometimes things were fine. I know John took him to work a few times. But, truthfully John seemed distant from your brother. He seemed like he was afraid to get to know him. I think part of him was afraid to get attached…your brother was always so sick. I think John had all these ideas of what he would do with a son, you know, play football or whatever. When Dean was born, small and sick, those dreams were pretty much squashed.”

“There’s other stuff for fathers and sons to do than sports.” I snapped, “And there are non-contact sports if Dean would have even been interested in playing. Not that he would have been. Sports aren’t his thing.”

“True.” Bobby was now frowning at me, “And your right; your brother was always more interested in drawing and exploring than playing ball. He did like cars though. He hero worshiped your dad for working in an auto shop.”

“Do you remember anything else?” I asked, sighing, rubbing my forehead. I was beginning to realize that Dad was always an asshole. Maybe he was a bigger one because Mom died, but he was definitely not the great guy Dean claimed he was beforehand. “Like how was Dad towards my brother?”

“The time John did spend with Dean, he always seemed tough on him.”

“Tough how?” I asked, my heart beginning to feel heavy.

“I felt he punished him quite a bit.” Bobby cleared his throat, “I remember one time in particular they were over here. Your mother was pregnant with you. I had this Great Dane named Tonks. Dean loved that dog.” Bobby paused, taking a sip of his beer, “But your brother was tossing a ball around to play fetch, and I guess he accidently knocked over a lamp. John tore after him like there was no tomorrow. He threw Dean over his knee and spanked the hell out of him. I was too shocked to do much-I never saw John get physical before. Your mom on the other hand reacted enough for the two of us. She had been making dinner at the time. When she realized what was happening she started screaming like a lunatic. She ran into the living room, pregnant as all get out, knife in her hand, and demanded he let “her baby” go. I’d never seen that look in her eye before. I have no doubt if your father hadn’t shoved Dean off his lap, your momma would have used that knife without hesitation.”

“Dean never told me about that.” I said sucking in my breath.

“I doubt he remembers.” Bobby shrugged, “Or that he wants to remember.”

“What happened after that?”

“Your mom held Dean until his tears stopped, and your dad left for a day or two. When he came back, your mom told him if he ever touched a hair on your brother’s head again she’d kill him.”

“Did anything else happen?”

“Nothing physical that I ever saw.” Bobby shrugged, “John seemed to terrorize him though. He’d yell at him over minor things, and then laugh when Dean would jump and cower. I felt bad for the little guy. It was clear he worshiped John, but instead of embracing it, your dad didn’t seem to
“What did Mom do when Dad yelled at him?”

“He never did it in front of her.” Bobby shrugged, “Guess he was smart in that sense. I told him a couple times he needed to chill out, but he always told me to mind my own business.” Bobby suddenly frowned, “What’s with all the questions, Sam?”

I opened my mouth to tell Bobby. I really did. I wanted to tell him. I wanted to tell him everything I knew. How Dad made us train when it was freezing out. How he made us run until Dean was clutching his chest, his lungs screaming for air. How he beat Dean leaving marks I’m sure would scar into adulthood. How he belittled and bashed my brother emotionally until he cowered, folding into himself. Maybe even how he made my academic achievements seem like they were nothing. Like I meant nothing. Like my wants and needs didn’t matter.

I really was going to tell him.

But then I heard the familiar sounds of the impala rolling into the driveway. I immediately got up and ran up the stairs to my brother. I didn’t want Dad to see my face, knowing it would be blazing with anger. I hated him so much.

Dean was sitting up in bed, flipping through the tv channels, looking annoyed. He barely acknowledged me.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“There’s nothing on tv.” Dean whined, “I hate being stuck in bed when there’s nothing on tv.”

“How about a movie?” I asked, “Bobby wouldn’t mind if I grabbed the VCR from downstairs.” I didn’t really want to go back down there, seeing as Dad was there, but I also wanted Dean to be comfortable.

“Maybe.” Dean began coughing again. He sounded awful; maybe even worse than he had the night before. When he finally stopped and downed the rest of the water that was sitting by his bed, he fell back against his pillow looking exhausted. He rubbed his chest, wincing, his face scrunched up in pain.

“Maybe you need to go to the doctor.” I said, “You don’t sound great.”

“I’m fine, Sammy.” Dean replied, rolling over, looking at me sadly, “It’ll go away.”

“I’ll go get the VCR.” I replied, “And I’ll get you more water.”

Dean and I spent the rest of the night watching movie after movie. We laughed at the poorly done plots of some, and reveled in the dynamics of others. When I heard Dean fall silent I knew he’d fallen asleep. I slid down from my bed, turning off the tv and the lights.

The next few days were rough. Dean’s fever began to climb and he began to sleep more than he was awake. I could tell it was hard for him to swallow because every time he did so, he clutched onto the sides of the bed for dear life. It was easy to tell just by looking at him that he was really ill. His face was pale and his cheeks were pink from both the fever and coughing so much. When Dean slinked away from breakfast the day before Thanksgiving, I couldn’t stop myself from turning my anger on Dad.
“I really think we need to take him to the doctors.” I said.

“He’s fine Sam.” Dad said, barely looking up from the newspaper, no doubt looking for cases, “You worry way too much.”

“Dad.” I snapped, “You’re the one who should be worrying. You’re the father here. His fever has been 101 for the last two days. Stop being a hard ass and take him to the doctors. Have you even taken a look at Dean? He looks awful.”

“Sam…” Bobby began, clearing his throat.

“What!” I snapped, “You know he does. He looks like shit.”

“Drop it, Sam.” Dad said, his voice not exactly threatening, but suggesting I shut up.

“No.” I said, folding my arms, and leaning back against my chair, “I'm gonna take him.”

“With what?” Dad looked at me laughing, “You're not getting my car. And you have no money. Your brother’s fine.”

“Bobby.” I said, turning to my only hope for support, “Please.”

“What if I paid, John?” Bobby asked, keeping his eyes on me, “And if I took the boy.”

“I can’t ask you to do that.” Dad replied.

“One of the doctors at the local clinic is a friend of mine.” Bobby continued, “He owes me some favors. Let me cash in.”

Dad sighed, slamming down his paper. Then he looked over at me.

“If I say yes will you stop bugging me?”

“I’ll stop bugging you.” I replied

“Fine.” Dad replied, getting up to make a phone call on his cell phone, “Do whatever you need to do then. I think I found a case.”

“John…” Bobby began, “It’s Thanksgiving.”

“Like that matters.” I replied, getting up to go get my brother. I actually hoped he had a case. Thanksgiving would be so much better without him around. I actually pictured the three of us, Dean, Bobby, and me sitting around the table with a huge turkey and all the fixings sitting around the table laughing and joking like we were a real family.

Dean wasn’t exactly thrilled that we were taking him to the doctors. He groaned and grumbled, but didn’t put up too much of a fight. Truthfully, he was so limp and lifeless at this point I don’t think he really had it in him to argue. He just quietly sat in the passenger’s seat in Bobby’s car, leaning his head against the window. He didn’t even make a comment when we got into town and passed some local girls, who from what I could tell from the backseat were Dean’s type; blonde, tall, and big chested. I caught Bobby’s eyes in the rear-view mirror when this happened, and could see the concern etched in his features.

As it turned out Dean had bronchitis, a sinus infection, and strep throat. The doctor said that there was no way Dean would have gotten better without antibiotics and would no doubt have come
down with pneumonia if not worse. Apparently untreated strep can lead to heart damage. The
doctor actually even recommended that Dean spend a few nights in the hospital due to how sick he
was, especially combined with his asthma and past medical history. Bobby managed to work it out
so that he could pay in cash and that it wouldn’t be billed through insurance. I doubted it was
legal, but the man is amazing in many ways. He was a giving and caring guy, and I guess as a
result people were willing to pay him back for his generosity. I couldn’t have been more thankful
for that. I owed him more than I could ever repay.

The antibiotics worked wonders on Dean. By day three, his fever was down, he was sitting up in
bed, was way less irritable and was back to cracking jokes again. His chest was beginning to rattle
less, he could actually drink without wincing, and he could stay awake for longer than three hours
at a time. Dean was sent home by the fourth day, with a bag full of antibiotics to take for another
ten days. I fully expected him to complain, but he didn’t. I guess he was just thankful to be feeling
better.

Dad returned to Bobby’s a day later. He didn’t ask anything about Dean’s health, but simply patted
my brother on the back, giving his shoulder light squeeze before heading upstairs to take a shower.

God, I hate that man.
Chapter 12

Dean

After I got out of the hospital and Dad came back to Bobby’s, he demanded us to start packing up the car so we could return home. Sam took one look at me and then threw a huge temper tantrum.

“We can’t go yet!” He said, getting up from where we were sitting on the couch. He crossed his arms, his voice already growing shrill. “Dean’s still sick. And we haven’t even had Thanksgiving yet.”

“Thanksgiving is not going to happen this year.” Dad said, barely even looking at Sam, as he began to pack up the table where all of his paperwork sat. “You can thank your brother for that. We need to get back. I have work to do back in that area. And you have school.”

“John.” Bobby spoke up, “Come on, it’s early. I can still make Thanksgiving dinner for today. I already began to defrost the bird this mornin. You guys can leave tonight. You guys can take home the leftovers. I know how much you are about lovin those turkey sandwiches. Plus, it’ll give Dean here an extra day of rest.”

Dad paused a minute, before glancing between Sam and Bobby, before his eyes finally fell on me. “Dean still doesn’t look great.” He admitted, “We’ll stay one more day. But then, that’s it. We’ll leave tomorrow morning. Sam, I don’t want to hear one more complaint out of you the rest of the day.”

“Yes!” Sam said, shooting his hand in the area, before plopping back down next to me on the couch. He grinned at me, like he’d won some major battle. I smiled back. I was glad for him. I knew he loved Thanksgiving, because it was something that normal people and normal families did.

Sam then shocked us all by asking Dad to take him shooting an hour later. Dad happily agreed, and the two of them headed out, leaving Bobby and I alone. Even though I was feeling better, there was no way my lungs could handle the dusty dirt roads where the make-shift shooting range was set up. So instead, I settled myself in the kitchen, chopping up vegetables for Bobby’s famous stuffing, despite his protest I should just sit back and relax.

“How you doin Dean?” Bobby asked, as he began to clean out the bird.

“Fine, as long as I don’t have to do that job.” I said, gesturing towards the turkey.

“Ha. Ha.” Bobby said, laughing and dangling some sort of slimy thing in front of my face. I jumped back, embarrassingly letting out somewhat of a shriek. But if anyone asks, I’d swear it was a manly bark.

“Gross.” I said, shuttering, before going back to slicing up the carrots.

“So, how you doing, Dean?” Bobby asked again. I fully expected him to lecture me on my somewhat weak stomach, telling me I better suck it up if I was going to be a hunter, at least one as good as John Winchester, but he didn’t.

“I’m fine.” I shrugged, “I’m feeling better.”
“Good.” Bobby glanced at me, nodding. “But that’s not what I mean. I’m asking how you’re doing in general. You look…I don’t know…you just don’t look…healthy?”

“I was sick, Bobby.” I replied, rolling my eyes, “Remember? Or do we have to look into checking you into a home for the elderly? I hear they have daily bingo games. That’s big fun for someone who is up there in your age bracket.”

“Shut up, smart ass.” Bobby said, rolling his eyes, laughing. “I know you were sick. I’m just asking if everything is alright? Sam was asking me some questions about you and your daddy—”

“What type of questions?” I snapped, turning to face Bobby, the knife in my hand, pointing it at him, unintentionally.

“First put the knife down.” Bobby said, taking it out of my hand with ease.

“Sam’s overly dramatic.” I said, knowing I had to reign in my feelings.

“You’re right there.” Bobby agreed. “But if there’s something you want to talk about, I’m here.”

“I’m good.” I said, shrugging. “But thanks.” Minus the fact that I was going to kick Sam’s ass once we got home and I was feeling better.

The kitchen fell into silence, Bobby began frying up his stuffing, making a joke on my slicing and dicing skills being up to par on the veggies, asking me what the damn onions, carrots, and celery ever did to me. I laughed, happy he changed the subject.

“I was thinking.” Bobby said once the bird was stuffed and in the oven, and we were settled comfortably in the kitchen. “What if I asked your daddy if you could stay here for a few weeks? You guys always come back for Christmas. That’s just a few weeks away. You can go back home, then. If you gonna be a top notch hunter, you gotta learn some Latin. You know to exercise some demons and such.”

“You know I have a hard time with books, Bobby.” I said, looking at him, frowning slightly.

“You don’t need books when you have me, kid.” Bobby said. “I’ll even let you fix up one of those cars in the back yard.”

I felt my breath hitch slightly at his offer.

God did I want to stay. I knew if I did, I’d have a month of comfort, relaxation, and freedom. Bobby would allow me to do whatever it was normal 18 year old boys did, within limits of course.

He sure in hell wouldn’t be dragging me out of bed at four or five in the morning to train, watching without so much as a twitch of concern as my body gave out on me.

He wouldn’t critique my every move, muttering in my ear how worthless I was or how I embarrassed him.

He wouldn’t drunkenly ramble how ashamed he was to call me his son.

He sure in hell wouldn’t hit me.

It sounded like great.

And for one perfect second, I wanted to say yes…
Then, my mind instantly went to Sam.

I didn’t really think Dad would beat him like he did me. Not anymore anyway. Sam was growing to be way too outspoken and way too independent for Dad to be able to treat him as his punching bag. Not to mention, Sam was getting bigger and stronger. He’d put on a ton of muscle in the short amount of time he’d been training regularly. It was obvious when we play wrestled he was able to pin me without much struggle.

I also had no doubt if my father ever did strike Sam, Sam would hit him back. I’m pretty sure Dad knew it too. When Sam talked to him, regardless of the topic, he faced him dead on, something I was never able to do. Sam was more of a man then I’d ever be. He was the son Dad was meant to have.

Anyway, I began to worry less that Dad would start hitting him, and began obsessing Dad would one day take Sammy and high tale it, leaving me all alone. It might be an irrational fear, but it was a one that plagued my deepest thoughts and invaded my most awful of nightmares.

I wouldn’t survive if that happened.

I couldn’t lose Sam.

And Dad knew it.

It was almost the cruelest of his ruthlessness towards me…

Although I had been the one who’d raised Sam, I wasn’t his father.

Not biologically.

Not legally.

Sam was still only fourteen. That meant that he was still under the care of his legal guardian. Dad could take my brother, high tale it to another state or city, and I’d have absolutely no say in the matter. I was dead convinced that if I stayed at Bobby’s, Dad would either beat me half to death on my return home, or would use Sam as a pawn to punish me. Not that I’d be fond with either, but if I had to pick between the two I’d take the beating any day. I couldn’t let him take my Sam.

So, my decision was simple.

I knew I couldn’t stay.

I had to go back.

“I can’t.” I said, sighing.

“Why the hell not?” Bobby asked, not even trying to hide his disappointment.

“I have things I have to do at home.” I said simply.

“Like what?” Bobby said, crossing his arms and glaring at me.

“Just stuff.” I shrugged.

“Dean, I really think you need—”

“We’re back.” Sam’s voice suddenly rang out. He and Dad both appeared in the kitchen, Sam
looking smug and Dad looking slightly irritated.

“The food smells good.” Sam said, coming over and standing by me.

“How was shooting, Sammy?” I asked.

“Okay.” Sam shrugged, grabbing the soda I was drinking and taking a swig, “But I’m not a good of a shot as you are.”

“You’d do fine if you practiced.” Dad replied.

“Maybe Dean can help you.” Bobby prompted, “He always had a natural shot.”

“That’s true.” Dad said, shocking I think all three of us. “Dean, I’m going to need you to step up and help your brother out. Hate to say it, Sammy, but your shot is pretty lousy.”

“That’s fine.” Sam shrugged, “Dean’s a good teacher. He’s patient.”

I winced at that last comment from my brother. I couldn’t help but feel that his comment about me being a good and patient teacher was a dig at my father’s less than patient techniques. By the look on Dad’s face, he’d taken Sam’s remarks the same way. He looked shocked at first. Then his eyes fell on me as his mouth slowly turned upward into a sneer.

Instantly I felt a shiver down my spine.

I knew that sneer.

And I knew it never lead to anything good.

Sam must have realized what he’d done because he suddenly fell silent, whispering what sounded like memorized nerd information under his breath.

Bobby must have noticed the stillness that entered the room because he cleared his throat, “John, the boys and I will finish cooking…Do you wanna go get some pies for dessert. And I’m almost clean out of beer. So if you wanna grab some of that, we can drink tonight. You and I haven’t really had a chance to catch up.”

“Sure.” John replied, his eyes still on me for a moment or two before he got up and left the room.

It wasn’t until I heard the Impala roll away did I realize I’d been holding my breath. Which I then let out with a sputtering cough. Sam reached out to pat me on the back, but I shrugged him off.

Suddenly, I was pissed as hell at him.

“What’s up?” I asked, getting up and leaving the kitchen before Sam could even reply.

“What’s up?” Sam asked as soon as we got into our room.

“What’s up?” I asked, slamming the door shut, “Are you kidding me? What the hell did you say to Bobby?”

“Nothing?” Sam looked at me, shrugging, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Like hell you don’t.”

“Dean.” Sam said, his voice beginning to shake like it always does when he’s lying to me, “Don’t be angry.”
“Don’t be angry.” I snapped, now shoving Sam slightly, “How can I not be angry? I thought we had a deal! You’re supposed to keep your freaking mouth shut. You’re sure in hell not supposed to be asking Bobby a bunch of questions about me and Dad. What the hell were you thinking?”

“Dean, I was just—”

“Shut up!” I screamed then began to cough again. At this point I’d begun crying. Not just a few tears, but like the really ugly kind. The kind where you’re face turns all red and your nose starts to run, and you just look like you’ve spent your entire life bawling your eyes out.

“What the hell is going on up here?” Bobby asked bursting through the door. “Dean can hear you yelling all the way downstairs.”

“Nothing.” I said, hurriedly wiping my face with my sleeves.

“Dean, are you crying?” Bobby asked, his voice softening.

“I’m fine.” I said, sniffing, “I guess I still don’t feel well.”

“I get that.” Bobby replied, his eyes boring into me. “I just am worried about you.”

“Well, don’t.” I said, tracing my shoe along the floorboards, “I’m fine.”

“Yeah…” Sam mumbled, just loud enough for us to hear, “Sure, you are Dean.”

“Is there something you boys want to talk about?” Bobby asked, glancing between the two of us.

“No.” I snapped, glaring at Sam, who just looked away from us both.

Bobby sighed, “Dean, are you sure you don’t want to take me up on what I offered you earlier.”

“Dead sure.” I all but spat.

“What’s he talking about?” Sam asked, looking at me.

“Nothing.” I said snapping, giving Bobby a warning look. If Sam got wind of Bobby’s offer, he wouldn’t stop bugging me about it. “I’m going to go start the potatoes.” I then booked it out of the room before either of them could object. I think it’s the first time in a long time that I hoped Dad would come back soon.

Dinner went okay. I’ve never been a big fan of turkey, even when I was little, so I pretty much pigged out on the potatoes, gravy and stuffing. I honestly wasn’t that hungry, but I also knew Bobby was already watching me like I was under some damn microscope, so the last thing I needed was him questioning my weird developing eating habits. Dad seemed surprisingly relaxed as he and Bobby shared hunting stories. Sam seemed overly happy, grinning at me in between mouthfuls of food. He stuffed his face until I was positive he was going to get a stomachache later. (Sure enough he did. He woke up in the middle of the night, whining and clutching his stomach, mumbling he was never going to eat again. Within an hour of this, and after I managed to scrap up some stomach medicine from Bobby’s medicine cabinet, Sam was already sneaking downstairs to fix himself another plate, raving how good of a cook Bobby was. There are times I could kill that kid.)

We left early the next morning. Sam groggily gave Bobby a hug goodbye, telling me he’d see him in a few weeks, before climbing into the backseat. After, Dad shook Bobby’s hand, thanking him
briefly before tossing his duffle bag as well as Sam’s in the trunk before getting into the car.

“Well.” I said, slinging my own duffle bag over my shoulder, “Thanks Bobby.” I held my own hand out for him to shake but Bobby quickly pulled me into a hard hug.

“Take care of yourself, Dean.” He said into my ear, “You’re a good kid. Call me if you need anything, okay?”

“I’ll see you Bobby.” I replied jumping as Dad started the Impala, knowing that was my signal to get in the car. As Bobby released me, I swear I could see tears in his eyes. I shrugged it off, tossing my own bag into the trunk before getting in next to Sam. I sighed heavily; envious of my brother was already snoring away.

“Did you keep your damn mouth, shut?” Dad asked as he began to drive down the driveway. “Or did you squeal like a little girl that Daddy hits you?”

“I didn’t say anything.” I said, feeling myself shrinking by the accusatory tone to his voice.

“Bobby’s always had a soft spot when it came to you. I’m not sure why. Common sense says it should be Sam.” Dad’s voice was oddly calm, “But for some reason, you’re his favorite. And that means he has a blind spot when it comes to you. I’d hate to see what would happen to him if he knew. He may be a smarter hunter than I am, but I’m the better hunter. So, I hope for his sake he doesn’t find out.”

“He won’t.” I said, my voice coming out surprisingly smooth.

“He better not.” Dad continued, “Besides, if you weren’t so pathetic Dean, I wouldn’t have to. You make me do it, you know? You’re the reason I have to treat you the way that I do. You don’t see me having to hit Sam, do you? Of course not. Your brother isn’t weak like you are.”

“I know.” I said softly.

And I knew that was the truth.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Just felt we needed a shorter lighter chapter

Sam

The ride home from Bobby’s was an uncomfortable one. I was glad I slept through most of it. Dad seemed occupied with his work, muttering to himself what sounded like a list of stuff he needed to accomplish. He did turn to me and ask me if I was ready to go back to school, which I thought was odd. I don’t think I ever remember him asking me if I was ready to go back to school. Normally it was me, reminding him that I had school.

Dean, for his part, pretty much ignored me. I knew, by the way he was curled up into himself he was still extremely pissed at me. I knew in his mind that I’d done as good as betray him for even hinting to Bobby about Dad’s abuse towards him. I reached out a few times, trying to swat at his leg, but he just moved away, practically plastering himself to his side of the car. I could feel tears prickling my eyes and a lump growing in my throat. I hated when Dean was mad at me. True, it didn’t happen often, and it never lasted long, but I knew this time I’d crossed a line. Dean had told me one of his biggest secrets, if not the biggest secret, and I opened my mouth and almost told the first person I came across. True, that person was Bobby. I guess that somehow made it worse in his mind. I just wished he’d understand I wanted him to be safe.

Once we got home, Dad headed to what he called the “library” to meet Hank, leaving Dean and I alone to deal with all the dirty laundry. I almost wanted to argue that we weren’t his house maids, but I didn’t want to piss him off, knowing Dean would pay the price. Plus, I really wanted to talk to my brother and I knew I needed to get him alone to do so.

“Hey.” I said, following my brother, who had already begun to empty all of our clothing in front of the washer and drier, “Can we talk?”

“Nope.” Dean replied, tossing in a bunch of tee-shirts and jeans, “I’ve got nothing to say to you.”

“You seriously can’t stay mad at me for forever.” I grabbed the laundry soap, holding it hostage.

“Yes I can.” Dean said stubbornly, reaching out to grab the soap but I held it out of his reach. It was a cheap move, and I knew it. Although I was still a few inches shorter than my brother, my arms were abnormally long so I was easily able to hold it over his head, sliding it on the top shelf above the washer.

“You’re such an asshole.” Dean said, trying his best to reach for the bottle. As he stretched, I simply reached out and poked him in the ribs.

“Stop it.” Dean growled, withdrawing his arm.

“Stop what?” I asked innocently.

“Don’t be more of a jerk than you already are.” Dean snapped his mouth turning into a scowl.
“Bet you can’t get the soap.” I said, wiggling my eyebrows and grinning.

Dean’s face turned into one of pure focus and determination. He glared at me with pure rage and frustration that it was almost laughable considering the stupidity of the situation.

I knew that I had him. Dean wasn’t stupid. He could easily pull over a kitchen chair, climb up on it, and grab the laundry soap. But, I also knew Dean’s pride was getting the better of him. There was no way in hell he was going to climb up on to a chair in front of his little-although not by much-brother. Dean gave me a sour look and reached up again for the soap. Once again, I poked him in the ribs.

“Sam.” Dean withdrew his hand again, his voice coming out in a huff of frustration.

“Dean.” I replied calmly.

Dean glared at me, before he wrapped one hand protectively around his side as he reached up with the other arm. That’s when I went in for the kill. I went behind him and dug a couple of my fingers into both sides at once. Dean let out a squeak and dropped to the floor.

I immediately sat on his chest, pinning him, and began to poke up and down his ribs.

“Samm.” Dean complained, beginning to snicker, “Stoop it.”

“Are you ready to talk to me yet?” I asked, unable to contain my grin as my big brother squirmed and laughed underneath me. It was probably the most I’ve tickled him in a long time. I know he really doesn’t like it. That loathing, combined with his asthma, I barely ever take it to this point.

“Finne.” Dean shrieked reaching out, grabbing my hands, “Just stooop.”

“I’ll stop.” I said, holding up my hands, so that he could see them, “But you’re staying pinned down so I know you will listen.” I chose to ignore my brother’s eye roll and just continued to talk, “Dean, you have every right to be mad at me. You do. I know it wasn’t easy for you to tell me what you did about Dad. And I know you’re scared. But I am too. I’m afraid that one day he’s going to go too far. I really wanted to tell Bobby because I knew he’d stop it. I just want it to stop Dean. I just want you to be safe.”

“I know.” Dean said softly, his green eyes lowering, “But I’m fine, Sammy.”

“I know you think that.” I sighed, “But he’s going to go too far one day, Dean. Maybe not on purpose, but one day he’s going to really really hurt you. Like hurt you and not be able to fix it or take it back.”

“He won’t.” Dean said, shuddering slightly. He wouldn’t look at me, and I knew he truly didn’t believe what he was saying.

“I also don’t get why you just don’t leave.” I shrugged, deciding it was safe to get off of Dean at this point. I was right and the two of us stayed on the floor, with me sitting and Dean lying flat on his back. “You’re eighteen. You’re a legal adult. You could walk away and never look back. You could even go live with Bobby for a while if it’s money you’re worried about.”

“I’m not leaving.” Dean said, more to the ceiling than to me.

“Why?” I asked.

“I’m not leaving you.” Dean closed his eyes, almost like it would make the conversation less
awkward, less painful.

“I’ll be fine.” I said, “Come on…You and I both know if Dad ever hit me, I’d punch him back.”

“It’s not as easy as it sounds, Sammy.” Dean replied, “He’s strong. Plus, I’m not scared of that anymore. Well, I guess I am a little. But I’m more scared he’ll take you from me.”

“Take me from you?” Now I was really confused.

“You are still a minor.” Dean explained, his voice coming out ridged, “He could take you and leave and go anywhere. He’d have no legal obligation to tell me anything.”

“I wouldn’t let that happen.” I replied frowning.

“You wouldn’t have any control over it.” Dean opened one eye and looked at me, “That’s what being a minor means.”

“Oh.” I felt my stomach drop. Once again, Dean was sacrificing himself, his life, his needs, and his own safety for me.

“Can we talk about something else?” Dean asked. “I don’t want to talk about this anymore right now. Want to go practice your shot?”

“Yeah.” I replied, “That’s fine. Let me help you finish the laundry, first.”

“It’s not fair.” Dean’s green eyes sprung open.

“What’s not?” I asked, as I helped him up, noting the pout that now graced his face.

“You’re not ticklish at all.”

“Sucks to be you then.” I replied with a grin. And with that I reached up, grabbed the detergent and handed it to Dean.
Chapter 14

Dean

Dad didn’t let us go to Bobby’s for Christmas that year. I can’t say I was surprised after the way our last visit had gone. I was sure by the questions Bobby was asking and the way he hugged me when saying goodbye, he was beginning to suspect something was wrong. He was always affectionate towards both me and Sam, but that hug had been different. It was when he hugged me, he never wanted to let go.

Dad’s threats to me on our way home told me that he too suspected that Bobby knew something was off between the great John Winchester and his sons.

Or more primarily between myself and Dad.

I know that Dad and Bobby used to fight all the time about how often he left us, but that’s when we were really small, like eight and four. Dad back then still attempted to come off as a loving, caring father, despite being absent in our lives. He’d make up lies about stuff the three of us did together, like going to the park or to a baseball game. Sam was too little at the time to call him out on his lies. My role was to stand there, and lie too, delivering the lines Dad had rehearsed with me over the funny stuff that happened when we were at said places. Once, I forgot my lines, and stammered, looking at Dad hopelessly. Dad had just laughed, playing it off, saying that I’d stayed up with him watching movies the night before and that I got silly and confused when I was tired. Bobby didn’t seem to even notice my lapse. I however broke out into a cold sweat, panicking and knowing that as soon as Dad got me alone, I was going to be in trouble. And I was right. Once he got me alone, he grabbed me hard underneath my upper arm—there’s a killer pressure point there—and swore up and down if I didn’t play off that we were one big happy family he’d make me regret it. I had no doubts in my mind he meant it.

Anyway, I wasn’t surprised when Dad told us over breakfast we weren’t going to Bobby’s. I just nodded and went back to playing with my cereal.

Sam however went berserk.

“Why not?” Sam demanded, jumping up from his seat. “Why do you always have to be such a jerk! We love going to Bobby’s. You know that!”

“You’re not to talk to me like that.” Dad said his voice smooth and low, not even bothering to get up. “Keep it up and you’re grounded. No tv for all of Christmas break.”

“Like I’d even care.” Sam scoffed. “You’re the worst father ever!”

“Go to your room, Sam.” Dad said, “I’m leaving on a hunt soon. You get your tv back when I get back.” He sighed and then turned to me, “Dean, I’m be gone into next week. I think I have a lead on that demon—”

“So you’ll be gone for Christmas.” Sam cut in, “Figures. Not that that should come as a surprise. At least we have one gift.”

“Sam.” I said, shooting out of my seat, grabbing Sam roughly by his pj top, “Get the hell out of here. Go to our room. You’ve said enough.”

“But Dean,” Sam said, his voice turning into a whine, “He’s a—”
“Sammy!” I said sharply, staring at him, narrowing my eyes, giving him my best “shut the fuck up look”.

“Fine!” Sam snapped, pushing me off of him and storming down the hall. He then slammed the door hard.

“Sometimes he acts like such a kid.” Dad said laughing, motioning for me to sit back down.

“He’ll calm down.” I said simply. I felt like reminding Dad that Sam was only fourteen—he was a damn kid—but I knew it wouldn’t do any good.

“So I need to make sure that you’re healthy before I head out.” Dad said, taking a sip of his coffee.

“What?” I asked so surprised dropped my spoon with a clank.

“I just need to make sure you’re healthy before I leave,” Dad repeated, “I have to be focused on this hunt, Dean. I can’t be distracted worrying about if you’re sick or not. It’s a good way to make a huge mistake. So, are you fine?”

“Yeah.” I said, trying to hide my shock. Dad’s left plenty of times before when I’ve been sick and never once batted an eye. What made this time different? “I’m fine.”

“Good.” Dad said, getting up and clapping me on the shoulder, “I’m heading out then. I’ll call you in a few days.” He reached in his pocket and handed me a wad of money. “Dean, take it easy the next few days, but then you and Sammy get back to your training. We need to get back at it after the New Year. I’m going to need to start taking you back on hunts again. So I need you to be in top shape. I can’t be carrying your ass if something would go south.”

“Okay.” I said, getting up, and following him into the living room, knowing not to show any amount of excitement. Dad considered any emotions besides brutality when hunting a weakness.

“Be safe.”

“Take care of your brother.” Dad said, giving me a knowing look. “Don’t do anything stupid.” He picked up his bag before shutting the door behind him. I locked it and sighed, knowing I had to go calm Sam down. Shutting my eyes, I ran my hand over my forehead, mentally trying to go over a speech in my head what to tell him.

I knew the reason we weren’t going to Bobby’s was because Dad suspected Bobby knew about the way he treated me.

I also knew that if I told Sam that, Sam would blame himself.

I decided I was just going to tell him that Dad and Bobby got into a fight when suddenly I heard Sam’s voice.

“What are you doing?” He asked, his voice a dead giveaway that he’d been crying. I opened my eyes, looking at him.

Yep, I definitely had a crying Sammy on my hands.

“I umm…I was just thinking.” I answered, shrugging.

“I hate him so much.” Sam said, his arms crossed, “I hate him. I wish he’d go on a hunt and never come back.”
“You don’t mean that.” I said calmly, “Come on, Sammy. Don’t say that kind of stuff.”

“You can’t say you never thought it.” Sam spat, throwing himself down on the couch.

I looked away, studying a stain on the floor.

The truth was I hadn’t thought it.

Not really.

At least not the way Sam meant it.

Don’t get me wrong. Part of me always breathed a sigh of relief when I watched him walk out the door. It was nice to know I wasn’t going to be belted every time I turned around. The tense feeling in between my shoulders would disappear, and I’d instantly remember all the answers to the questions on whatever supernatural creature he’d been quizzing me on, only flunking moments before.

This part made sense. It was rational and reasonable to feel relieved when Dad left.

But then there was the other part.

The confusing fucked up part…the part where I actually missed him.

The part where I couldn’t wait for him to get back home.

The part of me where I hoped he’d open his eyes and realized I could be the son he wanted.

I could be a great son.

If he’d just give me the chance…I’d be whoever he wanted me to be.

When I was younger, and even sometimes now, I half expected him to come back from a hunt changed. I wanted him to remember that I was his son, the one he was supposed to love. I wanted him to give me a pat on the back, and tell me the last few years have all been a mistake. And could we please just start over.

But that never happened.

But yet, I waited. I waited and waited. I was fucking eighteen years old and still was waiting for my daddy to come home and tell me he loved me.

Like I was some sort of defective moron who couldn’t understand that putting your hand to a hot flame hurt.

“Dean.” Sam sniffed continuing his tirade, “How can you be so calm about this. Christmas is ruined.”

“We can have our own Christmas.” I said finally, “Like when we were younger.”

“Like when we were younger and you stole all those girls gifts and pretended Dad bought them?” Sam said, beginning to laugh.

“Well,” I said, feeling my ears reddening, “Like that, but better. I did get you something, you know.”
“I got you something too.” Sam said, grinning at me. “Do you want to do our gifts now? It’s not Christmas, but I have yours. It’s already wrapped and stuff?”

“It’s up to you.” I said, shrugging. “Yours is wrapped. I had to use newspaper.”

“I don’t care.” Sam laughed, “It’s the thought that counts.”

We both then took off towards the bedroom, with Sam going towards the closet and me ducking under my bed, both of us coming out with badly wrapped packages.

I was up first, handing Sam my gift I’d made for him. I’d gotten him a copy of *Huckleberry Finn* (well, stolen it from the library, but whose asking). The copy he’d had was the schools. I also made him a bookmark out of some metal I pounded down until it was micro thin, where I then topped it off by carving his initials. I kind of felt my gift was stupid-I would have bought him something if I had the money—but his face lit up into a smile, showing off his dimples as he unwrapped it.

Sammy’s gift for me couldn’t have been more perfect. He’d gotten me a fleece lined red and black flannel shirt. I suspected Bobby had a hand in paying for the shirt, but Sammy picked it out. He was really the only one who knew that red and black were my favorite colors.

“Thanks, Sammy.” I said, putting the fleece on over my tee-shirt.

“I got it kind of big.” Sam said, almost nervously. “I know you like it a little bigger.”

“It fits perfectly.” I said, holding out my arms, pleased that the flannel’s sleeve reached slightly past my wrists. It would definitely keep me warm on colder hunts.

Sam looked back at me, beaming.

Early the next day, I was woken up by the sound of pounding. Jumping out of bed, I quickly grabbed the shot gun I kept by our nightstand and raced out of the bedroom, closing the door quietly behind me. It was early. I could tell by the way the sun was barely shining through the window. I cocked the gun, remembering Dad’s line of “shoot first, ask questions later”, then peeked through the peep hole of our apartment door. Gasping, I flung open the door, shocked at who was on the other side.

“Are you planning on shootin me?” Bobby asked motioning towards the gun that was now resting at my side.

“What are you doing here?” I asked, stepping backwards, letting him in.

“Your brother called.” Bobby said, “Said your daddy was on a hunt. Figured since you guys couldn’t come to me, I should come to you.”

“Sam called you?” I repeated.

“What are you a damn parrot?” Bobby frowned slightly at me, “Can you put that gun down? You’re making me nervous.”

“Yeah.” I said, uncocking the gun and setting it down on the coffee table, “Sorry. Do you umm, want breakfast? I can make you bacon and eggs.”

“First get yourself in your room and put some socks on.” Bobby replied, “This apartment is drafty
as hell. You’re gonna get yourself sick again.”

“Alright.” I said, turning and heading towards my bedroom, stopping when Bobby called out to me again.

“And let your brother sleep. This was my idea to come. I wanna spend some time with just you. That kids gotten awfully chatty lately.”

“Tell me about it.” I said, rolling my eyes, “You’d think he was a chick.”

I could hear Bobby chuckling as I made my way into the bedroom, not bothering to even be quiet. Sam was snoring loudly. That kid could sleep through anything.

When I came back out into the kitchen—with my socks on—less than a minute later, Bobby was already standing at the stove, cracking eggs into a pan.

“What are you doing?” I said, going over and trying to take the spatula out of his hand, “I can do that.”

“Listen here, Mother Hubbard,” Bobby said, holding it away from me, “I have no doubts about your culinary cuisine. But I also have a feeling you’re slaving away over this stove more than you’re not, so sit down and relax for a few, okay?”

I sat down, knowing better than to argue with Bobby.

“So you’re looking better than the last time I saw you.” Bobby said, turning to face me, “You don’t look quite so pale.”

“I feel better.” I replied. “Thanks for taking care of me.”

“You got it, kid.” Bobby said smiling at me. He finished the eggs, setting them off to the side, getting out the bacon.

After Bobby and I finished breakfast, he pushed his chair back, telling me he wanted to give me my gift. I protested, wanting to wait for Sam—we always opened our gifts together—but Bobby shook his head.

“I want to give this to you in private.” Bobby said firmly, “I know it’s tradition for you and Sam, but I felt this could just be between us two. Give me a minute.”

Bobby left the kitchen for a moment or two, and then reappeared with his present. As per Sam and I, his was also wrapped in newspaper.

“Open it.” He said eagerly, sitting down next to me.

I looked at Bobby before eagerly tearing open the package. A colorful quilt fell into my lap. Bobby’s gotten me some pretty cool gifts over the years…but an old quilt was not something that I was expecting. I looked up at him in confusion.

“It was your moms.” Bobby said softly. “She had it on her bed when she was a teenager. When your parents moved from their old apartment I stored a ton of stuff for them in my attic. They took most of it. I was up there the other day, cleaning out some stuff and I found it. I figured you’d want to have it. It was like it was left there for you to have.”

“It was Mom’s?” I whispered, instantly feeling my tears filling my eyes. I ran my hands over the
quilt, tracing the patterns of the squares with my fingers.

“Yeah.” Bobby smiled gently, “It was hers. I want you to have it and always remember how much she loved you, Dean. She loved you more than she loved anyone. I never thought that type of love actually existed until I saw her with you. She told me once that you were the reason she was put on this earth in the first place. Just to be your mom.”

With that my tears began falling, hard and fast. I knew my mom loved me, but hearing Bobby say it and his giving me her quilt meant the world to me.

“She’d be so proud of you.” Bobby continued, “Of everything you’ve done and of who you are. She’d be proud of the goodness of your heart, of the empathy you have for other people. She’d be proud of your bravery, of your inner strength. She’d be proud of how well you’ve taken care of that brother of yours. She’d be proud of the man her little boy is becoming.”

I knew everything Bobby was saying was true. Not so much the parts about me being a good person and all. But I knew that my mom would be proud of me. I knew that without question. The only feeling she’d ever given me was one of love and warmth and complete acceptance. Even when I made mistakes, she corrected me, but always told me how much she loved me.

I missed her so much.

“I want you to always remember that.” Bobby continued, “I want you to always remember how proud she’d be whenever you’re havin a hard day or feelin down. I want you to remember her smiling at you. Remember how she used to rock you to sleep every night. Remember how the two of you used to take walks to look at the moon. Remember her tellin you how much she loved you.”

“Thanks, Bobby.” I whispered, getting up to hug him, holding the quilt between us.

“I’m proud of you too.” Bobby said, hugging me hard, “I couldn’t be prouder of you if you were my own son. You changed my life kid…for the better. I was closed off to people before you came along. You opened my heart up.”

“Thanks, Bobby.” I said, my voice muffled into his shirt.

“No, thank you Dean.” Bobby replied. He kissed the side of my head and released me just in time for Sammy’s shriek of delight as he entered the kitchen.

Sometimes that kid has the worst timing.

Damnit Sammy.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

So I'm thinking of including a chapter from John and/or Bobby's POV. What do you guys think? Do you have a preference? Let me know.....

Sam

There was a small part of me that thought Dean would be angry with me for calling Bobby and inviting him over to the apartment. I knew that I’d screwed up at Thanksgiving, and although Dean swore up and down that the reason we weren’t going to Bobby’s was because he and Dad got into a fight over a hunt, I knew it was a lie.

Dean has a telltale when he lies. I’ve never told him this of course. I’ve learned over the years to use it for my own personal little brother lie detector machine. It’s actually kind of funny…he always runs his tongue slightly over his top lip then blinks twice, before delivering said lie. So when he did both before he launched into a crazy story, I knew he was lying his ass off.

However, the look on Dean’s face though when I entered the kitchen this morning cancelled out all my worries. Dean looked as though he’d been crying, but he also seemed calm and relaxed.

“What are you holding?” I asked, after giving Bobby a hug, gesturing to the blanket Dean was clutching for dear life in his hands.

“It was Mom’s.” Dean said, looking at me. “Bobby gave it to me.”

So, that was the reason for the tears.

“It’s nice, Dean.” I said, reaching out to touch it. Dean looked like he wanted to pull it away from me, but he resisted. I only allowed my hands to graze the quilt for a second or two before pulling away, awkwardly crossing my arms.

“I got something for you too Sam.” Bobby said, reaching down and handing me a big bag. “I didn’t wrap yours. I figured you didn’t care.”

“It’s fine.” I said, opening the bag, pulling out several books. “Aw, Bobby, you’re awesome. Thanks, man!” Bobby had gotten me several books I’d been itching to read. “How’d you know which ones?” I asked, when I saw one of them was To Kill a Mockingbird. I haven’t talked about this one since last summer?”

“Every time you tell me about a book you want to read I write it down.” Bobby shrugged, “That way I remember. You have another few coming for your birthday. I figured I might as well split them up. If I would have brought them all with me today I’m not sure my car would have made it here.”

Bobby stayed with us for three days before heading out. The three of us had an excellent time together. He helped us spar—Dean was anxious that Dad would know we had been slacking—and even helped Dean learn a new pin (one where he could use his quickness to overcome my growing
He began teaching me Latin so I could help Dad with exorcism spells, then provided me with a bunch of resources so I could continue on my own. Bobby praised me because I picked up on the language right away. He tried to help Dean too of course, but it didn’t go over very well. Dean fumbled over the words, stuttering and stumbling over the pronunciation, unable to repeat after Bobby. Finally, he ended up throwing the book Bobby had been referencing across the room, declared he was even too stupid to be a hunter, then stormed off, slamming our bedroom door so hard the wall shook. Bobby, being Bobby, gave him a few minutes to calm down, before going in to talk to him.

I’m not sure what was said, but they both returned a little bit later. Bobby with a mirror in one hand, Dean with his face flushed, obviously embarrassed. Dean took a seat at the kitchen table, taking the mirror from Bobby. Bobby put his hand gently on my brother’s shoulder, then began saying the Latin words in somewhat of a rhythmic chant. Dean watched him carefully, holding the mirror up so he could see both their faces. Dean then repeated the words back to Bobby, almost perfectly. Dean’s face broke out into a huge grin, a smile bigger than I’ve seen in a long time. Bobby simply smiled back, and patted Dean on the back before winking at me. I was pretty intrigued with his technique, so when Dean jumped into the shower later, I asked Bobby about it.

“There are different types of learners Sam. Some people learn by just opening up a book and reading, like you and I do. Others can just hear the information once or twice and it sticks. Others learn by doing or maybe seeing. Some people are a mixture of two or more. Dean’s a doer and he’s damn observant. He learns from experience. He has to work with his hands to get the concept of something. That’s probably why he’s so good at hunting and is great with cars. Once he gets something, he really gets it. So I figured the best way to teach Latin to someone with Dean’s learning style is to have them watch my mouth move first, and then have them watch their own mouth move. Like a copy and repeat method.”

“Pretty smart.” I nodded in approval.

“Your mom was like that.” Bobby said, “She was smart as hell, but struggled in school. She was fantastic at art. She used to say to me she learned far more from pushing her hands through a lump of clay, than sitting around in history class. I was always the opposite, so I never really understood what she meant until I got older. But now I get that education isn’t fair to people who learn differently. Or to those who see the world differently.”

“That makes sense.” I nodded. “And that does sound a lot like Dean….Do you think that’s why he had such a hard time in school? Because he learns differently?”

“Yeah.” Bobby nodded, “I do. I also think your brother needed support your dad wasn’t willing to get him. When he was little he couldn’t ever sit still. Your dad of course had his own way of dealing with that, but—”

“What do you mean?” I asked, frowning.

“Sam.” Bobby reddened, clearly realizing he’d opened a subject he’d rather not discuss. “Let’s not go there.”

“You opened the door.” I argued, “So you have to tell me now.”

“What kind of harebrained logic is that?” Bobby asked, trying to laugh off my sudden change in demeanor. I however didn’t answer. I just crossed my arms and glared at him. Bobby sighed, “You can’t bring this up to Dean. I doubt he remembers. It was a year or so after your Mom died. You have to understand it was a bad year. Dean struggled tremendously. His behavior was all over the place. He started acting up at home and at school. You know, bouncing off the walls,
unable to sit still, just pretty much all over the place. I remember once watching the two of you around this time. I actually pleaded for him to take a nap, offering him ice cream if he lay down for a half an hour. I didn’t think it was possible for someone with such little legs to move so fast.”

“Okay?” I shrugged. “What’s the big deal? He’s like that now? He’s still pretty fidgety. I don’t think he sits still unless if he’s sick.”

“I guess after a few incidences in school one of Dean’s teachers recommended he see a therapist. John was pissed, but he also didn’t want to appear like a negligent Dad. He was busy hunting that damn demon. Dean was already failing first grade. The school was already on your dad about Dean’s weight and spotty attendance record so John sucked it up and took him to one. Anyway, this big wheel shrink said that Dean was hyperactive or whatever. The shrink said that Dean was having trouble controlling his body on his own. He said that the hyperactivity and the loss of your mother was too much for your brother to handle and suggested puttin him on meds. Your daddy was pissed when he heard that. He was determined to fix Dean all on his own.”

“Okay…” I said, not liking the sound of any of this.

“I tried to reason with him, sayin that maybe the boy just had excess energy he needed to burn off and that he was missin his momma, but John told me in some not so nice words to mind my own business and that he’d deal with it.”

“What did he do?” I asked, knowing that Bobby was stalling which meant that whatever it was Dad did to my brother couldn’t be good.

“He used to tie him down to a chair using his belt. Dean would be screamin like he was on fire, tryin to get loose and your daddy would refuse to let him up until your brother calmed down. It was awfully hard to watch. I’d try to reason with that stubborn idjit father or yours. Normally I’d be able to talk him into lettin Dean go, or Dean would wear himself out.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” I snapped, slamming my hand down on the table, “You let him do that?”

“Sam.” Bobby said, his eyes growing wide, “Look, I wanted to knock some sense into your dear old dad, but I also knew if I did that, he’d take you boys. I didn’t want that to happen. Your dad would have taken you both and run.”

“I can’t believe this.” I said, running my hand through my hair, tears stinging my eyes. I wiped them away just in time to see Dean come back into the room, his hair damp, zipping up his faded blue hoodie.

“What’s wrong, Sammy?” Dean asked, giving me a smirk, “Your favorite daytime soap cancelled?”

I was so distraught by the news Bobby just told me, I simply grabbed Dean, pulling him into a hug.

“Hey,” Dean continued, struggling slightly, trying to get out of my grasp, “I’m sure you’ll find another way to cry out all your girly feelings. Just look in the mirror. If that reflection looked back at me, I’d burst into tears without a doubt.”

“Shut up.” I said laughing, shoving him away from me.

“Face it Sam.” Dean said, “You may have gotten the brains, but I got the good looks.”

“You have the good looks.” I said, correcting him.
“At least you admit it.” Dean grinned, ducking behind Bobby, who grabbed him pulling his hood over his head.

“Jerk.” I said shaking my head, realizing he’d tricked me.

“Bitch.” Dean replied with a laugh, before shooting off into the kitchen, with me chasing close behind.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

John's POV. This was really tough to write. I guess though he deserves a voice, as unfair as it is. Thank you for your opinions.

John

After getting home late a few days after Christmas, I made a quick stop in my son's room, checking in on them, watching as they slept.

I couldn’t help but notice the way they slept showed their personalities. Sam, my youngest always sleeps on his back, snoring loudly. Per typical, he was facing the ceiling, his chin up right without question, without hesitation. That’s pretty much how he greets me on a daily basis. He constantly will challenge me, meeting me eye to eye, nose to nose, not once looking away or backing down. Sam was my pistol. He argued with me every moment of every day, starting from the second he learned to talk. I swear if I said up, he’d say down just for the hell of it. No matter what I said or did, he wanted the opposite. He was more like me than either one of us would ever want to admit. He didn’t care what I thought or said; he did what he wanted so do without even glancing in my direction. Part of me admired his strength and determination, and the other half of me wanted to ring his neck.

Despite being difficult attitude wise as a teenager (or really from ages 6 onward), Sam was actually a really easy baby. He was happy, drank his bottles without problems, and slept consistently throughout the night. I guess you could say that he started his stubbornness out early because he passed up his due date by a week and a half. Mary actually had to be induced for the kid to be born. He was born healthy; a whopping ten pounds four ounces; and with enough pudge that it’s a shame he couldn’t lend some to his much thinner, much smaller older brother. I remember holding Sam at about a month old thinking this was how babies were supposed to be.

It’s no secret to anyone who spends more than five minutes with us, Sam and I argue quite a bit. Anything I think is important he thinks is pointless or unnecessary and vice-a-versa. I always felt however I had a great bond with Sam from the time he was born. Whereas Dean always seemed to shy away from me, Sam seemed open to anyone. I sometimes wondered if Mary wouldn’t have died, or even if she hadn’t died like she did, if my relationship with my youngest would be different. Maybe I would have had time to appreciate the fact that he loved school so much. I at least hope I would appreciate that. Even though I didn’t have the time to celebrate Sam’s successes in academics, I was still proud of him. It was nice going into a parent teacher conference and have the teacher rave about how bright your kid was for a change. I definitely would have loved going to his soccer games, gotten into practicing and running drills with him. Most times when I looked at Sam, I wished things could have been different. Especially between the two of us. I actually think we would have been a pretty good team.

I really feel if we would have been a normal family, Sam would also have been mine. Every parent has a favorite child and every child has a favorite parent, despite what they might tell you. Mary already claimed Dean as hers. She did from the moment she laid eyes on him. Truthfully, I’ve never felt a strong bond with Dean, other than when I was making him follow my orders. So, I
felt if I had had the chance, Sam would easily have been my pick, been my favorite.

Shaking my head sadly, I turned my attention towards my oldest. Dean was the opposite of his brother. Whereas Sam slept stiff as a board and snoring, Dean flipped and flopped throughout the night. His slight hissing gasps for air could be heard just slightly in between Sam’s snores. Typically, Dean slept on his side, curled up into a ball, as if he were trying to protect himself. I guess in a way he was. I know I’ve done more than enough damage to that boy’s psyche to last him a lifetime; both physically and emotionally.

Dean was my own personal puppet. I could pull his emotional strings easier than I could tie my own shoes. I could make him feel like he was the best son a man could have, or lower than a piece of shit on the bottom of my shoe. After Mary died, he became my outlet for my pain; my own personal punching bag. Somehow, kicking my own son’s ass made me feel better. Gave me a sense of control over the fucked up life we were living. When I really thought about it, which I didn’t often, I knew I hit and beat the boy too much for his own good. I used to feel bad, even sometimes still do, but after feeling remorseful, there I would be the next night slamming him around the room again.

It wasn’t totally my fault. Dean wasn’t completely innocent. He stole the most precious thing I’d ever owned from me. He’d taken Mary from me. When Mary and I’d met, we were so in love. We couldn’t get enough of one another. We could spend all day and all night in one another’s arms. We never ran out of conversation. We never ran out of stories. Then she got pregnant.

It was a difficult pregnancy from the start. Lots of morning sickness. She couldn’t keep her weight up. She was bed ridden for the last six weeks of her pregnancy due to the baby’s heartbeat. Even after all of this, Dean was born early. He only weight 4 pounds. His lungs were underdeveloped and he had to be put in an incubator and attached to all of these machines. We were given a pretty grim diagnosis, told that it was likely our son wouldn’t make it past the first week. Mary never once shed a tear. She simply looked at Dean, barely visible underneath all his medical wires and tubes, and said very calmly that he’d be fine.

From that point on, Dean became her everything. Her life became about getting him healthy and keeping him healthy. Once she was able to hold him, she hardly ever put him down. When we were finally allowed to bring him home, she spent the entire day rocking him and singing to him. She convinced me to pull the crib into our room, so that she could keep her eye on him. Dean had awful colic, so he cried throughout the night. I was functioning on little sleep and a ton of frustration so Mary and I began arguing a lot. When I finally convinced her to allow him to sleep in his own room, mainly for my own sanity, she’d spend half the night sleeping in the rocking chair by his crib.

I’ll admit I had a hard time bonding with my oldest. Dean would cry whenever Mary would hand him to me and wouldn’t settle down until she took him back into her arms. She’d claim it was because Dean could tell I wasn’t comfortable, but I had my doubts. As he grew, Dean clung to his mother, often hiding behind her when he saw me, watching me, as if assessing my mood before attempting to make any sort of contact. Maybe he knew I was jealous of him from the start. And because of that I was dangerous to him.

Besides being jealous of my own kid, I also was embarrassed of having such a small, weak son. He never seemed to grow fast enough, put on weight fast enough, or stay healthy long enough. It seemed to me every time I planned on doing something with him he’d start wheezing, or would come down with a fever. Mary would then coddle him more and I’d once again be ignored.

Things got worse as Dean grew. All my friends, who had boys, were doing all these fun things
with them. Normal father-son things, like playing ball or going camping. And there I was with a boy who was making regular trips to the hospital for one infection or another. Or who’d rather sit around drawing pictures with his mommy then learn how to kick a soccer ball, or hit a home run.

It also didn’t help that Dean was such a pretty kid. With his golden floppy hair, emerald green eyes, and long eyelashes, he looked like he was plucked out of a movie somewhere staring the world’s most beautiful people. Whenever I’d bring him around the auto shop, my co-workers joked that he was pretty enough to be a girl. I’d laugh, but inside I felt like bashing my fist through wall. Finally, after one particularly jabbing day, after taking a three year old Dean to work (on Mary’s insistence), I sat him down on top of the countertop in our bathroom and buzzed off his blonde mop. Needless to say, it didn’t go over well. With Dean or Mary.

“Daddy.” Dean whimpered, once I was finished, pointing a shaky finger into the mirror. “Who’s that little boy in the mirror? Why’s he copying me?”

“That’s cuz it is you.” I snapped.

“But why do I look so funny.” Dean turned to look at me, his lip trembling, his green eyes standing out more than ever.

“I gave you a boy’s haircut, Dean.” I said, not even trying to hide my annoyance, “You’re three years old now. Time to start acting like a man. You’re a marine’s son. This is how you’re supposed to wear your hair, not like some damn little girl.”

“But I don’t like it.” Dean cried his voice hitching. “I want my hair back, Daddy! Put it back on!” Dean reached down, grabbing a lock of his hair and tried placing it back onto his head. When it fell off he tried for a second time. When it fell off a third time, he just lowered his face into his hands and cried.

“Stop acting like such a damn wimp.” I roughly grabbed Dean off of the counter top, pinned him against my leg, and spanked him hard. This only caused him to wail harder, and jump around on one foot.

“You’re hurting me!” Dean gasped, trying to pull out of my grip, “Daddy! Stop! Ouch!”

Somehow, Dean managed to wiggle free and took off to his room. I followed him, swearing after him to get the hell back here. I got there just in time to see him slid under his bed.

I dropped down on all fours and tried to reach for him, but it was no use. I could barely get my shoulder’s under the bed. Dean was plastered against the wall, sniffing and crying. When he started pleading for “Mommy”, my heart skipped a beat.

I was going to be in for it big time if Mary knew I hit the damn kid.

“Dean.” I said, changing my tactics, knowing I had to now buy the kid off, “You have to come out.”

“Not till Mommy comes home.” Dean pressed himself as far back from me as he could, “You’re mean. I want Mommy. Mommy doesn’t hit me.”

“Dean.” I was beginning to panic. It wasn’t the first time I’d hit him when we’d been alone. The first time, he’d ran into Mary’s arms the second that she’d gotten home, pointed a finger at me and demanded she put me in time out. When Mary asked what for and Dean explained that I’d hit him, Mary charged past me, locking them in our bedroom upstairs. Once Dean was asleep, she laid into me, her words hitting me like daggers. I’ve never seen her so angry. I swear she didn’t speak
to me for two whole weeks. I was completely miserable.

I finally resorted to begging for her forgiveness. She made me apologize to Dean, and explain that I was wrong. I did of course, but only to get back into her good graces. Truthfully i felt no shame in hitting him. To be truthful, I couldn’t even remember what it was over. All that mattered to me was Mary forgave me. What she didn’t understand though was that it made me resent my son even more.

It also didn’t stop me from hitting him afterwards. Normally I was able to buy him off with a miniature toy car or an ice cream cone, or something. He seemed to want peace between Mary and I just as much as I did, so he didn’t say anything. Part of me thought maybe he’d forgotten by the time Mary had gotten home.

“Please come out.” I said, hoping this time would be no different, “I’m sorry I hit you. I think I have ice cream in the fridge. Do you want some? I know Mommy bought chocolate sauce.”

“Are you still mad?” Dean asked, his voice shaky with hesitation.

“No.” I said, “I’m not mad anymore. I also was thinking we could play with your cars after your ice cream….what do you say?”

“Okay.” Dean said after several minutes of quiet, “But no more hitting. Hitting hurts.”

“Deal.” I said, moving out of the way so Dean could slide out from under his bed.

I fixed us both a bowl of ice cream, feeling Dean’s eyes on me at all times. I know I should feel badly that he had such fear when he looked at me, but to be truthful I didn’t. It made me feel powerful. Like I was somebody.

“Daddy?” Dean asked, as we were sitting down to eat, his spoon raised in the air.

“Yes?” I asked, shutting my eyes, hating that his fists were so small they barely gripped the bowl the right way.

“Why do you hit me so much?”

“Because I need you to be a good boy, Dean.”

“Oh.” Dean fell quiet for a minute, before he looked at me and grinned, “I can do that. I can do that for you, Daddy. I promise I’ll be the best boy for you ever.”

Dean and I were sitting on the floor playing cars when Mary came home. Per normal, once he heard her keys in the door, he quickly abandoned me and ran to her, jumping in her arms, kissing both her cheeks.

“Dean…” Mary said, pulling him away from her slightly, “What happened to your hair?”

“Daddy cut it.” Dean said, taking one hand and running it through his now buzzed style, “He said I gots to be a marine guy’s son now. It’s time for me to be a big man.”

“Did he now?” Mary asked, her eyes turning to ice as they focused on me.

“Cuz I’m not a girl.” Dean continued, “But that’s silly. I know I’m not a girl cuz I have a pen—”
“John.” Mary set Dean down, “Can I see you alone for a minute?”

“Do I really have a choice?” I asked, trying to smile. I’m sure it’s already assumed that my smile was not returned.

“Mommy, I want to color with you.” Dean said, reaching out for Mary’s hand.

“We will.” Mary bent down and kissed Dean on his forehead, “Mommy has to talk to Daddy first. Then we can color all you want. For now, why don’t you go draw me a picture on your own, then I’ll be in in a few minutes.”

“Okay.” Dean said, turning and walking into the kitchen without hesitation.

“What the hell did you do to Dean?” Mary asked, turning to me, her face full of rage.

“I was tired of people calling him a girl.” I shrugged, “I just gave him a proper haircut. It’s about time he started looking and acting like a boy anyway. No more of this drawing and lollygagging around.”

“No one calls him a girl.” Mary snapped, “And since when is drawing and as you put it “lollygagging around” something boys can’t be interested in? He’s three years old. He’s your son. You should love him just the way he is. If you can’t do that, we need to make some major changes.”

“Are you seriously threatening me?” I half laughed, completely shocked that she’d gotten to this point over a stupid haircut.

“If you want to see it that way. Don’t make me choose, John.” Mary looked straight into my eyes, “Because trust me, you won’t like my decision.”

I’ll never forget that night. The night that my wife, who I loved more than anything, told me without batting an eye, that she’d choose her three year old son over me.

I guess in hindsight I should have seen it coming. Known that when I ran into the nursery that night, when I heard my beloved wife screaming for help, that the name that would grace her lips wouldn’t be mine. Even though she could clearly see me, and our eyes locked she yelled out the one name that clearly meant the world to her before being engulfed into flames; Dean.
Bobby

I never wanted kids. My daddy was a mean son of a gun. Scary as all hell sober, and then ten miles south of there drunk. Hell, I’ve faced down demons less scary then him. He beat both Mama and I pretty much within every inch of our lives, resulting in something that…well, that’s another story.

Anyway, I decided in my early twenties I didn’t want kids. I was terrified I’d do to my own kid what my daddy did to me, I was scared shitless that I’d follow in my daddy’s footsteps, just like my daddy had with his daddy. I swore up and down that the ugly cycle of abuse in the Singer household would stop with me.

I ended up getting married. My wife Karen didn’t want kids for similar reasons. We were only married for two years before she was possessed by a demon. Once again, that’s another story… But as a result I became a hunter, settled into a life where I was decently content. It just seemed like I was meant for the single guy life. Hunting things, coming home, sleeping it off, then getting up to do it all again. I had no ties to anyone, didn’t care about anyone. Didn’t have to worry about anyone.

That all changed the moment I met Dean Winchester.

Mary had been my friend since grade school. We’d grown up next to each other and always gotten along well. After high school and she married John, we stayed in touch, seeing each other every so often. She and Karen got along well. I can’t say the same for John and me…I don’t know…I just never trusted the guy. I always felt he was possessive over her. I tried telling her once that I thought John was not good for her, but she just got angry, came back at me with some biting comments, so I dropped the subject.

Anyway, when Mary called and told me I was going to be an uncle, I literally felt my heart sink. She had no siblings to speak of and I knew I was the closest thing she had to a brother, so I didn’t want to break her heart with my whole, I don’t want to be around kids speech.

I knew that it had been a bad pregnancy and that once the baby had been born, it had been a rough ride. Mary had kept me posted with Dean’s health, updating me on his progress and setbacks. I stayed away from the entire situation, using the excuse of not wanting to give him any germs from all the hunting I was doing.

That all changed however the day Mary called me and told me she and Dean were on their way to visit. I could never say no to Mary, so I hurried around my place, cleaning up, realizing halfway through that Dean was an infant and that he wouldn’t be able to walk.

I thought my heart was going to burst out of my chest when I opened the door and Mary stepped into my kitchen holding what looked like a tiny package, wrapped up in a green blanket.

“Hi Bobby.” Mary said softly. “Thank you for letting us come over. I wanted you to meet the most important person in my life. This is Dean,” Mary slightly untucked the bundle in her arms, “Dean, my sweet boy; this is your Uncle Bobby. He’s going to always take great care of you.”
“Hi Dean.” I said softly, feeling like I should speak to the kid, mainly because Mary was staring at me with those big eyes of hers. As I looked at the baby, my first thought was how little Dean was. Were all babies this small?

At the sound of my voice, Dean turned his head. He slightly opened his eyes, and let out a small cooing sound. His little fists moved slightly and before I knew what I was doing, I took my finger and lightly touched his hand. Dean yawned then fell fast asleep.

“Mary…” I whispered, looking up into her eyes, “He’s beautiful.”

“I know.” She beamed at me proudly, “Isn’t he perfect?”

From that point on I was completely sold on Dean Winchester.

“Uncle Bobby!” Dean yelled running into the kitchen at full speed, running and diving into my arms, “I missed you!”

“I missed you too, kid!” I said grinning, my bad mood from the hunt I had the night before instantly lifting, “Where are your parents? Or did you drive yourself here?”

“They’re coming.” Dean laughed, “I’m three. I can’t drive yet, silly.”

“You’re gettin to be so big though!” I said lifting Dean slightly in my arms and then pretending to drop him. I then lowered him upside down to the floor. He giggled uncontrollably as my dog Tonks came up and licked his face, “You’ll be driving in no time.”

“Hi Mommy!” Dean said, waving at Mary who’d just come into the kitchen. I pulled Dean back up right just in time to see John enter, looking agitated.

“Glad to see he found his best friend.” Mary said smiling, walking over to kiss me on the cheek, “He was asking about you all day.”

“Well, I was waitin all day.” I said smiling.

“You really have to get out more, Bobby.” John replied, taking Dean out of my arms and putting him roughly on the floor.

“No,” I said, glancing at Mary, who was frowning at her husband, “I’ve been around enough people to know Dean’s one of the best.”

John responded with a short laugh, before he said he was going on a walk, ignoring Dean whose arms were stretched out towards him.

“Mar…” I began.

“I don’t know why he’s like this.” Mary said softly, glancing at me.

I wanted to say something comforting, but could come up with nothing, so I scooped up Dean and tossed him up onto my shoulders. He instantly burst into giggles, which made Mary smile.

“Look how tall I am, Mommy.” Dean said, waving at her. “Maybe one day I won’t be so little anymore. Daddy will play with me then.”
Mary’s smile instantly fell off her face. She reached up for Dean who slid off my shoulder, wrapping his arms around his mother’s neck.

“Dean…” She said softly as Dean curled up in her arms, “Listen to me…you’re perfect the way you are…okay? Mommy and Uncle Bobby couldn’t love you anymore than we do now. You’re our best guy.”

“I love you too, Mommy.” Dean replied, giggling as Mary lightly tickled his knees, “I love you Uncle Bobby. Can I go play with Tonks, now?”

“Yes.” Mary gave Dean one more kiss before putting him down and he raced off to find Tonks.

Once Dean was out of ear shot, I turned to Mary, who was looking beyond pissed.

“Do you want to talk about it?” I asked taking a few steps back. When Mary looked like this, there was no guarantee she wouldn’t start swinging.

“I could kill John.” She snapped, “I’ve tried talking to him. I don’t know what his problem is.”

“Mar, is he always like this with Dean?” I asked. The few times I’ve seen them together, John seemed to pretty much ignore his son.

“I can’t talk about this now.” Mary said gesturing towards Dean who had come back into our line of vision, bouncing a ball with Tonks.

“Why don’t you just leave him, Mary?” I asked softly, “I’ll help you.”

“I’m pregnant.” Mary looked at me for a second before her eyes fell. “We just found out.”

When Mary died, things seemed to go to shit. John and the boys came to live with me for three months. John wasn’t doing well. He was drinking a lot, and had begun to do research on the demon that killed Mary. I helped him because I wanted revenge too, but honestly I could have cared less what happened to John Winchester. Like I mentioned, I never cared for the idjit.

On the hand, I was very worried about Dean. He lost a ton of weight, and let’s face it, the boy had little to lose in the first place. I’d do anything short of beg him to eat. He began to look sicker than I ever remember him looking, and began nodding off at the dinner table, I’m assuming out of exhaustion from lack of nutrients. John seemed unconcerned, and would merely lean over shaking Dean’s chair, causing the poor kid to jump in shock. I began to crush vitamins up into Dean’s milk, hoping that would at least help a little bit. I’m surprised to this day, John never found out.

The only time the boy seemed remotely happy was when he was with Sam. In fact, for the first couple of months, the only time I can even remember Dean smiling at all was when Sam was around. He guarded his little brother as though his life depended on it. He’d sit next to Sam for hours, shaking a rattle in front of him, refusing to leave his side for more than ten minutes at a time. Sam was such an easy baby. He hardly ever cried, after all was too young to really know what had happened, but it was easy to see that Dean was his favorite person. Whenever John and I would take care of Sam he’d smile at us, but the second he’d see Dean he’d let out a loud cooing sound and would just start to clap his hands. I actually think the reason Dean made it through that time at all was because of Sam.

But Sam couldn’t fix everything. The lively, energetic, talkative, little boy I’d grown to know and
love disappeared. I don’t know if it was the shock of being there when Mary died, or the shock of losing his momma in general, but Dean just stopped talking. I mean stopped talking as in went completely mute. No matter how much I soothed or how much John barked, Dean just wouldn’t talk. I’m not one for shrinks and all that babble, but I actually began thinking John should take his oldest to one. I was trying to think of how to bring the subject up to him one morning at breakfast when the asshole started in on Dean, in his typical militant barking way.

“Dean!” John snapped, ignoring his son’s flinch, “I asked you a question. Do you want cereal or pancakes for breakfast?”

Dean just looked up at him, blinking slightly before pointing at the cereal I’d set out for him on the table. I automatically reached for it, but John grabbed it out of my hands.

“No.” John snapped, “You say it or you don’t get it. There’s nothing wrong with your voice. There’s nothing wrong with you at all. You need to speak. For fucks sake, Dean. As if you don’t have enough problems, now you’re a freakin—”

“John!” I cut in, glancing at Dean, “You idjit… Come on, the kid just lost his momma. He—”

“What’s he going to do?” John turned towards me, “Not talk the rest of his life?”

“He just needs time.” I pressed, “You know how close they were.”

“You don’t have to remind me.” John snapped, getting up, and storming out of the kitchen, slamming the kitchen door behind him.

“Balls.” I muttered, turning towards Dean, who was watching me, his eyes huge and fearful.

“It’s okay, Dean.” I said. I poured him a bowl of cereal, and lightly patted him on the head.

“Thanks, Uncle Bobby.” He whispered softly.

I paused for a second, before whispering back, “You’re welcome, Dean.”

As the boys grew, I kept my mouth shut more than I wanted to over the way John was raising them. I was scared if I gave my opinion too much, he’d take them and I’d never see them again. I’ll admit there were times after they’d left that I’d be kicking myself for letting things pass. I felt like an ass. I didn’t agree in the slightest bit how John was raising either of them. It was different in both their cases, but wrong just the same.

Sam and John always seemed to be at one another’s throats, arguing about everything. The favorite battle was always about school. I always found it odd that Sam would be the one pushing the importance of education on his father. It seemed backwards to me. I admired Sam for taking his academic career so seriously. John of course would call him a sissy. Then in typical idjit fashion would throw in a guilt trip about the importance of finding the demon that killed Mary. Sam never seemed phased though, and would just argue back. The two of them would continue until Dean stepped in, telling Sam to walk it off. John would then start muttering his complaints to me. I tried talking to him a couple of times that Sam could have a different life away from hunting, but John didn’t want to hear it. He basically told me to shut the hell up and Sam was to do what he was raised to do.

Truthfully, what always worried me about Sam is the fact that he and John are so similar. They are
both so headstrong and stubborn neither one of them is ever willing to give in to see anyone's side but their own. Although Sam is more compassionate than John, he could be cruel. I've heard him throw some nasty comments in Dean's direction over the years. And even though I'm not lovin on John, Sam’s even thrown some insults his way that made me shudder. I also knew the kid was angry. I knew he hated moving around so much. I knew he hated hunting.

Dean on the other hand, seemed to embrace the hunting lifestyle. He was quick on his feet and was eager to learn the ins and outs of the business. He had amazingly accurate aim when it came to shooting. Hell, the kid shot better than I did. It worried me though that he was so talented. I had no doubts that John would waste no time in taking him on difficult hunts. As a hunter, I knew the job significantly lowered your life expectancy. I wanted Dean to live to see his twenty-first birthday. And then his thirtieth, and his fiftieth.

