Mate in Haste, Repent at Leisure

by TheReluctantShipper

Summary

Dean Winchester is desperate. His family is on the brink of homelessness and starvation, so he does the only thing he can think to do: Sells himself to an alpha through the Omega Ball, held by Abaddon’s Finishing School for Omegas.

The only thing Castiel Novak is desperate for is to get his mother off of his back. Though he's fourth in line for the throne, the queen has been badgering him for years to find a mate and get married.

When they meet, sparks fly, and they jump headfirst into a decision that will change both of their lives forever. Hopefully, it's the right one, because you know what they say about those who mate in haste...

They repent at leisure.

Notes

- This is (obviously) a work of fanfiction. I don't own anything but the original characters. I
don't claim ownership over the characters or storyline of the TV show Supernatural, no matter how grateful I am for them, which is hella.

- No posting schedule, because I am a garbage person comprised of garbage, and cannot commit to anything but my husband.

- Thanks to the Sister Husbands, who are my best friends in the whole world, and happen to be gracious enough to also beta most of my works for me. I don't know what I'd do without you girls, but I certainly wouldn't be doing this.

- The dubcon warning is because of the whole "arranged marriage" thing, and the MCD and GDV warnings are for much, much later chapters.

- These first couple of chapters are going to be a little shorter, but they'll get longer as we go on. I can tell you this is gonna be kind of a long fic, so buckle in, beautifuls.

- The country that the Novaks rule is deliberately kept vague because I know nothing about geography, and as it turns out I am not willing to learn. *shrug*

- Tags will be updated as I post new chapters, should they need new tags.
Chapter One

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“When do we move?”

“Soon.”

“Do we really have to kill all of them?”

“You know what he said. They all have to go. Except for him, of course.”

“I know, I just-”

“Quit asking stupid questions. You know why.”

“... I guess.”

“Say it out loud.”

“The Novak family has to die.”

Chapter End Notes

- Feedback gets my motor running.

- Come see me on tumblr!
Chapter Two

There are, Castiel Novak reflects as he surveys the crowd around him, a number of advantages to being the fourth son of a king. Not the least of which is while his mother insists that he find a mate, she cannot really decide who he mates.

As the last unmated member of the royal family, he supposes it makes sense that he should settle down. Michael, the oldest Novak son, mated years ago to shore up an alliance with a neighboring country. His mate Amara, omega though she may be, is scary as hell. She gets along well with Lucifer’s mate, Lilith, another omega who Cas wouldn’t want to meet in a dark alley.

As the only ones with any real responsibility to the throne, it makes sense that Michael and Lucifer, the second oldest, mated for power and money. Amara and Lilith are well-bred and lovely, their manners perfect. They both manage to defer to their mates without making it seem like there’s an imbalance of power in the relationship. They’re incredible, strong assets to the Novak line.

Gabriel, on the other hand, is mated to Kali. Not only is she a beta, and therefore far more unlikely to bear children, but she’s also strong-willed. She often contradicts Gabriel in public, which just as often results in them having loud sex as soon as they get home. Cas knows because Cas has had the misfortune of hearing.

Kali is really nothing like a royal bride is supposed to be, but Gabe has the advantage of being the third son, just as Cas has the advantage of being the youngest. So, as unsuitable as Kali is, no one has ever outright told Gabriel that he couldn’t have her, because he’s only barely in line for the throne.

(And because Gabriel would probably have taken it as a personal challenge and fled the country, but no one talks about that, either.)

It’s because of his brother’s antics that Castiel has never particularly felt the need to mate. Oh, he’s had partners, he’s nowhere near being a virgin, but the actual urge to mate hasn’t struck him. It doesn’t even particularly strike him now, but Naomi has been badgering him for weeks. His mother can be incredibly persistent when she so desires.

“We must present a strong, united front that the people can trust,” she’s been saying. “How can we do that if you’re always canoodling with some loose omega somewhere in the city? Or, even worse, locked up in some dusty library?”

He’s been hearing some version of this since he presented, but it’s recently gotten worse. His father’s kingdom is not a happy one. There are whispers of a rebellion. Castiel himself isn’t terribly worried, because there are always whispers of a rebellion. There are activists and protesters outside the palace almost every day, though Cast rarely pays attention to them. The kingdom is in turmoil, and since Naomi can’t control anything else about it, she’s begun to insist that Castiel end his bachelorhood.

He has no interest in finding a mate the traditional way, however. It would probably take far too long to pacify his mother, anyway. His vague plan to satisfy Naomi is to find an omega, knock them up, then set them up in a nice house somewhere to raise the pups. He will, obviously, pay for everything, and the omega will officially be a royal mate. He just doesn’t really want a “family life.” He’d much prefer to be in the library, or travelling to schools across the kingdom to talk to academics. He has
little time for pups.

Which is why he’s here.

Abaddon’s Finishing School for Omegas is a fine establishment, so he’s told. Josie Sands, the alpha who runs the place, is said to be harsh but fair, and every one of the omegas who’s gone through her training program has been perfectly suited to life in the spotlight. All of them are polite and poised, soft-spoken and lovely. None of which are traits that Castiel holds in particularly high regard, but he knows what’s expected of him and his mate.

So he’s at an Omega Ball, keeping an eye out for the waiter so he can get another scotch, eyes flicking over the omegas dressed in varying states of white and gold.

The room he’s standing in is huge, a ballroom straight from a historical romance novel. The lights are low and dreamy, casting the whole room in a warm glow. Those who are here to see the omegas are dressed to the nines, and the omegas themselves are done up quite well, too. Castiel wonders vaguely if the School pays for their clothes.

The Ball itself is an event held by the School to facilitate matches. The rich and powerful gather to choose omegas that suit their tastes, then offer a generous donation to either the omega’s current “benefactors” or to the school so they can take them home. It’s essentially prostitution with better marketing. The practice is looked on as extremely old-fashioned, and Castiel thinks it won’t be long before it’s outlawed completely.

But it’s not outlawed now, and he intends to make the most of it while it’s available to him.

The omegas are everywhere, all demure eyes looking down and submissive body language when an alpha comes around. Most of them are incredibly good-looking, and they all smell good, to boot.

The more gold an omega is dressed in indicates the more experienced they are sexually. Some people come to find omegas purely for pleasure, and Castiel tries not to judge, he really does, but it does seem a bit tacky.

Though he supposes there’s no room for him to throw stones, since he’s here for the “pure” omegas.

The omegas wearing white are virgins. Cas doesn’t know how the school knows that, but he vaguely hopes there’s no exam or anything of the sort. That would be rather humiliating, he thinks. Regardless of how they know, the omegas in white are the ones who are taken for mating, especially by those of nobility or royalty, like Castiel himself. It’s not the most tasteful way to find a mate, he knows, but it’s the most expedient, and he at least intends to be good to his omega. They will want for nothing.

Most of them, however, are remarkably… Well, unremarkable. The “come-hither” looks, the clothes meant to entice, the way they each smell like healthy, fertile omega, it’s all so incredibly manufactured. Castiel can see why this is considered a bit old-fashioned, going back to a time when omegas were seen as mate-hungry fools without a brain in their heads. It’s a bit disheartening.

He finally finds a waiter and gets another scotch after depositing the empty tumbler onto the tray. He, himself, is dressed in all black. The only relief from the dark color is the red embellishment on his button-up shirt, which is the only thing marking him as alpha aside from his scent. Otherwise, his shirt, waistcoat, and slacks are all pure black. He didn’t even know he owned black slacks, and he’s almost positive the waistcoat is Lucifer’s.

Whatever. I suppose it doesn’t matter.
It doesn’t matter because he’s not sure he’s going to find what he needs tonight. There are a lot of truly lovely creatures here, but he hasn’t really felt… Anything. Maybe the fabled “spark” isn’t necessarily required for becoming mates, but he’d like to look for it for a while before giving up on it completely. At least until his mother forces his hand.

Just as he’s thinking of leaving, he catches an enticing scent that has his inner alpha sitting up at attention. Apple pie, sunshine, freshly mown grass. The scent definitely belongs to an omega, and it’s absolutely mouthwatering. Cas has never really believed in the ridiculous notion of “love at first scent,” or even the raunchier tellings of an alpha popping a knot the first time he scented his mate, but dear God, he understands now where they came from.

He turns quickly, nose in the air. It takes him only a few moments to find the source.

The omega is tall, probably a smidge taller than Castiel himself. He’s got dark golden hair, the kind that darkens more with age, cut and styled carefully. His eyes are strikingly green even in the low light of the ballroom. He’s a bit on the thin side, but Castiel knows that places like this sometimes force omegas to diet when they don’t need to. He’s probably in his early twenties, and he’s quite possibly the most physically perfect human being Castiel has ever laid eyes on.

The only thing marring the perfection before him is the tenseness around his eyes. It’s slight, but even from here Castiel can see that the omega is uncomfortable.

He manages to pull his gaze away from the stunning man to see who he’s talking to. Ah, that explains it, then.

Alastair Racque is a lower part of the nobility who likes to think he’s much more important than he actually is. He attends functions that Castiel quite frankly has no idea how he gets invitations to, and is known to generally make most women, omegas, and children alike uncomfortable.

(Excluding Castiel’s brother’s mates, of course. Amara, Lilith, and Kali would each eat Alastair alive, and Castiel assumes that’s why the alpha avoids them).

Alastair’s body language is predatory, and the look on his face sets something sharp and protective off deep inside Castiel. His inner alpha starts to growl, and he has to contain himself from doing so out loud.

He does not, however, do anything to stop himself from going over to intervene.

Dean Winchester hates this.

He hates the white button-up shirt he’s wearing, embroidered with omega gold. He hates the makeup they forced him to wear, and the stupid hair gel. He hates that the only thing he’s allowed to drink right now is water when all he wants to do is drown himself in whiskey.

He hates that his father lost his job because some careless jackass didn’t properly secure a car on the lift and it fell on John Winchester, permanently paralyzing him from the waist down. He hates that the insurance company barely covered the hospital bills and outright refused to pay for the rehab facility. He hates that his mom can only find a job as a part-time server because of her subgender, which is not only demeaning, it’s not enough to support four people. He hates that he can’t get a job, either, no matter how hard he’s looked, and he looked extensively.

Things got really, really bad there for a while. Bad enough that Dean was skipping meals to feed Sam, and he knows his parents were doing the same for him. Mary was desperately picking up any shifts she could, and Dean was scrambling to find under the table jobs that paid cash, there just…
Wasn’t enough work. At least, there weren’t enough people willing to give omegas work, specifically.

Dean applied to the School in secret as a Hail Mary. When he got accepted, he knew his family would never let him go. They’d never let him sell himself like that, so he started attending the classes in secret. Juggling finishing school with the odd jobs he could find and with lying to his family was hard, but here he is. His last night as a free man.

Well, hopefully.

Because as shitty as the Finishing School is, Dean’s good at this. He’s seething with resentment and loathing for everyone around him, but no one would know it by his scent, because it’s clean. He’s learned to mask the stronger emotions in his scent, so right now he just smells like fertile, healthy omega. He’s learned to school his face, too, so he knows that he looks politely interested in whatever’s going on around him. Not interested enough to look like he’s too smart, but not disinterested enough to be rude.

Man, his family is gonna be so pissed if he gets bought tonight.

He’s good-looking, and he’s getting some good attention, so there’s a high chance he will be bought. There are some omegas here, though, who are “sponsored” by companies or prodigious families. They’re the ones with silks and diamonds, with professionally done makeup and hair, and wearing custom-made perfumes to complement their natural scents. Dean doesn’t have any of that, just a high school diploma, a give-em-hell attitude, and the underlying, desperate thought that this has to work.

And, of course, the burning knowledge that this is just glorified prostitution. A little more permanent than bending over in an alley, maybe, but prostitution nonetheless.

He keeps his family’s faces in mind while he subtly dodges Alastair’s wandering hands. He reminds himself that the satisfaction he would get from punching this asshole in the face (which would be a lot) is not worth the amount of trouble he’d get into (also a lot). So he keeps his face blank, his scent even, and his evasions inconspicuous.

It’s only the weeks of practice he’s had at doing just that that keeps him from whipping around and sniffing the air like crazy when an amazing scent hits his nose. It smells like thunderstorms, honey, and old books. It’s definitely not Alastair, he smells like cold, wet stone and blood. Dean tries to look around on the sly to find the alpha that smells so good, but he doesn’t end up having to try that hard.

“Alastair,” a voice like thunder rolls down Dean’s spine, making him straighten it as he turns to see the newcomer’s cold smile as he comes to stand next to Dean. “I wasn’t aware you’d be in attendance.”

“Castiel,” Alastair simpers. The name pings something in Dean’s head, but he can’t quite catch it, not when he’s swimming in that scent. “I just… Dropped by,” Alastair says, slime oozing from every word.

“Hmm,” Castiel hums in agreement. “Looking to help someone out?” The polite language that means, “buy an omega.”

You could buy me, Dean thinks to the dark-haired alpha, because damn. He’s all stubbled jaw and insanely blue eyes and sex hair that’s so dark brown it’s almost black. He’s almost as tall as Dean, with broad shoulders and a slim waist. Dean wants to lick something off of him.
“Well, I couldn’t pass up the chance to at least see what was being offered.”

There’s something stormy in Castiel’s eyes, and alpha protectiveness is starting to spike in his scent. It’s a little ridiculous, since he and Dean literally haven’t even been introduced, but it’s also kind of hot and making Dean a little weak in the knees. He mentally tries to shake it off, because now is not the time to develop a scent-crush on some random alpha. *Get a grip.*

“Interesting,” Castiel says evenly. “Well, I hate to intrude, but I must request the lovely omega’s company for a few minutes, if you wouldn’t mind excusing us?”

It’s a pretty clear dismissal, and the flash of irritation in Alastair’s eyes only lasts a moment before he’s smiling wide with crooked, yellowing teeth. “Of course, Castiel, please. Be my guest.” He turns and walks away with only a little stiffness in his gait showing any unhappiness at all.

Castiel finally turns to look at Dean, who’s a little overwhelmed with all that attention directed at him in those blue eyes. “I apologize if you were enjoying Alastair’s company,” he murmurs, “I just know that he can be a bit… Off-putting.”

*Damn, a hero* and *a gentleman.* Not that Dean needs saving, but the thought is nice. He lowers his eyes demurely. “It’s quite all right,” he almost purrs, “thank you, alpha.”

The alpha tilts his head a little, eyes drilling into Dean, and if he hadn’t practiced every facial expression in the mirror at least twenty times, Dean would think Castiel could see right the fuck through him.

“What’s your name?” Castiel asks.

“Dean, sir. My name is Dean.”

Chapter End Notes

- Feedback gets my motor running.
- Come see me on [tumblr](https://www.tumblr.com)!
“Alastair,” Castiel says as he comes to stand next to the omega who smells so incredible. “I wasn’t aware you’d be in attendance.” He keeps his voice even and his tone polite but cold. He finds Alastair extremely distasteful to be around, and his damn alpha instincts are angry that Alastair dared to speak to an omega that Castiel himself is interested in. *Ridiculous.*

“Castiel,” Alastair says, his voice just as nasally and oily as Cas remembers. “I just… Dropped by.”

Castiel can imagine what Alastair “dropped by” for. Rumors run rampant both about and within any level of nobility, but the whispers about what Alastair does to those in his care are particularly disturbing. From his staff to the omegas he “helps,” if the even some of the stories are true, he’s not a man who one wants to find oneself alone with.

*And he’s speaking to this omega.*

Cas curbs the growl that wants to crawl its way out of his throat. “Hmm,” he says instead. “Looking to help someone out?”

“Well, I couldn’t pass up the chance to at least see what was being offered,” Alastair says, like they’re at some sort of garage sale and not an Omega Ball.

Castiel knows he reeks of protectiveness, but he simply can’t help it. He wants to defend this omega, to not only claim him, but to protect him from harm. It’s because of that instinct that it’s more difficult than usual to hide his dislike of the alpha in front of him.

“Interesting,” he grits out. “Well, I hate to intrude, but I must request the lovely omega’s company for a few minutes, if you wouldn’t mind excusing us?”

There’s just a moment of defiance in Alastair’s eyes, and Cas finds himself relishing the thought of a fight. There’s no reason for it, he’s certainly not some mindless knothead who will battle for some random omega’s favor. He’s not even a particularly physical or violent person. Regardless, the brief promise of a challenge, immediately followed by the submissive way Alastair lowers his eyes, satisfies some deep alpha urge within Cas.

Alastair pastes on a smile. “Of course, Castiel. Please, be my guest.” The way he turns on his heel and stalks away makes Cas’ lips twitch up in a smirk.

He’s finally able to turn and give the omega the attention he deserves. “I apologize if you were enjoying Alastair’s company,” he says insincerely, “I just know that he can be a bit… Off-putting.”

The omega lowers his eyes in a submissive gesture that has Cas tilting his head. “It’s quite all right,” the young man says softly, smoothly, “thank you, alpha.”

It’s the right sentiment, said in the right seductive tone. The boy’s body language is all appropriate, submissive and pliable. Even his *scent* hints at gratefulness, beneath his incredibly appealing omega scent.

Something is just a shade… Off. Not *quite* sincere, not *quite* believable. Oh, most others would probably believe it. It would take very little for this young man to have the entire room eating from
the palm of his hand and believing that it’s exactly what he wanted. Castiel, however, was raised in high society, and can sense when he’s being fed half-truths.

The ability to hide or change one’s scent is hard-won and rare. Castiel can see how it would be a necessity to have such a talent as an omega from the School, but he’s duly impressed nonetheless. Many of the omegas here have just an underlying bite of fear to their scent, but Dean gives off nothing but his natural, fertile omega smell.

“What’s your name?” he asks.

The green eyes staring at him sharpen for just a moment. “Dean, sir. My name is Dean.”

Cas smiles. “A lovely name, indeed.”

“Thank you, alpha.”

As cleverly as it’s done, the fact that Dean is hiding the truth from him, especially in his scent, bothers Castiel. He’s surprised by how much it bothers him. He’s not angry, though, he’s curious. “Would you like to walk with me, Dean?”

Dean smiles, and Castiel wonders if no one else would see the tightness around his eyes, his lips. “It would be my honor, alpha.”

Castiel smiles and leads Dean around the room. He makes sure to make eye contact with any alpha they pass who dares to give Dean a second look. He knows he’s being ridiculous, but he wants to be the only one Dean sees tonight. Alpha knothead nonsense, he cautions himself, even as he’s satisfied when they all back off.

“Are you enjoying the Ball?” he asks.

Dean smiles beatifically. “It’s a lovely event. The School put a lot of work into it.”

A clever way to not answer the question. “Indeed.”

“And you, alpha? Are you enjoying yourself?”

Castiel smiles. “Please, call me Cas. And I certainly am now.”

The way Dean ducks his head and blushes doesn’t even look practiced, but there’s something in his eyes, just a flicker, that tells Cas it is. It’s been practiced dozens of times to appear as coy as possible. Interesting.

They make more stilted small talk as they make the rounds. Every so often, Cas is stopped by someone who wants to kiss his ass, but he mostly brushes them off. As if gaining favor with him would help them, anyway. Cas wields so little power in the kingdom it’s almost comical.

When one of these well-wishers, Zachariah Adler, is sent off after inquiring after Michael’s health, Dean cocks his head. “You have brothers?”

Castiel smiles ruefully. “I do, three of them. I’m the youngest.” Somehow, he doesn’t think Dean’s caught on to who Castiel is yet, and strangely enough, he’d like to keep it that way. “What about you? Do you have any siblings?”

The smile Dean gives him is the most obviously unhappy one yet, although again, Cas doesn’t think someone who wasn’t looking as hard as he’s looking would notice. “No. I don’t have a family at all.
It’s how I ended up at the School, actually.” His smile tightens. “An omega on his own can’t do much, especially without a family. It was pretty clear that this would be my best chance.”

*Lies, lies, all lies.*

Instead of upsetting him, or putting him off, the lies just make Castiel want to know why Dean is lying. Why won’t Dean tell him about his family? What drove Dean to be here, at the School, essentially selling himself in a practice so outdated that Castiel himself is sure to get the side-eye for finding a mate this way? What are Dean’s motivations? What does he hope to gain from this?

“Well,” Castiel says, instead of asking all of the questions burning in his heart, “I certainly benefited from it.”

Another smile from the omega, though this one is more genuine. “Ah, I think I got the better end of that deal, Cas.”

Maybe he’s a little scent-drunk, or maybe this is just a bad idea. Maybe it’s because Dean’s lying to him, and he wants to know why. Maybe it’s because Dean doesn’t know who he is. Whatever the reason, Castiel makes what is probably the most impulsive decision he’s ever made in his life.

“Dean, would you like to come home with me?” At the omega’s raised eyebrows, “To be perfectly clear, I’m looking for a mate, and I’d very much like you to be it.”

There it is again, a flash of rebellion, although it’s infinitely more attractive in Dean’s green eyes than it was in Alastair’s watery ones. It’s just a flash, gone before Cas can really even be sure it was there, and then Dean is smiling, ducking his head, and blushing again.

“I’d be honored, alpha.”

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*Shit. Shit. Shit.*

Dean follows Cas through the crowd and wrestles with himself internally.

*Mate. Shit. He wants a mate. Shit!*

He knows that this is what he wanted, this is what he’s here for. This is why he came to the damn school in the first place. And Cas seems like he’s pretty well off. His clothes are good quality, his manners impeccable. And it’s not like the dude’s not hot as hell. Dean would probably be willing to get into bed with him regardless, but that’s not really the point.

This isn’t a one night stand. This isn’t even being some guy’s mistress. This is *mating.* This is gonna be for *life.* It’s *permanent.* He’s gonna be Cas’ *forever.* He’s probably gonna want *pups,* for fuck’s sake.

*And, no, now is not the time to think of pups with messy dark hair and blue eyes. Or, gods forbid, dark hair and green eyes.*

The point is, it’s scary as hell.

Dean works to keep Sam’s face at the forefront of his mind as he follows Cas through the crowd. The (his?) alpha’s scent is thick with satisfaction, and as much as Dean’s stomach is turning, the way it smells makes his mouth water. *Dammit.* His dick is gonna get him in trouble one of these days.

*This day. Today. Today is the day that you’re in trouble, champ.*
However, as much as Dean’s panicking, and as much as he despises these circumstances, he really is grateful for this opportunity. He’d much prefer to be working somewhere to help his family out, but if this is his only option, at least it is an option for him.

And at least Cas is smokin’.

He’s a smidge shorter than Dean, but as the night has gone on, he’s just gotten better-looking. Broad shoulders, strong chest, tapering down to a slender waist. A lot of that is alpha strength, since they’re naturally bulky. There are definitely worse alphas here tonight. Alastair, for example.

As they make their way to Josie, Dean notices he’s getting a lot of dirty looks from his “classmates.” Their expressions vary from poisonously furious to gently envious. He wonders if it’s because it’s so early in the night. They’ve really only been here for a couple of hours. The night is young enough that, even if he weren’t here, Dean wouldn’t even be thinking about heading home for another hour. So he assumes that the other omegas are jealous that he’s clearly been chosen so soon.

