He knows his name. *Jack*, a word that reverberated through the warm dark, a syllable heavy with love, a whisper, a murmured promise. He remembers her voice. He remembers gold, brown, devotion. He remembers red and grey and fear and blood and faith. He remembers his mother.

***

After the battle, after the dead angel and the sacrificed king and the stymied Devil and the lost mothers, the Winchesters are left to stagger under the weight of their bitter victory. And Jack Kline is born.

Notes

Takes place at the very end and immediately after S12E23, All Along the Watchtower. Sort of an experimental style, hope you guys like it.
Chapter 1

This new world burns.

It tugs like flame at his skin, an air as alien and searing as starfire. (Starfire, how does he know what starfire is? A burst of light plays out like a scrap of film, not a memory so much as the imprint of a memory, his own and yet not his own: the creation of some far-off galaxy—gas and heat coiling into a new sun—a whiff of anise and jasmine and rosemary, the smell of a white dwarf) He isn't prepared for it. He knew it was coming and yet he isn't prepared. It happened too fast, the change—dark love sea warm waves heartbeat soft open light air pain cold breathe—and suddenly he's standing and his grace has reacted to the world and pulled him into a new shape, stretched him out, given him new limbs, more blood, a full set of adult teeth. It's too much—even the soft yellow glow of light in that room is too much, almost blinding. He stumbles forward on clumsy feet, the floorboards stinging against soles that have never carried weight. He stumbles forward into blessed darkness, finds himself curled finally in a pool of shadow, an enclosed corner that still leaves him feeling too exposed. He buries his face in his own unfamiliar arms. He wants to go back. He wants—before, but before is gone, there is only now, only the cold, only the rough plaster of the wall scraping against his bare back.

He knows his name. Jack, a word that reverberated through the warm dark, a syllable heavy with love, a whisper, a murmured promise. He remembers her voice. He remembers gold, brown, devotion. He remembers red and grey and fear and blood and faith. He remembers his mother. "Jack," he mutters into his arms, his first word, his own name. Trying to say it the way she had said it. Trying to grasp the meaning of it.

Footsteps, and he lifts his head as a man comes through the door. The man is tall, and grief rolls off him like water. Jack catches a glimpse of a blonde-haired woman with fire wrapped around her fists, a pair of blue eyes lighting up like suns, and that's all he gets before something claws its way to life inside him. He winces under the onslaught of a confusing jumble of inherited images of the man in the doorway: strung up like meat from chains and hooks, asleep and dreaming on a narrow bed, tall and beautiful and killing with a snap of his fingers. It's too much; Jack reels, realizes that he's grinning, that something inside him, the same silvery-white power that had known the taste of stars, is reacting to the purple-blue-gold soul of the man in front of him, that a surge of glee and possessiveness and hatred and lust is making him skin his lips back over his teeth.

The man in the doorway stares. Takes a slow step forward.

"Jack?" he says.

It's not the way his mother had said it, but the sound of the name breaks the spell; Jack blinks and forces down the snarl of grace (mine my mine king vessel partner bitch prey mine my love host foe mine mine). He recognizes the man's voice now, not just from the memories-not-his but from that time before, remembers the cadence of it filtering down through the dark, remembers the hesitant turquoise bloom of Kelly Kline's trust.

The man takes another step. Now that the angry echo of grace has subsided, Jack can hear the crash and swell of the man's sorrow, beating against his skin, against the walls of the room, an ocean whipped into a storm, barely held at bay. He resists the urge to cover his ears.

"Jack?" says the man again. His voice is wary but not unkind. He reaches out a hand, and there it comes, a stab of purple and gold compassion like lightning in the storm, trailing bits of the man's
thoughts like so much static electricity. (just a kid old not that old lucifer no don't not that he has a human soul just a kid he's afraid)

Jack lifts his head a little more. "Not afraid," he rasps. (He considers whether it's true, decides that it is. This world is large and overwhelming but not frightening.)

The man's face changes; he looks startled. Without turning around, he calls a name, then calls it again, urgently. His thoughts change, bristling a little. (he can talk he's grown no just a kid does he know does he know is he dangerous dean where's dean)

"I won't..." Jack pauses, wrestles with his own tongue for a moment, feeling out the sounds and rhythms of the language. "Hurt you."

With exaggerated slowness, the man goes down onto one knee, his hand still outstretched toward Jack. "My name is Sam." He hesitates. "I was...a friend of your mother's."