From about the ages of five until maybe sixteen, Dean was always showing up looking run down and sick. Most times John dropped them off he had some awful chest cold. I had to score the kid antibiotics more times than I can count. He ran more fevers than anyone I've ever met. Sometimes Dean’s fevers shot up so high in the middle of the night that Sam would wake me up and we’d have to put him into a tub full of ice just to bring down his temperature. I can’t tell you how awful I felt doing so. Dean, who would be pretty limp by this point, would wake with a jolt, screaming in pain, panic, and shock. The sounds he made still echo into my nightmares. Sam would whimper alongside his brother, collapsing to the floor, pleading for me to make it better. It always broke my heart to put them through this. I couldn’t help but think if Mary was around she would have done better.

Although I did understand that Dean was just a kid who was prone to getting sick, I felt certain infections were worse than they needed to be. I often felt like John waited too long to recognize how sick Dean really was, and Dean in turn would deny how ill he felt. I made it a goal to stay on top of his health whenever I could.

What really concerned me out of everything was Dean and John’s relationship. When he was younger, Sam used to moan and groan that Dean was John’s favorite because he spent the most time with him. I never told Sam, but I doubted that was the case. John spent time with Dean training him. It wasn’t good quality time that I’m sure Dean, as well as Sam, longed for. By the age of six, John had turned Dean into a perfect little soldier, barking out commands that would be followed without question.

I can’t say that I ever remember Dean arguing with John. I’m someone who believes it’s normal for growing kids to state their opinions when the time is right. But, with Dean, it was almost like he was afraid to. He never stepped out of line like normal teenagers do. He rebelled a few times against me, but we kept that between us. Then there was the noticeable personality change in Dean when John was present. As they grew up, a lot of time was spent just the three of us. Sam always made himself at home with ease, settling in with a book from my library. Dean was always shy at first, watching me carefully, very contradictory to his younger self. Eventually, he’d begin to relax and the two of us would joke around. Man, the kid was funny. He had a great sense of humor and killer timing. I truly enjoyed his company. We bonded over our love for cars. Each time they’d come over, he’d ask me if we could go work on one in my lot. We rarely talked about Mary, but when we did, he’d ask me questions, like if his mom’s favorite color was yellow (it was) and if she liked eating ice cream when it was snowing (she did) just like he remembered.

The second John would reenter the picture however, Dean would immediately clam up, tense up, and shut up. Dean hardly ever took his eyes off of his daddy whenever they were in the room together. And it always worried me.
And then Sam started asking me all those questions…and my fears began to grow.
Chapter 18

Dean

“I’m scared, Dean.” Sam whispered next to me, as we followed Dad into the grave yard late a few nights after the New Year.

“Don’t be. It’s just a salt and burn.” I shivered slightly, not out of fear but from being cold. Even though I had on a tee-shirt, Sammy’s fleeced flannel, and my winter coat zipped up to my chin, I was still freezing.

Actually I was fucking freezing.

Sam and Dad were each only in a tee-shirt and unzipped coat, both of them looking comfortable. I was immediately jealous they both managed to maintain their body heat easier than I did.

“But what if the ghost gets us?” Sam asked, his voice wavering.

I sighed, a bunch of thoughts, running through my head.

\textit{god damnit Sammy.}

\textit{Pull yourself together.}

\textit{Dad’s going to eat you alive if he thinks you’re scared.}

I glanced at him, planning to tell him at least one of the above notions, when I looked into his fearful eyes, and then I remembered.

\textit{Sam’s fourteen.}

\textit{My baby brother’s only fourteen.}

\textit{He’s just a little kid.}

“I promise nothing will happen to you, Sammy.” I said, low enough that Dad wouldn’t hear me. “That’s why there are three of us. One of us will keep watch, while the other two dig up the grave. Besides, I would never let anything happen to you.”

“I know.” Sam reached down, grabbing my wrist, “But what if something gets you? What do I do?”

“You get your own bedroom.” I said, nudging him, “You always wanted that, right? Just don’t paint it pink.”

“Not funny.” Sam replied, but he was laughing.

“Dean!” Dad said sharply, making me jump, “You and Sam will dig. I’ll keep watch.”

“So we’re doing all the work?” Sam cut in, “How am I not surprised.”

“Yes.” Dad replied, handing Sam his shovel, “I’ve dug enough graves in my time. It’s time to get your hands dirty, son.
“You just want to be the boss.” Sam said stubbornly.

“It’ll be fine, Sam.” I stepped in between the two of them. Sam looked at me before sighing and nodding.

“This sucks.” Sam muttered to me as we started to dig.

“Not now.” I mumbled, “Just dig, okay?”

Truthfully, I normally hate digging graves mainly because it’s boring as hell and it’s hard on the shoulders, but this time I was just glad to finally be warm.

It took me and Sam a good hour and a half to dig up the grave. Dad got frustrated with us and started pacing back and forth, hissing threats that I knew were directed mostly at me. Sam kept glancing at me and I knew it was killing him not to completely snap out. When we finally finished, Dad completed the job, burning the bones into ashes.

Once the three of us were back in the car, Dad began his lecture of how he had to do more strength training with us. I just closed my eyes listening to his list of complaints. Sam suddenly started snoring and I had to bit my lip to keep from laughing. I guess all that digging had tired him out. As I leaned back to check on him, to make sure he was okay, Dad reached out and grabbed my ear, twisting it hard. I wasn’t expecting it, and it hurt like fucking hell, so I gasped. Dad just laughed, let go of me and kept driving. I turned away from him suddenly feeling something inside me break.

Most times, when he hurt me, he at least had a reason.

I screwed up,

I fucked up,

I let Sammy down…

This time however, he had no reason.

I knew that digging graves took a while. Hell, it took long when Dad and I did it. It had taken me and Sam a little over an hour. It was his first dig, so I considered that pretty damn good.

Dad’s tweaking my ear was just to do it.

There was no reason for it.

He just did it because he wanted to hurt me.

He was my dad and he wanted to cause me pain.

I just wanted to not feel anything at all.

I needed to not feel anything at all.

I felt like I was going to burst.

A few hours later I found myself stumbling into the bedroom, drunk as hell. Dad had dropped Sam and I off before heading for the bar himself. Sam had fallen asleep right after he showered. I on
the other hand showered, and then lay in my bed, listening for the familiar sounds of Sam’s snoring. Once I knew he was passed out, I eased myself out of bed snuck into the kitchen. From there I took four shots of straight whiskey, topping it off with a beer. I felt great. I jogged around the neighborhood, and then I sat outside, daring Dad to come home. For the first time in forever, I felt no fear or concern what he might do to me. I actually wanted him to come home. At least if he hit me now, I knew it wouldn’t hurt.

I felt nothing.

Finally I got bored and decided to head to bed. Everything would have worked out perfectly if I hadn’t tripped over my own shoes. I went flying, tumbling to the floor, grabbing onto the nightstand on my way down, tipping it over with a loud crash.

Sam, who normally could normally sleep through a war, sat straight up.

“Dean!” He yelped, “Is that you?”

“Yeah...” I mumbled, “I umm, I was going to the bathroom, and I fell.”

“You okay?” Sam was up and out of bed, flipping on the overhead light switch before I could convince him otherwise.

“I’m fine dude.” I picked myself off the floor, not able to stop myself from swaying. Next thing I knew, I face planted onto the carpet. For some reason, this cracked me up.

“What’s wrong with you?” Sam asked, dropping down next to me. He pulled away from me, gasping slightly, “Dean, are you drunk?”

“So what if I am?” I asked, sloppily picking up the nightstand and lamp, almost knocking it over for a second time.

“Because we don’t drink?” Sam asked, staying on the floor, as I crawled into my bed.

“Maybe you don’t.” I replied with a wink.

“Are you saying you do?” Sam asked. “Why?”

I just responded by laughing at him.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Sam asked, sitting down on my bed.

“Nope.” I replied. I reached out and patting Sam’s hand, “You’re so cute, Sammy. Always wanting to talk. You’d make a good therapist. You should check into that. Maybe you could have your own tv show one day. Or you could write a book! But you’d have to read it to me, cuz I wouldn’t be able to read it myself.”

“Dean...” Sam sighed, as I continued to crack up.

“Maybe you can figure out why Dad hates me so much.” I continued, “You know, I do everything he asks and he still hates me. You fight with him all the time and you’re the favorite. How’s that even fair, Sammy?” I was talking too much and knew it, but couldn’t stop. I couldn’t shut up.

“You know, I wish I just would have died with Mom. Things would have been so much better.”

“Don’t say that.” Sam said. I could hear the emotions in his voice, but I was too far gone to care.

“No more sick stupid Dean for you.” I said, sitting up and pinching Sam’s cheeks. I’m pretty sure
I launched into singing, “Bye Bye Miss American Pie”, but I would really like to pretend that I didn’t. Couldn’t I have at least picked something from Metallica or Led Zeppelin to preform?

“Stop, Dean.” Sam said, pushing me back down onto the bed.

I fell silent and kept humming away random songs. That’s when the wave of nausea hit me. I opened my eyes in a panic, before throwing my hand over my face. The whole freaking room was spinning around me. I’d never been on a boat, but I was pretty sure this is what it felt like.

“Sam…” I said quickly, “I’m gonna be sick.”

Sam wasted no time in grabbing me, pulling me upright. He half carried, half dragged me into the bathroom, just in time for me to puke my guts out into the toilet.

“What’s wrong with you?” Dad asked, frowning at me over breakfast the next day. Because of the late night, Dad wanted us to have breakfast for fuel before we began training. However, I was just staring at my cereal, doing everything in my power not to hurl all over the table.

“He has the flu.” Sam said quickly.

“You are looking a little green.” Dad frowned, reaching out to feel my forehead, but I flinched so badly he quickly withdrew his hand. He sighed heavily, and I knew instantly I’d messed up. “I was really hoping you would have grown out of all these health problems by now, Dean.”

“It’s not like it’s his fault.” Sam said jumping to my defense.

He seemed to forget that this time actually was my fault.

I was the idiot who drank himself to the point of having a massive hangover.

And as badly as I felt now, I couldn’t say I wouldn’t do it again.

For a short time last night I had no feelings at all.

And it felt fucking great.

“I just don’t know what to do with you, Dean.” Dad sighed heavily.

“How about letting him rest today?” Sam asked, “He can’t train like this.”

“I wasn’t going to make him train today, Sam.” Dad snapped, “Look at him. Do you think I want to deal with a puking kid all day long?”

“It wouldn’t exactly surprise me.” Sam continued, crossing his arms. “It’s not like you haven’t pushed him before when he’s been sick.”

“Stop, Sam.” I mumbled, rubbing my temples with my hands.

“Well, I’m going to just start loading you up with vitamins.” Dad reached out squeezing my shoulder. His voice sounded too loud to my throbbing head, “I can’t keep dragging around a sick kid all the time. If you want to be a hunter you have to be healthy.”

“Okay.” I closed my eyes, hoping that both of them would just shut the hell up for once.

I couldn’t deal with a fight right now.
“Why don’t you just go to bed, Dean?” Dad suggested, “You’re really looking awful.”

I did as I was told, happy to obey his orders for once. How Dad didn’t know I was hungover, I had no idea. I figured he had to have been still a little drunk himself not to notice.

Sam came into our room a few minutes later, to grab his jacket.

“You okay?” He asked, coming over to my bed, handing me water.

“I feel like shit.” I replied taking it from him, taking a small sip.

“Dad said we are just going to the library. Finally, something I can do. I guess he wants my help researching a case. I shouldn’t be too long.”

“That’s great Einstein.” I muttered, pulling the pillow over my head. I was relieved I wouldn’t be around their little study group today. What the hell would I have done? Sit around in the kiddie section looking at pictures?

“When you’re better we need to talk things, Dean.” Sam said. I groaned into my pillow, glad I didn’t have to look at Sam with his frowning disapproving face.

“Great…can’t wait.” I mumbled.

Sam sighed before leaving me to deal with my misery. I tossed and turned, unable to get comfortable and unable to shake off the awful feeling of the hangover. I had no idea how Dad was able to function like this day in and day out.

Finally, after it was clear I wasn’t going to be able to sleep this off, I pulled myself out of bed and went into the shower, trying to wake myself up and shake off the general shit feeling.

I leaned my head against the wall, letting the water run over my back and shoulders feeling them lessen in tension slightly. As I ran my hand over my sides, I felt where my skin was scarred from being hit there so many times.

I knew my back was worse.

I knew it had to be bad.

I’d been sliced and diced there too many times for it not to be.

I never touched my back with my hands.

When I showered, I used a washrag. I wore layers so in the rare case someone would touch me, they wouldn’t feel the damage that was done.

I shuddered, feeling sick but not from the hangover.

I just didn’t want to think about the raised welts that were surely tattooed into my flesh by this point. I was branded, marked forever as a failure and disappointment.

I always worried how I’d explain things once I found someone that I loved, or would love me—if they could that is—how I got so mutilated there. I’d have to make up some big lie, other than ‘my daddy beat me’. If it was another hunter, maybe they’d buy an epic hero stories. Witches curse maybe?

I sighed, swallowing some water then spitting it out into the drain. For some reason, when I
thought like this, about a future with someone, my thoughts always traveled back to Donny.

I don’t know why.

It wasn’t like we were ever anything.

Not really.

Besides, I was supposed to like girls.

I was supposed to be straight.

Hell, if I was into guys Dad would…

Well, I’m into girls, so it doesn’t matter anyway...
So, Dean’s drinking really threw me for a loop. I was shocked that he’d even consider drinking besides the typical teenage just experimenting with taste. He knew better than anyone what an awful, mean, scary drunk Dad could be. In fact, I clearly remember Dean, who had to be no older than nine at the time, dumping Dad’s beer down the drain, and me asking him what he was doing. I remember this moment clearly because it’s the first time Dean communicated with me like I wasn’t a little kid.

“De?” I asked, going over to my brother who was standing in the bathtub barefoot, dumping out what I thought at the time was my father’s juice. “What are you doing? Why are you doing that to Daddy’s juice?”

“Cuz it makes him mean, Sammy.” Dean said, crinkling his nose and looking at me. “But you can’t tell him you saw me getting rid of it.”

“Why not?” I asked, crossing my arms, my annoying questioning side starting to show already.

“Cuz I’ll be in trouble.” Dean sighed, tossing the last of the bottles into a plastic bag before turning on the water, flushing the excess “juice” down the drain, “I just need to take care of us. This juice makes Daddy mean.”

“But if it makes him mean, why does he drink it?” I asked, confused.

Dean paused, before climbing out of the tub, sitting on the edge of the tub. “He doesn’t know it makes him mean.” Dean said slowly, reaching out for a towel to dry off. “He doesn’t know it makes him into a mean Daddy.”

“Is that what makes Daddy yell so much?” I asked, something clicking in my brain.

“Yeah.” Dean nodded, pulling on his socks, “That’s right.”

“He scares me when he yells.” I said, shivering.

“Me too, Sammy.” Dean nodded, “That’s why I had to get rid of the juice.”

“It’s monster juice.” I reasoned.

“I guess it is.” Dean grinned, “You’re so smart, Sammy.” He patted me on the head, before slipping on his shoes and taking the bag of empty beer bottles outside to get rid of the evidence.

I shuddered slightly, not able to imagine the terror Dean must have felt when he was trying to explain things to me, knowing he was going to get knocked around the moment Dad could get him alone.

I also had to wonder if it was a regular thing. Had Dean been drunk before and I just hadn’t realized? I tried to replay the last few weeks in my head as our conversation from the other night echoed through my thoughts.

“Dean, are you drunk?”
“So what if I am?”

“Because we don’t drink?”

“Maybe you don’t.”

Did he mean that he drank? And drank regularly? Dean had been acting strange. But I couldn’t fault him. I don’t know how I’d be acting if I were him. Losing Mom, taking care of me, hunting, dealing with Dad…I’m sure I wouldn’t have handled any of it with half the bravery that Dean had. But then there was the heightened anxiety, and the weird eating habits, now the drinking…had my brother just been pushed to his breaking point?

“Sam!” A voice broke through my thoughts, “Yo, Sam.” Trevor, a kid in my class, suddenly appeared next to me, reminding me I was in school, “Dude, the bell rang.”

“Sam?” Trevor said now waving his hand in front of me, “You going to lunch?”

“Yeah.” I cleared my throat, getting up, “I’m starving, how about you?”

“Me too.” Trevor agreed as I followed him out into the hallway. We were on the soccer team together and had always gotten along. “You looked really lost in thought there. You alright?”

“Yeah.” I grabbed my lunch from my locker. “It’s just stuff with my big brother.”

“Ugh.” Trevor shook his head, “Big brother troubles are the worst. Mine’s such a pain. I hate him. He never stops picking on me. I swear he was put on this earth just to annoy me. He’s such a jerk. How about you?”

“Dean’s not a jerk.” I said, “He’s just…Well, he’s definitely not a jerk. He actually takes pretty good care of me. My dad’s away for business a lot.”

“Where’s your mom?” Trevor asked, confused.

“She died when I was a baby.” I said.

“I’m sorry man.” Trevor frowned, and then did what people normally did when they hear about Mom. He looked incredibly uncomfortable.

“It’s okay.” I shrugged, “I don’t remember her. Dean does though. He and my mom were really close.”

“He must miss her a lot.” Trevor said, “I’m not really close with either of my parents, but that has to be rough….Your brother’s the one who comes to our games?” Trevor asked, “The one with the jean jacket?”

“Yeah.” I nodded, “That’s him.”

“Oh.” Trevor nodded, “He seems cool.”

“He’s my best friend.”

“You’re lucky.” Trevor grinned.

“Yeah,” I said, forcing a smile, trying even harder to swallow down my concerns, “I guess I am.”
When I got home from school, I found Dean sprawled out on our carpet, sound asleep. The guns I’m assuming he’d been polishing set next to him, the rag still clutched into his hand. As much as I wanted to talk to him about the drinking thing, he looked so peaceful. I sighed, deciding not to wake him.

I sat down next to him, opened my backpack and began doing my homework. I was halfway through my history reading when Dean stirred. He started muttering in his sleep. I never told him but he talks in his sleep quite a bit. Normally it’s a lot of mumbles, but periodically he’ll be clear enough that I’ll understand what he’s saying. I hear Mom’s name a lot, normally followed by a whimpered, “don’t leave me”, or “come back”. I’ve also known him to roll over, sit up in a dead sleep and ask me if I’m okay or where I am. He actually used to really freak me out because when I was younger I thought he was talking to me. I think that’s how I became such a deep sleeper. I had to be to block out his incessant babbling. Anyway Dean talked incoherently for a few minutes before he sat up with a start, looking lost and panic stricken.

“Hey.” I said, clearing my throat, trying to reign him back in. “Dean, you’re fine. It’s just me, Sam.”

“Sammy…” Dean turned to me, looking confused, “What are you doing home?”

“Schools over.” I shrugged, “Just doing my homework. You were sleeping.”

“What time is it?” Dean asked, grabbing my wrist, looking at my watch. “Sam! It’s five o clock!”

“Yeah?” I shrugged again. “So what?”

“Dad’s going to be home!” Dean shot up and raced out of the bedroom.

“Okay…” I said following him, watching as he frantically filled a pot with water then put it on the stove, turning the knob up high.

“Why’d you let me sleep?” Dean asked, turning towards me, his cheeks flushed, “Do you know how much trouble I’m going to be in if he comes home and dinner isn’t ready?”

“I’m sorry.” I whispered my heart beginning to race immediately. How could I have been so careless? I knew when Dad wasn’t hunting he came home at five, typically picking up hours at the local auto body shop. And I knew he expected dinner on the table immediately. As bad of a mood as Dad was when he was hunting, he was even worse when he wasn’t hunting.

Dean looked at me for a minute, turning away from me, staring at the pot on the stove as if that would make it boil faster. That’s when we heard the front door open and heard Dad’s voice call out to us that he was home. Dean turned to me, fear completely etched into his face.

“Hey boys.” Dad said, coming into the kitchen, tossing his work bag to the floor, “What’s up?”

“Hey, Dad.” We both said at the same time. I felt like crying as I glanced at Dean, who was staring at the unset table.

“Dinners not ready?” Dad asked, frowning as he too focused on the table in the middle of the room, “What the hell Dean?”

“I umm…” Dean’s cheeks flushed, “I’m sorry. I umm…I…I’m working on it now. I just lost track of time.”

“Hopefully doing something useful.” Dad crossed his arms, “What were you doing Dean that
made you lose track of time?”

“I ummm…I fell asleep.” Dean mumbled, his eyes noticeably dropping to the floor.

“You fell asleep?” Dad’s voice came out booming, “So, let me get this straight…I work hard all day, taking some time off of hunting to get some extra money for this family. All I ask of you is to take care of your brother and to have dinner ready to go at five. So you show your appreciation by falling asleep? What the hell Dean? What if Sam wouldn’t have come home on time? What if had needed you? Oh, that’s right, you would have been having naptime.”

“I…” Dean’s cheeks flushed, “I’m sorry. I’m working on it now.”

“Come on, Dad.” I said, stepping forward, trying to block Dean from Dad’s line of vision, “Nothing happened. Nothing is going to happen. I always come straight home. Unless I have soccer practice. Or prearranged agreements with you. Besides, I’m home early enough. I could always help with dinner.”

“Shut up Sam.” Dad snapped, brushing past me, as he now cornered Dean between himself and the stove. “Why do you have to constantly let me down, Dean?” Dad continued, “I swear you have to try to be this big of a failure. I’m starving. I worked hard all freaking day. Now, I here I am, home, ready to have a nice dinner with my family, and now it’s not even ready.”

“I just need the water to boil.” Dean said, his voice growing higher than normal, “It’s just mac and cheese. It won’t take long.”

“How about this…” Dad said, grabbing Dean by the collar of his tee-shirt, “I promise you will stay in your room the rest of the night. No dinner. You can’t make mine on time then you don’t get yours at all.” With that he shoved Dean into the hallway before reappearing alone.

“Dad, come on.” I said, jumping to my brother’s defense, “He just messed up. It happens. I should have woken him. I’m the one who let him sleep. It’s my fault just as much as it is his.”

“Stop it, Sam.” Dad said, “He’s gotten too irresponsible for his own and your own good. He needs to get his head back into the game.”

“But, don’t you think Dean’s looking a little on the thin side?” I asked, trying a different tactic. “I don’t know if making him skip a meal is really that healthy. We’ve been training so hard…I think it’s better he puts on as much weight as he can.”

“I don’t care, Sam.” Dad said, pouring the macaroni into the pot of now boiling water. “I said, no dinner and I meant no dinner. Besides, your brother’s always been on the small side. I doubt skipping a dinner is going to really make a major difference.”

“Well then if he’s not eating, I’m not eating.” I said stubbornly, crossing my arms. I wasn’t sure what I was exactly trying to prove with this sudden hunger strike, but I felt I had to do something.

“Do whatever you need to do.” Dad said, “Then you can go to your room and stay there too. But you’re both still getting up at five to go running.”

“Whatever you say.” I shrugged, walking out of the kitchen, and then booked it to Dean’s and my room.
I was lying on my bed, when Sammy came crashing into our room, slamming the door behind him.

“What are you doing?” I asked, sitting up.

“If you don’t eat, I’m not eating.” Sam declared stubbornly. He flung himself down on his own bed, staring up at the ceiling, “He’s such a jerk.”

“Sam.” I sighed, “Come on. You should go eat.”

“No.” Sam sat up, frowning at me.

“Just because he won’t let me doesn’t mean you shouldn’t. I screwed up. You’re growing. Just go get some dinner.”

“You’re the one who needs to eat.” Sam shot back. “You’re getting too thin.”

“I’m fine.” I said, turning away from Sam in frustration, “Just go out there, apologize and get some dinner, Sam.”

“No.” Sam said. Even though I didn’t see him, I knew he was in full pout mode.

“Why do you have to always be so stubborn?” I groaned, burying my face into the wall.

“Me?” Sam snapped, “Look who’s talking. You’re the most stubborn person I know.”

“Shut up, Sam.” I snapped back.

Skipping a meal really was no big deal.

At least not for me.

I’ve skipped enough of them over the years to know how to turn off the need for food.

Sure, when I was younger it sucked.

Those were really only the few times I ever remembered hating Sam. He’d just sit there, eating his dinner, after whining to me how hungry he was, not noticing that the more he ate, the more I starved.

But it wasn’t his fault.

He was always more important than I was.

Then somewhere along the line something changed.

I began to enjoy the fact that I could have the mind control to simply not be hungry.

It made me feel like I was stronger than everyone else.

And, I actually began to thrive in it.

Dad didn’t realize it, but his “punishment” really was just a boost to my own ego.

How I might not have much, but I did silently have a little bit of control over what happened to me.
I must have fallen asleep at some point because the next thing I knew, I was being pulled out of bed by a pair of large rough hands I recognized quickly as my father’s.

“Don’t make a sound.” He muttered in my ear, motioning toward a sleeping Sammy.

Like he really still had to tell me at this point to keep my damn mouth shut.

Once he pulled me from the bedroom and into the lit hallway, he wasted no time, in taking me down, shoving me to the floor and holding me there. I tried my hardest not to think of my face smashed onto the carpet. Who knows how long it’s been since the last time it was cleaned?

“I don’t know how many times I have to tell you.” Dad breathed heavily into my ear, “You have to be ready to be attacked at all times. When you’re on a hunt, whatever creature you’re going after isn’t going to give you a warning. You and I are going to do drills.”

“Now?” I asked stupidly.

“Now.” Dad hissed. He yanked me back to my feet, and then led me outside, pushing me into the impala before getting in himself.

“What about Sam?” I asked, as Dad turned on the car and reversed it so quickly I flew forward, just barely missing hitting my head on the dashboard.

“You didn’t seem to care too much when you decided to take a nap in the middle of the afternoon.” Dad snapped, “Besides, I gave Hank a key. He’ll be over in less than five minutes.”

I fell silent, knowing not to argue when Dad sounded like this. He wasn’t drunk, and I knew that that meant he was thinking clearly, which in some ways made him even more dangerous.

At least when he was drunk, I had the hope that he’d pass out eventually. Sober, he could go as long as he wanted to.

Dad pulled up to where we normally trained and parked the car. He was out and by the passenger’s side before I had a chance to even think.

“Get out!” He barked.

I made it about a fourth of the way out of the car before Dad grabbed me by the collar of my shirt, yanking me hard the rest of the way.

“Laps.” He said, “Now.”

I began running, knowing better than to ask how many.

I just finished my fifth lap when Dad suddenly dove on me, tackling me to the ground.

“Fight for fucks sake.” He snapped, pinning me to the ground with little to no effort. I struggled to get up, but he held me down, pinching hard at my shoulders, then jamming his elbows hard into my ribs.

“Stop!” I managed, choking slightly.

He responded by practically lying on top of me, crushing me with his weight. I started to wheeze as he took one hand, raising my chin forcing me to look at him.
“You and I are going to do this every night until you learn how to fight.” Dad snapped, spitting all over my face. “You’ll do this in addition to your training with Sam. I’ve obviously been too soft on you. Don’t count on eating much until you figure this out. Do you hear me?”

“Yeah.” I said, trying not to show how badly my chest was aching.

“Good.” Dad snapped, “I better see an improvement, Dean. You’re going to help Hank with research throughout the day. He already knows you can’t read, but the guy has zero common sense, so at least I can count on you for something. Everything else though…I swear I don’t know where I went wrong with you.”

“I’ll do better.” I said, locking eyes with him for as long as I dared. I knew that was the only way he was going to let me up.

To show him strength and determination even though I was fucking terrified.

“Good.” Dad rolled off of me, slapping me hard on the stomach, “Now…You have more laps to run. Get up and get moving.”

We made it home a few hours before our alarm clocks were supposed to go off. Hank was sound asleep on the couch, snoring loudly. Dad simply muttered to get some sleep, and began making coffee. He didn’t have to tell me twice; I was more than happy to escape to my room. After checking on Sam, I laid on top of my bed, not even bothering to shower or get undressed.

Surprisingly, as tired as I was, I wasn’t able to fall asleep. Besides, sometimes when you’re as tired as I was, it’s worse to go off of no sleep vs little sleep. When the alarm clock buzzed I jumped up, going over to Sam, gently shaking his shoulders, knowing it would take a few times of coaxing for him to get out of bed.

“Deeeeann.” Sam mumbled, pulling the pillow out from under his head and throwing it over his face, “Come on. Give me five minutes.”

“Five minutes.” I agreed.

I headed into the bathroom to splash some water on my face, hoping to shake off the exhaustion that was already beginning to settle in. I figured out I could manage maybe a few hours of sleep once Sam left for school and Dad left for work before Hank come and got me for whatever the hell he needed help with. I frowned as I glanced in the mirror at the brush burn that had popped out over my cheek. There was no way Sam wasn’t going to notice it.

Sure enough, once I finally got Sam out of bed, wielding him awake which required my entire body strength to shove him onto the floor, his eyes widened when he saw my cheek.

“Dean!” He gasped, “What happened?”

“I guess you’re kind of past believing that I fell?” I asked, raising my eyebrows in hopefulness. Sam’s response was to just glare at me.

“Boys?” Dad interrupted, thankfully breaking Sam’s gaze. I had to give it to my little brother. He definitely had the glaring thing down. He looked so angry it was creepy. “Are you almost ready?”
“Well, gotta go, Sam.” I said, sliding off of his bed, “You better get dressed.”

“Damn it, Dean…” Sam sighed heavily.

“See you in the car, loser.” I replied, and then scooted out the door before he could stop me.
Sam

Dean’s been in a really bad mood lately. I’m not really sure why. He’s just been really short tempered lately, snapping out at me over the smallest things. Things he’s never cared about before. Like when I accidentally forgot to rinse out my bowl after dinner, or like today when I left my history paper at home. I hardly ever forget my homework so I was shocked when I called him, and he swore at me over the phone.

“As if I don’t have enough shit to do today Sam.” Dean snapped, “For fucks sake. Can’t you just for once make it through the day without having to have me hold your hand?”

“What’s gotten into you?” I asked, turning away from the school secretary, “Forget it. I don’t need it that badly. I’ll just get docked the points.” And I meant it. I had a solid A in that class. A few points wouldn’t hurt me.

“No.” Dean snapped, “I’m not going to get blamed for you being anything less than freaking perfect. I’ll be there in fifteen minutes. Be outside. I don’t have time to wait around all day for you.”

“Dean—” I began, but I was cut off by the dial tone as Dean hung up on me.

Sighing, I hung up the phone. In all my years of knowing him, Dean had never hung up on me. Not even the time I snuck out of the house to go to the library in that snow storm when he specifically told me not to.

“Is everything okay?” The secretary asked, looking at me with little to no concern.

“Yeah.” I said, swallowing my concern for the moment, “My brother’s coming to give me my paper.”

“Alright.” She turned back to whatever she was working on and I left the office.

Luckily, I had lunch next. Trevor offered to go outside and wait with me, so that’s what we did. Dean was true to his word, and showed up, paper in hand about fifteen minutes later. The look on his face was one of complete agitation. What struck me though was the fact that he was limping slightly.

“Here.” Dean snapped, practically slamming my homework into my hand, “Try not to be so forgetful next time.”

“What’s your issue?” I asked, forgetting Trevor was standing next to me. “I didn’t forget it on purpose.”

“What’s my issue?” Dean turned to face me, “My issue is that I’ve got a tone of crap I need to do today before Dad gets home. Because you forgot your homework, I’m running behind. You know how it goes when things aren’t done on time.”

“Just tell him I forgot my homework.” I said quickly. “Or I’ll tell him.”

“Yeah.” Dean scoffed. “Just go back to school Sam.” He then turned and limped away.
“So that’s the great big brother you were raving about?” Trevor asked, after Dean was a safe distance away.

“He’s not normally like this.” I said frowning, “Something has to be bugging him.”

“I guess you know him best.” Trevor shrugged.

“My dad’s a real hard ass.” I blurted out, all of a sudden feeling the need to defend my big brother, “He’s always been super tough on Dean. He’s always chewing his ass out about something. I’m sure my dad yelled at him or something. That’s probably why he’s in such a bad mood.”

“That sucks, man.” Trevor shook his head, “Parental problems are no fun. Mine really don’t pay me much attention. They are always doing their own thing. It sucks. I’m sure whatever is going on with your dad and bro sucks too. Either way sucks.”

“That’s for sure.” I sighed. “It does suck.”

That was the understatement of the century.

When I got home later that day, Dean was sitting on the couch, a book in his lap, his face buried into his hands. He was so engrossed in what he was doing he didn’t even look up when I walked in.

“What are you doing?” I couldn’t help but ask, dropping my backpack by the coffee table and sitting next to him on the couch.

“What’s it look like?” Dean snapped, looking up at me, his face splotchy and his eyes red rimmed. It was obvious he’d been crying.

“Umm…” I wasn’t exactly sure how to answer that question.

“Dad says I have to read a couple chapters by the end of tonight.” Dean said, “He’s going to quiz me on them. He says I better get the answers right.”

“But Dean…” I cleared my throat, unsure how to approach what I know we were both thinking, “You umm…Dad knows you can’t…He…knows…”

“He knows I can barely read?” Dean snapped, slamming the book shut. “Yeah, he fucking knows. Why do you think he told me to do it? He knows I can’t do the academic stuff. He just wants to remind me how stupid I am.”

I wanted so badly to tell him that Dad didn’t think that. That Dad had forgotten how hard Dean struggled with reading and comprehending what he’d read and remembering facts. That he’d just been stressed so it had slipped his mind. But I knew that that was a lie. Dean was right. Dad did ask this of him to make him feel stupid. He couldn’t get to him physically, because although Dean was small and sick, he was strong. Dean was a force to be reckoned with when it came to the physical side of hunting actually because he was so small and sick. Not even Dad could argue with that. So he went after something Dean couldn’t help.

“I’ll read whatever it is to you.”

“Cuz that isn’t humiliating.” Dean snapped, “Having my little brother read to me.”

“Yeah, but you’ll shut down Dad.” I shrugged. “It’s one of my favorite goals in life. It’ll probably
make you feel pretty good.”

“I have to start dinner.” Dean replied getting up and limped away from me, the book left on the couch. I glanced at the title, realizing how truly insulting Dad was being. Dad had given Dean a book that was made for probably a ninth grade reading level about different types of monsters.

“I’ll read, you cook.” I said, jogging after him. I made a mental note to ask him later about the limp. I knew now wasn’t the time.

“Whatever.” Dean muttered. “I’m supposed to read chapters one through three. It’s like thirty pages, but I’m still on page five.”

“I’ll just start at the beginning.” I began, sitting down, “That way we can talk about it and try to figure what Dad’s going to ask you.”

“It’s a stupid book.” Dean muttered, as he began boiling the water and pulled a jar of spaghetti sauce out of the cabinet.

Dean was right. The book was stupid. It was just facts on different monsters. My head began swimming by the second chapter. I’m someone who considers themselves very good with facts, but the book gave so many of them, it was hard to keep them straight.

“Just stop reading, Sam.” Dean looked at me, his green eyes dropping in what I saw as embarrassment, “I have no idea what you’re talking about. I’ll just take whatever punishment he’s going to dish out.”

“It’s not you.” I said, “It’s the way it’s written. It delivers too many facts without anything to remember them by. Plus, it jumps around too much in the dates. I don’t know how someone even got this thing published.”

“Don’t lie to make me feel less stupid.” Dean snapped, stirring the sauce.

“I’m not.” I looked up at him bewildered, “Dean, I’ll even tell Dad myself.”

“Yeah, cuz that’ll be—” Dean was cut off by Dad’s loud voice announcing he was home. Dean sighed, turning away from me.

“Deannnoo.” Dad said, coming into the kitchen, tossing his work bag to the corner of the room, “I’ve been thinking about you all day…did you do your reading assignment?”

Before Dean could reply I jumped in. “Dad, that book was ridiculous. I read it to Dean. There’s no way any one could remember anything from that book.”

I glanced up at Dean, hoping to see a small smile of reassurance on his face, but all he was doing was hanging his head, with his eyes shut tight. Dad on the other hand was laughing.

“Aww.” Dad got up, putting his arms around Dean’s shoulders, “How cute. Isn’t that sweet, Dean…your baby brother had to read that big scary book to you…I guess he knows about your little…problem?”

“I told him a while ago.” Dean mumbled, the tips of his ears turning red.

That’s when I realized what was happening. This had been Dad’s plan all along. There was no quiz. In fact, I don’t believe Dad ever intended on quizzing Dean. Sure, he probably would have kicked his ass if Dean admitted he didn’t/couldn’t read the stupid book, but it was a setup. Dad
just wanted to embarrass my brother.

“How’d that make you feel Sam?” Dad asked, further proving my point, “You’re always so big on the academics? How’d it feel to find out that your super hero big brother isn’t great at something you value so much?”

“I honestly don’t care if he can read. It doesn't change how I look at him. ” I glanced at Dean, trying to catch his eye, but he refused to look at me. He was blushing hard now, all the way down to his neck. Suddenly, I wanted to hurt Dad as bad as he hurt Dean. And I knew the exact pathway to take. And there was nothing that was going to stop me from taking it. So, I took a deep breath and went straight for my father's jugular. “Actually I think it says more about you than it does Dean.”

“How so?” Dad asked, pulling his arm off of Dean’s shoulder, and frowning at me. He was clearly interested in what I had to say, but at the same time, was trying not to look like it.

“I’m just asking what type of father allows his son to struggle in school like you let Dean? I mean, I don’t know much about Mom, but I do know she wouldn’t have allowed this to happen. I think she’d be really angry if she knew you’d let him go through school like you did. She wouldn’t be ashamed of Dean at all. She’d be ashamed of you.”

I knew as soon as I said it, I hit the nerve I was aiming for and that I’d struck the right one. Dad was completely red. He was breathing hard and his eyes were full of rage. I braced myself, waiting for the attack. I think part of me even hoped for it. I wanted him to attack me physically like he had my brother, because unlike my brother, I’d hit him back.

Maybe Dad knew that. Or maybe he really just didn’t want to hit me. I’m not really sure. He just turned around and walked right out the door, slamming it so hard behind him the whole apartment shook.

Dean on the other hand was just staring at me, his mouth hanging open. I got up to get a soda from the fridge, popping it open and taking a swig. I sat back down, and glanced back up at Dean who hadn’t budged.

“What?” I asked, mimicking one of his famous smirks.

“I can’t believe you said that to him.” Dean breathed his eyes wide.

“It’s true.” I shrugged, “I don’t think Mom would have ever let you go through school like Dad did. She loved you way too much.”

“I know that.” Dean said, almost brushing the fact off like it was common knowledge, “I just can’t believe you said what you did to him.”

“It’s about time someone did.” I responded, “I can’t believe that no one has before. What about Bobby?”

“He doesn’t know how badly I did in school.” Dean swallowed, still not taking his eyes off of me, “I mean he knows I had a hard time, but…” Dean trailed off, clicking his tongue slightly looking away from me, staring at the floor. For a moment I thought he was going to tell me what was on his mind, but then he quickly shook his head and shrugged. “Whatever. It’s over now. I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Okay.” I replied, knowing that I had to accept that answer for now. I knew that if I pushed anymore I’d risk losing Dean for the rest of the night. I was pretty sure Dad would be out until
sunrise, and I didn’t want to waste time with my brother. So as curious as I was, I did what I always did when Dean was uncomfortable; I simply changed the subject.
Dean

Things have pretty much fucking sucked lately. There’s really no other way to put it. Dad’s been riding my ass even harder than usual, making me train harder than I ever had before. He was constantly barking in my ear, criticizing all the things I did wrong, making me repeat drills over and over. It carried over outside the training sessions, leaving me in such an anxiety ridden mess, that I couldn’t think properly. I made mistakes I haven’t made since I was little, like burning dinner or dying our whites pink. I received harsh blows to the mouth for all offenses so I had to watch how I ate, when I ate, and winced when I brushed my teeth.

He of course stuck to his extra training routine. They were rough and harsh. Dad ran me like I was his soldier, training for battle. By the end of those drills, my muscles would literally be screaming at me for relief. Not to mention, I also had to still train with Sam. He quickly noticed that I wasn’t running as fast as I usually did and that I was shaking when we did our pushups. When we sparred he took me down and pinned me with little to no effort. I’d just lay there, with feelings of embarrassment and indifference swirling in my mind. Dad would laugh and just praise Sam for his strength. Sam even tried to let me win a few times, but I just didn’t have the strength to make it look real.

“Are you sick or something?” Sam asked, as he sat on my chest, holding one of my arms over my head, trying to make the pin look real. “You’re not even trying.” Dad had stepped away to talk to Hank, so we were left alone.

“No.” I sighed, just happy to be laying down flat on the ground. Even though it was muddy and gross, I was glad for the moment of rest.

“You look awful.” Sam continued.

“You aren’t exactly going to win any beauty competitions yourself.” I managed a half smile, “Although with that long hair of yours, you might pass as a girl.”

“I’m serious, Dean.” Sam frowned, “You’re really pale. You have dark circles under your eyes.”

“I’m fine, Sam.” I replied shortly. “Just drop it.”

“Whatever you say.” Sam shrugged, getting off of me, and yanking me to my feet. I honestly don’t know why he bothered because I was on the ground again in less than two minutes.

“Let me have him.” Dad said suddenly, practically pulling Sam off of me, taking his place. Luckily he only used about a third of his weight on me. “Dean, you’re like a limp rag. Can’t you even put in any effort?” He kept me pinned, telling Sam to start running laps. Sam, hesitated, looking at me, almost hoping I’d protest. I just turned my head and looked away. “You’re making this situation way worse for yourself.” Dad snapped, once I heard Sam took off. “You’re staying pinned until Sam’s done running his laps and yours.”

I felt bad for Sam, but I also knew he could handle it. With his long legs and stamina he’d finish up for both of us in record time. Sure enough, he was barely panting when he was done. Dad released me, and I stood up, staggering back to the car.

All of this, plus doing the house hold chores, making dinner, and taking care of Sam, I was pretty
much always ready to drop. Dad seemed to take delight in my exhaustion, and as a result, took even more pleasure in physically striking me down whenever he could. For example, the other day I wasn’t running as fast as I should have been. Dad gave me a hard kick to the side of my right knee as I past him. I hit the ground instantly. Dad stood over me, sneering.

“I don't know how you think you're going to outrun any type of creature running like that. It’s honestly pathetic, Dean for as much as you've been training.”

“I'm just tired, Dad.” I pleaded, knowing instantly I shouldn't have said it.

“You're tired? Dad snapped, “I'll give you tired.” He reached down, grabbing me by my shirt and yanking me up, “You’ll run until you can't run anymore.”

He shoved me hard and all I could do was run. He made me run until I could hardly feel my legs. My knee where he'd kicked me, hurt like a son of a bitch, and as a result, I couldn't help but limp. I knew even though he was the cause, my lack of smooth gait made him more enraged. Once we got back into the impala all he did was bash my stamina. I honestly was too tired to fully listen to him. I got home, showered and fell asleep the moment I hit the pillow, glad that Sammy and I had the morning off training because Dad was meeting up with Hank.

I was snapping out left and right at Sammy, and I hated myself for it. I couldn't bring myself to tell him about my extra training sessions though because I knew he’d insist on joining, and the kid had school. I'd be damned to watch him screw that up because of me. It didn't stop me though from flipping the fuck out on him when he called me at school when he forgot his homework. Sam is one of the most responsible kids I know so it was really unfair of me to freak like I did.

The worst though was Dad’s want, if not need, to humiliate me over my lack of reading ability. It actually played to my advantage that I'd already told Sam I couldn't read or the situation would have been completely embarrassing. It hurt that he would use my defect top hurt me so badly. Sam however took the bull by the balls, and basically called him out on his own shit. He knew that Mom would never have let me struggle in school like I had with only Dad raising us, and he threw that fact in his face without batting an eye. I had to admit, I really thought Dad was going to punch him out for saying what he said, but instead he just walked away.

I tried to relax after Dad left, knowing he wouldn't return home until probably early the next morning, but my nerves were still on edge. I ended up freaking out on Sam for not hanging up his towel after his shower. He never does and it’s never bothered me before, but for some reason it enraged me.

Sammy being Sammy knew that I wasn’t truly freaking out over a stupid towel though. He simply took it from me, cleared his throat and looked me in the eye.

“What happened to your leg, Dean?” He asked his voice almost monotone. He looked so intently at me I had to look away from him.

“Nothing.” I shrugged, “I must have just slept on it wrong.”

“Yeah…right.” Sam rolled his eyes. “What did he do to you?”

I knew there was no way to avoid this conversation so I simply told him he kicked me; leaving out the part about the early morning sessions and my continuous failure to thrive.

“That’s so messed up.” Sam frowned at me. “How can you let him treat you like this?”

“What do you expect me to do about it, Sam?” I suddenly snapped, hating the fact that he was
frowning at me.

It suddenly irritated the hell out of me the way he looked at me.

All the pity he held in his eyes all the time.

I didn’t need his fucking pity.

It just reminded me of how pathetic I was.

I was weak as hell.

And Sam knew it.

My baby brother, who I pretty much raised, looked at me like I was some wounded puppy that had been kicked one too many times.

I was such a loser.

I disgusted myself.

I certainly disgusted my father.

How couldn’t I disgust Sam?

He had to hate me too. Deep down he had to be ashamed I was his brother.

“What do you want me to do?” I asked again, stepping closer to him, his mouth dropping open at the harshness of my voice.

“Nothing...” Sam stammered, his eyes widening slightly. “Dean…I’m just…I’m just worried…You just don’t seem like you. What’s going on? No offense, but you’ve been kind of…a jerk lately.”

I stared at him in disbelief. I suddenly wanted to pop him in the mouth. Didn't he realize how tiring my life was?

Extra training aside, didn't he know how rundown I felt?

All I ever did was sacrifice for him. Protect him. Try to provide him with the most normal home life I could manage.

Now, he was accusing me of being a jerk?

Didn’t he understand how fucking tired I was.

How close I was to throwing in the towel and calling it a day?

That the only reason I didn’t, was because of him?

I was completely beat down both physically and mentally. I could feel my hand curl into a fist.

I turned and started to walk away, afraid that if I looked at Sam any longer, I’d do something I’d regret. Sam however reached out and grabbed my arm, trying to stop me.

“Dean,” He said his voice growing high pitched, like he did when he was getting emotional, “You can’t just walk away from me. I deserve an answer. I don’t deserve to get treated like this. You’re
being so unfair.”

I looked at him for a second, and suddenly I hated him.

I hated that he got to have somewhat of a life.

That he was going to get away from this family, this situation, in a few years.

That he had an out.

I hated that he’d never know the pain in losing Mom.

He’d never know how much her death killed me. How much it made me wish I was dead too.

He’d never had a mother to miss.

I hated that he was Dad’s favorite.

I didn’t want him to get hit like I was hit, but it was clear he was Dad’s golden boy. No matter how hard I tried, I would ever be that.

That no matter what he was always the better son.

The smarter son. The healthier son. The stronger son.

The son that wasn’t broken by his past.

I looked into Sam’s eyes once more.

And that’s when it happened.

I leaned back on my good leg and punched my little brother hard in the face.
The second half of this chapter is supposed to be somewhat scrambled. It's done so on purpose because it's how I feel Dean would be thinking. Let me know what you think. If it's confusing, I can always rewrite it.

ps. I always have a harder time writing for Sam. I relate better to Dean's character, (no no abuse for me though, thank God) which is what got me hooked on the show. I'm trying hard to make Sam's voice a little stronger by lengthening his chapters.

I'm also contemplating having Mary's POV from wherever she may be. She will make an appearance at some point. That part is already written. It's just not the write time for that. Do you guys want a POV from her before hand?

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**Sam**

I can’t believe Dean hit me. He’s never hit me before. At least not in anger. I’ve never seen that look in his eyes before either. It was a look of complete rage. For a second, I thought that I was mistaken, that I was going to wake up from a bad dream, but the throbbing of my jaw spoke otherwise.

We stared at one another for a moment, Dean’s eyes wide and scared, and me holding my hand to my jaw, my own eyes in obvious shock.

“Sammy…” He breathed, his voice coming out shaky, “I’m sorry. I’m…I didn’t mean to…I’m sorry I hit you.”

“Dean…It’s okay, Dean.” I said mostly because I wasn’t sure what else to say.

“No, it’s not. I…I just…I can’t.” Dean turned and bolted before I could stop him. I wanted to run after him, but something stopped me, gluing me in place where I was standing.

All of a sudden a flood of memories hit me at once. Dean taking care of me when I was sick….Dean listening to my woes about being the new kid for the fifth time in one year….Dean constantly building up my self-esteem….Dean constantly praising me… constantly applauding my triumphs…constantly covering up my mistakes as his...These were all a stark contrast to the Dean that stood before me only moments before.

I felt in some strange way his hitting me was partly my fault; that I had pushed him too far emotionally. He’d given me enough body signals to let me know he was being pushed beyond his limits. His shoulders had tensed, his mouth twitched, the warning of fear and trepidation in his eyes. Then there was the flinching when I touched him…but I never thought he’d hit me. I never thought he’d hurt me.

Actually, I knew I was pushing him too far. But I couldn’t help it. I knew there was something going on with him. He wasn’t himself, and the punch to my jaw proved it. Not knowing what else to do, I went into our room, closed the door, and lay out on my bed. I reached out and picked up
one of the books Bobby had given me for Christmas. I tried to get involved in the story, but I just
couldn’t concentrate. I glanced over at Dean’s empty side, wondering when he’d come home. I
got up, and lifted the mattress, and stared at mom’s quilt.

Dean kept it there because he was afraid Dad would recognize it, and take it from him. I suggested
the closet-Dad never went in there—but Dean wanted to keep Mom close to him, so we figured
under his mattress was the next best hiding spot. Dean never said it, but his quilt was unspoken off
limits. I guess he just wanted to keep this part of Mom to himself. I couldn’t really blame him. I
didn’t really know her, and he shared everything else with me. But I still longed to touch it, so like
any normal little brother, I couldn’t help myself. I pulled it out from under the mattress then
wrapped myself up in it, like I’ve seen Dean do so many times. Dean always seemed so relaxed
when he had Mom’s quilt around him. He’d go from tense to calm in a matter of minutes. I
actually began to wonder if Bobby had the quilt blessed or something. Sighing, I cursed myself for
thinking such stupid things.

The calmness Dean felt was purely sentimental value and the connection he had to our mother. I
felt extremely stupid for being so naive. I carefully folded the quilt and tucked it back under the
mattress before going and lying back down on my bed. I suddenly felt incredibly guilty for
invading something that was so special, private, and almost intimate if you will, of my brother’s.
Why did I always feel the need to take from him? He constantly gave me everything? It was like I
couldn’t let Dean have anything for himself.

Dean came home later that evening. He staggered into the bedroom, indicating to me that he was
drunk off his ass. He barely looked at me, before kicking off his shoes, slipping out of his pants,
and crawling into bed in his boxers and hoodie. He pulled the covers over his head.

“Dean…” I said softly.

“Not now, Sam.” Dean’s muffled voice spoke, “Look, I’m sorry I hit you. I’m so pissed at myself.
I can’t face you right now.”

“I’m not mad at you.” I said gently, “I just want you to know I’m here, okay? I know somethings
up with you. I know it has to do with Dad. I know you feel you can’t talk about it with me for
whatever reason. But I’m here. However you need me.”

Dean didn’t reply, but the lack of snarky comment told me he wasn’t opposed to me being there
for him.

I went back to reading my book, finally able to concentrate on the title. A Separate Peace. I’d
been looking forward to it.

“Sam.” He said after a few minutes of silence.

“Yeah?” I asked, turning to face him.

“I’m drunk, again.” He whispered.

“I know, Dean.” I replied.
I’m so mixed up inside. All the time.

I can’t figure out the someone I’m supposed to be, or the way I’m supposed to think.

I feel like the someone I was went away a long time ago when my mom died, and someone else just took his place.

That someone is not real.

Just kind of floated around, filling in the space where the old me, the real me, was supposed to live.

The me who is really just a ‘he’ now.

And ‘he’ just kind of exists.

The ‘he’ who Dad commanded.

The ‘he’ who Sammy needed.

The ‘he’ who did what he could to survive.

But then I felt like that ‘he’ was leaving too.

Somehow that ‘he’ was becoming a new he.

But this ‘he’ was a bad he. An enemy he. A more like Dad he.

The he who hit his baby brother.

Oh my god, I hit Sammy. I honestly never thought I’d hit my baby brother. I never thought I’d hit Sammy. I feel sick to my stomach just thinking about it. I actually did get sick when I took off after I hit him. I puked right behind our apartment building. Since I hadn’t eaten since yesterday morning, I threw up nasty fucking bile. And let me tell you, that shit burns. I reveled in the pain as it stung my throat. I was glad for its nasty taste.

I was the biggest asshole on the planet.

I hit Sammy. My Sammy.

I wandered into the next town, where they didn’t know me. I found myself walking into a rundown bar. I knew I looked nowhere near the legal drinking age-Sam looked closer than I did-but I had my fake ID in my pocket, and I could really go for a beer. So I decided to give it a try and see if luck was on my side.

Against all odds, this lady bartender seemed to like me. She had to be around forty. Pretty for an older lady, and real flirty. She hinted she could tell I was underage, but made comments I looked a little worse for the wear, so supplied me for free with alcohol of my choosing.

The next thing I knew I was on my sixth beer, and waking up in her bed. I don’t even remember how I got there, but there I was. She was sound asleep next to me. I know it’s awful, but I did the old dip and run. I gathered my clothes which were thrown all over her floor, yanking them off as I half hobbled, half staggered out of her apartment. I stopped briefly to take a large gulp of vodka she had sitting by her door, and took off.
Somewhere along the line I’ve lost myself.

Maybe I just never really knew myself at all.

Maybe that’s been the problem all along.
Sam

Dean’s birthday is this week. I have no idea what to get him. Normally, I have no trouble coming up with ideas, but for some reason, I felt like this year, this birthday, really mattered.

It wasn’t like nineteen marked some huge milestone in my brother’s life. At least not according to the way generally we American’s like to celebrate. But to me, it meant everything. Maybe it was because it was the first year I’d really known what he’d given up for me over the years. Or maybe it was because he finally let his guard down enough to let me see what he had to deal with, the abuse, the stress of his everyday life. Maybe it was because I realized how lucky I was to have Dean as a brother. I wasn’t quite sure. But I wanted this year’s gift to be special. I wanted it to show all the appreciate I had for him. I wanted to show him how much I loved him being my big brother.

Dad would be no help of course. He hardly ever celebrated either of our birthdays. If he did, he just saw it as a time to buy weapons which he called “gifts”. They weren’t of course. They were really just something he’d later claim as his.

I figured my best bet was Bobby. Bobby really knew Dean best from an emotional stand point. But I also didn’t know if I trusted myself enough to express why this birthday was so important without spilling the facts surrounding it.

I glanced at Dean, who was passed out next to me on the couch. Dad was on a hunt, so we were doing our normal routine of movie binging. Dean had fallen asleep within a half an hour into the first movie. I’d just let him go. He seemed so exhausted lately. Plus he’s been rotating between buzzed to drunk almost every night. When I asked him about it, he claimed it helped him sleep. So, I was more than relieved when I heard his raspy gasps for air halfway through movie number one.

Dean must have sensed my eyes on him, because he stirred, sitting up suddenly. “Sammy?” He mumbled, rubbing his eyes.

“Hey.” I said, feeling his anxiety begin to shoot up, “You’re good. You and I are the only ones home.”

“That’s right.” Dean muttered, lying back down onto his side, sighing in obvious relief. “We do have to get up and train tomorrow.”

“You can.” I replied, “But I’m taking the well-deserved weekend off. You should too. He’s only gone until Tuesday. He’s not going to know we slacked off for a few days.”

“Sammy.” Dean sighed, turning over so that he was facing me, “He’ll know.”

“Dean.” I reached out and patted him on his rock hard stomach, “Come on, you have not one ounce of fat on you. It’s not like you’re going too got flabby in a few days.”

“I’m too small. I need to build up more muscle to compensate for it.”

“Your size is fine. You’re tougher and stronger than guys twice your size.”

“My shoulders are weak. My legs need better toned. My—”
“That’s Dad talking.” I said.

“But it’s true.” Dean frowned at me. “You don’t understand Sam. You don’t know what it’s like. You build muscle in your sleep.”

“Fine.” I said, knowing that I wasn’t going to win this argument no matter what I said. “How about we meet halfway. I’ll go running with you in the morning. But not until later. We both get to sleep in. Deal?”

“Deal.” Dean seemed satisfied, turning back to the tv, his mouth in a tight line.

I so badly wanted to make him smile, make him laugh. I just had no idea how. He suddenly seemed so serious all the time. It wasn’t the Dean I was used to at all.

“What do you want to do for your birthday?” I suddenly blurted out. If I couldn’t come up with a great gift, maybe I could at least do something special for him.

“My birthday?” Dean asked, looking at me in surprise.

“Yeah.” I nodded, “It’s next week. What do you want to do for it?”

“Nothing, really.” Dean glanced at me briefly, before turning his eyes back to the tv.

“Come on.” I nudged him slightly with my foot, “There has to be something.”

“There’s not.”

“Dean—”

“Throw me a party, Sam.” Dean said sighing heavily, “Ask all my friends over. Tell my girlfriend to get us a hotel room. Tell Dad I’m pumped to get the keys to the Mercedes. What the hell, Sam? Birthdays have never been a big deal for me. What makes you think I care now?”

“You’ve always made mine matter.” I replied. And it was true. No matter where we were, or what we were doing, Dean always made my birthday count. He’d do his best to bake me a cake, make me (or steal me) gifts, and overall just made me feel important. For my twelfth birthday, I was having an especially hard time. Dad was on a hunt and didn’t even call to wish me a happy birthday. I’d been grumbling and pouting around all day. Dean quietly listened to me, not making up the excuses he normally did for Dad’s behavior. I was convinced by birthday was totally ruined. However, after the sun went down, Dean told me he had a surprise. He lead me to the library, where he’d managed somehow (and God knows how) to get a copy of the keys. He then popped open the door and told me the whole library was mine for the night. It was honestly probably the best gift anyone ever got me. He passed out about an hour in, but I kept reading and reading. I loved it. I loved it because it was something that couldn’t be bought, but it proved to me how much Dean knew me.

“You’re my little brother.” Dean replied, “That’s my job.”

“Well, you’re my big brother.” I nudged him again, “So let me do my job.”

“Whatever, Sam.” Dean got up, heading into our room. It was clear he wanted to be alone. “It’s just another year. It doesn’t matter that much.”

I sighed as Dean closed the door behind him. All I wanted was to make Dean feel important. Show him how much he mattered. Give him a great birthday. But he wasn’t going to make it easy.
Maybe I didn’t deserve for him to make it easy.

I reached over and picked up the phone, dialing Bobby’s number by heart.

“Hello?” Bobby’s gruff voice answered, “John?”

“No.” I said, my voice squeaking for some odd reason, “It’s Sam.”

“Sam.” Bobby’s voice suddenly sounded panicked, “What’s wrong? Is everything okay? Your brother’s not sick, is he?”

“Dean’s fine.” I said, “Well, I mean, he’s…yeah, he’s fine.”

“Wanna try that again.” Bobby chuckled lightly, “Try to sound a bit more convincing?”

“His birthday is coming up.” I said, slightly varying off the subject, “I just wanted to do something special for him. I can’t really think of anything he needs. Dean isn’t really the materialistic type. He doesn’t want clothes or anything. You know already that I bought him that flannel for Christmas. I just don’t know what to do or what to get him. I’ve been trying to wrack my brain for ideas, but I can’t come up with any. Dad wouldn’t be any help. Besides, he’s on a hunt right now. So I thought I’d give you a call just to see if you had any ideas.”

“You done?” Bobby laughed, “Geez, Sam. Take a breath. Yeah, I know his birthday is coming up.”

“Could you come celebrate it with us?” I asked, without thinking, “Like just pretend you were in the area or something? Please. I don’t know what to do? Dean’s been really stressed lately. I don’t know why. I just want him to have a nice birthday. I think you coming would be the best gift for him.”

“Yeah.” Bobby said, without thinking, “Sure. I’ll come. I’ll just make up a story for your dear old Dad. I have a feeling he won’t be thrilled with me crashin, but he’ll deal with it. I don’t want to feed his alcohol addiction, but I’ll buy him a case of beer and hopefully that will soften his mood a bit. Call me in a few days. We’ll figure out the details.”

“Thanks.” I said, feeling instant relief. Bobby was possibly the best present I could give Dean. The only other gift that I could think would possibly be better was dead: Mom.

The next few days went quickly. I ran with Dean just like I promised. He was quiet when we ran, not saying much. I just babbled on incessantly, trying to fill the silence. He’d mumble here and there, but nothing like I was used to. When we weren’t running, Dean uncharacteristically mainly stuck to himself. When did hang, he was always quiet. I became quiet too, thinking maybe he just needed some peace for once. Dad came home from his hunt exhausted. Dean launched into action the second he walked in the door, ready with preheated canned chili. He sat at the kitchen table quietly, watching Dad eat, waiting for him to give the next set of instructions, or listen to his details about the hunt.

I on the other hand stayed where I was, on the couch, reading a book. I made a point to barely acknowledge Dad. The only time I spoke was when Dean disappeared to go take the trash out, reminding Dad that it was his birthday that weekend.

“I just don’t have time to be bothered, Sam.” Dad sighed, “I don’t know why you’re so sentimental about these things.”

I was about to argue maybe because he wasn’t, but Dean reappeared, shivering slightly.
“Damn, it’s cold.” Dean said, taking his coat off, and draping it over the kitchen chair.

“You’re such a pussy.” Dad said, “I just was out there hunting in a thin jacket for days.”

“Well whose dumb fault was that?” I asked, getting up and coming into the kitchen. For some reason I started to get a really bad feeling.

“Why do you have to challenge everything I say and do?” Dad asked crossing his arms, looking straight at me.

“Why do you always have to pick at Dean?” I asked. “All he said it was cold out. You didn’t need to call him a pussy. It is cold outside. That’s a fact. It’s winter.”

“Sam.” Dean said, his eyes staring straight at me, “Come on, just go read your book.”

I stood there, quiet for a moment, debating back and forth with myself. I wanted to keep going, tell Dad how much of a bully I thought he was. Argue with him how he raised us wasn’t right. I’d leave out the abuse of course. I wasn’t ready to break Dean’s disclosure just yet. I wasn’t sure if I could deal with the aftermath of that. After all, Dean and I weren’t exactly on the most stable of grounds. I’d completely forgiven him for hitting me, but he still was acting weird. All I wanted was for us to be back to the way we were, so I didn’t want to risk anymore damage being done.

Plus, I suddenly felt exhausted. I couldn’t understand why Dean refused to stick up for himself. After all, if he did and Dad made a move in his direction it would be two against one. Didn’t he realize I’d have his back? Didn’t he know I’d stick up for him? Fight for him? So, I did the only thing I could think of. I simply turned and silently walked away. I settled back down on the couch and resumed reading where I’d left off.

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**Dean**

I woke up the day of my birthday hardly realizing it was my birthday. I was planning to just play it off like any other day, but Sam being Sam wasn’t going to let that happen. I should have known better. He jumped on top of me the moment I opened my eyes, which I have to say is a little creepy if you really think about it.

“Happy birthday, Dean!” My little brother planted his growing body on top of mine, hugging me tight.

“Get off.” I mumbled, turning my face, burying into the crook of my elbow.

“Oh, come on.” Sam shook me lightly, “You can’t be so grumpy on your birthday.”

“It’s my birthday.” I retorted, “Doesn’t that give me the right to act like I want.”

“Not if this is going to be your disposition.” Sam patted my cheek, “Besides, I have a killer surprise for you. It should be showing up soon. Right before our morning training session. Something tells me we won’t be training today.”

As if on cue, the doorbell rang. Then rang again. When it rang for the third time, Dad screamed out at me to answer the “fucking door”. I shoved Sam off of me, well aware he was following me, grinning.

Sometimes the kid could be so god damn creepy. I really needed to have a talk with him about it.
Anyway, I opened the door and my mouth dropped open.

There, on the other side stood Bobby.

“Heya Dean.” Bobby grinned, “What no gun this time? I must say, I’m kinda disappointed in this welcome compared to the last one.”

“What are you doing here?” I asked, forgetting how to breathe for a split second.

“I think I like the gun in the face welcome better.” Bobby winked at me, still smiling. “Can’t a guy show up to surprise his almost nephew on his birthday?”

“Wait.” I sputtered, “You came all this way for me?”

“Happy birthday big bro.” Sam spoke up, slapping me on the back.

“Happy birthday, Dean.” Bobby grabbed me, wrapping me in a hug, squeezing me to him, nice and tight.

He felt so warm. So comforting. So reassuring.

He made me feel like I mattered.

At least a little bit.

He reminded me of Mom.

I finally felt safe.

As it turns out, Sam and Bobby had this visit planned for about a week. Sam told me as we hurriedly got dressed. Bobby gave Dad some bullshit excuse about a hunt that he was on nearby that turned out not to be a case at all. Bobby just said he needed some rest before heading home and didn’t see the reason to spend money on a hotel room, when we were so close. Dad, at first seemed annoyed, but didn’t seem to mind so much once Bobby produced a six pack of beer as well as a bottle of whiskey. Admittedly, my own taste buds picked up a little at the sight of both. I knew though as long as Bobby was in the apartment there was no way in hell I was going to be able to drink. He’d know right away that I’d done so, and would stare me down until I broke and confessed that I suddenly developed a liking for my father’s choice of addiction.

Anyway, once Dad cracked open a few beers, he was warm and smiling. Both he and Bobby were good and drunk by noon. Dad predictably headed off to the local bar. Bobby himself was seemed smashed, but gave excuse he just wanted to sleep his off. Once Dad was well on his way, Bobby turned to Sam and me, grinning.

“Well, I’m betting he won’t be home until nightfall.”

“Nicely played, Bobby.” Sam grinned. “You play drunk just as well as being drunk.”

“Well, I have had some experience in the matter.” Bobby winked, turning to me. “So, Dean…what do you want to do for your birthday? Anywhere special you want to go? I’ll take you and Sam anywhere.”

“Wait…” I glanced nervously at Sam, “Aren’t you drunk? Are you alright to drive?”

“No.” Bobby motioned for me to follow him, pulling out a bucket from underneath the table. It
was filled with a light brown liquid which I assumed was Bobby’s portion of liquor content that I assumed he’d consumed. “This was your brother’s idea. Besides, let’s just say I was. You have your license. You can drive, right? I knew there was a reason I brought the jaguar…”

“You brought a jag?” I asked, my mouth dropping open, “What year?”

“1961.” Bobby beamed, “I thought you might be interested in driving it…What do you say?”

“I have to get a shower.” I said, “I need to be completely clean to drive that thing.”

“And you call me the girl.” Sammy teased.

“When I start buying hair product, we’ll talk.” I replied, turning and heading off into the bathroom.

The three of us were in the car about a half hour later. I touched the wheel, running my hand over the soft leather. I couldn’t believe that I was sitting behind such a fucking awesome car. I was even more awestruck that I was going to drive it. The only problem was I had no idea where to go. No idea where to take us. The only place I could think of was that bar where I’d gotten smashed. But I knew Bobby would kick my ass if I even suggested it. Well, not kick my ass like Dad kicked my ass, but he’d kick my ass just the same.

“So.” Bobby said, “You just going to make us sit here all day? Where do you want to go?”

“I don’t know.” I shrugged, feeling a little dumb that I had no place to go. Sam would know where to go. He’d head to the library or to the soccer field. I on the other hand had no idea. I had no place special to head to in this whole town. No place where I wanted to go, nothing that I wanted to see.

“At least turn on the car, you idjit.” Bobby replied as if he were reading my thoughts.

I nodded, leaning down turning the key.

That’s when Hey Jude” started playing over the speakers. It was the song Mom always sung to me. She hated lullabies-she said they were boring and unimaginative-so that’s the song she sang to me at night or when I was sick. I felt a tingle shoot up my spine. I froze, glancing over at Bobby, my mouth dropping open for what seemed like the hundredth time that day. He simply just smiled at me.

“Happy birthday, Dean.” He said with a grin.

“Happy birthday, Dean.” Sam echoed.
Chapter 24

Bobby

As I drove home from John’s the next morning I tried to push away the concerns I had over leaving Dean. Something was wrong. I couldn’t put my finger on it, but something just wasn’t right. I didn’t ask him if he were alright though, because that wouldn’t have gotten me anywhere. I’m pretty sure Dean would tell me he was fine if his arm was torn half off and he was bleeding profusely.

But anyway, he just didn’t look well. His eyes looked less bright, even when he smiled in the car, and the smile he had seemed worn. I could tell he wasn’t sick—I knew the hallmark of those signs way to well to suspect that, but there was still something off…

On the hand, it was nice to see him turn nineteen. I smiled to myself as I thought about how happy Mary would be to know that Dean had reached this age. I knew she personally never had any doubts that he’d live despite his doctors concerns and predictions when he was born, but it was still a relief to know that he’d made it.

He was Mary through and through, from her looks to her sense of humor, to her kindness. When he smiled, on the rare occasions that he did so, all I saw was Mary. His mouth turned up, somewhat crooked just the way hers did. When he was trying to sell you on something, he smiled with mainly his eyes. Then he’d nod slightly as if he already knew the answer was a sure yes. And, just like his mother, I could never say no. Even if it meant letting him take my jaguar out for a spin alone at night.

The kid was more Mary’s then he’d ever be John’s, which I somehow felt made him more mine.

He was gruffer around the edges then she was…although not by much. I guess it was partly because he was a boy, and mainly because he was raised under John’s rough thumb. But you could see the sensitivity behind the smirk. You could tell that he had a heart that was way too big for his chest.

He was the one person that made me feel I mattered. Just the way Dean’s eyes light up when he saw me made me feel like I was important to somebody. Ever since he was a little boy, bouncing around my house Dean showed me the importance of caring about others. I cared about people before him of course…I loved my own mother, my wife, I guess in some ways I even loved my father…but Dean just made the whole human connection thing make sense.

I would do anything to protect him. That didn’t mean I let him get away with everything. I held him responsible for his actions. But the kid was so self-punishing; he made it hard to stay mad at him. I’ll never forget the time he was brought home by the local police. He and Sam had been spending part of the summer with me. John was on some hunt in the mountains. Dean had to be around twelve of thirteen at the time. He’d fallen in with a bad crowd. I’d let him go, mainly because I knew the kid had way to many responsibilities at his age and wanted him to let loose a little, but kept myself available for him to talk to when he needed me. He’d made many poor choices that summer, but I think getting caught stealing might have topped the charts.

On this particular day, Sam was being overly talkative. Asking me questions about how languages were developed (if I remember correctly) when the doorbell rang. Eager to get away, I crossed the living room in about three steps, which is no easy feat for a short man, and opened the door. I swear I nearly lost my lunch.
There on the other side stood Dean, who was hanging his head slightly. Behind him, holding him by the collar of his jean jacket stood a cop.

“Do you know this boy?” The cop asked, looking at me.

The cop was a young kid. Probably about twenty one or so. New to the area. I knew most of the police here. Balls. I wish I would have known him. He probably would have just let Dean go once he saw my address.

“Yeah.” I said, “Boy’s my nephew.”

“He was caught stealing.” The cop looked at me very seriously. “The owner of the store, Mark Gracen, decided not to press any charges. Said you’re a friend of the family once Dean here gave him your name. But I figured I’d take him out here to see if you really knew him.”

“I believe I already told yous I did.” I said, feeling protective, glancing at Dean who looked like he was about to be sick.

“He’s got a mouth on him.” The cop said, “Maybe you should teach your nephew to respect his elders.”

“I’ll deal with him on my own.” I snapped, reaching out and pulling Dean towards me, “I don’t need your advice how to parent.” I slammed the door, swearing. “Idjit.” I muttered, turning towards Dean, who had turned ghost white.

“Bobby.” He said backing up, hitting the wall, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done it. I mean, I shouldn’t have… I’m normally… Are you going to tell my Dad?”