When they get to where Josie is standing, near the front hall, Dean plasters on a bland smile and keeps his eyes down on the ground.

Josie Sands, though he knows her reputation is a good one, is a stone-cold bitch. She may not beat her omegas (and Dean thinks it’s fucking ridiculous that that’s what somehow became the standard), but she sure has other ways of making sure they suffer. Days without food until the omega is shaking with exhaustion and hunger. Entire heat cycles without toys, sometimes becoming so dangerous a doctor has to intervene. After his first week without being fed, Dean learned to keep his head down. He also learned to keep scraps of food in his room to make sure the younger ones got fed no matter what.

She’s smiling as they walk up. “Mr. Novak!” she coos. “Are you enjoying yourself?”

Cas’ smile is warm, which chills Dean’s insides. He seems nice, but what if he’s one like Josie?

“I’ve had a fine time, Ms. Sands,” Cas answers, “but I think I’d like to take Dean here home with me.”

Josie’s face freezes. “Oh, of course! Um, I just… Are you sure that you want this one?”

Dean struggles to keep his composure. What a bitch. Josie’s never liked him. He came on as one of their “charity” cases, basically meaning the School was banking on him bringing in a lot of dough to cover his tuition costs. She’s mean to all of the charity omegas, but she fixated on Dean for some reason. He doesn’t think he’s ever heard a kind word come out of her perfectly lipsticked mouth.

He sees Cas raise an eyebrow. “And why wouldn’t I be sure?”

Josie immediately brightens. “Oh, well, you know, his bloodline isn’t traceable at all. We have no idea where he came from. A bit of a mutt, really, probably from a family who sold him as soon as he presented. No way to know what kind of stock that kind of omega comes from.”

Dean fights again to not react at all to her words. The smear campaign against his family makes his hand tremble in rage, but no one wants an omega who gets mad. As much as he wants to snarl and beat her stupid alpha ass within an inch of her life, he keeps his cool.

His scent reflects nothing of his inner turmoil. He makes sure of it.

She’s still going on and on about how unsuitable Dean is. “And, you know, he wasn’t even able to procure any sponsorships.” She says it like it’s the only thing that makes any omega worth anything.
“I think you might be better impressed by some of our students that have already been invested into, they’re really quite stunning.”

Dean feels his heart sink. Dammit. He wasn’t able to get any of those stupid sponsorships, not that he really tried that hard. He was thinking he’d be able to get by on his good looks and solid frame. Now that it looks like it might cost him this, an alpha who smells good and looks at Dean like he’s not just an object, he’s regretting his laziness.

Cas turns toward him, catching Dean in the act of looking at him. His blue eyes are searching, but Dean is certain that Cas has no idea the kind of turmoil going on in Dean’s head. He revives his polite smile and drops his eyes down to look at Cas’ chest. “Whatever you think is best, alpha.”

Cas stiffens, and Dean groans internally. This is it. You fucked up. Jesus, how stupid can you get?

Cas looks over at Josie. “Are you questioning my choices, Ms. Sands?” His deep, thunderstorm voice is cold and angry, and Dean thinks it’s probably a little fucked up that he thinks that’s hot. Although, that could be because his words mean that the alpha hasn’t changed his mind at all, and he’s mad at Josie, not Dean himself.

The other alpha flushes. “Oh, oh, of course not, Mr. Novak, I-”

“You would do well to remember to address me formally going forward,” Cas interrupts her sharply.

She pauses, and Dean can see the exact moment that she admits defeat. “... Of course, Your Highness.”

Yeah, take that, you stupid, vapid... Wait, what? Highness?

The realization is like an electric shock to Dean’s system. He keeps his face calm, his body language submissive, but inside he’s freaking the fuck out.

Because how many people could possibly, in the history of forever, be named Castiel?

Castiel. Novak.

The Novak family.

The royal Novak family.

Fuck!

Chapter End Notes

- Feedback gets my motor running.
- Come see me on tumblr!
“And you know, he wasn’t even able to procure any sponsorships.”

Josie speaks as if she is passing on some sort of great secret, some prized piece of gossip that she is sharing with Cas before anyone else. He wonders if she’s always been this grating, or it’s the situation he’s been presented with that makes her so. His irritation doesn’t leak into his scent, because his mother is already going to throw a fit about him finding Dean this way, he can’t imagine what she’d do if he also damaged their relationship with the prominent School, but he’s absolutely on edge.

Josie’s still blathering, because of course she is. “I think you might be better impressed by some of our students that have already been invested into, they’re really quite stunning.”

Incredulous, Cas turns to look at Dean, who is by far the most attractive being in the room, omegas and alphas included.

The omega, however, looks upset. Maybe not obviously so, but Cas can see the tightness around Dean’s eyes, almost completely unnoticeable. If Castiel wasn’t looking right at him, he would have missed it completely, because Dean’s scent still gives away nothing. It makes Castiel’s alpha go even more growly and protective than it was before.

Especially when Dean catches him looking, and Cas has only a beat to see the swirling emotion in those lovely emerald depths before the omega is smiling tightly and sliding his gaze to the floor.

“Whatever you think is best, alpha.”

Cas stiffens and fights the way his upper lip wants to curl into a snarl. This woman, this poor excuse for an alpha, is the cause of his (not ours yet calm down no mine mine mine) omega’s distress. His alpha wants to growl and posture and take his omega away from here, possibly thrown over his shoulder like the cover of a silly romance novel.

However, Castiel really is more civilized than that. Instead, he gathers years of training around him to draw his spine straight and give Josie his best haughty glare, which he’s been told is quite intimidating.

“Are you questioning my choices, Ms. Sands?”

Castiel himself is even surprised at how angry his voice sounds, and even more surprised when he realizes he feels that anger. He’s angry that anyone could make Dean feel like he is less, which is ridiculous because Cas has known Dean for about thirty minutes now, and for all he knows the omega might be lacking.

Somehow, though, he sincerely doubts it.

The way Josie flushes is immensely satisfying. “Oh, oh, of course not, Mr. Novak, I-“

“You would do well to remember to address me formally going forward.”

“… Of course, Your Highness.”
Unsatisfied, he keeps his cool gaze on Josie. “And because of your blatant disrespect for my intended mate, and by extension myself, I expect that the price of my ‘donation’ will be lowered dramatically.”

A soft, strangled sound from his side has him turning to look at Dean again. The boy’s eyes are wide, almost panicked, or they would be if he wasn’t so adept at hiding his emotions. It’s more a change in expression than Castiel has seen yet, however, and in relation to his price no less.

There are some omegas who do actually like their “supporters.” Maybe Dean is one of those? Maybe these people were kind, and he’s selling himself here to help them. If that’s the case, it certainly stands to reason that he’d be upset if the price was lowered.

Cas leans closer to Dean and pitches his voice low, too low for Josie to overhear. “I will send double the original amount to your current benefactors, Dean, but I refuse to pay this woman more than she deserves.”

Dean just stares at him, and Cas is again privileged to see all of the omega’s feelings brightly showcased in his eyes before the boy looks down toward the ground again. “Yes, alpha,” he says softly, almost sincerely. “Thank you.”

“Call me Cas, Dean,” Cas reminds him gently. He then looks back at Josie, who’s staring at both of them with an unreadable look on her face. “What, precisely,” he says sharply, “are you waiting for? I’d like to escort Dean home now.”

Josie blinks, then flushes a deeper red. “Oh, I’m so sorry, but he needs to be prepared. He’ll need retraining for the high court, and I—”

Cas loses the battle against his upper lip. He can feel it twitching up into a snarl, and does very little to fight it. Josie notices and flinches a little, which makes his inner alpha purr. However, Cas makes sure to keep his voice very calm. “I believe that I have made myself perfectly clear. I will be walking out of here in a few minutes, and I will be taking Dean with me.”

Josie’s eyes flash, but Castiel holds her glare until she looks down at the ground, flushed and angry and embarrassed. “Of course, Your Highness,” she grits out.

“Is there not paperwork I need to fill out? Or do you just let omegas walk out with whoever manages to catch them first?”

She straightens, and her face relaxes in a bland smile. “It would be my honor, sir.”

“I should think so,” Castiel snaps, just loud enough for the vile woman to hear him. Her spine stiffens as she walks away.

As soon as she’s out of sight, Cas turns back to Dean. “I’m sorry about that, Dean, both her actions and my own.”

Dean just smiles, and it strikes Cas that it’s about as real as the one Josie gave him a few moments ago. “No need to apologize, al-uh, Cas,” he corrects himself at Cas’ raised eyebrow. The omega lowers his eyes to the floor again, and Cas allows himself a small frown.

Something is wrong.

He doesn’t know what, but bless it if he doesn’t want to find out. Dean is good, he’ll give the boy that. There’s nothing overt Cas can pick out that’s giving him the sense that Dean is distressed. His body is relaxed, his scent calm and even, almost pleased. Nothing about Dean gives away any hint
that he’s anything but happy that he managed to snag an alpha.

Castiel just knows. Something is wrong.

“Is…” He finds himself a bit unsure for the first time. “Is anything amiss, Dean?”

He’s only given another obviously fake smile. “Nothing at all.”

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**Double the original amount. Double the original amount. Double the original amount.**

Dean barely absorbs anything going on around him as Cas effectively purchases him. He knows that there’s paperwork signed, and he knows that Cas (Novak Castiel fucking Novak what the everloving fuck) is still pumping out angry, protective alpha hormones all over the damn place. Dean lets the attendant know that his bag is packed up, sitting on his bed in his room, but that’s the most he’s able to interact for a while.

As Cas leads him toward the car that’s taking them to Dean’s new home, he’s still reeling.

**Double the original amount.**

The thing is, Dean was always going to fetch a pretty good price. He’s a virgin, first of all, and alphas will pay through the nose for virgin omegas. Beyond that, he’s healthy, tall, and broad for an omega. It’s easy to assume that he’ll breeze through pregnancies, and he’ll be able to have quite a few of them. It speaks to the ancient breeding instincts in alphas, to make sure their own biological line is the strongest and extends the furthest. He’s also relatively well-spoken, can control his scent, and he’s pretty easy on the damn eyes. He’s a fucking catch.

But double the original amount?

And without the middleman of the School in the way, the money will get to his family a hell of a lot faster, and without a hefty percentage taken out. It’s way more than he thought he’d get, even on his optimistic days. It’s going to set his family up comfortably for a long time. It’ll even pay for Sammy’s school, once the time comes.

He should be excited, and on some level, he is. He’s over the moon. It’s just that… Well, right now he’s sort of numb. Sure, his family will be taken care of, and now that the paperwork has been drawn up, he knows they will be. Even though the majority of the money will be coming from Cas himself and not the school, and is therefore unaffected by the paperwork, he trusts Cas to come through with the dough.

Now that his main concern, which has been and always will be his family, has been resolved… What about him?

He keeps an iron control on his scent as they sit quietly in the back of the limo (which… what?) on the way to Cas’ place. His emotions are a wreck, he’s all over the place, but he sits still and keeps his eyes trained out the window.

He has no idea what to expect from the alpha sitting next to him, and it’s suddenly all he can think about. Is Cas gonna be, for lack of a less girly term, nice? Is he gonna be a good mate, or is he just gonna fuck a couple of pups into Dean and abandon him in some sort of lavish house where he’s gonna get yelled at for using the wrong fork during dinner? Is he gonna keep Dean tied up in a bedroom somewhere? There are medicines that make omegas go into a sort of perpetual heat, Dean’s heard the stories, thank you very much. Is Cas one of those alphas?
Cas is just sitting on the other side of the bench seat, staring out the window, still smelling like protective alpha. Dean kinda finds it hard to believe that the guy will be anything but decent, but it’s hard to convince his spinning head to see reason.

When they get to the castle (castle? what the fuck? how is this my life?) he follows Cas a step behind and to the left, just like he was trained. Nerves are making him nauseous, but it would be impossible to tell from the outside. He knows what the fuck he’s doing.

He wants to ask about his bag. He stuck his cell phone in it before he left to go to the ballroom, and though he had the forethought to turn it off before he put it there, it would make him feel better if he had it. He doesn’t know why, his family won’t notice until tomorrow morning that he’s gone. He wrote a long, long letter and left it under the pillow of his unmade bed explaining everything. They won’t be calling until tomorrow.

Gods, his mom is gonna be pissed.

Gods, he wishes he could talk to his mom.

The thought makes him heartsick as he follows Cas into the truly daunting foyer. The ceilings are insanely high and the floor is made out of marble so shiny Dean can see himself in it when he looks down. Jesus fuck. Even in the nice clothes the School provided, he feels downright scruffy in this damn place.

He looks up to see Cas looking at him, head tilted as he examines Dean. Dean meets his gaze. As much as he wants to lower his eyes again, to submit, he needs to stand his ground. He needs to know if Cas is the kind of alpha who beats his mate for daring to look him in the eye.

Not that it will change Dean’s decision one way or the other, but the uncertainty is killing him.

Finally, the corner of Cas’ mouth quirks up just as a bouncy girl with long red hair comes into the hall with them.

She looks surprised. “Highness?” she asks. “Is everything all right?”

He doesn’t take his eyes off of Dean as he speaks. “Quite, thank you. This is Dean. I’d like you to take him to the omega suite off of my rooms.”

Dean can smell the surprise on the girl. She’s another omega, then, from the sweetness of her scent. “Of course, Highness.”

Cas nods at Dean once. “I have some business to attend to. Please feel free to make yourself comfortable in the suites. We’ll… Discuss more tomorrow.”

“Thank you, alpha,” Dean murmurs, finally letting his eyes fall to the floor. He listens tensely as Cas’ footsteps hesitate for a moment, then turn and go down a different hall.

He jumps as the omega girl claps her hands together triumphantly. “All righty!” she says cheerfully. “Let’s get you to the omega suite!”

Dean smiles a little at her enthusiasm. As much as he wants to keep his guard up, the presence of another omega is soothing, and he just can’t keep himself closed off around everyone. May as well be a little more relaxed around this girl.

“What’s your name?” he asks as he follows her up the stairs.
“Charlie,” she chirps. “And I know you’re probably real nervous, but don’t be. Cas is one of the good ones. My fave Novak, if I’m being honest with you.”

Dean’s eyebrows go up at the candid way she speaks. Not just because she’s an omega, but because she’s… Not to be a dick, but she’s staff, isn’t she?

She might also be a mindreader. “I mean, don’t tell anyone else I said that, ‘cause I’d probably get in trouble, but omegas gotta stick together, yeah?”

She turns back and smiles brightly at him, but somehow Dean has lost his good humor. He does his best, because she seems like a really sweet person, but it has genuinely been the longest day of his life. Not to mention probably the worst one, too.

He manages to smile just a little. “You’re not wrong.”

Her eyes are shining with sympathy, but she mercifully doesn’t say anything about it. She babbles on as she leads him to his rooms, seemingly not needing a response, which is nice. Dean tries to take in as much as he can as they walk, but he breathes a sigh of relief when they get to Cas’ rooms.

Charlie opens the door and a wave of his soon-to-be mate’s scent hits him like a ton of bricks. It’s huge, musky, and soothing. He feels the harsh edges of himself start to smooth over despite himself, and he relaxes just a little bit.

Cas’ room is decorated in deep, royal blues and dark woods. It’s huge, probably the size of Dean’s old house, and it’s a little messy, which Dean downright refuses to find endearing in any capacity. Damn alpha.

Charlie’s already making her way across the main room, which is kind of a living room area. As she passes each set of doors, she points. “That’s Cas’ bedroom, there’s his bathroom, and his closet is right next to it. I don’t know why you’d need to know that, but there it is, anyway. And here,” she says grandly as she flings open the fourth door, “is your suite.”

Dean walks into a set of rooms that are kind of generic. They’re decorated precisely the same way Cas’ are, but there’s just no personality here at all. They could be hotel rooms, for gods’ sake. Cas did tell me to make myself comfortable, though, so maybe I’ll change that.

Charlie’s still talking happily. “So here’s your living room area, there’s a kitchenette, too, but it’s basically just big enough for the coffee maker that’s in there and, like, a mini-fridge. But both of those are fully stocked and operational, so get at it, if that’s what floats your boat. Everything’s kept clean already, so no worries there. You’ve got your TV in here, and a comfy-ass couch, and listen, that was a fight, let me tell you. Living with all alphas can be such a pain sometimes, seriously, but I made sure there’d be a good couch in here for you, because who the hell wants to live with an uncomfortable sofa? Gods. Anyway, you’ve also got your bedroom in here,” she points to one of the doors that stands open just enough to see a four-poster bed, heaped with white bedding that looks like clouds, “it’s pretty standard, but you’ve got a memory foam mattress, too, so what’s up. And, finally, the bathroom,” she says, just a shade too casually. “It’s also pretty normal, but the whole thing is scent-proof if you keep the door shut.”

Dean whips around to stare at her. She’s looking back kindly, and Dean realizes that, in the last fifteen minutes, Charlie’s already proven herself to be an ally. He hopes that the life he’s about to embark on with his mate will mean he doesn’t really need “allies,” but for now it’s nice to know that he has one.
Even if he doesn’t end up needing it, like she already said, living with all alphas is a pain in the ass. Having another omega around will be nice as hell.

Her voice has softened when she speaks again. “So, I’m gonna go make sure your bag gets up here, and I’ll leave you a cold dinner, since I doubt you got much to eat today.” She hesitates a little, then steps up and wraps her arms around his neck. Surprised, Dean finds himself hugging her close, letting her scent soothe him farther.

“I don’t know why you’re here,” she whispers, “but I promise that Cas is the good one. I promise. And I’ll do everything I can to help you, okay? It’s not gonna be bad here. I promise.”

Dean’s eyes well up with tears. Jesus. “Thanks,” he rasps, “really.” This was really all he needed, just someone to tell him that it’s gonna be okay. Charlie’s already a life-saver.

She lets him cling to her for a few minutes, then steps back and pats him on the arm. “You go take a shower,” she says pointedly, “and relax. I’ll take care of everything else, okay?”

“Sure thing,” he croaks out, not even embarrassed that his voice is cracking. “Thanks again, Charlie.”

She grins. “You’re very welcome.”

Dean watches as she flounces out, shutting the door behind her. He notices that there’s no lock on the door and snorts unattractively. Typical. Can’t give the omega bitch a way to say no to his alpha, can we?

The thought spurs Dean into the bathroom, which thankfully does have a lock. He flips it, then immediately strips his hated omega clothes off. He tosses them directly into the trash, because no way in hell will he be wearing that bullshit again.

The bathroom is big, just like the rest of the place. A double vanity, a toilet and bidet (that will be nice during heats), and a huge shower. Huge, all natural stone and glass tile. There’s a bench seat along one side, and there are several jets on the walls, making it clear that water can conceivably come from every direction. Dean fully intends to find the full extent of just what this bathroom can do, but not tonight.

Tonight, Dean met his mate.

Tonight, Dean found out that his mate is literal royalty.

Tonight, Dean’s mate brought him here, to an actual castle.

Tonight, Dean’s mate sent him to bed like a wayward pup.

Tonight, Dean’s entire life has changed. Months and months of work and lying and scrambling have paid off. He’s saved his family from hunger and homelessness. He did what he set out to do.

Now that he’s here, he can officially start to think about himself.

The shower is complicated, but Dean’s a smart cookie when he wants to be, and figures out the basic controls with relative ease. He forgoes the fancy “can wash you from any angle” nozzles and focuses on the one positioned like a normal shower. He also ignores the bench seat, because all he wants to do right now is curl up on the floor and weep.

So he does.
Dean cries for his family, for all of the fear and tension of the last couple of years. He cries for Sam, who’s going to find out what Dean did and feel responsible, even though that’s bullshit. He cries for his father, who feels useless now that he can’t use his legs, and will feel even more so in the morning. He cries for his mother, who’s going to be devastated. Dean cries for his friends, because even if Cas is gonna let Dean see them, they live on the other, poorer side of town, and it's not really feasible to see them nearly as much as he used to, not now. Nothing about his old life is really feasible. From now on, he’s going to be surrounded by strangers, by alphas, and the only one he’s even met is Cas, who he talked to for a handful of minutes before signing his life away to the man.

Dean cries for himself the longest. He cries out his terror, his heartbreak, his anxiety, his rage. He knows that this must be the only place he expresses them. He has to be on top of his game, never vulnerable while he’s out there.

So Dean cries.

The water never runs cold.

Chapter End Notes

- Feedback gets my motor running.
- Come see me on tumblr!
- Look! It's Charlie! Yay!
Cas wakes up earlier than he’s used to the next morning. Not that he tends to lay about in bed all day, anyway, but there’s much to be done today. Namely, get the money to Dean’s people before Naomi finds out about the omega at all.

It’s not that he thinks she’d deprive Dean’s previous benefactors of the money, it’s that Castiel thinks it will be much easier to weather the storm of her anger if everything has already been taken care of. If they’ve already been paid and Dean is already at his side, Naomi will run out of steam much quicker than if there was still work to be done.

It doesn’t hurt that Dean is gorgeous. That will go a long way toward soothing his mother’s anger.

He rolls out of bed and scrubs a hand down his face. He stretches as he stands, listening with satisfaction as his back pops and crackles. When he takes a deep breath to yawn, he frowns. The faintest scent of distressed omega permeates the air. It is faint, probably a few hours old, and the evenness of Dean’s current scent tells him that Dean’s sleeping. There’s no reason to be upset.

His inner alpha, however, is throwing a bit of a fit as Cas turns away from the door to the omega suite and toward his own closet. He pulls out a pair of jeans and a button-up, his usual attire, and fights with his instincts. There is no reason to go check on him, he scolds himself. It’s none of your concern. Of course he’s distressed, you purchased him yesterday. You’d be distressed, too.

With a sigh, he forces himself to leave his rooms and go in search of the paperwork from last night and Bela.

Castiel has no idea where his family found Bela Talbot, but he does know a few things about his personal assistant.

She is a beta, and therefore has little scent, and cannot scent others.

She is a truly lovely woman, but remains single.

She’s exceptionally efficient, often anticipating his needs before he knows he needs them.

She’s an incredible negotiator, mediator, and all-around useful person to have around.

She may well be one of his only real friends.

He adores her, but she terrifies the absolute shit out of him.

When he gets to her offices on the first floor of the castle, he’s not surprised at all to find her already at her desk, reading over the contract from the School. She’s dressed in a red suit with a white blouse, her formal attire contrasting sharply with his own casual clothes.

She speaks the moment the door is closed behind him. “Her Highness is going to have your head for this.” Her accent is lilting and lovely.

He collapses in the chair in front of Bela’s desk. “Let me worry about Naomi.”
Bela glances up at him through her eyelashes. “You know she hates it when you call her by her first name.”

Cas shrugs. “I hate it when she pressures me to get mated. Neither of us is walking away satisfied here.”

She sighs. “Very well.” She straightens some papers out and pulls out another stack of forms to hand over to him. “These are what you’ll need to fill out to get the promised amount to the Winchesters. I believe double the School’s asking price?”

