Honey and Clementines

by sir_kingsley

Summary

Dean Winchester would do just about anything for his best friend and co-worker, Castiel Novak — including accompanying Cas to his hippy yoga birthing classes. He thought their friendship could survive anything, even seeing his pregnant friend in very *ahem* compromising positions. But as they spend more time together preparing for the birth of Cas's child, boundaries are crossed and feelings start to surface and neither really know what to do about it.

Notes

This is a very belated birthday present to xHaruka17x! Keep in mind this is my first long-ish form a/b/o fic, so feedback is welcome. Please read the tags for anything that might make you uncomfortable.

And feel free to come talk to me on Tumblr either on my main blog or my bottom!cas blog ;)
The bell shrills and books and backpacks start slamming against desks, chairs screeching over linoleum as the students rush out the door.

“Please don’t forget to read chapter fifteen,” Dean calls over the chaos. “There will be a quiz tomorrow.”

He doesn’t miss the groans of distress at his announcement and just rolls his eyes as the teenagers flee his classroom.

Lockers clatter open and close in the hallway and in just a few minutes, silence falls.

Ah, lunch time.

Dean slips his phone out of his desk and locks the classroom on his way out. He can’t help but wrinkle his nose a little on his way to the teacher’s lounge. Not even the strongest blockers can completely douse the overwhelming stench of teenage hormones. The hallways always smell like sweat, angst, and sexual frustration.

He slips into the teacher’s lounge and nearly sighs in relief as the gentle and familiar scent of clementines and honey washes over him. He heads to the fridge with a big smile. “Hey, Cas.”

Sitting at the table, a dark-haired man looks up from his newspaper with a big grin. “Hello, Dean.”

Dean fetches his lunch from the fridge and claims the chair next to Cas. “How ya been?”

“Well, all things considered.”

“And how’s the little one?”

At the question, one of Cas’s hands drops from the newspaper to his lower stomach and rubs in a gentle circle. “Wonderful. We just went in for our twenty-four-weeks check-up. Everything looked great.”

Dean watched as Cas’s hand gave his stomach one final pat. At just six months, Cas was finally starting to show, proudly displaying a cute little baby bump under his sweaters. Sometimes it was still jarring for Dean to look at his friend of five years and see the obvious sign of pregnancy. But then he would smile because, truthfully, it was a good look for Cas. He looked happy. Soft.

“The doctor was quite impressed with Emerson’s development.”

Dean smirks as he bites into his sandwich, and shakes his head. “You’re really sticking with that name?”

Cas pouts a little at Dean’s gentle teasing as though they haven’t had this conversation a dozen times by now. “What’s wrong with it? It’s better than Ralph, isn’t it?”

“Any name is better than Ralph. But it’s a last name, Cas. I mean, c’mon. Emerson Novak?”

“Dean was originally an English surname.”

Dean pauses on his way to take another bite. “Why do you know these things?”
Cas just gives a small shrug before reaching over to steal one of Dean’s potato chips. “I like Emerson. He’s one of my favorite 19th-century writers and it’s different for a first name.”

Dean chuckles and admits defeat. “It’s your baby.”

They eat in silence for a few minutes and it takes a while for Dean to notice the subtle shift of the scent in the room. Since getting pregnant, Cas hasn’t been taking his blockers or suppressants — they weren’t healthy for the baby. Dean still took his daily, but like the teenage miasma in the hallways, sometimes bits of Cas’s scent seeped through. Always soft, just a hint of what he truly smelled like, but Dean could still pick up the distinct note of nervousness mingling in the honey and clementine scent of the omega.

“Are you okay?” he asks, looking up concerned.

Cas hesitates before meeting his gaze, looking a bit anxious. “I um, I actually have a huge favor to ask you.”

Dean pulls a drink from his water bottle. “Okay. Shoot.”

He tries not to be mesmerized by the pink tinge to Cas’s cheeks as his friend looks down at his lap. “I want you to know that you’re of course free to say no. It’s not your responsibility after all and I wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t important or-”

Dean can’t help the soft chuckle. “Cas, it’s okay man. What’s up?”

Cas takes a deep breath. “My doctor wants me to take a birthing class,” he begins. “So I have a better of idea of what to expect when I go into labor and, ultimately, make it a more pleasant experience for myself and the baby.”

Dean nods along. “Okay.”

“And I could do it by myself, but Dr. Mills said it’s easier to relax with an alpha presence. And since I don’t have an alpha, she recommended… asking a friend.” Cas’s eyes shift up then, hitting Dean full force.

It takes a moment for the implication to really sink in and then Dean’s eyes are widening.

“But you don’t have to!” Cas says in a rush. “Like I said, I can do it on my own. I just thought, well, you’re my closest friend and I- I thought I should at least ask.”

As Cas rambles, the general shock wares off and Dean feels his chest tighten fondly, feels a familiar heat thrumming proudly through his body and preens for just a second as he realizes how big an honor this actually is. For Cas to trust him enough to ask him to accompany him to these classes, a very intimate part of his pregnancy. It makes his alpha overjoyed.

He smiles and reaches out a hand, covering Cas’s and giving a gentle squeeze to cut him off. Cas looks up, still nervous and pink-cheeked. “Cas, I’d love to go to the classes with you.”

Cas’s eyes light up. “Really?”

“Of course, man. You’re my best friend. I’d do anything for you and your baby.”

The smile that curves Cas’s lips is soft and relieved. His scent sweetens the room.

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Cas glances down at his phone to check the time for probably the twentieth time in two minutes. He scoots to the side as another couple approaches the door and returns a smile of solidarity to the pregnant woman wobbling inside.

His hand falls to his own stomach. His baby bump isn’t quite as pronounced as hers but the doctor says that will change in another month. He can’t quite say that he’s thrilled at the idea of looking like a bloated balloon, but it brings a special smile to his face when he thinks of holding it, of hands a little bigger than his touching his skin gently, reverently as a deep voice whispers *hellos* and *I love yous* to the life growing inside-

“Cas!”

Cas’s head whips up and his body goes through a dizzying rush of responses: excitement, embarrassment, a little shame even, and confusion. That last one is pretty common when it comes to Dean Winchester.

Dean smiles brightly as he approaches Cas at a slight jog, his chest rising and falling with heavy breathes.

“I’m so sorry I’m late,” Dean pants and comes to a stop. “Got caught by a train.”

“Oh, it’s all right,” Cas says, looking down at his phone again. “There’s still three minutes until class starts.”

Dean doesn’t look relieved, offering an apologetic smile as he reaches for the door. “Shall we?”

They go inside together and Cas almost stops as though he’s smacked into a wall when the scent hits him. Pregnancy scents have always been sweet but with ten pregnant people in the room, it’s almost sickening.

Even Dean seems affected through his blockers, nose wrinkling in slight distaste. “Wow that’s strong.”

They gravitate toward two open seats. They’re not your typical chairs, long backs but no legs, putting them flat on the ground. Dean glances around at the other patrons, already in their seats, legs crossed in front of them.