“Relax.” I said quietly. “No, I’m not going to tell John. Listen, all kids steal. It happens. I’m not happy you did it. But it happens. I stole a candy bar once. Or so I thought it was a candy bar. Just grabbed it and ran. Imagine my disappointment when I ran outside and saw it was a huge fig bar.”

Dean laughed at that, instantly relaxing.

“Just don’t make a habit out of it, or I will have to kick your ass, okay? I’m not looking to visit you in kiddie jail anytime soon. Now, we do have to go back to the store and tell Mr. Gracen you’re sorry.” I said, patting him on the shoulder. “He’s a good friend of mine, and he did me a favor.”

Dean nodded and began to follow me out the door.

“Hey.” I said, stopping, turning around, “What did you steal?”

“A peanut butter cup.” Dean said, his cheeks flushing slightly.

“You’re allergic to peanuts, aren’t you?” I asked.

“Only slightly.” Dean frowned at me. “I just get hives.”

“Okay…” I said, not quite getting why he’d do that to himself. “Why would you pick that of all the candy’s though?”

“It was for Sammy.” Dean answered sheepishly. “They are his favorites.”

I couldn’t help but smile at the memory. That was typical Dean. To steal something that wasn’t even for him, but for his little brother. I could just picture it now. Dean fooling around in Mark Gracen’s store with that group of juvenile delinquents he was hanging with that summer. Eyeing
the candy bar on the way out the door, sliding it in his pocket, and of course getting caught by the local police.

Just like I promised, I never told John about his little brush with the law. Actually there were a lot of things that I didn’t tell John about. Like when he tried smoking that same summer or when I caught him…well…that’s a private matter that I’m not able to think about since I haven’t spoken to Dean about yet…but anyway, I figured it couldn’t hurt to shield the kid a bit from John’s tendency to come down a little hard on him. I knew Dean wavered between respect and awe of his father and fear and desperation for his affection. I reckoned keeping a few things out of John’s realm of knowledge wouldn’t be harmful.

There was also a selfish aspect to keeping secrets between just Dean and me. It seemed like the less Dean felt I would betray him to John the more he let his guard down. The more he let his guard down, the more he seemed to, if ever so slightly, turn into the old Dean. He smiled more, relaxed more. There were actually times I heard him fooling around with Sam, and his laughter was almost as light as it used to be. It made Mary seem closer.

Like I previously mentioned, I’ve had a harder time relating to Sam. I always called him and sent him stuff for his birthday, but I never felt the swelling sense of pride like I did with Dean. I was happy to see Sam growing up, and growing up healthy and strong, but it just wasn’t the same to me as Dean. Actually because of that, and the lack of stress to buy the perfect gift, Sam’s birthdays presents were always easier. I normally bought him a book. The routine we’d follow would be he’d call me when he was finished and we’d discuss it together. I’ll admit, he surprised me how fast he was able to read and how much he was able to recall and interrupt. He’d ask me for suggestions what to read next at the local library. But besides reading and Sam’s academic triumphs, I didn’t know much else about the kid.

Luckily that changed once Sam got older. I’m somewhat ashamed to admit once he started fighting with John and expressing his distain of him on a more consistent basis I felt closer to him. I never told him so of course that I had the same feelings and annoyances. It was nice to have someone else that saw John the way I did. As much as I loved Dean, his hero worship of his father tended to borderline on the frustrating side. It hurt me to watch him constantly struggle for John’s praise only to be shut down with a cold stare, or harsh criticism at every turn. I felt I couldn’t say anything, besides pick up the pieces that Dean stubbornly wouldn’t admit were broken. Sam however never had any qualms about calling out Dean’s disillusion about their father.

I remember one time in particular. They had to be about fifteen and eleven. They’d been staying at my house because John was hunting a shapeshifter near my area. Dean was super excited because he was supposed to accompany John on the hunt but woke up that morning with a high fever and a swollen painful throat. John took one look at his sick son, told him how pathetic he was and walked out of the house without him, shouting to me he’d grab breakfast on the road. Dean, who’d been dressed and ready to go, took off after his Dad, his hoarse voice yelling as much as it could, that he was fine. Sam and I followed; Sam probably to knock his Dad out if John relented, and me, nervous Dean would pass out running after his Dad.

“Please, Dad.” Dean begged, “I’m fine. I don’t even feel that bad. I’ve been preparing for this for days. I’m good to go. I’ve felt way worse than this before.”

“I’m not taking you.” John opened his trunk checking to see if he had all the proper weaponry, “You’re sounding like a whiny housewife.”

“Dad, I just want to be with—”

“Dean!” John slammed the trunk shut, “I swear to God, you give pathetic a new look. Don’t
blame me. Blame your lousy immune system. But there’s no way I’m taking a sick little whiny baby on the hunt with me. Now shut your mouth or you’re not going to go on a hunt for a long ass time.”

Dean instantly shut up, backing up slightly, so he was standing next to Sam and I. There was a part of me that wanted to tell John he was out of line, but if I did I was half scared he’d take Dean on the hunt just to spite me. There was no way the kid should be anywhere but in bed.

After John drove away, the three of us stood there in silence. It was Sam who spoke first, his words shocking me at the accuracy.

“Don’t let him get to you, Dean.” He said patting his older brother’s shoulder, “The guys a jerk. He’s always a jerk. But this one time I have to say, he’s right. You really shouldn’t be hunting when you’re sick.”

“I’m always sick.” Dean mumbled, his cheeks heating up. I couldn’t tell if it was from the fever or embarrassment.

“It’s okay.” Sam said, almost soothingly, “It’s not your fault. He can’t blame you for that. It’s not like you want to be sick. It’s not something you want to happen. I actually blame him the most. If he took better care of us, maybe you’d be healthier.”

“He takes care of us just fine, Sammy.” Dean mumbled. I could tell that not even Dean believed that.

“Dean.” Sam laughed, “Seriously, big bro? That has to be the fever talking. He doesn’t even try. You’re the one who takes care of us. You. He’s a jerk.”

“Don’t call Dad a jerk.” Dean said, snapping slightly, “He saves a lot of people. He’s a hero.”

“Some hero.” Sam snorted. “He just left his sick kid. I don’t think he’s a hero. I don’t think you should think he’s one either.”

Dean shrugged, falling silent. I then cleared my throat suggesting that we go inside and Dean relax on the couch. He started to protest, but I sold him with early morning cartoons and a pancake breakfast.

I truly believe that day changed something between Sam and me. I realized I had an unsuspecting ally in my youngest nephew.

As I turned into my driveway, I began to wander once again if everything was okay with Dean. Maybe it was time I sat down and had a heart to heart with Sam and see if he had any insight into what was going on with his big brother.

After all, if anyone knew it would be Sam.
I’ve been pushing Dean hard. Running him ragged left and right. The past month he’s run drills for me for about two hours every night, then again with his brother every morning.

I tried to get him to prepare to be attacked at a moment’s notice by jumping out and pinning him to the ground without warning. I was almost always successful, which pissed me off. No matter how much I lecture, or how many times I kicked his ass, he just didn’t seem to become any more aware of his surroundings. I found this odd because on the few hunts I’ve taken him on, he was completely observant. Actually the kid had a better sense of wherever creature we were hunting then men twice his age. In everyday life however, he was so jittery that every sound or movement made him flinch. In my opinion, this nervousness of his made it hard to decipher the ones that would be accurate to fear. I told him over and over if he didn’t get a handle on his anxieties and they ever carried over into a hunt, they were a sure fire way to get him or Sammy killed. He paled at that, swearing and promising he’d do better.

I knew in actuality I was what he feared the most. It wasn’t strategic on my part. At least it hadn’t been. Things just worked out that way. I know he’d been afraid of me for probably most of his life. I’ll admit, sometimes it hurt. Not so much now. Now it made me angry. But when he was little it did. It hurt I mean. It hurt that when he was a baby he was so uncomfortable in my arms he’d cry and reach out for Mary. No matter how many times she’d told me he could sense I was uncomfortable with him, I knew the truth. My son hated me. So I decided quickly to dislike him right back. And that, that was easy. It was so much easier than trying to love him.

But anyway, I figured if Dean couldn’t pull himself together to stay focused enough to not allow me to attack him, he was opening himself wide open to demons left and right. Any average hunter knows that demons have a handbook in playing with their mind. It’s almost like a script. They find where there is turmoil in the hunter’s life and then twist and turn the information and use it as emotional warfare. They find the weakness and use it for all that it’s worth. Which is why I knew my son would be a prime target for being used as a broken puppet when faced with a demon.

See, Dean has several weaknesses. His first would without a doubt be Sam. I couldn’t really blame him there. I drilled into his head since he was little that his main job was to take care of Sam. To protect Sammy at all costs. And I’ll admit to anyone that isn’t Dean or Sam, that he’s done one hell of a good job with that. He’s done a far better job than I ever could. Sure, Sam is a little too outspoken at times, but overall he’s a pretty well-adjusted kid. He’s as normal as someone could be considering our lifestyle. And I know that’s all thanks to Dean.

His second weakness would be his greatest fear; which undoubtedly is me. If a demon was able to get into Dean’s head it would know easily all the fears he had when it came to me. There are probably too many to sort them into rational and irrational thoughts. Besides, that would require an uncomfortable conversation with my oldest that I just didn’t want to have. I knew that I was going to have to start strength training both of them in mind control, but that was a bridge I wasn’t ready to cross. I knew I would need Bobby’s help with that, but that would entail him knowing some details that I’d rather keep secret. Such as the way I’ve dealt with Dean physically over the years. Bobby has always looked at Dean as his own son, so I knew if he knew half of what’s gone on between us, he’d for sure in hell attack me.

This thought process of course always led me to concern for Sam. I was always proud of my youngest in most regards, and this was no different. I wasn’t really sure if Sam had any real
weaknesses. I’d rack my brain to try to come up with something, but the only thing I could come up with was Dean. Sam would do anything just to keep him safe and healthy. I know his fears revolved around Dean getting sick and not getting better. Even though my youngest was constantly moaning about his feelings he was actually less sensitive then his brother. One wouldn’t think that, but it was true. Sam was in better control of his emotions. He felt what he needed to feel, expressed what he felt, then shared what he felt. I figured the only way a demon could break Sam was to threaten to hurt Dean. If a demon threatened his big brother, Sam would without a doubt crumble. But there was nothing I could do about that. I couldn’t change their closeness. I couldn’t change the fact that Dean raised Sam and that Sam loved Dean like he should love me.

Anyway, I’m getting off topic. Like I said, I’ve been running Dean ragged. I was actually surprised that he was still standing. I really thought he’d break by now, but he didn’t. He kept pushing himself. No matter how tired he looked or seemed. In addition to training I made it clear he was still expected to keep up with all his chores. He still made breakfast, dinner, and took care of Sam. Sometimes I envied the way Dean was able to balance everything. But Dean was Mary’s son, so I shouldn’t be surprised.

But Dean’s ability to balance everything just made me want to try to break him more. I doubt he saw it that way but what was originally meant as a punishment purely became a challenge. So, tonight, once I was sure Sam was asleep, I snuck into their room, and pulled a weary Dean out of bed.

“Get up.” I hissed, somewhat satisfied with how easily Dean rolled out of bed, following me into the hallway. He had his shoes and coat on before I could even order him to do so. I saw him glance at the clock, but he said nothing as he climbed into the car.

“I re-salted the window in our bedroom. And the bathroom.” Dean said before I could ask.

“Good.” I said. I had to admit, my son was on top of things. But then again, it was to protect Sam, so I should expect anything less.

“Dad, I wanted to ask you something.” Dean’s voice came out small, and he fidgeted slightly in his seat. He paused, waiting for my permission to continue. Once given he cleared his throat, “So, Sammy was talking to me—”

“It’s Sam.” I interrupted quickly, “You need to stop with the childish nickname. He insists that I call him Sam, so you call him Sam.” I glanced at my oldest, watching as his eyes widened slightly. He fell silent as he tried to recollect his thoughts. Finally, after I realized he wasn’t going to speak again without my approval, I sighed, “For god sakes, Dean, spit it out.”

“Sam was talking to me about this field trip.” Dean continued, sounding somewhat raspy, “It’s for real smart kids. They only take like ten percent of the class or something. They leave on a Friday morning, come back on that Sunday night, and go to Washington DC. They see all the important stuff that’s there. You know, things that Sam’s interested in. He said the school pays for everything. They go on this huge bus. It’s only a four hour drive. All he needs is his hotel. It’s fifty dollars. I know he’d really like to go.”

“Any reason Sam isn’t talking to me about this himself?” I asked, pulling up into the grass where we train.

“He doesn’t know I’m talking to you about it.” Dean said in a rush, “He was just talking, that’s all. Can he go Dad? Please? He works so hard. He gets straight As….I just think it would be nice for him to go.”
Dean’s plea for his brother reminded me so much of Mary’s when it came to his own well-being. Of course, Mary was a little more forceful with me then Dean, but I recalled a similar conversation when she announced she was quitting her job.

“I made my decision.” She replied, when I came home from work one day, “I’m quitting my job.”

It had been an argument we’d had for weeks. Sam had just been born, and she’d just gone back after being on maternity leave. I’d like to say it was all just about money, but that wouldn’t be the truth. The truth was because her reasons were because of Dean’s sudden decline in health. I actually pretty much forbade her to quit. But, that didn’t matter to Mary. She didn’t care what I thought. She only cared about what Dean needed. Or what she thought he needed.

“You can’t be serious.” I sighed, tossing down my work bag, “Mary, we talked about this. I thought we made a decision.”

“I made a decision.” Mary said, crossing her arms, “The school called me again. Dean was coughing so badly at school he threw up. So I took him the pediatrician and he has another infection starting in his lungs.”

“Another trip to the pediatrician?” I groaned, “Mary that costs money.”

“And that’s why we have health insurance, John.” Mary glared at me, “Anyway, I’m not sending him back to school. Or Sammy either. I already gave work my two weeks’ notice. Mrs. Gallegini up the street offered to watch both boys for the next two weeks. My boss even said I could bring Dean into the office as long as he’s quiet and isn’t disruptive. He needs to stay home and rest and get strong. Once he’s in kindergarten we’ll talk again. But right now, he just can’t be around all the germs.”

I’ll admit, looking back, her reasoning made sense. I’d just been too stubborn at the time to look at the bigger picture. I actually moved out for a few months. Well, actually Mary kicked me out. I’d flipped out at Dean in the middle of dinner that night for spilling his juice, screaming at him that all he was is a waste of money. I doubt Dean knew what I was saying, but when I grabbed him and screamed this in his face it was enough to make him burst into tears. Sam in turn started to cry. It was crazy to think how in tune they were with one another even back then. Mary went berserk, wrenching Dean away from me.

“Get out.” She screamed, pushing Dean behind her. “I want you out of this house right now.”

“Mary.” I instantly regretted grabbing the boy in front of her, “Please. I’m sorry. I just lost my temper.”

“You need to go.” Mary continued. “If you don’t leave, I’m calling the cops.”

And so, I left. I slept in the auto body shops couch for over two months. I showered there, ate my breakfast, lunch, and dinner there. Eventually Mary let me come back. I slowly earned back her trust by taking Dean out or buying him ice cream. I played with Sam. I became the role of the fun, nice dad. I swore up and down to her that I’d changed. That I didn’t realize how much I loved my children and being a father until it was taken away from me. And finally, she took me back.

But like his mother, Dean’s concerns and wants always involved everyone but him.

“What makes you think I should let your brother go on this trip?” I asked, “All he does is walk around here thinking he’s better than everyone because of all that school crap. I think giving him permission to go on this school trip would just inflate that ego of his even more.”
“I don’t think Sam has a big ego.” Dean said tentatively, “I just think school is something he’s good at.”

“Are you fine with that?” I asked, grabbing onto Dean’s wrist, “You know as well as I do, the moment Sam’s eighteen, he’s gone. He’s going to dump this family and leave and go do his own thing. He’s going to leave you in the dust, Dean. You think he cares about you, but he’s just biding his time before he can leave. He’s not going to stick around and be a hunter. He’s going to go and get some normal job somewhere and forget about all this. Do you really want that? Do you really think that’s fair to do to your mother? She gave birth to him. He doesn’t even seem to care about the damn demon that killed her.”

Dean’s mouth clamped shut at that one. I knew I had him. Anytime I needed to put a divide between my sons all I had to do was bring up Mary. I didn’t use it often, and I only used it with Dean. As much as he had a soft spot for his little brother, he also had a huge one when it came to his mother.

“Sam didn’t know Mom like we did, Dad.” Dean said softly, “I don’t think that’s fair.”

“I need a selling point.” I said, getting out of the car, motioning for him to do the same, “What are you offering? If I let Sam go to D.C. what will you give me in return?”

“I…” Dean’s cheeks flushed red, “I…I don’t have anything.”

“Then I guess it’s a no go.” I said, shaking my head, “Start stretching.”

“Wait.” Dean reached out, almost grabbing my sleeve, but pulled back, thinking better of it, “You’ll have me all to yourself for the time he’s gone. I’ll train as much as you want. No breaks, no complaints.”

I paused for a moment, looking into my oldest eyes. I could tell he was serious. That he meant it. “When is this trip?” I asked.

“Not this upcoming weekend, but next.” Dean said his voice surprisingly steady.

I paused as a mauld over Dean’s offer. I couldn’t help but be proud of my oldest for being so willing to give himself up to me for an entire weekend knowing I would more than likely make that time miserable for him. But I couldn’t let him know that.

“Fine.” I said flatly. “It’s a deal. You can tell your brother he can go.”

Dean knew better than to show me any emotion. He simply nodded before turning and began running the first of many laps around the make-shift track.
Chapter 26

I'm not a doctor nor do I have asthma so I apologize in advance for any inaccuracies.

Sam

Sometimes I really don’t understand my brother. He thinks he knows what’s best for me, but he
doesn’t. His constant self-sacrificing ways are almost too much to take at times. Sometimes I just
want to scream at him that he’s not a superhero. He’s not batman. He’s not invincible. And that I
don’t need him to be.

Take this whole trip to D.C. for example. He was so excited to tell me that I could go. I know in the
wild imagination of his he saw me viewing the white house, the Lincoln Memorial, the
Washington Monument…I knew he could practically see me smiling and laughing with my
classmates. Taking pictures, storing memories that would last a lifetime. But that wasn’t my reality.
As much as I wanted it to be, as normal as it was and sounded and almost tasted, it wasn’t mine.

If Dean had sat down to really think things over, he would have realized what a bad idea this was. I
know that when he gets excited about something he goes at it full force, without thinking of the
consequences of it.

I couldn’t for the life of me understand why he would think I would go. There was no way I would
leave him alone with our father. Not after I found out Dad was hitting him. Especially not after
Dean himself was acting weirder and weirder.

In hindsight, I realized I never should have mentioned the trip at all. I wasn’t thinking at the time. I
was just excited that I’d been given the invitation to go. I’d even felt guilt that night for bragging
about it, since it was an academic success. But it was just one of those things that I told him when
we were eating dinner. Well, when I was eating and Dean was picking at his food.

I get it was only for three days. But I also know our father. I knew that Dean had to strike some
type of deal with him to let me go. He had to bargain something. It made me uneasy to think about
what it was. I just didn’t trust any of it.

I couldn’t get Dean’s shocked face when I told him I wasn’t going and why out of my head. I just
couldn’t comprehend why it was so hard for me to get through to Dean that I wanted to stick by
him. It was like me caring about him was a foreign concept. And to be honest, the fact that he was
so dismissive about it hurt. I get that I hadn’t always been there for him like I should have, but I
honestly hadn’t had any idea what was going on. If I had, things would have been different. I was
trying to make it different now, but he was making it almost impossible.

I was getting sick of keeping everything a secret too. I was getting tired of watching Dean drag
himself around the house; exhausted, skinny, and sore. I was tired of watching him try to hide any
new bruises from me, when I already knew what was happening. I tired of his complete lack of
care for himself and stubborn refusal to do anything about it.

I was actually pretty tired of Dean.
Sam didn’t exactly act as thrilled as I thought he would when I gave him the news that he could go on his trip. Actually he did the opposite.

“I’m not going.” He said, crossing his arms.

“What?” I asked, looking over at him. He was sitting up on his bed, getting ready to go to our normal morning training session. “What do you mean you’re not going?”

“I said, I’m not going.” Sam said.

“Why?” I sputtered. I hadn’t expected this. I honestly thought Sam would be overjoyed he was getting to go. That’s why I told him when I had. I figured it would make the time between him and Dad a little more tolerable.

“You know why.” Sam said calmly, “I’m not leaving you alone.”

“Don’t be stupid.” I sighed, watching as Sam got up yanking on a pair of my old sweatpants over his boxers. Actually I was relieved he finally agreed to wear boxers. The nerd wore tighty-whites until last year. I slightly cringed when I noticed that the pants were a little short on him. I’d only handed them down to Sam last year when I hit a small growth spurt.

“I’m not being stupid.” Sam said, turning to face me, “I’ll make a deal with you. You tell me what kind of deal you made with Dad to get him to let me go, and I’ll decide if it’s worth it or not.”

“Deal?” I asked, cracking a slight smile, “I don’t know what you’re even talking about. There was no deal, Sammy.”

“So you’re telling me Dad’s letting me go out of the goodness of his own heart?” Sam asked, kicking his drawer shut.

“The man does have his moments.” I said winking at him.

“You’re lying.” Sam replied. “I’m going to wait for you in the car. I’m tired of you not telling me anything anymore.”

With that, Sam left the room, slamming the door behind him.

I sighed, getting up and grabbing myself a pair of sweatpants for myself. I was partly relieved that Sam had left me alone to get dressed. My entire left side was scraped up. I’d fallen when Dad knocked me over earlier this morning, tackling me into sharp rocks. I’d cleaned myself up on my own, which was painful enough in itself. I actually had to bite down on a rag to keep from yelling out. I pulled on a flannel shirt over my tee-shirt, and then pulled on a hoodie over top of that. Man did I hate the winter. My chest was already aching from running last night, or this morning or however you want to look at it. I paused before heading out the door, grabbing a hoodie for Sam, knowing full well he’d forgotten.

“What’s up with your brother?” Dad asked, catching me by my arm in the hallway. “He told me to forget about his trip then stormed off to the car.”

“I don’t know.” I shrugged, “I’ll talk to him.”
“Well if he doesn’t want to go, then he doesn’t want to go.” Dad pulled on his jacket, “I’m not wasting my money on someone who’s going to act like a spoiled brat. You better tell that brother of yours to get an attitude adjustment. If not, I’ll adjust it for him.”

“I’ll talk to him.” I mumbled.

“I’m going to practice my shot.” Dad said, as we got out of the car at our training site. “You guys run. When I’m done, I’ll come find you and we’ll practice those pins you’ve been working on.”

“Sounds great.” I said, rubbing my tightened chest, watching him walk away. Man, it felt tight. I hated my freaking lungs.

“You alright?” Sam asked, frowning at me slightly.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” I snapped, bumping roughly into Sam. I turned back to face him just in time to see him doing his normal obnoxious fourteen year old mock-impression of me behind my back.

How fucking unoriginal. Kid really needs to work on his material if he’s planning on taking his show on the road to the big leagues. John Winchester would squash him with his little pinky.

“So, are you seriously not going to D.C.?” I asked, choosing to ignore his moment of brief childish behavior.

“I thought I already made that clear?” Sam frowned at me. “I don’t understand why you’re getting so bent out of shape about this. It’s my stupid field trip. I don’t feel like going. Get over it.”

“What exactly is your problem?” I asked, as we jogged side by side.

“I could ask you the same thing.” Sam replied, “You’re the one with the secrets.”

“I don’t have secrets.” I said, the lie rolling off of my tongue with ease. “You know them anyway.”

“No I don’t.” Sam replied, running slightly ahead of me, almost baiting me to catch up. “Why are you so tired all the time then?”

“It happens.” I said, closing in on him, refusing to admit the cold air wasn’t cooperating with my lungs. “Listen, we can’t all be perfect little energetic fourteen year olds.”

“Yeah, because nineteen is so ancient.”

“It is to some of us.” I snapped, coughing out a wheeze.

“Maybe you should try eating.” Sam turned and started jogging backwards, making a face at me. “Maybe then you wouldn’t feel so old and cranky. Don’t think I haven’t noticed. Tell me, Dean… when was the last time you ate a proper meal? What’s next? Am I going to catch you purging in our bathroom.”

“Screw you!” I snapped, grabbing my chest as I felt my chest tighten. I suddenly felt everything begin to grow hazy around me as I stumbled trying to catch my footing. The next thing I knew I was connecting with the ground.

“Dean!” Sam yelled. He was at my side in a matter of what I would guess would be seconds. He propped me up onto his lap, before reached into my sweatpants pocket, fiddling for my inhaler. If I
had the lung capacity I would have made some type of crack about I normally don’t get this frisky so early in the morning. He swore as he dropped the inhaler into the snow. He picked it up before practically shoving it into my mouth, telling me to breathe as he pushed the medication into my stubborn lungs. I coughed as I felt it go in, clutching embarrassingly at Sam’s hand, probably half clawing him to death. “Good, Dean.” Sam said, holding me closer to him, “Let’s do another one. Breathe in and out for me, and then in two minutes I’ll give you another hit of this, okay?” I did as I was told, feeling my body begin to drift away as my lungs began to open back up and I began to breathe normally. I knew I was in for a killer headache lately, but at least I could breathe. Sam just sat there with me, rubbing my chest and telling me to concentrate on his breathing.

“What the hell is going on?” I heard Dad’s voice come up from what sounded like behind us. I shut my eyes, trying to muster up the strength to deal with him, but Sam spoke out, calmly and less biting then I was used to when it came to our father.

“He had an asthma attack.” Sam said, tightening his grip on me slightly.

“Fuck.” Dad dropped down in the snow, gently running his thumb over my forehead. “Dean….son….You okay?”

“Yeah.” I answered more raspy then I’d like to admit.

“Do you feel you need to go to the hospital?”

My eyes flew open slightly at that. It was rare Dad, or I for that matter, ever mentioned going to the hospital. Normally it was Sam who was the cheerleader for that type of melodramatic scene.

“No.” I breathed, “I’m fine.”

“You just are awfully white.” Dad sounded unsure of what to do.

“I’m fine.” I said again, shifting in Sam’s arms slightly. “I just need…I just need to sleep it off.”

“Okay.” Dad said after a long pause, “But you need to leave the door open, okay? I’m going to keep checking on you. Let’s just get you home and warm.” Without another word he reached down and took me from Sam. He then lifted me up with embarrassingly little to no effort and carried me to the car.
The quote is not provided in the image, but based on the context, it seems to be part of a narrative discussing a character's internal conflict and interaction with someone else. The quote appears to be discussing the character's feelings towards someone, possibly expressing frustration or anger. The text examines the character's relationship with the other individual and their own values or beliefs. The quote may be emphasizing the character's determination or resilience in the face of perceived challenges or prejudices. It could be highlighting a moment of decision or confrontation. The quote is significant in understanding the character's perspective and the dynamics at play between them. The narrative seems to be focused on exploring themes of self-identity, familial roles, and personal values. The character's response or reaction to the quote could reveal insights into their personality, relationships, and coping mechanisms.
collapsed. Although it was true his response to Dean’s asthma attack was very un-John Winchester, it left me with feelings of suspicion rather than feelings of warmth and love. I felt that it was either one of two things. Either Dad was really scared of Dean going into full respiration failure, which I can tell you from experience that wasn’t going to happen this time.

I’d seen him close once. His lips had turned blue and his shirt looked like it was being suction-cupped to his stomach and ribs as he rapidly tried to suck in air. His eyes pleaded with me for help as silently panicked for me to help him. So, I decided to drive him to the hospital myself even though I was only about twelve at the time. I don’t think I’d ever been so scared. I never forgave Dad for that. He was drunk at the time. But when Dad had woken from his drunken stupor, found my note, and he finally made it into the hospital he thanked me for taking care of Dean. So much so that he actually hugged me. I didn’t know what was going on between them at that time of course, but I guess even abusive drunken fathers care when their son almost dies.

The second option was one that was even more disgusting even for Dad to try and pull off. I was worried that there was a small chance that Dad was playing into Dean’s emotions on purpose. Pretend to be scared and care when in fact it was just a rouse to cause more damage later. And if that were the case, it left Dean wide open for an emotional attack because I knew that Dean would grasp at any amount of hope of Dad caring.

I glanced over at my brother, surprised to see him staring back at me.

“Dean!” I hissed, “What are you doing awake?”

“It’s kinda hard to sleep with you and Dad screaming at one another.” Dean gave me a slight smile.

“Sorry.” I muttered.

“It’s fine.” Dean shrugged, rubbing his head, “I have a killer headache anyway. I doubt I would have slept much longer anyway.”

“How’s your chest?” I asked. It was normal for Dean to get a headache after an attack. I wasn’t really sure why, but it always happened this way. I was more concerned with how his chest felt than his head.

“It’s fine.” Dean muttered, sliding down into his pillow, “Actually it feels pretty loose and normal. I’m glad you were there Sammy. You got me fixed up quickly.”

“No problem.” I replied, “I just am happy you’re okay. You really have to stop scaring me like that, Dean.”

“Tell that to my lungs.” Dean replied, giving me another faint smile, as he slid down under his covers, wrapping them around him.

“So can you tell me what’s going on?” I asked. “Please don’t tell me you’re okay. I know somethings wrong. Please talk to me, Dean.”

“I can’t tell you when he’s home.” Dean said, gesturing towards the door.

“Just whisper then.” I said, getting up and going over to Dean’s bed, ignoring his eye roll as I sat down beside him.

“He’s been making me train extra.” Dean said his voice thin and his eyes dropping. “He’s been making me run in the middle of the night with him. He’s been trying to get me to be more aware of my surroundings by pinning me down without warning. I’ve kinda been getting slammed around a
bit.” Without me having to ask, Dean pushed himself up and lifted up his shirt, revealing a scraped up left side and a well-bruised torso. Then he rolled up his sleeve and I could see his arm was well littered with finger shaped like prints all the way up. “I guess that’s why I’ve been so wiped out. And cranky.”

“Damnit, Dean.” I breathed, literally doing everything to keep my voice low, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t want you to know.” Dean pulled his shirt down and covered himself back up, his eyes glued to the bottom of the bed. “I was worried you’d insist on getting up and training with me.”

“Course I would.” I said, almost shouting.

“Shut up.” Dean reached out, grabbing my wrist. “Keep your voice down. I told you, now don’t be such a little bitch about it. I didn’t want you to worry. I need you to go to school.”

“I can do both.” I argued, instantly feeling angry. Why was Dean always trying to protect me? Didn’t he think that I could do both. Didn’t he think that I could handle things just fine? I wasn’t the same old Sammy that needed his big brother to hold his hand through everything. I knew too much now.

“I want you to go to school and do well.” Dean said, his eyes finally meeting mine, “I know that you can do both. But I also know it’s hard. I don’t want you falling asleep in class or being too tired to do your homework. Come on, Sammy. I’ll let you help me as much as I can, but you can’t do the extra training with me. Besides, if Dad knew you knew and you started insisting on showing up to those too, he’d definitely know something was up. You’re not exactly the most enthusiastic when it comes to training. Besides, what would the extra training do to your girlish figure?” Dean winked at me at that last comment. “The hair and the body just wouldn’t match anymore.”

“Shut up.” I reached out, wiggling my fingers threateningly at him.

“You can’t tickle me.” Dean said inching away from me, using his covers as protection, “I just had an asthma attack. That would just be cruel, man.”

“Consider yourself lucky.” I said, dropping my hands, and winking back at him. We both fell silent.

“Sorry I didn’t tell you sooner.” Dean said. “You’re my little brother. I just want the best for you.”

“I love you Dean.” I answered, getting up and heading to my own bed.

“You’re a bitch Sam.” Dean replied.
I bounced back pretty quickly after my asthma attack. I was up rearing to go the next day. I’m sure it’s due to Sam’s quick ability to get to me and pump my lifeline into my lungs. But I was up, dressed, and ready to go at five-thirty the next morning, only to discover that Dad was sound asleep. Sam was too, but I decided just to let him sleep for as long as possible until Dad was up ready to go.

I panicked slightly as I stood outside Dad’s closed door, not sure what to do. Part of me wanted to get back into bed, crawl under the nice warm covers, and just wait for him to come get me. Maybe it would buy me an extra half hour or so. But I wasn’t sure how that would go over. Dad was unpredictable in the mornings. I already felt lucky he didn’t yank me out of bed in the middle of the night so I wasn’t sure if I should try to push my luck any further. The other half was scared to wake him because anytime in the past when I had to, it always led to pain. I could remember being about eight and waking up to a crying Sammy in the middle of the night. When I went to check on him I realized pretty quickly he was running a fever. I wasn’t sure how high; I just knew he was really hot. I don’t even think we owned a thermometer at the time. Not that I would know how to use it. No one ever showed me. I’m not even sure I knew what one was. I do remember frantically trying to cool him down with a cold wash rag, but he kept crying and seemed to get even hotter. So, I went to wake up Dad. I still remember my heart pounding as I snuck into his room, and tried tapping him on the shoulder.

“Daddy-Dad.” I whispered, catching myself. I quit calling him Daddy around the age of five. But when I was scared it still sometimes slipped out. Which typically rewarded me with a slap in the mouth and told only babies and little girls called their fathers ‘daddy’.

“Dean.” Dad grunted, “What the hell do you want? It’s the middle of the night. Go back to bed.”

“I need you.” I said, climbing into bed, and pulling on his arm. He grunted and turned away from me.

“If you wet the bed you little shit I’m going to kick your ass.”

“I never wet the bed.” I said stubbornly. And it was true. It was just never a problem I had. Thank god. I certainly had enough issues and that luckily wasn’t one of them.

“Then get the hell out of here.” Dad turned and shoved me hard, knocking me off the bed. I flew backwards, hitting my back off of the wall. I bit back tears as I climbed back on top the bed.

“It’s Sammy.” I said, pulling at him again. Before I knew it I was lying flat on my back, pinned while Dad breathed angrily over me.

“What’s wrong with Sammy?” Dad snapped, “And how the hell did you mess up this time?”

“He’s sick.” I whimpered, squirming under his tight grip, “He’s really hot. I tried to cool him down, but he’s just too hot. I think he’s got a bad fever.”

“Shit.” Dad released me and took off down the hall.

Thank god Sam turned out to be okay. Dad ended up taking him to the ER that night. His fever was over 100 something. It was some awful infection. Bobby came to watch me when Dad was in the
hospital with Sam. Yeah, that’s right. He stayed with Sam in the hospital which is more than he ever did with me. But anyway, Bobby kept telling me how I probably saved Sam’s life and squeezing my shoulders.

There were other times I had to go get Dad. All of them resulted in me being pinned down to his bed, or slapped, or punched, so needless to say, I wasn’t exactly thrilled about the choice of whether or not to wake him now.

But I was more scared not to. So I slowly opened his door and whispered for him.

“Dad?” I asked, trying to contain the shakiness in my voice. It’s a lot damn harder when you’re whispering. Try it sometime. “Dad?”

“Dean?” Dad sat up almost frantic, “Are you okay?”

“What?” I asked loudly, taken back.

Dad flipped on his light, getting out of bed, coming over to me. I flinched slightly as he came closer, bracing myself for the hit that was to come. But instead he reached out and put his hand on my shoulder.

“Are you alright?”

“Me?” I asked dumbly, “Yeah, I’m…I’m fine. I’m just ready to go train.”

“We aren’t training today.” Dad said, “I think you need a few days off. Go back to bed.”

“What?” I asked, unsure if I heard that right.

“Go back to bed, Dean.” Dad said, patting me on the back. He then turned and headed back to his bed.

I did as I was told, climbing into bed, not sure what to do next. I couldn’t quite get comfortable enough to go back to sleep. The idea of relaxing with Dad a few doors down was such a foreign concept. I laid there for about twenty minutes before I got up, yanking my comforter with me and settled in front of the couch to watch tv.

I watched the old cartoons Sam and I used to watch as kids that I’d forgotten about a long time ago. I guess I drifted off because the next thing I knew, Dad was sitting on the other end of the couch polishing his guns. I immediately sat up, pulling away from him.

“You sleep okay, son?” Dad asked, glancing at me.

“Fine.” I said, looking around for Sammy. I caught glimpse of the clock realizing it was well past nine. Sam should be in school. “Where’s Sam?” I asked in somewhat of a panic.

“School.” Dad gave me a funny look, “I drove him this morning.”

“You took him to school?” I couldn’t help but ask. I could literally count on my hand the number of times Dad drove Sam or I to school.

“Yeah. I’m not that inept of a father you know.” Dad said. “I did need to look up directions to find the school though.”

When Dad gave me a wink I realized he was joking. I laughed mainly because I can’t remember the last time Dad made a joke that wasn’t at my expense.
“So Sammy really hates me, huh?” Dad asked. I noticed he used Sam’s pet name that he had absolutely forbid me to use less than twenty-four hours ago.

“Hates a strong word.” I replied, shrugging.

“Kid’s lucky I don’t throttle him.” Dad sighed, putting down his gun, “Mouthed off to me this morning about how I should take you to a doctor. Then continued his tantrum how he can’t wait to get the hell away from me when he’s eighteen.”

I felt myself grow a tad dizzy at the last statement. I knew myself that Sam was going to leave once he turned eighteen, no matter what he said. For one, there was no way I was going to let him stick around twiddling his thumbs with me the rest of his life. I wasn’t exactly sure how I was going to pull that one off-getting Sam to get the hell on with his life I mean—but luckily I still had time to come up with a master plan. For another, Sam had bigger dreams than being a hunter. His brain would scream at him for higher education which would just turn him into more of a little bitch then he already was. I didn’t want to see that happen to him. But even though I knew all this, it didn’t mean it didn’t hurt to hear Dad echoing Sam’s words.

“Sam’s just Sam.” I shrugged again, not sure how else to respond.

“I’m assuming he’s not going on his little field trip?” Dad was staring at me now. I have to admit, the way he was looking at me was making me awfully uncomfortable.

“I still have to talk to him about that.” I said.

“Tell me, Dean.” Dad picked up his gun again and began to once again begin to polish it, “Why wouldn’t he go?”

“I don’t know.” I shrugged, “He’s stubborn. I’m sure he has his reasons. He probably has a big project due that Monday or something.”

“You really think that’s all there is?” Dad asked, his voice almost too kind.

I didn’t trust that voice.

Normally that voice came when he suspected something.

Or already knew something.

“I couldn’t really see any other reason.” I shrugged again, feeling my heart begin to race slightly.

“I mean, I’m sure now that you had your little attack he’ll refuse to go…” Dad cleared his throat, “But I just have to ask you…you haven’t shared any sort of details with him have you?”

I swear my heart literally stopped for a moment or two.

“What kind of details?” I asked, praying like I never prayed before that my voice sounded as clueless as I tried to make it sound.

“About our little agreement?” Dad wouldn’t look at me, which made me feel even more creeped out, “You know, about keeping certain things away from Sam?”

“Oh.” I pretended to breathe out, “He doesn't know anything.”

“You sure.” Dad asked. He was almost smiling now. “Because you do know that if Sam somehow did find out it would end very badly for you. Well not only for you, but for Sam as well.”
“I know.” I said, unable to contain the drop in my voice, “I know that.”

“I thought I’d just remind you of that.” Dad said. “And even though you’re little brother’s growing like a weed and thinks he can boll dozer over me, he can’t. I’d knock him flat on his ass if I had to.”

“You’re not going to have to,” I insisted. “Sam doesn’t and won’t ever know anything.”

“Good.” Dad cleared his throat, “If you do tell Sam, it will be the last thing you ever do.”

I breathed a sigh of relief when Dad left to question a nearby town about strange events that were happening. Dad figured it was a werewolf, by the bite-marks that were found on the victims, but he wanted to gather some information first. Without thinking I got up and started putting away the guns he had polished back into their hiding places.

I wandered into Dad’s room just to hold and to touch a knife he’d given me for my sixteenth birthday. He’d only let me touch it that day. It was a beauty. It even had my initials and different protective symbols carved into the handle. When I opened the drawer where the knife was kept, it was under a bunch of Dad’s handkerchiefs. As I pushed the handkerchiefs out of the way, I noticed an upside down picture that was labeled Mary and Dean 1983. It was far too neat to be Dad’s writing so I figured it was Mom’s. I quickly picked up the picture and turned it over.

And there we were. Mom looked like about to pop being pregnant with Sam. Regardless, she was holding me close, kissing my cheek, while my mouth was open wide in what looked like full laugh mode.

I stared at the picture, sitting down on Dad’s bed. I don’t ever remember feeling that happy.

Was I ever that happy?

I guess I was.

A picture doesn’t lie.

My eyes fell again on Mom.

I couldn’t believe how beautiful she was.

Just by the way she was holding me you could tell she love me. And I could tell just by the way that I was turning into her that I felt loved and loved her back.

I wondered like I have many times who I’d be if she would have lived.

Would I be the same person as I am now?

Would I be that kid in the back of the class who couldn’t read? Who flunked out of school? Who was so embarrassingly stupid his daddy signed him out at sixteen?

Would I be that person who didn’t have any friends? The one who never truly let anyone know who he really was? Besides Sammy that is.

And it’s true. To the outside world, I cast myself as a character. A smooth-talking, rule breaking, confident, smart-ass jerk. A man, did the girls eat that up.

But it was all just a facade.
To hide my true feelings.

About myself.

About my pain.

Luckily the smart-ass thing was kind of real. I was always appreciative that I had humor on my side. I could laugh and joke off almost everything.

That’s one thing Sam didn’t have over me.

I had humor to joke my way out of things.

My Sammy was too honest, too real, and too raw. But then, I’d always been there to let him be who he wanted to be and who he needed to be.

I wondered if I’d be such a jerk if Mom was around. I doubted that I’d be so disgraceful. I doubted I’d be so full of self-hatred. But, maybe I would be. Maybe I was just meant to be a failure.

I know one thing for certain; she would have shielded me from Dad. I know that things weren’t great with us from the start. I do know that, deep down, despite what I tell myself and despite what I tell Sam.

If I’m really truly being honest I know he’s never really liked me.

I just don’t know why.

But I also know it has to be my fault.

I have vivid memories of him grabbing me and screaming in my face. And of Mom and Dad fighting because of it.

I also know Dad hit me when I was little when we were alone. I remember hiding from him under my bed whenever I could because I knew he couldn’t get to me there.

I didn’t tell Mom because I knew it made her sad and I hated to make her sad.

I just wish I knew what it was about me that was so awful to begin with.

I would fix it if I knew.

I would be a fucking good soldier.

Even if it killed me.
Chapter 29

Sam

I went to D.C. against my better judgement. Dean insisted that I go; telling me Dad was getting suspicious that I knew more about what was going on between them then I should. I’d like to say that I had a bad time there, but that would be a lie.

I loved walking through our Nation’s Capital, seeing and viewing all the memorials that I thought I would only just get to read about. I gawked at all the people who were buzzing around in suits carrying briefcases and had to practically be torn away from the front of the White House. There was just something about being close to where so many important decisions made me feel tingly inside. I was sad to leave, and even contemplated going to school in the area or moving here when I was old enough.

When I climbed into the Impala with Dad who picked me up from school, I was even less pleased to see him than usual.

“I thought Dean was supposed to pick me up.” I said unable to control my disappointment.

“You’re brothers has a bad ankle sprain.” Dad replied, “And hello to you too.”

“How’d he sprain his ankle?” I asked, forgoing any form of greeting.

“He fell during a hunt.” Dad turned on the Impala and began heading home, “He tripped over a root sticking up out of the ground. We were chasing after a werewolf and—”

“I’ll just ask Dean.” I snapped before I thought about the implications of my sentence would sound.

“You don’t believe me?” Dad asked. I could feel his eyes on me despite the fact that I wasn’t looking at him and that he was supposed to be looking at the road.

“I just mean I’d rather talk to Dean.” I explained without batting an eye.

Dad didn’t reply. We drove home in silence. He didn’t ask me how my trip was and I didn’t ask him how his hunt went. In truth I was beginning to feel guilty. How could I be so selfish to agree to go to D.C. despite Dean’s pleas? And how could I go and have such a great time when it was obvious Dean had been suffering at the hands of our father at home. I decided the second I could, I was going to force it out of him what actually happened.

When we got home, Dean was laying on the couch, barefoot, with his ankle propped up on a few pillows, wrapped with an ace bandage. He had a pair of crutches resting next to him. If Dean was using crutches, I knew he had to be pretty badly injured. He was never one to show he was hurt.

“Hey.” He said looking up from the tv giving me a warm smile, “How was your trip?”

“Fine.” I said, knowing my voice was emotionless. “How’s your ankle? Dad told me you tripped during a hunt?”

“Yeah.” Dean shifted, not making any indication either way if that were the truth, “Werewolf. We got him though in the end.”

“That’s good.” I said, looking up at Dad who settled in a chair with a beer. Imagine my shock
when he passed one to Dean who took it without hesitation.

“Thanks.” Dean said taking a swig and putting it down on the coffee table, now noticeably avoiding my eyes.

“What the hell is that?” I asked, pointing to the bottle. I pushed Dean’s good foot out of the way, which still made him hiss in pain as he moved, before plopping down on the couch.

“Damnit, Sam.” Dean snapped, “Watch it, will you? Fuck, it’s not like there isn’t another chair in the room. And it’s a chocolate milk? What’s it look like?”

“It looks like your drinking.” I said, not even allowing him to play that sarcastic game of his with me.

“Your brother’s in pain.” Dad said, speaking up, “So, I’ve let him have a few over the weekend.”

I don’t know if I was more stunned by the fact that Dad was defending Dean or that Dean was smirking at me with complete contentment.

“Chill out, Sammy boy.” He said, “It’s just a beer.”

“You’re breaking the law.” I said pointedly to Dad, “He’s nineteen. He can’t drink yet.”

“Sure he can.” Dad shrugged, “I mean I’ve broken many laws over the years being a hunter. I don’t think this one even tops the top ten. Besides, Dean’s the one who was able to keep up with that werewolf. If it wasn’t for him we probably would have lost it.”

“Thank god for that. Because that’s what’s most important, right? That you have another kill under your belt.” I glanced at Dean who was staring between the two of us, like he was watching a tennis match. Except for the fact that he looked terrified.

“Do you want me to write you a detailed description of the hunt and have my assistant fax it over to you?” Dad frowned, “I don’t know what happened on that trip of yours but watch your attitude. Don’t come in here acting like what you did this past weekend is more important. It was my money that allowed you to go.”

“It was my grades that allowed me to go in the first place.” I yelled, standing up, bumping Dean by accident, who, let out a yelp. I was too angry, and too focused on arguing to apologize.

“This is what I was talking about Dean.” Dad said, getting up and stepping closer to me, so that he was also hovering over Dean, who looked awfully uncomfortable. “Sam always uses his grades and intelligence to put us both down. He acts so much better than us.”

“I don’t use my grades to feel better than Dean.” I was so angry I was crying. “I would never do that to him.”

“Can you guys stop?” Dean’s thin voice spoke up, “Let’s not fight over this. Huntings important to Dad. Schools important to Sammy. So can’t we just leave it at that?”

Both Dad and I stopped arguing, both of us frowning down at Dean who was looking between us, squinting slightly. Dad turned and headed out the door, yelling he was going out and that he’d be home late. I shook my head, looking at Dean who was pulling himself up to a standing position and balancing on his crutches.

“Nice one, Sam.” Dean mumbled as he passed me.
I bit my tongue, not wanting to get into an argument with my brother. After all, I was looking to get the truth out of Dean about his ankle. And getting into an argument with him wasn’t the way to go about that. He’d immediately clam up and shut down emotionally. I just wasn’t buying the whole “let’s drink beer together, way to go son” act.

“How’d you really get hurt, Dean?” I was now standing beside Dean in the bathroom, watching as he unraveled the ace bandage and soaked his foot into the cool bath water. I winced when I saw how swollen and bruised it was. I could tell it was painful.

“Exactly like I told you.” Dean frowned at me, “I tripped over a freaking root when we were chasing a werewolf. Don’t start. It’s not what you think.”

“How else am I supposed to think?” I hissed, “I leave for a weekend and when I come back your limping around on an ankle that looks like it’s been throttled with a baseball bat.”

“For God’s sake, Sam! I tripped. That happens to people sometimes. Especially when they are running through the woods. Especially in the middle of the night. The only light source we had was the full moon. Don’t read into this. Dad didn’t do it.”

I fell silent, studying my brother’s face. There were no signs of his telltales. No tongue being run along his top lip, and no eye blinking. But I still didn’t believe him. I couldn’t. How could I? It was like Dean expected me to suddenly forget everything he told me over a period of three days. But I also knew standing there and calling Dean a liar was also a mistake.

“My trip was fun.” I said, trying a change of subject.

“That’s good.” Dean turned the cold water back on wincing as it hit his skin. I resisted against asking him if he’s seen a doctor knowing the answer would be a no. How he or Dad had gotten their hands on a pair of crutches was beyond me. Well, I figured seeing as Dean could hardly walk it had to be Dad who’d gotten the crutches. “What did you like about it?”

“Everything.” I replied, grinning for the first time since I got home, “It was all so cool.”

“I’m glad you got to go, Sammy.” Dean smiled back at me.

“Can we at least talk about the beer?” I asked.

“Nope.” Dean replied. He motioned for my support and I helped him into a standing position. He then grabbed his crutches and limped his way out of the bathroom.
Chapter 30

Dean

For some reason Donny’s been on my mind lately. I don’t know why. It’s not like I saw the guy or anything.

It happened after I woke up, somewhat delirious from pain pills with a touch of alcohol Dad had given me to help me sleep after injuring my ankle.

And yeah, I did trip over a tree root at night while running in the woods, while chasing a werewolf. I’m not going to lie, it hurt like a sonofabitch, but what happened after that made the eye watering pain almost worth it.

It’s a pretty simple story actually. Dad and I cornered the damn thing right before it turned from human to monster. Once it did turn, it took off running through the woods. Dad screamed at me to go and I ran as fast as I could after it. It was a pretty heavily wooded area and my smaller frame was easier able to squeeze through the narrow spaces between the trees. I was gaining on it, when I felt my boot catch on something. I fell, slamming down, face first, getting a mouthful of dirt. The werewolf was on top of me, before my brain could even register what happened, turned me onto my back and perched on top of my chest. As it pinned me down, I could feel its warm breath as it went down to take a bite out of what I guessed was my collarbone. I closed my eyes, willing myself not to scream. Suddenly I heard the thing yelp as Dad took out the son of a bitch.

I felt the fear that I had been holding in rush out in one long exhale. I didn’t even realize I had been holding my breath. It was only when I went to stand up and collapsed, embarrassingly yelping in pain did I realize that I really fucked up my ankle.

Dad immediately shone his flashlight on my ankle, loosened my boot, before pulling it off. I nearly jumped out of my skin while he lightly probed the bone there and the tendons. Instinctually I bit down on my coat sleeve, to keep from screaming.

“It’s not broken.” He said after a few moments, “But it’s badly sprained. Let’s get you home, kid.” Dad helped me up into a standing position and together we hobbled to the car.

Once we were home, Dad gave me a Vicodin and then told me to wash it down with a swig of whiskey. I coughed at the taste, glad it still burned the back of my throat. I was still with it enough to know that if it went down too smoothly there was a good chance Dad would get suspicious why I didn’t gag. Then, he put me to bed, elevating and icing my injured ankle.

I woke up around three in the morning shivering slightly. My first thought was of Sam and why I couldn’t hear his heavy snore. It took my sluggish brain a second to calm down from my panic and realize he was in D.C. My next thought was of Donny. My third thought was of Donny.

Donny.

I hadn’t heard or talked to him since I’d been fifteen. Since Sam and I came home one day to find Dad hurriedly packing, barking out orders that we were leaving and that we had to be out in a half an hour. Apparently he’d done something particularly law breaking and the police were hot on his trail.
In John Winchester translation: He screwed up, and royally.

I knew better than to ask, unlike Sam, who stood there, crying that he had been chosen to represent the school in some spelling bee, and demanding to know why Dad always ruined things for us.

What a nerd.

I wouldn’t be caught dead in a spelling bee. Even if I was good at it.

But to Sam it was important, so minus the teasing I’d done on the way home, I felt bad.

As I listened to my brother’s plight, I shoved our shit into the duffle bags. By this time I was a master packer. I knew jeans went on the bottom because they were heavy and tee-shirts on top. Boxers and socks could be shoved anywhere. Boots and tennis shoes could be worn or tossed into the trunk. I was packed and set by the time Sam came into our room, tears streaming down his cheeks.

“I hate him.” He said, coming in and flopping down onto his back on my bed, “He’s so mean. Why can’t we just stay a little longer? My teacher said I’m the best speller she’s ever seen. She said that I’d definitely win the county spelling bee.”

I was quiet for a moment, trying to think about what to say.

“Well, if she knows you’re the best, I’m sure you are the best, Sammy.” I finally ventured, sitting down next to my brother. “If she knows that you’ll win, doesn’t that kinda mean that you already did? Like screw the stupid contest. You would have won. Why embarrass the rest of the kids?”

Sam’s response was a loud sniff.

“You know Dad’s in trouble.” I said, lowering my voice. “You can see he’s panicking.”

“Like that’s our problem.” Sam replied, looking up as though he were talking directly to the ceiling. “He always screws up. Why should we always just willingly go?”

‘Because if we don’t go willingly, I’ll pay’. I thought to myself. ‘Because when you go to bed tonight, wherever it is that we end up, I’ll be slammed over some sink, and get the tar beat out of me.’

“Look, we just gotta, okay?” I said, trying not to show the fear in my own voice, “That’s just what we have to do. It’s what Dad needs us to do.”

“But we have lives here. Why do we always have to do what he says all the time just because he says it? You always do what he says no matter what. Don’t you care about leaving? You actually have a friend this time. You have Donny.”

Donny.

I wouldn’t be able to say goodbye.

My stomach suddenly plummeted.

‘You actually have a friend this time. You have Donny.’

After Sam mentioned Donny, my brain went into complete panic mode. Suddenly I was more eager to leave then Dad. I wanted to get the fuck out of town, the fuck out of here, before I had to think anything more about any of this.
So, despite my brotherly instincts to feel sympathy for Sam, I practically launched myself at the car, tossing both mine and Sam’s duffle bags in the trunk before gluing myself into the passenger’s seat. Dad did give me a funny look as he climbed into the driver’s seat with Sam grumbling and mumbling in the back.

I don’t think I was ever more relieved to bust out of a place in my life.

Even more so when I was younger at the school Sam was in now where I got picked on for being stupid. And even when Dad signed me out of school.

Sam’s words hung over my head, swirling over me like I was in some sort old stupid cartoon. ‘You actually have a friend this time. You have Donny.’

Was that all Donny was?

A friend?

Or was he more?

I wasn’t sure.

Nothing had happened since that night we kissed.

At least not anything that would be considered something.

I mean there was the small hand graze when we passed papers in school, the cocky grin I’d give him when I said something witty that made him laugh, the way he squeezed my knee when we hung out which always made me jump a foot and blush.

But I’d been with girls too.

Lots of girls.

Since I’d been thirteen.

More girls than I could count.

I hooked up with them in more places than I can remember. Janitor’s closets, behind the bleachers, in the baseball teams empty dugouts. It was always during school hours, and mostly it was to avoid going to class and feeling stupid. Do you blame me? Despite what I had going on at home, I was still a hormonal teenage guy. I just liked having sex.

Of course it was always just physical stuff; nothing I saw as anything long term or meaningful. Despite my reputation as somewhat of a heartbreaker; I made it perfectly clear what the intentions were from the get-go. Not that I didn’t want more, but I didn’t really have the time. I was too preoccupied looking after Sammy, doing what needed to be done around the house, or training to spend the amount of time with a girl that I felt she deserved. Besides, even if I did, I sure in hell didn’t have the type of home life to bring anyone into. I couldn’t let any of them find out about Dad beating me because Kelli, Susie, or Lauren, etc, would more likely pity me, tell her parents, then they in turn would call CPS.

And CPS meant foster care.

And foster care meant Sammy and I would be separated.

A few girls did ask about my bruises—it was kind of hard not to notice when I was shirtless—and I
always made up some excuse of getting into a street fight. It went with my reputation and the girls ate it up. I was careful to never hook up if I had belt marks on my back. Which admittedly put another damper on things my sophomore year. That’s when Dad seemed to really step up his game.

But yeah, for some reason, Donny was who I thought of at 3:30 in the morning. When my ankle was beginning to throb lightly and my head felt like it was made out of a ton of cotton balls. I carefully turned over onto my side, facing the wall sighing.

I remember that he told me his Dad beat him too...

And although I was deliberately careful he never crossed paths with my own father, I met his once.

Unlike Dad, he was less domineering and controlling and more negligent and frustrated. He seemed to be more annoyed by his kids presence than not. Donny mentioned that his dad would literally give Karen and him money just so they would stay out of the house. So despite being an abusive sob, he really was the opposite of John Winchester.

Dad would beat my ass if I stayed out all night like Karen, or spent hundreds on clothes just to waste time like Donny. He’d skin me alive if I skipped around town, smoking and drinking, and drawing attention to myself. He’d always advised both Sam and I to not attract any attention to ourselves. He’d freaking kill me if Sam were doing that.

I couldn’t help but wonder if Donny were okay. If he’d made it out of that house he was living in. If he took his sister and left like he always said he wanted to do once he turned eighteen.

Donny always said that the best thing he could do for his family was leave his father alone. His father even screamed this particular phrase at him when I was over there one day, with Sammy in tow. So, Donny simply took Karen by the hand and left. Sam and I followed suit. I remember feeling shocked that he was able to walk out of his house so easily. If I ever tried that, Dad would drag me back in and would beat me so badly I wouldn’t be able to walk for weeks.

I shivered slightly thinking about even thinking about it.

I really don’t know why Donny popped into my head. It wasn’t like I was seeking a companionship. I wasn’t at all. I liked being alone. I didn’t want anyone to have to deal with my shit. It wouldn’t be fair. I was a fuck up and I knew it.

I didn’t even like having to deal with me.

Truthfully, I sometimes I missed sex, but like I said before that had only been with girls. I was easily able to go to the next town over or even this one and hooking up with anyone I wanted. Not to sound cocky, but I knew I was good looking.

Even Dad said so. Mostly it was a joke at my expense, but it was what it was.

“You’re almost pretty enough to be a girl, Dean. If I didn’t know better, I would have thought you were one.”

“At least you’re good looking, son.”

“Don’t ever screw up that face of yours, kid.”

I knew I would be easily be able to hook up with whenever and whoever I wanted to.

The problem was that I had Sam.
And too much shit to do.

And I was too terrified of my father to leave the house when he was home.

Normally when he was gone, I was either exhausted or drunk.

Except for that one time recently, when I hooked up with that bartender chick.

Or at least I think I hooked up with her.

I honestly can’t remember. I was so drunk…

But I figured thinking about Donny was kind of useless. After all, I had no way to contact him. I couldn’t even remember his last name. I actually don’t think I ever knew it. To me he was just Donny.

I silently cursed myself for being so stupid.

For thinking about things that didn’t and shouldn’t matter.

For wondering about people who probably forgot about me a long time ago.

I’ll just blame it on the damn drugs.
Chapter 31

Sam

The next weeks flew by without any incidence. Dean and I went back to training and Dean seemed remarkably healthy. Dad seemed to leave Dean alone for the most part, only slightly giving a critique here and there. Dean seemed to thrive under the new conditions that were suddenly in place. I however, didn’t trust them. Dad was too slick and too cunning to have changed his behavior and feeling of my brother overnight. I found him glaring at Dean on occasions, and during those times I would hold my breath, waiting for the attack I knew would eventually happen.

Dad and I were at each other’s throats more than usual, but I didn’t care. I hated the man and wanted him to know how I felt. We argued over everything. I admittedly picked most of the fights, but then I’d argue that so did he. I fought with him when the orange juice ran out, when he forgot to pay the electricity bill and our power went out. I fought with him when I couldn’t find a pencil to do my homework and when he forgot to come to a parent teacher conference. Dean showed up for it instead, which I actually preferred, but I still felt like fighting with Dad over it, so I did.

I attacked him the second he walked in the door later that night. I could tell by his face he had a long day, and a long hunt, but I didn’t care.

“Where were you?” I asked, jumping up from the kitchen table where I was doing my homework.

“On a hunt?” Dad frowned at me, dropping his bag, and kicking off his boots, “Where else would I be? You know that Hank and I are working hard on—”

“You were supposed to be at my parent teacher conference.” I interrupted, “I told you about it this morning. You said you’d be there. You said you’d make it.”

“I’m sorry Sam.” Dad replied, not sounding sorry at all. “I got caught up in the hunt.”

“Dean came.” I said pointedly. “He came.”

“Well, that’s good.” Dad let out a sigh of relief which for some reason made me even angrier.

“It’s not his job!” I suddenly exploded, “It’s not his job to go to that. The title pretty much describes it all. Parent-teacher conference. You’re the parent. He’s the brother. Although, he is pretty much my parent.”

“What’s going on?” Dean, who had been in his room, suddenly appeared in the doorway behind us.

“Your brother’s giving me a hard time for missing his little conference today.” Dad said, rounding on Dean, who notably winced, “I thought I told you to cancel that?”

“I just thought I’d go.” Dean said, his voice coming out small and thin, “I figured I could make it work.”

“Don’t you think that attracted more attention to us?” Dad snapped.

“I said you were on a business trip.” Dean’s voice was almost pleading, “That you called me and asked if I could go instead. I told them I’d pass the message along to you. Besides, Sammy’s doing fine.”
“Dad,” I said, unable to watch Dean struggle any longer, “I’m sorry. I didn’t realize you tried to cancel today.”

“Go run laps, Dean.” Dad said, ignoring me completely, “When you get home, we’re having a talk about this. You should know by now not to disobey me.”

Dean paused slightly, giving me a worried look. Clearly he was afraid of leaving me alone. I just gave him a slight shake of my head, showing him I was fine. I knew Dad wouldn’t hit me. And if he did, he did. I wasn’t scared of him.

“Dean!” Dad barked, making me glare and Dean jump. “Did you hear me?”

“How many?” Dean asked, stepping backwards, bumping into the corner of the doorway.

“How about this?” Dad said, keeping his eyes on me, “I’ll come get you when I feel you’re done?”

Dean nodded, giving me one final glance before disappearing into the hallway.

“Why are you punishing him?” I asked, once I knew Dean was out of the house. “He didn’t do anything wrong. He is the one who showed up when you didn’t. He’s the one who always shows up.”

“If I were you I’d stop right now.” Dad said, giving me a warning look.

I wanted to ask him what he was planning on doing if I didn’t. I wanted to see how far I could push him until he hit me. But then again, he never has so I was afraid he’d just take out his anger on Dean later. So instead I spun around and stormed off to our bedroom, slamming the door hard behind me.

As I lay in my bed, I tried to picture what life would be like if things would have been different; If Mom hadn’t died, and if Dean and I would have grown up without all the crap Dad’s put us through.

I knew one thing for certain. Mom would have kicked Dad out of the house for the way he treated my brother. From the little I knew about her, the abuse of her oldest, her baby, never would have happened. At least not to the extent that it did today. She would have likely divorced him, if not killed him. I doubted that he’d even be in any of our lives, which considering the type of man he was, wouldn’t actually be such a bad thing.

I picture myself as pretty much the same person, except maybe a little less angry. I knew I was more than blessed to always be under the protection and care of my older brother. He let me be who I wanted to be, despite it not fitting his own profile of himself. I did think however Mom would support me in my academic career. I could picture her being proud of how smart I was and excited to help me pick a college. Instead of Dean showing up alone to school events, like award ceremonies, he’d have Mom with him, and they’d both be there to cheer me on. Dean wouldn’t have to go to any parent teacher conferences because Mom would want to attend everyone, glowing at the remarks the teachers made about how good of a student I was, and how well I functioned in the classroom.

Dean would have the greatest character change. For one, he’d be healthy. His asthma would be completely under control. He would have little to no attacks. There wouldn’t have been that scary trip to the hospital when I had to drive him myself. There wouldn’t have been that time recently in the snow when he dropped on me. His skin wouldn’t be marked up and scarred over from the multiple beatings he’d received over the years at the hands of our father. He’d be pure and
unscathed. He’d be bigger because he wouldn’t have stunted his growth by withholding food from his own body just to make sure I ate, although unknowingly, as I pleased.

Emotionally he’d be a whole person. He’d be able to be the person he was born to be without any qualms or concerns of who that person was. He’d be able to express the sensitivity I knew he hid without fear of being called a wimp or a pussy. He’d be celebrated for his compassion towards others, instead of made to feel isolated or shamed. Instead of beatings and punches he’d be given support and praise. He’d have friends to hang out with, and that he was able to bring over to the house. I even pictured him worrying our mother a few times by staying out past curfew.

I pictured Mom, happy and beautiful. She would be proud and loving toward both of us, but Dean would be the one she’d cherish the most. This was because, not only did they have an instant connection like they did in real life, but she also caught Dad beating the crap out of him when we were little. This beating lead to Dad’s being kicked out of our lives for good. Every few years he tried showing up, but Mom always called the cops on him. Dean always froze up when he saw our father, but always felt safe with both Mom and I around. Even though he insisted he didn’t remember the abuse (which we all knew he did), Mom felt awful about it, which was why she protected him so much. She hugged Dean a lot, which he allowed and even hugged her back.

Dean and I would still be tight. Our relationship would be different without a doubt, but we would still be close. He wouldn’t have had to be both a father and brother to me, and I wouldn’t so in some ways we would be less dependent on one another. We’d probably fight more and get on each other’s nerves more. Like normal brothers do. He’d more than likely pick on me like a typical older brother, making fun of my goody-goody personality and nerdy side. I on the other hand, would probably rat him out for sneaking out of the house, getting detention, and so on. But at the end of the day, we’d love one another and look out of the other.

The other thing that would be different would be academics in both of our cases. I would be given all the time to study I wanted. Mom would allow me to go on any academic trips of my choosing. Even though Bobby mentioned to me that she wasn’t a good student, she’d still praise whatever path I wanted to pursue.

Dean would be given the support to help him early on. Mom would resource and get him the best of the best tutors. She’d fight with the school to get him the most understanding and patient teachers. He’d graduate high school. Maybe even go to college. She’d encourage him when he felt like giving up. For some reason I had this vivid memory of her holding Dean, and comforting him after he failed a test that he studied hard for. I could almost hear Dean whimpering that he was stupid, and Mom telling him back that he wasn’t and that he had a lot of talent that a stupid test wouldn’t reveal. She’d tell Dean that he was smart, and kind, and compassionate, and she was proud that he was her son.

I sighed staring up at the ceiling. I wished with everything in me that that was our real lives. I wished that Mom was still alive, Dad was out of our lives, and that Dean would for once be given a fair shot at life.

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**Dean**

I was on my tenth lap around the track when I heard the sound of the Impala’s rumble coming up behind me. I knew better than to stop running, and even picked up the pace a little. When I came back around the track, Dad was out of the car, leaning against the door. The look on his face made my blood go cold.
“Hi, Dean.” Dad said, his voice oddly calm.

I knew better than to trust that voice.

“Dad…” I began, but before I could say anything else, I was pinned down on my back.

“You deliberately disobeyed me.” Dad snapped, grabbing me by my coat and slamming me back down, knocking my head off the ground hard before bringing me up to a standing position. “I told you to cancel that appointment.”

“I just thought I could help.” I said, grabbing onto Dad’s arm, trying to steady myself. I instantly felt dizzy.

“You thought wrong.” Dad snapped, giving me a hard shove and once again I found myself on the ground. I knew a sharp kick was coming so I instinctually curled in a ball like a coward and covered my head. Sure enough the kick came, his boot catching my side.

“Get up!” Dad barked, not giving me the chance and yanking me up by my hair. He began pulling me towards the car. I knew once we got in there, I’d be trapped.

I placed my hand over his, trying to diminish his grip as I tried to keep my feet going as fast as his, determined not to fall. I crawled in from the driver’s side, bracing myself for what was to come.

“Dad, let me explain.” I began, but was greeted with a sharp slap across the face.

“Shut up!” Dad snapped, “You know, Dean, it’s not enough that Sammy likes you better than me, but now you’re trying to be his father.”

“I’m not.” I said, trying to shake off the sting of the slap, “I just felt it was easier if I went and got it over with. Sam’s fine. We both know that.”

“I don’t care if he wasn’t.” Dad reached out, pinching my left shoulder hard. “You disobeyed me, Dean. I thought I taught you better than that by now? I guess I’ve been too soft on you.”

Too soft?

Was he kidding me?

And that’s when it happened.

I don’t remember it happening.

But it did.

That’s when Dad grabbed me roughly by my shoulder and pinned me on my right side. I felt a slight tug at the top of my jeans and my boxers (no, it’s not what you think), and then a sharp blinding pain on my left hip. Without meaning to I yelled out in pain. Then just like that, Dad released me, and started up the car. It was only when he tossed the knife down at my feet and I saw the blood did I realize what had happened.

My father just stabbed me.

It wasn’t a deep cut. At least I didn’t think so. A surface wound if that. But he’d stabbed me.

He stabbed me.

He cut me with his knife that he used to hunt monsters.

The knife that he killed the things he hated.

Dad dropped me off at home, warning me to not tell Sam, before speeding away. I put my hand over my cut, feeling the warmth and wetness of my own blood. I wished like hell Sam wouldn’t be awake but I knew from the light in our bedroom, there was no chance of that.

“Dean!” Sam poked his head out into the hallway, breathing a sigh of relief when I saw I was alone, “Thank god. I’m glad you’re back. You okay?”

“I’m fine, Sam.” I said, trying to keep my voice as calm as possible.

“Did he hurt you?” Sam asked, coming out into the hallway, flicking on the light. I jumped at the brightness, trying to think quickly of an excuse how to make it into the bathroom with my coat on, or how to get my coat off without flinching.

“I gotta piss.” I said quickly. I decided that was the best course of action. I scooted past Sam, and slid into the bathroom, locking the door behind me. I quickly locked the one to our bedroom, gulping in as much air as I could, trying to stop myself from freaking out. I waited a second, and then flushed the toilet just for realistic purposes. Then I turned on the shower and tentatively began stripping.

Like I thought the cut wasn’t deep.

It hurt like a bitch, but it wasn’t deep.

I stepped into the shower, hissing as the water hit my hip. I leaned against the tile wall, watching as my blood washed down the drain. Once it stopped, I washed my body before carefully washing my cut. I then lightly shampooed my hair and stepped out of the shower. I cleaned out my cut with alcohol which hurt like a bitch, then turned off the shower, before bandaging myself up. Luckily I had a clean pj top and pair of boxers stored under some towels-I kept a random supply in there before Sam found out about Dad so he wouldn’t see my beaten up body-and slipped them on, before unlocking both doors and heading out into our bedroom.

I ran smack into Sam who was standing right in front of the door, a worried look on his face.

“What the fuck?” I snapped slightly, “You trying to give me a heart attack? Damnit, Sammy.”

“What happened, Dean?” Sam asked, blocking me from venturing towards my bed.

“Nothing.” I shrugged, “He was pissed, what else is new?”

“Did he hurt you?” Sam asked, looking over my face. Luckily Dad’s slap hadn’t left any type of mark.

“He just yelled a lot.” I shrugged, giving Sam a wink, “Nothing I can’t handle.” I managed to pass him and slid into bed without drawing attention to my hip.
It had started to throb. I grimaced slightly as I tried to get comfortable.

“Why are you making a face?” Sam asked.

“Because you keep staring at me.” I replied, giving him a smirk, trying to school my features. “You try getting cozy in bed with your brother staring you down like you’re a piece of meat. Stop objectifying me.”

Sam opened his mouth to say something, and then shook his head, before flopping down on his bed. He clicked off the light and sighed heavily.

“So what did my teacher have to say?”

There it was. I knew he was dying to ask all night. I smiled.

“She said you’re doing awesome, Sammy.” I didn’t bother hiding the pride in my voice, “She said you’re one of the brightest kids she’s seen in a long time. And that you could probably have your pick of any college in the country.”

“Really?” Even though the light was out I knew Sam was smiling.


“Thanks, Dean.” Sam said softly. He was quiet for a moment before he cleared his throat, “Hey Dean,” He asked his voice wavering slightly like he does when he’s trying hard not to cry. “You sure you’re okay?”