“Correct.” Her efficiency will never fail to both frighten and enthrall Castiel.

A rare smile graces Bela’s lips. “I would have liked to see Ms. Sand’s face when you pulled that nonsense, Your Highness.”

Cas’ eyebrows raise in surprise. He’s not certain of Bela’s political leanings, but he’s been able to glean that she’s rather liberal. If she has a problem with Josie Sands, it means he’s probably correct.

“Yes, well,” he says finally, “she irritated me.”

She hands him a pen. “You’ve promised to pay a pretty penny for your revenge,” she says with a smile, eyes shining with approval. “Let’s get this paperwork filed so the Winchesters can be paid before Her Highness wakes up.”

He accepts and settles back into his chair for what he assumes will be a lengthy process. “The Winchesters are Dean’s previous… Ah, his previous owners?” He holds his free hand up in surrender when her eyes snap up to meet his. “For lack of a better term, of course.” Please don’t slit my throat with that letter opener.

She stares at him, an unreadable expression on her face, for a long time. “Castiel,” she says evenly, and the use of his name instead of his title has him paying extra attention. “Winchester is Dean’s surname. You’re paying his family for him.”

Castiel feels his heart drop into his shoes.

With the paperwork signed and the money sent out, Castiel goes back to his rooms. He needs to collect himself before breakfast with his family. He has a coffee maker set to automatically brew in his own rooms, so he at least can get the fortitude that caffeine offers before he has to sit down to a meal with his brothers and parents.

You’re paying his family for him.

He doesn’t know why the knowledge that Dean had a family instead of “benefactors” is throwing him for a loop, but quite frankly, it is. What drove Dean to these lengths? What kind of family does he have? Cas’ first instinct is to say that they’re probably not good people, if they’re willing to sell their own son. However, when Cas threatened to pay a reduced price, Dean got noticeably (to Castiel) upset. Are they good people who were backed into a corner? What would drive a family to sell one of their sons, omega or no?

When he gets back to his rooms, he opens the door and is immediately smacked in the face with the scent of agitated omega. Before he can stop himself, he crosses the room in long strides and barely resists the urge to throw the door to Dean’s suite open and charge inside to force comfort on the boy. Instead, he cocks his head and listens.
There’s a beat of silence, then Dean is speaking.

“Mom, come on,” his voice is desperate. “Please stop, don’t cry.”

Castiel eavesdrops on Dean’s conversation shamelessly.

“It was the only way!”

…

“No, no, don’t give me to- Hi, Dad.”

…

“I know.”

…

“I know, sir. I’m sorry. It was the only way.”

…

“Okay.” Now Dean’s voice is a bit shocked. “It’s okay, Dad. I know.”

…

Fiercely, “No, don’t say that! You did the best you could.” The pain in Dean’s voice causes a pang of something in Castiel’s chest.

There’s another beat of silence, then, “Sammy! Hey, man, look. Don’t worry about this, okay? This is no big deal.”

…

“Yeah!” Dean’s forcing himself to sound upbeat. Castiel wonders if “Sammy” is a little brother or sister who Dean feels he has to protect.

…

“No, no, he’s great, Sam. He’s gonna take real good care of me.” A smirk enters Dean’s voice that’s almost certainly insincere. “You know I’ve always wanted to be a kept omega, man.”

…

“It’s, uh… No, it’s…” A deep sigh. “Castiel Novak.”

The reaction is so loud that Castiel can hear it on the other side of the door.

“I know, Sam! I didn’t know it was him! And it doesn’t matter. He’s really great, Sam. I don’t regret anything at all.”

…

“Look, it was the only way!” Dean snaps, seemingly finally losing his temper. “It was never gonna get better! Mom can’t find work and Dad can’t work at all! You’re fourteen, Sam! You’re fourteen and you’re a goddamn genius and you’re gonna go and be a genius at some genius school and who was gonna pay for it? I did what I had to do, Sam.”
“Look, I gotta go, okay? I love you. Tell Mom and Dad I said the same to them. I’ll talk to you later, Sam.”

Castiel rushes over to his bed and sits there, trying to look like he wasn’t just listening in. His heart aches for Dean, for the pain evident in Dean’s voice and his scent.

*My poor omega,* his inner alpha is whimpering.

Dean sacrificed himself for his family. For some reason, his father can’t work and his mother isn’t able to find any, probably because she’s an omega herself, so Dean found the only way he could think of to help them. It makes sense now, why Dean was upset when he thought Castiel wasn’t willing to pay the original price. He was worried about his *family.*

*Why do you care?* He snarls to himself, to his inner alpha. *Knock him up and set him up. You’re not in an actual relationship with him, he doesn’t actually want to mate you. You’ll go through this wedding, with the mating. You’re going to put a pup in him, then put him in a nice house somewhere and forget about it.*

When Dean steps out of his suite and into Cas’ bedroom, he freezes, green eyes wide, and Castiel worries that not caring about Dean is a lost cause.

“Hello, Dean.”

The omega puts a hand on the back of his neck and his eyes dart to the ground. “Mornin’, Cas.” He sighs and points a thumb back into his own room. “Did you, uh, hear any of that?”

Castiel could lie, but he thinks Dean would know he if he did, so he chooses not to. “I heard some,” he said cautiously.

Dean’s scent has lost the acrid bite of agitation or distress. It has returned again to calm, almost even contented omega. *Damn, he’s really, really good.*

Especially as Dean’s face smooths out into a serene smile. “Well, don’t worry about it, ‘kay? My family’s a little overprotective, but I doubt we’re gonna see them again, so it won’t be a concern.”

Castiel frowns. “You think they disapprove enough to not come to the wedding?”

It’s Dean’s turn to frown. “Wedding?”

Castiel sighs. “We… Didn’t get much time to talk yesterday. Come, if you will. Sit.” He pats the space next to him on the bed.

Dean walks over and sits next to him carefully. “What do you mean, ‘wedding?’”

“It’s a bit… Old-fashioned, I know, but we’re royalty,” Cas explains, a bit embarrassed. *You’re royalty now, for all intents and purposes. So yes, before we go through the mating ritual, there will be a… Very public wedding ceremony.”*


Driven by some motivation he couldn’t explain if asked to, Castiel puts a comforting hand on the omega’s knee. “Dean,” he says gently, “I want to assure you that if at any point something happens, or something is planned, that you’re not comfortable with, you can tell me. I don’t wield a lot of
power, but I will do my utmost to make sure that whatever happens next is something we both approve of.”

Dean’s eyes are wide at the end of his little speech. He gives a little, unsure smile. “Okay, al-Cas. Sorry. Yeah, okay.”

Castiel knows Dean doesn’t believe him, but that’s all right. He doesn’t believe him, either.

---

Breakfast is a… Strange affair for Cas.

As usual, his father is at the head of the table, but Bartholomew’s head is buried in a newspaper, also as usual. Though Castiel thinks his father overlooks quite a few issues, he tries to be a good king. He tries to keep up on local events, not just country-wide ones, but in smaller cities and towns, too. It sounds exhausting and horrible to Cas, but he admires his father for trying.

Naomi is at the other end of the table. Seated next to her are Michael and Lucifer, across from one another. Next to them are Amara and Lilith, both seated next to their mates. Gabriel sits next to Lilith with Kali on his other side. Castiel is, as ever, next to Amara. They’re seated the way they always have been, and no one has ever, in the history of family breakfasts, mentioned that they sit in order of succession to the throne.

It’s one of those things no one talks about.

It’s especially strange to have Dean on his other side. Not that Dean is inherently strange, but it’s strange to have anything other than an empty seat there.

Dean himself, however, is wonderful. There is no indication in either his scent or on his face of the anxiety from this morning. He shows no signs of being uncomfortable in the presence of royalty. He has the proper manners to eat at the breakfast table with the Novak family, which is rather impressive, especially with Lilith’s propensity for bringing attention to that sort of thing during the meal (appalling). She has a laser eye on Dean’s movements, but he’s perfect.

He manages to both demure to Michael and Lucifer’s opinions in all things and make his own views known, too. He flatters both Amara and Lilith shamelessly, which Amara eats up and Lilith narrows her eyes at. He makes dirty jokes under his breath to Gabe, who ends up laughing so hard tears stream down his face, and then refuses to admit why he was laughing when asked about it. He shares a wink with Kali, and though they don’t actually say anything to one another, Castiel suspects the bond is forged, regardless.

He even makes Naomi smile, much to the shock of everyone at the table.

He’s charming and polite, somehow a submissive omega and an opinionated person at the same time. It’s fascinating. Castiel thinks he’s the only person who can the oh so slight tightening around Dean’s eyes, the tiniest of hesitations when he gives Naomi a charming smile around a cup of coffee. Dean is uncomfortable, but Dean is hiding it well.

Castiel finds himself thinking more and more that just setting Dean up somewhere where he himself is not isn’t going to work at all.

He wants to talk to Dean more about what he saw before breakfast, but the little redhead omega servant who helped them last night tugs his mate-to-be away, claiming he needs a real tour of the castle. Castiel bites back his objection that he should give Dean a tour of his home. The poor boy has already been so wonderful today, maybe he’d like to spend some time with someone more like the redhead servant than one of the royal family.
They are a bit stuffy, after all, according to Gabriel.

Instead, he makes his way to the library to escape. On his way, he’s skillfully intercepted by his mother.

Naomi Novak has aged like an exceptionally fine wine. Her graying hair rests well in the French braid she keeps it in, and her face, though more lined than it was in his youth, is still beautiful. Castiel does love his mother. It’s not the undying devotion she wishes it was, but he does hold quite a bit of affection in his heart for her, even if it is rather distant.

“Mother,” he says as she threads her arm through his. He braces himself for the ire she’s going to spew forth. “How can I help you?”

“Can’t a mother want to walk with her son?”

He blinks, then covers his hand with hers and smiles. “She can, but I suspect that she does not.”

Naomi hmphs, but he can’t help but notice that she doesn’t protest any more than that.

“Where has your omega run off to, dear?” Ah, here it is.

Cas grits his teeth. He doesn’t like her referring to his omega so dismissively, and he’s definitely not going to tell her where he is. “Dean is resting, mother. What can I do for you instead?”

“Well,” she says with a beatific smile, “we have to start planning your wedding, don’t we?”

Chapter End Notes

- Feedback gets my motor running.
- Also whaaaaat Cas realizing how much Dean gave up? IS IT POSSIBLE THAT CAS CAN BE REDEEMED FROM THE SEMI-DOUCHEBAGGERY HE CURRENTLY LIVES IN?
“When do we strike?”

“Getting anxious, are we?”

“Yes.”

A sigh. “We’ll hit them after the wedding.”

Chapter End Notes

- Feedback gets my motor running.
- DUN DUN DUNNNNN
Chapter Seven

Well, at least I look good.

Dean is standing in his suite, staring at himself in a floor length mirror that’s situated just outside his bathroom door as morning sunlight pours through the windows. He’s wearing a white suit embroidered in omega gold. It’s the nicest thing he’s ever had by far. Since Cas brought him back here, he’s been wearing his t-shirts and jeans, maybe a flannel when it gets cold. Which it does often, because castles are hard to keep clean, who knew?

The suit is incredible, though. It’s tailored to his every curve, which he knows because the tailor measured his every curve. Donna, a cheerful beta who chattered every moment they were together, insisted that the garment really suit him.

“He’s Highness wouldn’t have chosen ya if he didn’t like ‘em big and broad,” she said happily.

So the jacket emphasizes the width of his shoulders, and the long lines of that and the pants make him look tall. The shirt does highlight his slim waist, and Donna snuck in some green embroidery along with the gold to bring out his eyes. It's amazing, it really is, but it’s also kind of adding to the surreality that has been Dean’s life for the last two weeks.

The time before he met Cas, Dean spent constantly on the move. He was always hustling, trying to find odd jobs, doing anything he could to make a little bit of money. He never ended up actually hooking, thank gods, because he knew he’d fetch a better price as a virgin (which he did). He barely slowed down enough to eat or catch a few hours of sleep, especially after he was accepted at the School.

Since Cas, though, Dean’s been doing a whole lot of nothing. They scheduled the wedding around Dean’s heat cycle, as per tradition, so between wedding planning sessions, he’s had two weeks of nothing to do. He wanders the palace until Charlie rescues him. He’ll go down into the kitchen to hang out with the head chef, a grumpy alpha named Rufus who gives him the stink eye but doesn’t kick him out and can be convinced to share the good whiskey. He found the library a few days ago, so he’s been spending some time in there. He’ll find a book, find a chair that sits in the sunshine, and read until he falls asleep. Either a servant (less often) or Cas (much more often) will wake him up and he’ll wander back to bed.

It has been, quite frankly, boring as hell. The only thing he’s done on his own on any regular sort of basis outside of wedding planning is calling his family.

He knew it would happen, and he was right. His family is pissed. His dad threatened to storm the castle, raising hell, before he chilled and was able to tell Dean that he’s proud of him for making this sacrifice. His mom asked if he was absolutely certain this is what he wants, because there are still ways to get out of it, assuring him that they’d make it work if he wanted to come home. Sam straight-up told Dean that he’s already working on an escape plan.

They’re here today, and Dean’s psyched to see them for a few minutes, since Cas promised they’d take time out of the reception specifically to find the Winchesters, but he can’t go back with them. Not after the amount of money Cas sent them. Dean could tell just from listening to their voices that his parents are less stressed, less desperate. Dean is incredibly proud that he was able to do that for
his family. Maybe it wasn’t ideal, but he’s still responsible for dragging them out of the poorhouse, so he lets himself be proud.

He’s still fiddling with his cuffs when Charlie comes in. The little omega is dressed in a cream-colored, flowing dress instead of the usual omega white, in deference to his own status. He’ll be the only omega in white today, even the other royal wives are in cream or off-white. It’s a tradition that makes Dean simultaneously roll his eyes and feel a little sick with nerves. There will be no escaping being the center of attention today.

“It’s time,” Charlie says, her eyes sympathetic and warm.

Dean nods, takes a deep breath, and looks at himself in the mirror again. Well, here goes nothing.

It’s hot.

It’s, like, really hot.

The ceremony is outside in the massive courtyard, with the sun beating down on the Novaks, Dean, and about five thousand of their closest friends and family. Dean can feel sweat trickling a slow line down his spine, and he’s grateful at least that he’s dressed in white. Cas, who’s wearing a black suit embroidered with alpha red, has got to be dying.

He certainly doesn’t look like it, though. Frankly, Cas looks delicious. He’s all broad shoulders, messy hair, and vibrantly blue eyes that have only warmed at all when they landed on Dean as he walked down the aisle. The alpha looks imperious and royal. Could have done a lot worse, Dean thinks.

The ceremony is long and boring. During the planning process, Cas did his best to cut down on the flowery, extraneous language, but in the end was able to accomplish very little in that regard. The Queen insisted, and Dean ended up convincing Cas to relent and let the woman have the royal ceremony she wanted.

Cas has fucking hated planning the wedding. During the snippets of time he and Dean were been able to find together, he ranted about how ridiculous the whole process was, how much he despised being a spectacle for his family’s image, much less making Dean himself a spectacle. In the moments when they were around others and he could sense the alpha starting to get frustrated, it only took Dean laying a gentle hand on Cas’ arm, or a brush of their shoulders together as they stood side-by-side. It usually chilled Cas out enough that everyone could be civil. Now, although he’s still pretty obviously irritated, the alpha is at least well-behaved.

The Archbishop, a small beta whose eyes are a dull, cloudy sort of blue and has a personality to match, finally turns to Cas.

“Castiel James Novak, wilt thou have this omega to be thy mate, to live together according to the gods’ decrees, as well as in the holy state of matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?”

The vows make Dean squirm a little bit. Fat chance, he thinks, although he’s less convinced than he was two weeks ago that this is going to be miserable. Less convinced that he’s going to be miserable.

Cas has… Been around more than Dean thought he’d be. It’s nice, because Cas is interesting and smart and funny in a dry, acerbic sort of way. He also listens to everything Dean says like it’s fascinating, which is not only totally strange, but untrue. Cas has seen the world. Dean has seen most
Regardless, getting to know Cas has been nice, but the vows still wig Dean out a little. As much as he’s starting to like the alpha who will be his mate, they’re not in love. They’re not getting married (so weird, the tradition has almost completely died out) or getting mated because they want to. They’re getting mated because Cas bought him, fair and square.

The whole situation makes Dean’s head (and heart) hurt, so he tries not to think about it.

“I will,” Cas says. His voice is suited to declarations like that, deep and rolling and rough. Authority and somber attentiveness are written in every line of his body.

The Archbishop gives a little nod of approval, then turns to Dean.

“Dean Michael Winchester, wilt thou accept this alpha to be thy mate, to live together according to the gods’ decrees, as well as in the holy state of matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honor and sustain him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, as long as ye both shall live?”

Dean swallows hard. “I will.” At least his voice doesn’t shake as he promises his life away.

The Archbishop nods again. “Then, as keeping with the traditions of the gods, I declare you wed. You may kiss to seal the union.”

Nerves skitter around in Dean’s heart, making butterflies explode in his chest as he turns to look at Cas. Cas’ eyes are soft, though, his face less severe than it has been all day when he steps forward and gently, so gently cups Dean’s face. Dean feels a part of him go all mushy, and he melts against Cas when the alpha’s lips press to his. It’s short and chaste, but it’s also warm and… Nice. Nicer than Dean thought it would be, anyway. Even though he’s a little taller than Cas, he feels smaller, sheltered and cared for.

Just like that, it’s over. They turn to look at the audience, both smiling. Dean’s is a little less disingenuous than he thought it would be. Cas takes his hand, and it’s the easiest thing in the world to twine their fingers together, like they do it every day.

“I present the wedded pair,” the Archbishop drones, “Their Highnesses, Castiel and Dean Novak.”

Cas leads Dean down the aisle, where the guests sitting closest have been given handfuls of petals to throw over them, sanding them. A photographer walks in front of them and another behind, capturing the moment for all eternity. The only thing that’s not incredibly surreal is the way Cas’ hand is wrapped around Dean’s, strong and dry and firm.

Dean has never seen this many human beings in one place in his life. There are thousands of people milling about the courtyard, drinking and eating and laughing and talking. It would be completely overwhelming, were it not for Cas at his side.

The courtyard is beautiful. Big round tables that seat twelve each are covered in pristine white tablecloths. Strings of twinkling fairy lights stretch from tree to tree, covering the whole scene in a warm, romantic glow. The number of people wearing cream and black give the whole affair a sort of old movie feel.

Finally, after what seems like several hours of polite socializing, but is probably closer to just one, Dean catches sight of his mom in the crowd. It’s a rare opportunity, since no one is currently demanding their attention (read: kissing Cas’ ass by praising Dean). He tugs on Cas’ sleeve, and the
alpha stops staring off into space to turn and focus on Dean. “Yes?”

Dean flushes a little, but he really wants to see his family. “I, uh. I see my mom. Can I go say ‘hi?’”

Cas blinks. “Of course, Dean.” He sounds surprised. “I’ll come with you, let’s go.”

It’s Dean’s turn to be surprised, but he smiles a little and nods anyway. “Okay, yeah. She’s, uh, she’s over there.”

They make their way through the crowd. Dean’s stomach drops when an older beta tries to intercept them, but Cas gracefully dodges him, pulling Dean along with him, with a polite, earnest excuse on his lips as they walk by. Dean just tries to look demure as they make their way over to Mary.

Once they get there, Dean doesn’t even get a chance to speak before his mother is wrapping him up in a hug. Her scent is softly distressed, and as he squeezes her tight and murmurs in her ear, he hopes that Cas doesn’t say anything about it. Or about the alpha aggression coming from John, looking sharp in a black suit of his own, glaring up at Cas from his wheelchair, which looks new.

Actually, all of their clothes look new, and it fills Dean with such an exceptional inner peace that he ends up beaming at them like he really is marrying the love of his life. He’s certain now that he did the right thing. Just seeing how much more relaxed, if upset, they both look, lets Dean know that the money has gotten to his parents and it’s helping.

Mary finally releases him, and Dean finds that his voice is thick with emotion when he speaks. “You look great, mom.”

She smiles up at him, tears in her eyes, and cups his cheek. “You’re so handsome, baby,” she says gently. “You did so well up there.”

“Proud of you, boy,” John says roughly, finally turning his eyes away from Cas and looking at Dean. “You did good.”

It’s the second time that John has told Dean that he’s proud of him for this. It’s not that John was ever a bad father, but he’s always been a bit sparse with praise. It hasn’t left any scars on Dean or anything, he still has Mary to tell him that he’s smart and perfect and wonderful, but it makes his chest tight to hear from his father again that he thinks Dean did the right thing.

Someone clears their throat obnoxiously, and Dean sees Sam glaring at him from behind John. “Heya, Sammy,” he says, a smile on his face.

Sam rolls his eyes, but he’s already stepping around John to pull Dean into a tight hug. “You’re an idiot,” Sam murmurs into his shoulder. Dean sighs and squeezes his brother hard against him. Sam is still mad that dean did this at all, much less that he did it without telling him. It’ll take some time, but Sam will see this was best.

When they step back, completing the hug with many slaps on the back, Dean realizes that his husband (what? husband?) is standing behind him, patiently waiting to be introduced formally to Dean’s family. There’s an amused smile on Cas’ face, and Dean feels himself start to blush.

He takes another step back so he’s next to Cas and gestures. “Uh, Cas, this is my family. My father, John Winchester, and my mom, Mary. The kid is my little brother, Sam.”

Cas makes eye contact with John first and reaches a hand out for him to shake. Dean can’t tell if the two alphas are doing that ridiculous “squeeze the shit out of each other’s hands” game to establish dominance, but he can’t help the little spark of pride when Cas doesn’t back away from the naked
fury in John’s eyes.

“Mr. Winchester,” Cas says easily. “It’s a pleasure to host you.” Old, traditional words.

“And a pleasure to be a guest,” John returns through gritted teeth.

Cas turns to Mary next. “You look lovely, Mrs. Winchester. It’s easy to see where Dean gets his incredible looks from.”

Mary blushes prettily and demures, clearly charmed when Cas takes her hand and presses a chaste kiss to her knuckles. “Thank you, Your Highness.”

Cas waves his other hand. “Please, Mrs. Winchester, you’re family. I insist you call me Cas when it’s just us.”

Mary gives a high, nervous laugh instead of responding. Before she has a chance to, Sam is pushing his way past her to stand in front of Cas.

It has always been obvious to Dean that Sam is going to be an alpha when he presents. It’s never been more clear than right now, when he looks Cas in the eye (tall bastard) and stares him down.

“Dean is my brother,” Sam snarls, low and angry, “and I don’t care what you’re in the line for, if you hurt him, I’ll… I’ll make you regret it!”

It’s a fourteen-year-old’s threat, delivered in a fourteen-year-old’s wavering voice, but it’s to a prince. Sam’s smart enough to know what he’s saying, what he’s doing. It’s illegal, it’s stupid, and it’s so fucking stupid.