“Are we…?”

Cas shrugs. “It appears so.”

He starts to crouch. It’s not a hassle yet, but definitely isn’t as easy as it was six months ago. Or even two months ago. He gives a little wobble and shoots an arm out to steady himself and then feels two large hands grasp his hips.

“I got you, Cas. Here.”

Dean’s hands slide into Cas’s and ever so carefully, he lowers Cas into the funny chair and then drops into his own with a smile.

“Whoever designed these chairs did not have pregnant people in mind,” Dean whispers and Cas laughs.

“I think the assumption is that you’ll have a partner to help you,” he says.
Dean snorts. “Pretty big assumption.”

At that moment a short blonde woman struts into the room, a bright smile on her face and dousing the room in the scents of vanilla and lavender. “Good afternoon, class,” she greets in a peppy voice. “My name is Donna Hascum and I will be guiding you through these exciting next few weeks as you prepare to embark on the life-changing journey of childbirth.”

Beside him, Dean gives a little snort and leans closer to Cas. “She makes it sound like we’re on our way to Lonely Mountain.”

Cas gives a short laugh, unable to contain it, then schools his face. “Today,” Donna continues, “we’ll be familiarizing ourselves with omega anatomy-getting to know and understand your bodies-”

Dean’s shoulder brushes against Cas’s again. “I’m pretty familiar with it already,” he whispers and Cas just shakes his head. “-getting to know and understand your bodies-”

“Some may even call me an expert,” Dean mumbles. “-and what they need during this-”

“Oh, I know exactly what they need-”

“Dean!” Cas hisses softly, trying to go for admonishment but he knows his grin gives him away as he meets Dean’s eyes, twinkling with mischief. “Is there something wrong, gentlemen?”

Both men turn to Donna, smothering their smiles. “No, ma’am,” they say at the same time.

Her gaze lingers on them for a few accusatory seconds but then she turns and proceeds to explain the rest of the day’s agenda.

In a few minutes they’re looking at a giant laminated poster of the omega reproductive system and Cas pinches Dean every time he feels the alpha perk up with a new joke or innuendo.

The second half of the class is breathing exercises. Donna instructs everyone to scoot off of their chairs and push them back toward the walls so they have plenty of room.

“Now, I want the alphas to sit behind their omega, bracing your partner between your legs,” she says coolly.

Cas looks up at Dean, half expecting the man to look nervous or reluctant. But Dean just crawls into position, settling behind Cas, with his legs on either side.

“Scoot as close to your partner as possible,” Donna continues as she circles the class, observing their positions. “Omegas, you are going to lean back and your alphas will be there to support you.”

There’s a confusing catch in Cas’s chest as he starts to lean back into Dean’s heat. They touch and he feels almost electrocuted, like his body is hyper aware of every point of contact he’s sharing with the alpha and it makes little sense. The two have touched before but Cas doesn’t remember feeling so conscious of it.
He tries to shake the feeling away and just leans into Dean. He can feel the alpha twitching and tilts his head back, brow arching curiously at the little grin he finds.

“Trust fall,” Dean says.

Cas rolls his eyes. “I can’t stand you.”

“Put all your weight on your alphas,” Donna breaks in, still keeping her voice low and soothing. “Trust them to support you through this as they have supported you through your pregnancy, as they will support you during birth.”

Cas does as told and puts all his weight on Dean’s chest, noting happily somewhere deep in the back of his brain that the alpha doesn’t budge. It makes him feel warm all over, feeling Dean’s body heat seep into him from behind, his thighs cradling Cas’s hips, and his chest rocking Cas under the waves of steady breathes.


Cas sucks in a deep, steady breath through his nose, filling his lungs as much as he can and letting rolling his shoulders into it, before releasing it slowly, letting the calm take it’s place and-

“Oh, misty eye of the mountain below…”

The last leg of the breath stutters out of him in an airy laugh and he shakes in Dean’s arms.

They hear someone clear their throat sharply and look up to find Donna eyeing them. They settle down immediately, eyes closing and continue their breathing until she walks away.

“You’re the worst,” Cas whispers.

“You love me,” Dean responds, quietly and with confidence.

Class is over ten minutes later. Dean pulls Cas to his feet as the other alphas help their omegas and the aura of serenity dissipates under movement and conversation.

“Don’t forget to bring your yoga mats next week!” Donna calls as everyone starts to leave.

“Yoga mats?” Dean asks, brow furrowed. He looks to Cas. “Did she say yoga mats?”

Cas gives a tiny smile. “Oh, did I forget to mention that?”

“Forget to mention- Cas, you son of a-”

“Excuse me, gentlemen?”

They spin toward Donna, spines going rigid like guilty children. Their teacher glides toward them, somehow looking threatening and kind at the same time.

She takes a breath. “Listen. I know this is a class for partners and while you and your mate have a lovely bond, I must ask you to be a little less distracting in next week’s class, okay?”

Cas’s mouth goes dry the moment “mate” leaves Donna’s mouth and he looks between her and Dean, tongue tripping over itself in a desperate need to correct her.

But Dean just laughs and throws an arm around Cas’s shoulder. “We promise to be on our best
behavior next week.”

Donna’s smile sweetens and she wishes them a good day and wanders off.

Dean steers Cas out of the studio, rambling about something that Cas can’t hear. His mind is swarming with questions. Like what had they done to make Donna think they were mated? Why hadn’t Dean corrected her? Why was this bothering him so much?

“Cas? You hear me?”

Cas blinks and looks up at Dean, a little dazed. “I’m sorry, what?”

Dean grins. “I asked why you were smiling like that, you dork.”

“Oh, I—” He lifts a hand as if to touch his lips and check. Dean is still watching him, seeming more amused by the second as he waits for an answer that Cas doesn’t have. “I guess I was just lost in my head.”

Dean keeps smiling and Cas doesn’t understand why he can’t look away from it, why he focuses so much on the pink of Dean’s lips and how wonderfully full they are. Almost feminine in shape. An odd physical trait for an alpha but… very appealing.

“So you wanna grab something to eat?” Dean asks.

Cas blinks and feels a powerful wash of heat strike through him and tears his eyes away from Dean’s lips.

“Ugh, yeah, that sounds great.”

They start walking again but Cas pays no attention to where they’re going, too busy wondering just what the hell is wrong with him.

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Dean stares at the people bending and curving around him, a horrified and almost scandalized frown on his face.

“Dean,” Cas hisses.

He looks over where Cas is swinging his arms slowly up over his head, bringing his hands together and pulling them down to his chest.

So apparently, Donna hadn’t been joking about bringing their yoga mats. Dean had showed up — on time — and found Cas standing outside with two bundles in his arms and a wicked smirk. Inside, everyone was rolling out their mats, dressed in sweats and form-fitting athletic wear.

Dean looks down at his jean-clad legs, pulled uncomfortably tight against his skin as he tries to maneuver himself in the same position as Cas. This is ridiculous.

“How exactly is this supposed to help with childbirth?” he mutters, struggling to pull his knee in a little closer.