I didn’t reply.

I just pretended to already be asleep.

I couldn’t tell him I was okay.

Because quite truthfully I was crying too.

Not because of what happened.

It wasn’t because Dad had once again snapped on me.

Or that he’d once again beaten me up.

Or even that he’d cut me up some.

I could handle that.

I’ve been there before.

At least on some level.

I was crying because at that moment I knew it was a sealed deal.

I knew that one day Sam really would leave me.

And then I’d truly be all alone.
Chapter 32

**Sam**

Dad and I haven’t spoken since our fight a few days ago. Well, unless if we were arguing more that is. Dean’s pretty much played the mediator between the two of us, clearly trapped between his loyalty to me and his irrational loyalty towards Dad.

At breakfast, he’d ask various questions, normally getting a grunt from Dad and a glare from me. Normally it was only once Dean brought up something that Dad could hassle us about would he get a reply. I don’t know why he bothered. It was like he felt that Dad’s talking was better than the awkward silence. Like when he’d ask what we thought about a particular training session. I’d simply glare at Dad and wait for him to answer, often picking the opposite response. Normally Dad would reply by critiquing us, especially Dean. I’d use that as an opportunity to not only defend my brother, but argue with our father as well.

And that’s exactly what happened this morning. Dean was on his third round of trying to get us to make conversation, obviously making himself a nervous wreck in the process, when he brought up what we thought we could all work on in our training sessions.

“You’re shoulders aren’t gaining the muscle mass they should.” Dad said, his eyes sharply focusing on Dean, “I think we’re going to have to get you to do more chin-ups. Clearly you don’t do enough.”

“Why can’t you just give him a compliment?” I snapped, “Would it kill you? I mean you were on a roll there for a few weeks.”

“Dean’s slacking.” Dad said, his voice monotone, “I’m just being honest with him. And as far as you’re concerned, you’re running too slowly. You need to pick up the pace.”

“I’m running at the pace I want to.” I said, crossing my arms, “I don’t care to run faster.”

“I think it might snow.” Dean interrupted, “How about you guys? It’s cold enough. Dad, there’s still that draft in the bathroom window. We should maybe look into patching it up.”

“Sounds good.” Dad said, nodding in Dean’s direction, but not taking his eyes off of me. I stared right back, willing myself not to break first.

The only thing that broke our concentration was the knock on the door, and Hank’s voice calling for Dad.

“Alright, boys.” Dad said, still staring at me, and slamming a few tens on the table, “I’ll be home in a few days. Dean, take care of your brother.”

Dean waited until he heard the front door slam and the roar of the Impala driving away before he frowned at me. “Are you kidding me, Sammy? What the hell are you thinking? Why do you always have to fight with him?”

“Me?” I asked, suddenly snapping, “Why are you blaming me? He’s the adult. He’s the one who shouldn’t be fighting with us.”

“I don’t fight with him.” Dean said, looking up at me pointedly.
“That’s right, you don’t.” I snapped, “That’s because you’re too afraid to.”

Dean looked at me before simply shaking his head. I watched as he got up without a word, sighing heavily. I thought I saw him wince slightly, as he straightened, but the glare he shot me when he reached for my milk glass and cereal bowl told me that now was not the time to ask. I lay my head down on the table as he began washing the dishes.

I knew that Dean wasn’t someone who was easily afraid of most people or things. I mean, I’ve seen him look right into a police officer’s eyes not only lie, but smart off at the same time. I’ve seen him stand up for me when I was younger at a teacher was berating me for reading a book during a math lesson, and tell him he was “infringing on my rights as an individual”. How he even knew what that meant, I have no idea, but he said it. Of course, once Dean got me alone, he gave me an ear beating that I’d better pay attention in class or he’d kick my ass. I’ve seen him stun people older than he is with his wit. I’ve seen him stun kids his own age, with his sarcasm and jokes. To be honest, if Dean wanted to, verbally he was a match I wouldn’t want to go up against. As much of an ass as Dad was, I knew Dean probably could come up with some shockers to even zing the hell out of him. But I knew that Dean’s fear would never allow that to happen.

“Let me help you dry.” I said, getting up, feeling as enough time had passed for me to get reasonably close to him. Dean shot me a semi irritated look before handing me a towel.

“I didn’t mean that you should argue with him.” I said. “The guy just frustrates me.”

“No kidding.” Dean glanced at me, pausing, before giving me a smirk. “I swear you guys would fight if it day or day outside.”

“Probably.” I rolled my eyes. We fell back into silence, although this time it was a comfortable one.

“Do you want to go get some pie?” Dean asked suddenly, flicking soap suds at me.

“Really?” I asked, brushing off my shirt, “You sure?”

“Yeah. I want some pie.” Dean looked at me and shrugged.

“Then let’s get some pie.” I replied.

When we were younger, Dad had a hunter friend named Frank Gallant. He had two boys, both of them around Dean and my ages. Despite the fact that Dad and Frank got along well, the time the four of us spent together always ended in fist fights and black eyes.

Jeremy was Dean’s age and was one mean ass jerk. He picked on Dean relentlessly. I’ve never seen my brother’s temper flare so much as it did when Jeremy was around. He went from his normal understanding self to someone who I hardly recognized. He snarked and snapped and brooded from the time Dad announced they were coming for a visit until after they’d left.

Todd was my age. He was pretty much a mini copy of Jeremy, just dumber. Normally his personality wouldn’t have really clashed with mine, but everything Jeremy did, Todd had to do too. So that meant if Jeremy was picking on Dean, Todd wasn’t far behind. Which meant I in turn had a problem with him.

They picked on me too of course. They’d make fun of my weight-like I said I was kind of a chunky kid-or the fact that I loved school so much. Once they started in on me, Dean would launch
into full protective mode, hitting them with quit-witted insults. Jeremy seemed to thrive off Dean’s
defensiveness though. He’d always manage to push Dean over the edge, normally with a comment
about Mom (yeah, he was that type of guy), and get Dean to haul off and hit him. Then the two of
them would wrestle around, each throwing hard punches, scrapping around on the ground. Todd
and I would jump in, each of us defending our own brother and it would just turn into one ugly
brawl.

I hate to admit it, but they both normally kicked our asses. Jeremy was bigger than Dean, and
normally he’d use his weight to pin him. From there he’d sit on him, and hold him there, shoving
his face into the ground or the carpet or digging his fists into Dean’s back.

Todd on the other hand was smaller than I was, but I wasn’t a fighter. I was just really awkward
physically and mostly my swings were blind misses. I’d normally end up tripping or doing
something stupid. Todd and Jeremy would normally then just high five one another before leaving
us both on the ground; Dean sore and beaten up and me with a slightly wounded ego.

It’s been so long since we’d seen them last, I’d forgotten about them. I’m pretty sure Dean has too.
 So, you can imagine both Dean and my surprise when we ran into them at the local diner during
our pie trip.

Dean saw them first. He had been rambling to me about his choice of pie—he couldn’t decide if he
wanted peach or cherry-when his smile broke off and he frowned.

“No fucking way.” Dean swore.

“What is it?” I asked, turning to follow Dean’s gaze. My own smile dropping when I saw them…
them of course being Jeremy and Todd Gallant walking right towards us. For a split second, I
wanted to grab Dean and bolt, but I knew he wouldn’t run. That wasn’t his style.

“Hey, Winchesters.” Jeremy said, grinning, plopping down next to me as Todd sat down next to
Dean, “Wow, Sammy. The years have been good for you. Where’s all your baby fat?”

“It’s called puberty.” Dean said, “Or maybe Todd here is still waiting to go through it?” Dean
gestured towards Todd, who was wiry and thin, even more so than I remembered.

“Ha ha.” Jeremy said, rolling his eyes, “So, how about you, pretty boy. You disappointed that
you’ve reached your grand height of less than six foot?”

“Not as disappoint as you are of a certain body part not growing.” Dean replied, gesturing his eyes
under the table towards a particular area of Jeremy’s. “I hear they make creams for that.”

“So Dean,” Jeremy said his eyes blazing in anger, “How’s Papa Winchester? Old man still beating
you?”

Dean’s face immediately flushed red. My mouth fell open in shock.

“Aww.” Todd said, draping his arm over Dean’s shoulder, which of course, was quickly shrugged
off. “Isn’t that cute….Sammy, didn’t you know we knew?”

“If I recall correctly…” Jeremy said, “Little Sammy didn’t know at all.”

“That’s right.” Todd said, shoving his thick glasses up his nose, “I forgot. Sammy and I were at
Bobby’s the night Jeremy saw your dad beat you senseless.”

“My father actually felt bad for you.” Jeremy laughed, “And he was no picnic himself. Of course,
he never hit us. Just yelled a lot. But man, if Frank Gallant feels bad for you, that’s when you know you reached a whole new low into pathetic. Isn’t that what your dad called you that night...pathetic? I think that was it, right?”

“Dean…” I murmured softly, looking at my brother who suddenly looked like he was going to be sick. “What’s he talking about?”

“It’s okay Dean,” Jeremy spoke up, “I’ll tell him. You see Sam, while you and Todd were playing Robin Hood, your brother and I were hunting with our dads. Dean, being Dean screwed up. There was this little kid poltergeist who was wreaking havoc on a town. Dean couldn’t man up enough to kill him off. I guess he had a soft spot for little kids with long brown hair. So anyway, he stalled, ending up getting my dad slashed up across his arm. John of course left into action, killed off the kid, and saved the day. Once we got back to the motel, and my dad’s arm was bandaged up, John lit into your beloved big brother. Just pinned him down on the ground, took off his belt and beat the absolute hell out of him. The most entertaining part was your brother didn’t even try to fight back. He just lay there, on his stomach, his face smashed into that nasty dirty carpet.”

“Sam…” Dean began, his freckles more noticeable than ever due to the paleness of his skin, “I…”

“Finally, my dad got in between them, telling John that was enough and he made his point. Then the two of them left and got drunk.”

“I don’t suppose you helped him clean up.” I spat, feeling anger towards not only my Dad but at Jeremy too.

“Course not.” Jeremy shrugged, “He got what he deserved. The best part was in the middle of the night, I wake up and this weirdo is crying. Praying for his mommy to save him.” Jeremy laughed, “It was laughable.”

Now, I’m not really sure what happened next. Well, I am, but I’m not sure how I managed to pull off what I did. I simply folded my arm in half, so that it was parallel with the floor, before taking it and roughly slamming it into Jeremy’s face as hard as I possibly could. When I connected, I heard an ugly crunch and then Jeremy cry out in pain.

“Sam!” Dean yelped in shock as Jeremy dropped to the floor, yelling that I’d broken his nose.

“Guess you got what you deserved.” I said as I got up and stood over Jeremy. I laughed loudly at Todd who swore at me before dropping down to help his brother. I then glanced at Dean, who was staring at me wide eyed, before I turned and walked out of the restaurant without another word.

“Sammy!” Dean yelled, catching up to me. I guess I had been running because when I stopped to face him, he slammed into me, stumbling slightly. “What the hell was that?”

“You tell me?” I snapped.

“What do you want to know?” Dean asked, looking nervous and embarrassed.

“Did that really happen?” I asked, “Did that bastard really watch Dad beat you? So he really knew Dean? How did he know when I didn’t? Was it like what he said? Is that how it always is when Dad beats you? Did he seriously pin you down and whip you? What the hell is wrong with you? How can you be so weak to not defend yourself?”
Dean looked like I’d slapped him. His mouth twitched before he dropped his gaze, his eyes falling downward, his cheeks flushing red. He opened his mouth like he wanted to say something but then shut it, digging into some dirt with his boot.

I desperately wanted to take back my words. I knew my brother was anything but weak. Actually that word would better apply to me. Dean always showed me compassion, patience and consideration, and I always greeted him with anger, judgement, and thoughtlessness. I literally threw his pain in his face the second I was given the chance. I’d called him pathetic and questioned his dignity.

“At least stick up for yourself with me.” I said finally. “At least tell me what you’re thinking.”

“I’m not thinking anything.” Dean replied brushing past me and walking towards home.

“Come on, Dean.” I said, catching up with him, “You have to be. I just said some shitty things to you.”

“Sorry to crush your psychobabble dreams, Sam.” Dean said, picking up the pace, “But I’m not that deep. It’s cold. I just want to get home.”

“I can go get us pie somewhere else.” I said, changing the subject, “The gas station up the street has those single slices that are in the box. I know it’s not the same, but—”

“I’m not hungry.” Dean stopped briefly, glancing at me, “Sammy. Please stop trying to make this better. You can’t, okay?”

“Okay.” I said, locking eyes with his. I could see that he was beyond embarrassed and humiliated. So when he turned and started walking, I did the same, following behind him.
somewhat of a shorter chapter....i'm starting to shut dean's feeling off...slowly (don't worry).

anyway, i'd like your thoughts guys....would you like me to fast forward a couple years till sam's closer to 18 and have bobby find out about the abuse then? or would you prefer him to find out closer to the ages they are now?

also, i'm thinking about doing a chapter from mary's pov...thoughts?

cas will be brought in later...he will play a major role in both brother's lives.

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chapter 33

chapter notes

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dean

my hip was looking better. as much as it hurt, i made sure to clean it out every day. i swiped an antiseptic spray from the drug store the morning after it happened and even managed to get my hands on some antibiotics through a friend of my fathers. i told him some lie how i slit my hand sharpening my knife and he bought it.

sam hadn't noticed i was sliced and diced, which i was grateful for. things would have really gone to shit then. i knew i couldn't pass it off as a fall or even just a regular, “he just hit me” story. sam is smart enough to take one look at the long, but thin, mark running across my hipbone to know something really bad had happened. and once he knew, no matter how much i pleaded with him there would be no stopping him. i knew he'd go after dad with any weapon he could get his hands on first. the best case scenario he’d call bobby, and let him deal with it, but then i wasn’t ready to deal with it. plus, even if he did have the sense to call bobby, there was no guarantee bobby wouldn’t kill dad, and as much as he’s hurt me i didn’t want him dead.

if anything, i wanted to prove myself even more to dad. i wanted to show him that i could push through my pain and still be tough and strong. sure my hip would be throbbing after a hard training session, and yeah i’d have to change the bandages (which i also pocketed) several times a day from the stress on my body, but i was determined to show him i was resilient.

luckily, the day after it all happened, dad used his head and said sam and i would be doing less sparring and focusing more on shooting skills. when sam questioned him dad gave him the obviously well thought out explanation that we needed to be well rounded. sure we still did a lot of drills, and strength training exercises, and many, many, many laps, but dad was determined to keep sam away from my hip. so, i figured i just had to avoid play wrestling with him until i healed and i’d be good to go. after all, it wasn’t like sam ever walked in on me naked or anything.

but anyway, my hip was pretty sore most of the time, even with the bandage on it. dad had cut me right where my boxers hit my waist, so they were constantly rubbing me in that spot. i was always shifting around whether it was in the car or sitting at the table, or watching tv, trying to find a comfortable way to sit. i tried pulling them down somewhat, but they’d just slid down which caused my jeans to rub there, and trust me, that material hurt a hell of a lot more. i finally realized that if i slid my hand down slightly-not so that it was noticeable-and used it as a buffer between my
hipbone and my boxer’s waist band, it would prevent the irritation. Luckily the “few” pounds I’ve lost over the last couple months made this tremendously easy through my jeans and the bagginess of my shirts I was able to hide from Sam what I was doing.

I have to admit, the cut on my hip made me pretty jumpy. Not only because I was afraid Sam could find out, but because it also took away that small glimmer of hope that I’d been carrying around that maybe Dad was changing. Actually I think this was the worst thing he’s ever done to me. Well, maybe not the worst when you lined it up pain wise...or even damage wise...but it definitely was the most intense.

I honestly was just trying to block it out of my head my father cut me.

Jeremy’s well worded delivery of his already acquired knowledge that I was in fact Dad’s punching bag didn’t exactly boost my ego. It wasn’t necessarily what he’d said-I mean I knew he knew, I was there after all-it was more the look in Sammy’s eyes when he heard how Dad had pinned me down and belted me that practically killed me. They were filled with such shock, betrayal, and pity. I fucking hated being pitied.

I couldn’t blame Sam at all for calling me weak.

If anything my little brother always called it like he saw it.

I was weak.

And although Sam’s calling me weak hurt me more than I’ll ever admit, I’m just relieved that it kept him off my case for a few days.

I didn’t have to worry about him trying to play wrestle with me; which I normally wouldn’t mind, or tickle me; which I absolutely hated.

It also kept him from asking the normal stereotypical Sammy-like questions.

He didn’t ask me how I was feeling, if I was okay, or what I ate for lunch when he was at school. He didn’t dare ask me what happened when I limped into the room after a shower-I’d honestly stubbed my toe off of the corner of the door.

I mean, for once, he left me alone.

For the first time since he found out about everything he let me live alone in my own shame.

I was lost in thought about all this when Dad grabbed my wrist and twisted it hard, telling me he wanted to see if I’d yelp out in pain or not, giving me a pat on the head when I didn’t. It then was followed up with a question about the healing of his most recent work.

“How’s your hip?” He asked, still holding my wrist in his hand.

“It’s fine.” I said, squirming slightly under his glare.

“Have you been taking care of it?”

“Yeah.” I said, meeting his eyes.

“Let me see it.” Dad let go of my wrist and pulled me closer to him, yanking down my jeans. Then, luckily, perhaps to keep us both from an unnecessary embarrassing situation, he let me lower my boxers just slightly to reveal my left well bandaged hip.
Without a word he took off the bandage, surprising me with the gentleness that was used.

“Well,” Dad said after studying the damage for a moment or two, “It looks like you’ve done a great job taking care of it. At least you learned something over the years. Go re-bandage it.”

I was more than grateful to escape into the bathroom. I quickly turned on the faucet before falling to my knees and puking into the toilet.

When I finished being sick, I leaned against the counter of the sink, breathing hard. My anxiety was at an all-time high. I don’t think I ever really puked because of it before.

I don’t know.

There was just something about Dad’s calmness…and kindness…towards that cut on my hip that scared me. He almost acted as though it were nothing. As if he was looking at a splinter in my finger or a spider bite.

In the past he totally ignored the injuries he caused me. He acted as though they just weren’t there. That all the bruises and welts which marked up my body simply didn’t exist.

In a way, looking at it now, I preferred it that way.

Neither of us truly faced it. Sure, he threatened me and then would violently carry out his threats minutes later, but after the fact we never talked about it.

We pretty much both acted like nothing happened.

I guess that’s denial.

This…his examining the damage that was done…the damage that he caused…it was almost like a new threat.

I shivered slightly as the hairs on the back of my neck started to stand up slightly.

He was clearly telling me that that his cutting me had been no accident.

And even if it had…he had no remorse that he’d done it.

I just had to hang on for Sam to be eighteen…wait for him to get that free ride into college…and then get the hell out of this place.

I’d bust the fuck out and never look back.
Chapter Notes

Too Dramatic?
Not enough Drama?
Let me know.

Changed some stuff. Not much. Just a bit. Working on next chapter...Thank you for your support and opinions!!!

Sam

I woke up in the middle of the night having to use the bathroom. Sighing, I rolled over, getting up noticing immediately that Dean’s bed was empty. A bad feeling suddenly settled in my stomach and I forgot that I had to take a leak. I quickly, but quietly crept towards the door and pressed my ear against it.

At first all I heard was the tv, it seemed louder than normal. But, as I listened more intently, I could hear two voices; one deep, rumbling with anger, and the other, higher gasping with pleas. I hesitated, panicking slightly for a moment, not sure what to do. Then I heard a loud thump against the wall and Dean cry out and without thinking I tore into the hallway, blinking quickly as my eyes adjusted to the bright lights of the living room.

Dean was on the floor, lying in a protective ball, covering his head. Dad was standing over him, fuming. I watched in horror as Dad picked my brother up, telling him to act like a man, before he brought back his hand and slapped Dean hard across the face. I mutely watched as Dean stumbled slightly, but then steadied himself, managing to stay standing. It was only when Dad brought his hand back a second time and my brain begin to function properly with my body did I attack.

I charged at Dad, jumping on top of him, screaming for him to stop. Dad, who wasn’t expecting the blow of my attack, nearly lost his footing.

“Sam.” He panted, managing to shake me off of him, “Go back to bed. This doesn’t concern you.”

“Like hell it doesn’t.” I spat, getting up off the floor, going at him a second time. I was determined to block him from physically getting to Dean.

“This is between your brother and me.” Dad snapped. He looked at Dean, who was just standing there, his eyes huge. He was completely pale with blood pouring out of his nose. I swear he was shivering. "Right, Dean?"

“He’s right.” Dean said, his voice flat and quiet, “Go back to bed, Sammy.”

“No.” I practically shouted, “I’m not leaving you to deal with this anymore.”

By the look on Dean’s face I realized I slipped up. It wasn't until Dad spoke did i realize what I'd said.

“What does he mean anymore, Dean?” Dad was suddenly barreling towards my brother. Dean
instantly brought up his hands, protecting his face, ducking slightly into himself.

“Stop!” I yelled, trying to block the blow that we all knew was coming, but I was just shoved out of the way. Dad hit Dean so hard he fell back against the wall, his arms flailing in the attempt to stay standing.

“You told him! You little shit!” Dad crouched down to Dean’s level, grabbing him roughly by his tee-shirt, shaking him with each word. "I fucking told you not to tell him! I warned you!"

“Get off of him!” I yelled, trying my best to get in between them, but it was no use. Dad was a lot stronger than I thought. That and he had a pit bull grip on my brother’s shirt.

“What the hell did I tell you?!” Dad barked, continuing to shake Dean, who’d gone from pale to a slight green color.

“I’m calling the cops.” I declared, unable to watch Dad use my brother as a rag doll anymore. I got up, heading towards the phone, but Dad beat me to it. He grabbed the phone, ripping it right out of the wall.

“No you don’t.” He snapped, breathing hard in my face. “You do, and I’ll have your brother arrested. I’ll tell them I kicked his ungrateful ass out of the house and he broke in and tried to steal from us. I had to fight him off. He was crazy, deranged, and uncontrollable. But, it won't have to come to that...right Dean?”

We both turned to face Dean who had managed to stand up, but was swaying slightly.

“Just don’t hurt, Sam, Dad.” Dean mumbled, his words pleading, as he reached for a chair to steady himself, "Please, just leave Sammy alone."

“I’ll tell you what...” Dad gave Dean a smile I could only describe as terrifying. “How about you convince your little brother over here to calm the fuck down and I’ll consider that."

“You can hit me all you want.” I argued, “I don’t care what you do to me. I’m not scared of you.”

Dad suddenly turned to me, giving me the same terrifying smile, but unlike Dean who had noticeably dropped his head to the floor, I stared right at him, “Fine, Sam. I’ll let up on your brother if you let up on me.”

“What’s that supposed to me?” I asked, glancing at Dean who kept staring at the ground. His only response was the slight blush that began to grace his cheeks.

“Oh, your big bro didn’t tell you?” Dad grinned, “Well, I guess I should clarify a few things now that his and my special little secrets out. Although I have hit Dean for many reasons throughout the years, mostly because he's been a disappointment, you Sam, are one of those reasons.”

“What are you talking about?” I glared at Dad, refusing to break eye contact.

“Do you want to explain it to him, Dean?” Dad grinned, his evilness shining through. Dean didn’t reply and just kept staring at the floor. “Fine.” Dad replied, “I’ll do it then. As you're well aware Sam, from your advanced classes, your actions have an equal reaction. So ...your behavior...your defiance against me...Well, let's just say Dean got the reaction to your action.”

"What's that supposed to mean?" I asked, suddenly feeling a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach.
"I really have to explain it to you." Dad shook his head as though the answer was obvious. "Every
time you mouthed off, Dean got slapped. Every time you disobeyed me, Dean got punched. Every
time Dean couldn’t control you, he got whatever I felt like dishing out."

"Is this true?" I asked, turning to face my brother. His inability to look at me told me it was. I
suddenly felt sick to my stomach. I knew that arguing with Dad when he was angry was a bad
choice, anyone knew that, but I never thought about that my resentment towards him would cause
Dean any amount of pain.

"Wrap that big brain around that one for a while, Sam." Dad grinned, “I’m going out for a drink.
And Dean? You’re a mess. Go change your shirt for god sakes.”

And with that, Dad left, leaving Dean and I alone.

At first we just stood there, me staring at Dean, and Dean staring at the floor.

"Dean…” I began, but Dean turned and ran towards the bathroom. I took off after him, watching as
he dropped down to the floor on his knees and began to throw up in the toilet.

"Why’d you have to come out of our room, Sammy.” Dean asked, once he finished being sick and
flushed the toilet. For the first time he looked up at me, our eyes meeting, “Why couldn’t you just
go back to bed? Don’t you realize how much worse this is all going to be now? Now he has us
both.”

“I couldn’t just stand there and listen to him hurt you.” I grabbed a fresh wash rag and ran it under
some cold water before handing it to Dean.

“Thanks.” Dean took it, blotting at his mouth. He got up and brushed his teeth, wincing as he
looked at himself in the mirror. Then he turned back to face me, the fear showing in his eyes. “This
is all really bad, Sam.” He sank to the floor, burying his face into his hands. I took that moment to
race out of the room to grab an ice pack out of the fridge. Dean's face was already starting to
discolor and I didn't want him to bruise more than he had to.

“I can’t believe I was one of the reasons he was hitting you.” I dropped down next to Dean,
handing him the ice.

“It’s not your fault.” Dean shifted slightly so he could lean against the wall behind him, putting the
ice on his cheek. “I didn’t want you to know.”

“You should have told me.” I shook my head, “You really should have. To think all those times I
was fighting with him…times I just argued because I was angry with him…you ended up getting
hurt.”

“It’s no biggie.” Dean shrugged, “He would have just found some other reason.”

“I just can’t tell you how sorry I am.” I couldn’t help the tears that begin streaming down my face.

“Don’t cry.” Dean replied, not even looking in my direction, “Just stop. None of this is your fault,
Sam. Don’t feel bad. You’re the reason I haven’t offed myself years ago.”

“What?” I asked in a panic, grabbing Dean roughly by the shoulder.

“Kidding.” Dean grinned at me, but there was something behind his eyes that told me he most
likely wasn’t.
“But Dean I—”

“Drop it Sam.” Dean cut me off, snapping slightly. “None of this is your fault, so shut up.”

We both fell silent. I could hear the faucet dripping. I never knew it did that before. I don’t know how long we sat there, quiet, listening to the water droplets falling into the sink in a perfect rhythm. I felt Dean’s head suddenly drop lightly on my shoulder before he sat up, gasping loudly.

“Sorry.” He mumbled, shifting away from me slightly, “I’m just sleepy I guess.”

“You might have a concussion.” I replied, “Dad hit you a few times in your face. Your cheeks all swollen. Let’s get you to bed, but I’m sleeping in your bed with you.”

“You’re what?” Dean mumbled, as I pulled him into a standing position, “Hell no, you’re not sleeping with me. You’re not some chick, Sam.”

“I don’t care.” I replied, pushing Dean into his bed, climbing in behind him. “If you have a concussion you need to be woken up every few hours. I’m setting our alarm to make sure I don’t sleep through it. I don’t think I’m going to sleep anyway, so I want to be close to you if you stop breathing.”

“Thanks for the pixie dust thoughts, Sam.” Dean mumbled, rolling over onto his side, sighing heavily.

I shook my head, amazed that Dean could still keep his sense of humor through all of this. I then settled into his bed, trying to get comfortable. It was crazy how little space Dean took up. I pretty much had the entire bed to myself.

We haven’t slept in the same bed since I was nine and stopped being afraid of the dark. Well, since Dean solved that problem for me. Normally us sleeping side by side meant I was scared or too sick to sleep alone. And like always, from nightmares to chicken pox, Dean was the one who was there to take care of me. For once, I felt I could return the favor. Or at least try to.

I tried to blink away the tears I felt threatening to spill over. Normally when I was upset, I’d easily turn to Dean. Talk it out with him…allow him to come up with a solution that almost always worked…But this time it was different. I couldn’t turn to Dean. Because this time, the problem was Dean. Or at least the fact that I caused Dean pain. And that was the last thing on this earth I ever wanted to do. I loved Dean more than anyone. He was everything to me. I didn’t even know what life was without him.

I wanted to keep talking, but I knew my brother would keep telling me it wasn’t my fault. He’d keep brushing me off until he snapped, which would end in a fight. That’s always how things were and ended when I was worried about him. And I knew right now, Dean didn’t need my weepy tears and apologies. He needed me to be his brother and just give him support. I just wasn’t sure how to give it.

I suddenly thought of Mom. For the first time I wished for a mom; a mom to turn to…who I could cry to…who’d offer a hug when I needed one. A mom who’d offer advice and kind words and just plain love when I need it. At least I think that’s what mom’s do. I wasn’t sure. At least that seemed like what they did according to Dean.

“Hey, Dean.” I asked after debating with myself for several minutes if I wanted to ask him what I was thinking.

“Yeah?” He replied his exhaustion evident in his voice.
“Do you think Mom knows about Dad? Like how he is? What he does to you?”

Dean was quiet for a moment. I thought for a second he wasn’t going to answer me. But then he spoke, his words the words of someone whose been broken one too many times.

“I sure hope not, Sam. That would kill me.”
Chapter 35

Dean

I woke up the next morning, nearly rolling into Sam who was snoring loudly next to me. I mumbled a few choice words, unsure why my little brother was sleeping soundly in my bed. It wasn’t like we did this damn thing. I mean we were close, but this fucking drew the line. I was about to shove Sam to the floor when my brain suddenly kicked in, and I remembered what happened the night before.

Dad knew that Sam knew.

Fuck

He knew I told.

Fuck.

The night played through my mind in a series of pictures.

Dad tossing me into the wall; hitting me, then hitting me some more.

Sam coming flying out of no where, screaming at him to stop.

Dad hitting me more, Sam defending me. Sam and Dad fighting.

Sam telling Dad to hit him; that he wasn’t afraid of him.

Dad threatening both of us.

Dad telling Sam that he was one of the reasons he hit me.

God, that part sucked.

I’ll never forget the look in Sammy’s eyes when Dad said that.

Jesus.

I mean, sure it was true…

I did get smacked around when Sam mouthed off. Or when he acted out. Or when he did the little shit things he does just to piss Dad off. But, I mean, that’s just how Sammy is. He wants to be his own man, always has been. He wasn’t some obedient soldier like I was. He didn’t cower and plead for approval like I did. And I respected him for that. Besides, I knew that I couldn’t control Sam any more than I could control Dad’s anger. I learned early on, I just had to let Sam be Sam.

“Hey.” Sam’s voice suddenly spoke, making me jump, “You alright?”

“Yeah.” I cleared my throat, “Now that you scared that crap out of me. At least you know I’m still breathing.”

“Haha.” Sam laughed, rolling his eyes. “How are you feeling?”

“Peachy.” I replied, suddenly feeling overly exposed. Sam had seen me at my most vulnerable.
Sure, he’s seen me after I’ve been hit and smacked around, but he’s never seen the whole thing in motion. He wasn’t supposed to. I wanted to shield him from that. I was supposed to be the super hero big brother.

God, I fucking disappointed everyone.

“You’re face isn’t that bad.” Sam replied, reaching out to touch my cheek, “It’s a little black and blue…but not too bad….Where else did he hit you.”

“Come on, Sam.” I groaned, rolling over onto my stomach and tossing my pillow over my head, “Do we really have to do this? I’ve managed just fine on my own without you checking me over.”

Sam’s response was to let out such exasperated sigh.

I hated his freaking sighs.

And he knows it.

They always make me feel guilty. Like I’m keeping him from some major piece of information that he should be privileged to.

And he knows because I feel guilty, I’ll break. Then once I break, I’ll resent that I broke.

This is mainly because they always are followed by some chick-flick line that makes me hate any amount of feelings I have left inside.

“What is it, Sam?” I said, not bothering to hide my agitation.

Sure enough, Sam opened his mouth and softly came up with, “Dean, you don’t always have to be so put together.”

Damnit, Sam.

“What did you expect?” I snapped, whipping the pillow off my face “Early morning cuddles? A few kisses and hugs, some late night pillow talk and it would be all better? Get real, man. Real life doesn’t work like that.”

“I just want to make sure you’re fine.” Sam replied, his voice somewhat shaky.

“He hurt my left shoulder and the upper part of my chest.” I said gruffly, giving in and hating myself for being such a little bitch in doing so. “No big deal. I’ve had worse. It’s just a few bruised muscles.”

“I’m scared, Dean.” Sam whimpered.

And that’s when it happened.

The kid broke down. He didn’t even try to hide his tears. He just lay there, staring up at the ceiling, crying.

Damnit.

“And that’s when it happened.

The kid broke down. He didn’t even try to hide his tears. He just lay there, staring up at the ceiling, crying.

Damnit.

“Sam.” I sighed, propping myself up so I could get a better look at him, “Look at me. I’m okay. I’m not dead. I’m not even that hurt.”
“It’s not that.” Sam hiccupped. He always hiccups when he’s crying hard. “I am just…I can’t believe I caused you to be hurt…I can’t believe I caused you to get beaten. Dean….I’m so so sorry.”

I sighed, knowing that just telling him it was fine, and it was okay, and it wasn’t his fault wasn’t going to be enough.

“Sammy, listen…” I swallowed, trying to collect my thoughts, using the best of my big brother mojo to try to talk him off the ledge he was hanging off of. “You can’t blame yourself. I mean, sure…if you really want to get down to it, there were times where I got belted cause you mouthed off or acted like your typical nerd-self. But he also beat me just as bad because I left my shoes in the wrong place or because he had a bad hunt, or the weather wasn’t what he wanted it to be. He just would look for any excuse to smack me around. He’s…It’s just…It’s just not your fault. I don’t know what else to tell you. The guy has hated me since I was little. I mean, I know I tell you it was great when I was younger, before Mom died, but it wasn’t. Some parts were good, like he used to take me to the old auto shop or let me sit on his lap when he drove around town, but I’ve always been afraid of him. I remember I used to hide from him. You weren’t even born yet. So, you can’t blame yourself…okay?”

Sam was quiet for a few minutes, and then he slowly nodded. “I’ll try to get along better with him.” He said softly, “I will. The guy just makes me so angry. Especially now. But I’ll try to not fight with him so much about everything.”

“I won’t argue with that.” I said, reaching out and poking him in the chest. “But honestly, if you have to stand up for yourself, or what you think, do it. Don’t let whatever you think he’ll do to me stop you from being who you are.”

“I don’t even want to look at him.” Sam replied, “Much less talk to him.”

“I mean, that works too.” I grinned, “Except when he asks you a question.”

“And demands I answer and look him in the eye.” Sam suddenly smiled back.

“Scary shit.” I replied.

Sam started to laugh then fell silent, once again growing serious. Before he could muster up a good sigh, I beat him to it, sighing and asking him what the hell was wrong now.

“You have to promise me to let me know when you’re hurt.” Sam said, “If I’m not there…and he hurts you…you have to tell me. You can’t keep keeping things from me anymore. I’m not a baby.”

“Sammy…” I trailed off, not sure how to tell him, without pissing him off, that no matter how old he got, he’d always be my baby brother.

He’d always be little Sammy.

“You have to let me help you, Dean.” Sam pleaded, his eyes welling over with tears again.

“I’ll do my best.” I replied.

And it was the truth.

At least for the most part.
I breathed a sigh of relief as I heard my brother drift off to sleep beside me. I’d somehow managed to convince Dean to go back to bed, selling him on the story that I too was going back to sleep. I also reasoned with him that it was past eight on a Saturday so if Dad wasn’t going to wake us for training, he must be too hungover to care.

Instead of going back to sleep, like I’d promised, I ventured out into the living room/kitchen area. I was starving. I was craving Dean’s bacon and eggs, but I didn’t want to set fire to the kitchen—that was the last thing any of us needed—so I settled on cereal. Unlike Dad, I didn’t need Dean to wait on me. I could figure things out on my own.

I’d just sat down in front of the tv when Dad came out of his bedroom. I looked up at him, watching as he shuffled around the kitchen. He was dressed in his hunting gear, and tossing random food items into his duffle bags. It was only when he turned around, coffee in hand, bag swung around his shoulder, did he see me.

“Sam.” He said, stopping short, “I didn’t know you were up.”

“I’m up.” I said coldly. “You leaving?”

“Yeah.” Dad replied. He sounded almost nervous. “I caught a case up north. I’ll be gone for like two weeks. I put some money down on the counter for you guys.”

“Dean needs refills of his inhaler.” I replied.

I wasn’t sure this was true. I just wanted to mention my brother’s name and see how Dad reacted. But I also figured Dean probably was running low. I’d seen him shaking his inhaler the last few times he’d used it.

“Okay.” Dad pulled another twenty out of his pocket and placed it on the counter behind him, “I guess it’s good I picked up those extra shifts at the shop then.”

I knew he was trying to make nice, but I wasn’t about to smile at him, or let him off the hook. Not with Dean safely tucked away in his bed, and not with Dad leaving for two weeks. Normally, I’d make a snide comment that that was his job as a father, to provide medical care, but I also didn’t want to pick a fight. So, I just ignored him.

“Where is your brother?” Dad asked. My heart admittedly jumped a bit at his question. But, I swallowed hard and stared at him, not breaking eye contact.

“He’s sleeping.” I replied shortly.

“That’s good.” Dad nodded, lightly rubbing his beard, almost awkwardly. “Well. Let him sleep.”

“I was planning on it.” I answered, still staring him down.

Dad nodded. It was clear by the look on his face he understood that I was completely on Dean’s side. I’m sure he already knew I would be. He wasn’t that stupid. I’d always choose Dean. I almost wanted to tell him that, but I also knew that that if I did, Dean would end up paying the price. And I didn’t want that to happen.

“I guess I’ll just head out then.” Dad said finally, heading towards the door.
“See ya.” I turned my attention back to the tv, trying to keep my anger towards him in check.

It was only once I heard the car pull away from the apartment did I let out a list of swear words I randomly used. Tears rolled down my face as I cried. I couldn’t believe how much hate I could have for one person. As I began to calm down, I felt relief wash over me that Dad would be gone for two weeks.

Finally, once I’d calmed myself down enough, I checked on Dean, who was still sound asleep, laying on his stomach, his legs tangled up in his sheets. I shook my head, not sure how he managed to sleep like that. Then, I ventured back out for another bowl of cereal.

I was on my third tv program of teenage mutant ninja turtles when Dean stumbled out of the bedroom, shivering slightly. He was still in his pjs and barefoot with his short hair sticking up in all directions. I had to stop myself from laughing. He looked like a disheveled ten year old.

“Sammy.” He mumbled, rubbing his eyes, “You hungry?”

“I ate.” I said, showing him my now empty cereal bowl.

“Oh.” Dean flopped down next to me on the couch, yawning and shutting his eyes, “That’s good.”

“Dad’s on a case.” I added, “He’ll be gone for two weeks.”

“You serious?” Dean opened one eye, looking at me.

“Yeah.” I nodded, “I saw him this morning. He left us money on the counter.”

“Was he okay with you?” Dean asked, now both eyes were open, and he was starting to fidget.

“Yeah.” I shrugged, “Everything was fine. He didn’t say much. Just that he’d be gone for two weeks. Then he left. That’s it.”

“Oh.” Dean studied me before he closed his eyes again, propping up his feet on the coffee table, and sliding what looked like a comfortable position. Sometimes I envied the way he was able to compact his body. My long legs would never allow me to sit/lay like that.

“You hungry?” I asked, feeling I should offer. I may not be able to whip him up some bacon and eggs, but I could get him toast or cereal.

“No.” Dean shook his head slightly, “I’m fine.”

“Dean...” I sighed knowing now wasn’t the time to lecture him about his eating habits.

“I just have a headache, Sam.” Dean opened his eyes slightly, “I’ll eat later, okay?”

“Okay.” I replied, making a mental note to make sure he did just that. “Do you think you have a concussion?”

“Damnit, Sam.” Dean shifted uncomfortably next to me, “Can you just stop? I made it through the night, right? I just need to rest my head. I’ve had headaches like this before. I just need to take it slow. Drink lots of water.”

“Okay.” I replied, automatically getting up to get Dean some water. I had to resist the urge to ask what he meant about ‘headaches like this before’.

As far as I’ve known, Dean had had only one concussion. He’d been slammed into a headstone
during a regular salt and burn. I’d been eleven at the time. I remember sitting in the impala, angry Dad had dragged me out of my nice warm bed so that Dean could help him.

“Why couldn’t you just let me sleep?” I moaned as Dad and Dean got out of the car, “I would have been fine by myself.”

“Stop whining Sam.” Dad said, “You’re too little to stay home alone.”

“You let Dean stay home alone when he was younger than I am, now!” I insisted, “And he had to watch me. I’m not a baby.”

“You’re acting like one.” Dad slammed the car door, walking towards the gravesite.

“It shouldn’t take too long, Sammy.” Dean said, poking his head in the backseat, “I’ll dig extra fast. We’ll be home before you know it.”

“He likes you so much better.” I whined. “He lets you do whatever you want.”

“Sure, kid.” Dean gave me a grin, before ducking out and closing the door behind him, running after Dad shovel in hand.

Looking back, I couldn’t believe that’s how off I saw the situation. If I recalled correctly, Dean had a split lip that night. I’m positive I’d asked about it, and I’m positive Dean fed me some made up story that my eleven year old brain bought.

I glanced at the clock on the dashboard of the car (Dad had actually left the car on so I could stay warm), watching as it hit two in the morning. Dean and Dad had just finished digging the grave and were standing above the bones. Frustrated, I opened the door, getting out, whining to Dad once again that I wanted to go home. Dean instinctually turned to face me, taking his eyes off of the bones for a second. That’s when it happened. The spirit, or ghost, or whatever, screamed, hurling itself at Dean. I screamed as Dean went flying through the air and slammed into the headstone nearby.

“Stay where you are, Sam!” Dad screamed at me. Without flinching he struck the match, lighting it, and then flicked it into the grave. Instantly the ghost that was lingering over Dean disappeared.

I took off towards Dean, ignoring Dad’s orders to stay put. Nothing mattered to me at this point was getting to my big brother as fast as I could.

“Dean!” I dropped to the ground, tears rolling down my face, pulling my unconscious brother onto my lap. “Dean, please wake up.”

“Let me see him.” Dad pulled Dean away from me, checking his pulse. He then grabbed a handful of cold snow and shoveled it down the front of Dean’s shirt. Dean sat up gasping, his arms flailing.

“Sammy!” Dean wheezed, coughing and sputtering.

“I’m here.” I said, grabbing onto the sleeve of his coat. I’m right here.”

“You’re okay, son.” Dad said, glancing at me, nodding that Dean was in fact alright, “You probably have a concussion. You hit your head awfully hard.”

Dean did in fact have a concussion. It was a pretty bad one too. Bad enough that Dad had to drop us off at Bobby’s the following day because he had an “important hunt” that he just couldn’t put off. According to him he was going to be gone for a few days and didn’t think I was old enough to take
care of myself and a sick older brother.

To be honest, I still felt a tremendous amount of guilt for that night. I’d always felt like if I hadn’t opened the car door to complain, Dean wouldn’t have been distracted, and wouldn’t have gotten hurt.

I shuddered slightly to think of the number of headaches Dean had in the months that followed that night. I couldn’t help but wonder if they were the result of other head injuries I hadn’t been there to witness. How many times had he been pushed or slammed into a wall or table as a result of one of Dad’s drunken rages.

“What’s wrong?” Dean asked, his voice breaking through my memories, releasing me from the awful visions that suddenly were racing through my mind.

“Nothing.” I shook my head, trying to smile at him, but I could feel my lip wobbling instead.

“Come on, Sam.” Dean groaned slightly, “Don’t start up again. I’m fine. I just have a headache. No big deal. People get headaches. It happens.”

I didn’t say anything. Instead I just buried my face into the couch and began to cry once again.

“Sam…” Dean sighed, “Look, you gotta stop crying.” He shook his head, swearing then started again, “Wait, I don’t mean you can’t cry. I’ll kick your ass if you repeat this, but cry if you need to, but don’t cry because you feel bad or guilty or whatever it is you’re feeling. Dad’s gone for at least two weeks. Let’s just get whatever tears you have out of your freaking system and just enjoy the peace for a change. Okay?”

“Okay.” I said, sniffing, looking at Dean who offered me the smile he normally does when he wants me to know everything will be okay.

Normally I’d see that slightly smug, but comforting grin, and relax. My big brother had an uncanny ability to make me forget about most of my worries, if not solve them altogether for me. But not this time. It somehow made me feel worse that Dean was trying to put brave face on for me yet again. It almost made me want to shake him until he woke up out of whatever dreamland he’s suddenly convinced himself he’s living in.

I was afraid if I didn’t, that dreamland of his would kill him.
Chapter 36

John

I let myself into the motel room I’d rented, with a heavy sigh. The musty smell hit me the second I opened the door, almost providing a small comfort of when the boys were little. I flung my duffle bag down on the floor, salted the doors and windows before popped open a beer and sinking into one of the stained dirty chairs. I’d left the house this morning claiming I was going on a hunt, but the truth was I just had to get the hell out of there. I just had to get out of that house.

I needed to get my head in order. Make a plan. Just like any other hunt or any other case.

Dean had disobeyed the greatest order I’d ever given him. Besides, taking care of his brother that is. He betrayed me in a way that I knew, as well I’m sure he did too, sooner or later I’d take out on his ass. He told his brother how I beat him

To be honest, I wasn’t as pissed as I thought I’d be. Actually, I was far from it. I felt something I rarely felt in my life which is pure and utter terror. Which is why I fled. I knew rage and I knew anger, but I did not know fear.

Sam hated me enough to begin with. He hated everything I stood for and who I was. He hated how I moved them from place to place. He hated how I embarrassed him by my lack of social graces at the few events I’ve attended for him over the years. I knew he felt I was stupid for not attending college, and was embarrassed by that as well. He hated that I refused to provide a normal life. He just hated me.

Most of all, Sam hated the way I treated Dean. I learned a long time ago the quickest way to anger my youngest was to punish his brother. This fact was proven to me a long time ago when I made the mistake of actually grabbing Dean roughly by the arm in front of him. Sam had to have been only about four at the time, which would have made Dean eight or nine. I forget the exact circumstances, but I know I grabbed Dean and was yelling at him over something or another. Dean, who by this point learned to just fall limp when I was disciplining him let out a slight whimper as I tightened my grip on his arm. Sam suddenly charged at me, biting me hard on the ankle.

“Damnit!” I screamed, jumping and letting go of Dean who immediately reached for his brother, trying to shove him behind him. “Sam! What the hell!”

“You were hurting my brother!” Sam scooted out from behind Dean, pointing up at me, his face red and angry. “So I hurt you!”

“You little snot!” I snapped, grabbing for my youngest, but Dean stepped between us.

“He didn’t mean it Dad!” Dean now full force shoved Sam behind him, backing them both into a wall.

“Get him out of my sight, Dean.” I snapped, “I’ll deal with you later.”

Dean did as he was told, half dragging Sam, who was still glaring at me, into the bedroom and shutting the door quickly behind him.

That night really sealed Dean’s fate in my books. As much as I’d known prior to getting bit that Dean was Sam’s everything, it was clear that the little hope I had of getting Sam to remotely like or
respect me would be gone completely if he ever found out how I truly treated his brother.

So, I brainstormed. It was becoming clear Dean didn’t care what happened to him. He actually had become quite compliant to my discipline techniques. If I was punishing him he would even wait for my orders whether or not it was going to be a couple hard punches in the stomach, or if he was to get hit with my belt. If it was the belt he’d wait for me to instruct him if I felt like he deserved to have his shirt offer the kindness of slight protection or not.

If I was angry and I was acting on pure rage, Dean would just turn his head and take his beating, almost listlessly. Nothing seemed to work. Dean was too compliant, too obedient and too weak to fight against me. It was almost like my beating him had become routine. It was clear that Sam’s lack of rage towards me also meant that Dean hadn’t breathed a word to his little brother. I sometimes had a feeling, after a particularly bad beating, he would get close to breaking, purely out of seeking comfort. It was only when I found out that I’d belted Dean for something Sam had done did I realize my oldest son’s obsession in protecting his baby brother.

So, I realized I could use that protectiveness to my advantage. I saved my new found information like a trump card, tucking it in the back of my pocket, ready to pull it out when I really and truly needed it. Sure enough, less than a week later, Dean was in trouble at school for something or another. Who knows and who cares. The kid was always screwing up. But anyway, I had him pinned underneath me, my belt doubled in my hand, ready to strike. Sam was taking a nap in the next room, and Dean lifelessly just stayed on the ground, not even bothering to struggle. It was becoming evident to me that he didn’t care what happened to him.

With ease I flipped him over onto his back. Dean looked up at me in surprise, instinctually covering his face. That damn beautiful face that looked just like my Mary’s.

“So…” I began, “New set of rules Dean. If you don’t shape up I’ll beat Sam worse than I’ve ever beaten you.”

Dean’s green eyes which had been slightly closed suddenly opened wide. Fear like I’d never seen before settled into them. Deep seated fear. His lower lip quivered slightly and he actually shuddered under me.

“Dad…you can’t…just…Dad…don’t hit Sammy.” Dean pleaded, his voice barely above a whisper, a single tear rolling down his cheek, “Please. I’ll do whatever you want. From here on out. I’ll be good. Just leave Sammy alone.”

I smirked, feeling a slight amount of satisfaction. There it was. Dean’s weak spot. I’d been stupid not to know what it was before. Dean may not care about himself, but he sure in hell cared about his baby brother. However, I knew that the level of devotion went both ways. So, I decided to take my new found knowledge to the next level.

“Also, I know your little brother is just as protective of you…” I continued, “If you ever ever tell Sam what I do to you, I’ll beat him and make you watch.”

“I won’t tell him.” Dean said, his voice squeaking. “Dad, I swear. I won’t tell him. I wasn’t going to tell him anyway. I don’t want him to know. I don’t want him to hate you more than he—” My oldest suddenly clamped his mouth shut, realizing his error a little too late.

“More than he what, Dean?” I asked.

“Nothing.” Dean replied, his lip quivering.
“So, you think Sam hates me?” I asked sadly, suddenly releasing my oldest. I hung my head, trying to hide the fact that I was testing him. I knew that once again, Dean’s sensitivity and compassion would outweigh his survival instincts. And sure enough, I was right.

“Sammy doesn’t hate you.” Dean replied, sitting up, “You guys are just different. I think Sammy’s just confused why you do what you do.”

“Do you get why I do what I do?” I asked, glancing at him, actually curious in his response.

“Yeah.” Dean nodded, “That thing took Mom from us. I want to hunt it down too. I want to kill it too. But Sammy... he just didn’t know Mom. Not really. He didn’t get to know her. I sometimes get mad at him too for not hating it, but he just doesn’t know.”

For a split second I wanted to hug him. Dean explained my youngest better to me in those simple couple sentences than anyone else could have. But then I remembered how much he’d taken from me. He’d taken Mary and now he’d taken Sam. The two people in the world that were supposed to love me more loved him more. So, instead of giving Dean the beating I’d intended, I decided to give him a gift and got up and simply walked away.

I sighed heavily as I opened up my second beer. I needed a plan. I needed a plan to keep my youngest in check. I wasn’t sure how long Sam had known about everything, but I also knew where Dean tended to shy away from me, and sacrifice himself to save Sam, Sam’s reaction would be the exact opposite. He would come after me with everything he had, even swinging if he had to. I had no doubt Sam was already launching a plan against me. I wouldn’t be surprised if he already called Bobby. Bobby would come after me with a shot gun in a minute if he knew how I treated Dean. Even though it was my right to punish and discipline my children as I saw fit.

I could feel a new found anger towards my oldest begin to burn inside me. The small hope that I had that Sam would one day stop hating me was gone. To him, I’d done the ultimate no-no. I’d hurt his brother. I’d hurt the person that he loved and cared about the most. What Sam didn’t understand though, was that person should have been me.
Dean

We had two semi-okay weeks after Dad left. Well, I had two semi-okay weeks. Sam worked himself up until he was either hysterical with worry or raging with anger. I wasn’t sure which one was worse. I either had a guilty sobbing chick Sammy on my hands, or an out of control, punching walls, swearing Sam. And let me tell you, even though it was somewhat funny to watch him fumble over the ‘naughty words’ that rolled off my tongue with ease since I was about ten, the fire he had behind them was anything but. One night I seriously had to pin him down with everything I had to keep him from calling Bobby.

I on the other hand chose to spend my time training and drinking. If I knew my father, he was going to kick my ass good and hard. I wanted to go into the next few months, and pretty much the rest of my life, with as much strength as I could, determined to not miss one training session. I’d drop Sam off at school every morning, letting him pick and choose if he wanted to train—hell it was his choice, I wasn’t going to fucking force him—and then would spend the rest of the morning into the afternoon running, doing pushups and sit-ups. I practiced on the climbing wall Dad designed and strengthened my plank technique. It was a hell of a lot easier when Dad wasn’t standing over me, with the threat of his steel toed boot coming down on my back at any second.

When I returned to the apartment in the afternoon, I’d shower then sit on the couch drowning myself in alcohol. I realized if I sweet talked the one lady at the local beer distributor, she’d give me random bottles of beer or cheap whiskey for a few dollars, or a quick make-out session.

Don’t judge me.

Desperate times call for desperate measures.

We were both desperate.

Just in different ways.

Anyway, I’d just get myself settled, down a beer or two just in time to watch Sammy walk in the door. His face would fall once it caught a look at the beer bottle in my hand. The kid’s supposed to be some sort of baby genius, so you’d think by day three of me drinking would have established enough of a pattern for him to know what to expect. He’d then launch into a lecture of how I was underage, drinking too much, blah blah, blah, but after I ignored the first five minutes of his monologue, he normally sighed, and gave up. He’d end up next to me, doing his homework, glancing at me every once in a while before sighing again. That’s normally when the tears started. Hell, I needed to have a few drinks in my system just to deal with his wide spread emotions. I honestly didn’t want to deal with anything that had to do with how Dad treated me or was going to treat me. I just wanted for once to be fucking chill and just have Sam shut the hell up.

By the time Dad showed up two weeks later, I was drunk off my ass and lying flat on my back on the floor of the living room. Sam of course was perched on the couch, “reading”, although he was directing a hell of a lot of glances in my direction for me to buy that’s what he was really doing.

“Hey, boys.” Dad said setting his bag down. Sam immediately slammed his book down and moved towards me, somewhat barricading me from Dad’s view. I on the other hand stayed put, comfortable with my place on the floor. I never realized how comfortable the floor could be. Damn, for a shitty apartment, our carpeting wasn’t too shabby.
“How have you been, Sammy?” Dad asked, clearly trying to get a read on my brother. As if the way he planted himself next to me didn’t speak volumes in itself.

“I’ve had a great two weeks.” Sam replied. His voice came out sharp. It suggested he had a hell of a lot more to say, but was restraining himself.

“That’s good.” Dad cleared his throat, “How about you, Dean? Did you…Are you…You doing okay?”

“I’m peachy.” I replied, sticking my hand in the air and giving him a thumbs up sign.

“Are you drunk?” Dad asked, walking around and peering down at me.

“Yes.” I replied, giving him a grin. I don’t think I’ve grinned so much at my father since my very first hunt.

“Where’d you get the alcohol?” Dad frowned slightly.

“Not from you.” I replied, pointing behind me, “Don’t worry. All your alcohol’s still there. I did drink one beer, but I replaced it.”

Dad glanced at me and then walked over to the fridge, and opened the door. I didn’t even bother twisting around to look at him knowing full well he was counting the beers. I silently thanked whoever it was I was supposed to thank that I replaced the one I’d drank. He then, sat down at the table next to us, with a beer in hand of course, and began doing what he normally does; flipping through the newspaper for anything that remotely resembles a case.

Sam, who was still sitting next to me, shifted slightly, once again somewhat putting himself between me and Dad.

“Is there a reason you’re both on the floor?” Dad asked, glancing at us.

“It’s comfortable.” I replied, suddenly finding the spare thread on Sam’s tee-shirt really interesting. I started pulling on it, which rewarded me with a slightly annoyed look from its owner.

“I’m just sticking by Dean.” Sam answered. “You know…like always.” Even in my drunken state, I knew Sam’s statement was meant to send a message. Sam just told Dad without telling him, and without being asked, that he was on my side. And that he wasn’t willing to forgive him for any of what’s gone on between us.

Sam wasn’t going to let it go.

He was never going to let any of it go.

Dad clearly got the message too because he put the newspaper down and frowned at Sam. I’ll admit that I held my breath for a second, not quite trusting my brother enough not to smart off if Dad asked him to elaborate on his previous statement. But, Dad who looked a little weary just went back to reading. Sam just shook his head, and returned to his own book. And I returned to pulling on the string of Sam’s t-shirt.

“So we’re going to Bobby’s tomorrow.” Dad said suddenly. “So expect to leave first thing in the morning.”

“Why the sudden rush to go there?” Sam asked, putting his book down, once again turning around briefly, giving me an annoyed look. I just grinned at him and kept pulling at that damn string.
“Sam.” Dad sighed, “I can’t figure you out. You normally love going to Bobby’s. What’s the issue exactly?”

“No issue.” Sam replied, “I’m just wondering why now.”

“You have a holiday weekend coming up at school.” Dad shrugged, “I figured we might as well make a trip out there. It’s been a while since we’ve been there. Unless of course you don’t want to go.”

“I do. I always want to see Bobby.” Sam cleared his throat, turning now to face me, his face now full of questions. It was clear that he was taken back by Dad’s gesture of perceived kindness. “How about you, Dean? Do you want to go?”

I didn’t need to ask why Dad was suddenly dropping everything and taking us to Bobby’s.

This was a fucking test.

He was testing Sam to see if he was going to spill the beans about my getting hit.

It was a fucking huge test.

And even though my little brother was used to passing with flying colors, this was a whole new class of its own, in the entirely fucked up way to raise your children category.

Funny, I never looked at it that way when I was concerned.

But, it made me mad Dad was going to subject Sammy to the shit he’s pulled on me for years.

At least I knew what I was walking into.

Sam didn’t even realize this was all a trap.

He may think he knows Dad, but he doesn’t. He doesn’t know John fucking Winchester.

But just like he was testing Sam, I knew he was testing me too.

So, I said the only thing I could say.

“Sure.”

“Then it’s settled.” Dad went back to his paper, “We’ll leave at six am.”

I’d just have to warn Sammy later on.

That everything from here on out…well, everything that had to do with me…was going to be a fucking minefield of fucking bombs.
Sam

Dean was oddly quiet after Dad mentioned going to Bobby’s. Especially considering that he’d been drunk and grinning moments before. He picked at his dinner, mostly playing with the premade lasagna from the box with his fork.

Dad seemed to notice the sudden shift in Dean’s mood too. About ten minutes into us eating, and Dean turning his pasta over and over again, he slammed down his fist on the table, making us both jump.

“What’s the problem, Dean?”

“Nothing.” Dean said, his eyes widening slightly, “I’m just. I’m just not hungry.”

“You forget I know you to well son.” Dad grinned, getting up and putting his hand on Dean’s shoulder, “You forget I created you. So, why don’t’ you share with Sam what your thinking. Why we are really going to Bobby’s.”

My eyes met Dean’s briefly, before he dropped them, starting at his uneaten lasagna.

“It’s a test Sammy.” Dean said sighing.

“Thatta boy.” Dad patted Dean on the head, still keeping his hand shoulder.

“What do you mean a test?” I asked, trying my best to block out Dad and trying to keep Dean’s focus on me.

“To see if you tell Bobby.” Dean took in a deep breath, “About Dad. And me. He wants to see if you’re going to tell him how he…how he...” Dean trailed off, clearly unsure how to finish his sentence.

“How I discipline Dean.” Dad finished. “But, here’s the thing, Sammy. If you get any smart ideas, let me give you a little show of what could and will happen.” Without warning, Dad suddenly twisted Dean’s arm behind his back, slamming him down hard onto the table, sending his plate of lasagna flying. With his other arm he brought his elbow down and dug it hard into Dean’s shoulder. I don’t know how Dean kept from whimpering out in pain. I however yelled enough for the both of us. I flew at Dad, knocking my own plate to the ground, screaming. Just as I started to pound on Dad’s arm, he let go of Dean and just laughed.

“That’s just a preview, Sammy.” He said, “It can be so much worse. So keep your mouth shut. I’m going out Dean. Clean this shit up.” Dad walked out without another word.

Dean didn’t look at me. Didn’t say anything. He just briefly rubbed his shoulder and then started to clean up. Picking up his plate, then mine. He walked over to the sink. Returning with a dishpan full of soap and a rag. Then he began washing the sauce off of the cheap floors.

“Dean…” I said, finally finding my voice. I dropped down next to him, putting my hand over his,
stopping him from cleaning.

“Don’t.” He said, his eyes briefly meeting mine, “Just get out of here, Sam. Just leave me the hell alone.”

Bobby

I was kinda surprised when John called me to ask if he could stop by for a long weekend visit with the boys. I haven’t really talked to him much since Dean’s birthday, besides the brief phone calls here or there to consult on a case. But I missed those kids like hell so I agreed without hesitation. Not to mention I thought I heard a slight panic in John’s voice that normally wasn’t present that had me worried.

Admittedly I didn’t sleep well and ended up hitting the grocery store early making sure to grab a few of Sam and Dean’s favorite snack foods in addition to stuff to make burgers later. Dean loves burgers. I even picked up a case of beer for John, not sure what type of mood he was going to be in. Then, I went home to sit and wait. I took a few shots of whiskey, unable to shake the feeling that something was wrong. I breathed a sigh of relief once I heard the impala pull into my driveway.

I walked out to meet them, greeting John with a handshake. Sam flew out of the car giving me a hug. Dean on the other hand gave me a small wave, before popping the truck and pulling out both his and Sam’s duffle bag. John didn’t seem to notice the lack of greeting from his oldest and just grabbed his own duffle bag, bounding down the walkway towards the house. Sam turned to take his bag, but Dean shied away from him.

“Give me my bag.” Sam said, once again reaching for it.

“Sam, let me carry it.” Dean replied, “I can handle it.”

“I know you can.” Sam said, “But so can I. And it’s my bag. It’ll be fine. I can take care of it. You don’t have to worry about it.”

Dean stared at him for a second or two before he pulled the strap of the duffle over his head and handed it to Sam. I couldn’t tell what was happening, but I could tell by their eyes they were exchanging some sort of message. Shaking my head I took their lead and began following them down the pathway.

“Hey, Dean.” I said, reaching out and giving his shoulder a squeeze, pulling my hand back quickly when he flinched. “Hey, your shoulder okay?”

“Yeah, it’s fine, Bobby.” Dean gave me a slight grin, “I pulled it training the other day.”

“Your daddy runs you too hard.” I said, shaking my head.

“He knows what he’s doing.” Dean’s answer came out defensively.

“Sure he does.” Sam scoffed.

“He’s preparing us to be hunters, Sam.” Dean snapped, turning on his little brother. “What do you want from him? Cuddles and goodnight kisses. He needs us to be tough. He needs us to be on guard at all times. He knows what’s out there. You’re too busy being in your own damn geeky head to know that.” Dean gave me a brief look before barreling down the stairs, his duffle bag swinging
wildly around him as he went.

“Who spit in his Wheaties?” I asked, trying to get Sam to smile. It was odd to see the boys fighting. Or at least to see Dean snap at Sam. Normally my boy has more than enough patience with his younger brother.

Sam looked like he wanted to say something. He looked at me, his face looking pained, but then his eyes widened and he took off, calling after his brother. I sighed and took in a deep breath, unsure what the hell Winchester type mess I just stepped in.

Something definitely was different about this visit. I sensed tension the second I entered the kitchen. John, who normally took off the second the boys were out of the impala was clearly planning on staying put, his arms folded, watching Sam like a hawk. Two hours in, he was only on his third or fourth beer, nursing each of them, as though he had set a limit for himself. The questions he asked me were precise and directed and his answers to my questions were the same way.

Sam just looked pissed. I know he was going through this teenage rebellion phase. Actually, he seems like he’s been in that damn phase since the boy was old enough to talk and walk. At least when his daddy was concerned. But the boy literally spent most of the afternoon glaring at his father. When Sam talked he spoke loudly, almost shouting. Anytime he finished, he’d stop and look at John, as if challenging him. What he was challenging him to was beyond my guess.

I just assumed they were fighting. Those two idjits were always fighting. I made a mental note to try to ask Dean about it later. I knew the boy wouldn’t give me much information—he never did especially when his daddy or brother were concerned—but it never hurts to ask.

Speaking of Dean…he looked awfully nervous and uncomfortable. He was fidgeting in his chair, looking between Sam and John like he fully expected a fight to break out at any minute. I thought I noticed a faint bruising on his cheek, but I knew the boy was going hunting with John, and he wasn’t one to take a back seat when it came to seeing action first hand. John had even called a few weeks ago to tell me how Dean had nearly caught a werewolf by himself. He’d been so proud when he called. Of course, he didn’t flat out say he was proud. The idjit would never actually go that far. But I could hear it in his voice. I wished he’d just suck up whatever pride he had and would just give Dean the pat on the back he so desperately craved. How John didn’t see the kid craved his praise was beyond me.

I tried pulling Dean into the conversation. I asked him about hunts. How his trainings been going. How the hell he has such a steady shot time and time again without fail. How he notices things that no one else notices. I was hoping John would get a clue and give his oldest a pat on the back, but of course, he didn’t.

Dean didn’t help matters much. He hardly looked in my direction. When I asked him a question he’d mumble an answer and stare at his hands. It was almost like he was uncomfortable to talk to me or be around me. Whenever I started praising his abilities he just blushed, glancing at John. The jackass of course didn’t say anything to him, so Dean just shifted in his chair and murmured a quick thank you. Sam of course piped up that his brother was going to be the best hunter there ever was. He was greeted with a surprising and hushed ‘shut up Sam’ from Dean. Sam immediately sunk back in his seat, and asked to be excused, claiming he wanted to go check out my library. I saw though that when he got up he had tears rolling down his cheeks.
I couldn’t put my finger on it, but something was off. I kinda wished John would skedaddle so that I could get some answers.

I spent the rest of the morning into the early afternoon watching all three of the Winchester’s body language.

Finally an uncomfortable couple of hours, I asked John if I could take Dean with me to show him an old house that I was looking into for a hunt. Luckily I had told him about it previously, so after hemming and hawing, he agreed.

“What’s the story for the hunt, Bobby?” Dean asked as he climbed into the passenger’s seat.

“It’s not so much a hunt.” I replied, beginning to drive. “I mean it is, but it isn’t.”

“I left my decoder ring at home.” Dean stated.

I burst out laughing. “Fair enough. What I mean is, I basically took care of the big baddy. Let me tell you the background. It was a family that was haunting a house. The stepdad I guess killed his wife and daughter. He was tormenting anyone who entered the home. You know, threatening them, terrorizing them, normal stuff. In addition to all the crap this jerk was doing to the homeowners he was holding his wife and daughter captive. After my friend Rufus and I salted and burned his bones his wife appeared. She’s still lingering in that home. She means no harm but she can’t transition over because she couldn’t find her daughter, Laura. Apparently Laura’s been hiding because she’d been hiding from her ass of a stepfather. That’s where you come in.”

“You want me to talk to the kid.” Dean stated, catching on quickly.

“Yeah.” I nodded, “I tried to find her, so did Rufus. We don’t want to salt and burn either mom or Laura because they’ll both go peacefully. We want them to cross over together.”

“How olds the kid?” Dean asked.

“Five.” I said.

“That sonofabitch killed a five year old?” Dean snapped.

“Yeah.” I nodded. That fact had pissed me the hell off too. “I enjoyed torching that corpse.”

“Do you think I could talk to her mom?” Dean asked.

“Yeah.” I glanced at Dean, who was staring at the road ahead. “I’m sure.”

Dean nodded and the two of us fell into a comfortable silence.

We made it to the house in record time. Linda appeared within moments of us entering the house.

“Bobby!” She said, sounding somewhat hysterical, “I’ve looked everywhere. I can’t find her. What if we can never find her?”

“Well, I brought reinforcements.” I answered. “This is my nephew, Dean. He’s a hunter too. He’s going to try to help us find Laura…I trust him more than I trust people who are twice his age. Is that okay with you if he gives it a whirl?”
“Of course.” Linda nodded. She turned her attention to Dean, giving him a warm smile. “Hi, Dean. You…Honey, please don’t be offended…But you…you’re just so young.”

“I’m older than I look.” Dean said calmly, “I have some questions for you.”

“Okay…” Linda glanced nervously at me, then back at Dean.

“What did Laura like to do?” Dean asked. “Did she have a favorite song? Did she have a favorite game?”

“Oh.” Linda’s face relaxed immediately, “Laura enjoyed so many things. She was such a happy little girl…She loved animals…she loved chocolate cookies. Especially right out of the oven.”

“My Mom used to make those.” Dean smiled, “She made them just right. Soft in the middle and crunchy on the outside.”

“That’s how Laura liked them too.” Linda smiled, “But most of all Laura loved fairy tales. She loved to pretend she was a princess. She wanted to be rescued by a prince one day. She wanted us both to be rescued.” Linda glanced at me, tears beginning to roll down her cheeks, “I just… I should have left…But where would I have gone…It was the forties…no one would have taken me in…not with a child…Pete…he would have found us.”

“Don’t blame yourself.” Dean replied his voice soft, but strong. “You were in a bad situation. It doesn’t mean you’re a bad person. You did the best you could. Laura knows that. You just need to know that. This is all going to be over soon. I’m going to get your kid back. I promise.”

Linda nodded, wiping her tears away with her hand. She reached out and gently put her hands on Dean’s shoulders. Dean gave her a smile before he turned and started talking. That’s it. Just talking. He didn’t ask me for a EMF machine. He didn’t ask if I felt a chill. Nothing. All the kid did was start to talk.

“Hey Laura.” He said softly. “Hi. I’m Dean. I’m here with your mom and my Uncle Bobby. She—she wants you to know that you’re safe. I know you’ve been hurt. And I know that you’ve been scared. I know that you’re hiding because that’s where you feel safe. But, I promise you. You’re safe now. You’re stepdad…he’s gone. For good. So, it’s safe to come out and join your mom so you guys can get the help- so you guys can get out of this house.” Dean paused, and then sat down on the floor. “You know, I have a little brother. His name’s Sammy. He likes fairy tales too. I tease him about them—I’m his big brother, that’s my job, but truthfully I like them too. I like them cuz the good guys always win. Your stepdad was like a monster. Or like an evil king. You and your mom were like the princess and the queen that were stuck with him. But my Uncle Bobby here got rid of him. So now you and your mom get to go to your own kingdom.”

“Can it have butterflies?” A small voice asked, echoing down the halls. By the way Linda gasped and held her hand up to her mouth I knew that it was Laura.

“Of course you can.” Dean chuckled, “I don’t think there would be a kingdom without a few butterflies.”

“You promise me, it’s safe.”

“Cross my heart and pinkie promise.” Dean replied without hesitation.

“Okay.” Suddenly an image of a tiny girl, dressed in a night gown, with long hair appeared right in front of Dean.
“Laura!” Linda cried. Laura ran into her mother’s arms, the two of them hugging like it’s been forever since they’d seen each other.

“I’m sorry I hided Mommy.” Laura said, her voice small. “I was scared.”

“It’s okay, baby.” Linda replied, tears running down her face, “It’s okay. I’m so sorry. I love you.”

“I love you too.” Linda hugged Laura tight, and then turned towards Dean who was now standing beside me. “I don’t know how to thank you. You…You gave me back my most precious gift. How can I repay you?”

“Just watch for those butterflies.” Dean said with a slight grin. Linda nodded. Still holding Laura she walked over to Dean, and kissed him gently on the cheek. She gave him another warm smile. Then, Laura and Linda faded off into a bright shimmery light.

Dean and I both stood there for a while, neither one of us talking. Truthfully, I was swelling with pride. I couldn’t believe how good Dean had been with that little girl. I mean, I wasn’t surprised-after all he’d practically raised his brother—but he opened himself up, showing his vulnerable, compassionate side. He’d been able to reach her when hunters twice his age couldn’t. I knew the kid could point a gun and shoot, but I knew then that Dean had something special about him. I knew that this kid was going to go on and do great spectacular things. Things that John and I could only dream about. And I was so freakin proud to know him.