Dean can feel his own heart rate spike, and omega panic and stress floods the air, a mix of his own and his mother’s. Cas could have Sam thrown in jail, and if he really makes the case and embellishes what happened, he could probably have Sam killed.

So much of what Dean did, getting into the School and signing himself over to Cas, was about making sure that Sam would be all right. He was thinking about the meals Sam wouldn’t have to skip, the stresses Sam wouldn’t have to have, the sacrifices Sam wouldn’t have to make.

It kind of feels like he’s watching all of that unravel before his eyes. There’s fear in Sam’s gaze, but he stands stubbornly still, glaring at Cas and staying up in his space. All of his body language is aggressive and angry, challenging.

Dean manages to peel his eyes away from his little brother to look at Cas, dread pooling in his stomach.

But Cas looks… Calm. Dean scents the air, but only smells his own acrid fear. There’s no alpha aggression or anger coming off of his husband. Maybe a hint of amusement but nothing else.

Mary snatches Sam back and steps in front of him, opening her mouth, presumably to beg, but Cas cuts her off with a wave.

“No, no, Mary, please. I, too, would say foolhardy things for my brothers’ safety.” He looks over her shoulder at Sam. “I promise you, Samuel, that Dean is in the best of hands.”

The only thing on Cas’ face is open sincerity. His scent is clear, even, though Sam can’t smell those nuances yet. Cas means it, he isn’t angry at all.
As his mother’s relief floods the air, Dean thinks that being mated to this man, this alpha whose temper is even and ego is nil, might not be so bad after all.

Cas thinks about Dean’s family as he and his new husband sit at the head of long, raised table (a security nightmare, he’s sure, but Naomi insisted).

The Winchesters clearly love Dean fiercely, if the hostility that permeated the air so thickly was any indication. The alpha aggression coming off of John alone was almost choking in its intensity. More upsetting was Mary’s soft and sour scent, omega distress and pain and worry, though nothing but pleasant interest, and then burning stubbornness, showed on her face. It’s easy to see where Dean got his talent for hiding his emotions, as well as his lovely bone structure.

But by far Cas’ favorite Winchester (outside of Dean, of course) was Sam. His honesty was refreshing, even if it did make Dean stiffen up and his scent turn sharp with fear. Sam Winchester does not give one fuck that Cas is royalty, or that his actions and words could have repercussions. All Sam Winchester does give a fuck about is that Cas married his brother and therefore has power over the omega. Sam wanted to make sure Cas knew that someone loves Dean, and that someone will be watching how he takes care of Dean. It’s… Refreshing to have someone not give a wit about his status and only care about his actions as a man.

Not to mention the way Dean’s scent went sweet and clear with relief and happiness when Cas brushed off Sam’s recklessness. Cas would excuse a thousand rude words to make Dean smell that way again.

He’s shaken from his thoughts when Michael, seated on his left, claps him on his shoulder in congratulations. Cas forces a smile to his face, but stays silent.

He and Dean are seated at the head of the table, a dubious honor bestowed upon them for the occasion. Castiel despises it to the core of his being. He’s never had any urge to rule whatsoever, or be the center of such ridiculous attention. And poor Dean has been dragged along with him, although the omega is handling the situation better than Cas is. At least Dean actually looks like he’s enjoying the meal. Cas just finds it distasteful. He’d much rather be having dinner with Dean one-on-one, in the informal dining hall the servants use, which Cas has learned that Dean prefers.

Dean has been a revelation. He’s smart as a whip, but he’s content to let those around him assume that he’s dumb. It makes them let their guard down, say things they normally wouldn’t. It’s amazing. He has a dry, incredibly sarcastic sense of humor that goes well with Cas’ own. He often finds himself biting his inner cheek to keep himself from smiling or outright laughing as he listens to Dean mutter softly under his breath, his green eyes sparkling when he meets Cas’ gaze.

Dean is also consistently incredulous about the fact that he’s now royalty. He’s surprised when people bow or curtsy, or when people refer to him with respect. It’s endearing as all hell.

All in all, Cas is really starting to reconsider the plan. He… He likes Dean, which came out of left field, quite frankly. The curveball of actually liking his mate has thrown a wrench into his plans. He assures himself that he’ll sit down with himself and figure everything out after the wedding.

Lucifer’s grating voice cuts into his reverie. “What do you think, Cas?” he asks, a snide grin on his face.

Cas sighs. His brothers, seated around him at the table (Bartholomew and Naomi are on the other end, as dictated by tradition), keep trying to engage he and Dean in conversation. Dean is holding up admirably, but Cas is tired. It was a long, hot, unbearably boring day (the few minutes with the
Winchesters notwithstanding), and he has no real urge to pretend to talk to his brothers.

Michael isn’t so bad, but he’s the eldest. He’s so focused on ruling someday that he’s kind of boring, on top of being a stuffy know-it-all. Lucifer is… Well, Lucifer is terrible. He didn’t used to be this awful, but he’s grown bitter and angry. Cas doesn’t know if it’s because Dean is sitting next to him and he’s become sensitive to Dean’s predicament, but when did Lucifer become such a sexist? It’s embarrassing, is what it is, and Cas kind of wishes Lucifer would speak a little bit more quietly when he’s expressing such antiquated views.

Gabriel, unfortunately, is too far away to speak to easily. He and Cas are easily the closest, but because of the hierarchy of royalty, he’s the furthest from the end of the table.

*It figures that on this horrible day my favorite brother would be placed so far away, he thinks grumpily.*

He’s stewing in his own irritation, but he can tell immediately when Dean tenses beside him. He turns to ask what’s wrong and is hit with Dean’s scent.

When an omega is in heat, their scent is not only overrun with “fuck me” and “fertile” hormones, but their scent itself becomes unbearably stronger, sweeter. Cas can smell the deep cinnamon and baked crust notes of apple pie, he can smell the healthy sweat and warmth baked off of a body that’s spent time on the sun, he can smell the freshly mown grass of Dean’s scent as if he’s lying face down in it.

Dean’s eyes are shining with omega gold, and his hand is gripping Cas’ arm so hard he’s sure there will be bruises. Cas can already feel his vision going hazy as his irises thread through with red.

“Alpha,” Dean whines, actually whines.

“Dean,” Cas growls out, not that he means to growl, but he literally can’t stop it, not with his mate sitting so close, smelling like that. “You’re in heat.”

Chapter End Notes

- Sorry about the delay, beautifuls.
- Smut next chapter! Let’s earn that "E" ratinggggg
“Dean,” Cas growls out, the blue in his irises quickly being overtaken by alpha red. “You’re in heat.”

Dean whimpers again at the sound of his husband’s (mate soon mate me fuck me breed me pleasepleaseplease) deep voice. “Cas.”

Cas’ upper lip twitches like it wants to curl into a snarl, and Dean’s cock throbs in response. Jesus, never hit this fast before, holy shit.

“Castiel.” An alpha who is not Dean’s alpha speaks, his voice grating and terrible against Dean’s rapidly fraying nerves. Already scent-bonded, he thinks hysterically.

Dean pulls himself together enough to realize it’s Michael, his brother-in-law, speaking. “Castiel, you have to honor the Chase. Your omega needs to run.”

Cas is turning to growl at his brother, probably for daring to speak about or to Dean, but Dean’s inner omega is positively purring at the thought of the Chase.

Normally, Dean knows that the Chase is horrifying and archaic. The practice of an alpha chasing and catching an omega so they can claim them is nonsense. It’s so old-fashioned and sexist, a throwback to the days when omegas had no rights at all, that Dean almost balked completely. It offends everything he is, the thought of running purely so some damn alpha’s ego can be properly stroked.

To Cas’ credit, he nearly went apoplectic with rage at the mention of the Chase. When Naomi presented the idea of having it the old way, with several alphas pursuing Dean (though they’d let Cas win, obviously, in deference to his status), Cas outright threatened to elope.

“I will not,” he said through gritted teeth, “subject Dean to the humiliating and demeaning practice of being chased around by a bunch of high-society knotheds just so you can provide a spectacle for the kingdom.”

Naomi protested her innocence, and they bargained down to the less offensive version of the Chase. Dean will get a head start from the table, and Cas alone will chase him to the bedroom. When Cas realized that was probably her plan all along, Dean had to physically block his fiance from going to shout at his mother some more.

So normally, Dean finds the Chase abhorrent.

Right now, though, almost every part of him craves it. The idea of his alpha chasing him, of Cas proving himself physically capable of catching Dean, of pinning him down and mounting him and claiming him-

“Dean.”

Cas’ severe voice pulls Dean from his thoughts. He realizes vaguely that he’s getting slick, and he meets Cas’ eyes again, breathing in their combined scents heavily.
“If you don’t want to be knotted on this table, you may want to begin running,” Cas grits out.

Dean sucks in a breath, shock clearing some of the heat-fog from his brain. *What?* Cas has been nothing but considerate since Dean met him. It’s completely out of character for him to say something like that, and it’s enough to get Dean to really *look* at his alpha.

Cas’ eyes are glowing red, and his lips are drawn up to bare his teeth. He’s gripping the edge of the table so hard his knuckles are white. Every muscle is tight and bulging (rather enticingly) with evidence of Cas’ massive restraint.

“*Go,*” Cas snarls, and Dean obeys.

He’s vaguely aware of knocking his chair over to get away, or the rising cheer from the crowd witnessing their little drama. He hears Cas’ growl get exponentially louder, as well as Michael’s shout of, “*Not yet, Castiel! Dammit!*”

*Head start. I get a head start.*

Dean runs harder than he’s ever run in his *life.* He’s grateful that Charlie and Cas took the time to show him around the castle, otherwise he’d be lost as hell and probably end up getting knotted somewhere random. As it is, he beats feet to he and Cas’ shared rooms.

The air rushing against his face clears his sinuses and his head. With clarity comes *fear.*

The thing is that none of this has seemed *real* so far. The Ball, moving to the castle, the wedding ceremony, it’s all been in a sort of haze of adrenaline and *gotta do it right and gotta take care of Sammy* that Dean has really only been able to take a few moments to himself. Outside of his first night in the castle, he’s mostly kept himself away from thoughts about his situation and how absolutely terrified he is of mating.

*Mating is permanent.* Sure, there are ways to weaken the bond enough to mate again, if enough time and space is given away from one’s mate, or if one mate dies, but it’s *painful* to separate from one’s mate for both parties. Most people *die.* Dean’s signing up to be with Cas *forever,* and no matter how much he likes the guy, he still barely knows him. He *especially* doesn’t know how Cas is gonna be in the bedroom. He’s thought about it a little, thought Cas might be even a little awkward and endearing, but the red eyes and the growling at the table, while they were *extremely* sexy, scared the fuck out of Dean.

Even outside of the emotional implications, Dean’s a virgin. Sure, he’s gotten a couple of handjobs, gone down on a few people, but he’s mostly pretty innocent. He’s suddenly completely unsure he wants his first time to be with a heat-drunk alpha.

So when Dean gets to the rooms, instead of hitting either of the beds, he runs straight to his bathroom, twirls, and locks the door behind him.

He backs away from it until he hits the far wall, then sinks down until his butt hits the floor. He’s slick, and he knows it’s going to get worse soon, but he can’t help but stare wide-eyed at the door.

*Shit.*

This isn’t what he should be doing. Hell, he should probably be naked and presenting on the bed when Cas gets in, not cowering in the bathroom. As enticing as the image is (and it really, *really* is), Dean can’t find it in himself to move. He’s suddenly so, so scared.

He hears the door slam open and shut and he flinches. A whimper escapes his lips, so he clamps his
mouth shut and bites his tongue a little to keep any more noise from coming out. He knows Cas can probably smell him in here, but the instinct to keep quiet and curl into as small a ball as possible is overwhelming.

He hears the alpha sniffing around the room, then come to the door. He doesn’t bang on it or demand entry, but a low growl can be heard through the door, and Dean stifles a whimper.

Cas paces back and forth in front of the door for an unknowable amount of time, softly growling and gnashing his teeth audibly while he does so. Dean barely moves, ignoring the way his need is growing, as is the wet patch in his pants.

Then the cramps hit.

They’re manageable at first. Dean grits his teeth and clenches his fist and just bears it. He’s able to keep it together, despite his thoughts slowly sliding away from fear and hide and toward want and alpha and mate. He realizes dimly that he’s sweating through his suit.

He’s able to breathe through the first stabbing pain, but when it’s followed up by another almost immediately, he can’t help but cry out.

The shuffling of Cas’ footsteps stops, and his low, gravelly alpha voice rings out.

“Dean?”

It’s his name that does it. Not omega, or mate, but just… Dean.

Cas is nice enough, Dean thinks, struggling to his feet. Maybe he’ll feel really bad afterward and not want to touch me for a while.

Just get this over with.

Dean struggles to the door, leans against it to take a deep breath, then throws the lock and flings the door open.

And belatedly remembers that the door is scent proof as the wave of his own fear and desperation and heat stench wafts by him and directly at Cas.

Time is held in suspension for just a moment, because Cas could react so many ways. He could be furious at Dean for hiding. He could be angry at Dean for being scared. He could be overcome by the scent of omega heat that’s fast filling the room and take Dean where he stands, barely holding himself up by one hand on the doorframe.

The moment is broken when Cas does none of those things, and instead closes his eyes, drops his mouth open so he doesn’t have to breathe through his nose, and takes a step back.

Now, Dean’s dealt with a few alphas before. Grabby assholes, usually, jerks who think that because they have a knot at the base of their dick they’re entitled to any part of any omega they happen to want. And it’s hard to avoid stories, too, about alphas forcing themselves on omegas, especially in places like the School which are populated almost solely of sheltered omegas.

Dean has never, ever heard of an alpha taking a step away from an omega in heat.

Cas takes another deep breath in through his mouth and speaks, keeping his eyes closed.

“Dean, we don’t have to do this.”
Dean blinks, because that sentence is *way* too much for his heat-addled mind to deal with right now. “Uh, yeah, kinda do, Cas.”

“Not if you’re unwilling,” Cas says evenly, and even his scent is smoothing out from the alpha lust that was so thick in it before. “Never if you’re unwilling.”

*Never if you’re unwilling. Never if you’re unwilling. Never if you’re unwilling.*

The words roll around in Dean’s head, ricocheting off, refusing to make sense. *What?* He’s in *heat,* for Christ’s sake. He’s about to be so willing it will make him *physically ill* if he doesn’t get a knot in his ass.

*Never if you’re unwilling.*

It’s those words more than anything else that make Dean take a stumbling step forward towards his alpha. Oh, he’s still nervous, he’s a wreck. He’s worried, maybe rather childishly, that it will hurt, or that he won’t like it, or that he won’t be good at it and even if he *does* like it, Cas won’t want to do it anymore. So, yeah, he’s scared as hell.

But Cas said he wouldn’t do it if Dean was unwilling, and somehow, that makes Dean willing to at least try.

“Alpha,” he says, soft and whimpery, partly because of his fear and partly because it *hurts,* “I need you.”

Cas finally opens his eyes, and to Dean’s utter shock, the red is almost completely gone. Cas’ irises are still ringed in red, but it’s mostly that warm, fond blue that Dean has come to like so much.

“I’ve got you, omega,” Cas says gently. “Come here, sweetling.”

Dean goes right to him rather gratefully.

Cas immediately wraps his arms around Dean and holds him close. Dean melts into him, hands fisting in the back of his nice jacket and whimpering as he scents at Cas’ neck. Cas scents him back, inhaling deeply and letting out a pleased rumble when Dean tilts his head, exposing more flesh for Cas’ perusal.

“Lovely, just lovely,” he murmurs.

“Alpha,” Dean whines.

“Alpha,” Dean whines.

Cas runs a soothing hand up and down Dean’s back beneath his jacket. “Shh, shh, I’ve got you. Come here.”

**Cas guides Dean back toward the bed until the backs of his legs are pressed against it. He’s gently kissing the side of Dean’s neck. The feeling of the alpha’s soft lips on his skin, combined with the way Cas’ stubble scrapes pleasantly against Dean’s neck, thoroughly distracts him until he feels his jacket sliding down his arms. Cas doesn’t turn his attention away from Dean’s throat when he tosses the jacket somewhere in the room. Part of Dean wants to protest the rough treatment of such nice clothes, but most of him is entirely focused on every point of contact between him and Cas.**

Cas’ hands settle back on Dean’s hips. He can feel how big they are, the power and elegance in those long fingers through the thin fabric of his shirt. It makes him shudder and moan a little.

The sound makes Cas pull his head back up and look Dean in the eye again. The alpha red is still
just barely there, but Cas’ eyes are hungry anyway.

“Dean, may I kiss you?”

Dean blinks. His first instinct is to roll his eyes, because he can feel Cas’ huge alpha cock pressing against his hip (that’s not gonna fit) (but damn I’d like to try). He can feel how bad Cas wants it, so he kind of wants to scoff at him asking permission to just kiss Dean.

Except for how the way it kind of means everything to him, so all he does is nod mutely.

Just like at the ceremony, Cas tenderly cups Dean’s face, tilts him down just a bit, and kisses him firmly. Cas’ lips are plump and soft, if a little chapped. It’s easy to lose himself in this, because Dean knows that he can kiss, and it turns out that Cas is a pretty damn good kisser, too.

His traitorous, stupid body chooses that moment to send another stabbing pain through his belly. Dean whimpers into Cas’ mouth.

The alpha pauses, then pulls away a bit and sighs. “As much as I would love to take this slow for you, we may need to move along.”

Dean lets his head onto Cas’ shoulder with another pained sound. “Right,” he says breathlessly, uselessly.

Cas’ fingers are still incredibly gentle as he starts to unbutton Dean’s shirt. Dean shivers as his sweaty, flushed skin is exposed to the cold air. Cas flings the shirt much the same way of the jacket, and this time Dean’s dissenting noise actually makes it past his lips.

Cas pauses and cocks his head, remarkably cute for someone Dean wants to fuck him so badly. “Dean?”

He fights for words through his racing mind. “Prob’ly the nicest thing I’ve ever worn,” he says, blushing a little. As soon as the words are out, he wants to snatch them back, embarrassed.

Cas stares at him for a moment before a fond smile breaks over his face. “You’re remarkable,” he says. He ducks his head and runs the tip of his tongue along Dean’s collarbone up to his shoulder, where he nips at the skin there, effectively rendering Dean utterly speechless.

Cas’ voice is dark with intent when he speaks again. “When we leave this room, I’ll buy you a hundred shirts just like it, in whatever color you desire.” Dean’s inner omega goes wild at the thought of his alpha pampering him. A fresh gush of slick leaks from him. It’s starting to drip down his thigh.

Cas growls a little into his shoulder. “I think, however, I have more important things to attend to right now.” And he gently shoves Dean backward onto the bed.

The manhandling makes Dean gasp, and he can’t help the way he spreads his legs for his alpha, who’s standing at the bed, looking down at him with dark eyes. Abruptly, Cas strips his own jacket off, then starts tearing at his own buttons. Halfway down, he loses patience and yanks, sending buttons flying.

It’s cliche and ridiculous, and as he watches Cas fight briefly with his sleeves before ripping them off, too, Dean thinks it’s probably the hottest thing he’s ever seen.

Another cramp has him arching his back and crying out. “Cas!”

Immediately, he’s covered by the alpha. Cas usually runs kind of hot, but his chest and belly seem
almost shockingly cool where they meet Dean’s. The skin-to-skin contact soothes him, though, and he wraps his arms around Cas’ shoulders and buries his face in the man’s neck.

Cas is making soothing noises and pressing gentle kisses to Dean’s face. He’s only holding himself up a little, so they’re pressed together from chest to waist. It calms the burn beneath Dean’s skin just enough.

“I’ll take care of you, shh, I know what to do.”

It’s at this point, Dean knows, that Cas will flip him over, rip his pants off, and mount him. The thought is enticing, but he’s still scared. Even though his ass feels loose and sopping wet, Dean felt how big Cas is. What if it hurts? Oh, gods, what if he cries?

And then, as it turns out, Dean doesn’t know a damn thing.

Cas starts kissing his way down Dean’s jaw, his neck, his shoulders. He leaves sharp little love bites here and there, enough to make Dean jump and his breath hitch. He feels Cas smile against his skin and finds it in himself to glare down at his alpha.

Cas chuckles. “I’m sorry, sweetling, you’re just so responsive.”

Dean opens his mouth to deliver what’s sure to be a withering retort, but he loses the ability to form words when Cas laves his tongue across one of his nipples.

Sensation rocks him, making him keen and arch up into Cas. The alpha takes this in stride, pulling Dean’s nipple into his mouth and suckling. He brings a hand up to gently flick and twist Dean’s other nipple, leaving the omega helpless to do anything but writhe beneath him.

Cas spends long minutes unravelling Dean, who’s content to be taken apart until the heat in his belly becomes too urgent, too painful. His hands are fisted in Cas’ hair, and he uses the hold to tug insistently, trying to give some sort of signal that he’s drowning.

Cas must get the message, because he finally leaves Dean’s puffy, reddened, over-sensitized nipples and begins to kiss down his stomach. Dean’s breath is heaving and he’s trembling, so it can’t be a super pleasant journey for Cas, but he doesn’t seem to mind.

He gently nips at the softness on Dean’s belly as his hands start to undo Dean’s belt. His touch is incredibly tender, almost reverent.

“You’re lovely, Dean, everywhere.” A kiss to his hipbone. “I am going to track down every one of these freckles,” Cas promises in that husky, thunderous voice, “with my tongue if necessary.”

Dean squirms a little. “Too big,” he manages to say, his inherent need to argue with praise battling with the hormones flooding his system.

“Maybe you’re bigger than the standard omega,” Cas muses. The bastard sounds completely unaffected as he slides the zipper of Dean’s slacks down and hooks his fingers into the waistband to remove them “I, however, think you’re spectacular.”

As he draws the pants and underwear down Dean’s legs, he leaves chaste pecks along his thighs, his knees, his shins. “Long, strong, lovely legs,” Cas whispers, and Dean feels his alpha’s words stroke over his skin.

Cas is moving back up, placing yet another kiss on his hip bone. “Good, strong hips,” he murmurs. “Able to carry our pups, bring them safely into the world.”
There’s no way Cas knows how badly Dean wants that. Dean adores pups, wants so many he can barely keep up with them. Now he’s picturing grumpy, serious pups with fluffy black hair and green eyes, standing with energetic blonde pups with shining blue eyes.

His inner omega keens, desperate to be bred, though he knows the first mating is an unlikely time to get pregnant. There’s far too much happening in his body with the stress of the mating bond about to be created, very few omegas get pregnant on the first mating with their alpha. Regardless, his hands grip Cas’ shoulders hard, trying to drag him back up.

Instead, Cas smirks against Dean’s belly. “Hmm, you like that, do you?” Another nip to the skin. “Want me to breed you, hmm? Pump you full of come until it’s leaking around my knot?” Cas is leaving sloppy, open-mouthed kisses on Dean’s skin, moving closer and closer to his straining cock.