More footsteps, and Sam turns to the door. "Dean," he says a third time, but Jack doesn't hear whatever is said next; he's gasping, pressing himself back into the corner. The man called Dean is on fire.

Not—real fire, he realizes a moment later. Not physical flames, and Sam does not react in any way, so perhaps not visible flames either. But the inferno that wreathes Dean in lapping flame feels very real—the air is thick with smoke and grief, and the fire's crackling howl of loss and rage and pain blots out everything else for a moment.

Cas, the man's thoughts whisper, in a tangle of misery and shock. His heart is a hot coal, charring through his ribs. Cas cas cas cas cas cas cascascascas—

Jack fights his way free in time to hear Dean say, in a flat voice that sounds more like ash than flame, "This the nephilim?"

Nephilim. The word clangs like a bell, and Jack shivers a little. He thinks he can remember bits and pieces from before, the whispers that filtered into the womb like gifts, the whispers that named him (nephilim baby Jack abomination child prince power son angel human slugger). The last one makes that coiled bit of memory-not-his stir, but there's no storm of emotion from the grace in response to Dean's entrance, only a far-off echo of loathing. He shakes it off and looks up.

Dean is pointing a gun at him.
"Dean—stop, just wait!"

"Get out of the way, Sam."

Jack isn't afraid of the gun, but he rises to his feet anyway. The two men are much taller than him.

"I'm not afraid," he says again. He wants them to know this. There is very little fear in them, and he feels somehow compelled to stake his own claim to fearlessness, to prove himself equally undaunted by the world, burn (open light air pain cold breathe breathe breathe) though it might.

"It talks?" says Dean, brusque.

Sam throws up his hands. "He. He's a person, you know that."

Curious, Jack tunes into Dean's thoughts, dips into the fire for an instant, searching for whatever it is that keeps the gun trained on him. But there's no hatred, no disgust, no trepidation. A skim of cold anger, rainbowy like oil on the sea, is what numbs Dean's voice, what keeps his hands steady, but under it—

A man in a suit drives a blade up under his own ribs. A woman tumbles through a red-gold rent in the world.

Someone with dark hair and blue eyes is arching his back, mouth opening in a silent gasp, grace pouring from every orifice.

There's pain, there's too much pain, it's not his own but it makes his heart twist, makes a part of his grace quake in selfish, sympathetic distress, bits of words and entreaties (don't make me do this we don't have to do this father gabriel michael why father i loved you) slipping through time and bursting open in his head, a chorus of inherited loss, catalyzed like a reflex by Dean's unbridled anguish.

Sam is speaking still, but Jack can't focus on the words. In Dean's mind, the dark-haired man dies again and again. Jack tries to withdraw from the merciless loop of that memory, but it's hard to fight off the torrent, hard to withstand the anger and denial and raw grief (cas cas cas cas cas) that pours from Dean. Thought-flames lick against the walls of the room, sear his skin like brands. The memories batter against him, too fast to pick out individually, too barbed and cutting to ignore.

"What the hell?"

Too late, Jack realizes that his body has changed. His shoulders are broader, his limbs longer; he's nearly as tall as they are, now. He lifts his hands and touches his naked chest, surprised. He knows that if he looked in a mirror, his eyes would be blue.

Dean's face is twisted, a mask of horror and fury. Sam turns, makes a choking sound when his gaze lands on Jack. Jack rocks back on his heels, struck by the brunt of all that fire, all that sea. Loss twining through both their souls like so much jagged wire. The rush of images, memory and otherwise, from the two men is concussive, unbearable. He barely gets his guard up in time to avoid being swallowed whole by it, dashed against the floor. He wonders how they are still standing.

Something hot and wet touches his fingers and he realizes that a wound has opened in the center of his chest, spilling blood onto his hands in a slow dark tide. He drops his arms, wipes his hands on his
"Change back." Dean's voice shakes. Underneath, his thoughts are splintering, loud and angry. "Change the fuck back." (Cas not Cas no how dare you how dare you how dare you how dare you)

Jack pulls himself away from the fire that is Dean. Out of the influence of that clamoring grief, he manages to shift back into his original form. Or—not his original form, surely there were others before that, before, but at least the form that was built for him (that he created for himself? that something molded him into?) minutes ago, when he first opened his eyes in this place and stood. Surely that means this is the shape he needs right now. With a jolt of unease, he realizes he is uncertain. He casts his mind back, tries to remember the last certain thing, before the advent of this shaky, smoldering world.