Cas just shoots him a withering look and continues with his breathing exercises.

Dean blows out a breath. This really isn’t his thing — hell, he can’t even remember the last time he stretched. But as he observes, he can see a noticeable change in the pregnant people in the room and
Cas’s scent is just a tad softer so obviously it has some sense to it. He closes his eyes and rolls his head as instructed, sucking in steady, deep breaths.

Donna’s soft voice carries over them after a few more minutes. “Now we’re going to move into the all-fours position.”

It takes Dean a moment to catch up, his body feeling heavy, but he hears the rustling of clothes as people move and when his eyes finally flutter open they almost bug out of his head.

Because hanging right in front of his face is Cas’s ass.

“You want your hands braced directly beneath your shoulders and your knees apart,” Donna continues as she circles the class. “Make sure your tailbone is tucked under so the back doesn’t dip.”

Cas shuffles into position, his hips swaying and it’s like a sharp hit to Dean’s gut and his groin. It looks like Cas is presenting for him. Dean’s mouth runs dry, his mind going fuzzy as he tries to process what is happening and why only to find that he really doesn’t give a shit he just wants to-

“Is there a problem, Mr. Winchester?”

Dean jumps, head snapping back to find Donna lurking over him, one brow arched in a challenge. Ahead of him, Cas looks over his shoulder, eyes promising divine retribution if Dean is being a nuisance again. He feels his blood rush and tries to cough it away.

“Ugh, no. Nope. I’m good,” he sputters as he moves into position.

Donna watches him as he mimics his classmates, bending on his hands and knees. “Tailbone tucked, Mr. Winchester,” she says and pushes on his ass.

Dean snaps into position, resisting a tiny yelp. He hears deep laughter and peeks up to find Cas grinning. Dean scowls and keeps his eyes cast down.

“Now I want you to begin rolling your hips,” Donna says and Dean wants to curse. “Take it nice and slow, start small and work your way to bigger motions when you feel up to it.”

He can hear when people start moving and Dean rolls with them but keeps his eyes firmly on the mat and off of Cas basically for the rest of class.

Standing feels foreign and a little dizzying once Donna announces they’re finished for the day. Dean gives a big yawn, stretching his arms over his head and trying to shake the sleepiness off. Yoga may not be his thing but damn if he’s not going to have one hell of a great nap later.

“Um, a little help?”

Dean looks down and Cas is holding a hand out toward him. Dean takes it without hesitation and helps his friend to his feet. Cas grips him and sways for a moment and Dean’s hands instinctively go to his hips.

“You okay, buddy?”

“Yeah,” Cas says and takes a deep breath. “Just a little tired.”

Dean rolls up their mats and they make their way out of the class together.

“Any plans for the rest of the day?” he asks as they start toward their cars.
“I’m finally going shopping for baby furniture,” Cas says. He’s walking with his hands on his belly and Dean can’t help but find it adorable.

“Thought you ordered all that weeks ago.”

Cas grimaces. “I tried but I just didn’t feel comfortable buying it online. I want to see it myself and feel it. Talk to an expert and make sure it’s safe.”

Dean nods in understanding. “Want me to tag along?”

Cas raises a brow. “You’re an expert on baby furniture?”

“Well, no. But I feel like it’s my duty to come and make sure my godchild’s first years of life aren’t spent in a beehive.”

He is absolutely not mesmerized by the way Cas’s head tilts back when he laughs or how long his neck looks.

“Who decided that you were going to be the godfather?”

Dean tries to shake off the heat rushing through him and waves a hand at himself. “Um, it’s it obvious, Cas? Whom else would you entrust your safety of your child to?”

Cas gives a small shrug. “I have quite a few siblings.”

Dean snorts. “Oh, you would prefer Gabriel raise your child over me? You want all of your kid’s teeth and half her brain to be rotten by the time she’s two? Cool.”

They reach Dean’s car and neither of them even hesitate when Dean opens the passenger door and Cas ducks inside.

“So maybe not Gabriel,” Cas continues when Dean drops into the driver’s seat. “But Michael is plenty responsible and would be a great role model.”

“Yeah if you want Emerson to be a future leader of the Young Republicans and go on to pass bills in the senate that end funding for orphanages and clean water in underdeveloped neighborhoods.”

Dean starts the car and Cas just blinks at him. “That was specific.”

“Your brother literally tried to do that a year ago.”

Cas clucks his tongue. “You’re right; Michael is a dick. I guess you would be the best option, Dean.”

Dean pumps a victorious fist into the air, cranking up the music, and he misses Cas’s small smile that melts into a frown of confusion as they cruise down the road.

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It’s just the two of them in the break room again.

Dean is going on about some smartass answer a sophomore gave him today, rolling his eyes so hard Cas almost fears they’ll get stuck permanently looking upward.

Cas just smiles and nods along with the story, one hand absently rubbing his lower stomach. The baby is becoming livelier. He’s on the verge of seven months and it’s like the whole pregnancy gets more surreal with every passing day and he can hardly believe it.
In just another few months he’ll have a baby of his own. A child to love and spoil unconditionally.

He’s not so wrapped up in that to ignore reality, though. He knows it won’t all be precious cuddling and nightly lullabies. It’s going to be stressful and exhausting. He’ll be up to his ears in dirty diapers, waking up at all hours of the night for feedings. There are illnesses to worry about, rashes that can pop up no matter how careful he is and he’s heard the horror stories about breastfeeding.

These are the moments he starts to wish he would have a partner, someone who would have his back and help him through the hard times while appreciating the good ones.

But that’s not an option. The biological father didn’t want to be involved and in all honestly, Cas didn’t want him to be either. Cas didn’t want to say the night they’d spent together was a mistake because he was quite happy with the result, but he would prefer it he had fallen into bed with someone who was less of a mess. Someone kind and respectful and funny, someone affectionate and charming even when he had no right to be. Someone with a great smile and beautiful eyes, someone who smelled like-

Cas blinks at Dean, a sour feeling stirring in his gut. All these years as friends and he still had no idea what Dean smelled like. It had never bothered him before. He’d expressed the same kind of modesty with suppressants and blockers before getting pregnant.

It was just… at the classes. Cas couldn’t help but notice the way the omegas would scent their alphas and the way it would practically turn their bones to pudding, these blissful smiles breaking over their faces as they continued their poses. There had been a few times he’d instinctively tried with Dean when there was an exercise that required them to be close together and he could feel the alpha’s warmth. But there was nothing there. It was like Dean didn’t exist. And it drove Cas mad.

He stares at the alpha now, still chatting about his students, and tilts his head. He’s spent a lot of time wondering what Dean might smell like. Maybe something piney or fresh cut grass with hints of maple. Sandalwood and bourbon. Coffee and the earth after a rainstorm or maybe-

Lemons and lavender?

Cas wrinkles his nose and blinks his eyes, coming out his head, and he almost growls. Lisa Braedon, a ninth-grade science teacher, is standing next to Dean. She’s got one hand on his shoulder and they’re smiling at each other. Lisa’s fingers flex over Dean’s shirt and Cas’s tighten into fists.