“I will worship you when you carry our pups,” Cas is saying, “and I will think you’re beautiful the entire time. When your belly swells, making room for our pups. When your ass is begging for me, and we’re both almost too exhausted to move, I will find the energy to fuck you every. Single. Day.”

As dirty talk, it’s a little weird. But to a fertile omega? Who wants pups? Who’s in heat? It effectively drives Dean insane.

“Cas,” his voice is some combination of growl and whine. “Please, alpha, I can’t, it hurts, alpha. I need you, I-”

Whether in response to Dean’s pleading or in accordance to what his plans have been all along, Cas finally obliges by dipping his head and taking Dean’s cock into his mouth all the way to the base.

Dean arches his back in a wordless cry as the wet warmth envelops him. Cas sucks hard and bobs his head, moaning in apparent pleasure at the taste. When Dean feels questing fingers run up his inner thigh, he thinks abruptly that he feels achingly empty, and his only response is to spread his legs further.

He’s soaking wet, he can feel his slick halfway down his thighs and on the bedspread beneath him. When Cas sinks two fingers into him, fast but not rough, elation fills Dean even as Cas fills him. Pleasure is writhing through him, from his abused nipples, his cock, and his ass, which is being thoroughly fucked on Cas’ hand.

Dean manages to look down, and the sight that greets him almost kills him.

Not just the way Cas is kneeling on the floor next to the bed between Dean’s legs. Or the way the alpha’s cheeks are hollowed and his lips are stretched around Dean’s cock. Or even the way he can see Cas’ shoulder work as he fingers Dean, up to three now.

No, it’s Cas’ eyes, completely overtaken by alpha red again as he pleasures Dean.

In that moment, it really hits Dean how not powerless he is. Maybe he’s the omega, and maybe some would call him weak because of it, but they’re wrong.

Because Cas isn’t weak. Cas is a nerd, maybe, a little weird for sure. But Cas is strong. Cas is an immovable force, a fierce alpha.

And here he is, on his knees for Dean. For Dean’s pleasure, his comfort.

That thought, along with all of the confusing emotions and the wave of hot lust that it brings sends Dean hurtling into orgasm. He doesn’t even have time to warn Cas. His ass clamps down on his husband’s fingers and he can dimly feel himself pumping come into Cas’ mouth as every nerve
ending in his body explodes in ecstasy. He’s certain he’s screaming.

When he comes down, he barely comes down. He’s still hard as a rock, precome leaking from his tip. His ass aches with emptiness, and his stomach is almost constantly cramping. The edge has been taken off enough for him to be a little more present, but not much more than that.

“Alpha,” he moans. “Need you.”

He jumps in surprise when Cas moves back up his body quickly to kiss him hard. Dean kisses back fiercely, all finesse gone, just wanting to crawl inside Cas and never leave.

Cas’ hands are gentle when he pulls away and starts to maneuver Dean. “Hush, sweetling, I’ve got you. This will be easier if you turn over.”

*Turn over.*

The words are music to Dean’s ears. They wash away all rationality his orgasm managed to give him, and he barely registers the fact that he’s already flipped himself over to his hands and knees. It’s nothing at all to drop down to arch his back, press his chest to the bed and his face to the pillow, and cant his hips to present to his alpha.

That, apparently, does it for Cas. He snarls, suddenly all alpha aggression. It makes Dean moan and arch his back further, begging with his body.

He feels Cas crowd up behind him, and he must have taken his pants off at some point, because it’s all skin-on-skin from thighs to shoulders as Cas curls around him, nosing at Dean’s neck insistently. He keeps growling in the back of his throat.

“Cas,” Dean whines, pressing back against Cas’ cock. “Please.”

“Shh, I’m not going to hurt you,” Cas insists, somehow still thoughtful when he’s got to be completely overwhelmed by Dean’s scent. “We’re going to go slow.”

Dean opens his mouth to complain, but is cut off when Cas tilts his hips, lines himself up, and starts to press in. His pissy words are lost in the way Cas slowly and inexorably fills him up, splits him open on his fat alpha cock. The stretch is just short of too much, but he still finds that he needs Cas’ hands on his hips to keep him from shoving back and taking him in the rest of the way.

It takes a while, but eventually Dean feels Cas’ hips press flush against his ass, as well as the slight swelling at the base of his cock where the knot will form before orgasm. Dean moans around the feeling, squeezing his inner muscles to help adjust to the girth inside him. Cas growls and leans down to nip at his shoulder. Dean stills as his instincts demand that he submits to his alpha’s desires.

After a long moment, Cas speaks. “Are you all right?”

Dean nods, shifting a little. Cas growls again, a warning, and Dean stops immediately. “Yes, alpha,” he whispers, fighting the urge to move. Pain is ricocheting through his midsection again, making it hard to keep from moving. He manages it, but only just.

“Please, alpha, it hurts.”

“Of course, sweetling,” Cas murmurs, placing one big hand on Dean’s bell, alpha strength keeping them balanced on his other one as he begins to move.

Dean’s entire world narrows down to the drag of Cas’ cock in his slick, fluttering channel. The alpha
starts out slowly but quickly sets a faster pace. His growls start to increase in volume and aggression until he’s snarling into Dean’s neck even as he’s fucking into him mercilessly.

“Mine,” he growls, teeth snapping so close that Dean can feel the displacement of air at his neck.

*Oh, fuck, fuck, shit, I’m so close. “Yes, yes, yes-”*

“Say it,” Cas says in his deep, rolling voice, but even through the heat fog Dean notices that he’s not using alpha voice, and he appreciates more than he can say. Which means he has absolutely no desire to disobey his alpha.

His *mate.*

“Yours,” he moans. He tilts his head, giving Cas more room to scent at his neck, sensing that the moment is nigh even as his belly and thighs start to tighten and tremble. “Yours, alpha, *please-”*

At that precise moment, Cas snarls and sinks his teeth into the juncture of Dean’s neck and shoulder, just over his scent gland. Dean tilts his head back and *howls* as he comes, jerking and wailing out the overwhelming pleasure. Cas wraps a steel arm around Dean’s waist, keeping him still, and shoves into him one last time, locking them together as his knot pops and he comes, too. Dean can feel how much Cas is coming, alpha come painting his insides white. The relief is immense, drawing Dean’s orgasm out even more. Cas is growling, but it’s a pleased, rumbling noise now.

A beat after Cas leaves the mating bite on Dean’s neck, an immense flood of mating hormones floods the omega’s system. The only things Dean really registers are *mate* and *safe* and *satisfied* before it completely overtakes him and he passes out gratefully in his mate’s arms.

**Chapter End Notes**

- *squinty eyes at this whole chapter*
Chapter Nine

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

When Cas wakes up, it’s to Dean’s back pressed tight against his chest and his own lips against the back of his omega’s neck. His inner alpha is humming in contentment, and he absolutely cannot contain the urge to pull himself up onto one elbow so he can stare down and admire his mate.

*Mate.*

Dean is, of course, lovely in sleep. Now that he’s relaxed out of the mask he keeps on to hide his emotions, his features have softened, taken on a sort of ethereal, unbelievable beauty. His eyelashes cast spiky shadows onto his high cheekbones in the gentle morning sunlight, and his plush mouth is open just a bit.

His mate also snores, which Cas probably shouldn’t find quite so endearing.

His eyes land on the mating bite on Dean’s neck. A soft, possessive growl rumbles in his chest, and he makes sure to keep it quiet enough to let Dean sleep. Poor thing is probably exhausted, he thinks fondly even as a deep satisfaction seeps into his bones. He doesn’t try to fight the old instinct to lean down to lick the wound clean. Even as he does so, he chastises himself for falling asleep while he was tied with Dean. He should have taken better care of him.

Once his inner alpha, obnoxious jackass that he is, is satisfied that Dean’s mating bite is clean, Cas gets up, making sure to keep Dean covered and warm. He goes to the bathroom to use the facilities and brush his teeth quickly, and gathers supplies. Once he has everything he needs, he goes back and sits cross-legged next to where Dean still lies peacefully.

Using gauze and hydrogen peroxide, he tenderly disinfects the mating bite on Dean’s neck until it’s actually clean. Then he dabs antibacterial ointment onto it and bandages it. As much as he hates watching his mark disappear beneath the gauze, he hates the idea of Dean getting an infection much more.

Once he’s satisfied that the wound has been tended to, he slowly turns Dean onto his back, making sure he stays asleep. Castiel takes a cloth, dunks it into the bowl of warm water he placed on the nightstand, and tugs the blankets off of Dean enough to gently clean the omega. He tries to keep his thoughts and touches as clinical as possible while he cleans Dean’s belly, cock, thighs, and ass. There’s slick and come everywhere, and a thorough shower would probably be best, but this will suffice for now.

He takes his supplies back into the bathroom and leaves them on the counter for the maid to attend to. When he gets to the bedroom again, he gathers all the sheets and blankets, save the one currently beneath Dean, and takes them into the main set of his rooms. He dumps them on the floor near the door so housekeeping will be sure to see it and take it to the laundry. While he’s here, he sets the coffee maker to brew and checks the small refrigerator, frowning when he sees that it hasn’t been restocked.

He goes to his dresser to pull on a pair of lounge pants and go in search of food when there’s a knock at the door. Frowning again, he looks through the peephole only to see a cloud of red. He gets a whiff of omega, and as sour as it is because it’s not Dean’s scent, it relaxes the protective drive enough to let him open the door.
The redheaded omega who’s friends with Dean is standing there, beaming up at Castiel and holding a covered platter.

“Good morning, Your Highness!”

“Good morning… What is this?”

“Me and Bela figured that you two wouldn’t be up for going down to breakfast, and I couldn’t remember if your fridge had anything in it, so I brought you some stuff. There’s fruit to keep your blood sugar up, those little sausage and bacon pastries you guys like so much, and some biscuits and honey.”

Cas blinks. “That’s extremely thoughtful of you.”

She smiles. “My pleasure, Your Highness.” As he takes the platter from her she asks, “Is there anything else you guys need?”

Cas stares at her for a beat before blurting, “What’s your name?” When her mouth drops open in surprise, he feels himself flush. “It, ah, it seems to have slipped my mind.”

Her eyes are twinkling with humor now, but she doesn’t seem to be inclined to mention that Cas has never known her name. “It’s Charlie, Your Highness.”

Cas nods. “Thank you, Charlie. That will be all.”

As he shuts the door behind him, he has the absurd feeling that Dean would be proud of him. He shakes the thought away as heat-drunk fancy and goes into the bedroom to set the platter on the nightstand. Dean is starting to stir, so Cas hurries to pour them both a cup of coffee and to fix Dean’s the way he likes it before coming back into what’s technically Dean’s bedroom, kicking the door shut behind him and carefully knee-walking onto the bed and leaning back against the headboard.

Dean turns his face towards him and cracks one lovely green eye open. “’s that?”

Cas smiles. “Coffee.”

Dean groans and heaves himself up until he’s sitting next to Cas, close enough that their shoulders are pressed together. Castiel hands the cup over, unable to stop staring as Dean takes a sip and leans harder against him. It takes a minute or two for Dean to notice.

The omega blushes. “What?”

“Nothing, nothing. It’s just that you seem more… Relaxed, I suppose.”

His cheeks darken further, but Deans shrugs. “Yeah, well, I, uh… I guess I am.”

Cas smiles. “Good.”

“You, uh, you were pretty cool last night, with the whole…” Dean makes a vague hand gesture. “Everything. And now that I’ve got the bite, I figure, you know. No reason to hide from you now.”

Dean’s eyes are down on the mug that he’s gripping so tight his knuckles are turning white. Knowing that his mate is uncomfortable expressing his emotions this openly, Cas takes pity on the boy and turns to press a kiss to his temple.

“Indeed, there is not,” he assures Dean softly before turning back and lifting the lid on the platter Charlie brought. “Are you hungry?”
Dean perks up. “Starving.”

Cas pulls the platter into his lap, being careful with his cup of coffee, then watches in amusement as Dean eats like he’s actually starving. The past few weeks have, in fact, put some meat on Dean’s bones. His face, just a bit sunken when they met, is full and lively now, more beautiful in health. He eats without manners here, his cheeks puffed out like a chipmunk’s. It’s another habit that Cas probably shouldn’t find cute, but he’s helpless to do anything else.

“Cas.”

His mate’s voice pulls him from his thoughts, and Cas looks over at him. “Hmm?”

Dean’s brow is furrowed in concern. “You gotta eat, man.”

“Oh, of course, I—”

Before he can get more than that said, one of the breakfast dumplings is pressed to his lips. He meets Dean’s bewildered eyes and cocks an eyebrow as he bites into the pastry. Dean blushes wildly again and glares down at his lap.

“Damn omega instincts,” he mutters darkly.

Cas chuckles. Heat cycles vary from person to person, but most alternate between the burning need for sex and the irresistible urge to nurture their partner. He sobered a bit when he realizes that for someone as independent and as strong as Dean is, it must be humiliating to be stripped down to these base instincts.

Damn.

“If it helps at all, I probably licked at the bite on your neck for at least twenty minutes this morning.”

That rings Dean’s eyes back to his. Hope and relief are shining in the green depths. “Yeah?”

The opportunity to make his mate feel better is overwhelming, so he nods quickly. “Indeed. I also cleaned you up, and I was about to go in search of food.”

Dean seems to relax at that. “Yeah? You did a good job, alpha.”

The no doubt calculated words have him puffing up a little with pride, which makes Dean grin as Cas rolls his eyes. Calm yourself, he tells his inner alpha before he speaks again. “As much as I’d like to take credit, Charlie was at the door with food before I was even putting on pants.”

Dean’s eyebrows go up. “Charlie, huh?”

Cas nods and watches the fascinating display of emotions across Dean’s features. Pride, then gratefulness, then surprisingly enough, jealousy. The air sours with the scent of upset omega.

Belatedly, Cas realizes his mistake. He quickly puts the platter and his mug back on the nightstand, then plucks Dean’s cup from his hands and does the same. He turns and takes Dean’s hands into his, maintaining eye contact.

“I already had pants on when she got to the door,” he says in an even, reassuring voice. “We didn’t touch at all, you can’t even smell her on me. I only asked for her name because it occurred to me to be ashamed of myself that I didn’t already know it.” He cups Dean’s face with one hand. The wariness in his green eyes is killing Cas. “Please don’t fret, sweetling. I only have eyes for you, I
There’s a beat of silence that makes Cas increasingly nervous before Dean throws himself at him. Cas catches him easily, then smiles and lets Dean rearrange them until he’s got a lapful of omega. Dean’s sitting on his thighs, his knees on either side of Cas’ hips. His arms are draped over Cas’ shoulders and his face is buried in Cas’ hair. Cas puts his own arms around Dean, cradling him close and pressing gentle kisses to his collarbone.

“You’re all right,” he soothes softly. “I’ve got you.”

After long minutes of scenting and holding one another, Dean moves them again, and Cas is content to let him. He ends up on his back with Dean’s head resting on his chest, an arm across his stomach, and a leg thrown over his. He puts his own arm around Dean and presses a firm kiss to his forehead.

“Are you always this affectionate?” he wonders aloud. They haven’t slept together in a bed before now, so he has no frame of reference.”

He smiles as Dean nuzzles into his chest, the sweet gesture at odds with his disgruntled tone. “Heat’s making me a little drunk. You caught me, alpha. I’m kinda a cuddle-slut.”

Cas laughs and holds Dean closer. He can tell that Dean’s starting to drift off again. “Feel free to use me to satisfy any urges you have,” he says drily.

“Hmm, maybe later,” Dean slurs, pressing his face to Cas and holding him tighter even as he falls back asleep.

Cas runs his fingers through Dean’s hair, basking in their combined, happy scents. He thinks about the young man in his arms, and then about last night.

Cas can’t recall a moment quite as jarring as when Dean opened the bathroom door and the scent of terror and pain and desperation smacked him in the face as surely as if Dean had hit him himself. Cas will forever be grateful for the clarity he was able to cobble together then, for the patience he was able to give his mate.

He’s in awe of Dean. To be so scared and vulnerable, and still be able to open the door? The minutes of hiding aside, Cas knows for a fact he couldn’t have done the same. The courage that lives in Dean’s heart astounds and humbles Cas. He feels honored to have been the one who got to put Dean’s fear at ease, to make last night a good experience for him.

And his reward is this. His mate,pliant and trusting, cuddled up to him and snoring against his shoulder. Considering how much time Dean spends hiding his feelings and calculating his movements, it’s a privilege to see him so open and honest.

As Cas gives in to the urge to fall asleep, he wonders drowsily how he ever thought he’d be able to leave Dean’s side.

The second time Cas wakes, it’s because Dean’s nails are digging into his chest as the omega rides his cock like he’s getting paid for it.

“Dean,” he growls, his hands digging into Dean’s thighs as he resists the urge to fuck up into him.

Dean grins down at him. His eyes are glowing omega gold, and he’s so slick that Cas can feel it running down his hips to pool beneath him on the bed, but Dean’s smile is still cocky and gloating.
“ Couldn’t wait,” Dean pants. “Needed you, alpha.”

Another growl tears itself from Cas’ throat and he moves his hands to hold onto Dean’s hips, guiding him into slowing his pace down just a smidge. Dean whines and Cas has his own feral grin on his face.

“Shh, good, you’re doing so well,” he murmurs. Dean whimpers and obeys, and Cas is overcome. “Wanna watch you come apart for me, omega, so beautiful riding my cock.”

Now that Cas is controlling his movements, Dean pulls his hands up and runs them through his hair fisting them like he can do nothing else. Cas tilts his hips just right so that he knows he’s hitting Dean’s prostate and the soft cry that Dean gives him is the sweetest sound he’s ever heard.

“Just like that,” he urges, starting to move faster as the tension and sparkling heat starts to burn at the base of his spine. “Just like that, gods, you’re perfect, Dean-”

“Alpha,” Dean whines, and his heat scent is making Cas a little crazy, and his vision goes fuzzy as his eyes bleed over into alpha red at his omega’s desperation. “Alpha, please.”

He finally reaches between them to wrap a hand around Dean’s weeping cock, bobbing as Dean moves, red and hard and throbbing. “You wanna come for me, Dean?” he snarls, jacking Dean slowly but keeping the tunnel of his fingers tight.

Dean suddenly falls forward again, his hands on Cas’ chest as he rolls his hips to keep up his tempo. His eyes meet Cas’ and he bites his lip. His lovely face is dripping sweat, as is the rest of him, and he looks delectable.

Cas forces himself to take a deep breath through his mouth. Though the weight of his omega’s scent is heavy and rich on his tongue, it clears his mind just enough so that he can actually think for a moment.

“What is it, sweetling?” he asks, looking up at Dean and realizing that he looks a bit shy, a bit nervous. It’s never a look he wants to see on his mate’s face again. He reaches up to cup one of Dean’s cheeks. Dean tilts his head into it, scenting Cas’ palm and wrist.

“Wanna bite you,” Dean murmurs, and the red on his cheeks probably isn’t just from exertion anymore.

Cas loses a minute to white-hot pleasure when Dean starts moving his hips in a figure-eight over his steadily swelling knot, but he comes back to see a glint in Dean’s eyes and he knows the distraction was on purpose.

It only takes a few moments for him to decide. His brothers don’t have mating bites, but the last couple of weeks and especially the last few hours have shown Cas definitively that he doesn’t a relationship that’s anything like the ones Michael or Lucifer have with their mates. Dean is his equal, if not his superior in many ways, and Cas is already lucky that Dean’s his mate, much less that Dean wants to make it more official, more permanent.

He tilts his head and watches as Dean’s eyes zero in on the movement. “Yes,” he says, a growl in every word, “Yes, I want it. Come on, sweetling, bite me.”

Dean moans and falls forward, his hips frantically bouncing on Cas’ cock now as he scents at Cas’ neck and shoulder. His knot is catching on Dean’s rim and Cas can’t help but start to thrust up into his mate, pleasure clouding his brain and making him chase his impending orgasm.
Cas bit Dean just over his scent gland, and he expects Dean to bite him in the same place. It’s not the only place a mating bite will be effective by any means, they’ll work wherever they’re put, but it’s the most traditional placement as instinct is what guides most alphas to bite their omegas there. It will show above the collar of most shirts, but that’s the last thing on Cas’ mind right now, and he’s not sure he’d be quite bothered by that, anyway.

His mate, however, must be a bit more clear-headed than he is, because he moves away from the spot where Cas’ neck meets his shoulder. As Cas’ knot finally locks them together and he starts to come, he feels Dean’s teeth sink into the meat of his shoulder, effectively mating them. He growls and reaches up to tear the bandage off of Dean’s neck so he can bite him back, and feels a fierce satisfaction when Dean howls into his shoulder and bucks as he splatters both of them with come. The world whites out for a while.

Cas comes back to himself to find Dean lazily licking at the wound on Cas’ shoulder as he does the same to Dean’s neck. He bites off a curse and presses a gentle, apologetic kiss to the mark.

“Dammit,” he mumbles. “I already cleaned that.”

Dean chuckles. “No complaints here,” he says between long, luscious licks to Cas’ mark. Cas shudders at the feeling.

He peppers Dean’s shoulders and neck with kisses, pausing periodically to clean at his mark, too, for a long while before he speaks. “I’m surprised,” he says simply.

Dean shrugs, almost knocking into Cas’ face with his shoulder, but he doesn’t seem to notice, so Cas doesn’t mention it. “Just seemed right at the time. I, uh…” Now he seems unsure, eyes glued to Cas’ shoulder and biting his lip. “Sorry if I overstepped.”

Cas presses a kiss to Dean’s mating mark and moans a little when Dean shudders and clenches around his knot. When he’s able, he says, “You didn’t. I could have said no, and even if I hadn’t wanted it, you put it in a place that’s easily hideable.”

Dean finally turns to look at him. “If you hadn’t wanted it, huh?” He smirks. “You sayin’ you wanted my bite, Cas?”

Cas smiles, adoring the playful, cocky side of his mate that’s come to the surface. He growls and bucks his hips, rolling them so Dean is on his back with his legs wrapped around Cas’ waist. “I think,” he says, nipping a bit at Dean’s mark, “that I want everything you want to give me.”

The air floods with bashfulness and affection. Cas growls happily and kisses Dean fiercely. He thrusts another few lazy thrusts, letting his knot tug at Dean’s rim and making his mate gasp and writhe beneath him.

Dean pulls away, laughing, and Cas takes the opportunity to press kisses from his jaw down to his mating bite. “All right, all right, big sappy alpha,” Dean says, the complaint in his voice belied by the soft delight in his scent.

“It must be your heat making me a little drunk,” Cas says with a smile pressed against Dean’s bite.

Dean laughs again, loops his arms around Cas’ neck, and pulls him back up for another kiss. After several long minutes, he sighs. “M all sticky,” he mumbles, looking down at the mess between them with distaste.

Cas smiles. “I can help with that.”
“Well, yeah, but we gotta wait until your knot goes down, and by that time it’ll be all crusty, and—Hey!”