*I love you, Jack.*

Jack lifts his head. "Where is my mother?"

Sam's expression becomes, if possible, more pained. "Jack, she's...she's dead."

"She died giving birth to you," Dean says bluntly. He lowers the gun but doesn't put it away. "Lotta—" there it is, the telling crack in his voice as a lick of flame breaks through the ashen surface veneer—"lotta people died tonight because of you."

Jack catches a flash of frustration from Sam, but the flare of burnt-orange registers only for a moment before it sinks back beneath the taller man's grief.

"Where is she?" Jack says again.

They glance at each other instead of replying, but an image of the room next door floats loudly at the forefront of their minds. It's enough. Jack takes a step.

"Stop right there," Dean snaps. The gun is up again, aimed directly at Jack's heart.

"Dean, he's a kid," Sam says, his hand on his brother's (they are brothers, Jack can see the coppery strands and threads of blood-red that tangle them together) arm.

"He's Lucifer's kid."

Jack recoils. Despite his oceans, Sam is held together, somehow, with thorns and willpower and iron wire, but Dean—there is nothing holding back Dean's sorrow. Under the snarl of Dean's words comes a series of memories, all tinged in carmine revulsion: a blonde-haired man with eyes like coals, a hole in the earth, a Sam-who-is-not-Sam. And then: the person whose form Jack has just shed, silver light ebbing from his eyes as he slumps to the ground.

They are terrible images, magnified by pain of the man to whom the memories belong, and yet there is an odd familiarity to them, something that makes his grace flare in response, an answering echo, as if it—as if it knows—oh. Oh.

(you will always end up here tried to be nice dean we're going to take our time cat's out he did invite me in)

Jack closes his eyes. He wishes himself elsewhere.

Abruptly he is elsewhere—he is not in that room but in the doorway of the next, staring down at the scorched footprints he'd left on his way out.
Chapter 3

The world drags at his skin, still, but after the fire and lightning of Sam and Dean it feels less like a burn and more like a tug, like ghost hooks threaded painlessly through the dermis, making this new body prickle, pulling him gently this way and that, offering possible futures, possible paths of action. A pull, but a deferent one: the world has no mastery over him. He crosses the room to the bed, and this time the floorboards do not sear his feet, nor vice versa.

His mother (how does he know she's his mother? he's never seen her face, how could he, but somehow he knows) lies on her back in silent repose, hands folded. Jack hadn't seen her when he first woke, hadn't looked round, had only felt the need to flee from the cold air, the harsh light, the atmosphere that stabbed at his new lungs.

The light doesn't bother him now. He looks down at his mother. He remembers the stink of her fear and despair, always faint as if seen through protective glass, a toxin that couldn't fully penetrate the shielding warmth of her love. He remembers trying to help. Remembers how simple the urge had been (mother mother warm sea dark love mother help here mother safe), how little he'd understood. Extending his grace outward, a clumsy child offering what it could.

Under her skin, now, he can see the empty channels where his grace had flowed, runnels of memory in the flesh, still smeared with faint gold residue, like a lingering electric charge. He'd healed her, shown her the future, pushed power out of himself and into her. Her body remembers the paths and patterns of his grace, and he remembers that dim sweet before—remembers the rhythm of her heart, the soft rush and whisper of her blood, the sound of her voice from far-off. It's a place in which his grace existed once, a place it has since left.

He pours it back in.

Dusty gold light trickles from mid-air—he doesn't need to lay a hand on her, nothing so limited—and down into her skin, twining into her cells, searching, reviving, healing the subatomic damage (I'm sorry, he thinks, contrite, I didn't know, I couldn't help it) his birth had caused. He hears twin gasps from behind him, and surmises that what he's doing is visible, that Sam and Dean can see his mother's corpse beginning to glitter and blaze, but he doesn't turn around—he looks up, instead, reaches through the ceiling with a thought.

Souls bound heavenward travel slowly, dragged by no snarling hellhound. Jack slips past the roof of the house and in the direction of the dimming stars. No Reaper came for Kelly Kline's soul; he finds his mother's spirit drifting near the stratosphere, a conglomeration of grey and peacock blue and the smell of honeysuckle and jack is it jack jack is that you, and he hooks her with a thought-finger and reels her back down to Earth.

In the room, on the bed, his mother opens her eyes with a gasp.

"Kelly?" Sam is hastening forward to help her up, emanating disbelief. She looks frantically around the room for a moment, and then her eyes land on Jack. Her brow creases.