“Well,” Dean said, clearing his throat, “Guess we should head back. Sammy’s probably a nervous wreck by this point.”

“Dean, wait.” I reached out, catching him by the arm, “What you did just then…that was…that was incredible.”

“I just talked to the kid, Bobby.” Dean shrugged, “It was nothing anyone else couldn’t do.”

“Others tried Dean.” I said, still holding on to him, “Including her own momma. And that little girl came out for you. I’m so proud of you. You did a great job!”

Dean glanced at me for a moment before shrugging slightly and just standing in place. His face was literally a mask. Completely non expressive.

“Can we just go back?” He asked finally. “I really gotta get back to Sammy.”

“Sure, kid.” I said, patting him on the back, “Let’s go. Your daddy is going to be so proud of you.”

“Bobby.” Dean stopped dead in his tracks, “About that. Can you just tell him the kid just came out when she saw me or something.”

“What do you mean?” I turned to him, not quite understanding what he was asking me.

“Can you…can you not tell him what I said?” Dean rubbed his neck uncomfortably, “I just…I just don’t think he needs to hear about the whole fairy tale, butterfly crap I spun. It was a lie anyway. I don’t believe in that stuff anymore. Fairy tales are lame. They are for little girls, chicks, and Sammy. That shit doesn’t exist. Just…can you not tell my Dad I said what I said?”

“Sure, Dean.” I replied, trying to smile through my words.

Truthfully, I could feel my heart sink lower than it had it a long time. Somewhere along the line, between losing his momma, raising Sammy, and dealing with John Winchester’s range of bullshit,
Dean had lost his sense of hope.

And I’ll be damned if he lost it forever.
I slept awful after getting home from that semi-hunt with Bobby. I tossed and turned, having nightmare after nightmare. The first contained my typical panicked feelings of losing Sammy. We were younger in this particular nightmare and playing in the woods. I’d bent down to tie my shoes, stood up, and Sam was gone. Just gone. I looked everywhere and couldn’t find him. I felt empty and lost and dark until Sam woke me up, shaking me, asking why the hell I was screaming his name at the top of my lungs.

I managed to convince him I was fine, and fell back asleep, only to be greeted with another nightmare. The second was this terrible sensation of being pinned underneath a red storm like monster that broken open my skin, ripping it to shreds. I tried ducking and tried rolling away from the pain it inflicted but no matter how hard I tried, I was stuck. I couldn’t escape. I literally could feel it lashing into my chest like lightning, leaving welts of blood in its path. Once again, Sam woke me up. This time he told me I was pleading to be left alone.

The last and final nightmare was the worst of them all. Mom was trapped in a burning building, screaming at me to save her. She was exactly how I remembered her, but I was the age I am now. I managed to break away from the fire fighters, police, Sammy, and even Dad and run back into the building. I’d just entered the room where Mom was, when the flames around us shot up, surrounding her even more than before. I reached out, begging with her to take my hand, promising her I’d keep her safe. Just as we touched the floor gave way and she plummeted, falling far and fast into the fiery pit underneath me.

“Dean!” Sam’s voice suddenly was yelling in my ear. I was aware that he was holding me close to him, so much so that I was smashed face first into the shoulder of his pajama top. “Dean, come on. Snap out of it!”

“Sammy?” I gasped, grabbing onto his shirt and holding onto it, “Sam?”

“Yeah, Dean.” Sam said softly, “It’s me. Are you alright?”

“Yeah.” I breathed out releasing the grip I had on him, “I’m fine. Get off me.”

Sam did as he was told. I sank back down onto my pillow, still trying to regain a normal breathing pattern. It was only when I rubbed my hands over my eyes did I realize I had been crying.

“You’re breathing really shallow.” Sam said, getting up and flicking on the damn light. “You need your inhaler.”

I wanted to argue with him.

To tell him that he was being ridiculous.

But I knew by the way my chest was tightening he was right.

“Here.” Sam handed me the inhaler and I took a hit. I felt immediate relief. I coughed slightly. Waited the proper time. Then took another hit. “Water.” Sam said, handing me his water bottle.

“This is yours.” I said, pushing it away from me in mock disgust.
“Yeah, because we’ve never shared before.” Sam rolled his eyes, “Drink it, Dean.”

I rolled my eyes and took a sip, made a face, and handed it back to him.

“If I get any kind of weird fungus on my mouth I’m hunting you down.” I replied, settling back down on my pillow.

Sam either couldn’t come up with a reply or just chose to ignore me. He just turned off the light and climbed back into bed. Or back into my bed.

“I hope you don’t think this is going to become a regular thing.” I said, bringing my knee up and giving him a sharp jab where I knew his ass had to be. “You really gotta get yourself a girlfriend, Sam. Or a teddy bear.”

“Where you dreaming about Mom?” Sam asked, ignoring me once again.

“What makes you ask that?” My voice hitched slightly, and I could feel a shiver run down my spine.

I was beyond happy that Dad’s bedroom was downstairs all the way in the basement, and he wasn’t anywhere near us considering all the damn yelling I’d been doing all night.

“You were crying for her.” Sam said softly. “You kept telling saying you were coming. To where I don’t know. You didn’t say. You kept repeating you’d save her this time…I tried to wake you, but you were really in a deep sleep. Then you started screaming…and cry… Hey…Dean…You know you couldn’t save her before, right? I mean, you were four.”

“Course I know.” I snapped.

“Dean…”

“I gotta piss.” I cut in. “Move.” I slid past Sam, just wanting to escape the comforting lecture he was about to provide. I made it out of the room, and halfway down the hall without hearing another peep out of him. I paused at the top of the stairs, contemplating if I wanted to chance a run in with my father for the few shots of whiskey I was now craving.

On one hand, I knew I probably looked like hell. The last thing I needed was to run into Dad and try to explain why my eyes were bloodshot and my cheeks were streaked with tears. I always had a bad habit of shivering like crazy after I cried. He knew this of course, so I knew a run in at two in the morning, with a drunken John was not something I wanted to subject myself to right now. Whether I was at Bobby’s house or not.

On the other hand Dad was actually okay with me drinking. Ever since that night I injured my ankle he’s been more than pleased with my new hobby. In fact, he encouraged it. He’d pat me on the back, tell me he’d waited years to drink with me, and couldn’t wait to go on a beer crawl. His only rule was that I earned my own pack or bottles. He made it abundantly clear I was not to take from him, and if I did I was to replace it immediately. I could earn beer by training or by doing whatever shit he felt like making me do.

So basically, I was his beer slut.

Finally I took a deep breath and took the plunge. There was no guarantee I’d even run into Dad. If I knew John like I do, he’d be long since passed out in his own drunken slumber. Sure enough, the house was dark and quiet. I knew my way around enough to be able to find the kitchen without running into anything. I flicked on the small light above the sink and grabbed a hold of the
whiskey. I quickly tore off the top of the bottle and was just about to put the whiskey to my lips with suddenly a hand covered mine, stopping me in mid swig. I turned around, meeting face to face with Bobby.

“What are you doing, Dean?” Bobby’s calm voice totally conflicted with the anger that was firing in his eyes.

“I umm… I…” My brain suddenly shut off. I couldn’t think of a damn thing to say. I knew I couldn’t lie my way out of this. I’d been caught red-handed, plus I had too much respect for Bobby to even try. I couldn’t smart ass my way out of this one. The last time I’d seen Bobby this pissed at me was when he caught me trying to smoke when I was thirteen.

“Go upstairs, Dean.” Bobby sighed, “Let’s talk up there. I don’t think we want to wake your father.”

I turned and started heading up the stairs. I wouldn’t be surprised if Bobby hit me. He never has. He’s never even threatened. But he looked so pissed.

“Sam’s up.” I said turning to face Bobby once we reached my bedroom door.

“Does he know that you—”

“Yeah.” I shifted uncomfortably.

“So this weren’t no freak, first time thing?” Bobby asked.

“Not really.” I answered, opening the door and heading inside.

“Dean!” Sam shot up like he’d been fired out of a freaking canon, “Where were you?!”

And on went the damn light.

And I knew it was all downhill from here.

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Sam

“Dean!” I shot up, turning on the light, “Where were you?”

I immediately dropped back onto the bunk bed when I saw Bobby behind Dean.

“Your brother was downstairs about to take a big old sip of whiskey.” Bobby said, closing the door, before putting his hand on Dean’s shoulder. It was different though than the way that Dad puts his hand on his shoulder. It was gentler. Firm still, but not scary.

“Would you buy I thought it was milk?” Dean asked, looking at me, giving me a small grin.

I shook my head dismissively. I wanted to stick up for him. He was standing there, looking like a guilty two year old with huge red swollen eyes, but I wasn’t about to let him off the hook. Now that he’d been caught by someone that wouldn’t slug him on the shoulder and call him champ. Okay, Dad didn’t exactly do that, but the way he was when he and Dean drank together, it was pretty darn close.
But I also wouldn’t throw Dean under the bus and state that his drinking was something I’d seen him do time and time again. Or that it was something that scared me. I wasn’t sure Dean knew how much it terrified me. If he was going to hear it, he was going to hear it when it was just the two of us.

“Do you have anything to say for yourself, Dean?” Bobby asked.

“I guess…I really don’t.” Dean said honesty. “I guess that hunt just kinda screwed me up a bit. I just needed something to…I don’t know….calm my nerves a bit.”

I swear when Dean said that, Bobby’s face completely fell. It went from mad and pissed to sad and worried.

“I’m sorry, Dean.” Bobby sighed, “I’m sorry. I guess I didn’t think that it would affect you that way.”

I wanted to know what hunt and what had happened. Bobby had come home in a great mood, telling Dad that Dean had done his job without any hesitation and he did something that neither he or Rufus could do. Dean seemed a little uneasy at the time, but he grinned and allowed the pats on the back that Bobby supplied.

However, I knew now was not the time to ask.

Dean didn’t respond, he just shrugged and looked away.

“I know we aren’t the type to talk about our feelings and all.” Bobby looked rather uncomfortable, “But do you want to talk about why you’re feelin how your feelin?”

Dean was quiet for a moment or two then he just shook his head.

Bobby sighed and for some reason his eyes met mine. I quickly turned away, knowing if I kept eye contact with him for too long a lot of information was going to pour out.

“We do have to have a conversation about the drinking, though.” Bobby began.

“I don’t think there’s that much to talk about.” Dean said. “I just made a mistake.”

Suddenly, I couldn’t take it anymore. Before I knew what was happening, I opened my mouth.

“Dad lets him drink.”

“He what?” Bobby said, his eyes falling back on me.

“Shut up, Sam.” Dean snapped, his eyes now glaring.

“Dad lets Dean drink.” I stated, feeling there was no going back now. It wasn’t like I was saying anything about the abuse. Besides, it was true. “They even drink together.”

“You’re nineteen.” Bobby said, turning to face Dean, who noticeably flinched and took a step backwards, sinking down into a chair by the desk. “You shouldn’t be drinking.”

“I told that to Dad.” I said, practically feeling Dean’s stare boring through me. “I told him, and he didn’t care.”

“Is this true, Dean?” Bobby asked. His eyes hadn’t moved off my brother.
“Aw, come on Bobby.” Dean said, trying to sound light-hearted “It’s not like you didn’t drink when you were my age.”

“I don’t care what the hell I did.” Bobby snapped, his voice rising slightly, “I do however care what you do.”

“It’s just part of the life, Bobby.” Dean shrugged, trying to play it cool. But I could see he was shaking. “You know that.”

“Dean…” Bobby was taking several deep breaths, his eyes wild with anger. He took a few steps towards my brother, before he stopped. “We are going to finish this conversation tomorrow. I just… I don’t want to talk to you when I’m this angry. The two of you get to bed. And no more trips to the kitchen.” With that, Bobby turned and left closing the door behind him. I could hear him muttering all the way down the hall.

Dean stayed where he was, turning so that I couldn’t see him. I knew by the way his shoulders were hunched he was pissed. I didn’t regret what I had said. I mean, I knew that my timing wasn’t great, but I also was glad I said it.

“I thought he should know.” I said honestly.

Dean didn’t say anything. He just got up and came over to me, before grabbing me by the arms and yanking me hard. I went flying, falling to the floor, face first. I pushed myself up immediately only to see him getting into bed, laying diagonally, and pulling his covers over his entire body.

“Dean…” I began.

“Shut the fuck up, Sam.” Dean said, his voice angry and full of venom, “If you know what’s good for you. Shut the fuck up.”

I sighed, hit the light switch by our beds and climbed the ladder.

I couldn’t sleep. I just laid there; listening to the sound of Dean’s muffled sobs.

I woke up the next morning to find Dean’s bed empty. Sighing, I slid out of bed myself and jogged down the stairs. I wasn’t too surprised to see Dad, Bobby, and Dean already sitting at the kitchen table. Dean’s back was to me, so I couldn’t see his face. I could however see Bobby’s. It was full of concern, almost sad. And I could see Dad’s. He looked up, sensing me somehow. For a second, I saw rage in his eyes. I knew without a doubt he was angry. But as soon as it was there it vanished.

“Sammy.” He called, waving me over to them, “Come on. I think we have to have a conversation.”

“Okay.” I said, walking over to the table, feeling my heart racing. I sat down next to Dean, giving him a quick look over. He seemed okay. From where I was sitting he didn’t look injured. There were no new visible bruises—I didn’t think there would be any, but you never can know—and he wasn’t sitting like he was hurting.

“Sam.” Dad began, clearing his throat, “I want to know why you lied to Bobby about me giving your brother alcohol.”
“I didn’t lie.” I said, turning and staring at him, “You do give him alcohol. You guys drink together all the time.”

“That’s an exaggeration.” Dad shook his head, “I never drank with your brother. To be honest, this has all been so shocking. I explained to Bobby that this has unraveled really quickly. That Dean’s really been struggling. And that I’ve been trying my hardest to help.”

“That’s not true!” I said, shooting out of my chair, “You gave him alcohol. You drink with him. I saw you! You’re lying.”

“Sam.” Dean grunted next to me, “Stop. Look, I’m the one who lied. Dad didn’t know I was drinking. I just told you that to shut you up.”

“Dean!” I snapped, “Don’t cover for him!” I rounded on Dean so fast, his eyes grew as huge as saucers. “Why do you always lie for him? God, Dean. Just once, be honest!”

“Sam.” Bobby was suddenly in front of me, blocking my brother from my view. “I think you need to calm down.”

“Dean!” I yelled, trying to move past Bobby, but he once again shielded Dean from me. “Screw this family.” I snapped finally, turning and walking away. I shoved my feet into my sneakers, making a comment to Dad that I was going to need new ones because mine were too small. Then, I turned and walked out of the room, and then out of the house.

I walked around in the woods by Bobby’s, hoping and not hoping Dean would eventually come looking for me. So imagine my disappointment when I saw Dad coming down the path, straight towards me.

Sighing, I crossed my arms and waited for him. I wasn’t going to make any effort to meet him. He was going to meet me. Dean might have run to him, or bowed down and kissed the dirt at his feet, but I wasn’t going to do anything of the sort.

“Hey there, Sam.” Dad said, “I was worried about you.”

“Sure you were.” I said sarcastically, “Any new lies I should know about?”

“As long as we’re here I’m not lying.” Dad replied, “I managed to convince Bobby—with your brother’s help—that you just can’t face the facts that Dean has a problem and I’m trying to get him help. Hence why we made the little trip out here.”

“That’s such bull.” I said, “Bobby’s not stupid. He knows Dean’s not an alcoholic.”

“You sure he isn’t?” Dad grinned, folding his arms, “Or isn’t capable of being one? Don’t think I haven’t noticed how much he enjoys it. Don’t think I haven’t seen how it fills that deep dark hole of self-loathing he’s dug. Don’t think I don’t know the feeling of wanting to chase the memories of big bad monsters away. Sounds like he has a problem to me. Actually, sounds like a big problem. So, if you want him to get any sort of help-Bobby already is up there preaching away at him—I’d keep your damn mouth shut. If you make any further of a scene, I’ll just pack you up and leave. And we both know Dean won’t let me take you alone. He knows what I’m capable of.”

“I told you I’m not scared of you.” I said sharply. I wanted to hurt him. God, I wanted to hurt him so badly. I couldn’t believe that he was going to use alcohol, which he practically bathed himself in, as a weakness of my brother’s. After all, Dean grew up wanting to be just like Dad—for whatever reason I wasn’t sure. He watched Dad drown his sorrows in beer and whiskey and so on and so forth for years. Why wouldn’t he try to do the same?
“You might not be.” Dad said grinning at me, “But your brother’s terrified enough for both of you. So that means I still get to call the shots. I still get control. Because he won’t leave your side, Sammy. If I have to say one thing for my Dean, he’s loyal. Even to the point of stupidity. He’ll sacrifice himself to save you, yet he won’t ever turn against me. So, do him a favor and shut the hell up.”

“This won’t last for forever.” I said, storming up the path, “One day I’m leaving. And I’m taking Dean with me. You won’t get me for forever. You don’t get him for forever. You don’t deserve him.”

“We’ll see about that.” Dad laughed briefly, “I’m going out. Tell Bobby I’ll be home late. And Sam? Watch that mouth of yours. Don’t think your brother isn’t going to pay for your little mistake. I doubt you want him paying for anymore.”

I bit my tongue, swallowing down the desire to tell Dad where to go. I watched as he walked away from me, and got into the impala. I then took off in a jog towards the house as I heard and saw the damn car drive down the dirt path.

I was somewhat nervous as I pushed the door open. I wasn’t exactly sure what type of mood I was going to face from either Bobby or Dean. However, Bobby was the only one who was visible. He was sitting in the kitchen, drinking what looked like a coffee, with a book open. He was writing down facts and apparently was so involved in doing so I had to call him three times for him to hear me.

“Sam.” He said, looking up, frowning slightly, “Where’d you run off to?”

“I took a walk.” I said in a rush, “Where’s Dean?”

“In your twos room.” Bobby shook his head, “Why’d you lie, Sam. Honestly, I almost beat the hell out of your daddy. I know you two have your differences but that’s a mighty big lie to tell. I didn’t even believe him until Dean pipped up and said that it was all true. You should have seen your daddy’s face. He was about split in two over this.”

I stood there, not sure what to say. It hurt Bobby automatically thought I was lying. I wasn’t a liar. Especially about Dean. I said what I did because it was true. Dad did let Dean drink. If anything he encouraged it. I wasn’t sure why, but Dad seemed to like it better and Dean better when he was drunk.

“Just go to your room.” Bobby said dismissively. “I really have a lot I want to say and I don’t want to say it.”

I nodded, glad for the excuse to go. I wanted to talk to Dean anyway.

My brother was lying on his bed, tossing a small ball in the air and catching it. It didn’t look like that much fun seeing as he was on the bottom bunk bed. Normally I’d tease him about it, but I knew now wasn’t the time.

“Hey, Dean.” I said as casually as I could, shutting the door.

Dean unsurprisingly didn’t reply. He just turned away from me, facing the wall.
“Come on, bro.” I said, going over to his bed, “Look, I know I screwed up. I’m sorry, okay? I just…I shouldn’t have said it.”

“We covered.” Dean said, his voice gruff and short. “It’s fine.”

“Except that Bobby thinks you’re a teenage alcoholic and I’m a liar.” I said, throwing out a small joke. I wanted to see if Dean would take the bait and joke back but he didn’t.

“I’d rather him think that.” Dean replied.

“You know, it’s not the worst thing I could have said.” I replied, trying to put things into perspective.

“Is that a threat?” Dean turned just slightly so that he could see me.


Dean looked at me for a moment then sighed, turning back to face the wall.

“Just do me a favor, Sammy….Whatever Dad says to you about this loose lips thing you have going on ….Whatever Dad does to me…just stay out of it? Don’t let him guilt you. Just close your eyes. Just please stay out of it.”

“I’m not going to do any of those things.” I replied, “I’m not leaving you alone to deal with this anymore.”

Dean replied with a heavy sigh and pulled his pillow over his head.

I buried my head in my hands. I knew that once we left Bobby’s there was going to be hell to play. And even though Dad was going to be the one inflicting the damage, I was the one who had Dean’s blood all over my hands.
Surprisingly Dad didn’t punish me for Sammy’s little slippage once we left Bobby’s. I’d been expecting the worst. I’d even braced myself for it. Hell, I even braced Sam for it. I prepared him the best that I could.

I told him everything from mouth wounds looking worse than they actually were, to the fact that I embarrassingly was a bleeder.

I told him he normally aimed for the middle of my back or the back of my knees to knock me down.

I told him once I was down I took the cowards way out and just curled up in a ball, covering my head with my arms.

I told him it was the only way I knew to protect myself once he really got worked up.

I told him that the more I struggled the angrier he’d get and the worst the beating would be.

I told him to stay out of it.

To shut his mouth.

To just go into our room, shut the door, and forget about it.

Sam listened intently, nodding with sorrow in his eyes until the last part. When I told him to just shut out whatever was going to happen, he flipped his lid. He grabbed me by my shoulders, and then slammed me into the wall. He told me there was no way in hell that was happening (okay he didn’t say hell, but he might as well have), and that he’d left me to deal with this long enough. He then launched into some crazy one sided conversation about his formative years, which I think I somewhat phased out for.

But anyway, like I said, I braced myself to get belted and nothing happened. In fact, Dad didn’t even lecture or threaten. We drove home in silence. It was only when we were about a half an hour away from home did Dad say anything.

“So, Dean.” Dad began, clearing his throat, “I’ve been thinking. You really covered for me back there…I mean, sure you were the one who was dumb enough to go down into the kitchen and try to drink…you should know what a light sleeper Bobby is…But I have to hand it to you…You really did a great job convincing him that Sam’s a little liar.” Dad paused and glanced back at Sammy. I did the same, pleading that Sam would have the good sense to keep his freaking mouth shut. Luckily he did, but I could feel the glare strong and hard coming from the back seat. Dad
must have too because he chuckled slightly before he continued, “I mean it’s not everyone who’d lower himself to an alcoholic teenager to save his old man’s ass. But, you did that. So…I guess I’ll skip the punishments. Sound fair to you?”

“Yeah.” I said, trying not to show how relieved I felt. Not only because I didn’t want to get bashed around, but I didn’t want to get bashed around in front of Sam. The less he had to see of that life, that side of things, the better off he’d be in the long run.

“However…” Dad turned around briefly before focusing back on the road, “The next time you open your mouth Sam to anyone about anything that doesn’t concern just the three of us, and I will lay into your brother with everything I have. Do I make myself clear?”

Now, I would have easily replied, nodded, and then obeyed-just like the good little soldier my father trained me to be—but Sam remained silent.

“Sam!” Dad suddenly barked, making me jump. “You answer me when I speak!” He then pulled the car off to the side of the road so quickly, I literally felt my stomach flip and I had to swallow down whatever small amount of food Bobby made me cram down my throat this morning. Dad suddenly grabbed me hard by the shoulder, almost picking me up, but my seatbelt held me tight.

“Let him go!” Sam yelled, springing to life, unbuckling his seatbelt and trying to get his hand in between Dad’s own hand and my coat. “Let Dean go, Dad!”

“I don’t see how I can make this any clearer.” Dad fumed, unsurprisingly not letting me go. He shook me every few words. “I am not tolerating your bullshit anymore. I can screw your brother up for a long time with one good hard punch. Do you want that to happen?”

“No.” Sam replied, his hand still gripping my jacket, still trying to pry me loose from Dad’s hold. “I don’t.”

“Good.” Dad let go of me, shoving me hard so I was fully back into my seat. “Then, let’s revisit the last conversation. You’re too keep your damn mouth shut. About anything and everything. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes.” Sam replied, falling back into his seat. He sounded fucking exhausted. Like that simple word, that agreeing to obey our father’s request was the biggest task he’d ever accepted.

“Good.” I didn’t have to look at Dad to know that he was grinning, satisfied that he’d successfully John Winchestered his way to making his other son salute and obey.

I didn’t say anything. I just closed my eyes and leaned against the window, once again feeling my stomach flip and flop over and over again.

And that’s when Dad said it.

The thing I was dreading him saying from the moment Sam started challenging him.

The thing I kept in my darkest of dark thoughts that he’d one day release on my baby brother.

“You better keep your mouth shut.” Dad said, as he pulled back on to the road. “Because if it wasn’t for you, we wouldn’t be living like this. If it wasn’t for you I would still have my Mary.”

“How do you figure?” Sam asked, his voice coming out strong, but questioning.

“Dad.” I said, speaking up, “Don’t. Please don’t do this.”
“Say what, Dean?” Sam asked. I could hear the slightest hitch of panic settling in his voice as he spoke to me. When he’s scared he always talks through his nose. It sounds like he suddenly developed some horrible cold or allergy.

“Exactly what I said, Sammy.” Dad replied, his voice too calm, too steady, but gruff at the same time. “I’d still have my Mary, your brother would still have his mommy. Don’t you get it Sam? Why do you think that that demon was in your nursery? Do you think that was an accident?”

“Dad!” I said, my voice louder than I expected it ever to be when I talked to my father, “Stop! It’s not—”

“Sam.” Dad interrupted me, speaking over me. “Do you think the damn sonofabitch got lost on its way to possess some poor soul? No Sam. That demon was after you. And you’re Mom, my Mary, stopped him. She stopped him to save you. And she burned for it. She died cuz she got in the way.”

“Dad!” I turned on him, suddenly grabbing and yanking the wheel, “Shut the fuck up!”

He however ignored me. He just stopped the car. Right there, in the middle of the road. He turned and faced my brother.

“Don’t you get it? You killed your mother Sammy.”

Sam

My heart feels like it’s been broken and shattered and then broken and shattered again. Dad’s words pounded through my ears and into the back of my head over and over again.

‘You killed your mother Sammy’

‘You killed your mother Sammy’

Oh my God.

It was because of me she was dead. It was because of me we had this lifestyle. It was because of me we were dragged around the country and put into only to be yanked out of over twenty schools in our lifetime. It was because of me I’d never have the life that I craved. It was because of me we didn’t have a mother. And, it was because of me Dean got beaten on a regular basis.

I instantly felt sick to my stomach. I asked Dad to pull over, telling him that if he didn’t, I was going to throw up in his back seat. Part of me hoped he wouldn’t, just so I’d have the excuse to mess up his stupid car.

He did so, without hesitation. I got out of the car, dropping and crawling to the ground before I threw up everything that hadn’t fully digested yet. I was crying hard and fast, gagging both on my tears and what was flying out of my throat.

“Sammy.” Dean’s gentle voice suddenly spoke next to me. I could feel him drop down next to me, feel his hand on my back, “God…kid…take it easy. You’re going to puke all over that shiny hair of yours.”

For some reason, this joke, the timing, the person saying it, made me take in enough of a breath to calm down. I sucked in a huge breath and leaned against the impala, shaking my head, huge tears
still rolling down my cheeks.

“Sammy, you can’t—” Dean began, but was interrupted by Dad who loudly beeped the horn. He sighed and stood up, brushing the dirt off of his jeans. Then he held out his hand for me to take it, pulling me up to a standing position when he did so.

“Dean—” I whispered.

“Don’t worry, Sam.” Dean said giving me a quick but worried grin, “I’m going to deal with it. He’s gone too far this time. I’ll take care of it.”

Dean was true to his word. He was silent once we got back into the car to drive the rest of the way home. He was uncomfortably quiet. Normally when Dean’s quiet like this, it means that he’s pissed and pissed enough not to just laugh it off with a joke. I know this because this particular mode of his mood is saved just for me. I also knew that Dean’s silence was normally the quiet before the storm. He didn’t get pissed like this often—maybe only twice at me—but when he did, it was always an extreme explosion.

Sure enough, the second we were back in our apartment with our bags unloaded by the front door, and the windows and doorways properly salted, Dean turned to Dad telling him they needed to talk.

“You need to talk to me?” Dad asked, wheeling around with a grin on his face, “What the hell, boy. Watch your tone. Who do you think you’re talking to.”

“Unfortunately someone who claims to be a father.” Dean said, his voice calm and sure. He’d been sitting next to me on the couch, but now he stood up, going toe to toe and face to…well…chin with Dad. “Why the hell did you say what you did to Sammy? He didn’t kill Mom. Man, that’s screwed up. Even for you. God, I’d stood by you, defending you, when you make me do a lot of shit. Making me run drills until I can barely walk, making me run in the snow with no jacket. I’d never once complained. I’ve always stuck up for you. I always told myself and Sammy that you had your reasons for it. That you wanted to make us tough to keep us safe. But this…what you said, there was no reason for it. It was cruel and fucked up, and honestly fuck you for saying it.”

Dad smiled through Dean’s whole speech. When Dean finally seemed to run out of words, he stepped back looking Dad over, waiting for the response. I sat nervously on the couch, twisting my hands around and around. I honestly wasn’t sure what to expect. For one, Dean never spoke to Dad like that. For the other Dad was grinning. I wanted to pinch myself to see if this was some kind of dream, or if we’d been hit by a djin who’d gotten one of my wishes a little twisted.

“Are you done?” Dad asked, his voice lower than normal.

“Yeah.” Dean folded his arms. “I reckon so.”

“Good.” Dad suddenly moved like lightening and the next thing I knew he had Dean pinned to the wall by his shirt. His left forearm was pressing into Dean’s chest and his free arm had one of Dean’s pinned painfully behind him.

“Dad!” I yelled, running over to them, trying to pull them apart but Dad simply blocked me with his body.

“How dare you speak like that to me, boy!” Dad screamed now in Dean’s face. I could see that his spit sprayed onto Dean’s grey tee-shirt. “I am allowed to speak to my son and tell him whatever I want to. Especially if it’s true. It’ll protect him in the long run.”
“Some protection.” Dean mumbled. He was quiet, but he said it loud enough that both Dad and I heard him.

“You little shit!” Dad let go of the arm that was pinning Dean’s behind his back, wheeled back and just punched my brother right in the stomach. Dean of course went to bend down, gasping in both pain and lack of air, but Dad still held him against the wall. Then Dad reached out and slapped him hard, across the face. Instantly Dean’s lip split open and blood trickled down Dean’s chin.

“Dad! I yelled, taking a hold of his hitting hand with all of my might, “Stop. Please. Just stop.”

“I’m going for a walk.” Dad said, shaking me off of him, and giving Dean one last hard shove, “I don’t ever want to hear either of you question or contradict me again. Do you understand me?”

I didn’t. I really honestly knew that I wasn’t going to follow this sick rule of his, but I also knew Dean was looking a little whiter than normal and was wheezing slightly, and that meant he needed to get his inhaler. And soon. So after Dean nodded, I nodded. I eyed Dean’s duffle bag, knowing exactly where that inhaler was. I just needed Dad to get out so I could grab it and make my brother use it.

Luckily Dad just grabbed his wallet off of the counter, put on his jacket, and began to head out the door, muttering to himself about the ungrateful brats he raised.

“Oh, and Dean…” Dad stopped, when he was about halfway out the door, “Just remember…It’s Sam who’s going places. You’re nothing but a grunt. That’s all you’re ever be. You don’t have the brains for anything else. I don’t ever want to see this attitude from you again. Or I’ll beat you senseless and toss you out on your ass.

With that, Dad closed the door behind him. I quickly made my move, grabbing for Dean’s duffle and pulling out his inhaler. I then caught my brother by the back of his neck and practically jammed the inhaler into his mouth. Dean staggered slightly, grabbing my arm as he coughed and sputtered, sliding down the wall. I went with him, rubbing circles on his back as he coughed. He shot the second hit of his inhaler on his own, then leaned back against the wall, breathing deeply, looking absolutely exhausted.

“You okay?” I asked, putting my hand on his knee, glad to see some color returning to his cheeks.

Dean nodded, wiping his nose on his sleeve. “Yeah.” He pulled himself up, clearly heading towards the kitchen. I beat him to it, filling a glass with water and handing it to him, before helping him sit down in one of our kitchen chairs. He took a sip, another deep breath, and looked at me, his eyes full of sorrow. “You okay, Sammy?”

“Me?” I nodded, trying to stop the tears that had already begun rolling down my cheeks, “I’m fine.”

“You know what Dad said about Mom” Dean began, his breathing still uneven, “About you and her…it’s not true…Sammy…you didn’t kill her. That sonofabitch demon did.”

“Come on, Dean.” I said, shaking my head, “It does add up. She was in my room when she died. That thing was in my room. My room. Dad didn’t make that part of it up. You saw it. You saw her right before she died.”

Dean shut his eyes, shuddering slightly. I instantly regretted making him relive the memory. I wanted to kick myself for being so insensitive. I was just about the reach out and give him a pat on his shoulder, when he opened his eyes.
“That doesn’t mean anything.” Dean’s voice was strong and convincing. “She could have been anywhere. If she’d been in the kitchen, would it have been the fucking coffee pots fault? Whatever happened just happened. Like Dad said, demons don’t screw up. If that thing wanted you, he would have taken you. It was probably some kind of trap for her. It probably made you cry somehow. It knew she’d come to protect you.”

I nodded, trying to buy into what my brother said. I wanted to believe him. I really did. But when it really came down to it, I knew that what Dad said was true.

That demon had to be after me. If it wanted to set a trap for my Mom, Dean would have been the bait. Dean would have been the one the demon would have chosen. Demons were smart. The demon wouldn’t have wasted it’s time with me. Dean would have easily been the first choice. It would have picked her favorite; the son she loved more than anything.

For the first time in a long time, I agreed with my father.

I’d killed my mother.

All of this; our lives, Dad’s quest for revenge, Dean’s broken body, my longing for normality…All of it was my fault.
Chapter 41

I MIGHT Re-EDIT.

ps. I have no idea where Mary actually is right now. I felt though that she deserved some credit for the ten year mark. She’s noted as a skilled hunter. I doubt she went into Nov 2 without being prepared. Not that my way is the real/right way, but it works for this story so that's how i did it.

Mary

I can’t believe what John’s done to our boys.

To my boys…

To my sweet babies…

I’d die a thousand times over again, if it meant I could take away even the slightest bit of pain either of them has suffered.

Especially to my Dean…

It killed me to watch John raise them like soldiers.

Watch him drag my sons from state to state.

Giving them no stability, no home, no life.

I just wish they knew I was there.

That I was there with them through it all.

I was there when Dean, had to pull baby Sammy out of his crib at night to feed him a bottle. I was there to see him heat the bottle up when Sam refused, cringing when he put the bottle in boiling water, then beaming when he tested the bottle on his wrist, just like he watched me do so many times.

I was there when Sam learned to crawl. I was there when Sam said his first word, “De”. I was there when Dean’s face lite up when he realized he was trying to say Dean, and John’s face turn red in jealousy when he realized the same thing.

I was there when Sam took his first steps, when he went to school for the first time. I was there when he dived on his brother, hugging him, thanking him for sending him to school. I was there when Dean in turn laughed, calling him a nerd.

I was also there to watch him have a broken heart when John pulled him from school to school. I was there the times he didn’t get to finish a project he worked so hard on. I was there the time he was supposed to represent the school in a spelling bee, and at the last moment was yanked away
only to be plunked down in another school. I was there when the kids laughed at him for his frayed pants or hand-me-downs.

I was there when he questioned every move John made. I was there when he’d tell Dean how much he hated their father. How much he resented him. How he was going to leave one day and never come back.

And I was there to see Dean take it all in, nod, and give Sam a reassuring pat on the back. I was there to hear Dean tell him that he was proud of him, that he better stay in school, keep up those good grades so that he could get into a good school. I was there to know Dean told Sam he could have a better life.

But I was also there to see Dean later break down in the bathroom, crying with the pain and hurt that his brother would one day abandon him. The brother he raised, the brother he took such good care of. The brother whose needs he held above his own.

I wish you could hear me because Dean, you did such a beautiful job, honey.

I was there the first time Dean starved himself. Not on purpose, but to feed his little brother. I was there when he made the choice that when they had limited food, limited funds; it was to go to his baby brother. I was there when the choice he made long ago stopped being one of sacrifice and started being one of control. I was there when what once was could be considered unhealthy eating habits, began to spiral into something dark.

I was there in tears when Dean dropped out of school. I was with him every time he stumbled and stuttered over words and sentences while the other kids laughed at him. I wanted to damn all his teachers to hell that looked the other way and who didn’t try to help my little boy who was clearly struggling with an undiagnosed learning disability. I blamed John for not looking into programs or therapies that could help. I wanted to tie him to a chair and light a torch, when he’d tie Dean down when he couldn’t sit still

I was there for Dean’s first hunt. Overly nervous, but then and secretly proud how much of a natural he was. I watched him use his compassion and sensitivity that John tried so hard to stamp out to realize facts about hunts that no one else noticed. I was there, with a slight eye roll, when John would brag about him and pat him on the back and call him his son.

I was there for every asthma attack, every chest infection, and every fever. I was internally grateful to Bobby Singer for caring for my son when I couldn’t. I was there behind him when he slammed the doctor into the wall when the doctor told him that Dean was just born with bad lungs. I was there every time Bobby racked his brain with guilt when he had to plunge Dean into an ice bath to bring down his fever.

Then I was there when John shoved him to the ground the first time after I died. I was there for the first slap, the first hard punch. I was there when he beat him with his belt for the first time, leaving Dean a shaking mess on the ground. I was there when Dean decided he wasn’t going to cry anymore when his father beat him no matter how much it hurt. I was there when his Dad pinned him down and hurt him just for the sake of hurting him. I was there for all the first times he marred my baby’s skin and every time after.

Then I was there when Dean Winchester forgave his father over and over again.

And I was there when my baby, my Dean, gave up on himself.
None of this was supposed to work out this way.

I knew the ten year mark was coming up since I made the deal with the crossroads demon to bring John back. However, I always pictured he’d come for me. Ask me to do something damaging or hurtful. I never thought it would come for Sam. I never thought that it would end like it did.

I had already come to terms with the fact that I planned on not following through with my end of the deal. Demon deals are no different than any others. Both sides have to hold up their end of the contract, or there are consequences, and those consequences normally have to do with what you bargained with in the first place. So, because I had bargained with John’s life that is what I assumed I’d be bargaining with again. This may sound cruel and unusual as his wife and mother to his children, but to be honest, I’d grown resent and even hate the man. The way he wanted to control me, the awful way he treated Dean…especially Dean…well, let’s just say it would make it easier if he were just gone.

I had seen a divorce lawyer. Right before I knew I was pregnant, I dropped Dean off at daycare and went to town. The lawyer told me how difficult it would be to win custody of Dean because John made more money than I did and that Dean was on his health insurance. He said I’d have to prove that he was either an abusive or negligent father. Or that he did drugs or consumed vast amounts of alcohol. John had stopped being physical of Dean since that last time he spanked him at Bobby’s, so I guess that not wanting to spend time with your child and your child shying away from you weren’t enough evidence that something were wrong. Also, apparently John’s lack of medical concern over Dean’s welfare meant nothing as long as he was footing the bill for him to get care in the first place.

A few days after my meeting, I realized I was pregnant. It had been a long time since John and I actually made love—we had had sex a few weeks back yes mostly because he was so angry, I was afraid what he’d do with that anger. Something happened at work that day and he was huffing and puffing and glaring at Dean who was lying on his stomach coloring. So, after I put Dean to bed that night, I felt I had to extinguish some of that anger.

When we found out it was a boy, John was beyond happy and said that maybe this time he’d actually get the son he wanted. He said this right in front of Dean, whose gentle green eyes filled with tears before he disappeared off to his bedroom.

The second John headed off the work that day, I ran up the stairs and found Dean sitting in his closet, his knees brought up to his chest, crying into his little hands.

“Hey,” I said, knocking on the outside door, “Can I come in.”

“Yeah.” Dean looked up at me briefly, “I’m not sad cuz I don’t wants a brother. I do wants one. I love him already.”

“I know you do.” I sighed, reaching out motioning for him to crawl onto my lap, which he did without hesitation. “Are you upset over what your Daddy said?”

“Yeah.” Dean sniffed loudly, “Maybe this new baby will make Daddy happy. I try to make him happy, but he don’t like me much.”

“Oh, Dean…” I sighed, rocking him gently, feeling his tears beginning to soak my blouse.

“It’s cuz I’m too small and too sick.” Dean stated.

“That’s not true.” I said, knowing Dean was too smart and too observant to buy it.
“Daddy said it the other day. I hearded him.” Dean sighed, “I can grow though. Everyone grows. Daddy was small once too.”

“That’s right.” I said, hugging Dean tighter, impressed with his rationalization. “Sweetheart, you’re the person I love most in this entire world. I don’t care what your father says or thinks. You’re my angel. I love you.”

“I love you too, Mommy.” Dean sniffed, shifting slightly, losing his grip onto me. I could feel him starting to doze off. He always fell asleep after he cried. I began singing “Hey Jude” to him, knowing it would comfort him and lull him to sleep quickly. Sure enough Dean’s eyes fluttered and his breathing became slightly hitched. When he let out a final sigh, I knew he was asleep.

“I can’t love someone who treats you the way John does.” I whispered. “I can’t love someone who can’t love the person I love more than anything.”

So, that’s when I formed was my plan.

That day in the closet, while I held my sleeping son.

I decided I was going to break my deal with the yellow-eyed cross roads demon.

Plain and simple.

My plan was to break my deal. Send John back to being dead. Carry on with the rest of my life. Raise my sons in a loving home. Reverse the damage John did to Dean.

But unfortunately, that’s not how any of this played out.

But, there’s always a loop hole.

There’s always a way out.
One year and a few months later

Sam

“Come on little bro.” Dean tossed me the keys of the Impala over the kitchen table, “I’m hungry for some pie.”

“Dean,” I said, following after him, “Why are you giving me the keys?”

“Why do you think?” Dean slid on his jean jacket, grinning at me, “You’re going to drive us.”

“Dean, I don’t have a license.”

“You’re going to be sixteen soon.” Dean shrugged, heading out the door. “That’s practically a license.”

“No.” I said matter of factly, “It’s not.”

“You know how to drive. I mean, not great…” Dean smirked, “Besides, Dad let me drive around without any license. Now, it’s my turn to let you.”

“Yes, Dean.” I said sarcastically, “Because Dad is the role model we should all chose to follow.”

Dean paused, looking at me, frowning slightly.

“Sammy, he’s trying okay. You know that.”

“He’s trying to what Dean? Not drink himself to death? Not continuously fail me at being a supportive father when it comes to my academics? Or wait…is it not beat the crap out of you just because he feels like it? Because if it’s any of those things, then he’s pretty much failing miserably.”

Dean scowled at me slightly before clearing his throat.

“So pie?”

“Pie.” I replied, “We can walk to the diner you know?”

“Where’s the fun in that?” Dean scoffed in me, “Besides, I was thinking of driving a little out of the way. To that kick ass diner with the blueberry pie twenty minutes from here. Remember? We stopped there before we went on that hunt a few weeks ago. The one with the Wendigo?”

I froze, looking at Dean who was grinning at me. I couldn’t understand why he was able to breeze past the fact how hurt he’d been after that hunt. He’d taken the blunt of that monster’s brute force and strong claws. I’d been the one to sit in the back seat and hold my own jacket over his chest, trying to stop the bleeding while Dad drove us home. Then, I’d been the one to pin him down and stitch up his wounds while our father left to go get drunk. I’d been the one to pour peroxide over his chest to prevent infection and listen to him cry out in agony. Then I’d been the one to watch him drink himself into a stupor and pass out face down on the table before loading him up on my back and tucking him into bed.

Needless to say, it led to a huge blow out between Dad and me, where we were literally screaming
at one another, nose to nose. This naturally progressed to Dean trying to keep the peace, only to get a sharp punch in the jaw by Dad for doing so.

So, how Dean could even remember the blueberry pie out of that entire ordeal was beyond me.

“Fine…” I said, managing to swallow down my anger, “But you’re driving.” I tossed the keys back to Dean who caught them, shaking his head at me.

“You’re freaking un-American Sammy. Hell, any other kid would have been behind that wheel in a heartbeat. Only teenager I know that plays by the rules.” He winked at me before he ducked into the impala.

“Someone in this family has to.” I muttered climbing in to the car, frowning at Dean who blasted Led Zeppelin’s something or other.

Dad’s music. Always Dad’s music.

“So, I’m thinking Dad’s going to let me go hunting on my own soon.” Dean said, as he pulled out on the highway, flicking off a trucker who honked at us for cutting him off.

“Really?” I asked in surprise.

“What?” Dean instantly clammed up. “You don’t think I can?”

“It’s not that.” I shook my head, “I just don’t know if that’s a good idea.”

“Why?” Dean’s question came out more like a grunt.

“I don’t know, Dean…” I stammered, “I mean, do you really think you’re ready for that?”

“I’ve been training my whole life.” Dean glanced at me, “Of course I do.”

“Did Dad say that you were ready?” I could feel my heart begin to pound.

“Well…no…” Dean trailed off, shrugging, “I was going to talk to him about it later.”

“Oh.” I said, knowing I sounded more relieved than I should have, “Okay. Yeah, see what he thinks.

I knew for a fact Dad wasn’t going to let Dean go out hunting alone.

For one thing, Dad was too greedy with hunting to pass on any cases. He wanted them all for themselves. I mean this was the man who missed Christmas almost every year due to hunting.

For another, Dean was proving to be a quicker and faster hunter than Dad ever was. Hunters talk. Like any other community out there, they connect through word of mouth. And the word that’s out there is that John Winchester’s eldest is an even better hunter than his old man.

So, there was no way he was going to set Dean up to get ahead, or get one up on him. If I knew Dad, he was going to control when and how Dean hunted, and that meant Dean was going to hunt only when he hunted. Therefore he could control how the hunt went to a certain extent.

I was on the opposite side of the spectrum. I didn’t want Dean to hunt alone because I was afraid of something happening to him. I had no doubt Dean could handle himself-after all, he’s faced the biggest monster of them all on his own most of his life—but things happen on hunts. Good hunters go down. Hunters that have been hunting longer than either Dean and I have been alive. I didn’t
want Dean bleeding, dying in the middle of some field, all alone.

“I just don’t want anything to happen to you.” I blurted out.

“Nothings going to happen to me, Sammy.” Dean said, giving me that cocky grin of his.

“But what if it does?” I said, not even embarrassed by the fact that my voice cracked. “Seriously? What if you get hurt or something hurts you and you’re all alone out there? Please wait a while before you try to go out there alone, Dean.”

Dean fell silent, and he began biting his lip. I knew by his face he was weighing what I had said.

“Okay, Sammy.” He said finally. “I’ll wait.” He paused before adding, “But only because you got all cute and weepy when you asked.”

“Shut up.” I said, reaching out and poking him a few times in the side. He predictably jumped and then punched me in the arm lightly.

“When’s dad coming back?” I asked, suddenly coming up with an idea.

Dad and Hank were currently up in the mountains hunting some kind of monster. I honestly don’t know what type. I can tell you with all honesty that if Dean wasn’t hunting, I could care less whatever creature Dad was facing.

“In like four days.” Dean replied, turning into the parking lot of the diner, “I’m ready to get me some pie!”

“How about we drive and see Bobby, then?” I asked. “After pie of course. I mean we can drive up there tonight, spend a day or two there, then drive back. Dad will never know.”

“I don’t know Sam…” Dean trailed off, “What if he found out?”

“How the hell is he going to find out?” I asked, “If I don’t tell him, and you don’t tell him, and we fill the gas tank up, he’s not going to know. Come on, man. We haven’t see Bobby in forever. We have a few changes worth of clothing in the trunk. You know he’d love to see us. I know you guys talk on the phone pretty regularly.”

Dean sighed. He glanced at me slightly, biting his lip.

“You sure he won’t find out?”

“I’m sure.” I said patiently. “We can use to money that we would have used on food for gas. Come on, Dean. It’ll be like a mini vacation.”

Dean looked at me briefly. I could literally see the wheels of fear and eagerness turning in his head. Then he grinned at me and I knew I’d gotten my way.

“Well, I have missed the old geezer.”

“Alright, Dean!” I reached out and lightly patted him on the shoulder, “Thanks! You won’t regret this!”

“You better hope on my ass I don’t.” Dean replied.
“Good to see you, kid.” Bobby said, wrapping me in a hug before I even had a chance to put down my duffle. “I’m glad you called, but it’s not needed. You don’t ever need to ask if you twos can come for a visit. You’re always welcome here. You got me?”

“I got you.” I said, once Bobby released me. He gave my shoulder a quick squeeze, frowning slightly.

“You eatin alright? You’re lookin and feelin a little thin.”

“Just ate almost a whole blueberry pie.” I said with a grin. I turned to Sam who was awkwardly bent down tying his shoes, “Right, Sammy?”

“What?” My brother squeaked, standing up quickly, before face planting on the floor. I internally closed my eyes. Sam’s awkwardness was going to make Bobby even more suspicious.

Sure enough Bobby squeezed my shoulder once again, before taking my face in his hands and locking eyes with me.

I looked away instantly, my eyes falling on Sam, silently pleading with him to jump in and say something.

Truth be told, I was underweight.

Probably more so than I’ve ever been.

I ate little to nothing. Sam was always on my ass about it. I always just waved him off like it wasn’t a big deal, but truthfully I knew I had a problem.

Or at least the start of one.

The only thing I ever craved was pie, and even then that was far and few between. I don’t know if punishing myself all these years by withholding food and then habitually setting up food as a source of control has fucked me up. Anytime I ate more than a little, my stomach started killing me. Cramps and pain like you wouldn’t believe.

Like tonight for example…As much as I wanted to dive in and eat the entire pie that I’d driven twenty minutes for, I only managed about two pieces. I wanted more, but I was full. I knew if I forced it, I’d be doubled over in pain, with Sam rubbing my sore back, pleading with me to get help from someone.

Then I knew that my temper would ignite.

I’d snap at him.

He’d stand there, looking like I’d iced his best friend.

Then I’d feel like a piece of crap for doing so.

“Dean.” Bobby said, bringing me back to reality, “Honestly…son…are you eating okay? Is John not feeding you boys?” He glanced over at Sam who was looking healthy, strong, and well fed, and frowned, “Is he not giving you enough money for both you guys to eat properly again?”

“He is.” I said, once again quick to lie and defend my father and once again not exactly sure why I did so. “It just must be all that hunting. Dad says I have a high metabolism.”
“I’m kinda shocked your daddy lets you hunt right now.” Bobby commented lightly, still frowning. “I mean, doesn’t he seem concerned that you’re…that you’re umm…that you’re so thin? John should know better than to toss an unhealthy kid into a hunt.”

“I’m healthy.” I said, shrugging.

Bobby stared at me for a few minutes before shaking his head, and turning to Sam.

“How are you doing, Sam?” Wow, you’ve gotten tall. Damn, want to give me some of that height?”

“I could if I would.” Sam replied, “It’s actually kind of awkward being this tall already.”

“Shut up, Sam.” I muttered, a little louder than I intended.

“Dean’s real sore about it.” Sam replied, reaching out and pinching me on the cheek. I knew that his intention was to jokingly pull me out of my sudden bitchy mood, but it had the complete opposite effect.

“Well, you try having a little brother who is smarter and taller than you.” I snapped.

Sam immediately frowned, drawing back his hand. He looked like I slapped him.

Jesus do I hate myself.

“Dean, we’ve talked about this.” Sam lowered his voice slightly, “You’re plenty smart. You—”

“I know, Sammy.” I said, rolling my eyes, “I know. Spare me the teenage girl monologue.”

“Come on, Dean…” Sam sighed, “Don’t—”

“I’m gonna go toss our bags upstairs.” I said, taking Sammy’s bag from the floor and fleeing the kitchen before he could say another word.

I threw our duffle bags on the floor before rolling onto my bottom bunk, covering my eyes with my hands.

Truthfully, it didn’t bother me that much that Sam was smarter than me. I was glad he was. He liked all that academic stuff that I not only could never wrap my mind around, but also found extremely boring (partly because I couldn’t understand it). However, even if I did get it, I couldn’t exactly see myself spending hours doing my homework, or locking myself in a library studying for some stupid test that wouldn’t matter when I was slashing the throat of some monster or driving my blade through some wraith’s heart.

I understood and respected that “smarts” were Sammy’s thing.

I got it.

Especially lately since Dad has been drilling it into my head that only Sam could do research, because I lacked in the brain department.

What bothered me was the fact that my little brother was taller than me. By a good three or four inches.

That killed me.
And it was something that Dad never hesitated to bring up over and over again, time and time
again. No matter how hard I could feel my cheeks flush, or how often Sam would point out that
he’d probably soon be taller than Dad himself.

But that didn’t matter to Dad. That hadn’t happened yet. All that mattered was that Sammy was
taller than me. And all that did was provide Dad with leverage that I was truly the runt of the
Winchester brood.

My baby brother who I fed a bottle to, whose diaper I changed, who I taught to walk, loomed over
me like I freaking umbrella when we stood side by side.

“Dean.” Bobby’s voice suddenly spoke from above me. “Whatcha doin?”

“Knitting a sweater.” I replied, sighing and turning around so that I was facing the wall.

“Listen, kid.” I could feel Bobby sitting down on the bed, “I’m not one to pry. You know that. But
is there anythin you wanna talk about?”

“Nope.” I said.

“I ran into a hunter the other day.” Bobby said, changing the subject, “The guy’s name is Greg
McNeill’s. I guess he worked a case with you and your Daddy?”

“Yeah.” I nodded, sitting up facing him, relieved the subject was changed. “We were taking down
a demon. Dad thought it was going to lead us to the one that killed Mom, but not so much. Turns
out it was just a plain old demon.”

“Plain old demon or not, Greg said you did a phenomenal job. He said the demon started spouting
out things, screaming threats at you, but you remained calm, stared the thing down, and lead it to
its trapped mark.”

“I don’t take demons seriously.” I replied. “They lie. You know that. The thing kept telling me
he’d crush my spine into sand. I told it to go fuck itself and that it wouldn’t have a chance. I backed
up until the thing was stuck in its trap. It realized it was stuck right away, started screaming and
cursing at me. I just stood there grinning at it while Greg threw holy water on it and Dad flushed
the damn thing out of the vessel.”

“Well, talk in the hunter community is that you’re turning into a pretty great hunter.” Bobby said,
grinning, “I won’t lie, I’m proud to say I knew you when…”

“Don’t worry, I’ll remember you when I’m rich and famous.” I said, offering Bobby a smile. “I’ll
even give you a small mention when Hollywood comes knocking to film a movie about me.”

“You better.” Bobby grinned, “What do you say we head on downstairs? I think Sam’s trying to
cook down there, and I’m pretty sure the kid might burn my house down.”

“I always tell him to stay away from things that require more than a microwave.” I joked, sliding
out of bed, “Kids never cooked a day in his life.”

“You treated that kid too damn good.” Bobby said, patting me on the back.

“One of us deserved a childhood.” The words flew out before I could stop them. Bobby and I
looked at each other before I turned and bolted down the stairs, yelling at Sam to get the hell away
from the thing the rest of us call a stove.
So, dinner was uncomfortable to say the least. I fidgeted in my chair, unable to clear even half my plate of Bobby’s awesome homemade spaghetti. I just kept pushing my food around and around, wishing like hell it or I could just disappear on the spot.

Bobby was watching me, clearing his throat probably unintentionally. Every time I looked at him, he was frowning slightly, his eyes full of concern. His plate too was left untouched. If I thought it wouldn’t have led to a full blown after school special discussion I would have told him to eat up, but I knew that wouldn’t be the case.

Sam on the other hand devoured three plates full. He was used to my not eating by this point. He knew that his lack of eating wouldn’t make me eat. He’s tried that route several times already. I think he realized, like I did, that this whole thing had gotten way out of control. And, like me, he had no idea what to do about it. He knew he couldn’t turn to Dad-I shuddered at the thought of what the man would do if he found out. He knew I’d punch him out if he told Bobby. So, he did what Sammy does best. He talked about school. He told him about the science project he was working on, how he was in all the advanced classes, and how he was reading some huge book (I can never remember the name) just for fun. I was pretty sure it fell on deaf ears. Bobby responded and made conversation back, but I could tell his attention was on me.

Which of course made me even more self-conscious and uncomfortable.

I have to admit by the time Sam and I climbed into our bunk beds, I was relieved and exhausted trying to play off that everything was fine. I’d just gotten comfortable when I heard Sam’s voice from above me.

He was in his typical Sam mode.

Using that calm and patient voice I’ve freaking grown to hate.

Like the one he uses when he’s trying to reason with me like I’m some irrational toddler who needs to take a nap.

“Maybe you should talk to Bobby, Dean.”

“About what?” I asked, deciding to play the stupid card.

That role had been given to me long ago; why not use it to my advantage?

“You know what.” Sam sighed, his face dropping over the edge of the bed, scaring the shit out of me.

“I don’t.” I said stubbornly, “You’re going to have to be more specific Rapunzel. But it better not be about what I think it is.”

“You’re eating issues.” Sam said plainly, not taking the bait I’d set up to start yet another argument about cutting his damn hair.

“Not gonna happen.” I replied. “Besides, I don’t have any eating issues.”

Sam sighed heavily and heaved himself back up on his bunk bed. “Dean, you realize you have an eating disorder, right?”

“I’m not some chick, Sam.” I laughed, “So calm down with your high school psychology.”
“It doesn’t just affect girls.” Sam said, keeping his cool, “I read about it. It can affect anyone. You’re a prime candidate for it. You strive for perfection. You’ve never had any control over anything that’s happened to you. You never had a choice over anything that’s happened to you. You feel like you’re never good enough.”

“Didn’t I tell you to knock off your pyscho babble?” I snapped.

“I think you need to stop looking for validation from Dad.” Sam said, “I just feel you’re looking for something you’re never going to get. Why do you care what the guy thinks anyway. He’s a complete asshole. Look how he’s treated you. He—”

“Shut the hell up, Sam.” I interrupted, jumping out of bed. “What do you know about it anyway? All you do is try to piss the guy off. What do you know about trying to make him proud?”

“That’s just it, Dean.” Sam replied, still calm as hell, which was really starting to irritate the hell out of me. “I don’t care. And I don’t care because I know he’s not worth it. He doesn’t ever give us respect. Why should we give him any?”

“Because he’s our father!” I snapped, yanking my pillow and my comforter off my bed, “Sometimes I feel I don’t know you.”

“Where are you going?” Sam asked, his voice rising slightly.

I chose to ignore him. It was partly because I loved Sam too much to fight with him, but it was also mostly because I didn’t know where the hell I was going. It was only when I found myself in the basement of Bobby’s house did I realize where I’d fled to.

And of course.

I couldn’t have just ended up on the damn couch.

No, I’d run straight to the source of all my problems.

To Dad.

Well, to his bedroom.

Way to fucking go, Dean.

Way to fucking go.
Chapter 43

Chapter Notes

Please don't judge Bobby too harshly in this chapter. He's trying his best...he just doesn't know how to handle what's being thrown at him. Thank you for all of your support and suggestions! I value all of them and keep them in mind while writing!

Bobby

I don’t really consider myself the worrying type. I’m not one to sit up at night, worrying and fretting about this or that. Sure, on occasion, I have the occasional toss turn night, just like everyone else, but I’ve learned, early on, that with this job you really have to let go moment you shower off grim and the grime from whatever it is you’ve seen or done.

Needless to say I spent the night after the boys showed up wide away, staring at my ceiling. I couldn’t wrap my mind around how awful Dean looked. I’ve seen him exhausted before. I’ve seen him sick, feverish, and hooked up to breathing machines, but I never saw him like this.

Admittedly, Dean had always been thin. Truthfully his weight has always been borderline dangerous. It partly had to do with being underweight to begin with, but it was also because I knew he would sacrifice food to keep Sam full and fed when they were just wee things. Back then, if John was hunting close, I’d always try to convince him to let them stay with me, both to keep an eye on them and to let Dean just be a damn kid, keep him fed, keep him safe. Or if I knew where they were staying, I’d send Dean extra money so he could buy food instead of the meager amounts John would leave. I never told John of course and neither did Dean to my knowledge.

It made me angry. Plenty of times. But I knew that John Winchester was a proud man. I knew that it was easier to send money then try to confront a fight a battle with a hard headed man who would most likely react by taking his children away from me. Looking back, maybe that made me selfish. If it did, then I guess it does. But I did what I thought was best at the time.

Looking back, I think it lead to some resentment towards Sam. I know it’s unfair, but it would piss me off that Dean was as light on his ass as could be and Sam could spare to give him a few pounds or two. Now, I’m no super model myself here, but sometimes I wanted to shake the damn kid and make him see that his brother was suffering to keep him happy. However, when I finally did spell it out to him he looked so stunned and mortified I felt bad for feeling anger towards him in the first place.

Anyway, I knew Dean has always been self-conscious about his smaller size, thanks to John Winchester’s narrow view points of “what makes a man”. He normally hid it well by wearing multiple layers-a fact I’ve known for years-but this time, this time he couldn’t hide it. Not one damn bit.

I could see it in his face, in his hands, in his collar bone.

The boy was not only skinny. He was damn skinny.
By the time morning came, I probably slept a total of three hours. I woke to find Dean in my kitchen, cooking up my bacon and eggs.

“Coffee’s ready.” He said, motioning towards the cup he’d already poured for me. “Just black, right?”

“Yep.” I said, going over to take the spatula off of him. He surprisingly gave it to me without much of a fight and sat down in one of my kitchen chairs.

“Sammy likes his eggs with tomato.” Dean replied, watching me carefully. “I saw you have a few. Can he have one?”

“Sure, can.” I said, leaning over to grab one, “You know better than to ask.”

“I’ll cut it for him.” Dean got up out of his chair, washed the tomato and then began slicing it slowly and carefully on my small cutting board.

“How about you?” I asked, “You still like your eggs with cheese?”

“Oh.” Dean looked at me, shrugging, “I’m not hungry. I’m not a breakfast person.”

“You used to be.” I said, “I swear it used to be a race between you and your brother who could get to the table first.”

“I guess I grew out of it.” Dean shrugged.

“You don’t just grow out of eating breakfast.” I said frowning, turning the flame off of the bacon.

Dean didn’t reply and just reached out to refill his coffee cup. I watched him helplessly, unsure of how to handle this. I knew how to take care of the hunting side of things. I could help him learn anything he needed to learn about monsters, fighting creatures, and fighting demons. I could teach him to talk Latin both forward and backwards. I’ve dealt with this kid through losing his mother, gotten him through whatever germ had decided to vacation in his body. I’d somehow even managed not to kill him when I caught him trying to smoke at thirteen. But this, this was something entirely different. And I had no freakin clue what to do.

So I said nothing. I’ve never been someone to act on something that was important without thinking it through. I think that’s why I’ve lasted so long as a hunter. I never went into any hunt without being totally completely prepared. And I guess I had to look at this like a hunt.

Dean disappeared downstairs, returning with Sam in tow. Once the three of us sat down at the table for breakfast (with Sam and my plate full of food and Dean’s with two pieces of bacon and his cup full of coffee) it seemed like the two of them had worked out some pre anticipated dialogue. Sam was like an echo to Dean’s voice, repeating everything he said, nodding like a bobble head whenever he was asked if he agreed with him.

After breakfast I watched from the kitchen as the two of them settled into the beginning of their Saturday. I had down right refused to let Dean do the dishes mainly because I knew he was responsible for doing them at home. I chuckled slightly as Dean reached out and lightly slapped the book Sam was reading out of his hands. Then Dean made a pouty face at his brother who then jumped out of his chair at his big brother. But Dean was quick to take his little brother down. I smiled, watching them mess around like they used to when they were little, laughing and smiling, looking more carefree then I remember them being in years. Relief flooded through my thoughts
because for once they actually looked like normal brothers just rough housing around.

But then, I noticed the shift. It was small at first. I saw Sam retreat slightly, and I could tell that he’d let Dean win the first pin and second pin. I heard Dean say something along the lines of just because Sam has ‘girl hair’ doesn’t mean he has to ‘act like one’. Sam just grinned said that Dean better watch that pretty face of his and the two began scrapping again. Sam took him down with ease, but at the same time, he took him down almost delicately. He then pinned him, barely putting half his weight on him. Then his pin turned into nothing more than just a few pokes at his ribs. Dean of course laughed and squirmed-kids always been ticklish as hell-until Sam released him a few seconds later. It ended with Dean flipping him off and Sam pulling him up into a standing position, patting him on the shoulder with a grin.

When Dean came out into the kitchen a little later, my gun in hand, asking if he could go practice his shot I pushed down my normal “just relax and be a damn kid” speech and realized it was prime time to talk to Sam. So I nodded, jokingly told him not to shoot his eye out, and yelled at him to zip up his damn coat.

I wait a few minutes, took a deep breath, and went in to face the youngest of the Winchesters.

Sam was sitting in the middle of the room, several of my books surrounding him. He looked up when he saw me, giving me a slight grin.

“You sure I’m not your son, Bobby? I swear I could spend years here reading your books.”

“You kinda have, haven’t ya?” I asked, pulling a chair up and sitting down.

“That’s true.” Sam smiled again, before his face grew serious and he sighed. "You want to talk to me about Dean, don’t you?”

“What’s going on with him, Sam?” I said, not seeing the need to beat around the bush.

Sam looked down at his lap like he was thinking how to best answer my question. Then he looked up, frowning.

“It’s not like he thinks he’s fat or anything like that.” He began slowly.

“But you are saying he does have an issue with his eating.” I stated.

“Yeah.” Sam nodded. He pursed his lips together, “He has for a while.”

As soon as Sam said that I felt extremely guilty.

How long has it been since Dean’s been struggling?

Like I said, he’s always been thin. And he’s always worn multiple layers of clothing to hide it. But had I been blind to something I should have known years ago? Was there something I should have recognized as a red flag between the exhaustion and illnesses?

I always tried to do right by the boys, but maybe, just maybe I’d fallen majorly short.

Mary wouldn’t have missed something this major.

Not for her baby.

Actually I doubted Dean would have any type of eating thing at all if she were alive.
“How long?” I finally managed to ask.

“I honestly don’t know.” Sam shrugged, his lower lip shaking slightly, “At least a year...maybe a little longer. I think he had a problem before I knew he had one. I started noticing that he was never eating when I ate and that he was getting skinnier and skinnier. When I asked him about it, at first he’d lie to me, tell me he ate earlier in the day, but I knew it wasn’t true.” Sam took a deep breath, looking a little weary, “For instance, he’d tell me he ate something that was still in the fridge-like the time he told me he had two pieces of leftover pizza for lunch. I figured he’d say that, so I purposely checked before I left for school that morning-there was three pieces then, and when I checked after he’d gone to our room, there were still three pieces.”

“Did you confront him about it?”

“Yeah.” Sam sighed, brushing his hair out of his eyes, “I mean, at first, and still sometimes. He’s never come out and said that he has a problem to me, but he knows I know. I tell him all the time I’m here if he wants to talk or if he needs me I’m here, but he just shuts down. So I back off and wait for the next time. You know how Dean is. He has to be ready to talk.”

“Yeah.” I nodded. This was true. The older Dean got, the more and more closed off and guarded he seemed to get. Most hunters were like that though. “Does your Dad know? I mean, surely the man has noticed Dean’s underweight.

Sam scoffed and then shook his head, “He doesn’t care Bobby. As long as Dean can still carry his gun and hunt, he doesn’t care. Sure, he’ll make fun of him for being small, but he’s always done that. He’ll on occasion tell him to eat, but that’s only when we’re out to eat and Dad’s paying for it on the spot.”

“He’s still riding him about being little?” I asked frowning.

Truthfully as the boys grew I saw very little interaction between the boys and their father. I mean, it was hard not to notice the disagreements between John and Sam-you could be in the room with them for a few minutes and they’d fight-but with John and Dean there was very little spoken minus a few quick orders and instructions. If John was here, he was distant and drunk and somewhat cold, but that’s just who John has always been as a person. I hadn’t outright heard or seen anything minus a few jabs here and there throughout the years on John’s end. And I’d contributed that to exhaustion and frustration that came with the damn job and his fixed obsession of finding what killed Mary.

Not saying that I agreed with his style of parenting. If anything I would say he was negligent. Leaving and going as he pleased. Forgetting to fill Dean’s inhaler, not bothering to check in when he’d been sick, and not recognizing when a sniffle was more than just a sniffle. And it wasn’t just Dean. John wasn’t a great Dad to Sam either. Not paying attention to Sam’s needs in his academic world. Not getting that college was Sam’s future.

But it pissed me the hell off to hear that he was slashing Dean about his body. I would have thought that after all these years John would have just gotten over the fact that Dean would just be a smaller guy.

“Yeah.” Sam frowned at me, “Honestly Bobby, the guys a jerk.”

“We need to figure out how to help your brother.” I said, not wanting to truly start bashing John to his almost sixteen year old. The boy’s always had trouble with his old man and I didn’t want to add fuel to his fire.
“I’m pretty much open for anything.” Sam said, “I mean, that’s not going to hurt him. Dean can’t eat too much. When he does his stomach hurts. He gets these awful cramps and can’t move.”

“His damn stomach’s probably shrunk.” I sighed. “He probably is at the point where he can’t handle that much even if he wanted to.” I had a friend who once had been stranded in the mountains when a snow storm hit in the winter. He had lived off of canned peaches and beans for almost three months. When the snow plows finally dug him out in the spring, he’d lost about eighty pounds. I’d taken him out to lunch and he could barely eat more than just soup. Turns out he had to give his stomach time to adjust to living like a human again. And this had been a full grown, huge ass man. I couldn’t imagine the damage Dean had done to his body, or even how long he’s been keeping this up.

“I’m scared, Bobby.” Sam said softly, “I try my best to get him to eat. Once I even sat on him and refused to get up until he said he’d eat, but he just ended up crying and telling me he couldn’t.” Sam then looked up at me in alarm, “Please don’t tell him I told you he cried. He’s going to be mad enough at me as it is for talking to you about this in the first place.”

“That kid’s got a lot of balls if he’s going to be mad at you, you idjit.” I said shaking my head, “But don’t worry, I won’t say anything to him about the cryin. I am gonna have to confront him about his eatin though. He’s too skinny for me not to.”

“Good.” Sam nodded, tears escaping down his cheeks. Sam didn’t try to wipe them away. “You can even yell at him. I just want him to be safe.”

“I’ll handle it the best I can.” I said. I paused briefly then pulled the boy in for a hug. Sam and I’d never really had the hugging/tender relationship. But I figured knowing Dean, and really John, we were probably in for a major battle, so if anytime was a good time to start with all that shit, this was it.

I admit, the longer I paced around the house, waiting for Dean to return, the more and more nervous I got. Sam kept glancing up at me every so often, giving me a smile. He kept repeating to me that it was going to be all good and that if anyone could talk some sense into Dean it was me, but I was beginning to seriously have my doubts.

I needed Mary.

Actually that’s who Dean needed.

That’s who Dean always needed.

God alone knows the rest of us have made a shit show of his life.

When Dean finally made his way back to the house, shivering and looking wiped out, I asked him if he wanted to go check out the car I was working on. When I told him it was a black 66 mustang with red interior, his eyes lit up.

“No freaking way! Can I check it out?”

“Sure.” I said. “I just finished fixing it up. You wanna go for a ride?”

“Can I drive?” Dean could hardly contain himself. He looked like that three year old boy I knew not so long ago.

“Of course you can.” I replied, pulling the key out of my pants pocket. I knew that Dean would be overly thrilled by the idea of being able to touch a mustang, much less drive one. Especially one
that was so old and classic. Besides, he was a great driver, much better than most people twice his age. Plus, I needed to get him to relax enough so maybe I could get him to talk about whatever the hell was going on with him.

“You’re the best Bobby!” Dean said catching the keys as I tossed them to him. Once we were both in Dean turned the key in the ignition, grinning at me as the mustang purred.

“She’s a beauty, isn’t she?” I asked, grinning and giving Dean’s shoulder a quick squeeze, trying not to frown as I once again felt the sharpness to it.

“She sure is.” Dean carefully adjusted the mirror before backing out of the lot and heading down the road.

“How was your boys’ ride up here?” I asked, knowing that Dean needed to be coaxed into the conversation.

“It was easy.” Dean grinned at me, “It’s nice getting out. You know…just me and Sammy. I tried to get him to drive, but damn kid’s such a nerd he won’t until he has a license. He’s such a good, smart kid; I don’t know how I raised him sometimes.”

“You’re a good, smart kid too, Dean.” I said.