“… was wondering if you wanted to get dinner on Saturday n-”

“He’s busy.”

The words fly out of Cas’s mouth before he can stop them. Lisa and Dean look at him, both seeming a little confused, but Cas doesn’t retract his words. He doesn’t want to.

Dean gives an awkward laugh, and looks back at Lisa. “Ugh, what Cas means is I’m busy Saturday afternoon. But I’m free that night.”

Lisa’s smile returns slowly. “Oh, good. I’ll text you the details, okay?”

She nods a small goodbye to Cas who is barely resisting glaring at her and takes her leave. Dean waits until the door clicks shut to look at him, his eyebrows riding high. “Um, you okay, man?”

“Of course, Dean, why wouldn’t I be?” Cas says and his tone seems clipped even to him.

“You just… seemed upset there for a minute. You and Lisa okay?”
Shame washes through Cas like ice water and he feels his shoulders drop. He had no right to snap like that. He didn’t even understand what had come over him. Dean and Lisa have been circling each other for a while now and Cas had always gotten along with her before. It had to be these hormones.

“Cas?” Dean says, his voice deep with concern. “Are you okay? Do you want to go see the nurse?”

Cas works up a tight smile and shakes his head. “No, I’m fine. Just tired I suppose.”

The bell rings then and Cas stands, using the table as support. This stomach is starting to become more than he can handle.

“I’ll see you later,” he tells Dean and hurries back to his classroom.

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“Hey, Lis!”

Lisa spins around at his call and Dean shoots a bright smile as he jobs toward her.

“Sorry for being late,” he says once he’s in earshot.

Lisa holds her arms out and they hug. “Hanging out with Cas?” she asks as Dean pulls back and reaches for the door to the restaurant.

“Cas?” he asks, confused. “Ugh, no, haven’t seen him since this afternoon. Why?”

“You smell like him,” Lisa says as she walks past him.

Dean looks down at his clothes, pulls the collar of his shirt up to his nose but doesn’t smell anything. He shrugs and follows Lisa inside.

They’re seated in a booth and Dean asks about her day. He and Lisa have had a thing — he supposed that’s the best word for it — for a little over a year, since she joined the staff at Lawrence High. It’s mostly been harmless flirting around the school and a few dates here and there. Never anything official. He liked Lisa — she was smart and kind with a sense of humor, but there had never been a real spark between them.

Nothing like the one with-

“Um, Dean?”

Dean blinks. “Huh?”

“I asked how your day was.”

“Oh! Well, Cas and I went to a birthing class. Today we started working with the yoga balls. I guess they’re super helpful with contractions and relaxation. Cas didn’t want to sit on it at first because he was afraid he’d roll off and hurt the baby.” Dean smiles just thinking of the way Cas had scowled at the big blue ball, not an ounce of trust in him. “It went fine though. I was there to keep him steady and help him move around on it.”

When Dean looks up the expression on Lisa’s face is unreadable. “So you… go to all of the classes with him?” she asks.

Dean nods like he needs to be careful. “Ugh, yeah. His doctor recommended a couple’s course. Said it helps omegas relax when an alpha’s around and makes the birth easier and stuff.” He shrugs and
reaches for a breadstick.

“But Cas is single, isn’t he? So why would his doctor recommend a birthing class for couples?”

Again, Dean shrugs. “Like I said, it’s better for Cas and the baby. He told Cas to ask a friend and I wasn’t doing anything on Saturday afternoons so… voila.”

“So the other father isn’t involved at all?”

An icy rage courses through Dean at the mention of that dumbass who knocked up Cas. Balthazar. Dean had never liked him the few times they’d hung out, usually in a bar because that was basically where Balth lived. He just lurked around the club scene, picking up whoever he can. Sure, he’s nice enough and charming to boot, but he’s also a complete numskull and a piece of shit — and if Dean hadn’t already thought that before he got Cas pregnant, it was practically scientifically proven the moment he told Cas he wanted nothing to do with the baby. Like what kind of person turned down Cas? A fucking idiot.

“No,” he says tightly. “He’s not involved.”

Lisa gives a small nod and it occurs to Dean that she went through a similar situation when she had her son, Ben. Dean forces his fists to unclench and takes a deep breath. No reason to be defensive.

Cas isn’t yours to defend anyway, a small voice says in the back of his head.

They continue their date with less tension. Lisa talks about how Ben is doing in school — the fourth grade is treating him nicely. Dean mentions the report Cas got from his check up — Emerson is still developing perfectly. Lisa says she’s found a new yoga studio downtown and they even offer hot yoga. Dean tells her about how they have to do yoga at the birthing classes and he showed up in jeans the second time.

The finish eating and Dean gets the bill. He’s telling Lisa about last Saturday when he and Cas went furniture shopping and he had to beg Cas not to buy a guinea pig bed spread for the crib as they exit the restaurant.

They stop on the sidewalk near Lisa’s car. She has that unreadable smile on her face again. “You know, it’s admirable how dedicated you are to Cas and his baby. It’s almost like he’s your mate.”

Dean frowns. “What do you mean?”

“You just haven’t been able to stop talking about him all night.”

A rush of embarrassment colors Dean’s cheeks. “Oh, I’m, ugh, I’m sorry.”

“No, it’s fine. It’s good that you care about your friend so much.”

Dean nods and tries to shake off the sinking feeling the word “friend” gave him.

“So, ugh, Ben is staying at my parents’ for the night if you want to come over,” Lisa offers, looking up from under her lashes.

It takes Dean a moment to understand her meaning and when it hits him it makes his stomach turn.

“Ugh, sorry, Lis, but I actually gotta be somewhere early tomorrow morning. Maybe some other time?”

Her smile drops a few degrees. “Right. Some other time. Have a good night, Dean.”
Dean watches her get into her car and waves as she drives off. A cold breeze pushes into him carrying the last whiffs of her scent. Lavender and lemons. And he frowns, body longing for honey and clementines.

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He gets the text around 2:00 p.m.

Cas: Are you busy?

Dean: nope what's up?

Dean lounges on his bed, watching the little text bubble pop up letting him know Cas is responding.

Cas: Would you be interested in helping me put some of this together?

A photo follows a second later and Dean barks with laughter at the sight of Cas’s living room overtaken with boxes of furniture.

Dean: yeah I’ll be right over

True to his word, Dean takes a quick shower and jumps in his car, hair still wet. It’s about a twenty-minute drive to Cas’s.

When he arrives, he doesn’t even bother with knocking. He has to ease the door open, careful not to knock over the box propped near it. He takes one official step inside and stops. The apartment is absolutely saturated in Cas’s scent. It’s so strong, Dean can practically feel honey on his skin and he wonders briefly if he had forgotten his blockers. It smells so sweet and wonderful, like ripe, pregnant omega, so thick and delicious.

Suddenly, Dean looked down and was horrified to see the slight tent in his pants. Fuck.