"Jack?" she breathes.

Jack takes her in, this being who shaped and grew and birthed him. The warmth of her, the light of her, the grey and the blue and the honeysuckle and all the intricate possibility of her folded up into human form. "You're okay," he says.
He would like to say more, ask her more, but the sudden sunburst of wild and desperate hope that emanates simultaneously from both Sam and Dean hits him like a violent blow to the gut, so strong that he very nearly vomits from the sheer immensity of it.

"You can—" Dean is stepping forward, all that careful surface opacity gone now, his face a naked flame. He gestures. "Did you just—you can—"

Jack steps back under the brunt of that gaze, finds himself stumbling onto uneven earth, safely removed from that room with its storm of supplication. He blinks, disoriented, feeling a strange prickling at the small of his back, as if something has just brushed against his shoulder blades. Before him is a structure, a small house in which, through the walls, he can plainly see the three startled souls whom he has just left.

He looks around in wonder. This, then, is the world. The night is overcast, a few faint stars peeping through. A faint lightness toward one edge of the sky signals dawn (he has never seen a dawn, and yet some part of him can almost recall countless dawns). A soft breeze makes goose bumps rise on his skin, the lake soughs against the shore a few yards away, and the body of a man lies on the ground at Jack's feet.

He crouches, not particularly surprised by the presence of the corpse. Its existence had hovered in Dean's and Sam's minds like a specter, some grief-ridden ghost that had taken possession of him, prodded him into a new form before he realized what he was doing. He'd worn, however briefly, that dark hair, the now-closed eyes, the weary lines of the face. He is not surprised to find the real thing here.

More surprising is the fact that he recognizes the body, or at least the lingering trace of the essence that had inhabited it. He has a vague memory of a rough voice speaking kind words, of his mother's conviction blooming like a many-petaled flower. Of his own grace following the ley-lines of that trust, questing out in the direction of some mingled scent of mint and ozone and courage.

Jack frowns. The man with the rough voice has known the touch of his grace, and his corpse still carries the memory of it, an access point through which Jack might be able to alter his fate, were he to try. But this isn't a matter of healing a wound and pushing a soul back into a revived body. The soul that once existed within this vessel is long gone, and the power that had more recently called it home is...Jack tips his head, narrows his eyes, catches a glimpse of some massive, mutilated creature, long-limbed and many-eyed, which had lived curled and coiled within the constraints of its flesh vessel. It's gone, now—burned away, extinguished, its ashen remains hidden within the corpse's cells like spent gunpowder. Only the scorched imprints of its ragged wings can be seen, stretched across the earth like shadows. The air is laced with the sharp, perfumed scent of mourning, a soft, intangible haze that marks where someone had cried out in denial, stared in disbelief, knelt in shocked silence.

The door to the house bangs open and Dean comes running across the yard, flames trailing him. He pulls up to a halt a few feet away from Jack, breathing hard. Jack can hear the hammering of Dean's heart, a sound derived not from exertion but from fear and hope.

"You brought Kelly back," Dean says—gasps, almost, the words tumbling out in a rush. He has put away his gun. The fire around him beseeches. "You can...you can bring him back, too."

"This is different," says Jack slowly. He watches the words lance through Dean like knives.

"Please try," Dean whispers. (please, his thoughts stutter, please please please please)

"You think I'm a monster."
Dean swallows. "This would prove that you aren't." But the words ring out hollow. Dean must know that Jack doesn't need to prove anything.

Jack surveys the body on the ground. There is no soul floating overhead. No faint trail of spirit leaking upward from the red wound in the corpse's chest. No, this isn't a simple healing, this is reconstitution of a more complex sort.

"Please," says Dean again. But there is doubt twining through his mind now (he can't he can't do it there's nothing he's gone he's gone for good he's gone and I never we never), extinguishing what it touches, making the fire burn black with despair.

There are things Jack can do, and things he cannot. This, he suspects, is in some sort of interim grey area. This, he suspects, is dangerous. And yet there are those traces carved by his grace, and there is that memory he has—this child must be born.

Jack straightens, considering. A name floats to the front of his mind, syllables that had been loud and clamoring against Sam and Dean's ribcages, misty and faint from before when they filtered down through the depths of his mother. He turns the name over, catches again that hint of lightning and earth and stubborn bravery.