“Ha.” Dean laughed at me, rolling his eyes, “Sure Bobby. You break out that whiskey early today?”

“You’re a great kid.” I said, uneasy with the tone of Dean’s voice. It was pure sarcasm. There was no hint that he was joking at all.

“I’m not.” Dean said, almost automatically, “I’m a screw up. We both know it. It’s fine.”

We both fell into an uncomfortable silence. I didn’t know what to say. I somehow felt if I continued to tell Dean that I felt he was not only one of the best kids, but the best kid, I’d ever known he’d just get more down on himself.

“So how are things with you?” I asked, trying to change the direction of the conversation.

“Peachy.” Dean replied. “How about you Bobby? How are things? Are things good? How is it being an old drunk hunter? Is it great? Is this what I get to look forward to?”

I could tell by his snarky tone, he’d had enough of the questioning. I also knew that he lashing out because he was hurting. So unlike I would have with anyone else; I chose not to lay him out and instead ignored his rudeness. But, I also decided enough was enough with the small talk and just hit him with the question that was burning me up inside.

“Dean, are you starving yourself?”

“What!” Dean snapped, almost stopping the car in the middle of the street. “No. Don’t freaking listen to Sam! He’s such a little bitch!” He pulled the car over and parked it. If the situation wasn’t so serious, I would have paused to thank him for having the sense not to drive when he was angry.

“What the hell did he say to you?” Dean asked, turning on me. His eyes were not angry though. Once again, all I saw was fear.

“Nothin.” I shrugged, “I’m askin cause you look like hell Dean. You hardly ate dinner last night. You didn’t eat breakfast. You’re fucking too skinny.”
“My stomach was upset from the drive last night.” Dean said quickly, “What, you going to judge me because I felt a little nauseous? And I’m not a breakfast guy, so what? And what do you want me to do? Sit around all day and stuff my face with potato chips and crap so I can pack on the pounds just so you can calm the fuck down? I told you. I have a fast metabolism.”

“Dean.” I said, holding my hand up, “Stop. I’m telling you as someone who cares about you. You don’t look good. And I can tell you’re underweight just by looking at you. And I’m no doctor.”

“I was going to ask to see your medical degree.” Dean muttered.

“When I squeeze your shoulder and all I feel is bone.” I said pointedly, choosing once again not to take up an issue with his tone.

“So I have boney shoulders.” Dean’s lip curled up slightly, “So what? That doesn’t mean I’m not eating. Sam’s just an overdramatic little bi-”

“This has nothing to do with your brother.” I interrupted. “This is all me. So, prove me wrong. Let me see your ribs then.”

“What?” Dean frowned, protectively and probably subconsciously wrapping his arms around his sides.

“If you’re not as thin as I think you are then you shouldn’t have a problem.”

“Why can’t you just look at me like I am?” Dean whined, shifting in his seat, clearly uncomfortable.

“Dean.” I sighed heavily, trying with everything in me to keep my patience. “You have at least three layers of clothing on. So let me take a look. If you look fine, then I’ll shut up and let you be.”

Dean froze for a second, almost as if he were contemplating what to do. Then he simply got out of the car, slamming the door hard behind him. Then he took off, running across the street and cut down so alley way.

I drove around for about two hours looking for his dumb ass. I was teetering between boiling anger and downright panicking. About thirty minutes in, I called home, to see if Dean had shown up there. When Sam replied that he hadn’t, I realized that I unfortunately had to fill him in what was going on.

“He ran away?” Sam’s voice broke and I could tell he was crying.

“He just needed to blow off some steam.” I said.

“But he’s out there all alone.” Sam said, his voice hitching. “What if someone hurts him? He doesn’t have anything on him. What if that thing that killed Mom comes for him? He won’t be able to fight it off all alone. What if something that’s mad at Dad tries to hurt Dean?”

“I’ll find him, Sam.” I said unsure of what else to say. The boy was understandably freaking out and I had no idea what do say or do. “It will all be okay. Nothing’s going to happen to him.” I hoped I sounded more convincing then I felt. Truthfully Sam’s worries and thoughts weren’t that unimaginable possibilities. “I get you’re scared, but I need you to try and calm down the best you can. Call me if he shows up there, okay? Here’s my cell number…”

“Call me as soon as you find him.” Sam whispered before he hung up.
I sighed, starting the car back up, my own heart beginning to pound.

About two hours and ten frantic phone calls from Sam later, I got my eye on him. He was walking down the street, as if he were out taking a stroll. But, by the looks of his stooped posture and hands buried in his pockets, I could tell he was cold. I quickly called Sam then proceeded to drive slowly towards Dean. I slowly got out of the car, and grabbed Dean hard, pulling him into my chest, blocking his panicked attempts at an escape.

“Relax.” I said, in his ear, “It’s me. It’s Bobby. Calm the hell down.” I let him go for the most part, but kept a hand clamped on his wrist, and forced him to face me. He puffed his chest a little and tried to look intimidating. He looked anything but with his lip quivering the way it was.

“Just leave me alone!” Dean snapped stubbornly.

“We need to finish our talk from earlier.” I said, putting my other hand now on Dean’s shoulder, trying to provide a source of comfort.

“Aw, come on, Bobby.” Dean moaned, “Can’t we just drop it?”

“No, no we can’t. However, I was out of line drilling you like I did before. So, I’m sorry for that.” I said, even though I wasn’t sure at all why I said it. If I had my way, I’d pin the kid down, strip him to his boxers and put his ass on a scale. I didn’t have a scale, but I’d sure in hell get one.

“Thanks.” Dean said, obviously agreeing with me. “I’m sorry I took off like I did.”

I was a bit taken back at how easy that had been. Sometimes I forget that Dean hates conflict. Unless if it’s a hunt, combativeness makes him uncomfortable. Maybe it was from growing up being the middle man between his brother and father.

“I’m not sorry though for worrying about you. You gotta help me out here a bit, kid. You just look…I don’t know... I hate to say it, but you just look...damn it Dean, you look freaking skinny.”

Dean looked at me, running his tongue, back and forth over his bottom lip as though he were not only thinking about what I was saying, but what to say next.

“I’m just never that hungry.” He finally managed, shrugging.

“So Sam wasn’t totally off.” I joked gently.

“Sam loves food.” Dean gave me a kind of half smile, “I don’t know. I just never liked it like he does, I guess.”

I begged to argue on that statement. When Dean was little he had more than what one would describe as a healthy appetite. He loved food. He wasn’t picky and would eat anything from sandwiches to some fancy pasta dishes. I vividly recall him sitting on one of my bar stools at three. He’d eaten two large pieces of pizza then asked for dessert with barely taking a breather in between.

But that was before Mary died. The two of us actually used to be amazed at how such a small boy could cram so much food into his stomach without exploding.

“I just never really need much.” Dean continued pressing his lips together, “I guess I just got used
“I know you had to make sacrifices before,” I said, feeling guilty once again. But this wasn’t the time for me to feel guilty. This was about Dean’s willingness to accept even in the slightest bit he had a problem. “You need to put some weight on, Dean. You…” I stopped myself from saying he was too sickly not to. I knew if I’d say that Dean would tailspin and I’d lose him again. “You would have so much more energy. You’re a great hunter now. Think how much sharper and faster you’d be if you ate. Your brain and body need food.”

“I doubt it’ll make me smarter and bigger, Bobby.” Dean gave me a sad smile.

“I’m not looking for it to make you smarter and bigger.” I said, frowning. What the hell is going on in this kid’s head? “You’re plenty smart. And you’re plenty big enough.”

“Says you.” Dean shook his head sighing, “Can we head home now? I’m tired. Sam has probably worried his little girl head off by now.”

“Yeah.” I nodded, starting the car back up. “Sure thing.”

Once I pulled up in front of the house, I told Dean I needed to check in on a hunt. He paused for a second before shrugging and heading inside.

Then I broke. I mean huge big tears, slobbering like a St. Bernard, gulping for breath, the works. I couldn’t hold it in anymore. I’m not a crier but I also ain’t ashamed of letting it lose when I need to.

And Dean, my Dean, was hurting more than I ever imagined him hurting. It was clear that something terrible screwed up was going on in that head of his, and I had no idea, no power, no spells, no nothin to stop it.

So, after sitting there in silence for several minutes, I reached for my phone and did something I never thought I’d do. I called John Winchester for advice on his kid.

It was mostly out of exhaustion, sorrow, and stomach ulcer causing worry.

I was shocked for once he answered the phone. He hardly ever answered on hunts. Normally he only called back after several urgent messages and even that was a rarity. I could tell that he wasn’t drunk, but buzzed, and that he also seemed to be in a great mood, so I decided to bring up Dean’s less than healthy eating habits.

Normally a slightly buzzed John is better to talk to than a sober John or drunk John.

“John.” I cleared my throat, “I know it’s none of my business…but I wanted to talk to you about something.”

“Sure Bobby.” John cleared his throat, “What’s up?”

“Well,” I took another swig of whiskey, “The boys stopped over for a visit…I was just wondering...Is Dean okay?”

“Why wouldn’t he be?” John’s voice changed from one of open and kind to closed off and short.

“He just...he just looks thin.”
“I haven’t really noticed.” John replied. But I could tell by the way he answered me that he had noticed. And that pissed me off. I mean pissed me off to the point that I was glad the man wasn’t sitting in front of me. I probably would have punched him straight in the face.

But then, I’d never see those boys again.

“No offense, John but it’s kind of hard not to notice.” I replied, saying the only thing I could say.

“The boy’s old enough to know how to take care of himself.” John said sounding bored, “What do you want me to do? Pin him down and force fed him?”

“If you need to.” I answered shortly.

“You surprise me with that response, Bobby.” John replied and I could almost hear his smirk. “It’s kind of shocking. I mean you’re normally all about taking a gentler approach when it comes to the boys. Especially with Dean. I figure if he isn’t hungry, that’s his problem.”

“I just think that it’s more than not feeling hungry.” I tried to reason. “I feel like whatever is going on in that kid’s head is deeper than that.”

“What are you suggesting?” John asked, “That my boy has some type of fucking teenage girl disease?”

“For starters I know nothin about nothin.” I said, “I don’t know about these types of things. But, I do know that these types of problems don’t only target teenage girls. I don’t know what else to tell you. All I know is that he’s clearly underweight. And John, Sam is concerned too.”

As soon as the last part came out I knew instantly I’d said the wrong thing. John’s voice changed to panic at the sound of his youngest name.

“Sam?” He asked, “What’s Sammy been saying?”

“Nothin.” I shrugged, wanting to kick myself for volunteering that last bit of information, trying to figure out how to work my way out of it, “I asked Sam if he noticed anything. He knows him best. But honestly…Dean…he just doesn’t look great.”

“What would you rather him look like?” John snapped, and I knew that I’d lost him. “He is who he is, Bobby. You know as well as I do that I can’t change that. I damn well wish I could. Boys been nothing but an issue since the day he was born.”

“You don’t mean that.” I said, feeling myself growing angry. How the hell couldn’t John see that Dean was one of the best things that ever happened to him in his pathetic existence?

“Let’s drop the subject, Bobby. This conversations ruining the buzz I have going. I’ll talk to him. I’ll see what’s going on, okay? That’s the best I can give you.”

Then, the idjit hung up on me.

And something told me I’d just made a huge mistake.
Chapter 44

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT NOTE: I do not condone John's thoughts of eating disorders. I myself know that they are a serious struggle that are nothing to joke about or to categorize into one group in particular. But, I feel as though this is how he would view them being the SOB that he is. So please do not read if you feel you may be offended by some assholes thoughts. Also, let me know what you think about his reaction.

John

I was more than a little agitated when Bobby called me to ask me about whatever the hell was going on with Dean.

For starters, I had just come off of a difficult hunt. I had just settled down in my bed for some mind numbing tv, waiting for Hank to return with food enjoying the couple of beers I tossed back when my phone started buzzing on my nightstand.

Sighing, I reached for my phone, cursing whoever it was, damning them to hell if it wasn’t important. When I saw that it was Bobby, my anger lessened some and I answered the phone, wondering with the old man had in store for me. Normally it was a tip on an upcoming hunt.

However, once Bobby started yammering on about my oldest son’s physical physique hunting was apparently the last thing on the old kook’s mind.

I however wanted nothing to do with it. The last thing I wanted to do is sit there in my motel room and talk about freaking Dean. I didn’t want to hear about whatever the hell Bobby thought his problem of the month was. Actually, I didn’t even want to think about it. Like I said, I just had a tough hunt-although I successful one-so I ended up shutting down this conversation as quickly as I could.

“Let’s drop the subject, Bobby.” I said, not even bothering to hold in my sigh, “This conversations ruining the buzz I have going. I’ll talk to him. I’ll see what’s going on, okay? That’s the best I can give you.”

Then, before Bobby could reply, I hung up.

Oh yeah, I was going to talk to Dean alright.

Hank pulled up in front of the apartment and gave me a nod. He knew that I was pissed at Dean, but he had no idea why. He just knew that when he got back with the food, I’d snapped that I needed to go home and I needed to go home now. I had lent Dean the impala, which I now knew had been one huge mistake, so I’d hitched a ride with Hank to this hunt.

“You need back up?” Hank asked as I got out of the car.
“You can’t be serious.” I almost laughed. “Dean’s nothing. It’s the other one who’s going to give me a run for my money, but I’ll shut that down quickly too. This is family business. I appreciate it if you don’t bring it up to me again.”

“Sure, John.” Hank gave me a funny look, “Whatever you say, man.”

When I opened the door to the apartment, I heard Sam’s more than likely incessant chatter from the kitchen stop immediately. I heard Dean shush him and Sam in turn tell him just to go out the back door. Which, I knew Dean wouldn’t do. He wouldn’t dare. Not my boy. Not my good little well trained soldier. Dean wouldn’t leave me. He wouldn’t risk it. Not when I had his little brother under the same roof as me.

Dumb fucking kid. Didn’t he get by now, I’d never hurt Sam like I did him?

“Hey, boys.” I said, walking into the kitchen, dropping my duffle bag at the doorway, blocking any hopes Dean had of escape to his room. “How’s it going?”

Sam immediately frowned, which I knew was just his way of showing his hatred of me and his disappointment that I’d arrived home a little ahead of schedule. He was sitting at the edge of his seat, which I’m sure was because he fully intended on attacking me if I attacked Dean. For a smart kid, he was awfully stupid. He really didn’t seem to understand the more he’d defy me, the more Dean would suffer. I however felt satisfied that he kept his mouth shut and didn’t mouth off. So, maybe he wasn’t so stupid after all.

Dean on the other hand was just standing by the sink, frozen in place. He obviously had been in the middle of washing dishes because although he was facing me, his hands were full of suds, which of course were dripping onto my kitchen floor. He was starting at me with complete terror in his eyes. Like Sam, he didn’t speak, but I knew that his muteness was for a completely different reason.

“I believe I asked how it was going.” I stated, looking between the two. “Anything you want to talk about?”

“I guess you know we went to Bobby’s.” Dean said, wiping his hands on a dishtowel.

“Yes, I do.” I nodded, leaning against the counter, folding my arms, “I’m sure you could imagine my surprise that the two of you were over there visiting with him when you were supposed to be training and being obedient.”

“Because we all know we don’t deserve a break from that.” Sam muttered, glaring at me.

Dean on the other hand just hung his head. “I’m sorry Dad. We never should have gone.”

“Whose great idea was it?” I asked, looking between the two of them.

“Mine.” Dean said quickly, “I wanted to go. I made Sam go.”

“That’s not true.” Sam snapped, slamming his fist down on the table, “I am the one who had the idea in the first place.”

“Shut up, Sam.” Dean mumbled, glaring at his brother then looking back at me. “It was all me. Don’t listen to him. It was my idea.”

I nodded, knowing that that was a lie.

My children may not think I know them but I know them well enough to know when ones covering
for the other. Or when Dean’s covering for Sam. Which happens most of the time.

Like now.

“I don’t care whose idea it was.” I snapped, “Dean, you’re the one in charge. You should have put your foot down. You need to start being tougher. When I asked you to look after your brother I didn’t expect you to be such a pansy about it. You give into him way to easily. It’s like you’re afraid to say no to him.”

“I’m sorry, Dad.” Dean said automatically.

“Don’t talk to him like that.” Sam snapped, blowing like I knew he would.

“Shut up, Sam!” Dean said, sounding absolutely exasperated.

Sam surprisingly sat back in his chair and did as he was told. I almost wanted to ask Dean what his trick was to get his brother to listen to him was, but instead I cleared my throat and proceeded to continue to grill my oldest about the past weekend.

“So I’m sure you’re aware Bobby called me?”

“Yeah.” Dean now looked more uncomfortable than I ever remember him being. “He told me you guys talked.”

“Take your sweatshirt off, Dean.” I said pointedly. Dean glanced at Sam wearily before pulling his shirt over his head and letting it fall to his feet. He then turned and faced the sink, leaning over it slightly, getting in the normal position for me to beat him.

My heart dropped a little when I realized how skinny he actually was.

And to be honest I had planned on ripping Dean apart; both physically and emotionally.

I had fully planned on calling him every insulting name I could think of, yanking him in front of the biggest mirror I could find, and just pick at every physical attribute he had. I was going to belittle him on everything from his damn unfairly handsome, almost fucking beautiful face to the oddly scattered freckles he had on his shoulders. I planned on shoving him into the mirror, slamming his cheek against it, berating him and saying just because he looked like a damn girl doesn’t mean he needs to pick up one of their weird diets.

Then, I planned on beating the hell out of him. Kicking his ass until he swore up and down he was going to knock off whatever shit he was pulling. I planned on kicking him in the ribs, driving my boot into them, telling him that if he wasn’t such a damn freaking girl and had more meat on his bones this wouldn’t hurt so damn much. I planned on telling him what an embarrassment he was to have as a son, how I wished I would have just left him at Bobby’s after Mary’s death. The old man never came right out and asked, but I knew damn well he wanted to, and would have accepted if I made the offer.

But as I looked at the thin frame of my oldest…all of those thoughts suddenly evaporated. Bobby was right. I knew Dean was thin—he had always has been…but this…this was something different.

I remember back when he was a toddler his doctors wanted Mary and I to put him on all these weight gaining supplements. I was all for it—I wanted the freaking kid to bulk up—but Mary held her ground with a good hard no. She not only refused, she had a few choice words for them. Then she did something I’d never thought she’d do; she began to cook. Before Dean, it was all take out or cheap roman noodles, but once Dean’s weight became a constant conversation at every doctor’s
appointment, she bought a cookbook, and began making some actual home-cooked meals. And like Mary herself, they were amazing. She filled us both with roast beef, fresh vegetables, homemade pies, and so on. Slowly but surely Dean did put on some weight. Mind you, it wasn’t what I felt like the boy needed to put on, but the doctors backed off and Mary was happy. She wanted her baby to be happy and healthy and as long as she had that she had everything.

So, yeah, I never really saw Dean being light on his ass as something to be alarmed about. Annoyed and angry, sure. But now, when I looked at him, all I felt was fear.

Admittedly, I have noticed he’d lost a few pounds here and there over the years. Okay, maybe more than a few pounds, but I didn’t really put much into it. For one, I hardly ever saw my oldest without a few layers of clothing-unless of course I was beating this shit out of him (and normally I was less than sober at that point). For the other, I had just chalked that up to him just having a high metabolism for the amount of running I had both boys do on a consistent basis.

“Dean…” I sighed. I wasn’t exactly sure what to say. For the first time in a long time, or maybe really since he was born, I actually felt like I’d failed him. “Dean…what the hell are you doing to yourself?”

Dean turned around to face me, glancing over at his brother like he wasn’t sure how to respond. So, after a few uncomfortable seconds of silence, Dean did what he normally does; He tried to soothe over the problem.

“It’s nothing.” He shrugged, “It’s just all the training and stuff. I’m fine, Dad.”

I got up and went over to him, feeling my steps unsteady, not shocked that Dean flinched as I approached. I grabbed on to Dean’s wrist, realizing how easily I was able to hold it between my middle finger and my thumb. “This isn’t just from training.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Dean said, his eyes dropping. “I’m alright.”

Now normally I’d make him look at me. Normally his dropping his eyes would have landed him a good crack across the mouth, but not this time. This time I didn’t know what to do or what to say.

Sam, who’d gotten up by now, was gripping my arm and staring at me. I knew he didn’t trust me. Hell, I barely could trust me.

I had no idea how to deal with this. I could hunt like no one else. I could take down a vampire clan, exorcise a demon, kill off a werewolf, not get hexed by a witch’s coven with ease…but then dealing with my children…especially when they actually needed me…I…

Shit.

I was a fantastic hunter.

I saved people for a living.

But I was a lousy excuse for a father.

Dean never asked for a damn thing. He never complained. He never bitched. He never asked for anything. And now, he needed to do the asking and he still just stood there, telling me everything was fine.

So, like Dean, who always stepped into his role in the family as the peace keeper, I fulfilled mine. Without a word, I let go of my oldest and got the hell out of the kitchen as fast as I possibly could
without breaking into a run. I grabbed my wallet and headed out the door. And like typical the next scene for me was the bar.

I had absolutely no idea how to deal with this.

So I drank until I barely knew what it was I was supposed to be worrying about at all.

Then I puked.

All the way home.
I had a hard time sleeping that night. I felt like Dad’s reaction to us going to Bobby’s and to Dean’s obvious physical decline, had been far too placid. I had prepared myself for the worst. I’m sure Dean did too. In fact, I know he did. He didn’t say anything after Bobby mentioned he called Dad. He simply nodded, before packing us up and driving home like a mad man. He didn’t talk much on the way home, besides rambling to me about flying cars (what?) but by the way he was gripping the steering wheel and pressing his lips together, I knew he was panicking.

I on the other hand was preparing for what I was going to have to do to protect my brother. The problem was the fine line between protecting him and destroying our relationship. If it was up to me, I’d simply call the cops on Dad, and get him the hell out of our lives once for all. I knew through my research since Dean was over eighteen, Dad would get booked on assault and battery. I knew though, if I did that, Dean would never forgive me. I couldn’t understand it, but no matter what Dad did to him, Dean could never turn his back on Dad. Despite all the times he was knocked down, berated, or beaten up, Dean still loved our father.

What actually scared me more than making a phone call was the feelings of rage and unfiltered hatred I felt towards our father. Sometimes, in my darkest of dark thoughts, I thought about the things I’d like to do to him. They were such violent images that I hardly recognized myself in having them. I thought about how I’d like to hurt him, how I’d like to cause him pain…the sick things I’d like to do to him if given the chance. I thought about how I’d like to give back even the slightest about of pain he’s caused my brother.

But anyway, I had prepared for this unfortunate return of Dad’s to be the fight of all fights. I tried talking to Dean about it, pleading with him just to take the impala and get the hell out of town for a while, but Dean naturally refused. He simply told me he wasn’t going anywhere without me, that I had school, and that everything was fine. He was even delusional enough to tell me he was fine and how he wished everyone would trust him. This insistence was almost as crazy as Dad’s lack of response. I didn’t understand either. It was clear Dean was sick. How he couldn’t admit it, when it was so obvious didn’t make any sense to me. And it was completely out of Dad’s character just to walk away.

Sighing, I turned on my little reading light Bobby had bought me last Christmas and opened up the book I’d been reading. I settled into my pillow, enjoying the quiet. When I looked at the clock, and realized the bars would be closing soon, I admit, I began to feel a little anxious. I knew Dad was out drinking, and his coming home drunk and angry and couldn’t mean anything good for Dean.

In a way, Dad made Dean weak. Just like I made Dean weak. Dean didn’t dare defend himself against Dad. Just like he wouldn’t spare his own pain for fear of igniting mine. It’s something I never could understand no matter how many times Dean’s explanation of “I’m being a good son” was repeated to me.

“Sammy?” Dean’s voice spoke out gruffly, “What you doing?”

“Just reading a bit.” I said, glancing over his way. “Is the light bothering you?”

“No.” Dean coughed. I silently cursed, knowing that my light probably had woken him. Dean was a light sleeper. He always has been. I guess he always had to be. I doubt that he ever really slept soundly his entire life.
“I was just finishing up.” I lied, shutting off the light and putting my book on our nightstand.

“Couldn’t sleep?” Dean asked. He knew me too well.

“I just feel a bit wired.” I admitted.

“No more coffee for you.” Dean joked. I hated coffee. I tried it once when I was twelve, after nagging Dean incessantly to try some of his and ended up spitting it out, right in his face.

“That’s great Dean.” I said, doing my best not to snap, “Joke away.”

“You’re pissed.” Dean stated, sensing the mood in the room shift.

“Yeah, Dean.” I sighed, flipping on the light, glaring at my brother who was blinking back at me, as his eyes tried to adjust. “How the hell can you just sit there and act like nothings wrong?”

“What do you expect me to do?” Dean gave me a funny look.

“Never mind.” I flipped over so that my back was facing him.

“Are you seriously mad because I’m not sitting here crying and shaking like a little girl?”

“No, I’m angry because you don’t ever share how you actually feel.” I snapped. “I’m your brother, Dean.”

“I don’t need you to hold my hand.” Dean snapped. “I never asked for that.”

“And I never asked for any of this.” I got up out of my bed and flew at Dean, pinning him down. “Do you think I want this? Do you think that I want you to starve yourself like you do? Do you think I want to watch Dad kick your ass over and over again?”

“Get the hell off of me!” Dean somehow managed to tuck his one leg close to his chest and kick me off of him. I landed on the floor with a thud and the next thing I knew he had me in a pretty painful hold. He held me there for a moment or two, before he let go of my arm and got his knee off of my back, releasing me. I rolled over, rubbing my shoulder breathing hard. Skinny or not, Dean could still put up a good fight and pin when he needed to. Or I guess if he was angry enough.

Dean then got back in his bed, and pulled the covers over his head without another word. I could instantly feel his anxiety level heighten.

I sighed getting back into my own bed and flipping off the light. I knew I’d blown it again. None of our conversations about my trepidation over my brother's lack of self-preservation skills ever went well. They always ended with me saying the wrong thing, cutting him down further and lower if that were even possible.

I was just about to tell him I was sorry when I heard the front door to our apartment open followed by someone crashing and swearing.

“Dean!” Dad’s voice came out loud and desperate, bellowing through the closed wooden door to our room.

Dean shot out of bed before I could stop him and went out into the living room, slapping on the light. I was right behind him both shocked and relieved not to see Dad fuming with anger, but instead laying in a pathetic lump on the floor.

“It’s okay, Dad.” Dean said softly, going over to our father, and helping him into somewhat of a
sitting position.

“Damnit Dean.” Dad said, clutching onto my brother’s hoodie sleeve, “I think I drank too fuckin much. This whole damn rooms spinning.”

“Sammy, get Dad some water.” Dean said, barely glancing at me, and instead grabbing several pillows off the couch to prop Dad up. I wanted to argue—I wasn’t Dad’s maid—but I didn’t, seeing how Dean was the one who asked me for the water in the first place.

I filled a newly washed cup and tried to stop myself from shaking. Dean was acting pretty damn calm. In fact, by the looks of how he was handling everything, he looked like he had been through all of this before.

“Thanks.” Dean said as he took the glass from me, giving me a look I couldn’t quite read. “Dad, I’m going to get you some Tylenol and a bucket in case you’re going to get sick. I can’t move you. Besides, I don’t think you should be anywhere where you could fall out of. It looks like you already hit your head. I’ll clean it quickly now, but I’ll need to look at it more tomorrow, okay?”

“M’kay, Dean.” Dad said, reaching out for my brother, who was no longer there. He glanced at me, frowning slightly, “Sorry you has to see tis Sammy.”

“It’s Sam.” I said calmly, moving slightly as Dean returned with his armor of supplies, which also included a plate full of buttered bread. How he’d gathered this all so quickly, I had no clue. I swear the guy is part superhero. Or part god.

Dean handed Dad the Tylenol, watching as he took it with water before he handed him the late full of bread. Dad ate two pieces, getting crumbs everywhere. Dean then handed him more water before he began to tend to Dad’s head.

“God damnit, boy!” Dad snapped, drunkenly swinging at my brother, “That fucking burns.”

“I have to make sure it’s clean Dad.” Dean said calmly, dodging our father’s clumsiness with ease, “Whatever you did, you must have scraped it open. You don’t want it infected. How are you going to charm the ladies with an infected face?” With that Dad surprisingly stopped struggling and instead changed to a mild hissing.

“I’ll get you a blanket then I think you should try to get some sleep.” Dean said, “I’ll sleep on the couch so if you need anything, I’ll be right here.”

“Dean!” I hissed following him into our room, watching in disbelief as he pulled his comforter off of the bed, “What the hell are you doing?”

“What’s it look like?” Dean asked, struggling mildly as I blocked his way back to the living room.

“You don’t need to be his babysitter.” I said, “He’s a big boy. He went out and got drunk. Let him deal with it.”

“He’s really drunk, Sam.” Dean said, without hesitation. “I have to make sure he doesn’t choke on his own vomit or something. It’s fine. It’ll be fine. When he’s this bad, he’s too far gone to do anything to me. I just need to get him through the night like always.”

“Like always?” I questioned. “So, this has happened before?” So, my assumptions from before were correct. I knew it. I knew that somehow, as much as my father hurt and tortured my brother, he was still twisted enough to make Dean take care of him.
“I’m not going to let the guy suffer.” Dean said simply. He brushed past me, heading back into the living room. I sighed heavily as I heard him tell Dad he was back and if he needed anything else. Then I curled my hands into fists when I heard Dad slur to ‘shut the fuck up’ and ‘turn off the damn light.’

It took everything in me not to go out there and pull Dean back to safety. I stood there for a few minutes until I heard Dad start to snore, lost in his drunken stupor. Only then did I get into bed, drawing my knees up to my chest and allowing the tears of frustration and sorrow to finally flow down my cheeks.

I woke up the next morning, panicking slightly when I saw Dean’s bed was empty. I took off groggily into the hallway, remembering the events of last night only once I saw (or I guess heard) Dad sleeping on the floor.

“Hey Sammy.” Dean greeted me, as I went into the kitchen. He was already at stove cooking up what looked like French toast. “I went out and got Dad some orange juice. Sometimes he likes that after a bad night. But I got two cartons, so feel free to have some.”

I stood there for a moment, glaring at him. It was only eight o’clock. Dean was fully dressed, showered and looked like he’d been up for some time. Not only did the kitchen smell great, it looked great. It was completely spotless. It was clear that Dean had gone on a rapid cleaning spree. Not that it ever really gets dirty with Dean around—he’s somewhat of a germaphobe- but everything was organized.

He tends to organize when he’s nervous. And trust me, that’s the only time. Most of the time he’s searching for something he’s lost that was in his hands only moments ago. Like his coffee cup, or his cell phone or whatever else he feels is so valuable at the moment. He always makes the joke that it’s a wonder he hasn’t lost me throughout the years. But I always know where his things are. I keep track of them for him.

“How long have you been up?” I asked, grabbing the orange juice and pouring us both a cup.

“I don’t know.” Dean shrugged, nervously picking at a string on the table cloth. “I just got up, cleaned a bit, went to the store.”

I nodded, not sitting down, just watching him, sighing as he flinched at the sound of Dad’s groan from the living room.

“Dean!” Dad barked, “Where the hell are you?” He came stumbling into the kitchen, one eye shut. And oh man did he reak. “I having a killer headache.” He continued, slumping into his chair and grabbing the juice I’d poured for Dean downing it, “Can you make yourself useful and get me a fucking Tylenol.”

“Yeah.” Dean glanced at me quickly before disappearing into the living room. I knew by his look he was telling me to shut up and to mind my own business, but like usual, I just couldn’t help make a comment.

“Dean got up early and made you breakfast.” I said, “So he is being useful. Plus he took great care of you last night. You’re lucky he was there because if not, I would have just let you suffer by yourself.”

“What the hell are you going on about now, Sammy?” Dad asked, frowning up at me, as he shoved
French toast into his mouth, chomping loudly.

“It’s Sam.” I said, crossing my arms, watching as Dean came back handing Dad the Tylenol bottle.

“What took you so goddamn long?” Dad demanded, catching Dean by the collar off his hoodie.

“I couldn’t find the bottle.” Dean said softly, “I guess it got knocked off the coffee table. It was under the couch.”

“Fucking useless.” Dad mumbled as released Dean and popped open the cap, downing hopefully enough pills to end his miserable life.

“Can you stop calling him that?” I snapped, stamping my foot, not realizing that I probably looked like a pissed off toddler until the action was already done.

“Sorry to offend, Sammy.” Dad grumbled, “Dean, where the hell are the eggs?”

“He’s not making them.” I said quickly moving to block the access, “He made you French toast. That should be enough. You want eggs, get the hell up and make them yourself.”

“What the fuck’s your problem this morning.” Dad snapped, slamming his fork down, “You’re cruising for extra laps kid.”

“You’re my problem.” I snapped, “Like always. You’re my problem. You went out, got drunk, then expect to be catered to. You did this to yourself. You’re not sick. You’re hungover. Deal with it on your own.”

“Like you should talk.” Dad glared up at me, “How much do you do on your own? Your brother spoiled you rotten. That’s why your such a brat now. He was far too soft on you. You’d be a completely different kid if I raised you—”

“Thank god you didn’t.” I snapped.

“Dad.” Dean jumped in, his cheeks flushing red in what I’m guessing was a mixture of anxiety and embarrassment. “How about I take Sam and train? You take a shower and try to sleep this whole thing off. If you still want eggs later, I’ll fry you up some.”

Dad fell silent, glancing between myself and my brother. I could tell he wanted to object but I could also tell he felt like shit. He was practically green. I was glad. I wanted him to suffer.

“Fine.” Dad nodded, “But I’m telling you one thing, Sam. Things are sure in hell going to change around here. So fucking brace yourself.”
Chapter 46

Dean

I didn’t say anything to Sam until we got to the field. He was ranting and raving most of the way about how much he hated our father and how sorry he was going to be one day for what he put us through. He kept saying how he would sue him for something or other, I don’t really know. I let him go, not objecting and not commenting, because I knew that he needed to just run out of steam.

I parked in the grass and got out of the car, letting Sam be. I wasn’t really in the mood to argue with him about training. I wanted to run to work out some stuff in my own head, so I started stretching.

“Dean.” Sam said, getting out of the car, shutting the door so quietly I don’t think he could do it again if he tried, “What do you think Dad meant by things changing?”

“I don’t know Sammy.” I sighed, straightening so that I was somewhat eye level, or as eye level as I could be, with my little brother. “But don’t worry about it until whatever it is happens. You know how it is with the two of you. You guys both say stuff to one another you don’t mean.”

“I always mean whatever I say to him.” Sam said, frowning at me slightly, “I do think he’s a jerk. And I know he meant it when he blamed me for killing Mom.”

“Sam.” I sighed, rubbing my temple, trying not to show my frustration.

I hated more than anything that Dad said that to him.

I’d take a thousand punches to have that one comment taken back.

For one thing it wasn’t true.

For another talking about Mom hurt enough.

Watching Sam cry over it, blame himself for her death, then in turn blame himself for our lives-my life-because of it was more hell then I could describe.

“I know.” Sam held up his hand, “I’m sorry. I know. I know he meant it, but I know that it’s not true.”

“Good.” I said, giving him a small punch in the shoulder.

“But I do think he’s serious, Dean. About things changing.”

“Sam, I came to run, okay?” I started warming up again, “You can do whatever you want to do. I promise you though, I’m not going to let anything happen to you, alright? He’s not going to do anything to you.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about.” Sam sighed before leaning over and stretching out himself.

When we got home, Dad was nowhere to be seen. I breathed a sigh of relief, telling Sam he could have the shower first for once. I normally couldn’t stand to be dirty, but I was craving some of that
orange juice, so I made a beeline for the kitchen. No sooner had I slipped out of my shoes however, did I hear a panicked yell come from the bedroom.

“Dean.” Sam flew into the kitchen, nearly tripping over his feet. “My beds gone.”

“What!” I asked, feeling my heart drop. I shoved past Sam and took off towards our room. Sure enough, his bed was gone.

“Dean…” Sam was behind me, shaking, “Do you think he’s kicking me out?”

“NO!” I yelled, louder than I intended. “Sammy.” I swallowed, readjusting my voice, “He wouldn’t do that. He wouldn’t throw you out. Don’t panic.” I then ripped open our closet door, breathing a sigh of relief that all of Sam’s clothes were still in there.

“Missing something, boys?” Dad voice suddenly spoke. Sam and I both turned to face him. He was leaning against the doorway, clearly waiting for reaction. It was easy to see he was still hungover as hell—even from across the room you could smell him, see his bloodshot eyes—but he was grinning. I’ve seen that grin one to many times in my life. I know for a fucking fact that whatever he had up his sleeve couldn’t be good.

“Yeah. Sam’s bed.” I said, shocking myself a little at how bold and sharp I sounded.

“Sam’s bed…” Dad nodded, “I was wondering if you’d notice. Just like most things, Dean, you failed big time with taking care of your brother. That selfish bratty attitude of his is going to get him or one of us killed one day. So, here’s the new plan. I’m now taking over. I’m in charge. Sam will sleep, eat, breathe, and shower, when I say he can. No more of this free will crap you instilled in him. So, in order to do what I need to do, I’m limiting your time together. So, Sam’s going to be bunking with me.”

“The hell I am.” Sam snapped, shoving past me. Before I could catch him, Sam dove at Dad, trying to push him out of our room.

“Sam. Stop.” I yelped frantically going over and pulling my brother off, doing everything I could to pin him to the wall, while Dad stood there and laughed.

“Dad.” I said, my breathing hitching from trying to keep Sam restrained, “Can’t we talk about this? What happens when you leave on hunts? Sammy’s—”

“Don’t worry, Dean. I have that all figured out” Dad reaching out to obviously pull me off of Sam, but I sensed it coming and held on tight to my brother. Sam too saw what was happening, stopped struggling, and gripped onto me, digging into my arm so much that it actually hurt. Finally somehow Dad managed to pry us lose, slamming me to the ground, and putting his knee into my back.

Dad was still talking, but I couldn’t focus on what he was saying. I was already out of breath from the struggle with Sam and the stress of everything, so I wasn’t too shocked when my chest started to tighten. Real panic started to set in when I realized I was heading into an asthma attack and that I couldn’t breathe. I started to squirm-more so than I ever would under normal circumstances—and tried to claw my way out from under Dad’s pin. Sam and Dad were too busy arguing above me to notice, their voices getting more and more muffled. Finally, with everything I had in me, I choked out a desperate ‘Sammy’, holding my pinkie finger up, which we’d long ago designated as my “I’m in real fucking trouble” signal.

“Dad!” Sam yelled frantically, “Get off him. He can’t breathe!”
Luckily, by who knows what power, Dad got off of me. The next thing I knew Sam was jamming my inhaler into my mouth, telling me to breathe. He shot the medicine into my mouth, pulling my head into his lap at the same time. He waited the appropriate amount of time, and then hit me up again. He sat with me, rubbing small circles on my chest, telling me to focus on his breathing and to just focus on the ceiling of our room. Then he snapped at Dad to get me some coffee, saying he read somewhere that caffeine helps.

“He’s gone, Dean.” Sam whispered softly, lowering his face down close to my ear, “You’re okay.”

I didn’t say anything. All I could do was grip the hell onto the sleeve of my little brother’s shirt, thumbing the fabric in between my fingers.

Sam and I fell into a comfortable silence, with him holding me tight and me still hanging onto him for dear life. Dad returned, placing a cup of coffee next to me. I didn’t really feel like drinking it—honestly, I was feeling a bit nauseated—but Sam insisted.

“I read it in an article, Dean.” He said, helping me sit up, leaning me against the base of my bed, “It’s supposed to help open up the airways to your lungs.”

“You’re a nerd.” I managed as I took a sip.

“You should be glad I am.” Sam said honestly. “You see, caffeine is similar to the drug theophylline. It’s a drug that’s used to open up the bronchial airways.”

“Long as it works.” I said giving him a slight smirk.

“It’s a shame you don’t put as much effort into hunting as you do your brother’s medical problems.” Dad said, clearing his throat. Sam just looked at Dad, biting his lip. It was obvious it was killing him not to say whatever it was he was thinking. Dad then turned his attention back to me, “I better put some weight on your ass so I can take you to the doctor to check out those screwed up lungs of yours. I’m sure in hell not sitting there, pretending to hold your hand while the cops come down to put you in a hold. You know they can do that, right? If you’re mentally unfit and if they think you’re a harm to yourself, they can lock you up.”

I glanced at Sam, trying to see by his face if he knew if that were true.

I know the actual law better than most.

I knew how to lie to the cops better than anyone.

I knew how to make it seem like you weren’t in a certain place at a certain time.

I knew how to cover your tracks, to not leave your fingerprints.

I knew how to keep your nose clean, how to not attract unnecessary attention to yourself.

Hell, I’d been an expert on all of that shit since I’d been eight years old.

I even ironically knew that if you were going to hurt someone else you could get locked up.

However, I wasn’t sure if they could lock you up if you were a danger to yourself.

I mean, it honestly seemed kind of fucked up to me.

It was my body.
Whatever the hell I choose to do or not to do to myself should be my choice.

Nothing the fuck else was.

“I don’t think it works exactly like that.” Sam said tentatively, “They don’t just throw you in jail for having mental health issues.”

“Locked up is locked up.” Dad shrugged. “Psych ward can be worse than jail.” He looked at me and grinned, “But anyway, to continue our conversation, Sam you’ll be under my thumb for now on.”

“You’re delusional.” Sam spat. “You can try, but I’m not like Dean.”

I knew he didn’t mean for it come off as an insult. But it sure in hell felt like one.

“Trust me, I’m well aware of that.” Dad got up, “No one in their right mind would be that much of a grunt. The smarter ones are always the harder to break Sammy. And I will break you eventually. But, let me be clear, if you give me a hard time, your brother will be the one to suffer for it. Now, I want you up and out to go stake out some grounds with me for an upcoming hunt.”

“I’ve got homework.” Sam said defensively. “It’s due Monday. It’s an—”

“Does it look like I care?” Dad asked, “Have Dean do it for you. That’ll be sure to get you an A. Dean, I’m sure they have some crayons at the local diner. Let’s go, Sam.” And with that, Dad waltzed out of the room.

For someone with a hang over he still had his fucking bag of evil shit together.

Sam just glanced at me helplessly.

“Just go.” I said, getting up, “I’m going to take a shower and try to sleep a bit. We’ll figure things out. But for now try to listen to him, okay. For your own sake.”

“I’m only doing it for you.” Sam said, giving me a pained look before disappearing as well.

It was only after I was showered and in bed did I allow myself to break down.

I cried for my mom.

I pleaded with her to help me.

I could take the physical punishments Dad dished out.

I was used to them. I could handle them. As long as I could still crawl away at the end, I could live through it.

But this thing of Dad taking Sammy…of him taking Sam’s life into his hands…was something I couldn’t handle.

I was fucking terrified.

I didn’t want Sam to be damaged like I was damaged. I wanted him to be a whole happy and healthy person, not the broken poor excuse of a fucking embarrassment I’d become.

Dad’s grunt.
I’d raised Sam carefully. I raised him how I thought Mom would want us to be raised.

I loved Sammy.

I had no fucking idea how to deal if Dad destroyed him.
Let me know what you think about Mary.

Mary

Sometimes I feel like a bad mother.

I honestly do.

Not for what you might think—it’s not so much for leaving my children—although, trust me, I’ve suffered through, and still suffer through, the pain and guilt of leaving them—but I also know that if I could have prevented it—if I could have prevented the life they are living—the pain they’ve been forced to endure, I would have.

I’d lay down my life for it.

Ironically.

What I feel like a bad mother for is how differently my feelings are whenever I’m watching my sons.

With Sam, I love him, I do, but I feel somewhat detached.

I don’t know if it’s because I never really got to know him personally. I knew him as a baby of course. He was a dream compared to Dean’s infancy. He was a healthy baby who slept through the night, took his bottles—as long as they were warm—and loved to play with his big brother. But I never got to know him know personally any further than the six month year old I left that night in his crib. He was my son, but it was often like he was a stranger to me. When I watched him as he grew it was like I was watching someone I only read about, or met briefly.

Dean on the other hand I knew better than I knew myself. As a kid he liked cars and art. Two totally conflicting things, but such is my son. He could spend hours zooming around the house with his matchbox cars or on his stomach coloring or painting picture after picture. His favorite color was consistently red. When I asked him why, he’d just shrug and tell me he just liked it. I thought it was because it was the first color he’d learned so it was easy for him to say everything was red. But that theory went out the window when he did know his colors, and he still claimed everything was red.

I never worried about Sam the way I did Dean either. I mean, even as infants, the two were incomparable. I always put on a brave face where Dean’s health was concerned, but when I was alone I’d allow myself to cry. Like mother like son I guess. As much as I preached to John, to the doctors, to anyone that would listen that my premature, very sick, very underweight son was going to be fine, I was scared out of my mind. So I kept Dean close; practically in my pocket. I don’t think I slept through the night for the first year and a half after he was born. I was terrified that he’d stop breathing; that the lungs that had already given him so much trouble, would give up on him.

That I wouldn’t be there. That I’d lose him forever.
With Sam, it was the complete opposite. He was a whopping ten pounds four ounces. Twelve hours of the easiest induced labor imagined. He gained weight easily without any concerns from his pediatrician. A concept at this point was foreign to me. He slept soundly from night one on, with not even the slightest hints of gasping or wheezing. He’d coo from the moment he woke up until he was ready to be fed. He only fussed when he was hungry or tired. I did check on him periodically throughout the night, but it wasn’t this anxiety ridden experience like it was with Dean.

The other thing that made things easier with Sam was that John was involved. With Dean he had found every excuse to do something other than hold his son, any excuse other than to feed him, any excuse to be alone with him. Sam, he embraced and actually doted on. He’d constantly sit Sam on his lap to watch his car shows on Saturday mornings or play “army” (I never got the concept of the game) with him. But, having John involved was a huge help. I wasn’t the only one getting little to no sleep. I wasn’t the only one who was saddled with changing diaper after diaper. It was nice to share the responsibility. In a lot of ways it was like how life should have always been.

But then I also had Dean. In a way John acting like an actual father to Sam freed me up to spend time with my oldest. We’d take walks around the neighborhood, or draw together. He’d crawl into my lap and hand me his favorite books. I noticed he had a hard time sitting through them, so I often used voices to make him laugh and stay focused.

I loved our time together.

I think another feeling with Sam is that he always seemed somewhat immune to John’s excessive and obsessive need make his boys-our boys-into mini obedient soldiers. I’m sure a lot of it had to do with Dean shielding him and protecting him...but even without that, Sam’s personality was different from his brothers. He never seemed to pay John much attention. He seemed to not only shrug off John’s insults but challenge them. I’ll never forget watching when John told Sam, who had to be about five at the time, to eat his spaghettios with a spoon. Sam defiantly ate them with a fork. Sure, he made a mess, but he ate them with the fork.

So I didn’t worry.

Sam was Sam and that’s all there was too it.

Dean on the other hand was struck down left and right over his father’s disapproval of him. Over and over again. No matter how many times John belittled him. Somehow Dean was able to pick himself up, and try again. He kept taking care of both his father and brother most times at his own expense. I knew Dean’s childhood disappeared the day I died, and somehow someway instead of wallowing into self-pity, he put his focus into his little brother. He raised Sam probably better than I ever could. He somehow found the perfect balance between being too gentle and too firm. Sam excelled under Dean’s type of parenting. He was self-disciplined, grounded, and had a vision of a future that didn’t involve hunting. Anyone could see Sam was a success story. Not only was Sam close to what Sam considered to be a success, but Dean was the only parent he’d really known. Trust me, hurt me to have to say that, but it also made me proud as hell. Dean was an amazing parent. He was an awesome father.

Which is even more of a reason why John separating my boys borderlines on psychotic.

Or just plain cruel.

In his case, probably both.

If his target was to hurt Dean, he succeeded. My heart broke alongside my oldests.
“I don’t know what to do, Mom.” He whispered, his voice hitching, “I wish you were here. I don’t know what I’m supposed to do. I want to take Sammy and run. I want to get the hell out of here. Take him to Bobby’s. I know he’d be safe there. I know Bobby would protect him.” Dean let out a shaky breath, “But I can’t. He’s only going to be sixteen. If I took him now, Dad would take Sam away for good. Then Sammy... he’d be fucking alone. He’d be alone with Dad. I can’t let that happen. I just feel so stuck. I feel fucking stuck.” Dean started to wheeze, which threw me into a whole new level of terror. “I don’t know how it got this bad. I don’t know how the fuck this happened. I just fuck up everything, Mom. You’d be so ashamed of me.”

Now, this broke my heart. I wanted so badly to tell Dean that there was no way I could ever be ashamed of him.

Especially not with how great of a kid he was.

Not with how big his heart was.

Here he was, knowing that he was most likely going to get beaten later and all he was worried about was protecting Sam.

“I don’t know who else to talk to.” Dean’s tears started falling hard and fast. “I know there’s no God. There’s no angels. I know you always said angels were watching over me, but if they are... I’m sorry they’re doing one hell of a lousy job.”

I knew that Dean was using his humor to try to bring himself back around, but it was then the light bulb went off in my head.

That’s when I figured it out; how to partially find my way back through the loop hole.

Angels.

I’ve seen them.

Or one, when I was a little girl.

I’d been camping with my family. One of the very few trips we took that didn’t involve hunting. I guess I’d hit my head running alone the bank and fell into the lake. The next thing I knew I was laying out on the grass, with a figure standing above me.

A man with beautiful blue eyes.

He didn’t say anything, but I knew he saved me.

And I knew he was an angel.

And I knew, like I was drowning. My son was drowning.

And like me, god, he was so like me. He needed an angel.

He needed to be saved.

He deserved to be saved.

In fact, I demanded it.
I felt bad leaving Dean alone after his asthma attack. He looked like hell. His hair was disheveled, his cheeks were flushed, and his eyes were bloodshot. I was glad however to get Dad out of his hair, even if it was just for a few hours-any time he could get away from that asshole was better than nothing. Plus, I’ve been around enough of Dean’s attacks to know what warrants him needing to be monitored afterwards and what doesn’t. In the longevity of watching my brother struggle, that last one was just a “small” asthma attack. Thank God Dean was smart enough to come up with that hand signal years ago, or it could have been a lot worse.

“Just for the record, I despise you.” I said, to Dad as I got into the car. There was a huge part of me that felt like making a break for it; to run and flag down whoever I saw first, ask for their phone and call Bobby. I doubted Dad would even bother chasing after me. But, I was scared that he’d go back into that house and destroy Dean, so I obeyed his pervious order.

“That will change.” Dad said, beginning to drive. “You’re going to realize Sammy, you and I are actually a lot alike. You’re brother…he’s been too soft with you. But you and I both know that you’re a stubborn sonofabitch like me. We know that you’re cunning, smart, and driven. That’s a fantastic combination for a future Winchester hunter.”

“I don’t want to be a hunter,” I said, for what seemed like the millionth time. “Besides, why can’t you acknowledge that Dean’s the hunter you so badly want me to be? I’ve been around enough hunter circles with the two of you to know that people are impressed with him. Why can’t you be?”

“Because he’s weak.” Dad snapped, “Sure, he has an amazing shot. I taught him that.”

“You taught me too.” I butted in, “But I don’t have that type of aim.”

“You could if you wanted to.” Dad argued.

“No, I couldn’t.” I insisted. And that was true. There was a brief period where I did try—it was brief—but I had nothing on Dean when it came to the physical aspect of hunting. Or the instincts. And I told Dad so.

“I doubt that.” Dad shook his head, laughing slightly. You’re stronger than Dean. I have no doubt if you applied yourself to the physical aspects of hunting like you did your damn school work, you’d be better in no time. Besides, let’s look at this reasonably. Dean’s bleeding hearts going to get him killed one day. He thinks with his heart over his head. He’d jump in front of a bullet to save someone else, not thinking of the consequences that it could do to him.”

“Isn’t that a hero?” I asked. Dad merely glanced at me before continuing.

“Let me ask you this, since you’re so keen on defending your brother. What’s going to happen if he gets cornered by a demon? He can’t use any of his fancy charming techniques to get the damn thing trapped. The only thing he can do is say an exorcism right there on the spot. How well do you think that will go over? Have you ever heard him try to recite something he memorized? Or try to read something? He stammers and stutters and then just goes mute. How well do you think that’s going to go?”

“Bobby’s helped him with different exorcisms.” I stated, “If you’re so worried why don’t you send
Dean to his place for a few weeks.”

“Don’t you get it?” Dad pulled up in front of the house, where I’m guessing the hunt was going to take place, “No matter what Bobby does, Dean will fuck up when the time comes. The kid could barely recite the alphabet without getting all flustered.”

“You should have done something then.” I snapped, getting out of the car, and slamming the door. “How could you let him go through school like that? That’s fucked up. What the hell kind of parenting was that?”

“Watch your mouth.” Dad said, clearly signaling he was done with the conversation, “We need to go up there and talk to these people. I’m thinking Rugarus. People have gone missing in the neigh —”

“Don’t care.” I replied. I walked up the stairs and rang the doorbell.

When we got home that night, Dad told me to get into bed. No shower, no asking if I was hungry, no nothing. He did allow me to use the bathroom, but then shut me in for what I’m assuming was the night. I heard him pop open a can of beer (I know for sure it wasn’t soda), and turn on the tv.

That’s when realization started to hit.

I began to feel unbelievably homesick for my big brother.

All those comforts Dean had provided for me, made sure that I had had, suddenly seemed so far away. I didn’t even have a book with me.

“Dad.” I said, getting up and opening the door, “Can I at least have a book. I like to read before bed.”

“No.” Dad, who was on the couch watching tv, barely looked up at me. “I told you to go to bed. You go to bed.”

“But I’m hungry.” I said, suddenly beginning to panic.

“She believe you heard me.” Dad repeated.

I stood there for a moment, not sure what to do. I wanted to flick him off, tell him I’d never respect him, never look at him like a father, but I could feel tears starting. I wasn’t going to give him the satisfaction of seeing me cry. So, I shut the door and crawled back into my bed.

I turned my face inward towards my pillow, crying quietly. I missed Dean. I shuddered, as I thought this was quiet possibly how my brother had been raised. The little parenting Dad had done had been cold, abusive, and cruel. I wouldn’t put it past Dad to toss his six years old into a dark room, with no dinner, no words other than “go to bed”. No wonder Dean had learned how to be self-sufficient so young. No wonder he was always so concerned with me and my needs. Once again I felt tremendous guilt Mom was dead because of me. Despite how I played it off to Dean, I knew what my father had said that night to me was true; I was the reason she was dead. I wasn’t sure how or why, but I knew it was my fault.

I wanted my brother. I missed the annoyed look he’d give me as I got ready for bed at night, double checking my homework. I missed his sarcastic comments of how I should get my beauty sleep so I
would one day be as good looking as he was. I missed the sounds of his hitched, wheezy breathing next to me.

Needless to say, I didn’t sleep at all. Dad came crashing into bed and started snoring the moment he hit the pillow. I’d forgotten how loud Dad snored. When we used to share hotel rooms he used to keep me up at night if I wasn’t asleep before him, so Dean always made a joke he sounded like an angry bear with a cold. Back then, we’d hide under the covers and laugh, but remembering that made me feel even more lonely. All I wanted was to see my big brother.

The next morning, Dean looked as tired as I felt. He glanced at me briefly as we climbed into the car, obviously searching for signs of distress. I gave him a small sad smile, trying to let him know that I was fine physically, but that I wasn’t happy.

During training Dean seemed to have lost his motivation. His shot was off which rewarded him with a sharp and hard jab to the ribs from Dad. Unfortunately for Dean he fumbled even more with his gun after that with made Dad do it to him over and over again. I was sure Dean probably was littered with bruises.

Then Dad sparred with us. He was fair to me, even showing me different types of blocks, but with Dean he knocked him to the ground and pinned him. Dean didn’t even bother to struggle.

“I give, Dad.” He said, after a moment or two, his voice coming out quiet.

“You’re brother and I were talking yesterday...” Dad began, “He seems to think that you’ll have no problem reciting spells—mainly exorcisms—when need be. I had to tell him what a mess you are when it comes to such pesky little things like that. So, prove me wrong, Dean. Recite one.”

Dean’s eyes immediately looked to me in panic and I felt my heart sink. It was clear that despite Dean knowing the exorcisms, saying them here and now, were two very different things.

“Exorcizamus te...” Dean began, “Exorcizamus te...” Then he fell silent, clamping his lips together.

“That’s all you got?” Dad laughed. “Come on, Dean. Surely Bobby taught you better than that.”

“I…I don’t …remember anymore.” Dean stammered, closing his eyes, “I can’t do it.”

“Exactly what I thought.” Dad got up off of Dean and looked right at me, clearly proud with himself. “What did I tell you Sam? Anyway, boys. Enough for today. Let’s head home.”

I ignored him and just reached down, pulling Dean up. My brother couldn’t even look at me. His cheeks were bright red with embarrassment. He shrugged me off of him and walked off towards the car. Instead of getting in however he kept walking, his hands shoved in his pockets, and his shoulders hunched.

“Where the hell are you going?” Dad called out, still laughing.

“Walking home.” Dean replied, not bothering to turn around.

“Suite yourself.” Dad shrugged, “Let’s go Sammy.”

“It’s Sam.” I snapped, “And Dad, it’s like ten miles.”
“He’ll manage.” Dad said, “He wants to be a bad ass and walk, let him.”

I stood there for a moment, contemplating what to do. I wanted so badly to run after Dean. But I know my brother. I could tell by his tone and body language, he wanted to be left alone. Dad had succeeded once again in embarrassing him, and me trailing behind, trying to convince him Dad just being a jerk, wasn’t going to stop the now self-loathing party that he no doubt was spiraling into.

“Why did you have to do that?” I asked, frowning at my father.

“I had to prove a point.” Dad shrugged, “Now do you get what I’m talking about. He’s going to get crushed out there. It’s a shame stupidity can’t be cured.”

I sighed, and shifted slightly. I hated to admit it, but Dad had a point. Not that Dean was stupid, but that he would probably run into trouble if he was faced with a demon or something else he couldn’t use his senses or skills to fight his way out of. I knew he knew the exorcism. I heard him say it a million times with Uncle Bobby. And because he couldn’t read, I knew that he had to have it memorized. So I’m guessing he folded under the pressure.

“I’ll help him.” It was the only thing I could think to say.
Chapter 49

Dean

I’ve been pretty much on a tailspin after Dad pulled Sammy from me. I’ve been drunk pretty much every night. My room was littered with empty beer bottles. Sam and Dad were snipping at one another worse than ever, which meant I was getting slammed around and thrashed around worse than ever. Sam’s attitude seemed to have kicked into overdrive. I didn’t blame Sam. I knew he was young and angry. As hard as he tried-and I know he tried-to keep his mouth shut, he had a negative comment for everything Dad said or did. But my backside was getting sore from the aftermath of Sam’s soap box ways so in between my drunken hazes I managed to come up with a solution.

It was simple. As long as Sam gave more time to hunting, and devoted more time to researching and training, and less time to complaining or eye rolling, etc., he could pick a club or school activity of his choosing.

Manipulative, yes.

But I guess I am my father’s son after all.

So, Dad agreed. Sam agreed. And they shook on it.

Sam ended up choosing some lame debate team thing. I was slightly embarrassed for him, but Sam’s Sam so after making a few jokes at his expense, which earned me his typical nostril flaring and an exhausted dragged out version of my name, I told him I was proud of him. Sam beamed and I almost reached out to give his shoulder a squeeze, but Dad shoved one of his guns into my hands and ordered me to start cleaning it.

Dad made sure Sam and my time together was limited. If he was around he often sat between us, or constantly kept one of us by his side at all times. He’d stay in the living room, drinking a beer, watching our every move. He never let us run together anymore. He split our training schedule up. If I was running, Sam was sparring with him and vice a versa.

He never left us alone. Unless if he was going to work at the auto shop, he took one of us with him at all times. Which meant one of us was going hunting with him. When I found out he was taking Sammy, I objected to that first, which of course earned me a black eye and a knockdown punch to my stomach. I wanted to argue that it was ridiculous to do any of that, that I could keep Sam safe, or that the three of us could even hunt together, but I knew better than that.

On nights that Dad had Sam, I was a wound up ball of anxiety. I hated the idea of my little brother out there hunting when I knew firsthand how dangerous it was, and that it was something he despised doing. I knew that Dad wouldn’t watch out for Sammy like I would. If it came down to it, Dad would leave Sam alone if it meant victory on a hunt. So my heart rate would shoot through the roof the second Sam walked out the door, and I’d do whatever I could to take the edge off. I either drank alone at home-pathetic I know-or I hooked up with that bartender chick, Barbara.

Barb was actually pretty cool as far as flings go. She’d pamper me, treating me to whatever pick-me-up I felt like having. Just as long as she was able to show me off to her middle age friends, and just as long as I’d willing and able to perform between the sheets. It was clear that we were both using each other, so I didn’t see a problem with it.

No strings attached right?
She did ask me about my bruises.

And my scars.

So I of course I came prepared with my normal array of bullshit and lies.

I chose to tell her I was in some underground Fight Club. Which I might add she seemed especially
turned onto, so I clung onto that storyline. I even made up some stories about all the guys’ asses
I’d successfully kicked. She gasped and clung to me as I told her, burying her face into my chest. I
was cool with it because it made me feel strong and fucking invincible.

I could be whoever I wanted to be with her.

She saw me exactly how I wanted her to see me, even if it was based on a bunch of bullshit.

With her I wasn’t the Dean who was beaten up regularly by his father.

I wasn’t the Dean who was lost with who he was without his little brother by his side.

I wasn’t stupid, or weak.

I definitely wasn’t pathetic and useless.

With Barb, I lied so much I could actually believe my lies.

She began to become my escape from reality as much as much as the alcohol.

And man, I fucking loved escaping.

I was beginning to understand why Dad drank so much.

I was at the bar one night when I meant Gil.

I barely noticed him, but I guess he’s been noticing me for a while.

It was a night Dad had handed me my ass. Sam had mouthed off about something or another and
I’d gotten in the middle of it. I of course paid the consequences. So, after Dad took Sam out
hunting with him that night, I made my way to the bar, nursing some very sore and tender stomach
muscles, downing shots, hoping to drown out the pain.

But anyway, I was just sitting there, on my fourth shot in a row of Jameson when this guy
approached me.

“Hey.” He said, “Anyone sitting here?” He gestured to the chair next to me.

“Doesn’t look like it.” I said, barely glancing his way.

“Looks like you could use a friend. I’m Gil.” Gil held his hand out for me to take, but I shrugged
him off, blocking my split lip with my shoulder. “I’ve seen you here quite a bit lately.”

“Your observational skills must be top notch.” I replied.

“You seem close with Barb.”
“She’s my soulmate.” I answered rolling my eyes, taking a sip out of the beer that was washing down my many shots.

“You sure do drink a lot.”

“You keeping this all in a log?” I snapped.

“I’m just saying from my experience people who drink as much and often as you do, and are screwing middle aged bartenders, are usually in some type of pain. Normally physically or emotionally. Or both.”

“Is this speech of yours going somewhere?” I asked, “Because I have to say, Bil or Gil, or whoever the hell you are, you’re kind of killing my buzz.”

“Well, funny you mention that. I actually have a little something that could add a little something extra to that buzz you have going?”

“And what’s that?” I asked, turning to face him dead on for the first time.

“Ever heard of a little thing called pain pills?”

“They have pills for pain?” My voice was dripping with sarcasm.

“I mean to take to get high.” Gil rolled his eyes. “You know, to help take the edge off.”

“I’m not in the business of buying what you’re selling.” I said simply, raising my hand for another beer. Joe, Barbara’s bartender slid one to me right away without so much as a second glance.

“Maybe you aren’t now.” Gil said, getting up from his chair, “But one day you might be. I mean, it’s a great rush. You feel calm and safe and you forget all your problems. Nothing bothers you. You’re invincible. Trust me, you’ll hit a time where you’ll think of this conversation. And when you do, here’s my number.” Gil handed me a piece of paper with his name and number on it. “Call me.”

He disappeared after that. I shrugged off the encounter, shoving his number in my jacket’s pocket. I didn’t really know that much about drugs. I mean, other than they fucked you up majorly.

I couldn’t risk that.

Not with hunting.

And not with Sammy.

I made it home just before training, still drunk, and feeling pretty good after a decently sweet night with Barb. I’ve learned that experience comes with being with an older lady and I was definitely reaping the perks of that. But anyway, when I stumbled into the apartment, Dad was already up, drinking coffee and reading the newspaper.

“Hey Dad.” I said, suddenly feeling embarrassed.

“Where the hell were you?” He greeted me, barely looking up.

“Umm…out.” I managed.
“Were you drinking?”

I knew there was no denying it. Fuck it, like I said, I was still drunk.

“Yeah.”

“Were you busy getting laid?”

“What?” My voice squeaked lightly.

“Were you out getting laid? You’re shirts on inside out.” I glanced down at my tee shirt and sure enough it was. I cursed myself for being so stupid and lazy and not checking.

“I umm…yeah. I guess I was.”

“Good for you kid.” Dad looked up at me and grinned. Then his face straightened slightly, “Tell me though….it was with a girl, right?”

My heart skipped a beat.

Why the hell would he ask that?

Course it was a girl.

Why would he ask that?

“Yeah, course it was.” I replied, giving him a smile, hoping that my breathing was as steady as I was trying to keep it.

“That’s my boy.” Dad winked at me.

Sam picked that time to come out into the kitchen, looking half asleep.

“Hey, Dean.” He mumbled as he passed. Then he paused, grabbed a hold of my tee-shirt and took a whiff. “Dude, you stink like a brewer. And you look like you haven’t slept in days..”

“I’ve been out.” I shrugged. “And it’s called a bar, Sam.”

Sam glared at me, “I’m guessing you’ve been drinking?”

“Well, I haven’t been crocheting.”

“Why do you always have to be such a smart ass?” Sam snapped, plunking down to slip on his shoes.

“Someones testy this morning.” Dad laughed, “And don’t give your brother a hard time Sam. He was fulfilling some manly duties last night. You’ll understand when you get older.”

“Dean was out drinking and having sex.” Sam shrugged, “Don’t make it sound like he’s fulfilling some great obligation.”

“Sammy…” I began.

“I’ll be in the car.” Sam replied, getting up and shoving past me.

“Man that kid’s moody.” Dad looked up at me shaking his head, “If I didn’t know better I’d think I was raising a damn girl.”
“Sammy is prone to pmsing at least three times a day.” I replied, feeling safe enough to move further into the kitchen and pour myself some coffee in a go cup. “You just have to let him go. He’ll be okay.”

“I guess you’d be the expert.” Dad replied. I flinched slightly, feeling like I’d just unintentionally pulled the tab of a time bomb detonator. But then Dad laughed. “You really have to work on your game face, Dean. Go change. I’ll meet you in the car. Don’t want to keep your brother waiting.”

The second I heard the front door shut I breathed a sigh of relief.

I headed into the bathroom to splash some water on my face before looking at myself in the mirror.

Admittedly I looked a little rough.

My skin had a slightly reddish tint to it and I had dark circles under my eyes.

But I’ve looked worse.

And at least this time it was from partying and being normal rather than getting my ass kicked.

I thought back to how Dad asked if I’d hooked up with a woman….and why the hell he’d asked that in the first place.

Why the fuck would he even ask that?

My heart skipped a beat and my stomach flipped slightly.

I was 100% straight.

I let out a shaky breath, not exactly sure why I felt so nervous.

Suddenly the only thing I wanted to do was crawl into bed, pull the cover over my head, and drink some more.

Drinking chased problems away.

But I knew that Dad and Sammy were waiting for me, and that Dad never tolerated any type of excuse for skipping out of training (minus the ones he provided of course), so told myself to ‘toughen the fuck up’. Then I quickly changed into training clothes and headed out the door.

Fuck my life.
Chapter 50

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the lack of updates. I have too many chapters started and too few finished. Thank you for all of your support.

John

Somethings up with my boy.

I can’t put my finger on it, but somethings up. It’s like he lost his drive and motivation. During training he’s lacked his normal “that a boy” attitude. He’s always been a firecracker when it’s come to the physical aspect of hunting. He’s surprised even me with his ability to bounce back after a particularly hard tackle, without showing any pain or after effects of shock at all.

He’s amazed me with his strength, especially considering his small size. Sometimes I think he may even be stronger than Sammy whose past him up in height and weight a long time ago.

Yeah, his little brother out grew him. I wondered if that bothered him as much as it bothered me. Whenever people-well hunters- met my boys together, they often confused the two, thinking Sam was Dean and Dean was Sam, I’d have to set them straight. Dean was becoming somewhat legendary in his own right, and they all wanted a chance to slap him on the back and congratulate him on his skills. Dean seemed uneasy at all the praise and would just stand there with his hands in his pockets, answering questions but staring at me the whole time. Sam would often jump in and begin discussing some sort of boring facts that he’d memorized which would cause whatever hunter was snooping around to eventually drift off to grab a drink, taking me with him.

It’s really the only time I let the two of them be alone.

Like I’ve said before, Dean’s stamina has also been more than impressive. The kids hacked up a lung and still managed to finish his time around the track in record speed. He’s always pushed himself to and over the limit on the amounts of pushups, situps, pull ups, and planks. Whatever he’s lacked in muscle, he’s made up for in tenacity.

However, all of that recently has gone to shit.

Now he acts like he’s never trained a day in his life.

When we spar, he takes the pin and lays there until I decide to get off of him, or taps himself out if I decide to make it an especially painful hold. He doesn’t even try to worm his way out of it, or try to take me down like I’ve taught him. He’ll roll on his side, or stay lying on his back, before slowly getting to his feet.

His times are down in both running and in his normal day to day exercise routines. The other day he barely had the energy or strength to hold himself up doing a simple plank. He was a complete mess on the track, tripping and falling over his own two feet, something he’s never done before.

His shot, which I always prided myself in, was completely off. He missed the marks I set for him almost three out of ten times, which was unheard of. Sam was never a great shot, but Dean, man,
Dean was shooting better than most men at the age of six.

Just his general enthusiasm for hunting is gone. Even Hank’s noticed. Normally, I’d be offended and tell him to go fuck off, but he’s always been supportive of me bringing my kid along. He’s all but flat out told me how much he appreciates me bringing Dean along on hunts, and has even gone as far as bragging about knowing the boy personally to other hunters. But lately, he’s been beating around the bush about Dean’s weight issues, telling Dean he needed to go eat a damn steak or something. Dean normally laughs it off and asks what’s wrong with broccoli and lima beans (the kid hates any type of veggie), but I’d catch his eyes and I could tell that he was dodging the subject just as much as I was.

I do know the kid’s been drinking an awful lot. I’ve caught him staggering in a few times drunk out of his mind around three or four in the morning. He stinks of cheap perfume, cigarette smoke (he better not be smoking or I’ll fucking beat his damn ass so he won’t be able to do anything but lay there in agony for weeks), and alcohol. Mainly beer or whiskey. Just like his old man.

Unlike me, Dean was an overly happy drunk. He also turned into a huge flirt and a cocky son of a gun. The reason I know this, is because I’ve drank with him out a few times recently, much to Sam’s dismay. I have to say, seeing Dean out and about made me swell with pride. The ladies loved him. I don’t think there was a night where he didn’t have at least three girls throwing themselves at him. Most times I’d slip him a twenty and let him treat himself and his girl to night in a nearby hotel.

To be honest, I was just glad he was hooking up with girls. I’ve seen him turn the heads of both men and ladies alike, and it worried me. My boy was a good looking kid. Too pretty to be honest. And it worried me.

But Winchester men love the ladies. We always have and we always will be. So I was relieved to see Dean follow in that path. The kid probably had a better reputation then I did.

I guess the lady he is/was seeing wasn’t anything serious.

Needless to say though, between all the girls and the booze, there was still something off. I didn’t know how to reach him. He sure in hell wasn’t going to come to me. Let’s face it…I wasn’t the type of father either one of them came to with their problems. Not that I’d really want to be-I’ve never been the emotional type. They had each other I guess for that type of stuff. Well, they did, till I took that comfort away. And I wasn’t planning on returning it anytime soon.