Cas laughs at Dean’s cry of alarm. He uses a blatant and shameless display of his alpha strength to wrap one arm around Dean and lift himself up onto his knees and other hand.

Dean yelps again and tightens his arms and legs around Cas, making it easier for him to lift his omega into the air as he steps off of the bed. He puts his hands beneath Dean’s thighs and grins at the startled look on Dean’s face.

“What’s wrong, Dean?” he asks as he walks to the bathroom with a smile.

“That, uh…” Dean’s pupils dilate and Cas falters a bit when he feels Dean clench around him again, sending another wave of bliss from his knot.

“That was hot, alpha,” Dean whispers, voice rough with new desire.

Cas grins savagely, which makes Dean whimper, and Cas thinks to himself that it might end up being remarkably easy to fall in love with his mate.

Chapter End Notes

- Have some fluff and tell me what you think.
Chapter Ten

The day Dean finally wakes up sore, tired, and covered in sweat, slick, and come, but missing the painful urgency in his belly, he immediately closes his eyes again in relief. Thank the gods.

When he opens them and turns his head a little, his eyes land on Cas, who’s still dead to the world. The alpha is on his side, one leg thrown over Dean’s and his arm across Dean’s chest, pinning him to the bed. His nose is squashed into Dean’s shoulder, and he’s doing some sort of combination snoring and growling thing that Dean resolves to not find cute no matter what.

As he watches his alpha sleep (creepy, he knows, but he gives himself a pass because he’s tired), Dean thinks that he’s been closer to genuinely happy in the last few days than he thought possible. Cas has been nothing but attentive, sweet, ferocious in bed, and gentle. He’s been everything a partner should be during something as emotionally and physically draining as a heat cycle. Dean hopes he can be the same for Cas when he goes into rut.

No matter how nice it’s been, though, Dean knows that it’s over. They’re going to go back to living stilted, separate lives. Not that they were never together before the wedding, but the last few days have been completely different. Dean will miss the dynamic they’ve made together. He hopes they can recreate it for his next heat.

Better get this over with.

He slowly disentangles himself from Cas’ limbs, watching carefully to make sure his alpha stays asleep. Cas snorts and frowns a little, but doesn’t wake up as Dean climbs out of bed.

As soon as he’s on his feet, he has to bite back a whimper. He didn’t realize quite how sore he is, but it’s becoming clear fast. It’s not just his ass, although it obviously hurts. His hips and his back ache from all of the contorted positions he’s been in, the skin on his knees is a little raw, and the joints are making themselves known, too. His head is pounding and his mouth is dry and his belly is clenching in a combination of hunger and upset.

Dean feels like shit.

He manages to limp his way to the bathroom after deciding he wants to be clean more than anything else right now. He supports himself using furniture and walls, and he doesn’t bother shutting the bathroom door behind himself. Cas has seen worse.

By the time he’s standing under hot water, it’s five minutes later and there are tears standing in his eyes. It’s from frustration, he assures himself. It’s just because he’s still tired and hormonal. It certainly has nothing to do with him already missing his alpha. He’s not sad, or affected in any way at all at the thought that he and Cas will go back to being a royal couple instead of just Dean and Cas.

Yeah. It’s just frustration.

He’s trying to get himself to bite the bullet and reach over to get the shampoo when the scent of concerned alpha mingles with his own emotional turmoil.

Damn.
“Dean?” Cas’ voice is rougher than usual from sleep. “Dean, what’s wrong?”

“Uh, what? N-nothing.”

Cas does him the courtesy of not mentioning his overwrought scent or the way his voice cracks. Instead, Dean listens (turning around to look would take way more energy than he currently has) as his mate steps into the shower stall.

Even despite the temperature of the water beating at his chest, Cas’ heat warms his back. Dean decides not to be ashamed of the way he leans against Cas, letting his mate take his weight.

“Shh,” Cas murmurs against his ear. “I’ve got you.”

Dean lets himself be manhandled, albeit gently, so he’s leaning back against the wall. Cas looks around and reads several bottles until he finds Dean’s shampoo. He considers helping, but the wrinkle of concentration on Cas’ brow is too endearing, so he watches until his alpha’s face clears in triumph.

Cas comes to stand just in front of Dean again and tilts his head to press a gentle, affectionate kiss to his lips.

“I’ll take care of everything, sweetling. Your only job is to stay upright. Is that okay?”

Dazed, Dean nods.

Cas’ fingers are gentle but firm as he shampoos Dean’s hair, massaging his scalp at the same time. Dean moans and lets his eyes fall closed. Cas’ scent is all pleased and warm. The alpha uses the detached shower head to rinse Dean’s hair, taking extra care to keep it from his face.

Dean opens his eyes again in surprise when he feels Cas’ strong fingers on the sides of his neck. Cas’ gaze is on where he’s soaping Dean’s skin, now moving down to his collarbone and shoulders. He gently removes the bandage from over his mating bite and tosses it over into the sink before turning back and continuing his ministrations.

Dean is confused. What the hell is Cas doing? They’re done, his heat cycle is done, it’s obvious in his scent. Cas performed his duty to his country and his new mate admirably, several times over, but a duty it was nevertheless. This isn’t a love match, it’s at best an arranged marriage, a shady purchase at worst.

So what is Cas still doing here? He should be at breakfast, showing off his new mated scent (but keeping his bite secret) and maybe sharing one or two risque stories of the more athletic positions he and his new omega tried. Not… Not here. Not still here, carefully still taking care of Dean. Dean should be alone in this shower, working through the pain on his own.

He lets these thoughts chase one another around as Cas lathers the soap first down Dean’s left arm, then his right. As he does, he also massages the ache out of each muscle, all the way down until he’s massaging each one of Dean’s fingers individually. He then moves back up to knead at the broad muscles of Dean’s chest, keeping his touch light over sore nipples.

Dean jumps a little when Cas drops to his knees. The alpha chuckles a little and leans forward to press a gentle kiss low on Dean’s belly.

Tears spring to his eyes again as he’s forcefully reminded of pups. He knows the chances that he’s pregnant are slim to none, but he suddenly wants it so bad. The alpha kneeling in front of him, who’s being so gentle with him, Dean can see him being so good with pups.
He doesn’t realize that he’s whining a little until Cas’ hands are at his hips, rubbing soothing circles into the skin there. “Shh, it’s okay, Dean, I’ve still got you.”

Dean manages to beat back his emotions through sheer force of will and nods at his alpha. “Sorry,” he rasps.

“You have absolutely nothing to apologize for,” Cas says firmly.

He goes back to running soapy, almost reverent (though Dean feels a little silly even thinking the word) hands over his belly, then down his hips and thighs. He kneads the long muscles in Dean’s legs, his calves, then moves down so he’s washing his feet. He even takes the time to wash between each of his toes and the bottoms of his feet.

Finally, he sits back. “Turn around,” he orders softly. Dean complies, grateful for the opportunity to close his eyes and rest his forehead against the tiled wall.

Cas stands and starts at his shoulders again. He washes Dean’s back with just as much meticulous attention as he did his front. When he gets to his ass, Dean stiffens, but Cas’ fingers remain gentle as he cleans tender flesh. He doesn’t linger there, but continues down Dean’s legs.

He helps Dean turn back around and positions him under the spray, making sure he’s completely rinsed off. Dean watches in disbelief as Cas then runs a cursory shower for himself, tearing his own mating bite bandage off with much less finesse and scrubbing his own body quickly, without nearly as much care as he showed Dean’s, even though he’s got to be just as sore.

Once they’re both free of soap, Cas turns the water off and helps Dean step out of the shower. The omega is too surprised, too confused to say much of anything as Cas takes one of the fluffy white towels from the shelf and pats him dry from head to toe. Then, after drying himself off rather quickly, Cas shocks Dean again by easily scooping him into his arms, bridal style. Dean yelps and clings to his alpha, who chuckles, making his chest rumble soothingly against Dean. He knew, from the several days of marathon sex, that Cas’ alpha strength is nothing to dismiss, but it still boggles his mind to be carried like he weighs nothing.

Cas lays him gently out onto the bed, then starts fussing at his mating bite again (it’s been reopened quite a few times over the last few days). That’s it for Dean.

“Uh… Cas?”

“Hmm?”

“What, uh…” It’s not like he wants this to stop. His inner omega is going fucking nuts at all of the pampering, all of the ways Cas is taking care of him. It’s so much more than Dean ever expected from his life when he walked into the School for the first time, so much better. So, it’s not like he wants it to stop, it’s just making him off-balance.

He has no frame of reference for this behavior, outside of… Well, outside of Mary and John. Dean’s parents are deeply, deeply in love with one another. He’s watched his father dote on his mother, and vice versa, but he didn’t expect that he’d get to have that same sort of interaction with his alpha. Especially since he resigned himself to going to the School and being bought.

So what, exactly, is going on here?

“What is this?”

Cas looks up at Dean’s eyes again, continuing to dab at the bite on his neck with disinfectant, and
tilts his head. “What is what?”

Dean gestures between them. “This.”

“This… Us? Are you asking… About us?”

Dean rolls his eyes. “No! No, Cas, I’m asking what the hell you’re doing.”

“I’m disinfecting your mating bite.” Cas’ frown is deeper.

“Not… No, not…” Dean takes a deep breath and tries to sort out his thoughts. “Cas,” he says finally. “I’m asking what you’re doing, with the pampering and the washing and the carrying. Is this residual heat hormones? Because that would actually make some sense. Is it something else? Am I putting off helpless vibes? Because I’m not, helpless, you know. And I don’t.”

Cas’ fingers, gentle but firm again as they grasp Dean’s chin and make him look back at the alpha, shut Dean up as he looks into those blue eyes.

“Dean, stop.” Cas’ voice, too, is gentle. His eyes are searching Dean’s face, and he’s not sure what Cas finds there, but it keeps him talking.

“I’m not sure what I anticipated when I went to the Omega Ball, I admit. I was planning on simply finding someone to mate, maybe someone who smelled nice. I planned on mating them, marrying them, and impregnating them, then setting them up somewhere nice, but ultimately out of the way.”

Dean’s heart thuds in his chest, his breath going short at this confirmation of his fears, but Cas is still talking, so he tries to listen.

“But you’re so… Irreverent.” Cas’ voice is fond, now, and his scent is pleased again. “You’re brave and reckless, but you sold yourself to take care of your family. You manage to keep Michael and Lucifer thinking that they’re smarter than you, but you easily keep up with Gabriel and Kali when they have conversations about any number of advanced subjects. You’re still, these several weeks later, surprised when someone refers to you with a royal acknowledgement.”

Dean blushes hard at the affection in Cas’ words. Shit. “Uh…”

Cas refocuses on Dean’s eyes. “I know that… I know this didn’t begin the way either of us wanted it to. I know this isn’t the mating of your dreams, or even really of your choice. But I…” And here, Cas blushes a bit himself and his eyes dart away. “If you’re willing, that is, I’d like to… Ah, I’d like to try to make you happy. Here, with me, while we try to give this a real chance to work.”

That… Is not what Dean was expecting to hear.

“A real chance?”

Cas nods.

Dean just stares at him for a second, because Cas, himself, has been a bit of a surprise. Cas is smart, with dry humor and a quick wit. Cas cares more than he thinks he does, and he’s a favorite around the castle staff even without trying. He’s caring and kind and thoughtful and quiet and...

And maybe, maybe, Dean has caught a few feelings for his alpha. So maybe Cas’ idea isn’t a bad one.

“With me?” He clarifies again. “You want to try to make this a real relationship, not just one for
show like Michael and Amara or Lucifer and Lilith? With me?”

Cas nods again, earnest.

Dean smiles a little. “Uh, yeah. Okay, alpha.” He palms the back of his neck shyly. “We can give it a shot.”

Cas’ answering smile is brilliant and alpha relief and elation flood the air, making Dean grin and his own scent turn pleased and happy. They just stare at each other for a few beats, lost in (though Dean will never admit it) one another’s eyes. Dean’s thinking about all of the potential they have now, and getting a little giddy about it (lingering hormones, he’s sure), when they’re interrupted by Dean’s cell phone ringing from the other room.

Dean blinks. “Uh.”

Cas is frowning a little. “Who in the name of the gods would be calling you right now?”

“The only people who have my number are my family.”

At that, Cas gets up immediately and strides out of the room. When he comes back, he has Dean’s cell phone in his hand. “Then you should answer,” he says simply as he hands it over. “I’ll go get us some food so you can have some privacy.”

Not quite with his permission, Dean’s hand darts out to wrap around Cas’ wrist. They both stare at the point of contact before Dean can bring himself to speak.

“I, uh… You can stay,” he says quickly, before he’s completely unable to continue with this chick-flick moment. “If you want, I mean.”

Cas’ smile is bright again, but he doesn’t do anything but nod. Dean nods back before tapping the screen and putting the phone to his ear. “Heya, ma.”

“Dean!” Mary’s voice is relieved, happy. “How are you, baby?”

Cas is cleaning up the supplies he used to disinfect Dean’s mating bite. His own bite isn’t nearly as open, what with alpha healing and the fact that Dean only really bit him the one time. He’s clearly listening, but he’s going about his own business. He’s unselfconscious about his nudity, moving around the room comfortably, and he’s gorgeous and strong and Dean thinks he might be a little bit in love with him already.

“I’m good. Really good.”

“The wedding was so lovely, but you had to leave so fast. Was your heat okay?”

“Mom,” Dean whines. Cas is crawling into the bed now, done with his clean-up, and Dean automatically curls up next to him. Cas wraps his arm around his shoulders and presses a kiss to his forehead, and Dean feels inexplicably cared for. He hides his face in Cas’ chest.

Mary is laughing softly. “Oh, now that you’re married I thought you wouldn’t be embarrassed by talking about this!”

“It’s not that,” Dean grumbles. “You’re my mom.”

“Oh, hush,” Mary admonishes without heat or rancor, “and tell me everything about your alpha.”

Cas chuckles in delight, Mary squeaks when she realizes Cas is right there, Dean groans in
embarrassment, and everything is looking more and more like it’s gonna be all right.

Chapter End Notes

- I know this chapter is shorter, I’m sorry, but I’ll make it up to you with the next one.
Chapter Eleven

Chapter Notes

- This has been beta'd but not reread by myself, so if you see an error give me a shout out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The weeks after his wedding to Dean represent the most peaceful time in Castiel’s life, trite though the thought may be. If he told Gabe, his big brother would never let him live it down.

He’s going to keep it to himself.

Each morning he wakes up tangled up with Dean. The warm scent of sleeping, content omega mixes sweetly with his own thick, happy scent. The sheets are always wound about their calves because Dean runs hot but refuses to sleep any further away than pressed right up against Cas. The alpha has no complaints.

It’s the scent of coffee permeating the room that wakes him up. If it’s early enough, Cas will nuzzle Dean awake, or rouse his young husband by sucking his cock. The slow way his green eyes fill with heat makes Cas growl and his own eyes tinge red.

There are many worse ways to spend a morning.

“Do we have to?”

Cas tries to smother his smile at the whine in his mate’s voice. From the flat look he receives, his efforts are in vain. “Naomi would like us to make an effort to be more visible.”

(Her exact words were, “Stop dragging your husband back to your rooms at every available opportunity. We must present a stable, united image to the people, Castiel, and it’s difficult to do that if you and your mate disappear from the face of the earth after your wedding!”)

“Oh, well, if Naomi wants it,” Dean grumbles as he burrows closer under Cas’ arm.

Cas smiles again and presses a kiss to Dean’s hair. They’re watching an old Western in what’s technically the connected omega suite but has become the space they share more than anything. The couch has finally lost the department store scent it came with and now smells like mates.

“It won’t be that bad,” he murmurs. When Dean huffs, Cas laughs. “We can even go out to eat somewhere. It will be a nice change from peanut butter and jelly.”

Dean leans up specifically so Cas can see him roll his eyes. “Cas. A chef lives here. Hurting for variety we are not.” He lays back down. “The only reason we’ve been eating PB&J’s is that we’re both too godsdamn territorial to be around other people.”

That has proven very true. Cas was foolish enough to believe that he would be above such archaic, knothead tendencies. His oldest brothers simply smiled and nodded when he said as much, which
was infuriating, but should probably have been a sign.

Since they mated, Cas’ instincts are on high alert to keep Dean away from other alphas. He doesn’t act on those urges, of course, but he does find himself needing to holding himself back more than he’s comfortable with. He’s often almost overwhelmed with the desire to drag Dean physically away from any alpha they encounter and knot him mercilessly until his mate forgets that anyone but Cas himself exists.

He’s not going to, but he wants to.

Dean has revealed that he feels similarly territorial about Cas, but the damned boy has such an ironclad control of his scent when they’re in public that no one would know. Instead, he makes do with shamelessly and thoroughly scentmarking Castiel when they’re alone, then making good use of his youthful, pretty face to look utterly innocent.

Incorrigible, Cas thinks fondly.

His own control over his scent is minimal at best, and when he starts thinking of the dark, possessive look Dean gets as he rubs himself all over Cas before they go anywhere, the resulting arousal starts to permeate the air.

As another, less appealing result, Dean scrambles off of him. “Oh no, buddy,” he says with a scowl. “We are not getting naked again. We’re going out so your mom will get off our backs and I was promised good food.”

Cas smirks. “But Dean, a chef lives here. We can get good food here.”

Dean puts his hands on his hips and glares. “Cas.”

Castiel has found himself hardpressed to deny Dean anything, so he just sighs and gets to his feet. “Very well. Let’s get dressed.”

“This was a mistake,” Dean says darkly. Despite the words, he gives a bland smile and shy wave to the paparazzi swarming the sidewalks. The Royal Guard, a security team comprised of six muscled, solemn betas, creates an imposing barrier that none of the reporters dare cross as the royal couple move from the car to the restaurant. In response to Dean’s shallow acknowledgement, though, the frantic cries for interviews and flashes of cameras go wild.

Cas chuckles and nods to the crowd as he places a (possessive) hand on the small of Dean’s back. He’s used to the attention and able to brush it off easily, but Dean’s back is tense enough that the muscles are hard beneath Cas’ hand. His scent, as always when they’re in public, gives nothing away.

Cas grimaces as guilt washes over him. Dammit. As much as it may look like Dean has completely adjusted, this is all still very new to him. Dean hasn’t told him too much about his childhood, but Cas has been able to read between the lines to a life of a homebody with a few close friends, along with more than a few skipped meals. The way they live now, with abundance bordering on opulence and constantly being the center of someone’s attention, it must be quite the culture shock.

It doesn’t help that the media has fallen in love with Dean and their love story (the official one, about a chance meeting in a market, a scentbond, and a whirlwind romance, of course, not the true story). It’s no wonder, really, because Dean is incredibly lovely, and Cas is a notoriously reclusive bachelor. The resulting media explosion is probably something Cas should have foreseen. Charlie says that a “hashtag Destiel” has been “trending” for weeks, which is all nonsense to Castiel but includes a lot
of covertly taken photos of the few times they’ve gone out since the wedding.

The constant media attention must be jarring for his poor mate. *I should have been preparing him for all of this,* he chastises himself, *instead of keeping him in bed for days.*

“Cas?”

He blinks and looks over at Dean. His handsome face is still smooth for the public, but concern shines in his eyes. “Are you okay?”

Cas nods and gestures for the hostess of the restaurant to lead them to their table. The restaurant is quiet and discreet. It’s one of his family’s favorites for that very reason. It’s because of that discretion (and their strict no-press policy) that Cas feels free to both answer the question and twine his fingers with Dean.

“I feel guilty about how little I’ve tried to prepare you for public life now that we’re married,” he confesses in a low voice. “The life of a royal is vastly different from that of a citizen, I can only assume. I should have done more to get you ready.”

As they reach their table and sit opposite one another, Cas has another clear view of Dean rolling his eyes. “Shut it, alpha,” his mate says sternly. “It’s not that bad. I mean, it’s not great, but I’ll get used to it.”

Cas sighs. “I have no doubt that you can handle yourself, Dean.”

Dean snorts. “Damn right.” His face softens a little. “Look, Cas, it’s kinda sweet that you’re worried, but I’m fine.” He smirks. “Besides, it’s not like you were the only one running off to the bedroom at every opportunity.”

Cas has to concede the point, but as the conversation flows easily between them (as it always does), he can’t get the thought of Dean’s tension when they were outside out of his mind.

*I should do something nice for him.*

“Where are we going, Cas?”

The suspicion in Dean’s voice would sting if Cas didn’t know he spent the whole afternoon being dodgy. Dean has called him out in it several times, but Cas insisted nothing was wrong and kept his mouth shut.

Now, as their driver takes them into a much less ostentatious part of town than they live in, Cas hopes that his surprise will be taken in the spirit he intended instead of a gross overstep.

It’s simply that Dean has been *amazing.* He transitions seamlessly from the demure omega he pretends to be while around the Novaks into the sassy, sexy creature he is when he and Cas are alone. He still blushes when someone refers to him with an honorific, but he has mastered the art of interacting with the staff in the castle with both respect and authority. He’s even managed to charm Bela, who Cas could have sworn was completely immune to any such thing.

Dean has worked so hard to fit into the world he was thrust into, the world *Cas* thrust him into, that the alpha burns to do something for Dean. He wants Dean to understand that, while they may have to spend most of their time watching their manners and their public displays of affection, they can still be in Dean’s world, too, sometimes. They can still, for example, have a simple dinner with the Winchester family.
Dean’s eyes widen when he recognizes the neighborhood. There’s cautious hope in his voice and his scent when he asks, “Cas?”

“You’re mother is expecting us,” Cas explains quickly, watching his mate’s face for signs of distress. “I didn’t want to surprise her with our presence, just you.”

Dean turns to look at him and Cas’ breath catches at the unreadable but inexplicably significant emotions playing over Dean’s face. In the relative darkness of the backseat of the sedan they’re in (the vehicle they take when they’d like to be a bit more inconspicuous than a limousine would allow them to be), green eyes glitter brightly at him, and Cas is powerless to stop himself from leaning forward to capture Dean’s lips with his.

Dean hums appreciatively into the kiss, pressing into it and opening easily when Cas swipes his tongue across Dean’s bottom lip. It isn’t about building up the heat that constantly burns between them, they don’t have the time and there’s a driver less than two feet from them. This is about comfort and communication. It’s thank you and you’re welcome and I’m ridiculously fond of you all in one, from each of them and to each of them.

Maybe the taste of Dean is making Cas a bit poetic.

When the car comes to a stop, Cas pulls back regretfully, but not without a last nip at Dean’s pouting lower lip. Dean lets him go, but slides his hand over to lace his fingers with Cas’.

“Thank you,” he whispers, voice rough.

Cas smiles. “You’re very welcome, sweetling.”

As they get out of the car, Dean is visibly excited. He hurries to the front door of his family’s home. Cas follows at a more sedate pace after murmuring to the driver that the security team should station themselves discreetly. He doesn’t want his mate’s family endangered because of his own spontaneity, and although he usually believes three bodyguards per royal is overkill, having six people guarding them tonight feels much better.

Mother’s paranoia is getting to me, he thinks with a smile.