"Castiel," Jack says, and a tear opens up in the world.
Through the rip there is nothing—it is not dark, merely lightless. Not cold, merely unwarmed. The gap where it is joined to the world contorts at the edges, in protest at a connection that should never have been made.

*Slugger,* says a fragment of his grace, warningly. Jack pauses, his hand outstretched. The emptiness beyond the rip yawns, uncaring. *Castiel,* he thinks again, and remembers—dimly as if through a veil, the image mosaic-like, pieced together from too many sources—an angel (*an angel?* he thinks, and dredges up a faint memory: a rush of wind, the flare of enormous wings in flight, the sky blurring past, the taste of grace in one's veins, the power and righteousness and glory of it all) who had faith in everyone but himself.

He hears more footsteps behind him, hears a gasp from his mother and a muttered curse from Sam or Dean. He ignores all of this and pushes his mind outward, as he had done with the bedroom—not upward this time, but forward, through the gap, into the emptiness.

The void numbs where the world had burned, but it drags at him in the same way, tugging him in every direction. It doesn't whisper of potential but of entropy, of spent power, of exhausted possibility. He does his best to disregard it, to focus on his purpose instead. His own memory of Castiel is weak and second-hand; even when he'd reached out with his grace, it was his mother who channeled it, his mother who heard him and moved accordingly. But behind him, in the world to which he is anchored, he can hear the susurration of three minds that *did* know Castiel, and Dean's is the loudest, so he focuses on that, tries to sort through the torrent of Dean's regret and guilt and self-loathing and anger (*cas i'm sorry cas i never i'm sorry cas cas cas* *cas i never i'm sorry cas cas cas*) to find the thread of memory, the trail of Cas's essence, an echo kept alive by the people who cared for him.

(*cas cas you son of a bitch cas we're cas cas cas best friend we've ever cas cas better together cas cas cas cas cas* cas cas)

The thing that was once called Castiel is scattered throughout the void, dispersed like melting snow into the emptiness. Jack gathers up the specks, fighting the void's ceaseless pull. He can feel power being leached from him, sacrificed in order to sustain him in this place where the living should never dwell, even for a short time. He fights the hiss of his grace, fights the urge to retreat. He needs to be thorough. He can't say whether it is intuition or some unsourced foreknowledge that warns him, but he knows, somehow, that this is not a trip he can make again.

The specks are silver-bright, still, not yet broken down by this empty place, but they are inert under his touch, unresponsive. He cradles them close, slips back toward the earth where his body still stands. The unlit void clings to him, resists his efforts to leave (*nothing gets out,* it seems to croon, *nothing nothing nothing nothing*)—but he can feel the weight of his physical body, rooting him in the world of things that exist, and he can hear the voice of his mother, feel her hand in his, and with a wrench (*nothing no nothing can leave no nothing nothing*) he pulls free and snaps back into his body. The gap slams closed behind him.

The air tastes sweet (when did it begin to taste sweet, instead of burning?) and the dark sky is, he realizes, not really dark after all. He can feel Castiel thrumming inside his palms, a coalescing mass of grace, beginning to stir. Jack lets his own grace thrum through the angel, galvanizing Castiel's essence into remembered wakefulness. He can feel it taking shape, starting to slip into the familiar
ruts of its crippled form. He doesn't let this happen—wraps his own grace around Castiel's instead, rebuilding splintered wing bones, restoring eyes, slipping into the cracks, healing too many old injuries to count.

Healed, Castiel cannot be contained; he unfurls from Jack's grasp, blazing silver-white, threads of gold snapping free as Jack's grace finishes its work and withdraws. He hears muffled cries from behind him, hopes his mother and Sam and Dean have had the sense to shield their eyes. It's all Jack can do to funnel the angel back into the empty shell on the ground. The body resists; it's technically a corpse, after all, and isn't something that's meant to be inhabited. But the grooves where Jack's grace once rushed are still there; he makes the heart flutter again, makes the lungs pump, spurs the vessel to accept Castiel's grace into well-worn channels. The long-limbed creature with its sprawling wings folds like paper, fitting itself gently into the realm of the flesh, and a jolt rocks the night as Castiel's consciousness fully awakens, flickering into the range of Jack's hearing mid-thought.

—ean again never see—Jack?

"Jack!"