I briefly considered calling Bobby….but I also wouldn’t give the old man the satisfaction. He was always on my case about how I raised my kids, especially when they were little, and especially over Dean. I knew he thought I was this negligent, tyrant of a father who didn’t care. Calling him about my cluelessness of what was going on with my son would only cement that fact. Besides, I made sure the contact between them was limited. Although I guess I should take the boys for a visit to ward off suspicion, seeing as they practically used to live with him. Fuck this whole shit.

So, I decided the easiest thing, besides ignoring the situation completely, was to go straight to the source. I decided just to talk to Dean himself. To be honest, he wasn’t that hard to be around. If anything out of everyone in my life, he was the person who gave me the least amount of trouble. He wouldn’t give me lip like Sam, or give me that firm frown of disapproval like Bobby.

I decided to confront my oldest when we were out one night. We left Sam at home, with specific
instructions to salt the doors and not answer for anyone.

“So, what’s going on with you?” I asked, handing Dean his beer, watching as he swiped at the foam with his finger.

“Nothing.” Dean shrugged, glancing at me, his eyes shifting around the bar, as if he were somewhat uncomfortable to be sitting here with me. More than likely uncomfortable talking to me at all was more like it.

“Don’t bullshit me.” I said, trying to keep my calm, “Somethings up. Your trainings gone to shit. Your running times are lousy, your stamina sucks. I don’t know what the hell is going on with your pin and holds. You haven’t been able to get out from under one of my pins in weeks. You haven’t been able to pin Sam in twice as long. And your shots are off. Your shots never off.”

“Just hitting a slump I guess.” Dean shrugged.

“You can’t afford to hit a slump in our line of business.” I hissed, leaning forward and grabbing him roughly by the arm, releasing him when I remembered we were in public, “It’s not like this is baseball or a damn football game. This is life or death. You know that.”

“I know.” Dean looked at me, paling slightly, “I’m fine, Dad. I swear. I’ll just try harder. I guess I’ve been in my head too much.”

“In your head too much?” I frowned at him, taking a huge gulp of my whiskey, “What the hell does that even mean?” He sounded like a fucking girl, daydreaming all day.

“I just…” Dean looked down then shrugged, “I just have to get my head on straight is all. Been drinking too much. Partying too much. I haven’t been getting enough sleep. I haven’t been focused.”

“Damn right you haven’t been focused!” I snapped. “You’re never focused. Not being focused is a good way to get someone killed!” Damn I wanted to hit him. I wanted to slap him from one side of the bar to the other. “Not focused…Try telling me something I don’t know.”

Dean glanced up at me, catching my eyes briefly before looking away. He fidgeted in his seat like he always does when he’s nervous. Like always, it annoyed the hell out of me.

“Will you sit still?” I snapped, reaching out and clamping my hand down on his thigh. He tensed immediately, so I kept my hand there. “I’m going to ask you again…what the hell is going on with you. And don’t give me the not focused bullshit. That’s a given.”

“I’m fine Dad.” Dean gave me a small lopsided smile. “There’s nothing to worry about. I swear.”

Sighing I released him. I could tell that he was lying. Hell, I taught the little shit how to lie.

Dean then skillfully changed the subject to hunting. I decided to follow his lead, seeing as I wasn’t getting anywhere by grilling him. I should have known the kid wasn’t going to pour his heart out to me.

But I knew something was wrong.

So, Dean left me with no other choice. As much as I didn’t want to…and as much as I was dreading that conversation, I had to have it.

Where my tactics with Dean had been pure domineering and bullying, I was going to have to come
up with a totally different strategy.

And like any hunt, I had to come prepared with arsenal and a plan.

I was going to have to talk to Sam.
I woke up in the middle of the night to get a drink of water when I was greeted by the sounds of someone getting sick in my and Dean’s bathroom. Okay, I wasn’t exactly greeted by the sounds, as much as I pushed my ear to the door. I could see the light was on, and seeing as it was four thirty in the morning, and Dad was sound asleep, I was hoping it was a good time to talk to my brother. That plan of course was foiled immedietly, but I quietly knocked on the door, pausing as I heard the toilet flush.

“Sammy.” Dean opened the door, leaning against it. I couldn’t see him—he’d shut off the light—but I could hear him shivering. My brother normally had a pretty strong stomach—he was lucky in that department—but whenever he did throw up, he always shivered and shook afterwards like “a crack addict needing a fix.” His words not mine.

“How’d you know it was me?” I asked, stepping into the bathroom, and shutting the door behind me.

“The knock.” Dean turned and headed back into our-well his-bedroom, turning on the nightstand lamp. “There’s no way Dad could knock that softly.” He gave me a smile before lying back into his bed.

“True.” I smiled, taking note how smart Dean was. I missed the subtly of his intelligence. No one else would have been able to identify who was on the other side of the door by the sound of the knock. I sure wouldn’t have. I took a good look at my brother, realizing he looked awfully pale.

“Are you umm…You okay?”

“M’ fine.” Dean frowned rubbing his head, “I guess I picked up some nasty bug. I got a headache. My stomach’s killing me. Serves my ass right for all those late nights and early training sessions.”

“Were you drinking tonight?” I asked, before I could stop myself. Just looking and talking to Dean, it was obvious he hadn’t been drinking. He was acting normal. Minus the being sick. He wasn’t acting overly goofy, or cocky. He wasn’t hanging on me, telling me how much he loved me. I could see the hurt flicker in Dean’s eye, but he quickly shook it away.

“I can’t even think of beer right now.” He made a face before pulling his legs up to his chest, sighing, “I felt like crap all day.”

“I didn’t mean it how it sounded.” I said, feeling like a jerk. My time alone with my brother was limited, and not only was he sick, but I was making accusations that I could tell weren’t true.

“I know.” Dean shivered again. I noticed that he had on thick grey socks. Dean never wears socks to bed. He always sleeps barefoot. I on the other hand am the opposite. I can’t sleep without them. I just feel naked somehow. But if Dean was sleeping with socks on, he had to really be feeling crummy.

I reached out and out my hand on his forehead, both relieved and proud when he didn’t pull away or flinch. “You feel a little warm. You probably have a fever. Do you want Tylenol or something?”

“I don’t think I could keep it down.” Dean sighed. “I hate puking. I’d rather do anything else.”

“I know.” I replied, trying to look comforting and hide my smile.
He couldn’t have been more truthful.

As strong and tough Dean is with every other illness that has been flung his way, he’s that much of a baby when it comes to throwing up. He’s been known to lie on the linoleum floor in the bathroom, and sob, “why me” over and over again.

He just wasn’t a good puker.

He was the kid that could never throw up in a plastic bag in the car. Even I could do that. He had to have Dad stop the car so he could go down on all fours, snot and tears running down his face, while he hurled on the side of the road. Not even Dad got in the middle of Dean and his throwing up.

“I’ll get you some water.” I soothed, ignoring the grunts of protest.

I was in the kitchen doing just that when Dad waltzed out of the kitchen, yawning. When he saw me, he instantly frowned.

“What the hell are you doing up?” He asked, “Sam, it’s five o’clock in the morning.”

“Dean’s throwing up.” I said, knowing that that there was enough to shield any brute force anger.

“He’s probably hung over.” Dad answered, moving further into the kitchen to get the coffee started, “His ass better be ready to start training.”

“No. He’s sick.” I looked at Dad, so that he could see that it was the truth. “He’s got a fever. He’s shivering and shaking.”

Dad frowned at me, before turning and heading into Dean’s room. I followed, for once not being absolutely terrified.

Dean was exactly where I’d left him. Shivering, and curled up in a ball in his bed.

“Hey, kiddo.” Dad sank down on Dean’s bed, reaching out to feel his forehead. But unlike with me, Dean did flinch. His eyes fluttered and he mumbled something that I couldn’t quite make out. Dad, who’d pulled his hand away, looking as though he’d been slapped, put one hand on Dean’s shoulder and then laid the other one on Dean’s forehead. “Well, you definitely have a fever.” Dad frowned, “You feeling like crap?”

“Peachy.” Dean replied, closing his eyes.

“When did you start feeling badly?”

“When I got up this morning.” Dean mumbled, “I was cold and freezing one minute, then burning hot the next. My stomach’s been on fire. My head’s fucking throbbing.”

“Did you drink today?”

“A few beers.” Dean mumbled, his mouth turning up in disgust.

“Okay. Well, that’s good.” Dad must have sensed my apprehension because he looked up at me, “It’s not what you think, Sam. I’m just making sure this isn’t withdrawal.”

“I’m never drinking again.” Dean replied covering his eyes with his hand.

“What did you have to eat today?” Dad rolled his eyes, and continued his investigation.
“Ugh.” Dean stuck his tongue out slightly, “Don’t talk about food. I can’t think about food at all.”

“Yes or no, Dean?”

“Ramen noodles.” Dean replied. “And a banana.”

“You hate bananas.” I couldn’t help but add.

“Kill a guy for trying to settle his stomach.” Dean mumbled, frowning. Then he let out an exasperated sigh, dragging his hand through his hair. “I have to throw up again.” He limply and blindly pushed himself out of bed, and instinctually reached out for me. I instantly grabbed onto him, helping him into the bathroom. We made it just in time for Dean to toss his stomach contents into the toilet.

“Well, Dean…” Dad said, once he was finished and was sprawled out on the bathroom floor. “I’d say you definitely have the stomach bug. I’ll go pick you up some ginger ale, chicken soup and crackers. Then, I guess I’ll head out on the hunt I was going to take Sam on. Clearly you’re not training today. Sam, you’ll stay here and take care of your brother.”

“What?” Dean and I both asked at the same time.

“I’m going to bring you stuff for your stomach. Then I’m taking off. Sammy will take care of you.”

Dean glanced at me for a split second before nodding slightly at Dad. “Okay. Sounds good.”

“I’ll head out now. That gas station up the street never closes.” Dad glanced at me, almost like he wanted to say something else, before heading out.

“Do you think he’s really going to leave us?”

“Looks like it.” Dean replied.

“Why would he do that?” I asked, my suspicions taking over, “He hasn’t left us alone in two months.”

“I don’t know.” Dean looked up at me miserably, “I don’t feel well enough to care right now, Sammy.”

He had to have been pretty crummy to just shrug Dad’s 180 off so easily. I reached out, this time brushing my hand on Dean’s flushed cheek.

“I’ll get you a bucket.” I said, “We’ll put it by your bed. That way you don’t have to keep running to the bathroom if you have to throw up.”

“I’m not puking in a bucket.” Dean grumbled. “Buckets are for babies. And you.”

I ignored him, knowing that the little bit of fight he was showing was going to be gone shortly.

Sure enough not twenty minutes after I placed the bucket by Dean’s bed, he was on his hands and knees emptying out whatever possibly could be in his stomach.

“You’re alright.” I said, patting Dean’s back. I handed Dean some water so he could rinse out his mouth, then helped him back into bed.

“Thanks, Sammy.” Dean replied. He looked completely exhausted.
By that evening, it seemed like whatever bug was in Dean’s system had finally worked its way out. He was sleeping soundly and hadn’t thrown up (and yes, I do mean in the bucket) for like four hours. Dad had in fact left us to go on his hunting trip and I was relishing in the peace and quiet.

I was just wrapping up the last bit of homework when my cell phone rang. Glancing down I sighed when I realized it was Dad. I quickly bounded out of the room to answer it, not wanting to wake Dean.

“How’s your brother?” Dad greeted me, the second I said hello.

“Better.” I swallowed, hoping that he wasn’t going to tell me he was coming home to get me, “It seems like the worst is over. He’s kept down the ginger ale since six. He hasn’t eaten anything though, so I guess that’s the next step. But he’s sleeping now, so we’ll see how it goes when he wakes up.”

“Okay, good.” Dad let out a sigh of relief, “Monitor him Sammy. He really looked bad this morning.”

“Yeah, Dad.” I said, trying to control the anger that was building. What the hell did he think I was doing? “I know.”

“I don’t know Sam.” Dad cleared his throat, “I’m worried about him. Kid’s been looking off for a long time. Maybe it’s time I moved you back in there with him. Into his room, I mean.” Dad fell silent and I realized he was waiting for me to make a comment.

“I’m fine with that.” I answered, feeling my heart begin to speed up with anticipation. Honestly, if the past few months taught me anything, it was how much more things sucked without Dean’s care and general presence. As bad as I thought I had it before, it was clear and obvious Dean made it his mission to make my life as good as he could.

“Maybe separating you boys was a mistake.” Dad continued, “I mean, you and I…we just seem to….we just…well, maybe we’ll get along better with a little less time together. You’re still hunting with me. It’s not going back to how it was before. You still have to answer to me over your brother. I’m your father. Not him.”

“Okay.” I said simply. I wanted to tell him more than anything that Dean was my Dad. That Dean was the one who raised me, but I knew if I wanted things to go back to the way they used to, at least even a little bit, I had to bite the bullet on this one and just agree with him. “That sounds reasonable.”

“And maybe we can put our heads together to figure out what in the world is going on with your brother.” Dad continued.

“Yeah, sure.” I agreed.

“I’ll be home tomorrow night.” Dad said, “See you then.”

It was only after I hung up did I have the feeling I’d just somehow made a pact with the devil.
After my ‘marathon puking my guts out day’ I woke up surprisingly hungry. When I mentioned it to Sam, who was sitting on his worn out sleeping bag, he acted like it was Christmas morning.

“That’s great!” He exclaimed, practically jumping into bed with me, “Dad bought you a ton of crackers and soup. I’ll put it on for you! I also found some jello. Only like two months expired. It should be okay, right?”

“Yeah, Sam.” I sighed, pushing him off of me, “Easy though. I’m not feeling up to early morning cuddles quite yet. Besides, I need a shower. I’m gross.”

“Let me help you.” Sam grabbed my wrist and practically pulled me out of bed.

“You going to scrub me down, too?” I asked giving him a slight grin. Despite feeling like shit, Sam’s mother henning was pretty funny.

I hope to god I didn’t sound like that.

“Do you need me to?” Sam asked, his eyes slightly widening.

“NO!” I burst out laughing, and continued to head to the bathroom. “Sorry you had to sleep in here, on the floor by the way. That couldn’t have been comfortable.”

“That’s the best part!” Sam exclaimed suddenly jumping up and down. I wish I could freaking bottle this kids energy and mix it with my morning coffee. “I’ve been waiting for you to wake up to tell you. Dad’s moving me back in with you!”

“He’s what?” I asked, feeling my heart begin to skip around up with hope. “Sam, I swear if you’re joking, I’m going to kick your ass.”

“It’s no joke.” Sam grinned at me, his dimple showing for the first time in I don’t know how long. “He called me and told me. Guess I drove him crazy enough that he can’t handle me anymore.”

“That’s understandable.” I said solemnly, laughing when Sam’s smile slipped off his face. What the fuck. The kid couldn’t possibly think I was serious. “Sam.” I said, rolling my eyes. “Chill out man. I’m kidding.”

“I know that.” Sam replied laughing freely. “I’m so happy, Dean. I really missed you.”

“Missed you too, Sammy.” I replied, “But I’m going to shower. Make sure you write about all your warm and fuzzies in your diary. I’ll be sure to read it later.”

Sam cracked up at that. I didn’t even feel it was some of my best material, but if he found it funny, then cool I guess. I just shook my head and slid into the bathroom, quickly stripping out of my clothes and tossing them into the laundry basket.

I kind of wanted to burn the fuckers but I figured I’d just wash them and rewash them before wearing them.

I knew Sam changed me at some point throughout my little song and dance with the bucket, but it still creeped me the hell out that I slept in them.

On that note, I mentally reminded myself I was going to have to change my sheets too and do my whole rinse and repeat method.

I don’t know…something about throwing up really freaked me the fuck out.
Vamps, salt and burns, blood and guts (okay, maybe not guts), and werewolf’s I can handle. But puking, fuck puking.

I want to throw up thinking about it.

After I scrubbed and rescrubbed myself –and then scrubbed and rescrubbed again-I came out of the bathroom freshly changed and found Sam making my bed.

“I stripped your sheets.” He said, looking up at me. “I was waiting till you were done in the bathroom so we can just toss the laundry in all at once.”

“Thanks, Sammy.” I said. For some reason I was could feel myself tearing up.

Relax Dean. It’s a bed. It’s a fucking bed.

“You’re welcome, Dean.” Sam said softly. He stopped what he was doing, and came over, wrapping me in a hug. I noted that he was now a good deal taller than me. Not that I was surprised—I’d been around him enough to know he was growing, but I hadn’t actually been toe to toe with him since Dad up and changed our living arrangements.

“You’re a damn Sasquatch.” I said into Sam’s shoulder.

“What?” Sam pulled away from me giving me a confused look.

“You’re fucking huge, man.”

“It’s not as great as you’d think it is.” Sam replied with a laugh, “It’s not always fun to be the one of the tallest people in the room. I have to say though; I can’t wait till I pass up Dad.”

“That’ll be the day.” I grinned.

“Trust me, I fully plan on rubbing it in.” Sam smirked. “I already have my speech all planned out. I only have about an inch and a half to go. But come on, let’s get some soup in you. I have it already warming on the stove.”

“Bitch.” I replied, following him out into the hallway.

“Jerk.” Sam answered.

It was only after I had the soup settled in my stomach and Sam and I were sitting on the couch watching tv did I allow my mind to wonder why the hell Dad had suddenly done a 180 on us, and switched us back to rooming together.

No good deed goes unpunished after all.
John

So my plan to move Sam back in with Dean worked like a charm. Partly because Dean seemed to bounce back from whatever self-pity party he’d decided to throw himself during their little separation. He was still acting odd—still wasn’t eating like he should—was still drinking, but he’d toned it down. He didn’t go out anymore on his all night benders. Which was somewhat of a disappointment because that meant he wasn’t adding any notches to his belt with the ladies as a Winchester man should…but I guess I have to take what I can get.

And like I said before, I guess I should just be glad the kid was sleeping with ladies to begin with.

Not that I should have doubted my boy…He was a Winchester after all…besides, he knew how I felt about…the alternative lifestyles…of those sickos. He knew first hand actually.

Dean had to have been about six years old. Maybe a little younger. Maybe a little older. I don’t really know. The kid always looked so little and young for his age, who am I to actually know how old he actually was. I just know Mary was gone and Sam was walking and talking. It was one of those rare occasions I took them to the park. Bobby had been on my case about me not spending enough “quality time” with the boys and being obsessed with hunting. So to prove him wrong, I took them to this park by the motel we were living in at the time.

I had been writing in my journal about my recent case, after giving Dean clear and direct instructions to look after Sammy, when I looked up to check on my sons. Sam was happily digging in the sand box. Dean was playing in the grass next to him, with another boy, who he seemed to have made friends with. I was honestly somewhat happy because ever since Mary, Dean only spoke to Sam me and Bobby. He only spoke to other people if he absolutely had to. Getting him to order at a restaurant was like pulling teeth. I was always on him about having to use his voice in case Sam was in trouble. After he’d stutter and stammer when the waitress would ask him if he’d like juice or milk, I’d badger him, asking him how he was planning on looking after his brother if he couldn’t even say what he wanted to drink. He always assured me, he would always take care of Sammy, and he was just “saving his words”. As a result, and admittedly out of cruelty, I used to make him practice talking until he practically fell asleep doing so. So needless to say, I was oddly pleased to see him playing and talking to this kid. That is until I watched him pick a flower and offer it to the damn kid before leaning over and kissing him on the lips.

Immediately I felt a fire burn through my body. When the hell was this kid going to give me a freaking break? I think I reached Dean before the other kid even registered what happened.

“Daddy!” Dean yelped at me in surprise when I grabbed him roughly by the arm. I had restrained from really laying into him since Mary died, out of respect to her. I mean I yelled and screamed at him a lot, but I hadn’t actually hurt him.

“We’re leaving!” I snapped, letting go of Dean, and picking up Sam, who’d started to cry, probably from seeing his brother so startled. “Right now!”

“Why?” Dean blinked up at me, tears rolling down his cheeks.

“Because.” I snapped, grabbing onto Dean’s wrist and dragging him with me, as I made our way back to the motel room, “Boys do not give flowers to other boys. And they do not, ever, EVER kiss other boys.”
“But that’s just Freddy.” Dean replied, stumbling slightly, as I shoved him into the motel room, watching as slammed the door and put Sam down on the floor. “He’s my friend. We were just playing the “I love you game.” You used to play it with Mommy all the time. You always gave her flowers and kissed her. I saw you.”

“You’re Mommy was a girl.” I snapped, grabbing him roughly by the shoulders. “And I’m a boy. That’s different. Boys can give flowers to girls. But boys cannot give flowers to boys. Or kiss other boys. Especially kiss.”

“Why?” Dean asked, his lower lip starting to tremble.

“Because if you do you have a sickness.” I barked, wincing as I heard Sam begin to scream “De” “De” and toddle towards his brother. “They lock you up if you have a sickness like that. Do you want that Dean? Do you? Do you want the police to take you away from me? From Sammy?”

“NO!” Dean yelled, whimpering looking backwards towards Sam, who’d reached us and was yanking on his brothers overalls. “Don’t let them take me Daddy!”

“Then you kiss only girls!” I threatened, slowly letting him go. “Am I clear?”

“Yes, Daddy.” Dean answered, kneeling down, wrapping Sammy in a hug. Sam hugged him back, yelling at me that I was bad over his “De’s” shoulder.

I shook my head, the flashback fading quickly. I heard the front door open, signaling Dean was home from bringing Sammy home from school. Sam’s dimples were showing and Dean’s cheeks were flushed, indicating they’d been laughing and kidding around. They both stopped when they saw me. Dean immediately straightened, growing quiet, and Sam made a face, making a beeline for the fridge, making a sandwich.

“How was school, Sammy?” I asked, turning to face my youngest, noting Dean was pressing himself against the counter, as far away from me as he could possibly get.

“Great.” Sam said, barely acknowledging me. “So can you come in, Dean?”

Dean didn’t answer, blushed brighter, and just looked down at the floor, nervously shifting from one foot to the other.

“Can he come where?” I asked, knowing from Dean’s reaction I wasn’t going to like whatever it was Sammy was asking of him.

“To school.” Sam suddenly grinned at me, “It’s for the students who are on the college track. Since I’m in my junior year, the school feels that the more the family is involved the more successful we will be. So, we were asked if a family member could set up a meeting with the guidance counselor to see what’s all involved.”

“Wait…What…?” I snapped. I could feel the rage surge through my body. Who the hell did Sam think he was fooling? I thought we cleared up the college thing a long time ago?

“I’m going to college.” Sam looked at me, his face smug. “I know we’ve talked about the fact that I’m interested.”

“And I know we’ve talked about the fact that you aren’t going.”
“Too bad it’s my choice.” Sam shrugged, getting up to pour himself some milk, as if we were discussing the freaking weather. “Once I turn eighteen you really don’t have a say.”

“I’m your father.” I snapped, getting up out of my chair, and going up to my youngest, blocking him against the cabinet. For the first time ever I really wanted to hit him. Dean, must have sensed it—after all, he should know, the little fucking shit—because suddenly he was in between us, his back to me, telling his brother to calm down.

“Some father.” Sam practically laughed in my face. “Dean’s my Dad. Dean’s the one who took care of me. You’re just a—”

“Sam!” Dean’s voice was gruff, “Stop it. Shut up! If you can’t, go take a fucking walk.”

Shockingly, Sam did shut up. He paused, looking at his brother, his eyes softening considerably. Then, he glared at me, before shoving past us both and storming out of the house.

Dean didn’t face me right away. I could hear him clear his throat, probably because he was trying to figure out what to say. He notably lowered his shoulders a little, and then turned around.

I however didn’t allow him to speak. I just instantly grabbed him by his shirt, yanking him forward.

“What the hell is going on?” I snapped.

“Dad.” Dean eyes widened, “Please…calm down.”

“Don’t tell me to calm down.” I held onto him, shaking him like a rag doll. It took me a moment to regain control of myself and my anger. If I hurt Dean right now, I knew Sam would lose his ever loving mind. Plus, I also was still concerned for whatever the hell was going on with my oldest. And beating the shit out of him wasn’t going to make whatever it was any better. So, I released Dean, giving him a shove. “You’re brother has some balls.”

“I don’t like it either.” Dean said softly.

“So how long have you known about this?” I asked crossing my arms.

“Since forever.” Dean looked at me, almost pitifully, “You know Sammy’s been talking about college for forever. You know this life isn’t what he wants.”

“This life isn’t about what Sam wants!” I snapped, without meaning to. “Do you think this is what I pictured for my life?”

“No…” Dean trailed off, almost as though he hadn’t really given that much thought before.

“Trust me boy.” I said, knowing I had an in, “This wasn’t the life I thought I’d have. I wanted a happy apple pie life with your mom. I wanted to grow old with her. I sure in hell didn’t want to chase some demon around the country until my hair turns grey.”

“No.” Dean replied, biting his lip slightly, “I guess you didn’t.”

“But this is the life we were given.” I continued, “So this is the life we’ve got. So your brother better get the hell over it. You better knock him off of whatever pedestal he’s put himself on. College is out.”

Dean didn’t answer me like I expected him to. I thought he’d simply nod and just tell me he’d talk
to him. Instead he faltered slightly, opening his mouth a little before closing it and staring at an imaginary spot on the floor.

“Do you have something you’d like to say?” I barked. I could feel my temper begin to rise again. Why did he have to be so freaking difficult?

“I can’t do that Dad.” Dean looked at me, his eyes full of fear, but he looked me dead on, just like I’ve always taught him. “I just…Sammy…he has his own hopes and dreams you know…? I just…I can’t go and tell him that I don’t think he should go for it because I do think he should. I told him I had to think about me going to his school, which I still do, but only because I’m not that smart and I won’t understand what the hell is going on and I don’t want to embarrass him. But I can’t tell him not to go for it. He’s my little brother. I have to be there for him.”

And that’s when I snapped.

Dean

Dad hurt me pretty bad this time. I mean busted me up big time. Hurt me so bad actually he sent me a few towns over to get a hotel for a week to recuperate until my bruises went down slightly.

At least that’s what I assumed. It happened once before, a few years ago. I’d fucked up majorly-Sam had run away from home-and Dad had kicked my ass so badly, I began to have doubts that I would ever be able to walk normally again.

I dragged myself out of bed, feeling slightly dizzy, making my way towards the bathroom. My vision was slightly off and everything had a funny haze to it. Turning on the light I winced when I saw my face. My lip was split open, dry with blood and my eyebrow was black and blue. I gingerly touched my neck, which had the markings of what I’m guessing were my Dad’s fingerprints. The last thing I remembered was Dad chocking me out on the floor. I guess that’s where I’d passed out.

A cold shiver ran through my body. I made it towards the shower, pulling back the curtain, somewhat surprised to see how clean it was. I literally have had reoccurring nightmares of having to scrub out the bathrooms in the motels we used to stay in before I dare let myself or Sammy anywhere near them. Maybe that’s where I developed the creepy crawlies when it came to germs and dirt. Which is strange for a hunter, I know. But then again hunting didn’t gross me out. It’s not like bathed in the blood and grime of it all. Plus, I always made sure I washed off the gore of it all the second I could.

Anyway, relieved I pulled off my shirt and got out of my boxers and jeans, feeling sick at the sight of my bruised up chest and stomach. Groaning, I turned the water on warm, waited till it hit my preferred temperature then climbed in. I flinched as the water hit me, knowing the burning feeling would go away after I adjusted to the soft pounding of the water. I realize a bath would logically make more sense but there was no way that I sitting in that tub, no matter how clean it looked.

When I got out of the shower I patted myself down carefully, and wrapped the towel around my waist. It was surprisingly soft for a motel towel and made my way back into the bedroom. I pulled out a clean tee-shirt and boxers out of my duffel Dad had packed and sunk back down on the bed. I was feeling pretty dizzy so I was glad I didn’t have any actually wounds that needed attended to. Just a bunch of bruises. I turned the tv, watching this show about haunted hotels (which was totally
“bs) when my phone rang.

Realizing it was Dad’s name and number I swallowed hard and answered it.

“Dean.” Dad’s voice was firm and harsh. “How are you?”

I knew he wasn’t actually asking.

“Fine.” I said, knowing that was the only answer acceptable.

“So here’s the plan.” Dad said, “I’m told your brother you’re on a hunting trip a few towns over. I told him you’re hunting a low class demon. You’ll be gone about a week and a half. The thing kicked your ass pretty badly. You get all that? I’d write it down for you, but…well…you and I both know that wouldn’t do any good.”

“I got it.” I said, trying to choke back the hurt.

Why did he always have to throw the reading thing in my face.

Sure, it hurt when he picked on me about my size. I couldn’t help that I was smaller…But I could at least work with what I had. I did my best to make up for it in my speed, strength, and agility.

But the reading….Damn it, that was something that stung and stung every time.

I was so fucking stupid.

“How’s your vision?” Dad asked, sounding impatient.” From the sound of his voice I was guessing he must have asked more than once.

“A bit hazy.” I admitted, knowing if he was asking specifically he must already know the answer.

“Okay. I’ll be over to check on you when Sam goes to sleep. You hit your head pretty hard when you went down. You probably have a concussion. So, try not to sleep.”

“Okay.” I said. I was feeling tired so I knew it was going to be a bitch not to sleep.

“Oh, and Dean, if your brother calls you, you tell him what I told you.”

He hung up before I could reply. I sighed, and tossed my phone aside. I positioned my pillows so that I was forced to sit up, and was almost uncomfortable.

Less likely to fall asleep that way.

Regardless of how I was sitting, I could feel my eyes start to drop after about two hours. For one, my head felt extremely heavy and for another I couldn’t really focus too well on the tv screen. The bright lights kind of all squiggled together. My phone went off for the second time. Sighing, I flipped it open to answer it when Sammy’s name appeared on the screen.

I’m not that stupid I can’t read my own brother’s name.

“Dean!” Sam wailed into the phone. It was obvious to me he’d been crying. The desperation of his voice made me snap out of whatever the hell state I was in. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” I said, clearing my throat. Sam would be able to sense any trace of me being less than truthful if I wasn’t careful.
Kid’s like a fucking lie detector test lately.

“Dad said you’re on a hunt.” Sam sniffed loudly. I wanted to tell him to go get a damn Kleenex, but I knew he wasn’t in the mood for any of my big brother jabs right now. And frankly, neither was I.

“I am. Demon.” I repeated. “Some low-end tool bag. Should be gone about a weekish.” When Sam didn’t say anything I continued, “I’m holed up in some shit hole apartment. It’s fucking gross.”

“Are you telling me the truth?” Sam asked, his voice catching.

“Yeah.” I glanced up as I saw Dad enter the motel.

I guess he’d gotten himself a key. Smart actually. I knew he’d packed my gun—it was under my clean shirts—and I’d put it by my pillow—but I also knew that with my vision blurred, I wasn’t truly capable of using it.

I mean I was, I could shoot with my eyes closed and hit the target better than anyone, but I wouldn’t have been able to see fully see it was him. His number one rule besides ‘Take care of Sammy,’ was ‘Shoot first, ask questions later’. And I wasn’t looking to shoot my Dad.

Despite everything.

“I’m telling the truth, Sammy.” I made sure to emphasis my brother’s name so that Dad would know who I was on the phone with. Dad seemed to get the hint because he sat down on my bed, waiting.

“I just thought maybe something happened after I stormed out.” Sam was still sobbing. “I never should have said anything about the college thing. I’m sorry Dean. I was overly excited. I guess I just wanted to rub it all in Dad’s face a bit. Okay, a lot. I’m sorry. Also, I never should have left you alone with him.”

“Sam.” I sighed, glancing at Dad who hadn’t moved from his spot on the bed. “Calm down. There’s nothing to be sorry for. It’s late. You have school tomorrow. Go to bed. I’m fine. I’m hunting. I’ll see you in a few days.”

Luckily, this managed to get Sam to mumble a very emotional goodnight to me before hanging up. I put the phone down on top of the night stand and looked at my father.

Somehow his stillness scared me.

He was just sitting there.

His hands folded in his lap.

Just sitting there.

Finally he spoke.

“Did he believe you?”

“Yeah.” I nodded, “I think so.”
“Good.” Dad turned to me. “He was ranting and raving that if I hurt you he was going to call Bobby. Tell him everything.”

“He won’t.” I licked my lip, knowing it wasn’t a promise I could keep.

“He better not.” Dad threatened, “I’m telling you Dean, things will not end well if he does. Now lie back.”

“I feel fine.” I said, knowing that it was obvious that I was anything but. Dad looked like he had about three heads.

“Let me see your eyes.” Dad said, taking out a small flashlight and looking into them. I shied away at the brightness, trying to bat Dad’s hands away, without realizing I was doing so.

“Well, your eyes are sensitive to the light, that’s for sure.” Dad sighed, “How’s your vision?”

“It’s okay.” I lied.

I couldn’t tell him the truth.

For one, I didn’t want to appear weak.

I could hack this.

Secondly, I didn’t want him to feel bad for hurting me like he did.

I know he didn’t mean it.

Not really.

“You probably do have a concussion.” Dad said with a heavy sigh, “But you’ll be fine. You’ll be back to hunting before you know it.” Dad motioned for me to lift my shirt and I did. He lightly pressed my stomach and ribs, I guess seeing if he did any permanent damage. I was able to pass off my flinching as just being injured. Finally, he nodded, seeming satisfied. “You’ll be okay, Dean. You just need to take it easy for a few days.”

“I know. I’ll be fine Dad.”

“I’m going to spend the night here.” Dad replied, getting up and plopping down on the other bed. For the first time it dawned on me there were two beds and it had probably been his intention to stay here with me the entire time.

I automatically could feel myself tense up. I hated the idea of spending a night in a strange place, let alone in a strange place with my Dad without Sammy. I mean, I was fine if we were on a hunt. Normally I was either too tired—or too drunk—to care, but the idea of him being here while I was hurting just freaked me out.

“You don’t have to.” I replied, “I’ll be fine. Sammy’s home alone.”

“Sammy’s not a kid anymore, Dean.” Dad said, grabbing a bottle of what looked like whiskey out of the duffle bag that he seemingly pulled out of nowhere. “He’ll be fine. He’s stayed home alone before. I’ve told you before, you have to stop babying that kid so much. So close your eyes and get some rest. I’ll be checking on you throughout the night.”

I knew better than to argue. So, I simply climbed under the covers, rolled over and faced the opposite wall. It’s not like Sam was in actual danger. Dad was right; he could survive the night, if
not a few more, on his own.

And I did know Sam wasn’t a baby anymore. I mean, I had to look up to make eye contact with my little brother, but to me, he was always going to be just that; my little brother. I don’t care how old we were or how old we got. Sam’s needs were always going to be put way ahead of mine.

I’d do anything for that kid.

I’d even go to hell for him.
Chapter 53

Bobby

I was sitting at home, finishing off my fifth or sixth beer of the evening-when the phone rang. Pissed off as hell that I had to get up from my research about a summoning spell, I grumbled and barked into the phone.

“Who the hell is this?” I snapped.

“Bobby?” Sam’s voice came from the other end. At least it sounded like Sam. Although his voice was slightly deeper than I remembered. It’s been a while since I last spoken with the kid. I talked to Dean regularly-the boy made an attempt to call me at least every other week-but I hadn’t actually seen either of them since the last time they came to visit. Not since I called John about Dean’s weight. And I’m not sure that all had to do with just John.

“Sam?” I questioned.

“Yeah.” Sam sniffed.


“It’s Dean.” Sam sniffed, “At least I think it is. Dad and I had a big fight a few days ago. Dean hasn’t been home since.”

“Okay…” I said, trying to piece together what the kid was saying.

“Dad says he’s on a hunt. And that’s what Dean said too…but I don’t believe it.”

“Why not?” I could feel my blood begin to pump through my veins.

“Could you just come meet me, Bobby?” Sam’s voice cracked with unnecessary desperation. Truthfully I was halfway out the door already. “I really need to talk to you.”

“I’ll call you when I’m close.” I responded before hanging up the phone.

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I made the drive in about half the time it normally would take me. I drove about 80 the entire way, luckily dodging the cops using this old radar radio I put together years ago. I called Sam, once I was about fifteen minutes away and he asked me to meet him at the local library, telling me that it was the least likely place either Dean or his Dad was likely to show up.

Sam met me in the basement, the reference room, where no one ever really goes. He didn’t talk to me at first, and just led me to a smaller room where he promptly shut the door. Then, he burst into tears and collapsed into my chest.

It took me a good ten minutes to calm Sam down enough to be able to talk to me. I honestly didn’t know what to say to him besides shushing him and telling him everything was going to be okay. Had this been Dean I would have cracked some type of joke and made him laugh to lighten the mood, but like I said before, I just never had that type of relationship with Sam. Besides, ‘speaking
Sam’ was always Dean’s specialty, and apparently it was Dean who Sam was upset with or over.

“So what’s going on?” I asked once Sam wiped his nose on his sleeve and sank into a chair.

“I have to tell you something.” Sam said, his voice low, “And I promised Dean I wouldn’t. I didn’t even know for a long time. I mean, I guess I should have known. But I didn’t. don’t know how I didn’t know. But I know now. I should have told you when I first found out, but I promised not Dean not to, but I can’t keep it in anymore.”

“Sam, take a breath.” I was trying my best not to show how exasperated I was feeling. I knew that my frustration was more to do with panic then Sam himself. “Whatever it is, just say it.”

“Dad beats him, Bobby.” Sam said, his tears falling quickly. “Like really beats him.”

“He what?” My question came out harsh and sharp.

“Please don’t make me say it again.” Sam whimpered. “Please, just help him. Please. I’m begging you to do something. Please help my brother.”

Balls.

How could I have not seen it.

How couldn’t I have known.

Suddenly everything made sense.

The flinching.

The complete change in his behavior whenever John walked into a room.

How he’d always shut down…

How he obeyed every order John gave without hesitation, without question.

How he jumped to perform at a moment’s notice.

His panic whenever he was brought home for shop lifting that I was going to tell his Dad.

His panic on how / was going to deal with him.

The fucking bruises.

His bruises…

I’d assumed they were from training. I’d assumed they’d been from hunting.

How the hell couldn’t I have seen what was right in front of my face.

How couldn’t I have known?

I was supposed to be Dean’s protector. I was supposed to be his biggest advocate. And I failed him.

I failed him in the biggest way I could ever fail a person.
I failed the one person in my life, in this world who I’d give my life up for.
I failed the person I called my son.

I was going to kill him.
I was going to kill John.
I was sure of it.

Once Sam broke the news and then started supplying me with stories, I knew the next time I saw John Winchester I was going to cause him some great bodily harm.
I wanted to make him suffer.
I wanted to make him suffer like he’d made Dean suffer.

I wanted him to feel the pain. I wanted him to feel so beaten and so broken he didn’t have the energy or ability to crawl away. I wanted him to fucking bleed. I wanted him to be so bruised that he couldn’t find a place on his body that wasn’t black and blue.

I was gonna hurt him.

And I was gonna hurt him bad.

As much as it killed me, I had to see John before I saw Dean. And not in the confrontational way that I wanted. I knew I had to remain calm first and for most and that it was important for John to not even know I was in town. I figured if I followed John first thing in the morning, he’d take me to where ever he was storing the boy.

Let me tell you, it was tough. As I watched him get into the impala, I felt this urge to kill him. But, I knew I had to hold in my rage if I wanted to get to Dean. So, I simply cursed at him, put on my sunglasses and my hat that has the long hair attached-don’t judge me, I don’t like it either-and followed a car behind him all the way to a motel a few towns over.

It was surprisingly nice, which sent a bad feeling to me right off the bat. Hunters aren’t exactly known for picking five star accommodations. The fact that this one looked clean and respectable meant that it was likely John was trying to make up for something. Dean was a bit of a germaphobe and a neat freak…So if it was he who John was visiting, that made me all the more worried.

John left and drove off about ten minutes later. I took a deep breath, tossed the sunglasses and hat in the backseat and got out of the car. I went up to the door where John had just come out of, took out my lock pick and picked the lock. I had a feeling if I knocked Dean wouldn’t answer the door.

When I got into the room, Dean was nowhere to be seen. I guess he heard the door close though because he came from around the corner, talking to me like he assumed I was John.

“Dad? Did you—” He stopped short when he saw me. His mouth dropped open. The ice pack that he’d been holding dropped to the floor. “Bobby…” He sputtered, “What…what are you doing here?”
That’s when I knew. Everything Sam said was true. Not that I doubted it, but the small amount of hope that I had that perhaps things were being over exaggerated were gone. It was clear Dean had been beaten and been beaten badly. And it was clear that it wasn’t from some hunt or as a result of a training session that had gone too far.

“Bobby?” Dean asked again.

“Oh Dean…” I let out a shaky breath, “What the hell did he do to you?”
Chapter 54

Dean

When I walked out of the bathroom and saw Bobby I swear my heart stopped. I instantly tried to search for something to say.

Anything really.

A joke.

An excuse.

A story.

Fucking anything but the truth.

But, I could tell by Bobby’s eyes that he was here for particular reason. And that reason was the one I’d been dreading my whole life.

He knew.

He fucking knew.

God dammit Sam.

So now I had to face my surrogate father, the one person who I knew could help me and lie my ass off that I was okay.

Even though I knew I wasn’t.

I’m so fucking tired.

“Oh Dean…” Bobby sighed heavily, moving slightly towards me “What the hell did he do to you?”

“What’s who done?” I said, thinking quickly. “I just got back from a hunt and—”

“Don’t play me, Dean.” Bobby interrupted. “I know, okay? I know.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” I shrugged. “Come on, Bobby. You know you’ve had a few bang ups after a hunt. It’s nothing to worry about.”

“Sam called me. He told me what’s been going on.”

I sighed, knowing I wasn’t willing to call Sam a liar. Not to Bobby. Not again.

But it wasn’t like the other alternative was great either.

I went over to the bed and sank down, burying my face in my hands.

“Dean…” Bobby came over and sat down beside me. “Dean, let me help you. Let me protect you. God damnit, son…how could I…how could you…?” Bobby’s voice broke. I heard him let out a shuddering breath and before I knew it he was crying.
“I’m okay, Bobby.” I said, “Really. Don’t cry about me. I’m fine. It’s nothing I haven’t handled before. I just gotta hang in there until Sam graduates, then I—”

“Will you shut the hell up?!” Bobby suddenly snapped. “Will you for one second just stop worrying about Sam, and worrying about yourself? Damnit Dean! Do you honestly care that little about what happens to you? Look at you! Fuck, Dean. Your Daddy beat you half to death.”

“I’ve had worse.” I said without thinking.

“Yeah, cause that makes this all okay.” Bobby snapped motioning at me. Then he sighed. “I’m sorry. I’m not mad at you…I just…this is all just…” He looked at me, his eyes and face red. “So, how longs he been beating you? And I want an honest answer.”

“Since I was little.” I shrugged and began running my hands together, “I don’t know. I mean, I guess he always hit me. Even before Mom…” I felt my own voice catch. “Don’t get me wrong, Bobby. She didn’t know. He hit me once and she knew and she kicked him out of the house. He swore up and down he’d never do it again. When it started up, I didn’t want to tell her…I didn’t want him to have to leave again, you know? Besides it wasn’t so bad back then….” I glanced at Bobby to try to read his expression. I didn’t want him being angry with my Mom. More than anything I didn’t want him to be mad at her. His face however was stoic.

“Go on.” Was all he said.

“I guess it really started up again after…after she died. I was about six I guess. Sammy was really little. He’d just started walking. He was late you know…I didn’t know how to get him to walk…”

“Dean.” Bobby said shortly, “Focus.”

“So anyway,” I continued, swallowing hard, “Sammy took his first steps that day. I was so excited. Dad was sleeping off a hangover. I guess I woke him up. You know how he is when he’s hungover…So he umm…he hit me pretty hard that day. After that…I mean, it just I guess continued.”

“And I’m guessing it got worse over time?”

“You could say that.” I shrugged once again. “I mean, most of the time it was my fault. I was sloppy at training, or fucked up on a hunt. Or messed up taking care of Sammy. Let’s face it Bobby.” I looked at him, giving him a half smirk, “I’m not exactly what my Dad ever wanted in a son. I never have been. I can’t even blame him. I—”

“Stop it.” Bobby suddenly grabbed me roughly, picking me up off the bed by my shirt, “Don’t you ever think that about yourself. Anyone, any man, would count himself lucky to have you as a son. I know I would. Don’t you ever, ever let whatever that man has brainwashed into that mind of yours make feel like you are less of a person. And don’t you ever let him make you feel like you deserve to get beaten.”

I couldn’t look Bobby in the eye, mainly because I wasn’t buying what he was selling. So, I focused on this piece of art in the room instead. It wasn’t particularly interesting but it was better than Bobby seeing how much I hated myself.

Bobby released his grip on my shirt just to wrap me in a tight hug. I winched slightly when he bumped a sore spot on my upper back by my shoulder. Bobby held me for a long time, rocking me slightly. I could feel him start to cry again.

I on the other hand felt surprisingly numb.
I’m not kidding you.

I literally felt nothing.

I didn’t feel fear, or relief, or sadness.

It was like I wasn’t even in the room. Like I was just watching this whole thing happen to me, but I wasn’t actually there.

I don’t know if that even makes any sense.

Bobby released me, and held me at arm’s length. “We gotta come up with a plan, kid. I’m gonna call your brother. Three heads are better than two. And by the looks of your eyes, you got a nasty concussion.”

“I’m fine.” I argued, turning away from him. But even as I said it, I couldn’t deny that I was starting to feel dizzy again.

Like I had been for days.

I’d get up, take a shower, and have to lie back down.

Or get up, make coffee, have a few sips, and would find the room begin to spin.

“Rest Dean.” Bobby said, directing me to the bed. “I’ll go pick up your brother.”

I guess I passed out the moment I hit the pillow. Because the next thing I knew, I had Sammy gently shaking me awake.

“Hey, big bro.” He said, his voice soft, “I was worried about you.”

“Sammy.” I mumbled, giving him a slight pat. “Fancy meeting you here.”

“Oh god, Dean….” Sam’s voice hitched, “God…he really messed you up.”

“Come on, Sam.” I said, opening my eyes, and trying to focus on my brother’s face. Ever since this last go run with my dad whenever I woke up, it took a while for things to come into focus. “I’m fine. Nothing that won’t heal.”

Sam responded like I expected him to; he dropped his head down on my shoulder and started sobbing. “I’m sorry, Dean.”

I groaned, “Great here we go with the chick flick moments.”

“Don’t joke.” Sam suddenly sat up. “Let me say this. I’m so sorry Dean. I shouldn’t have said what I did. I was just excited. I wanted him for just once to be excited for me, even though I knew he wouldn’t be. I wanted him to realize how important you are to me, which is why I picked you to be the one to do this whole process with me. And yeah, maybe just maybe I wanted to piss him off. But when you told me to take a walk…I never thought he’d do…I’d never thought he’d go this far.”

“Sammy, it wasn’t your fault.” I sighed. I couldn’t stand to see my baby brother crying like this. Not over me. “After you left I said some stuff I shouldn’t have. That’s why he did what he did. I
mouthed off.”

“What over?” Sam looked at me confused. “You never mouth off.”

“It was over a hunt we were planning.” I shrugged, “I told him I thought his plan wouldn’t work. I told him I knew better. He didn’t like that very much. So, I told him I wasn’t if we weren’t going to do my plan I wasn’t going.”

Sam frowned, “That doesn’t make any sense Dean. You always agree with Dad. Even when he’s acting like an asshole.”

“That’s not totally true.” I mumbled, feeling a prang of annoyance.

True I might not stick up for myself. And I may fold when it comes to me and my wants and needs when it came to my father, but I did my best to do right by Sam. As well as I could.

“Boys.” Bobby interrupted, “Let’s focus on what’s important. Let’s not get caught up in the details. We need a plan. You’re Daddy…he may not have a lot going for him, but he’s manipulative as hell. If we are going to go up against him, get you out safely Dean, and get Sam out legally we need to play this with our heads and not our emotions.”

“Who says I want to leave?” I asked, suddenly confused.

“Are you kiddin me?” Bobby asked, his eyes widening, “You mean to tell me, that after all that’s happened, after all these years of your dad smackin you around, you’re just gonna sit there and take more of it?”

“I only have about a year and a half left.” I shrugged, “I told you that. Sammy will be eighteen soon. He can go off to college. Then whatever happens, happens.”

“Whatever happens, happens?” Bobby snapped, holding up his hand to silence my brother who at this point had started pacing around the room. Him and his god damn long ass legs. “Do you really think that little of yourself? Did he fuck you up in the head that much? Your daddy’s skinned your backside up and down and bloodied you up left and right your whole life and you’re just acting like it’s the most normal thing in the world. Dean, you’re not safe. He could have killed you this time! By the looks of this motel room, I’m sure he was feeling somewhat panic striken or at least bad, and John Winchester never feels bad...not as long as I’ve known him. And here you are, sitting here telling me calm as can be that tellin me you wanna walk back into that house like nothin happened? I’m giving you an out here, kid.”

“And I’m saying I don’t need your out.” I shrugged, glancing at Sam who at this point had stopped and was just staring at me, his face a beet red. I honestly couldn’t tell if he was going to cry or charge at me.

“What exactly are you trying to say Dean.” Sam asked, his voice strange and deep, like he’s just gone through puberty in the past sixty seconds. “Are you trying to say that after I leave for college, you don’t care what happens to you?”

“All I’m saying is once you’re safely in school I’ll know my job is done.” I replied. “That’s what you always wanted, and that’s what you deserve. You’ll be all grown up Sammy.” Embarrassingly I could feel tears begin to roll down my cheeks, “You’ll start your own life, you’ll get the hell away from this life. You’ll get away from me and Dad. You’ll be normal.”

“First off, let’s face it. I come from this family... So I’ll never be normal” Sam’s gave us both a slight grin, which wasn’t returned on either side. He shrugged it off though and just kept talking.
“And yeah I want to get out of hunting. I always have. I won’t lie about that. I want a life as far away from all of this as I can get. But when I talk about leaving, I’m not talking about leaving you. Dad, sure. As far as I’m concerned he should get the hell out of both of our lives…but you…there’s no way I’d ever want you gone, or not want to have you around. You’re my big brother. And I love you.”

I paused, taking in all that Sam was saying. Quite truthfully I knew that what he was saying should hit a hell of a lot more than it was.

But it didn’t.

All I ever wanted was a family to care about and to care about me.

But nothing Sam said mattered.

Everything was crashing all around me.

Despite what Sam said, he was leaving.

He’d broken his promise and called Bobby.

He should have just kept his fucking mouth shut.

So now, Bobby knew.

And he sure in hell wasn’t going to let me just walk back into that house with Dad like nothing happened.

Sam had just undone what I’ve worked years to hide.

Our entire world was crashing and he’s just sitting there, spouting off his feelings that were a bunch of bullshit.

I wanted to fucking disappear.

So I rolled over and pulled the blanket over my head, trying to drown out the rest of his speech that I didn’t care to hear.

Sam

I never wanted to hug and strangle my brother more.

I was relieved when Bobby called me, saying that he found him. I broke down when he told me the state he was in. ‘Black and blue marks everywhere, seems like a few broken ribs by the way he was holding himself, eye look like he’s dazed and concussed’. I broke down even further once I actually saw him.

There’s never been any doubt that my brother’s always been pretty. I’ve heard it being said ever since I was little. I’ve heard waitresses, landlords, and hunters alike telling Dad how beautiful he was. I knew that Dean hated it. I knew he hated the fact that people thought he was beautiful. He told me once it made him feel weak. I never really got why…the way I saw it he was lucky…Dean could walk into a room and easily turn heads…but he hated it.
Dad hated it too. I know he’s definitely knocked out a few grown men for making jokes that if he needed money he should just sell Dean’s money maker. When I was younger, I had no idea what that meant and was confused by my father’s suddenly explosion of violence. After a few incidences of that, I braved the front and actually asked Dad what the guy who said he ‘envied the glass of Dean’s ice tea glass’ meant. Dad of course had punched the guy in the head, and we’d bolted from the scene before anyone had a chance to blink. It was then he explained to me that there were people in the world who were just as dangerous as the creatures we hunt. He said that Dean being pretty was something we had to watch out for, especially in our line of work. He said that some hunters, some monsters, some people, would use it to their advantage. It took me a few more years to get what he meant. Now of course I know better.

But as I looked down at my sleeping brother, I felt tears prickling my eyes. My brother was still beautiful of course. But the evidence of what Dad did to him was awful. His eye brow was completely and black and blue. His lip was painfully spilt open and swollen and misshapen. I could see even by the way he was curled up half on his side he had finger-print sized bruising all along his neck, where I’m guessing Dad had grabbed him. I didn’t even want to think of what the rest of him looked like. Just thinking about it made me sick to my stomach.

What was worse than seeing some of the damage was hearing Dean spouting off to Bobby. I knew Dad had messed him up mentally—I knew it first hand—but I never ever thought he’d screwed him up this badly. I knew that Dean didn’t exactly have the highest opinion of himself…but listening to him discount himself and his own needs and safety made me want to grab him and shake some sense into him. I held steady though, knowing that the last thing Dean needed was another physical threat.

What I needed to do though was try to show Dean how important he was to me. But as I tried to tell him, I could see everything I was saying was falling on death ears. I don’t know if it was the concussion, or he was just that far gone at the moment, but Dean was just looking at me, his eyes void of any emotion. For a second I saw a flicker of registering what I was saying, or in my brother’s case, allowing himself to register, but then he gave me a smirk and his typical, “Shut up bitch” response.

“Alright, alright, you two.” Bobby cut in, “Save the family therapy for later. Right now we have to figure out what the hell we’re gonna do. Dean, I could easily take you home with me. You’re twenty. That’s not a problem legally, and I’d love to have you.”

“Not going.” Dean replied, without a moment’s hesitation. “Not leaving Sammy.”

“I’ll be fine.” I said, exasperatedly, “Dean, come one. He’s never hit me. And he’s had plenty of opportunities. How many fights have we gotten into and he’s always walked away. He’s never done anything to me like he has to you. He knows that I wouldn’t allow it.”

“Sam.” Bobby said sharply. “I need you to shut up.” He gave me a look of such disgust I instantly backed down and went to sit on the other bed. He watched me go, his eyes narrowing on me. I never saw Bobby glare at me like that before.

“Can we just change the subject?” Dean mumbled. “I don’t want to talk about this anymore.”

“No, son.” Bobby sighed, going over and sinking down onto Dean’s bed, “We can’t. I’m sorry Dean, but we can’t let this go. Your daddy…he’s been hurting you a long time. He’s gonna hurt you one time too many…he’s gonna hurt you and not be able to take it back.”

“Nah.” Dean grinned, clearly changing tactics, “He needs me around for hunting. He wouldn’t hurt me bad enough I couldn’t hunt anymore. He needs someone to cover his back. Sammy over there
made it clear it’s not going to be him. So I’m pretty sure that gave me a few extra years.”

“Will you just stop!” I snapped, jumping up to confront my brother, only to be blocked by Bobby. “Stop with the jokes, Dean! Dad’s a jerk. I hate him for hurting you. I hope he goes out on a hunt and gets himself maimed. I hope he gets hurt so bad he can never hurt you again.”

“Take it back.” Dean stood up, facing me.

“No.” I barked, “I won’t take it back, because I mean it. I mean it. I actually sometimes wish he never comes back at all.”

“Sam.” Bobby tightened his grip on me, shaking me slightly. “Stop it. Despite what you might feel, now’s not the time to—” He was stopped by the sound of the bathroom door slamming. “Damnit!” Bobby snapped, letting go of me and throwing up his hands and headed over to the bathroom door. “Take a freaking walk, Sam.”

“I don’t want to.” I said, folding my arms.

“Then I’ll kick you out.” Bobby said simply. “You may be a hell of a lot taller than me, but I can promise you I can still take you idjit self. So get the hell out. Let me deal with your brother.”

“Fine.” I turned and left, slamming the door behind me.
Hey guys, sorry for the long awaited update. I've been sitting on this chapter for a while, but I've held a hell of a few weeks and just haven't been able to post. I apologize. I hope you enjoy it. Already began writing the next chapter too...

Bobby

I watched Sam go, grateful that he gave me little to no problem when I told him to take a walk. I get that he was upset, but sometimes the kid was too damn outspoken and too damn harsh for his own good. He should know better than anyone not to spook his brother when he’s clearly so vulnerable. Granted, I got where Sam was coming from-hell I thought it myself a million times since last night- but saying it out loud to Dean was completely uncalled for.

I knew now not only did I have a beaten up, conditioned that he ‘deserved it’, abused kid on my hand, but one that was now locked up in a bathroom as well.

“Dean.” I knocked on the naturally locked door “Come on kid. Let me in.”

“Get out of here, Bobby.” The reply came out short and gruff. “Just leave me alone.”

“I can’t do that, son.” I sighed, “It’s just us. Sam’s out walking off some steam…just open the door. Let’s figure this out together. We gotta come up with a plan here.”

This time I got absolutely not reply. So, I pulled out my big guns. The only arsenal I had left.

“Dean.” I said, taking a deep breath and leaning against the door, “I understand what you’re feeling…I do…my Daddy…my Daddy…he beat me up to.”

I paused, listening. Then I heard the sound of the lock clicking. The door opened, and Dean stood there, his mouth hanging slightly open.

“What you say?” He whispered, his eyes wide.

“I said, my Daddy beat me too.” I said, not backing down. As much as I wanted to turn and walk away, I knew that I couldn’t. I couldn’t ask Dean to face his own demon if I refused to face mine.

“I thought…you said he didn’t die when you were little?” Dean’s frowned slightly, biting his lip.

“Yeah.” I nodded, “He did. I umm…he…” I paused. I couldn’t tell the kid the truth. I couldn’t tell him that my Dad died by my own hands. That I’d grabbed a gun and shot him, killing him instantly. Not yet. Not now. “He was a hell of a tyrant. Beat me. Beat my momma…just…he…he wasn’t a good guy.”

“I’m sorry that happened to you.” Dean’s lower lip trembled slightly, “I never knew… I just… I just figured I was… alone.”
“You’re not.” I could tell that we were starting to get somewhere. “It’s a hell of a lousy club to be a part of, but trust me…you aren’t alone.”

“Did he drink?” Dean took his eyes away from me and began running his thumb along the woodwork of the doorframe, studying it intently.

“Yeah.” I nodded, “He was a sonofabitch when he was sober, but when he was drunk…he was absolutely terrifying. I used to hide in my closet the second I heard his truck pull up after he was out with his buddies. I knew what was going to happen. No matter what my Mom and I did…he’d always lose it on us.”

“Dad’s worse when he drinks too.” Dean bit his lip, “Or maybe he isn’t…I don’t know…drunk…at least I think he doesn’t mean to hurt me…I just…I just don’t know why he does it, you know? I try to not piss him off…to not screw up…but…I just always manage to make him mad.”

“It’s not your fault, Dean.” I said, reaching out and lightly putting my hand on his shoulder. “You’re daddy…he…he has a problem….He never dealt well with your momma’s death…he’s just…he shouldn’t be taking it out on you. You haven’t done anything. If anything, you’ve helped keep your family together.” Dean’s response was to just shuffle his feet. He didn’t shrug me off though, so I took it as a sign to continue. “Let’s come out of the bathroom, huh? I’m an old man. Let’s go have a seat somewhere.”

“Okay, gramps.” Dean replied, nodding.

I breathed a sigh of relief. If Dean was attempting to make a joke, he was at least beginning to let his guard down. At least a little. We walked over to the small table and chairs and sat down. Dean looked at me, his green eyes watching my every move.

“I gotta say.” I said, trying to lighten the mood, “Your Dad hooked you up with this room. I don’t think I’ve ever been in a room so nice.”

“Yeah.” Dean let out a short laugh, “Small price to pay.”

I looked at him for a moment before I laughed too. I have to say, kid did have an amazing sense of comedic timing.

“You’re something else.” I said, reaching out, and gently ruffling his hair. Dean gave me a slight grin. “You’re a good kid, Dean.”

“So…” Dean asked, blatantly ignoring my complement, his face growing serious again. “What did you and your mom do after…after your dad died?”

“We moved to a new town. And to a lot after that. My mom…she never got over his death…she had a hard time keeping a job. She died when I was seventeen. Liver failure.”

“I’m sorry.” Dean said softly, “I was hoping for a happy ending for you.”

“It’s okay. It was a long time ago.”

Dean nodded, biting his lip.

“I’m just so tired, Bobby.” He said softly, a single tear rolling down his cheek.

“It’s okay to be.” I put my hand on his shoulder, “You’ve been holding it together for too long. You’ve been stronger than anyone. You don’t need to deal with this alone anymore. You’ve taken
great care of Sam. You’ve done better by him then any parent could ever hope to do. Now it’s your turn. Let me help you.”

Dean looked away from me as his tears started to spill over. He was quiet for a long time. I stayed quiet too. I just sat there, letting him take it all in, knowing he needed to think things through.

Dean looked like he was about to say something, when his phone started to ring. By the look on his face I didn’t even have to ask who it was. The kid turned white and instantly tensed.

“Hi Dad.” He said, glancing at me quickly. He fell quiet for a while as though he were listening intently. “Yeah. I’m fine….Yeah, I’m icing it…No, I’m not dizzy anymore…Sammy? I’ve talked to him, but he still thinks we’re hunt—Oh…Dad…But we’ve been working on that for…Okay. You’re right. I’m sorry….No, sir. I don’t. Yeah. See you in a week.”

Dean hung up the phone. His shoulders now slumped.

God he looked so small.

He looked so helpless.

“What he say?” I asked.

“He’s going on this hunt we’ve been working on…” Dean shook his head, “He said I’m too hurt to go…and that he can’t wait…”

“Well whose damn fault is that?” I asked, feeling my anger begin to grow again. “He’s the one who bloody hurt you, Dean.”

Dean looked at me, his eyes full of complete grief and what I could only could describe as guilt. He then got up and headed back to the bathroom, this time closing the door softly behind him.

I buried my face in my hands, sighing.

I knew that trying to convince Dean to let me help was gonna be hard. But damn, with him being so jumpy this was gonna be pretty much impossible.

I was tempted to start knocking on the bathroom door again, but I knew that Dean needed space. So, shouted to Dean that I would be back soon, and took the advice I’d given Sam a little while ago, and headed out on a walk.

I walked around for little over an hour. Forty minutes into it, I started panicking that Dean would think I left him because I was angry with him. So I made it back to the motel as quickly as I could only to find Sam now sitting at the table, reading the newspaper, and Dean sound asleep in his bed.

“Hey.” I said, suddenly feeling a bit bashful around the youngest Winchester. I was still pretty pissed at him for all the things he’d said to his brother, but I also knew that I wasn’t one to judge. After all, I hadn’t been there to see the things Sam had seen. I hadn’t even known there was a problem.

“Hey.” Sam glanced up at me, well, I guess glared up at me, before going back to his reading.

“What you reading?”

“Trying to decide if I’m going to vote Democrat or Republican.” Sam said. I knew this was Dean I
was talking to, this would have been a joke, but with Sam, I wasn’t quite sure. Judging by his intense look, I’m guessing he was serious.

“When did your brother fall asleep?” I said, changing the subject. It was clear to me Sam wasn’t going or willing to make small talk.

“About twenty minutes ago.” Sam folded his paper and sighed, “I came back and he was just sitting there, staring off into space. I figured he’d talked enough and heard enough from me, so I just turned on a movie and sat with him. He fell asleep within ten minutes. He does that when he’s really stressed. I think he just sleeps to shut out everything.”

“Sounds safe.”

Sam nodded, looking back at his brother. “Better than other alternatives, I suppose.”

I chose to ignore whatever it was that Sam was hinting at. I’m sure Dean had a list a mile long of coping mechanisms that he’s used over the years. I’m sure I’d find out, and hear all about it later, but right now that wasn’t my concern.

My only focus was getting him away from John with as little struggle and trauma as possible.

Balls.
Getting Dean to agree to get the hell out of that motel room was hard. I was half tempted to just drag him out of there, which I did suggest to Bobby one of the many times he locked himself back into the bathroom, but was told it wouldn’t do any good. That Dean had to leave on his own. However long it took.

Dean of course tried his normal tricks of joking around and charm. He kept insisting that it wasn’t a big deal, that he’d mouthed off, that Dad was only “disciplining” him. Neither one of us let any of his normal tricks of the trade work. We didn’t laugh at his smart comments, allow him to change the subject, or allow his grin to hypnotize us into submission. We basically just watched him work himself up into exhaustion. I kept my cool, knowing if I blew, as much as I wanted to, it wouldn’t do my brother any good.

Finally, after hours and hours of arguing, with Bobby looking like he aged twenty years, me ready to pull my hair out and Dean lying flat out on the bed I brought out the only arsenal I had left.

“I checked into it.” I said, “I can get emancipated from Dad. That means that I can go to court and become my own legal guardian. Drag Dad, you, and me through a long process. They’ll find out what Dad does for a living. They won’t buy his “mechanic only” front. They’ll find out about his real job and they’ll think he’s crazy. The way he’s treated you will come out…and if they don’t, I’ll tell them. It’ll be a lot of money and take a lot of time. It’ll take me out of school, “and might even ruin my chances at that scholarship I’ve been looking into.”

“You wouldn’t…” Dean sat up, his mouth dropping open.

“Do you want to test me?” I cleared my throat, “I wouldn’t if I were you. I already called the school near Sioux Falls. They’ll let me finish what’s left of my junior year and transfer all my credits. I’ll graduate on time.”

Dean’s eyes widened as he took in the information. His lip quivered slightly and for a moment I thought he was going to burst into tears. Then something changed. He got this kind of glassy look in his eyes before nodding slightly and slinking back down into the bed, turning away from both of us.

“Sam…” Bobby motioned to me, to follow him. Once we were outside, he put his hand on my shoulder and gave it a slight squeeze. “I’m going to pack up some main stuff, then I’ll come back here and you two can run in and get your personal items. I don’t want to leave him alone. He might try to bolt. Don’t push the issue anymore unless he brings it up. Just watch tv. Don’t try to get any more out of him for right now. We got what we wanted and needed for now.”

“Sure thing, Bobby.” I nodded, giving him a slight smile. Bobby smiled back and then took off to his car.
I took a deep breath, then headed back inside, ready to face probably what was going to be the biggest struggle of my life.

It took a little longer than I expected for us to fall into life at Bobby’s. For the first two to three weeks, Dean was a complete wreck. Convincing him to get into Bobby’s old beat up car was just the beginning. He fought Bobby and I every step of the way. He practically spit at the doctor Bobby brought to the house to check his injuries, insisting he was fine and didn’t need any more help. He downright refused to take the pills that were prescribed to him so that he could sleep at night, saying that real men don’t take “such shit”. He was miserable and moody and when he wasn’t he was sullen and silent. I don’t think I was ever more relieved to watch him pass out after ranting and raving that we were ruining his life, our lives, Dad’s life.

The doctor, who turned out to be a friend of Bobby’s was worried about the damage that was done to my brother’s body. Not only what Dad had done to him, but also the harm he’d caused himself. He was extremely worried about Dean’s weight. He said that although whoever hurt him—Bobby agreed to Dean’s irrational insistence to say we “found him” this way, definitely did so with intent, part of the reason why his ribs—he had three broken ones—had snapped so easily were because of his being malnourished. The doctor also commented that he noted that Dean’s body had indications that this wasn’t the first beating that he’d taken, but seemed to know better than to push. Anyway, he prescribed a ton of vitamins for Dean to take and suggested strongly that we get Dean into some type of counseling. For the trauma he suffered and the expected eating disorder.

That’s what he called it.

An eating disorder.

So it was official in my mind.

Just like I always knew it to be.

He set up a schedule to see Dean every few days for a while, probably mainly out of Bobby’s insistence. Dean was less than pleased with this of course. Which lead to major tantrums, things being thrown, and bathroom doors being slammed.

I can honestly say I’d never known my brother to be such a pain in the ass nightmare. Not ever. He became someone I hardly recognized. I admittedly and without shame would break down and cry after he’d spout out hurtful comments, telling me this was all my fault, and that I ruined our lives. That if Dad died it was my fault because no one had his back anymore. I of course retorted that would make everything easier which lead to Dean giving me a hard shove into the wall, before locking himself in the bathroom.

I’d always cry afterwards. I never doubted making the choice that I did to pull us out of the life that we were living, especially because now that I was sixteen, I knew the court-emancipation card would keep Dad off of our asses for a while, but it was awfully hard to always stand tall.

In regards to Dad, Bobby mainly dealt with him. I did tell him that if he came near us, I’d go to the cops. I told him I wasn’t opposed to going to through the courts. I told them I’d get emancipated. That I had enough evidence to do so. Dad somewhat laughed at my threats, but said little, so I knew that he knew I meant it.

Bobby’s terrorizations were more violent and to the point. He basically told Dad that if he showed
up on his front porch he’d shoot him. It was a quick and brief conversation. But we all knew, Bobby didn’t make threats he didn’t intend to keep, so Dad knew better than to press his luck. For now anyway.

It took me zero time to adjust to our new lives. A month in I was thriving in the non John Winchester environment. I was enrolled in school, flourishing in my classes, and making friends. I was still worried about Dean of course, but I was able to actually for the first time in a long time, focus on school and only school. I didn’t have to worry if I had to stay after school to work on a project and even was considering trying out for soccer in the fall. I knew getting onto the team heading into my junior year was a long shot, but I’ve come up against much harder obstacles, so I figured why not give it a whirl.

Bobby was supportive of my academic ambitions. It was nice having a parental figure didn’t think that polishing your gun should come above studying for the SATS. He was generally interested in helping me weed through the college brochures I’d picked up. He never hesitated to ask me about my day and listen to me discuss my government class that I found completely fascinating.

I couldn’t help but notice there was still some distance between us. We still mostly made small talk, kept to the facts of things. Our conversations hardly ever strayed from school. If they did, it was about our current situation. When we did talk about Dad or Dean it was in almost a categorized fashion;

What happened…what was happening now…what the plan was next…

If Dean had a particularly hard day or night….

If Dad tried to make contact or not….

It was never ever about my feelings or my emotions. It wasn’t like with Dean, who Bobby was practically begging to share anything besides demonstrating how well he could slam a door.

I knew Bobby cared about me, he showed me that more than enough times, but for some reason neither one of us could break down this invisible barrier that was between us. He constantly made me feel appreciated and thanked me for getting Dean and I out of the hell hole we were living in, going as far as saying I probably saved Dean’s life. He’d call me brave and pat me on the back, but the warmth that he showed Dean just wasn’t there. And I was okay with it. For the most part.

But I knew he didn’t love me like he did Dean. He didn’t love me like a son like he did Dean. I was just Sam to him. Who happened to be Dean’s brother. And that was okay. Because right now Dean really just needed all the love he could get.

The whole notion that Dean needed all the love that he could get became abundantly obvious to me when I came home from school today. I was supposed to stay after to meet with my counselor, but she had to reschedule. I walked into what I thought was an empty house-Bobby was working and Dean was supposed to be with him-but the second I stepped into the kitchen, I instantly felt something was wrong.

I rounded the corner into the living room, library area and saw no one. The uneasiness didn’t leave me though. I wandered down the hall, examining my surroundings. Everything seemed to be in place. The salt lines were still perfectly lined on the windows. The books I had picked to read later were still laid out on the coffee table. Everything was quiet. Shrugging I headed up the stairs. It
was only when I walked past the bathroom that Dean and I shared and noticed the door shut, with the light pouring out into the dark hallway did my heart skip a beat.

“Dean?” I paused, then softly knocked on the door. “Dean, you home?”

No answer.

“Hey, Dean!” I said, a little louder, knocking a little harder.

Once again, there was no answer.

That’s when I started to panic.

Dean was hardly ever one to lack in a smart witty retort, or in recent fashion, finding creative ways to tell me to go the fuck away. So the silence scared me.

I reached down and started to jingle the handle, feeling my throat start to close up when I realized the door was locked.

“Dean!” I yelled again and again. I took my body and slammed against the door with all of my might. Over and over. Finally, after what seemed like forever the door gave way. I went flying into the bathroom.

Dean was sitting against the wall, cradling his left wrist in his lap with a vacant expression. When he looked up at me, his eyes barely showed any acknowledgement that I was even there. It was only when I got closer did I see the razor blade in his right hand.

My big brother had just slit his wrist.