“Hello, Dean.”

His head snaps up and Cas is approaching him, the scent getting thicker. Dean smiles weekly and swiftly hides his lower half behind one of the large boxes.

“H-hey, Cas. How’s it going?”

Cas sighs and gestures toward the mess. “Terribly, as you can see. Everything needs to be assembled and I’m not even supposed to lift more than half of it.” Cas steps closer, a warm smile curving his lips that look pinker than usual. “Thank you so much for coming.”

“Oh, yeah, n-no problem, man.” Dean grins and claps his hands together, not sure if he’s trying to distract Cas or himself. “So where should we start?”

“I guess the crib.” Cas points to the biggest box currently cornering his couch. “We should probably carry it to the nursery and put it together in there.”

He moves as if to do it himself and Dean springs into action, erection long forgotten. “Hey, hey, I got it,” he says, sliding past Cas.

“I was just going to help,” Cas huffs.

“Dude, I’ll take care of it. You just make sure I don’t crash into anything.”
Dean lifts the box — and nearly dies — and carries it to the nursery, setting it down where Cas commands. They cut the box and Dean removes the pieces, organizing them around the room. He fetches a few cushions and helps Cas settle on them so he can help unwrap things and put some of the smaller pieces together while Dean assembles the frame.

They tackle each piece of furniture about the same way, taking occasional breaks to get more pillows to support Cas’s back or lifting him up so he can use the bathroom. Cas’s scent seems to fade the longer Dean is there — or maybe he’s just adjusting to it. Either way, the heat stops coiling in his lower stomach and he doesn’t pop any more unwelcome boners while they work.

Around 7:00 they have all the big pieces finished: the crib, rocking chair, changing table, dresser, a bookshelf.

Dean frowns at that one. “Really, Cas?”

Cas just gives an airy shrugs. “I’m an English teacher, Dean. What did you expect?”

They settle in the living room and Cas orders pizza for dinner. The spend two hours just lounging around watching TV and eating.

Come 9:00, they return to the nursery to arrange everything and Dean is painfully reminded just how big a pain in the ass Cas be because that finicky fucker makes them change the floor plan like a dozen times. Finally, he settles on one and Dean hangs around to help add a few finishing touches: putting some photos on the wall, assembling the mobile, which is of course bees but Dean doesn’t comment — it’s actually kind of cute.

It well past 11:00 when they finish.

“Staying up till midnight on a school night,” Dean yawns as they wander back out in the living room. “Our students would be so disappointed.”

“I can’t thank you enough for coming over today, Dean,” Cas says. “It would have taken me weeks to do this by myself.”

Dean just waves it off. “No sweat, Cas. Anything for you.” He says the words and almost wants to take them back — not because they’re not true, but because he’s terrified as he realizes just how true they are.

Cas just smiles and it’s so soft but makes Dean flood with warmth.

“I, ugh, I better get going,” he says, reaching for the door and trying to fight off another yawn.

“You know you’re welcome to spend the night here,” Cas offers. “You can borrow some of my clothes to sleep in and wear to work tomorrow.”

And god, what the idea of being wrapped up in Cas’s scent does to him.

*Nope, nope, nope.*

“Ah, that’s okay, Cas,” he says, reaching for the door. “It’s not too far. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He opens the door and hits a wall of cold air like it’s solid ice.

*Nope, nope, nope.*

He turns back around to wear Cas is standing with is arms crossed over his chest. He grins. “That
offer still stand?"

Cas rolls his eyes. “I’ll get you some pajamas.”

*****

Cas wakes in the morning feeling a little sore but still well rested. He climbs out of bed and wanders downstairs to the kitchen. His nose picks up on something as he walks and he sucks in a deep breath, letting a sense of calm wash through him.

He reaches the kitchen and starts a pot of coffee. He can hear Dean snoring in the living room and it makes him smile.

Having Dean around yesterday had felt so good. He’d been a wreck all Saturday after they’d parted ways after class. His body just couldn’t stop moving, couldn’t settle or relax, knowing Dean was going out with someone that night. Someone who wasn’t Cas.

And it’s ridiculous, he’d told himself. He and Dean weren’t mated. Dean was his best friend. He had no say in what the other man did or whom he dated. Dean was doing him a huge favor by attending these classes, Cas had no right to demand any more from him.

But just thinking about it now in his kitchen has Cas tensing. He’d been careful not to ask about Lisa or the date even once yesterday. He didn’t want to know. And when Dean never made any effort to bring it up himself, he’d felt so relieved.

Cas hears an alarm start in the living room and Dean’s grumbling as he turns it off. Cas muffles his laughter and pulls two mugs from the cabinet.

Another wave of tranquility crashes over him, sweeping away any lingering thoughts of Lisa, and Cas fills the mugs, turning to offer one to Dean when he hears the alpha approaching-

A powerful scent hits him, knocking him back an inch and the mug slips from his hand. Dean stands there, looking just as stunned, but neither pays attention to the shards of ceramic swimming in a sea of black.

Cas’s nose twitches and he can’t help pull inhale slowly and deeply. It smells like a thunderstorm in his kitchen, and fresh grass with just the softest hints of whiskey. It’s the most intoxicating scent he’s ever smelled and it has him slicking instantly.

Dean growls and Cas shivers in response, his body leaning toward the alpha on instinct. He needs to be closer. Needs to touch, needs to taste.

“Cas,” Dean says and he sounds like he’s choking.

“Dean,” Cas responds in kind and steps forward.

Dean meets him, the alpha’s hands landing possessively on Cas’s hips and pulling him close, careful of his stomach. Cas feels more slick leak out of him and he breathes more of the scent of thunderstorms like he can fill his body with Dean’s lightning.

“Cas,” Dean whispers, his lips ghosting over Cas’s, and Cas tilts his head back a little more in invitation.

“Dean,” he whines, fingers fisting in the T-shirt he’d given Dean last night, “please.”
Dean’s lips press against his, gentle but insistent. He licks at Cas’s lips and Cas opens willingly, craving the taste of the alpha. Dean’s tongue is hot and demanding and thrilling as it sweeps into Cas’s mouth like he’s trying to devour Cas.

And maybe it’s not the ideal first kiss considering morning breath and all that, but it’s still beyond perfect. It’s all he can do to just hang on, his instincts torn between wanting to climb Dean like a tree and wanting to fall to his hands and knees on the kitchen floor and present. Or drag Dean up the stairs to his bed and spend all day in a nest just feeling each other and being together. His body shivers at that idea. Yes, he wants to lie in bed and be held. He wants to feel Dean’s large hands caress his body and bask in the alpha’s heat.

Dean starts to pull away and Cas chases him. He can feel the way Dean’s lips curve into a smile as he gives in and nips at Cas’s bottom lip before finally pulling back. There’s a dazed gleam in his eye that turns Cas into a puddle.

“I feel like I’ve been waiting to do that for five years,” Dean whispers.

And god, Cas can barely handle that confession. “Really?”

Dean nods and nuzzles his neck. “Yeah. I’ve wanted you so long, Cas. I just… didn’t realize.”