Mary Winchester, lovely as ever in a dress that Cas suspects is the best one she owns outside of the one she wore to the wedding, answers the door with a big smile. The scent of a happy family and omega happiness with a tinge of unease washes over them where they stand. Cas breathes it in deeply. The castle is too big for his family’s scents to really coalesce like a normal family, and he’s not sure he would want them to, anyway. In the scent of the Winchester’s home lives a lot of love, affectionate and teasing interactions, home-cooked food, and genuine care for one another. The Novaks probably just smell like bureaucracy.

Mary immediately flings her arms around Dean’s neck, crushing him close. He makes a dissenting noise but hugs her just as hard. “Come on, ma,” he grumbles into her shoulder.

“Hush,” she says firmly. “I get to hug my baby as long as I want. I haven’t seen you in weeks.” The relief in her voice and lingering in Dean’s scent lets Castiel know he’s done the right thing.

When they disentangle, Cas is surprised to find himself with an armful of happy omega, and not his this time.

“You, too,” Mary says against his chest. She’s hugging him gently, like she’s not sure she’ll be welcome, but it means no less to Cas for its lack of vehemence. “You’re part of the family now, so
It takes Cas a moment to remember that he’s supposed to hug back, but he finally does and wraps his arms around his mother-in-law. “Thank you for having us, Mary.”

She leans back and beams up at him. “No, no, thank you for bringing my baby back.” She whirls around. “Come in, come in. Dinner’s almost ready.”

They follow her in and Cas looks around curiously. The Winchester home is worn but clean, and very clearly loved. The furniture in the living room they come into first is clearly still around from the time Dean was a pup, but it’s clean and there’s what appears to be a handmade blanket lovingly arranged on the back of the couch. There are several throw pillows and a big, warm rug takes up the majority of the floor. Through the doorway, he can see an outdated kitchen with a table that has five places set at it. An incredible smell is floating through the house, making his mouth water. Another doorway leads to what appears to be a hallway, down which he assumes are the bedrooms and bathroom.

From said hallway emerges Sam. The teen is glaring sullenly at Dean when his brother notices him and makes his way over. Sam has warmed up a little, and has gotten down to only lecturing Dean for five minutes before he lets any phone conversation they have continue. He remains icily polite to Cas.

“Dean, Cas,” he says shortly.

Before he can say anything else, he’s gently pushed out of the way by John Winchester, who enters the room behind his son. He’s smiling, and while there’s a subtle line of tension in his shoulders, probably from the presence of a strange alpha in his home, his scent remains free of aggression.

“Move, son. Let me see your brother,” he grumbles. When his eyes land on Dean and Cas, he beams. “Dean!”

His mate’s scent goes sweet with joy again and Cas basks in it as he watches Dean lean down to embrace his father. He shakes John’s hand himself, too, and enjoys the lack of alpha posturing this time. They both still squeeze one another’s hand a bit harder than they would in other circumstances, maybe, but there’s no longer potent fury rolling off of John Winchester.

“Prince Novak,” John says formally.

“Please, Mr. Winchester, call me Cas. I must insist when we’re in private.”

“Well!” Mary says brightly, clapping her hands together. “Dinner’s ready. Now, Cas, I’m sorry we’re not quite up to par with what you’re used to. I’m not quite a royalty-level chef, and some of the dishes are mismatched, but I’m told I make a mean lasagna, and Sam made garlic bread!”

“Mom!” Sam hisses, embarrassment coloring his cheeks. Dean snickers.

Cas, ignoring the brothers for the moment, steps forward to take one of Mary’s hands in both of his. “Mary, please rest assured that no one is comparing here. Even if we were, if anything, your home would come out on top every time.” He smiles and hopes that he looks earnest, because he feels earnest. “In the last few minutes, your home has felt more genuine to me than anything that has happened in the castle since I was born there.”

Her eyes are wide, and as soon as his little speech is over the air floods with omega happiness as she
beams up at him. With the hand not clasped in his own, she cups his face gently. “Oh, my,” she says with a smile, “you are just the sweetest thing.”

“All right, all right,” Dean says good naturedly. “Hands off my mate, ma. Let’s eat.”

She purses her lips at him. “It’s a wonder they let you eat at all with manners like that,” she says primly, but her pretty eyes sparkle with mirth and she uses her grip on Cas’ hand to tug him into the kitchen. “Come on, now. Anyone not in the kitchen in the next four minutes isn’t eating at all!”

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During the meal, it slowly dawns on Castiel what he’s taken Dean from.

It has been easy to put the way they came together out of his mind the last few weeks. He’s been busy losing himself in Dean, in bright green eyes and a wicked smile and a nubile, graceful body. He’s been learning Dean’s sense of humor and sense of decorum, the pitfalls of his psyche and the way the skin around his eyes crinkles a bit when he laughs. He’s been letting himself ride the wave of euphoria he felt when Dean agreed to try with him for a real relationship.

But this… Warmth that he’s surrounded in at the Winchester’s dinner table, it’s completely unlike anything Castiel has ever experienced. He loves his family, he does, but the only one of them with whom Cas has a relationship that even comes close to being like the Winchester family’s bond is Gabriel.

The love this family shares is written deeply in every gesture, every laugh or teasing jab. Their scent is drenched in affection for one another, a deep familial bond that is somehow unique with every pair of them. It’s fascinating.

It’s also incredibly upsetting.

Although he’s not quite as good at hiding his scent as Dean is, Cas does a fair job of concealing how conflicted and emotional he’s feeling. He smiles in all the right places, and at the end of the meal, when coffee is passed around along with thick slices of apple pie, he’s able to relax enough to drape an arm around the back of Dean’s chair. When his mate leans into him, he drops his arm to Dean’s shoulders, holding him close. No one bats an eye, just another way in which the Winchesters are different and quite probably better than his own family.

When it’s nearing the time they should start thinking about leaving, Mary’s face drops. “Oh, no! I completely forgot about the security!”

Cas blinks. “The security? They’re right outside both exits.”

“I know, but I forgot to offer them dinner!” Her scent is souring with dismay. “Oh, gods, how rude of me!”

Dean is chuckling. “Mom, mom, it’s fine. They’re, like, highly trained and stuff. They weren’t expecting anything.”

“Oh, are you sure, though?”

“Yeah, ma.”

Another reminder of how much more pure, how much more genuine these people are than his own. About how lovely these people are, these people from whom Castiel purchased a son. Hell, if they asked right now, he’d hand them all the cash he paid them for nothing, Dean or no. Sam notwithstanding, the Winchesters are by far the warmest, most welcoming people Castiel has had the
pleasure of dining with.

It all becomes a bit too much in that moment.

“Speaking of the security team,” he says quickly, standing. “I should have a word with them about leaving soon. Please, Mary, do not concern yourself with them, they are by far not expecting anything from you.”

Her expression is stubborn. “Well, I have an extra pie in the fridge. I’ll just divvy it up and wrap up each slice for them.”

Castiel nods once and turns to flee.

Once he’s outside, he completely ignores the guard at the door and walks out to the street. He stands on the sidewalk, just in front of the car they took to get here, and stares out into the night.

The neighborhood is lovely, quaint, straight from a storybook, and Castiel is suddenly overwhelmed with how much he simultaneously hates it and longs for it. He wants to give Dean a life like this, a simple, unobtrusive life, one where he wouldn’t have to be “prepared” for paparazzi following them to a breakfast date. He also hates it here, he hates this nice little row of houses and fenced in yards because it represents the life he absolutely cannot give Dean. Probably the only life he cannot give Dean.

Less than two minutes later, the omega in question joins him. Dean just stands next to him, silent for a few moments, before he gently says, “Alpha?”

“Your family is lovely, Dean,” Cas rasps, his voice tight with suppressed emotions. “I…” He sighs. “I should have tried to find out what your situation was before we wed. I should have tried harder to make sure you weren’t being taken from circumstances like these.”

“Like these?”

“Good circumstances.”

He senses more than sees Dean roll his eyes before his mate comes to stand in front of him, cups a hand around the back of Cas’ neck, and draw him in until he’s scenting his omega. He feels guilty about it, but he accepts the comfort.

“This isn’t the way I wanted this,” Dean murmurs into his ear. “I was in a shitty situation and I was desperate to get out. It sucks. But I wouldn’t have taken your charity, no matter how good you smelled, and Cas, I don’t… This? This is working. I don’t regret it. So don’t get upset, because I’m not.”

Cas leans back to look up at his handsome husband in the light of the street lamps. “Are you sure?” he asks. “I can try, Dean, I can try to get you back to this.”

Dean smirks, and Cas’ system floods with relief. “Nah,” Dean says with a wave. “You wouldn’t know what to do without me, alpha. Can’t leave you all alone and sad like that.”

“It’s true,” Cas says earnestly. “I would be lost.”

“Sap.”

“It’s nice to finally see that you’re alive, Cassie,” Gabe says with a smirk the next night, hands deep
in his pants pockets as they walk along one of the paths in the courtyard.

Cas smiles out at the beautiful gardens they’re walking through. The fairy lights hung over the path twinkle in the evening darkness, casting a lovely, rosy glow over everything. It very much matches Cas’ mood, and the only way the night would be better if Dean were with him.

He’s aware that he sounds like a lovesick fool, and he feels that way, too. Dean, however, is in their rooms, talking on the phone with his brother. It inspired Castiel to seek his own brother out. They went to an early dinner and are just now ending the evening with a long walk through the gardens, talking about anything and everything.

Castiel realizes that he’s missed his brother. The time he’s spent with Dean is something he wouldn’t trade for anything, but he did miss Gabe. His favorite brothers devil-may-care attitude when it comes to everything but his mate is a good balance for Cas’ own solemn, serious demeanor. They balance one another well, and while Dean balances him just as well in different ways, it’s nice to be here with Gabriel.

“While I don’t regret the time I’ve spent with Dean, I do find myself grateful for the opportunity for us to… ‘Hang out.’”

Gabe tosses his head back and hoots with laughter. “Ooooh, down with the slang now, Cas? The kid’s a good influence on you.”

Cas smiles ruefully. “Though I’d argue that Dean is hardly a child, I believe you’re right. He is a good influence.”

Gabe’s eyes are calculating for a moment as he stares at Cas before they warm up considerably. “You’ve got it bad for the omega, huh?”

“I very much do, yes.”

A guard approaching them, face set in tense lines, interrupts any further gushing on Cas’ part. The brothers come to a stop, matching frowns on their faces.

“Highnesses,” the guard says tersely, though respectfully. “I must immediately insist that you accompany me to the castle.”

Gabe frowns harder. “What’s up your ass, chuckles?”

The guard’s face tightens with a sort of pained reluctance. “Your Highnesses…”

“What is it?” Cas insists, his stomach turning. “Spit it out.”

“The King and Queen. They have fallen.”

Cas feels like he’s been punched in the stomach. His brain neatly blanks out, the words refusing to sink in at all. He looks over at his brother, whose mouth has dropped open as he stares at the palace guard. The palace guard, whose name Castiel cannot recall if he ever even knew it, who just gave them the news of their parents’ death.

Gabe swallows hard. “Fallen… Fallen, like-”

“They have been murdered.”
Chapter End Notes

- "DUN DUN DUNNNNN" - exact quote from my beta reader
- I feel like I say this at the end of every chapter, but I don't know how I feel about this chapter.
Chapter Twelve

Chapter Notes

- Whattttt two updates in one week? It must be everyone's birthday.

“... and her hair is crazy soft, Dean,” Sam insists eagerly, “like you wouldn’t believe. And she wants to be a nurse, how cool is that? She wants to save lives. Like, someone told her that only doctors save lives, and she went off on Brady, the idiot. She was like some sort of avenging angel, Dean, it was amazing—”

Dean grins and hums noncommittally as he listens to Sam ramble on about his new girlfriend. Dean’s been slowly planting and nurturing the seeds in his little brother’s mind for weeks, and last night Sammy finally got up the balls to stutter his way through asking Jess out on a date.

And if part of Dean wishes that he could have asked Cas out on a date the same way, then he just reminds that part of himself that at least he was able to give Sam this opportunity.

Besides, it’s not like this thing with Cas isn’t amazing just the way it is. Sure, it started out weird and bad, but Cas is pretty damn awesome. The alpha has proven himself in a million ways to Dean, but mostly in the way that he didn’t have to prove himself as anything. Cas freely admits that when he thought of what would happen after the Omega Ball, he thought of getting a pretty omega pregnant and then putting them in some sort of countryside home to raise pups by themself, or with the help of the staff.

Instead, Dean barely goes a couple of hours without seeing Cas, which suits him just fine. He likes the reassurance that Cas can’t get enough of him, just as much as he can’t get enough of Cas. He might not actually be in love with his alpha right now, but he knows he’s getting there, and soon. He’s all right with it.

Gods bless it, his mother was insufferable after the dinner they had. She called him the next day and gushed about Cas, about the affection she scented between the two of them and the little touches they shared while sitting at a dinner table together. Dean suffered through half an hour of blushing and stammering in response until Cas came back with food and he unceremoniously hung up on his mother. She made him regret it later, no doubt, but there was no way he was gonna have that conversation with Cas in the room.

“... and she’s so kick-ass, Dean. She’s already presented as an omega, but she doesn’t let it stop her at all. The math teacher said he thought she might be more comfortable in a Home Ec class, and she called her mom to tell her, and a lawyer called the school the same day. How cool is that?”

Dean smiles indulgently. “That’s pretty damn cool, Sammy.”

“... It’s Sam,” his little brother says prissily. “Sam.”

“Look, you’re my kid brother, and I’m always gonna—”

Dean is interrupted by the door to he and Cas’ rooms being flung open. He jerks up to see Bela standing in the doorway. Her manner is mostly calm and collected like it always is, but her eyes are
just a touch frantic as she scans the room. They finally land on him and she huffs out a breath.

“Hang up the phone, Dean,” she says, voice soft but firm. “Cas needs you.”

“Sammy,” Dean says, fear making his heart thump hard in his chest, “I gotta let you go.”

“Is everything okay?” His brother sounds worried.

Dean fakes confidence just as well as he ever has. “Definitely. Just forgot about an appointment I have.”

“Okay.” It’s obvious that Sam doesn’t believe him, but Dean hangs up and tosses his phone on the bed anyway. He’ll deal with Sam later.

“Bela?” he asks, and he hates how young his voice sounds.

The beta’s own voice is kind but again firm. “Dean. I need you to be strong for Castiel right now. The…” She takes a deep breath. “The king and queen have been murdered.”

“What?!”

Whether or not Dean actually liked the king and queen, they seemed kind of… Untouchable. Bartholomew, for all his faults (which were many, although Dean’s smart enough to keep that thought to himself), was a relatively kind man. At the very least, he was always trying to be a better king. Whether or not he missed the mark was a separate issue. And Naomi Novak was a hurricane of a woman. It’s difficult to imagine them as anything other than alive and vital.

Poor Cas, Dean thinks as he scrambles to his feet. He knows his mate wasn’t super close with his parents, but losing your mom and dad is still devastating, he assumes. He can’t imagine how he’d feel if he lost John and Mary Winchester in one fell swoop.

He quickly yanks on a pair of sneakers and hurries out the door behind Bela. He’s been working on being more casual around the palace like Cas and Gabe are, but he still feels naked in just his t-shirt and jeans.

When they get to the foyer, however, all of Dean’s insecurities disappear.

Fuck. Cas looks like he’s seen a ghost. His face is pale and drawn, and his hair is wild on his head, which tells Dean that he’s been running his fingers through it in bewilderment. The scent of sad alpha is burning Dean’s nose, but he makes a beeline for his husband. Kali comes from another door a beat later and goes to Gabe, but Dean only has eyes for Cas.

Cas doesn’t see him until Dean’s almost to him. He wraps his alpha up in his arms, and for the first time, Dean really notices that he’s a little taller than Cas. He knows it, of course, but Cas usually makes him feel so cared for that it’s easy to forget he has a few inches on the man.

Now, though, he holds Cas tight, directing him with one hand on the back of his head to press his face into Dean’s neck. It’s the side with the mating bite, and Cas desperately noses the collar of Dean’s t-shirt down so he can press his face right there, inhaling like a madman and trembling in Dean’s arms.

“Shh,” Dean murmurs against Cas’ ear. “I’ve got you, little alpha. I’ve got you.”

The funeral only takes hours to schedule and announce. Dean tried his damnedest to field calls from
his family and friends until he admitted defeat and let Bel take his phone for a while.

“Just until after the funeral,” she said smoothly as she plucked it from his fingers.

It gave him time to focus on Cas, who’s been going through the motions like he’s doing it all by memory and not because he actually wants to eat or drink or sleep. Dean thinks it’s more about the shock factor than it is about any real, abiding love he had for Naomi and Bartholomew. It’s awful to think that, and it’s another thought he’ll be keeping to himself, but it still rings true in his head.

So Dean takes over. He’s the one who meets Charlie at the door when she brings food. He assures her that Cas is fine in a soft voice when she asks, but doesn’t go into further detail than that. Not because she’s a servant, but because this is something between Cas and Dean themselves. No one else needs to know how the youngest prince feels about his parents’ untimely demise.

Palace security has tightened up almost ridiculously. There are two guards stationed at the bedroom door of each member of the royal family, not that any of them but Michael are doing much of anything. Dean feels for the eldest Novak, he really does. He’ll have to be crowned as King soon, and it’s not a job that Dean envies him or his wife. To their credit, Michael and Amara are putting on brave faces, though their smiles and scents are strained with distress at the several public appearances they make before the funeral.

The morning of the funeral dawns cold and clear, a brisk autumn breeze and sharp almost-winter sunlight making the day seem too peaceful for what it’s going to be used for. Or maybe that’s exactly the way the day should be for a funeral, fuck if Dean knows.

Dean quietly accepts their funeral clothes from Bela with a murmured thanks. She nods, dressed in a black suit with a pencil skirt herself, and clicks down the hallway in her ever-present high-heeled boots. Dean turns back and puts the garment bags on the table before going into the bedroom to wake Cas up.

He crawls into bed with his alpha, who he knows is wide awake and staring at the ceiling. Dean rests back on the bed and holds an arm out. He’s relieved when Cas presses close almost instantly, resting his head on Dean’s chest.

Dean presses a kiss to the mop of sweaty, kind of gross hair that’s tickling his nose. “Gotta get up, little alpha,” he murmurs.

“It all seems so… Unnecessary,” Cas whispers. “The whole spectacle. Why can’t we grieve in peace?”

“That’s the price of all this,” Dean replies softly with a wave of his free arm around the room, wishing he had a different answer for his mate.

“I didn’t ask for any of it.” The petulance in Cas’ voice almost makes Dean smile.

“I know you didn’t. But this is what we’ve got. So come on, let’s go.”

He drags a grumbling Cas out of bed and into the shower. He washes his alpha with the same reverence that Cas showed him after his heat. Cas just lets him, leaning back against the tiled shower wall and watching Dean’s movements with gratitude and some emotion almost too big for Dean to put a name to. He presses a gentle kiss to the cut of Cas’ hipbone and ushers him out of the shower.
Once they’ve toweled off, they dress in sharp black suits, complete with black dress shirts and black ties. Delicate, tasteful embroidery at the lapel of their jackets marks Dean as omega with gold and Cas as alpha with red. *Fucking patriarchy,* Dean thinks, but it’s without heat this time. He has too much on his mind today to worry about antiquated gender roles right now. He does notice the way Cas frowns vaguely down at the red on his suit, but Dean’s busy trying to tame his mate’s hair and doesn’t think too terribly hard on it.

Once he gives up and just fluffs Cas’ hair back to its normal chaos, he takes a deep breath and rests his hands on the sides of Cas’ neck, tilting his head up to look into his eyes. “Ready, alpha?”

“Not remotely,” Cas says. “Let’s go.”

Dean stands corrected. *This* is more human beings than he’s ever seen in his life.

The guest list for their wedding was either more exclusive than he realized at the time, or people are morbid fucks who are more attracted to death than a happy love story (not that they knew the story wasn’t true, but still). Michael insists that the people want to pay their respects, but Lucifer says people like seeing royalty fall.

“It makes them feel better about their pathetic, meaningless lives,” he sneered as they all stood in line to start the procession.

Dean doesn’t like Lucifer, but he keeps his damn mouth shut about it. Today, out of all the days, isn’t the one to raise a fuss. He stays quiet and stands still next to Cas as the Archbishop drones on and on about Naomi and Bartholomew and somehow manages to make an assassination sound boring.

The only snub he gives to tradition or convention is that he holds Cas’ hand throughout the service. Cas’ grip is strong, just this side of too hard, but Dean holds on, keeping his eyes forward and his grip just as tight.

As soon as they get back to their rooms, Cas is on him. There’s a low, possessive growl in his chest and his hands are harsh where he holds Dean’s hips against the wall. His teeth scrape hard against the sensitive skin of Dean’s neck, making him gasp.

When Cas begins tearing Dean’s clothes off, once again tossing beautiful formalwear on the ground, Dean lets himself become pliant in his alpha’s arms. He’s into it, and the longer Cas is pressed hard against him the wetter he’s getting, but Cas needs this.

Normally, Dean’s a bit of a brat in the bedroom. He’s mouthy, figuratively and literally. He pushes back against Cas, makes his mate work for his submission.

Tonight, Cas doesn’t need a fight, he needs a soft place to land. Dean can do that, *be* that for him.

So when Cas uses his hold on Dean’s hips to turn them and start walking Dean backward toward the bed, the omega lets him. Cas is kissing him fiercely and Dean responds in kind. He whimpers when Cas nips at his bottom lip, letting his mouth fall open.

Once the backs of his knees hit the bed, Dean waits until Cs pushes insistently at his shoulders to fall backward. By this time he’s already down to just his pants, having already toed his shoes and socks off. His shirt and jacket are gods know where and his pants have been undone, barely hanging on his hips.
Cas bends down to bite harshly on one of Dean’s nipples without preamble, making him cry out and arch into the pain. Cas rumbles in approval and laps at the stinging flesh even as he tugs Dean’s pants and underwear off at the same time, leaving Dean bare on his back.

Cas stands back up and just stares. Dean lets him, unashamed of how his hard cock and wet thighs make it obvious how much he wants his husband. Cas’ eyes are dark as they rake over every inch of Dean. There’s an obvious tent in his pants. His hands are twitching at his sides, but he makes no move to touch anymore.

Dean lets it go on for a few long, silent moments before he realizes that he’s going to have to take the initiative. Cas may need to be in control tonight, but Dean is going to need to guide him there. His poor mate is still reeling, still lost. It’s Dean’s job to bring him back.

He sits up, letting his scent go wild with arousal and adoration. He reaches up and slowly pops the button of Cas’ slacks and draws the zipper down. Cas’ eyes never leave his as Dean gently pulls the slacks, along with the silk boxers underneath, down to mid-thigh.

Cas’ cock is thick and red, the head shiny with precome. The very beginnings of a knot are beginning to swell at the base. Dean wants to worship Cas with his mouth and hands, wants to choke on this thick cock, kind of wants Cas to knot his mouth, locking him there, making him swallow every drop.