And he was just sitting there, watching himself bleed.
Chapter 57

Bobby

When Sam called me to tell me Dean had slit his wrist I literally have no memory of how I got home, or even if I told anyone I was leaving. The next thing I knew I was pulling up to my house, just as Dean was getting loaded into the ambulance, swearing away at the EMTS.

“We gotta sedate him.” I heard one of them say, “He’s too combative.”

“Don’t you fucking touch me!” Dean screeched. “Get off of me!”

“Take it easy, kid.” The other one said, grabbing Dean roughly and trying to pin him to the stretcher, “You’re not exactly calling the shots right now.”

“The fuck I’m not.” Dean snarked back, managing to squirm out of the man’s grasp, throwing a sharp and well directed elbow to his cheek. “Get the fuck out of here!”

“Hey!” I yelled, before Dean could do any more damage and before the other paramedic could shoot him up with god knows what, “What the hell do you think you’re doing?!” I immediately put myself between the two.

“And who the hell are you?” The guy looked at me in alarm, “Look buddy, I don’t know what you think you’re doing, but this kid here just tried to—”

“I know what he tried to do!” I snapped, not allowing him to finish his sentence.

“Bobby!” Dean latched onto me with his good hand, digging into my arm so tight I swear he left marks. As hard as I tried hard not to, I couldn’t help but see that his other wrist was tightly wrapped up in gauze. I could already see that his blood was leaking through. “Don’t let them take me to the hospital! It was just an accident! I’m sorry! Tell them I’m fine!”

“Sir,” The other EMT said, “I really don’t know who you are, but we really have to get going. We’ve been called in on a suicide attempt. We gotta get this kid to the hospital to get evaluated—”

“I’m his uncle.” I said, the lie rolling off my tongue with ease.

Immediately the one EMT’s face softened slightly, “Look sir, I know this is a lot to take in, but his brother called 911. Clearly your nephew is in deep distress—”

“Fuck you!” Dean spat, taking a hard swing at the guy. I gotta give the kid credit. He has one hell of a swing. Especially considering the situation.

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“Fuck you!” Dean spat, taking a hard swing at the guy. I gotta give the kid credit. He has one hell of a swing. Especially considering the situation.

“I know what he tried to do!” I snapped, not allowing him to finish his sentence.

“Just give me a God damn minute.” I said, grabbing Dean by the arm, and pointing in the guys face at the same time, “Let me talk to him. If I can’t calm him down, you have my permission to inject him with whatever you need to. Hell if I can’t calm him down, I’ll do it myself.”

The two men looked at one another before nodding slightly. They stepped back, giving us some space.

I turned to face Dean, doing my best to hide the fact that I was shaking. I couldn’t believe that he’d actually hurt himself. I knew that he was struggling, but I didn’t think he was as bad off to do something like this.
“Dean.” I said, taking his face in my hands, “Listen, I don’t know what to do here. I’ll be honest with you. I get that you’re scared, but I think the best thing to do is let these guys take you to the hospital.”

“I know I screwed up.” Dean eyes locked with mine, “Please don’t let them take me to the hospital. I don’t want to go. You can patch me up better than any doctor there. I didn’t even mean to hurt myself like I did. It just happened.”

“Dean,” I sighed, “I think that you need more help than I can give you.” There was something in my gut that was telling me to tell these two morons to shoot Dean up with whatever concoction they could, shove his knocked out ass in an ambulance and I’d meet them at the hospital.

“I don’t.” Dean insisted his voice growing to a high pitch, “I don’t. I just screwed up. I just want to stay here. Please, please let me just stay here. Bobby. Please! I don’t want to leave.” Dean’s tears were now fully streaming down his cheek and his breathing had begun to become hitched.

I swallowed hard, barely able to look at him. I could barely look at my boy…at Mary’s boy…and all the guilt of leaving him with that bastard of a man who calls himself a father came flooding back. God knows the kids been through hell and back enough times in his life that he should be given a little bit of a break.

Quite frankly I wasn’t sure if pulling Dean from the last bit of familiarity would be for the best…

“Alright, kid…alright.” I nodded, putting my hand on his chest, and feeling his heart rate shoot through the roof. By this point his lip was trembling and he was actually shivering. “Calm down. I won’t make you go anywhere.” I gave his shoulder a reassuring squeeze, and rubbed his neck. I turned to face the paramedics and cleared my throat. The idjits raised their heads up to me, clearing trying to act as though they hadn’t been eavesdropping. “I have a family friend who’s a doctor.” I continued, “I’m going to give him a call to check my nephew over. If he feels he needs to go to the hospital, I’ll take him there myself.”

“You sure that’s wise?” The paramedic that had been so keen on sedating Dean asked, “You realize in situations where there’s a suicide attempt—”

“Listen.” I said stepping up to the man, who notably backed down, “I understand you mean well, and that you’re just doing your job, but I gotta deal with this how I see best. And right now that’s keeping here Dean with me.”

“Whatever you say.” The paramedic shrugged to his partner. They both turned to help Dean down from the raised stretcher, but the kid was already halfway off. He brushed past Sam, who I actually hadn’t even noticed standing there until just now.

And man. Did he look pissed.

Balls.

Sam

“Sammy...” Bobby said, both surprised and embarrassed to turn and see me behind him. “Hey. I umm…” It was clear that he’d forgotten all about me. Not that I was even surprised by that.

“I can’t believe you’re just letting him stay here!” I snapped at me, launching into an attack, watching as the ambulance pulled away, “He needs help Bobby. More than we can give him. Even
I can see that! He tried to slit his fucking wrist!"

“I know he does.” Bobby said, glaring at me. It was obvious he was trying to do everything to restrain himself against flipping the fuck out. “But the last thing Dean needs is another change of scenery. He needs just more watchin and more supportin.”

“More watching and more support?” I shrieked, “I don’t know how much more there is to give! I get that Dad hurt him and hurt him bad, but he’s out of it all now! I don’t know how much more we’re supposed to do!” I was so angry I was actually seeing red. “Dean’s still having nightmares; he’s still not eating right. Now this! He slit his wrist, Bobby!”

“I understand that Sam.” Bobby said, “But your brother needs time. He aint gonna get better in just a few weeks just cuz we took him away from your daddy. The damage is up here,” He pointed to his head and then to his heart, “And here, just as much as it was to what you and I could see. We don’t know half the stuff that John said or did to him.”

“Which is why he needs a professional.” I folded my arms. “Someone who knows what the hell they’re doing.”

“Well, may not know much, but I do know you’re brother.” Bobby said pointedly, “Better than you maybe. And right now Dean needs comfort.”

“Yeah, and where were you when he was getting beat up all our lives?” I snapped so hard, spit came flying out of my mouth.

“Sam.” Bobby stepped up to me, his eyes widening, “We’re doing things my way for right now. If that doesn’t work, or I feel at any time I can’t handle this, I will not hesitate to drive Dean to the hospital.”

I rolled my eyes and glared at him. My brain was shooting off so many mean and hurtful things I couldn’t decide what to say or think so I just clamped my mouth shut and stood there.

“Oh, and Sam…” Bobby said, passing me, and grabbing me by the arm. “If you ever imply again that I knew your father was beating your brother and I did nothing about it, your and my relationship will change forever. I’m telling you now; I haven’t been able to look myself properly in the mirror since I found out for not being able to figure out what was goin on sooner. If I had known, I would have pulled you both the hell out of there without a second thought. So I never want it said again. Are we clear?”

I paused before nodding. Bobby let go of me and headed down to the house.

I took a deep breath before turning around and following him.

I headed upstairs to where I knew Dean would be and by fault where Bobby would be too. Dean was curled up in his bed, facing the wall, with Bobby sitting beside him, gently rubbing his back. I went in and climbed up onto my bunk bed, grabbing my book from the window ledge, not bothering to kick off my shoes.

“Did I ever tell you about the time your momma kept me up all night worrying cuz you wouldn’t drink your bottle? She was visiting with me…the doctors put you on this special formula to make you gain weight. She was so pissed off. Kept wanting to tell them to buzz off. But she listened because she wanted to do what was best for ya. Not that she always listened, but you’d dropped
two pounds in a week and for a baby, I guess that’s pretty damn scary. Anyway, your stubborn ass sat there, tight mouthed, and refused to drink. No matter what the hell she did. She heated that bottle, swottled you up nice and tight, rocked you back and forth. She let you play for a bit, let you sleep, did everything and anything. You still refused to drink.

I was a basket case. I was wantin to put you in the car and drive you off to the hospital and make those damn doctors feed you that bottle themselves, but your mom stayed cool and calm. She kept saying you just needed time. That you just needed to be comfortable. She kept saying that just because it took you time, didn’t mean you wouldn’t eventually get there. That you had a rough time coming into the world but that that made you a fighter and that made you stronger.

Finally, after three or four in the morning, you looked at her and she looked at you. She simply took you in her arms, sang “Hey Jude” to you and you sucked that bottle down. The whole thing. Without stopping to get burped or anything. Then she smiled at you, kissed you on your head and you both fell asleep in my chair. Both of you content as can be.”

I was quiet as I felt my tears streaming down my face, my book long forgotten. I was reminded once again how different my brother’s life would have been if Mom would have lived. And the sick thing is I actually felt a prang of jealousy that he’d gotten to experience her in a way that I never would. And maybe never would have even if I had known her.

“The point to my story Dean is that there is no time frame for you to heal from all of this. What John’s done to you…well, that’s enough to give anyone a reason to have a lifetime of problems. I certainly can’t say how anyone is supposed to act and what is normal and what isn't. But what I am sayin is don’t give up on yourself. Keep rememberin that your strong. Even if you don’t feel it. You are. You’re a fighter and have been from day one. Your momma knew it. You gotta let yourself heal. Just know Sammy and I are here to catch you when you need it.”

Bobby stayed with us that night. Brought in a beat up looking old army cot and just camped out. I don’t think either one of us slept much. He didn’t acknowledge me and I didn’t him.

Dean was quiet for the most part. Minus the mumbling he was doing in his sleep. And the tossing and turning. And then of course, were followed by the nightmares. And unlike with me, when Bobby grabbed Dean and wrapped him in a tight hug, he didn’t shove him away.
Chapter 58

Dean

I didn’t mean to hurt myself.

Not really.

Not like Sam thinks at least.

I honestly just wanted to stop thinking and fucking feeling all the goddamn time.

I just wanted to focus on something else.

Anything else.

The problem was, there was nothing.

I mean, I didn’t exactly come wired with a handbook of healthy coping mechanisms. All I knew was drowning out my feelings in alcohol and putting my feelings into hunting.

I already knew there was no alcohol in the house. Which for a hunter who drinks as much as Bobby is weird as fuck. Trust me. I checked around night two and again around night four. I guess he figured that it would freak me out and remind me of Dad.

Either that or Sam told him more about my own little dabblings in that pond...So that numbing agent was out. And if that were true, Bobby more than likely already tipped off the nearby bartenders and alcohol stores that I was underage ending it with a slightly healthy threat if they sold to me.

Hunting was out of the question. I even knew that. I didn’t even try to ask if I could go on a hunt. I knew I wasn’t healthy or physically fit enough to even try. I wouldn’t be able to carry out even a small one. Hell, I wasn’t even strong enough to train properly. Bobby wasn’t hunting either so as far as I could tell, he’d put that idea out of his mind as well. Actually the word “hunting” hadn’t even crossed any of our lips since the night Bobby brought us home.

So that’s how I ended home by myself that day. Bobby had sent me home because I was looking worn out and pale-honestly I was feeling dizzy and sick to my stomach-so I was somewhat relieved. His orders were simple and concise.

“Go home Dean, get some ice tea, eat something-anything really-and relax.”

Somehow I went from hearing that, to hearing Dad’s voice in my damn head. Loud and clear. “Goddammit Dean. You’re fucking worthless. What the hell is wrong with you? Even Bobby sees it. He doesn’t want you around. He’s just too nice of guy to say it to your face.”

So I began panicking.

I felt my heart begin to pound so loudly I could hear it in my ears.

The room began to spin a bit, and I felt like I was going to be sick to my stomach.

I convinced myself in an instant that it was true; That Bobby had just sent me home because he couldn’t stand the site of me.
I fucking knew it.

He just took us in as a favor to Mom.

I just wanted the thoughts to stop.

So I began rooting through Bobby’s drawers in the kitchen to find everything or anything that will give me pain relief.

That’s when I stumbled on the box cutter in the third drawer to the right of the stove. I held it in my hand for a few moments staring at it.

I made my way up the stairs feeling that I was living someone else’s life. My body felt both heavy and fuzzy at the same time.

I wondered into the room I shared with Sam. I sank down on my bed, holding the box cutter in my hand. My heart was still racing. All I could think of was all of this was my fault.

All of this was fucking my fault.

I was too fucking worthless.

I was too fucking weak.

God, I was so fucking pathetic.

The next thing I knew I was sitting on the bathroom floor, rolling up my sleeves…

It hurt more than I expected it to.

I’d had way worse before…this simple slice of the blade should have been nothing, but I instantly found myself gasping and tears spilling down my face.

The sight of my own blood made me dizzy, and for a brief second I thought I was going to pass out. I wasn’t one to have a weak stomach-hell, I’ve been stitching up Dad since I was ten years old-and nursed all of Sammy’s scrapped knees since I was way younger than that. And I for sure in hell have seen my own blood before.

Maybe this was because this was at my own hand.

That I’d caused this.

I didn’t want to die.

I swear I didn’t.

I was a hunter.

If I was going to die I was going to do it at the end of some blade, some monster’s victory. Some fucking blaze of glory ass shit.

Or let’s face it, at the hands of my own father.

But I definitely wasn’t planning on doing so right now. Not today. Not sitting in Bobby’s
bathroom, because I gave my wrist a little slice and dice.

What I really wasn’t planning on was for Sam to walk in on me…

And that’s when things spun completely out of control…

Needless to say, when Sam found me he went into full panic mode. Screaming and crying. He launched himself at me, slamming me hard into the wall, grabbing the razor blade out of my hand, and tossing it across the room.

“What the hell are you doing!” He grabbed me by my shoulders and pinned me against the wall, crying and snot running down his face. “Dean! Are you trying to kill yourself?! Oh my god! Dean!!!”

I didn’t reply at first. I just looked at him, feeling tears running down my own face, only I didn’t feel like crying.

“It’s okay, Sammy.” I managed finally. “I’m okay.”

“You call this okay!?” Sam who had somehow managed to wrap my wrist up in a towel—where the hell did he get that—and showed it to me. “Dean, you’re cutting your wrist in the bathroom. This is the farthest thing from okay!”

“Just let me wrap it.” I said, trying to tug away from him, but he held me tight. “I’m tired. I want to go to bed.”

“That’s not happening.” Sam snapped, reaching into his back pocket with his free hand and pulling out his phone. “I’m calling 911.”

“What!” I argued, trying even harder to pull myself free, “Sam, that’s not necessary. You know I hate hospitals. Look, I know I messed up. It was just an accident.”

“Shut up, Dean!” Sam snapped. He put his legs over mine, making my escapes for freedom completely impossible. He held his phone up to his ear and began talking a mile a minute, listing our address and what happened. He hung up briefly before holding the phone back up to his ear, giving me a knowing look.

“Bobby!” He said, his voice breaking and the tears starting again, “You gotta come home…It’s Dean…he slit his wrist.”

I woke up the day after the whole shit show slightly confused why Bobby was sleeping in an army cot next to my bed. It wasn’t until I rolled over onto my wrist, feeling the bandaging, did it all come flooding back.

I instantly felt my stomach plummet as guilt hit me hard. I can’t believe what I had done to myself. How fucking low was I? Not only had I sat in Bobby’s bathroom while I carved up my own arm, but it was my baby brother who had found me.

Just sitting there.
Pathetic and bleeding.

Damn fucking damnit.

If Sam didn’t think I was weak before, he sure in hell had to now.

Not only did he have a brother who could barely read his own name and got his ass beat by his father, but he also had one who couldn’t pull himself together enough to realize a good thing when it was in front of him.

Anyone else in my position would know, and should know, that I was given a second chance at a normal life. Or whatever type of normal I wanted to live. I wasn’t going to be hurt or smacked or beaten to a pulp for being a fuck up. Bobby wouldn’t hit me, even if and when I deserved it.

But somehow that fucked me up too.

The whole being safe thought process.

It was such bullshit.

No one was ever safe.

Not really.

And especially not me.

I knew Dad wasn’t going to give us up as easily as he was playing it right now. I knew Dad better than anyone.

This wasn’t over.

He’d put too much time, effort, sweat and blood into my training for him to throw in the towel. He had me so fearful of him, yet loyal and devoted that I followed his every command without question, without hesitation. That wasn’t something he was going to let go of.

Besides, who the hell else was he going to belt when he was pissed off and needed to let out his rage?

Who else was he going to scream when a hunt went wrong?

Who else was he going to pin down and punch over and over again because he missed his dead wife and was too drunk to realize that it wasn’t going to bring her back?

Fuck,

Who else would let him?

With Sammy it was all about his pride.

The constant power struggle between the two of them.

Who was right, who was wrong.

Who was the villain, who was the hero.

Whose way was right.
Who knew more and who would get in the last word.

Add Bobby into the mix, and well, that was just a recipe for disaster.

Actually it was more a nuclear bomb ready to detonate at any time.

To add confusion to my already fucked up brain, I was worried about my dad.

It was something I worried about constantly.

Who the hell was looking after him? Who was watching out for him? Who was backing him up on hunts? Who was stitching him up if some monster tore him up? Who was making sure he didn’t choke on his own vomit when he drank too much?

I’d never forgive myself if something happened to my father.

If some monster snagged him and hurt him…

If some vamp turned him.

If he lay bleeding unable to get help…

If some ghost cursed him and throttled him until his bones were broken.

If some goddamn witch…well, actually fuck witches…

But Dad’s death would be on me.

I’d be the one who he’d blame.

Who’d Sam eventually would blame.

Yep, Sammy really hit the jackpot in the screwed up older brother lottery.
Chapter 59

Chapter Notes

Cas's first appearance. Basically describes his conflicted point of view. His dealings with events within the Winchester family, and the shift in his level of caring for Dean.

CASTIEL

It’s rare that one’s purpose is given so early in life. Most search their entire lives for a one; a reason for existing; a reason for being. Angels are no different. Despite what people believe. We don’t always have an answer. We don’t always have a plan. God’s orders don’t come with a road map. I however always knew what my purpose was.

I knew for as long back as I can remember that I was to save Dean Winchester.

I was tied to Dean even before he was born.

It was I saved Mary Campbell that one afternoon in the lake when she nearly drowned.

It was I who made sure John Winchester made it home from the Marines, even knocking him off balance when he was about to step over an IED.

And it was I who put the two of them together, making their souls align and match, even as brief as it was, to ensure Dean Winchester would be born on January 24, 1979.

I wasn’t told why Dean was so important, but I knew better than to question. I was an angel of the Lord. I was just to do. I wore my title with pride. I felt honored to be chosen for such a huge job.

At first it was very…mechanic…like they are supposed to be. I went through the motions, followed orders, showed up for important prescheduled dates, made sure certain events in the Winchester family occurred and were finalized.

But then something…changed…

At first I didn’t know how to identify it….I suddenly began to look at Dean Winchester as less of a job and more of a person…and slowly it dawned on me…
I’d broken the number one rule of dealing with humans. I actually began to feel personally invested.

I actually began to care what happened to the boy.

I was immediately asked about the shift in my emotions.

The only problem was, I had no idea how to explain it. I don’t know when things changed.

Maybe it was watching Dean struggle to take those first few breaths, his lungs, weak and small. Or maybe it was Mary’s constant faith her son would live and his defiance to prove the doctors wrong. Or maybe it was the first time he smiled up at me while I stood over his incubator one night, while I froze the rest of the world around us. He looked at me so knowingly with those beautiful green eyes. Like we were old friends.

I was drawn to watching his mother hold him close and rock him to sleep. As soon as he was in Mary’s arms, that very first night she was able to hold him, void of wires and machines, the feeling of Dean’s heart connected with mine. It was a warmth I’ve never felt.

I felt that warmth shatter when Mary died that night. And I’ve never felt it return.

Sam, who I expected to have some sort of connection with I felt nothing. I suppose that’s due to Dean strictly being my case. Although, I did feel it strange that someone who was so important to Dean, I couldn’t get a read on. Sam to me was like a gaping black hole. A complete mystery.

The anger and hate I felt when John disgraced him both physically and emotionally rumbled inside of me, frightening myself at its strength. I’ve fought wars alongside my brothers and the things I felt like doing to John were worse than anything I’d seen in battle. I tried to interfere, but was not only forbidden to, but also threatened to be pulled off of this case if I tried. Losing Dean felt too grave, so I did what I had to do, and reigned myself back.

I was more than relieved when Dean escaped to Bobby’s. John’s rage had been in full force. I managed to twist one of Dean’s ribs, unfortunately cracking it, to avoid it puncturing his left lung. I might have also possibly given John a cramp in his hands when he had his hands around Dean’s throat.
The feeling of relief was short lived. I was punished for my intrusions and given a chaperon by the name of Zachariah. He made it clear that he was going to solely be responsible for Dean Winchester. I was being pulled off the case until the time was right for me to “follow through with my orders”.

I didn’t argue, but I felt what I would assume would be an organ that humans arbitrarily call their heart sink and break.
Chapter Summary

Crap. What do you think?

Sam

The weeks following Dean’s suicide attempt were nerve wrecking. I was balancing between being completely pissed off at my brother, and being completely devastated by his actions. There were moments and times I could hardly look or talk to him without feeling overcome with a surge of emotions. I wasn’t sure if I wanted to slap him over the head or fling myself at him and sob. Not that it really mattered. Dean wasn’t exactly looking or talking to me either.

Bobby and I basically lived by avoided each other. We didn’t out right have arguments, but we could hardly remain in the same room unless it was to eat together as the makeshift family we were trying to be for Dean, or to watch him endlessly flip through the TV channels.

Bobby, to his credit, decided to take time off work. He gave us the excuse he needed a vacation, but we all knew the truth; he didn’t want to leave Dean alone to his own devices. Shockingly, Dean didn’t argue about being babysat. That showed how far my brother really had fallen. Normally he’d whine and pitch and tantrum about being monitored, but he simply just shrugged and turned back to the tv show he was watching.

Bobby also made it clear that he and Dean were going to keep busy. He even made an itinerary of abandoned cars that he’d that needed to be fixed and work that needed to be done around the house. And I didn’t care what the reasoning was or what the two of them did. I was just glad that Dean wasn’t going to be left alone during the day.

For the next week or two, Dean remained stoic and silent. He continued to eat little and push his food around and around his plate. Bobby told him he was going to have to talk to someone about the eating if Dean didn’t hurry and pick up the pace, but Dean would just mumble an affirmative or that he was “trying”. There wasn’t even a sharp comeback or snarky comment made.

I felt like my brother was completely slipping away from me.

That’s why I was beyond shocked when I was flipping through the TV on Saturday afternoon and he came and asked if I wanted to go to town and grab some milkshakes.

Saturday milkshakes were a ritual when we were younger and staying at Bobby’s. I have memories of being five or six and Dean walking with me to town, holding my hand, and urging me to try a different flavor than I did the last time. Back then, I used to think he was weird because he’d always get the same; a small chocolate milkshake. He’d shrug, simply roll his eyes and tell me he just liked what he liked, but I realize now he was probably just doing that so he could splurge on me. Even though Bobby always gave us more than enough money.

“I’d love to get milkshakes.” I said probably a little too loudly. Dean jumped, looking slightly uneasy. But then, he smiled and nodded.
“Alright. Cool, Sammy. Bobby gave me some money for working on his car so you can get any flavor you want. Let me just run it past him what we’re doing.”

Bobby didn’t seem quite as thrilled as I had about us going into town. First of all he handed Dean the keys to one of his trucks, insisting that we drive. He also made sure that the new cell phone he’d given us was fully charged and was on. When Dean slipped upstairs to go to the bathroom, Bobby pulled me aside and very matter of a fact told me that I wasn’t to leave Dean out of my sight for any circumstances.

“I think that we should be glad he wants to get out the house.” I said, bracing myself for an argument. “At least he’s wanting to do things that old Dean wanted to do.”

“You’re not thinking clearly, Sam.” Bobby shook his head, “Course I’m glad your brother’s wantin to get out and about. Hell, there are days I want to drag him out of this house kickin and screamin. But it aint about me not been happy about Dean. It’s your Daddy that scares me. He gave into this whole thing far too easily.” Bobby said wearily. “I felt like someone was watchin Dean and I the other day when we were workin out back. I didn’t want to make a big deal out of it, because your brother seemed to actually be relaxing, but somethin just didn’t feel right. I want you guys in view of the truck at all times. I want you to keep the phone in your pocket. Text me every half hour. If you get the slightest bit uneasy, get the twos of your asses back here immediately.”

“Alright.” I said, realizing in my excitement, I’d totally forgotten about the realization that Dad could show up at any minute.

“And if you do feel somethings off, don’t let on to him about any of this. Say you’re sick or somethin. If that brother of yours gets freaked out we may never get him back out of his rabbit hole.”

I nodded, then we both fell silent as we waited for Dean to come back downstairs.

After all, we still weren’t really talking.

Dean reappeared about five minutes later looking good. Actually he looked better than he has in a long time. He’d shaved-the small amount of scruff he was able to grow-and actually threw some gel in his hair. It was clear that Dean’s “going to the bathroom” was code for fixing himself up.

“Check you out kid.” Bobby said, grinning and clapping Dean lightly on the shoulder. “Those girls in town will be throwing themselves at you left and right.”

“Looking good, big bro.” I said with a huge smile, resisting the urge to hug him. I didn’t want to scare him off with my overly affectionate ways.

“Thanks guys.” Dean said, his cheeks flushing slightly. He shifted almost as if he were embarrassed. “Ready to go, Sammy?”

“Yes.” I said, “I was born ready.”

“Bitch.” Dean replied as he took the keys from Bobby.

“Jerk.” I replied rolling my eyes, following him out the door.
“So what’s going on with you and Bobby?” Dean asked as he started up the truck, glancing at me briefly.

“Nothing.” I shrugged.

“You’re full of shit, Sam.” Dean almost laughed, “You could cut the tension between you guys with a knife. You have a lovers quarrel or something?”

“Or something.” I echoed, rolling my eyes at Dean’s attempt at humor. “We just disagreed on something. I said something I shouldn’t have. That’s all.”

“Oh.” Dean shrugged. “Go figures there.” He winked at me before his face grew serious again, “Well, talk to him about it. Bobby’s pretty cool. We’ve had our differences over the years. I know I’ve pissed him off before. But he’s a forgiving guy. Talk it out with him.”

“I don’t ever remember you pissing him off.” I frowned. “I actually don’t think you could piss him off if you tried.”

“Oh, Sammy.” Dean shook his head, laughing to himself, “The little you know of me.”

I leaned back in my seat perplexed. I’d never seen anything but caretaking being done on Bobby’s end towards my brother. I actually don’t think Bobby ever even told Dean no. Clearly, Dean wasn’t willing to spill out any details, so I just decided to chalk things up to Dean being Dean. He had a pretty skewed view point of what it meant to piss people off though so it probably meant he didn’t make his bed or something.

“How’s school?” Dean’s question cut me off guard. My brother hadn’t asked me about school since we moved in with Bobby. I was used to him asking when we lived with Dad, but his sudden interest was so familiar it almost seemed odd. Dean must have sensed my reason for hesitation because he cleared his throat. “Sorry I haven’t been very involved Sammy…I’ve just been…Well I’ve just…I’ve just been having a hard time.”

“It’s okay, Dean.” I said softly, “I know it’s been difficult for you.”

“No chick flick moments, Sammy.” Dean said hurriedly, as he pulled into a parking spot right outside the local diner. “So Beaver, how’s school?”

“Schools great.” I said with a smile, watching as Dean’s tight lip turned into an easy smile. “I love it here. The teachers are great. The kids are nice. I think I am going to study law in college. I have a government class. It’s really interesting.”

“That’s great, Sammy.” Dean said, getting out of the car. He was now grinning at me, his eyes glowing with what I could only read as pride. “You’ll make a great lawyer. You can argue better than anyone I know.”

“Thanks.” I rolled my eyes as I followed Dean into the diner. “What about you?”

“What about me, what?” Dean glanced at me, as he slid into a free booth, looking confused.

“What do you want to do know that we are free from Dad?”

“I want to hunt.” Dean sounded almost insulted that I asked him.

“Oh, come on, Dean. There has to be something else you’ve wanted?”
“Not really.” Dean barely acknowledged the waitress as she handed us our menus.

“You can’t tell me you always wanted to be a hunter.” I pressed.

“So what if I have?” Dean asked, crossing his arms and frowning.

I could tell immediately that I’d backed myself into a tough corner. As much as I wanted my brother to think for himself, it was too soon and now wasn’t the time to push him.

“I guess…I guess that’s good then.” I finished quickly gulping down the water that was put down in front of me.

Dean replied by snorting and spinning his spoon around and around the table, looking bored. I looked down at the menu, staring at it like it was a text book. I wanted to kick myself for even questioning Dean wanting to hunt. Why was it so hard for me to accept that that’s the life he wanted for himself. He never gave me any grief about wanting to go to college.

“You guys ready to order?” The waitress was back, breaking up the silence.

“I’ll have a strawberry milkshake with extra strawberries and cream.” I said handing her my menu and looking at Dean. Dean, who was now staring out the window, looking completely pissed and completely lost all at the same time. The waitress gave me an annoyed look and motioned towards my brother. “Dean?” I prompted.

“I’m good.” Dean answered handing over his own menu, watching absentmindedly as the waitress walked away.

“You’re not going to get anything?” I asked, not even trying to hide the emotional pitch in my voice.

“No.” Dean replied shortly.

“Oh, come on, Dean.” I shifted in my seat, feeling tears begin to prick at my eyes, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean anything by what I said. There’s nothing wrong with hunting. I just…I just wasn’t sure if you wanted to do anything else ever, you know?”

“Can we just drop it?” Dean finally met my eyes. “I just wanted to hang out with you. Like we used to. No daytime soap operas.”

“Yeah, sure.” I nodded, more than willing to drop it if Dean was.

“Here you go, kid.” The waitress handed me my strawberry milkshake and I dove in happily, embarrassingly letting out an “oh yum.”

“Is it that good?” Dean asked, laughing lightly, handing me a napkin.

I paused briefly, grinning back. It felt so good to hear my brother laugh again. It seemed like it’s been forever since I’ve heard that sound. I knew not to get sappy though, so I just nodded. “You sure you don’t want something?”

“Nah.” Dean shook his head, his face sliding into an easy grin. “You eat up Sam. Maybe next time.”

We spent over an hour just hanging out and talking. Dean told me how much he was learning from Bobby. That he’d forgotten how much he liked working on cars. How they were going to rebuild
an old carburetor. I didn’t fully understand everything he was talking about, but it was just good to see him happy. He even confessed he actually enjoyed working on the house.

Dean all but lit up when I told him more about school, the friends I was making, and how I was definitely going out for the soccer team. He even offered to help me prepare for tryouts which would be coming up soon.

“You’re going to have to pull that princess hair back though, Sammy.” Dean said, with a sigh stretching out his legs into my booth, “They’ll think you’re trying out for the girl’s team.”

“Very funny.” I said, rolling my eyes, honestly glad to hear the old insult. It made me feel like I was getting my brother back.

We’d slipped back into "being us" so easily I almost forgot about our current situation. It wasn’t until Dean and I were safely in the truck and passing past the post office did I suddenly feel the same eerie feeling Bobby had been talking about. I turned so that I looked like I was just talking to Dean, but I was also able to take a quick glance behind us.

And that’s when I saw him.

Standing in the middle of the road, watching us as we drove away.

Dad.
Chapter 61

Bobby

I paced nervously back and forth the length of my house the entire time the boys were gone. I tried to distract myself by reading or working on my symbol work but I couldn’t concentrate.

I just wanted the boys home safe and sound. I was cursing myself up and down for even letting them go in the first place. I was half tempted to get my ass in one of my cars and make my way into town, but I couldn’t come up with an excuse good enough that Dean would buy besides the fact that something was wrong. Kid would sense the alarm on my face right away.

Damn kid was too observant and he knew me too damn well.

One look and he’d launch into panic mode.

Luckily, Sam was true to his word and text me every half hour.

*Made it to the diner without problems.*

*I think I messed up. Dean’s not eating…*

*Things are fine now. Having a great time.*

*Dean’s sounding like his old self. He even made fun of my hair!*

*Heading home now.*

I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw the truck pull up outside my kitchen window. I took off outside to meet them, trying my best not to appear overly anxious. Dean greeted me with an easy smile with Sam close behind him.

“I know you’re trying to watch your figure.” The kid said with a smirk, “But I know you can’t resist the chocolate vanilla soft serve. Especially with gummy worms.” He handed me a Styrofoam cup with a lid and gave me a reassuring pat on the shoulder, “Thanks Bobby for letting me take the truck.”

“You’re welcome.” I said, touched to the point of almost being choked up that Dean remembered my favorite snack. “Thanks for this, Dean.”

“Gotta take a leak.” Dean brushed past me and took off for the house, clearly not wanting to be involved in any tender moment.

God I’m getting soft in my old age. Melting down over some damn ice cream.

“Bobby…” Sam suddenly cleared his throat, forcing me to focus my attention on him. The second I saw his face, I instantly felt my heart plummet inside my chest.

“Did you see him, boy?” I asked in a voice hardly above a whisper.

Sam glanced towards the house, before he looked at me, his face what I could only describe as grave, and nodded.

“Yeah. When we were driving away. I suddenly felt this really odd “being watched” type feeling.
So, I looked behind us and he was just standing there, in the middle of the road, watching us. He must have been watching us in the diner the whole time.”

“Dean obviously doesn’t know.” I stated unnecessarily.

“No.” Sam shook his head, “He noticed I became quiet once we got back into the car, but I just told him I think I ate my icecream to quickly.”

I nodded, briefly taking my hat off, and letting out a heavy sigh.

“Figures that bastard would show his face now.” I said out loud, “Dean’s finally starting to come around and he…” I stopped abruptly, realizing what I had just called John in front of Sam.

“It’s okay.” Sam said quickly, “He is a bastard. Trust me, I’ve called him far worse before in my head. And to Dean.”

We both shared an awkward laugh before falling into an even more awkward silence.

“So… Sam cleared his throat, “What do we do? Obviously we gotta tell Dean…”

“I’d hate to do that to him.” I sighed again, “He’s just gettin his footing again…”

“Yeah.” Sam shrugged, “I get that, but I know my brother. He’ll be pissed if he knows we knew Dad was in town and we didn’t tell him. He’ll think we’ll treating him like a baby. Plus, it’s kind of dangerous not to tell him. I think it’ll be worse for Dean not to be prepared for something like this. I mean especially if Dad tries to catch him off guard.”

I swore, knowing the kid was right on all accounts.

Dean would be more than pissed if he knew we kept the fact that John was camping out in town a secret. I didn’t even want to imagine the blow up from that one. The one thing Dean hated more than anything was to be treated like he was a baby. That he couldn’t handle himself. John had already taken that feeling away from him more times than I wanted to count, so who was I to try to do the same in the guise of protection.

Also, more importantly, Sam was dead on that Dean needed to be prepared. It wouldn’t surprise me if John tried to nab Dean when Sam and I weren’t around. If Dean was caught too off guard he might not be able to get his wits about him quick enough to make an escape or god willing fight him off long enough for one of us to get to them. Not that Dean ever would fight his father, but I would like him to be prepared in case the situation presented itself.

“You’re right.” I said, meeting Sam’s eyes. “But I’m going to need your help in telling him….I don’t even know how to start.”

“I got this.” Sam smiled giving me a half smile.

“Good thing you’re here boy.” I reached out squeezing his shoulder, “I need ya.”

We found Dean digging in the kitchen, digging around in the fridge. He glanced up when he saw us, giving Sam a small smile.

“I was thinking of making you sloppy joes, Sammy.” Dean said straightening. “What do you think?”
“We need to talk Dean.” Sam said, clearing his throat. “When we were on the way home from the diner. I saw something.”

“Something?” Dean looked at me rolling his eyes, “Ever think of becoming a writer, Sammy? You’re descriptions are awesome.”

“I saw Dad.” Sam’s voice came out short and tight.

“What?” Dean’s grin fell off his face. He visibly paled. He licked his lips lightly and shifted his footing.

“I’m sorry, Dean.” Sam started to cry. “I hate him for showing up. You’re just starting to be you again. And he shows up…Dean…he was just standing there, in the middle of the road, watching us drive off.”

“Did he see you?” Dean asked, rubbing the back of his neck.

“I don’t know.” Sam shrugged, wiping his eyes with his sleeve.

“Oh, geez, Sam. Don’t cry.” Dean reached out and pulled his brother to him, wrapping him in a hug.

Dean’s need to comfort his brother took me for a loop. I knew the kid was beyond scared. I could see him shaking as he held Sam’s shirt in his fists. But once again he somehow managed to swallow his own feelings and offer comfort to Sam.

“I’m just so pissed.” Sam said into his shoulder, “I’m so angry. Why can’t he just leave us alone?”

“You know it was just a matter of time before he came looking for us.” Dean said honestly pulling away, “You really didn’t think he was just going to let us go just like that did you?”

“No…” Sam trailed off, the tears rolling down his cheeks faster, “But I hoped he would…or at least leave us alone for a while. He hurt you so badly Dean…doesn’t he get that he almost killed you?”

“He didn’t almost kill me, Sam.” Dean rolled his eyes again, offering one of his charming smiles, “Nothing could take me out that easily. Not even Dad.”

“Dean.” Sam’s voice dropped to a whisper, “Don’t minimalize what he did.”

“We are going to have to come up with a plan, boys.” I said clearing my throat, sensing Dean’s defensiveness begin to spike. I could tell by Dean’s eye roll that I needed to nip this before he shut down. Not that I didn’t agreed with what Sam was saying-I did and it was obvious Dean was fooling himself here-but now was not to the time to have this conversation.

“Plans are good.” Sam agreed, for once sensing the shift in the conversation.

“And knowin your daddy, it’s gonna have to be a full proof plan.” I continued, “Let’s order pizza, and come up with something together, okay?”

“I’m going to wash my face.” Sam mumbled, with a nod. “I’ll be back.” Dean and I watched him go, either of us saying anything. I fully expected Dean to crack a joke about Sam’s not touching his aftershave or something (not that either one of them needs it), but he remained silent. Once he was out of the way, Dean turned to me, staring at me so intently he actually made me nervous.
“You got something you wanna say, kid?” I asked, reaching for the phone to call in our pizza.

“I don’t want to put you out.” Dean began voice deepening. “If you want me to get lost, I can do that. I don’t want to be a burden. I don’t know if you really want to be in the middle of all of this. As long as Sammy can stay… I can leave tonight if you want.”

“Are you crazy?” I slammed the phone down, making Dean jump. “Don’t you get kid? I’d take a bullet for you any day. There’s no way I’m tossing you out on the street with or without your Daddy lingering around out there. I wouldn’t even let you leave if you wanted to. I’m going to protect you, Dean. We’re going to get through this. So I don’t want to hear anymore of you being a burden. Got that?”

“Yeah.” Dean looked me over, nodding. He dropped his eyes staring at a spot on the floor before retreating to go check on his brother. I could tell by his facial expression he hadn’t believed a word I said. It was easy to tell that the kid still heard his father’s voice over anyone else’s.

I knew that type of father’s voice all too well.

The one that told you that you were weak, a loser, pathetic. And God knows what else.

But then Dean had about ten more years of dealing with that voice than I did. And therefore probably a hell of a lot more damage to work through.

And before I knew what I was doing, I put my hand through my kitchen wall, punching through the plaster, leaving an obvious fist-sized hole.

Balls.
Dean

The next few weeks passed without any problems. I did my best to keep my cool, even though I was on edge every moment of every day. I jumped at every little sound, constantly looking over my shoulder even when I was sitting in Bobby’s living room watching TV. My hand shook when I opened the front door to drive Sammy to school—which I now insisted on doing—and I felt a sick feeling in my chest pretty much constantly. I was a complete mess.

I acted cool though. I couldn’t let Sammy know that though. He was scared enough. He began this ritual of checking and rechecking all the windows and doors in the house, making sure they were locked. He made Bobby walk around with a shot gun and a flashlight at night, patrolling the yard. I was pretty convinced Dad wouldn’t be stupid enough to just be sitting in some bushes, but the actions made Sammy feel better. I kinda think it made Bobby feel better too. The two of them still barely talked, but at least they were talking.

Sammy began having nightmares. I’d wake up to him crying in his sleep. He started crawling back into my bed again in the middle of the night. I became accustomed to rolling over to make room for him. Sometimes, if I were up for it we’d talk. More times than not, I’d just fall back asleep. I would never admit it, but I slept better with Sam’s large gigantic form snoring loudly next to me. It made me feel safe, even though Sammy was my little brother and he was the one who needed comforting.

I finally got up the courage to bring up hunting. I did it over breakfast one Saturday while Sam was reading the paper—what a nerd—seriously he was reading about something that happened over in some country I couldn’t pronounce if you told me. Bobby was working on research for a friend who’d called him last night on a hunt. I’d been wanting to bring up the subject for a while, and seeing him work, I figured now was as good of a time as any.

It went better than I expected. I could feel Sam glaring at me the moment I brought up the subject, but he didn’t say anything. Bobby for his part, was quiet. He listened to me spout out how much I missed hunting, and going on hunts, and preparing on hunts. I started rambling at some point, but he just let me go. When I finally wound down he simply nodded, told me he expected me to bring up wanting to hunt again at some point, but told me he had some ground rules.

As it turns out Bobby had a ton of fucking ground rules.

All of which I was completely opposed to.

Or at least acted like I was opposed to.

To be truthful though, some of it I knew I needed.

As much as I hated to admit it.

First off, he made me start slow on the training. Which to him meant “running only”. And he only let me run for a half an hour to forty five minutes to start each day. And only weather dependent. If it was the least bit damp I was banned from even attempting. I insisted that it’s something I’ve always done. He looked at me, called me an idjit, and asked me how that well that worked for me. I fell silent, knowing he’d made his point.
He also insisted on jogging next to me, which I naturally made fun of, telling him I was pretty sure I could find my way back home without needing a babysitter. To that he told me to simply stop flapping my trap. Truthfully though, I was glad he was there because I would have been scared shitless to run by myself with Dad lingering around.

Then came my least favorite rule of all; He refused to let me get back into actual training without me seeking help.

Like professional help.

So, he made me go to counseling.

Full blown, sitting on the couch, across from someone counseling.

Over my eating.

I bitched and moaned and whined and complained but I knew I had a fucking problem.

A big fucking problem.

For one, I didn’t have the strength to train like I used to. It was obvious to me when I got dizzy into five minutes of running. For the first couple of times, I had to roll onto the ground and wait until the spinning stopped before I’d demand my body finish. It was clear as hell to me, there was no way I could handle fighting off some monster anytime soon.

My body looked like shit. I was all stick and bones. I still insisted on wearing multiple layers to hide how thin I was, but I wasn’t fooling anyone. Bobby actually had to go out and buy me some new jeans because mine were so loose that my cutting an extra hole in my belts wasn’t cutting it anymore. Getting out of the shower made me kind of sick, so I checking myself out in the mirror. My collarbone stuck out like no collar bone should and I could count each of my ribs without trying.

Then there was the slightly terrifying fact that I just couldn’t eat. Even when I actually felt kinda hungry and wanted to. It was like my body just wouldn’t let me. I’d feel like my insides up to my throat would suddenly completely be filled with cotton and I had to literally force things down. Piece by piece. Nothing tasted like it used to. And, like I said before, I’d get these awful stomach cramps and most things I’d puke up shortly after even though I had no intention of that happening.

I wasn’t bulimic for fuck’s sake.

Anyway, the counseling wasn’t as awful as I thought it would be…Despite my eye rolling and sarcastic comments…The guy Bobby found…Timmons…wasn’t all bad. He was involved with the supernatural, so that automatically took off some of the strain in discussing whatever I might need discussed. I mean I wouldn’t go hang with the dude or ask him to go grab a beer, but he pretty much let me do the talking, as long as we focused on my eating at least half of the session.

Timmons told me on the first day that many guys struggle with all sorts of different issues. He kept insisting that most of them weren’t even able to admit there was a problem, much less seek help. I guess I did a few too many eye rolls because he always continued with a line like “just because guys don’t open up and admit to their fears or issues like girls tend to do, don’t make our problems any less relevant.” Or “talking about your feelings doesn’t make you any less tough.”

Yeah, because I felt all patched up and better after he told me that. All reassured that being an emotional wreck was fine.
Except for that, you know…I fucking didn’t.

Mostly, I kept quiet. I basically said the bare minimum.

But that doesn’t mean I wasn’t listening.

Even though I was acting like I wasn’t.

I got the uncomfortable idea that Timmons knew about Dad.

Or that he at least sensed it…But he never fully pushed me to talk about it.

He beat around the bush by saying things like, “A lot of times someone or something makes us feel like we need to punish ourselves…” Or “It sounds like a lot was placed on your shoulders at a young age….” And other shit like that. But it was never full out, “I know your father beat you, Dean.” Or “I know you know you’ll never be good enough Dean. I know you feel like you’ll never be able protect Sammy enough.”

If he only knew the half of it.

He let me know that it’s okay to feel that I wasn’t perfect. That people doubt themselves sometimes.

But that I needed to focus on my good traits.

Of all the good things I had.

Of how important I was to everyone that loved me. How much Bobby loved me. How much Sam loved me.

He must have known from Bobby that Sam was the most important person in my life because he focused a lot of my supposed positive thinking with him involved. On how much I’ve done for him. How it was clear I always put him first. How obvious it was that Sam—who he’d talked to too—admired me. He fixated on how well Sam was doing, and how he was healthy and decently happy.

His biggest want was for me to refocus on how I viewed myself. He must have realized early on that giving me compliments only made me shut down, so he simply stated facts.

That I was only nineteen.

That I needed to give myself time to grow and develop into who I wanted to be.

That no one knows who they are and what they want at my age.

That I needed to give myself the time to heal and time to figure out what I wanted.

That it was okay to be selfish sometimes.

A lot of that shit was bull if you ask me.

He assigned me to go see a GI doctor who put me on a ‘special diet plan’. It was pretty bland at first, starting with just noodle soup. I have to admit, that after my third or fourth night into eating, I was pleased to report that I had very little to no stomach pain.

I started to get my strength back. I might be biased, but I felt it was pretty notable. I was able to run longer and further without having to roll onto the ground after feeling like the world just tipped
over on itself. Sam still pinned me pretty easily, but I was putting up more of a fight and actually was able to scramble out from underneath him.

So yeah, things were looking up.

Sam and I even got back to arguing over stupid shit. Normal actual brother stuff. Like what to watch on TV, how I was apparently annoying to him when he was trying to study (I didn’t think that drumming to Metallica was that obnoxious, but whatever), me getting pissy when he was left his wet towels on the floor of the bathroom after a shower. Me rolling my eyes, pretending to hang or shoot myself when Sam started spouting off about some stupid school project he was really really into at the time.

I think we both appreciated the stupid fights though because it meant things were sliding back into normal. Or a new normal. Whatever normal’s normal is supposed to be.

So that’s why, today after I was getting out of the shower, when my cell phone rang, I answered it on cue, without checking the number, expecting it to be Sammy. He’d had some big debate thing in one of his classes today that he’d spent all night—and fuck do I mean all night-practicing for. As much as I teased him, I knew he knew I actually cared.

“Hey, nerd boy.” I said teasingly, towel drying my hair with my other hand, “How’d the debate go?”

“Dean.” Dad’s voice spoke, deep and calm, making a chill run down my spine. “I want to talk to you. Please, just give me a half hour.”
Chapter 63

John

I hung up after I finished talking to my oldest feeling satisfied. It wasn’t a shock that he’d agreed to meet me. I knew that despite his recent desertion of me, and perhaps a slight touch of amnesia of who I actually am, I still had him eating out of the palm of my hand.

It honestly hadn’t taken much convincing. Hardly any at all. I just simply told him it was important we talked.

“Please, just give me a half hour.”

“I don’t know Dad…” Dean’s voice literally wavered. I smiled slightly, glad that I had this much power over him over the phone. “I kind of think it’s best that we just take some time…to you know…”

“To what, son?” I asked, “To talk more about your bad feelings with Bobby and that damn shrink of yours?”

“You…you know about that?” Dean’s voice came out choked. He was embarrassed. Embarrassed that I knew he sat on the couch and poured out his heart and soul like some fucking insane middle aged housewife.

“I know about it all, Dean.” I sighed, “Do you think I wouldn’t have been tailing you and Sam since you left town?”

Dean fell silent on the other end of the phone. So quiet I almost actually held my own phone out to see if the little shit had hung up on me.

“Sammy’s doing well.” Dean said finally.

“Well,” I said, realizing this was a prime opportunity to seize the moment at hand and change tactics. “About Sam…I thought about calling him…but I thought I’d have a better shot with you.”

“Sammy’s doing well.” Dean said again, softer this time.

“I just want to talk Dean.” I said, feeling him weakening at just the mere mention of me calling his little brother. Sam’s going to be the death of him one day. I can guarantee that.

“Where?” Dean’s voice was thin.

“How about that diner you and Sammy are so fond of?”

“When?”

“How’s right now suite you?”

“I don’t know.” Dean faltered. “I think I should talk it over with Bobby.”

“Really?” I sighed heavily into the phone, knowing I had to play my wounded card. “Has the old man gotten into your damn head that much that you can’t do anything without his approval? You know we’ve never seen eye to eye on you or Sammy, Dean. You know as well as I do that I’ve done what I’ve done to protect you. To help you know how to protect your brother.”
“I know Dad.” Dean said so quietly I barely heard him.

“So, what do you say?” I asked, letting my voice drop slightly as well, “I’d love to see you kiddo. I miss you.”

Dean fell silent for a moment or two. Then I could practically hear him nodding as he agreed, “Okay. I’ll see you at the diner in like half an hour.”

I hung up extremely pleased.

No matter who or what interfered, my Dean was and would always be my perfect little obedient soldier.

The blunt little soldier that I raised him to be.

Dean looked good. I had to admit. My boy looked better than he has in a long time. The last time I saw him he was banged up pretty bad…black and blue from head to toe…but all his bruises had healed. I was somewhat relieved to know I hadn’t done any permanent damage. Especially to that face of his.

He put on some weight since I’ve seen him last. I knew that he was getting treatment for his…well for whatever eating problem he had…but actually seeing him in front of me made me realize how sick and thin he was before. I’m sure could still be classified as underweight, or in the lower end of what his body type should allow, but he looked good.

His cheeks were filled out and somewhat rosy with color. The dark circles around his eyes were gone and he even had a light to his eyes again. He wasn’t quite so pale anymore. His shoulders even looked a little broader than since I’ve last seen him. He actually looked good. I had to admit. If he packed on maybe fifteen more pounds, and started training again, he might even look like a hunter.

“Hey Dad.” Dean said, looking slightly uncomfortable as he slid into the booth across from me.

“Hey, son.” I said, notably gesturing towards him, “You look good.”

“Thanks.” Dean mumbled, his cheeks reddening.

“You’ve put on some weight.” I commented.

Dean merely nodded, shifting looking uncomfortable.

“Hey, you.” The older waitress who had given me coffee came up and smiled at Dean. “Dean…I don’t think I’ve ever seen you in here without Sam.”

“He’s busy.” Dean said quickly, almost too quickly.

“Do you want tea?” She prompted. She refilled my coffee cup barely looking in my direction.

“Yeah.” Dean nodded.

“It’ll be right out.” She gave Dean a warm smile, “Do you want some eggs and toast with that?”

“Teas, fine.” Dean replied, handing her the menu that was in front of him.
She nodded, briefly looked at me, and walked away.

“Come here often?” I asked.

“Often enough.” Dean nodded.

“What’s with the tea?” I couldn’t help but ask, “You were always a coffee drinker.”

“It hurts my stomach.” Dean shrugged, “I miss it, but I just gotta take it easy. Tea cuts it for now.”

I nodded, as though I understood, but I didn’t. Of course I didn’t. I never understood when it came to my oldest.

“So you said Sammy’s doing well?”

“Yeah.” Dean rubbed his hands together, giving a slight smile to the waitress as she put down the tea, “You know Sammy…he’s got the school thing going for him. He’s doing soccer next year too.”

“That’s actually what I wanted to talk to you about.” I said, clearing my throat, “How long do you and Sam plan on living with Bobby?”

“I don’t know.” Dean shrugged, squirming in his seat, looking more and more uncomfortable. “It hasn’t really been planned out too much.”

“I think it’s time you two come home…don’t you?” I pressed. “Sam…Sammy can go back to school. But I need you both with me. How am I supposed to protect you. Sure Bobby’s a great hunter, but the man’s getting up there in age. He’s not as quick as he used to be. He can’t take care of you like I can. What if something happens to him and the demon goes after Sam? Besides, I need your help. I can’t hunt alone. You’ve been the best partner I’ve had.” I saw Dean’s eyes flicker with hope briefly as I said that, but he still refused to look at me. “I mean, you’re the one who knows me best…” I continued, “You know how I work, how I hunt. I know you miss it, Dean. Hunting is in your blood. You gotta be craving one at least a little bit.”

“I do miss it.” Dean admitted. He bit his lip looking like he was going to cry. The fucking little wimp. God it just made me want to take him out back and tan his hide. I couldn’t believe that I wasn’t around him for a few months and he goes soft.

“Well, if that’s the case, come home.” I stated, “Just pack your shit and come home.”

“That’s not going to happen.” Bobby’s voice suddenly rumbled, causing both Dean and I to jump.

“Bobby!” Dean all but jumped out of the booth before sliding back down into it.

“Get out of here, Dean.” Bobby snapped. But Dean didn’t budge. He just stayed put, his eyes wide, looking between the two of us.

“What the hell are you doing here, John?” Bobby asked, putting his hand on my boy’s shoulder, as if he were silently giving him a message. I visibly saw Dean relax somewhat and that pissed me off. “I told you to stay the hell away.” His voice was low and growling.

“Let’s talk outside.” I said, knowing that all eyes in the restaurant were probably at this point on us. Bobby glanced around briefly before nodding. The old man may have been pissed as hell I was here, but he wasn’t stupid. He knew we couldn’t attract attention, no matter what the reason.
He watched as I threw down some money and then waited as I walked out first. He kept Dean close to him. I walked down the street down an alley way before I stopped and turned to face both Bobby and Dean. Bobby, who now had a gun predictably pointed at my direction and Dean who was standing there, looking shaken and sick.

“Get out of here, John.” Bobby said, his voice dangerous and threatening, “I told you I’d shoot your ass. And I meant it.”

“Dean agreed to meet me.” I said, holding my hands up, “I’m not forcing him to do anything. I simply made a phone call.”

“Yeah, my ass.” Bobby snapped, “So you called him. And he came running. Big whoopdy do for you. You know that boy can’t say no to you. It’s no different than if you dragged him out of the house.”

“No matter what you say or do Bobby, Dean’s mine.” I smirked as I saw Dean visibly pale and his shoulders slump. He knew it was true. “I’m always going to have him more than you will. They are my kids.”

“You don’t deserve your kids.” Bobby snarled.

“Dean,” I turned to son, who looked like he was going to be sick at any moment, “You’re twenty. This is your decision completely.”

Dean looked down then up at Bobby then at me then back to Bobby again.

“I think…” He said, his voice coming out in a stammer, “I…I think I…I just want to stay with Bobby. You know…for for now.”

I swear I took everything in me not to snap out and grab him by his scrawny little neck. Cocky little bastard.

How could he just stand there and say that to me? That he was going to stay with Bobby? I raised him. I put a roof over his head, clothes on his back. I showed him how to hunt. I allowed him to continue to exist.

“Dean’s made his decision John.” Bobby said, practically grinning, put his hand on my boys shoulder and giving it a squeeze. “Now get the hell out of here.”

I however stood my ground, glaring down at my son. “So, let me get this straight…you’re just gonna turn your back on this family? You’re going to let me go out and hunt alone. You know what I’m going after…You know what I’m looking to make right. Are you just going to turn your back on me? On your mother?”

“I…” Dean opened his mouth, then closed it quickly.

“John, you sonofabitch, get—” Bobby poor attempt at a threat was interrupted by Dean’s sudden leaning over and puking. Right on my fucking boots.

“What the hell!” I snapped, jumping backwards. “Are you kidding me! What the fuck, Dean!”

“I’m sorry.” Dean said, holding his hand to his mouth, looking panicked. “I didn’t mean to. I--”

“GO to the truck, Dean.” Bobby said, shoving his keys into Dean’s palm. He then grabbed the kid,
spun him and gave him a hard shove towards where the parking lot. He then turned back to me his face red. “I’m telling you John, the only reason I haven’t shot you dead on the spot is because of that boy. Now get the hell out of town.”

I paused briefly, debating if I wanted to push the subject of Dean coming back with me further. I decided that looking at the anger in Bobby’s face, and the pathetic stance of my sons, that I’d done enough nudging for today. I knew that I’d get Dean back sooner or later. I bred him for this. I bred him to be a hunter. I bred him to be mine.

He had little to no hope to stay out of the life forever, to stay away from me.

I’d fucking dare him to keep trying.

“I’ll talk to you later, son.” I yelled before I turned and headed back to my car, not bothering to look back.
Chapter 64

Chapter Notes

Sammy's POV up next.

Bobby

Dean and I didn't talk on the way home. As much as I wanted to ask him what the hell he'd been thinking just going and meeting up with John, the kid's stark white face told me otherwise. I knew if I pressed now, Dean was heading for major shut down mode.

He jumped out of the truck and ran towards the house before I even put the damn thing in park. Balls. Sighing I trudged down the stairs, willing myself to have some patience. If I talked to Dean when I was feeling this angry he’d lose the progress he’s made.

I needed some damn time to think.

I was immediately greeted in the kitchen by Sam who was frowning up at me from his huge stack of textbooks he'd been no doubt pouring over.

So much for time to think.

“What's wrong with Dean?” He asked predictively.

“Not now, Sam.” I said waving him off, really wishing for the first time in weeks I could have a drink. I tossed out all my alcohol when the boys moved in with the hopes of not triggering Dean-I was even in communication with my friend on the medical aspects of withdrawal. I’m not going to sit here and tell anyone that it was smooth sailin, but Dean’s emotional health was more important than my own vices.

“Yes now.” Sam slammed down his pencil, his nostrils flaring. “I can tell something’s wrong. I’m sick of bring kept in the dark all the time. I'm not a baby. What happened to my brother? When I saw him this morning he was beaming and smiling; now he looks like he saw a ghost…only, that wouldn't scare him…. But what happened?”

I sighed, knowing my annoyance had nothing really to do with Sam. The poor kid was just worried about his brother. I couldn't blame him. Considering everything.

“Your dad called.” I watched as Sam’s face fell, “He asked for your brother to go meet up with him…And well…you know how your brother is when your Dad’s involved…”
For a long moment, I thought Sam was about to cry. He stared at me, his nostrils flaring slightly. Then he shook his head, clearing his throat.

“So he saw him?” He said slowly, staring at me, his eyes now looking dangerous. “Are you serious? After everything…. After this past time…all Dad had to do was call and Dean goes running?”

“Apparently so…. I sighed, squinting at Sam who at this point started pacing around the room. “I got a call from Betty—she’s a friend of mine who normally waits on you boys. I guess she could tell that something was off with Dean when she saw him with your Daddy today…that and I tipped her off if she ever saw Dean with grown man other than me to give me a call—so that’s what she did. So I took off to the diner and low and behold, there your brother was, sitting there looking stark white with your old man.”

Sam suddenly stopped pacing, turned to face me, his eyes were on fire. He looked like he wanted to say something, but then turned and headed up the stairs. I started to call after him, to stop him and give his brother some time, but then I held back.

Sam had to a right to be a little pissy. Granted I planned on sticking near by if things got out of hand between the two of them, but I also knew they needed to talk this out and knowing the way Sammy boils over and Dean’s anxiety controls him, it was probably better to get it out in one big huge swing. As much as I hated to admit it, Dean did kind of have to face the music on this one. He did owe Sam enough to at least here him out.

I sighed sinking down onto the stairs, finally allowing myself to feel a little bit of what just happened. Seeing Dean with John made me feel like tossing up my cookies—so I wasn’t too surprised when Dean did his, and all over John’s boots nonetheless.

I was proud of the kid for choosing to stay with me, but I couldn’t help but think Dean had been thinking about his brother and his happiness more than his own safety. I think it threw John for a bit of a loop that Dean didn’t just willingly jump in the impala with him but it also gave me a major feeling of unease. If I knew John I also knew that he’d automatically see it as a challenge. As bold and as threatening of a hunter he was, I also knew that he had every ability to turn to around other places and other ways. I knew that with a sinking and heavy feeling, Dean’s refusal to skip off into the sunset with him was going to become a new obsession.

If John’s at all to be the bastard that I know him to be, he would stop short of nothing to get Dean back.

And if that happened…well I wasn’t too sure there would be much left of Dean to patch up for the next time.
I felt a surge of emotions when I found out Dean meet up with Dad. If I had to categorize them, I’d have to say I first felt disbelief. How could he just meet up with our father after all the hard work he’d done. It wasn’t like it had been easy for him. Hell, it hasn't been easy for any of us. I knew that despite what he'd been through, Dean has a lot of pride. We were raised to be “real men” after all, John Winchester style, and speaking to a shrink didn’t exactly fit that mold. So I knew as much as I supported the social sciences, it took an awful lot for Dean to admit he needed enough help to lie in a couch and talk about our childhood, well his childhood with some well meaning stranger.

The second emotion that over took me was pure and utter rage. I’d given up everything for him to get out of that house, to get us away from Dad. And with a simple phone call, Dean just lets him waltz back into our lives without hesitation.

I guess I had given Dean way to much credit but I had hope that the last time dad hurt him would have been the last time. I for one was more than willing to make sure on my end it was the last time. I couldn’t understand the life of me why the hell he’d willingly just let the man back into our lives. All the guy did was call him…it’s not like he dragged Dean kicking and screaming out of the house.

I was so blind with anger I could feel my eyes burning with tears as I made my way through the house. I tripped up the stairs, having to grab on the railing to catch myself. I flung open the door, relieved that he hadn’t locked it, barking out his name that came out more like a strangled cry.

However, when I saw Dean laying on his stomach, facing the wall, all of my anger vanished. I couldn’t see his face, but I could tell by his stiff body language, my brother had to be feeling hyper-vigilant and exposed. I suddenly felt like I was six years old again, and all I wanted was to snuggle up against my big brother after a bad dream. I also knew that no matter what I was feeling, Dean has to be feeling it in ten fold. So I crawled into bed, flipped over on my back, nudging my own shoulder against Dean’s. He flinched slightly at the touch, but didn't shove me away.

“You okay?” I asked, turning slightly so that my cheek was resting slightly on his elbow.

“Peachy.” Dean’s reply came out muffled yet biting. He was quiet for a second then he cleared his throat, “So, I'm guessing Bobby told you?”

“Yeah Dean,” I sighed, turning so that I was now staring up at the wooden box frame of the bottom of my bunk bed. I noticed that Dean had marked his initials in the wood. I had to wonder when he did that. We went through a period when we were younger where Dean had insisted we carve out initials someplace, somewhere, every place we stayed. He said it was important to mark our territory and it says kind of like our own photo album. I of course argued that it was nothing like a photo album, but Dean would just grin at me pull out his pocket knife. He’d then carefully carve D.W. into some lame weathered piece of wood, and then hand me the knife to do my own.
“I’m guessing you wanna talk about it.” Dean sighed.

“Yeah,” I cleared my throat, “I do Dean…but only if you want to.”

Dean fell silent, turning away from me so he was now facing the wall. I thought for a second he was just flat out ignoring me but then I heard the unmistakable sniff beside me, and knew my big brother was crying.

I rolled into him, burying my face into the back of his flannel.

“I fucked up, Sammy.” Dean said, his voice coming out gruff from all the emotional he was trying to suppress. “I thought I was doing fine…I really did…But when he called…I just…I…”

“It’s okay Dean.” I said softly. “It’s all going to be okay.”

That’s all it took for Dean to turn into me, burying his face into my shoulder. The angle was awkward, but I wrapped my arm around his shoulder, glad to feel some bulk to it, and hugged him the best I could.

“I’m sorry Sammy.” He said softly.

“It’s okay.” I said again, “I love you Dean, no matter what.”

As I lay there, not talking, listening to Dean beginning to regain control of his emotions again, I realized that this wasn’t going to be the easy fix I thought it would.

I had fooled myself into thinking that getting Dean away would make everything better. That we would have that so-called “apple pie life” Dean is always making fun of me for craving. Dad had Dean in a way that neither Bobby or I ever could. It was like he owned some type of secret code to my brother’s brain, making him bow down and obey at all costs.

I instantly regretted, like I had so many times, when I teased him about being dad’s “perfect soldier.” It was clear to me now my brother was brainwashed and operated purely on what he knew to keep him and myself safe.

Slowly I heard Dean’s breathing deepen and even out and I knew he was drifting off. After I was convinced he was sleeping, I glanced over at my brother’s face, relieved to see his face looking relaxed. As I turned my attention up at my brother’s badly carved initials I had to wonder what the hell our father had really done to him to mess him up so badly. I wasn’t any expert, but I felt that it had to go beyond just the physical pain dad inflicted. I knew the asshole was hard on him, I knew he picked at him-I had been privy to that all of our lives-but I was beginning to wonder what happened between them when I wasn’t around. Clearly the two of them went to great lengths to keep me out of the worst of it. What exactly was said over the years? How many times did my
brother fear, truly fear, for his life? How many names had dad called him? How much brainwashing had to be done to make Dean so compliant?

I knew from what little Bobby told me that the abuse started way before Mom died…despite the stories Dean used to tell me how “different” dad was. Even that confused me…what exactly did Dean think he was saving me from by his made up fairy tales. It’s not like I ever even wanted to look up to John Winchester. I wouldn’t have cared if the man was taking care of the sick kids in Africa before Mom died. I knew our father how I knew him. And what I knew of him, before I even knew knew him I didn’t like.

More importantly, what was it about my brother that made him so hated and so despised by the man who was supposed to love him unconditionally? What made it so easy for a man to be so callous against his own child?

And how the hell between all of this did Dean still manage to take such good care of me?
Chapter 66

Dean
I woke up that night in a cold sweat with my heart feeling like it was going to beat out of my chest. It took me a second or two to remember what the hell had me so freaked out, but as soon as I turned and saw Sammy sleeping like a freaking stiff next to me, everything came flooding back.

I almost blew it.

I almost fucking blew it for all of us.

After everything Bobby did for me; after everything Sammy gave up, I almost tossed it all away.

Why? Because I was too much of a fucking wimp to say no to my father.

All I had to do was tell him no. That I wasn’t going to meet up with him…actually all I had had to do was hang up the phone.

The second I heard his voice I felt like was as helpless and pathetic as I’ve always been. I actually kind of blacked out a little bit. That might sound like a cop out, but it’s true. I don’t remember much of our conversation, just more so me finding myself hanging up the phone and heading out the door.

I drove on near autopilot to the diner. I swear I momentarily lost my hearing, my ears felt so stuffed up. The pressure in my head and chest were so strong it actually hurt. When I walked into the diner, I almost chocked on my own spit.

He was just sitting there, waiting for me. John Winchester, the man that to tried to created me into the man I hoped be, only to destroyed to my lowest form of myself all at the same damn time.

It didn’t help matters that Bobby had to come save my ass.

Again.

The man should start a fund for how many times he’s had to come to my rescue lately. I was
becoming a full time job. He had to have installed some type of warning beeper in me when I was sleeping.

It also didn’t help that I barely talk to my father. Just looking at him made me practically mute. I stumbled and stuttered to get the words out that Sammy and I were staying at Bobby’s and that we were both thriving. I actually just told him about Sam because Sam was who mattered, and Sam was who both Dad and I cared about. Because quite honestly, if it were just me, I probably would have already hitched a ride back to the Winchesters training school of hard knocks lives.

And it most certainly really didn’t help that I puked up my breakfast all over my Dad’s boots. I don’t think that one even requires an explanation.

But anyway, the worst part by far was having to come home and face Sammy. Tell him that I fucked up again. Tell him that I once again bowed down to our father. That I was weak and pathetic and couldn’t say no to the man he risked everything to save me from.

Fuck.

I had expected Sam to yell at me. I had been prepared for a verbal tongue lashing. Id even braced myself for it. Hell, I would have deserved it, almost welcomed it...but his sad, almost sympathetic, look somehow made things worse. But, per his usual self my little brother threw me a curveball. His support made me crumble and break. His concern for me felt misplaced and without meaning to caused my guilt to overflow into cold hard tears. And all it took for me to start crying was for him to tell me that everything was “going to be okay” and the tears just started flowing.

I’m such a little bitch.

Then of course being the sap that he is, Sammy told me he loved me. I fell silent, knowing I didn't deserve his love.
I am exactly what my father trained me to be.

A worthless grunt.

But yeah, after my little field trip to the diner, I woke up to Sam sleeping solidly next to me. This in itself wasn't u usual-Sammy’s taken to climbing into my bed since we got to Bobby’s-but then I saw Dad's face, and it all came rushing back. I laid there for a few minutes, unsure of what to do next, before climbing over my brother and wandering down the night lit hall. Bobby had put one in every turn due to Sam's (and my) fears of Dad springing out of the shadows. I briefly stopped by Bobby’s room, half tempted to go talk to him, only to turn and head into his bathroom when I heard his deep snores.

Leaning over the tub I turned on the warm water, plugging the drain when it hit my desired temperature. Which was a few degrees below boiling. Then I pulled off my clothes before sinking down into the water, sighing as I began to feel myself relax.
Unlike all those shabby motels, Bobby’s bathtub I knew was clean.

I took a deep breath and lowered myself into the tub, letting myself sink until the water covered my ears. I was grateful for Bobby and his big old fashioned tub. I vowed right then and there never to make fun of him for it again. As I began to relax, my mind began to wander.

I thought back to when Sammy and I were younger—we had to have been about 6 and 10. We were spending two months or so at Bobby’s because it was summer vacation and Dad had been on a hunt in the area. Being in the area meant he was close enough it wasn’t an inconvenience to drop us off for a few weeks but far away enough he wasn’t crashing there at night.

What I remembered most about that time was it was two months full of fun and laughter. Bobby took us swimming, kicked a soccer ball around with Sam, and played catch with me. We had chores to do, small stuff like setting the table and cleaning up after ourselves (in my case) or cleaning up our toys (in Sam’s case), but other than that we were carefree and allowed to spend our time without the rigid rules I’d become so accustomed to.

Bobby would actually cook for us. Sam and I would come in from playing and he’d be putting dinner on the table. And I mean real dinner. Like home made spaghetti, twice baked potatoes, and meat loafs. Sure he’d order out, but the food never had the greasy taste to it we were used to. I hadn’t really developed my battle with food just yet. Sure I skipped a few meals so Sammy could eat, but I wasn’t fucked about it yet.

However, out of everything that summer, the swimming by far was my favorite part. Bobby taught me how to float on my back that summer. I loved just laying in the lake, still as can be—which normally for me seemed impossible—and just float. Everything would be silent and quiet, and peaceful and calm. I’d lay there and just watch the clouds shift through, past, and over the sun. It seemed all my problems suddenly vanished.

I could somewhat forget the last words my father said to me in private was if I told Bobby what he was doing to me, he’d hurt Sammy, or that I should be embarrassed to call myself a Winchester. I could forget that the last time he’d hit me it had been with a metal hanger.

I could forget that I was responsible for my little brother. What and when he ate. If he was happy. That he felt loved. That he stayed safe. That he'd never find out about me and Dad.

For a few moments, life would be fucking perfect…

Of course, I would be brought back to reality without much trouble. Normally by Sammy who’d appear next to me by way his stupid swimming floaties Bobby bought him, and would start whining for me to play with him. I always pretended to ignore him until he was in the perfect angle for me to spring up and scare the shit out of him.

Ha. Poor Sammy. He fell for it every time.
And hey, at the end of the day I am a big brother. I do get some privileges.

All jokes aside though it had been a great summer.

Actually, it was probably one of the best summers of my life.

End Notes

Reviews are helpful...let me know what you think....

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