Cas lets his hand drift under Dean’s shirt, needing more of his warmth. “I nearly went mad yesterday, picturing you out there with Lisa. I thought… I thought about you going home with her and I couldn’t—” his breath hitches and he buries his face in Dean’s chest.

Dean’s hand rises to stroke through Cas’s hair and his breath tickles Cas’s hair as he whispers calming reassurances. “I’m so sorry, Cas. I never should have agreed to go. I wasn’t really into it and even she could tell.”

“Really?” Cas mumbles into his shirt.

“Yes. You know what she told me when it was over?”

“What?”

“That I talked about you so much it was like we were mated.”

Cas laughs and clings tighter to the alpha — *his alpha*.

“Oh, shit, Cas!”

Dean jerks away, startling Cas as he sways on his feet. “What?”

Suddenly he’s off his feet, cradled at Dean’s chest. “You were standing in that glass,” Dean says as he carries Cas to the living room. He sets Cas on the couch and knees in front of him. “Let me see if you’re hurt.”

Cas is stunned into silence as Dean inspects each of his feet.

“Looks like one little cut. I’ll get the first aid kit,” Dean says, starting to rise. “Then I’ll clean up the mess and we’ll have to get ready for work.”

Cas almost scowls at the mention of work. That’s the last thing he wants to do right now — he’s just found his mate, doesn’t that warrant one day off?

“I can see you’re thinking of playing hookey,” Dean says as he returns with the first aid kit. “We’ll be
close by each other all day, Cas. And the second that bell rings, I’ll be next to you.”

Dean cleans the cut on Cas’s foot and bandages it. Once he’s done, he pulls Cas to his feet and Cas is amazed at how easy and natural it feels to just fall into Dean’s body and kiss him.

And he supposes it is natural. This is the way it always should have been. The two of them.

He feels his baby give a soft kick and he grins. Okay, the three of them.

*****

The next few weeks are some of the best of Dean’s life. Probably the best if he’s being honest — but he’s trying to leave some wiggle room for the weeks to come.

They’ve been spending just about every waking moment together. Dean had basically moved in with Cas the day of their first kiss. It didn’t feel too fast or scary to either of them. They sleep together, drive to school together, pop in on each other’s classes and eat lunch together. Then they drive home, cuddle and cook dinner, buy more things for the baby, and they still attend the birthing classes every Saturday.

The classes have become exponentially easier since getting together. Dean doesn’t feel weird about having to touch Cas or feel guilty when he gets a little hot seeing Cas in certain positions. And Cas practically came out of each class like a puddle of goo Dean had to carry to the car — apparently that’s what every omega usually left like, Cas had just been missing a key ingredient: Dean’s scent.

Dean had had no idea how important his scent was to Cas, how taking his suppressants and blockers and robbed Cas of the greatest advantage of having an alpha around. He had needed the sense of safety and steadiness the alpha scent provided. The calmness.

Dr. Mills had explained it to both of them the first time Dean accompanied Cas to one of his check-ups. Cas had been doing well before, but his blood pressure was much lower and he had less muscle tension. Even the baby seemed to have perked up, heartbeat stronger than ever and more active when Dean was around. Dean hasn’t taken his meds since.

Cas is eight months now and beautiful as ever. A little grumpier at times, but nothing Dean can’t manage. In fact, he finds there’s nothing he loves more than pampering his omega.

*His omega.* It still gives him chills.

Of course, the bond isn’t official. They haven’t mated yet. Not for Cas’s lack of trying.

“Dean,” he whines, crawling over Dean’s body and settling in his lap.

Dean grins and tries to keep his focus on the papers he’s grading. Cas kisses his neck, warm lips wandering up toward his ears. He pulls the lobe between his teeth and nibbles, making Dean’s breath catch.

“Cas,” he tries to warn.

“Alpha,” Cas whispers, rolling his hips down on Dean’s crotch.

Dean gasps and puts the papers he’s grading away at a safe distance. His hands grip Cas’s hips, pulling him closer and Cas gives a delighted squeal and kisses him. It’s hot and sloppy and Cas keeps grinding on his cock and Dean feels like he’s burning with fever in just seconds.
“Cas,” he says again. “Please, sweetheart.”

“Dean, I need you,” Cas whines. “Please, baby, I feel so hot and I need you.”

At that moment Dean is hit with the scent of Cas’s slick and Cas reaches for his hand, pushing it around to his ass where he can feel the wet spot through his pajama pants.

“I need to feel you inside me, baby, please,” Cas pants. “Please, Dean, please.”

Dean wants to give in so badly, his entire body screaming for him to give Cas whatever he needs. But he feels Cas’s stomach rub against him and his instincts snap at him to be careful. He can’t risk hurting Cas or the baby, so he can’t give Cas exactly what he wants. But he can give Cas the next best thing.

“Dean,” Cas whines again, hips grinding harder, more desperate. “Oh, god, please.”

Dean brings his hands back to Cas’s hips. “Okay, sweetheart. I’ll take care of you.”

Carefully he lifts Cas off of his lap. He doesn’t miss the excitement on Cas’s face as he settles back into the pillows while Dean climbs between his legs. Dean takes his time undressing Cas, pulling off his pajama bottoms and his underwear, then lifting his shirt over his head.

Cas’s breasts have grown big and round, ready to feed once the baby arrives and they make Dean’s groin tighten. He leans in and flicks his tongue over one nipple, teasing it until it hardens in his mouth. Cas moans above him as Dean switches to the next nipple, his hand drifting below, caressing Cas’s swollen stomach all the way down until he finds Cas’s cock. Cas gives a sharp gasp at the contact and Dean continues to work his nipples, mouth traveling back and forth while his hand strokes his cock nice and slow.

“D-Dean,” Cas stutters. “Dean, more, please.”

Dean gives Cas’s left nipple one final bite before kissing his way down his stomach, loving every inch that he can and then taking Cas’s cock into his mouth.

They’ve done this a couple times and while it drives Cas wild if indicated by his bucking hips and the stream of profanities falling from his lips, but Dean also knows that it’s not enough.

He still puts his all in it, swallowing around Cas’s cock until it reaches the back of his throat. He sucks around it, then comes back up, licks his tongue around the tip and then up the bottom of the shaft. Cas’s hand clutch at Dean’s hair as his body continues to jerk and move, riding the pleasure wherever it takes him.

“Dean,” Cas cries. “More! Please, baby, give it to me, I want to feel you inside me, Dean, please!”

Dean takes his cock all the way again, ignoring Cas’s pleas and he hears the growl of frustration that quickly becomes short little breaths as he gets closer.

Dean back off again and takes him deep, repeating it until Cas’s body is like a tense live wire ready to snap and erupt in flames. Cas is almost in tears above him and Dean knows it’s time.

He takes Cas down to the root once more and wriggles a finger below to circle Cas’s hole. Cas’s hips jerk up and then slam down, but Dean is careful. He uses his other arm to pin Cas to the bed as he continues to suck around his cock and rub at his hole which is practically gushing slick. Cas begins to shake.
“Dean, oh god, Dean, please, Dean, Dean, Dean!”