It's a different voice (out loud? yes, spoken out loud, he thinks, disoriented) Only then does Jack realize that his mother is standing just behind him, her hand on his arm. She wraps something around him—the blanket from her bed, he realizes, confused by its introduction but suddenly conscious of the fact that it is cold outside, and that his feet are numb, and that the blanket is warm and soft. She wraps her arms around him, too, and he turns to meet her embrace. Suddenly he is very tired; the world throbs in the grey pre-dawn, rocking him with a sudden swell of will and want and weariness, and the tugs on his skin sharpen like fishhooks. From the ground, there is a sudden rush of ozone and mint. Castiel groans and opens his eyes.

"Cas—"

"Cas—"

The two men step forward at the same time, their thoughts jumbled, overridden by their cresting emotions: disbelief and wonder and a warm rose-red gladness. From Sam he gets mostly relief, in calm periwinkle waves; from Dean there's a fierce cobalt surge that doesn't quite subsume everything that came before it—all the grief and anger and worry and shock and love which foams suddenly to a bursting point and explodes out of him. Sam makes a grab for Dean's arm as the shorter man strides forward, but Dean evades the attempt and grinds to a halt in front of Castiel, who has made no move to sit up.

"What the hell were you thinking?"

"Dean—" says Sam, but his voice is lost in the outburst that follows.

"What the hell were you playing at, running in half-cocked like that? Stabbing fucking Lucifer, did you think that was going to fucking do anything? We went over the fucking plan, you knew you were supposed to stay behind and wait for us, did you think getting fucking stabbed in the back was going to help?"

Flat on his back, Castiel stares up at Dean with wide eyes. Jack wonders if the angel can see what he can—that although Dean's words are flushed an angry red, taut with scorn and blame, underneath them his thoughts blaze green and gold and midnight blue, and his relief is such that Jack wonders his voice doesn't shake.

Dean goes on. "And you didn't, I don't know, think to check that the fucking Devil wasn't still
kicking before you waltzed back through that portal? Getting yourself stabbed, and for fucking what? For Mom to get stuck in who fucking knows where with that piece of shit—"

"It's alright," says Jack to her. She looks at him, startled. He chooses not to explain—it seems fairly evident that no one else, even the angel, is as acutely aware of the color-soaked undercurrents of thought ribboning through the air between the five of them. (Otherwise surely Castiel and Dean would be aware that long banners of identical hue are unfurling within both of them. Surely they would realize this.) Instead he simply leans into her, resting his head on her shoulder, equal parts pleased and perplexed by the sense of comfort he derives from that small movement.

Castiel slowly pushes himself up into a sitting position. "Dean," he rasps.

"You could have died, you did die, you fucking—" Dean breaks off, lowers his head. He doesn't say anything more. His fists are clenched.

Castiel vanishes.

At any rate, he vanishes from the visible plane. On the etheric plane, his wings snap open to their full extent, and Jack turns his head to watch the angel called Castiel take flight with a fierce, bird-like cry of disbelief and joy.

Sam and Dean are looking around in alarm, but Castiel reappears in front of them a few seconds later.

Dean jumps visibly, then exhales. "Son of a bitch." His voice is low.

"Dean," Castiel breathes. "Dean, Sam. My wings are healed—Dean, I can fly, I can fly."

For a second, Jack thinks that perhaps Dean will ignore this new information, pick up his tirade where he left off. But the man stares at Castiel, and something Jack cannot identify passes over his face. The anger ebbs. Dean sighs. He moves forward and pulls Castiel into a rough hug.

"Thought you weren't coming back this time," Jack hears him mutter, the words muffled.

Castiel's forehead creases. "I just went inside the house," he says.

Dean makes a choked sound that could be a laugh. He reaches out a hand without letting go of Castiel.

Sam takes three quick steps and wraps his arms around the two of them. Then he catches Jack's eye over the top of Castiel's head. Thank you. It's a thought, but an aimed one, deliberate and direct. Jack blinks in surprise. He doesn't know when Sam realized, when Sam figured out that Jack isn't hearing only what is spoken aloud. Sam gives a tiny nod, then breaks eye contact, though the indigo pulse of his gratitude doesn't fade.

Jack watches the three of them as they stand in the muddy earth, leaning into each other. Again, that tugging on his skin, working its way deeper, into his chest. He shivers without knowing why.

"You did a good thing, Jack," his mother whispers into his hair. Her arm tightens around him.

"Look, the sun is coming up."

Some part of him can recall countless dawns, and yet Jack has never seen a dawn. He looks with all his might.
Chapter End Notes

Hope you guys enjoyed this one! Feedback and/or comments are always super appreciated!

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