Dean eases just the tip of his finger into Cas’s wet hole and Cas’s body snaps, hips arching up as he comes in Dean’s mouth. Dean strokes him through it, his finger petting Cas’s soft rim and the omega continues to spasm. When Cas starts to shake again, Dean eases off, pressing one last kiss to the head of Cas’s cock and pulling his finger from his hole. Cas whimpers.

“’s not fair,” he slurs when Dean crawls over him to kiss him. He glares at Dean but his eyes are already fluttering shut.

“I know, sweetheart,” Dean whispers and starts to rearrange them on the bed so Cas isn’t lying in the wet spot from his slick. Dean cleans him up a little with his T-shirt and then settles behind Cas, one arm draped over his waist, hand splayed on his belly.

Cas sighs and leans into Dean’s chest, covering Dean’s hand with his own. “Love you.”

Dean smiles and presses a kiss to the back of Cas’s neck. “I love you, too.”

*****

Cas sits impatiently on the observation table.

Dr. Mills finally comes in, warm smile in place. “Good morning, Castiel,” she greets as she goes straight to her counter, washing her hands and pulling on a fresh pair of gloves. When she faces him again, her smile is brighter. “Looks like you’ve reached that peak pregnant glow.”

The irritation Cas has been sitting on the last two days evaporates long enough for him to blush. Ever since he scented Dean, his pregnancy has gone from standard to extraordinary. He doesn’t feel as stressed or scared even. Every morning he wakes up wrapped in thunderstorms and Dean’s strong arms and he finally feels safe and… stable. Dean is there every day to help him, child proofing his apartment and adding a few things to the nursery. Cas isn’t alone anymore and that bit of reality has done wonders for himself and the baby.

Dr. Mills laughs. “Hey, let’s get through this check-up and then I’ll have you back on your way to that handsome alpha.”

She runs her usual tests on Cas, checking his blood pressure and his heart, listens to him breathe. She then has him lie back and pull up the hospital gown he’d been given. She checks on the baby and reports that everything looks great. In another minute, Cas is sitting up and redressing.

“So, any questions for me?” Dr. Mills asks, removing her gloves and rewashing her hands.

“Can I have sex?” Cas asks immediately.

Dr. Mills turns to him, blinking owlishly. “Excuse me?”

Cas sighs, that irritation from earlier coming back with a vengeance. “My alpha refuses to knot me and it’s driving me insane. I think he’s afraid it’s unsafe for the baby this late in the pregnancy. Is that true?”

Dr. Mills chuckles knowingly, sliding her hands into the pockets of her coat. “I see. You’re not the first omega to have this problem — though I’d say most wish their problem was their alpha being too careful.”

Cas’s hand drifts to his stomach protectively. “So it can hurt the baby?”
Dr. Mills shakes her head. “No, Castiel, it won’t. In fact, we encourage intercourse as long as the omega is comfortable with it. This late in the pregnancy, it can help trigger labor and the release of hormones is a great natural painkiller from any cramps or false contractions you’ll start to experience.”

Hope burns through Cas like wildfire. “Really? So it’s okay for us… to be together?”

“I’m not saying you should go out and have crazy, rough, wall-slamming sex,” Dr. Mills says, waving a warning finger. “But if your body is craving that kind of intimacy and you take it easy, yes, it’s fine for you and your mate to have sex.”

Cas’s blush returns. “Oh, we-we’re not… we’re not mated yet.”

Dr. Mills’s eyebrows shoot up. “Really?” Cas nods, confused by her obvious shock. Dr. Mills reaches for Cas’s chart. “Well, your body suggests otherwise. You’re producing all the hormones of a mated omega according to your last blood test.”

Cas’s jaw drops. “But how-how-”

“Maybe you haven’t shared your bites yet, but for intents and purposes, you’re mated,” Dr. Mills says.

Cas doesn’t know how to respond. That’s literally impossible. He and Dean had fooled around a few times, but they hadn’t actually mated or bit each other yet. Without the bite, they couldn’t be real mates.

“But how…” he starts again, not sure where to go with it. “It’s impossible.”

Dr. Mills puts down the chart and comes to rest a comforting hand on Cas’s shoulder. “For most, yes, but it is a common occurrence for a special group of people.” Cas looks up, head tilted, and Dr. Mills smiles. “True mates.”

*****

Dean shuffles through the door to Cas’s apartment, his arms ladled with all sorts of shopping bags. He knew Cas would be home from his check-up soon. Dean hadn’t been able to go with him, owing a Sunday visit to his parents. In retrospect, he should have been smarter and rescheduled it for a time when Cas could come with him because he’d taken one step through the front door and his mother pounced on him.

Whose scent is that? When did you get mated? Who are they? You’re having a baby? Why didn’t you tell me?

Dean is still kind of dizzy from the onslaught of questions.

He’d made it out alive with a promise to bring Cas soon to introduce them.

He felt bad about bailing on the doctor’s appointment though, so he’d sped back into the city, made a few stops, and was hoping to make it home before Cas so he could surprise Cas with dinner.

Dean drops the grocery bags on the kitchen counter and goes to hide the others in the hall closet. But on his way past the stairs his nose picks up on a scent that turns his body into a flame. Dean runs up the stairs and follows his nose to Cas’s bedroom, dropping the bags in the doorway when he sees what waits for him.
Cas is spread out on the bed, completely naked, one hand splayed over his swollen stomach and the other between his legs, finger ing his hole. The room smells like omega arousal and sweet slick and Dean can see the way it coats Cas’s fingers as he pumps them in and out of himself and he can’t help the way his tongue darts out to wet his lips.

“Dean,” Cas whines and his eyes open, meeting Dean’s.

“Cas,” Dean chokes out. “W-what are you doing?”

“Dean, I need you,” Cas says. “My body needs you.”

Dean takes an involuntary step into the room, body prepared to give Cas whatever he needs. But then he stops and bites his lip. “Cas, we can’t.”

He expects a pout or for Cas to growl as he usually does, but today he smiles. Then suddenly, he’s pulling his fingers out and sitting up. He moves toward Dean slowly but purposefully, takes Dean’s hands in his and wraps them around his waist. Dean tenses, fighting every urge to grope and lick and maybe throw Cas on the bed and fuck him into oblivion.

“I talked to Dr. Mills today,” Cas breathes against Dean’s neck, pressing a wet kiss at the column of his throat.

“Okay…” Dean says, head a little fuzzy as Cas continues his gentle ministrations.

“And she said that as long as we don’t get too wild,” he begins, hands sliding under Dean’s shirt, “that it’s perfectly safe for you to knot me.”

Dean’s breath hitches. “Really?”

Cas’s long fingers tickle up his ribcage, sliding to his back and pulling his closer. “Dean,” he whispers, looking up from under his lashes.

“Y-yeah, Cas?” Dean stutters.

“Mate me.”

Dean springs into action at Cas’s request. He carefully lifts Cas, thrilled by the excited yelp that falls from Cas’s lips, and he carries him to the bed. Cas falls back easily and Dean crawls over him, covering Cas with his body from head to toe and ravishes Cas’s neck and chest with all the kisses he can.

Cas squirms beneath him, his breath coming in short pleasured huffs. His fingers slide into Dean’s hair when Dean’s lips suckle on one of his nipples, working the bud to hardness.

“Dean,” Cas whines. “Please no teasing. I’ve been waiting for this for weeks.”

Dean pulls off the nipple to nuzzle at Cas’s neck. “I know, sweetheart. Me too. Just want it to be special.”

Cas’s hands cup Dean’s face, forcing his eyes up and Cas’s smile is soft and stunning. “It’s always special with you.”

And Dean’s only human, okay? How is he supposed to control himself after something like that? He dedicates himself to giving Castiel everything he’s been craving, fitting weeks of desires into just a few minutes of bliss. He nestles between Cas’s legs and licks him open, tongue delving through
thick slick and moaning around it like it’s the sweetest thing to ever touch his lips. He eases his fingers in slowly and Cas arches into them, rolling his hips down to take as much as he can.

“Shh, sweetheart, I got you,” Dean whispers when Cas’s movements start to get a little erratic. “I’m finally going to take care of you to the way you deserve.”

“Please, Dean,” Cas mewls, driven desperate with need. “Need you.”

Dean moves away then and Cas cries out, hands reaching for him. Dean smiles and situates himself against the headboard before pulling Cas into his lap. Cas looks confused for the barest of seconds before realization hits and his eyes light up like blue fire.

Time seems to stop the moment Dean enters Cas. Their eyes are carefully trained on one another, absorbing every little twitch of the lips as their bodies finally merge the way their natures had been demanding since that morning in the kitchen.

They don’t rush it, just rock into each other like it’s the most natural thing in the world. Dean lifts his hips into every roll of Cas’s, his hands firmly planted on Cas’s waist while Cas grips his shoulders for balance.

Their lips meet and Dean thinks he can taste his future in Cas: Cas tastes like a house on the outskirts of town with a vegetable garden and a front-porch swing. He tastes like lullabies and squeals of young laughter. He tastes like petty arguments over laundry and Saturday afternoons grading papers in the backyard and midnight dances in the kitchen while it rains outside. He tastes like happiness and shooting stars and wild dreams that always come true.

He tastes like honey and clementines.

Cas’s breath draws short, shaking out of him, and his pupils have devoured the blue of his irises. “Dean,” he breathes and Dean knows, nods his head before baring his throat.

Cas leans forward, lips pressing into the junction where Dean’s neck meets his shoulders and Dean kisses Cas in the same spot. Their hips continue pumping, Dean’s knot swelling, feeding the barely contained inferno smoldering inside of them and they’re so close to incinerating each other just a little-

Cas goes taunt, his entire body locking down around Dean and his teeth sink into Dean’s flesh. Dean howls, his knot popping instantly and he bites into Cas. The euphoria that courses through him is harsh and relentless and so damn delicious. He feels himself coming inside Cas, flooding him with his seed and he goes slack-jawed, teeth easing out of Cas as he sinks back against the headboard. Cas slumps against him, head on Dean’s shoulder.

The minutes that follow are quiet and precious. They catch their breath and clean each other’s wounds, then hold each other until Dean’s knot deflates. Cas shivers when Dean shifts them so they’re both lying on their sides.

Cas smiles sleepily, his eyes barely open. “That was worth the wait.”

Dean chuckles. “Glad I met expectations.”

Cas just grins a little wider, then scowls when his stomach growls. “I need to make dinner,” he grumbles.

“I was actually already planning on something before you seduced me.”
Blue eyes open to just slits. “Are you complaining, Mr. Winchester?”

Dean draws his fingers over Cas’s hips in a slow circle. “Not even a little.”

Cas inches toward him, kissing his chin, and Dean is about to respond when Cas’s stomach grumbles again. Cas rolls his eyes. “This will have to wait. Emerson is demanding nourishment.”

“Oh, hey, that reminds me.” Dean climbs out of the bed and goes to fetch the bag he’d left by the door. Cas is sitting up when he turns around, half covered by the sheets and somehow looking ten times more gorgeous than when Dean walked in twenty minutes ago. Dean shakes the dirty thoughts growing out of his bed and settles back in the bed, offering the bag to Cas. “I picked up a little something for Em.”

“Em?” Cas echoes with an arched brow. “Who approved that nickname?”

“Me,” Dean says without shame. “Open it.”

He waits with very little patience as Cas digs into the bag and pulls out the small gift. He holds it in his lap for a second, not moving, and Dean wonders if he’d done something stupid.

“Essays: First Series,” Cas reads, his voice soft. “Ralph Waldo Emerson.”

“Ugh, yeah, I thought it could be her first book, ya know, for her shelf,” Dean explains, suddenly feeling desperately unsure of something he’d thought a great idea just an hour ago. “I thought you’d like this one because Self-Reliance is your favorite, right?”

Cas looks up and Dean feels cold panic because Cas looks like he’s about to cry. “Oh god, did I-”

He never gets the chance to finish that sentence as Cas falls into his arms, smothering Dean’s lips with his own, and neither get around to making dinner for a couple more hours.

*****

Emerson Jane Novak is born in late December during one of the worst snowstorms of the decade. While she was brought into a world covered in ice, her life is filled with nothing but warmth.

She grows up in a house on the outskirts of town with a vegetable garden and a front-porch swing. Her days are spent battling tickle monsters and going on safaris in the backyard; her nights are calm with forehead kisses and soft lullabies. The first book read to her was written by a man with her name and there’s a message inside the front cover that says From Dean in blue ink that will later be scratched and replaced with From Daddy.

When she’s three she gets a baby brother named Austen Kurt Winchester. He has light hair and eyes like hers and he cries a lot but she loves him the most.

When she’s five she and Papa get the same last name as Austen and Daddy. She doesn’t remember the day much except for the pretty dress she got to wear. But she remembers her dads kissing in front of everyone and her Grandma Mary muttering about how it took them long enough.

People whisper about her dads a lot. Apparently, they’re true mates, which is super rare. Emerson doesn’t know what the means. She just knows them as her dads who bicker over dishes and which color to paint the guest room, who grade homework on the weekends because they’re the enemy, who play old people music in the middle of the night and dance in the kitchen like they’re the only two people in the world.
She and Austen just think they’re gross.

But one day when she’s older, she asks them what it means to be true mates and they just smile at each other and reach for their hands.

Papa says it means loving the one person the stars made for you.

Daddy says it means trusting your nature to show you how to love them.

They say she’ll know when she smells the most beautiful scent in the world, a scent she’ll feel in her bones that she can’t live without. For Papa it was thunderstorms and whiskey and fresh cut grass.

Daddy smiles and says there’s never been a scent that could make him as happy as honey and clementines.

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