Tonight is not for that, though.

There is not, Dean has discovered in the last few weeks, a seductive way to flip over onto his belly from his ass. It’s always gonna be a little awkward. It’s just a fact of his life.

So he at least tries to do it gracefully when he turns over onto his hands and knees. He’s not sure that he succeeds, but at least he doesn’t fall on his ass, so he counts it as a win. Cas, at least, groans a little at the sight. Especially when, without a word, Dean arches his back and cants his hips, showing off his slick, swollen hole.

There’s a breathless, still beat, Cas makes a choked-off noise in the back of his throat, and then he’s covering Dean. His breath is hot on the back of Dean’s neck as his clothed body presses to Dean’s bare flesh. His cock nestles between the cheeks of Dean’s ass like it belongs there, which, yeah.

There’s something deliciously filthy about the fact that Cas is still dressed while Dean is completely naked. It’s a vulnerable feeling while making Dean feel invincible at the same time. He’s struck again by the feeling of being powerful. Cas may be the alpha, he may be the one currently mounting, but Dean’s the one who got him there.

Cas growls into his shoulder and trails a hand down until he’s circling a finger around Dean’s hole. They moan simultaneously as Dean presses back.

“Please,” he pants. “Alpha, please.”

Instead of responding verbally, Cas sinks his finger in all the way, making Dean gasp. He’s wet enough that there’s no pain, and it’s only a moment or two before he’s rocking back onto Cs’ hand, whimpering for another finger.

Cas acquiesces. Soon enough, he’s three fingers deep and Dean is babbling nonsense, desperate to feel Cas filling him up.

His alpha takes his sweet time, but he finally pulls his fingers away and lines his cock up against Dean’s entrance. Now that they’re here, Cas seems unwilling to draw it out much longer. He sinks in
slowly, making Dean feel ver bit of the stretch. The omega moans long and loud when Cas bottoms out, his hips pressed to Dean’s ass.

Cas, who leaned back to presumably watch himself disappear into Dean, covers Dean again until his mouth is pressed to his ear.

“Mine,” he growls.

Dean has no idea where that came from, but he is so beyond caring right now. “Yours,” he agrees breathlessly. “Yours, alpha.”

Another growl in his ear makes Dean shiver, even as Cas withdraws suddenly and has him gasping. When his mate slams back in, Dean loses any train of thought he’s ever had.

Cas sets a punishing pace. The wet sound of skin slapping mixes with Dean’s own cries and Cas’ grunts of effort. Dean’s world narrows until only the slick drag of Cas’ cock inside him exists at all.

His orgasm surprises him, as wrapped up as he is in the sensations overflowing within him. When his pleasure peaks, he’s only vaguely aware of his own come hitting the bedspread because Cas’ knot expands at the same time, locking them together. It sends Dean into a second, immediate, painful orgasm. He screams through it, his arms giving out and his face smashing into the pillow.

He feels the hot splash of Cas’ come inside him and it satisfies his inner omega immeasurably. He deliberately clenches around the knot in his ass, drawing a growl and another orgasm from his mate.

Cas collapses on top of him. Dean heaves them to the side to avoid being crushed, then cuddles back into Cas. His alpha’s arms wrap around him tight and he presses his face into Dean’s shoulder as they come down.

When the lust, arousal, and satisfaction clear from the air, the sharp scent of alpha sadness has lost some of its urgency, replaced with a faint undertone of a desperate sort of comfort.

Dean runs his fingers gently over Cas’ knuckles where his hand rests on Dean’s belly. “I don’t know if I’ve said it yet, Cas, but I’m sorry.”

The arms around him tightly. “Thank you,” Cas whispers. After a comfortable beat of silence, “For everything, these last few days. I would have been lost without you.”

Dean’s heart beats a nervous rhythm in his chest, but he smiles and wraps his fingers around Cas’ wrist to give it a squeeze. “S’okay.”

They both lie awake until Cas’ knot goes down. They clean up, Cas undresses, and they climb back into bed together, all without saying another word.

The only other words Dean even has are too much, too big, too soon. So he lets Cas cling to him, gently runs his fingers through his mate’s hair, and doesn’t acknowledge the growing set spot on his shoulder beyond kissing Cas’ temple and holding him tighter as he trembles.
Chapter Thirteen

“Holy shit. Holy shit, we did it.”

“I don’t think the whole castle heard you. Say it a little louder, why don’t you?”

“Oh. Uh. Sorry.”

“...”

“Um. Who’s the next target?”

“The youngest, I think.”

“Really?”

“His security will be the lightest.”

“...”

“Problem? You know what we said when we started this.”

“You’re right, you’re right. No problem. Castiel it is, then.”
Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Notes

- I can't tell y'all how delighted I was by your reaction to Ch. 13. I died, honestly. Thank you all so much.
- TRIGGER WARNING in the end notes. Please scroll down to read it or proceed with caution.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Somehow, Cas knows when he wakes up the next morning that it’s already almost noon. The curtains are drawn so no sun lights the room, but he knows they’ve been allowed to sleep in. He wonders vaguely as he stretches if his siblings have done the same.

He opens his eyes blearily, searching in the darkness as they land on his mate’s face, only a few inches from his own. Dean, so handsome all the time, currently has his face smashed into the pillow with his mouth open, and if Cas isn’t mistaken, he’s drooling just a bit.

*I must stop thinking everything he does is adorable,* he thinks without conviction.

Today, as soon as they get out of bed, is going to be hard. He’ll have to face his own grief, as well as his siblings and their grief. The four Novak sons will have to find a way to navigate the world and their own royalty without their parents at the head. A long, difficult road lies before them.

For now, however, Cas pulls his lovely (drool notwithstanding) mate back into his arms, buries his face in Dean’s hair, and drifts back into sleep.

It’s not that Naomi and Bartholomew were spectacular parents, Cas reflects a few days later, it’s just that they’ve always been around. His life, the palace, everything is changed. It will take some getting used to.

They’re in the library, reading quietly in late afternoon sunlight that drapes itself over the room. Cas is sitting on one of the long leather sofas, a book propped in one hand while the other is running idle fingers through Dean’s hair as Dean reads another book. His head rests on Cas’ thigh.

Dean hasn’t left his side since they found one another in the foyer after they got the news. Even on days like this, when Cas can bring himself to do little more than read quietly in the library, his husband stays close. Dean doesn’t complain, or try to force Castiel to talk or move, he just stays.

*I really would be lost without him.*

He redirects his thoughts back to his parents. Cas has few one-on-one memories with his father, and it pains him to admit that none of them stand out as particularly touching or emotional. He doesn’t doubt that his father loved him, albeit distantly. Bartholomew’s time was mostly split between running the kingdom and grooming Michael for the throne. There just wasn’t time for another son, much less a fourth son who was hard to relate to, anyway. They were less than close.

Upon reflection, Cas doesn’t know that Naomi Novak was close with anyone. While Castiel has
more genuine memories with his mother than with his father, things like scraped knees and gentle forehead kisses, she was too deeply enthralled with royalty to be more involved in her childrens’ lives. Especially as they got older and required less constant care from her.

Because of the distant relationship he had with them, Cas thinks he’s recovering from shock just as much as he’s working through grief. He’s just never lived without his parents’ steady but remote presence.

“Hey.”

Dean’s soft voice brings Cas from his ruminations back to the library. He looks down to see Dean gazing up at him, concern shining in his green eyes. “Hmm?”

“Thinking awfully hard up there.”

Cas hums in agreement. “I was thinking of my parents.”

“Thinking what?”

“That I wasn’t particularly close with them. So I’m not sure why I’m so… Affected by their passing.”

Dean frowns. “Cas, come on. They were your parents. Of course you’re sad.”

Cas shakes his head. “That doesn’t mean the same thing to me as it does to you, Dean. As you’re well aware, my family is much less close than yours is.”

“I don’t buy it.” Dean sits up and turns so they’re facing one another “Cas. It doesn’t matter. No matter how regal and royal and distant they were, they were your mom and dad. I know that you guys weren’t tight, but they were your parents, and they were murdered.”

Cas smiles a little and lifts one of Dean’s hands to press a kiss to the omega’s knuckles, He gives himself a moment to savor the blush that colors Dean’s cheeks before he speaks.

“Dean, I adore that you’re so passionate about family, and I hope you don’t find it strange that I sincerely hope you continue to feel that way when we begin our own.” Bashful omega pleasure and affection flood the air around them and Cas’ smile widens. “But to us, to the Novaks, that’s not the case. We’re bound by tradition rather than emotion. My gods, if I’d thought my mother would have let me, I would have gone off on my own years ago.”

Dean smiles back. “Yeah? Wanted to go sow some wild oats, alpha?”

Cas laughs. “I wanted to study abroad. But the instability in the kingdom put Naomi on high alert. She barely allowed us to leave the palace, much less the country.”

“Well, it’s a lot less likely now.” Dean leans forward a little. “Your mom wasn’t the only omega who wanted you safe, Cas.”

Cas kisses Dean gently. “Going to insist on keeping me at home, sweetling?”

“You know it.”

“There’s not much to do around here, you know. We might get bored.”

“I’m sure we can think of something,” Dean says with a wicked grin. It softens after a moment. “I’m sorry you weren’t tight with your folks, Cas, and I’m sorry they died, too.”
Cas sighs and lets the playful moment drift away. He presses a kiss to his mate’s forehead. “Thank you. At this point, I’m more worried about the fact that they were poisoned.”

Dean frowns. “Yeah. That’s kinda scary.”

Cas cups Dean’s face trying to look reassuring. “Dean, please don’t worry. Everything that comes into the palace is being tested. Nothing will happen to us.”

“You’re fourth in line, nerd. I’m really not that concerned,” Dean says dryly.

Castiel isn’t all that concerned, either. It’s shocking, yes, that his parents were murdered, but it’s an anomaly. For the gods’ sake, they live in a palace, and the security has at least doubled. He and Dean are only ever truly alone when they go to bed, and even then there are guards just outside the doors.

There will always be threats made to royalty, there will always be rumors of unrest and rebellion. Royalty and the idea of ruling bodies is something people love to despise. No matter how stable the kingdom, someone will always be plotting to undermine it.

But an actual assassination is so rare as to be almost completely nonexistent, especially a successful one. Gods, two successful assassinations, if the deaths of Bartholomew and Naomi are counted as one, would be completely unthinkable.

When Castiel wakes up that night, it takes him a moment to understand why he’s awake at all. Feeling drained after their conversation in the library, he and Dean took a laptop and a bag of cheese puffs to the omega suite and watched movies until they passed out. A gross habit, he knows, but cuddling with Dean and eating junk food was deliciously delinquent enough to soothe him. The sheets smell like cheese dust, of course, but they also smell like happy mates.

A scuffling sound, barely audible, has Cas stiffening in alarm. The guards have strict orders to stay out of the room unless the palace is actively on fire. Since he doesn’t smell smoke and no other sound has been made, he doubts it’s the guards.

Cautiously, slowly, he lifts his head and scents the air as quietly as possible. There, a thread of unfamiliar beta nervousness.

An intruder, a voice in his head whispers.

An assassin.

Adrenaline dumps into his system unceremoniously. The spike of anxiety in his scent must be what wakes Dean up, green eyes snapping open as soon as Cas turns to look at him. Cas places a finger to his lips and Dean’s eyes widen before he nods in understanding.

Cas disentangles them from the bed as quickly and quietly as possible, and they both stand. Every instinct in Cas is screaming at him to run into the other room and confront the invader, but his brain wins out over his inner alpha.

Alpha though he may be, Cas is a scholar at best. At worst, he’s a bit of a spoiled, aimless prince. He’s best in a field of wits, where he can use logic and reason to win a battle. He’s been taught rudimentary self-defense, but he’s fourth in line. Add to that the fact that he’s never more than twenty yards from an armed palace guard, fighting has never been at the forefront of his mind.
The guards. There are guards posted outside the door. If he can call out to them in time, they’ll burst into the room and dispose of the would-be murderer.

It’s as this thought flashes across his mind that Dean strides determinedly toward the main room and opens the door.

Unlike Castiel, Dean apparently has no compunctions about facing an attacker head-on. As he steps forward to follow (and hopefully restrain) his mate, half-remembered stories of street brawls and playful tussles coalesce in his mind.

Unlike Castiel, Dean knows how to fight.

Cas is only a few steps behind Dean, but every moment is being stretched into a surreal eternity. By the time he’s at the doorway, the scents of aggression and rage are clouding the air.

The assassin has frozen in the middle of the room, facing Dean. There’s a breathless pause, during which Cas tries to absorb as many details as he can. The man is a beta, dressed in all black with a scrap of fabric covering his head and the lower half of his face, leaving his eyes visible. He’s shorter than both of them, but stockier, too. A glint of silver tells Cas that he has a knife in his hand. Cas’ stomach clenches in panic and he again opens his mouth to call out a warning.

All hell breaks loose.

Dean charges forward, silent but for a wordless growl of anger. The intruder flinches back, but Dean hits him like a freight train and sends them both careening across the room. As they grapple, they make almost no noise, but the growl must have been loud enough for the guards outside to hear. Dimly, Cas realizes they’re pounding on the door, trying to get in.

We didn’t lock the door, he thinks hysterically. Since his parents died, none of them do. They rely on the guards to watch over them, and they must be able to get in quickly should they be needed.

Castiel doesn’t have time to worry about the guards, much less let them in. His eyes are glued to Dean as he fights the assassin. They seem evenly matched, and Dean is holding his own, but Cas is watching intently for the chance to get between his mate and the threat. His inner alpha is roaring in his chest, and for once, Cas is in total agreement.

Dean grabs for the arm holding the knife while still trying to restrain the assassin’s other hand. He reaches just a bit too far and it pulls him off-balance. The beta takes the opportunity to wrench his arm out of Dean’s grasp. At the same time, he swings the knife towards Dean.

Dean sees it in time, but just barely. He manages to throw himself out of the way, but time seems to slow down as Cas watches the knife sink and pull a tear into the flesh on Dean’s forearm. The room is abruptly awash in the coppery scent of blood. Dean yelps in pain as he hits the ground, cradling his bleeding arm to his chest and staring up at the assassin with wide eyes.

Another beat of crystallized stillness passes, and then Castiel sees red.

He’s fairly certain he’s never moved as fast in his life as he does when he tackles the assassin. He flies across the room and hits the other man in the midsection. They crash to the floor.

For all that Cas is a scholar, and for all that he generally prefers his adventures be of a literary nature, he’s also an alpha. One of the benefits of his subgender, aside from the obvious social advantages, is speed and strength. No matter how experienced or trained someone might be, at some point, alpha strength always wins out.
Especially if said alpha’s mate has been threatened and hurt.

The intruder tries to buck him off or gain the upper hand by rolling them over, but Castiel is a man possessed. His vision is blurry as his eyes flood with alpha red. He tries to pull the knife away, but the man eludes him. He snarls and tries again while keeping one hand at the base of the assassin’s throat.

The man beneath him twists and hisses, “You’re gonna die, Novak. Your mate, too. We’ll-”

At that moment, a surge of liquid, violent pain sears into Cas’ side, and Dean cries out his name. The pain, his mate’s distress, and the uttered threat all combine to completely override any rational thought Cas had at his disposal.

He needs this man to stop.

Dead is stop.

Without ceremony or mercy, Castiel crushes the assassin’s throat in his hand until blood bubbles from the man’s lips and he goes still.

Chapter End Notes

**TW:** Graphic violence depicted. An assassin breaks in at the end of the chapter, harms Dean, and then Castiel kills him.
Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Notes

- Sorry about the delay, guys. The holidays, you know. This is kinda short, but it's been a long time and I wanted to get it up, so it only got the briefest of editing. If you see any mistakes I missed, feel free to point them out. :)

Dean doesn’t remember if he’s ever been quite this angry in his life.

“You fucking assholes.”

He’s standing in the hallway just outside their rooms with Cas right behind him, quiet while Dean fumes. In front of them, the hall is packed with people, every Novak and their mates, throngs of staff, guards, and a few doctors. Dean scans the crowd for the flash of red hair that would signal Charlie’s presence because gods know he needs some sort of ally in this shitstorm. He’s not surprised when he doesn’t see her, though, because the crush of people is thick and most of them are higher-ups.

That’s okay, though. The other omega’s support would be nice, sure, but Dean’s angry enough that he doesn’t really need it.

“You fucking assholes,” he snarls again, because it fucking bears repeating. He’s still wearing the flannel pajama pants and ratty t-shirt he wore to bed, same as Cas. There’s blood on both of them.

“You are not,” he continues, “about to lecture me right now. Not when he,” he jabs a thumb behind him at Cas, “just had to do your jobs for you.”

The captain frowns, his scent turning sharp with anger. “Your Highness, I’m-”

Dean’s temper, boiling since he had to wad up a t-shirt to press into his alpha’s bleeding side, finally snaps.

“The King and Queen just died!” Dean roars, his vision going hazy with either anger or omega gold. “Where the fuck were you?”

The rest of the hall has fallen silent, and the captain’s face is pale. “I-”

“No!” Dean shouts. “Fuck you! The King and Queen were just murdered, you useless fuck! Where the fuck were you?!?”

“Your High-”

“Shut. Up,” Dean snarls. “No more talking from you. And you,” he snaps, pointing at a palace doctor who’s clearly trying to sneak past to get to Cas. “You’re not laying a finger on him.”
The doctor is usually a rather meek omega, and any other time Dean would be delighted by the way the man straightens his spine and juts his chin out.

“The prince needs medical attention.”

Right now, though, it’s really just annoying.

Dean takes a step back and flings an arm out in front of Cas, letting a little snarl curl his upper lip. “I don’t trust a godsdamn one of you. If I can’t rely on the guards to keep their fucking eyes open, what makes you think I’d trust you to treat my husband?”

The doctor opens his mouth to protest, but is interrupted by Bela pushing her way through the throng. Bless her lovely beta heart, she’s holding a hefty first aid kit in her hands. There’s stress in the way she carries herself, tightness at the corners of her eyes and mouth, but she also has steel in her eyes.

“Here, Dean,” she murmurs. “Everything you should need is in there.”

“Thanks, Bela,” he says softly. “I owe you one.”

She smiles. “You owe me a million, Your Highness.”

Gabe steps forward before another word can be spoken. His eyes are flicking between Dean, Bela, and Cas with an unreadable emotion in their hazel depths, but his voice is even and his scent is calm. “Take Cassie back to your rooms and patch him up, Deano,” he says softly. “We’ll take care of the rest.” He flaps his hands. “Go.”

Dean gives Gabe a nod of thanks and everyone else a haughty glare of disdain before he turns to look at his alpha.

Cas looks like shit.

It’s probably been less than fifteen minutes since he killed the assassin who invaded their bedroom, but the vengeful, powerful creature who did that is long gone. Cas is pale, and there are dark circles under his eyes. There’s blood on his t-shirt, as well as smeared on his arms and up on his neck. Luckily, the knife wasn’t huge, and the bastard didn’t get the chance to twist it or pull before he died, so it’s just a deep puncture in Cas’ side. No stitches are required, just disinfectant and a bandage. Cas is still holding the wadded up shirt to his sluggishly bleeding side over the shirt he’s wearing.

Dean notices with a pang of pride that his alpha is still standing tall, though. He’s obviously wiped out, but his spine is straight and his eyes are clear, even fond as he meets Dean’s gaze.

“Come on, Cas,” Dean murmurs. “Let’s get you cleaned up.”

Cas nods and turns to walk back into the bedroom, and Dean follows, closing the door and locking it behind them with a snick. The air in here is still tinged with aggression and fury, but the staff who removed the body and (very quickly) cleaned also sprayed a scent neutralizer, so it mostly smells like nothing.

_Like nothing even happened_, Dean thinks.

He follows Cas into the bathroom. He sets the first aid kit on the counter as Cas leans against it. He can feel Cas’ eyes on him, so he turns and meets his husband’s calm blue gaze. The lights are soft and warm, making Cas look less pale, though still tired.
“Heya, alpha,” he murmurs.

“Hello, Dean.”

Dean’s heart clenches with emotions too big and complicated to untangle right now. He shoves all of them down and moves to stand in front of Cas. He fingers the hem of Cas’ t-shirt. “Gonna have to get this off.”

Cas nods and sets aside the shirt they used to stem the blood flow. The wound is still bleeding, but it’s slower now. It still makes Dean wince.

He helps pull Cas’ shirt off, taking care to be extra gentle when he has to tug the fabric away from the edges of Cas’ injury. His alpha doesn’t give so much as a grunt of pain, but Dean’s inner omega is whimpering at the idea that he’s hurting Cas.

He tries to be clinical and detached when he goes down to his knees to apply a disinfectant and bandage to Cas’ side, but Dean suspects he fails miserably. Once he gets it clean and covered, he closes his eyes and presses a kiss to the skin just next to the white square of gauze.

“Not quite as pretty as if the doc did it,” he says gruffly, “but at least I know I’m not trying to kill anyone.”

Cas is smiling when Dean looks up at him. “You’ve done well,” he rumbles. “Now, come on. Your turn.”

Dean lets Cas pull him to his feet, then rearrange them so he’s leaning against the bathroom counter where Cas was moments before. Cas takes Dean’s arm in hand and starts to untie the shirt Dean tied around it in a rush. The fabric is stiff with dried blood, but Cas is patient and gets the damn thing off in a few minutes.

Dean’s cut is a little rougher looking than Cas’ is. The gash is only a few inches long, but it’s kind of deep, and the edges of his skin are ragged where they were torn open. He’s lucky the bastard didn’t hit a vein and make the wound fatal instead of just messy and ugly. Pain radiates up his arm as the cut is exposed to air, making Dean whimper. The air goes sharp with omega distress, and Dean curses his inability to keep himself together. *Cas didn’t even flinch, and here you are, acting like some sort of stereotype,* he thinks viciously at himself.

“Shh,” Cas coos as he gently wipes at Dean’s arm with disinfectant. “There’s no shame in feeling pain when one has been wounded, Dean,” he says as he cleans the cut. Dean stays silent.

“This could use a few stitches,” the alpha murmurs after a quiet moment.

“Like hell am I going back out there to find a doctor,” Dean says heatedly.

Cas just nods and applies a few butterfly bandages, pulling the skin together as best he can. He then slathers antibacterial ointment onto the wound and begins to wrap gauze around Dean’s arm.

As he does so, his gentle touch reminds Dean of their wedding night, how sweet and patient his alpha was in the face of Dean’s terror. With a shock, he realizes that they only got married a few months ago. Honestly, Dean’s gone longer between oil changes, but right now he can’t imagine his life without his mate, his husband. The words *true mates* float through his mind vaguely, but it’s been scientifically proven that the concept is bullshit. In his head, he knows they’re just incredibly compatible, but his heart thinks they were meant to be together.

We almost died tonight, he thinks as Cas tapes the gauze to itself to secure the bandage. I almost
died. Fuck, Cas almost died.

They should talk, they really should. No matter that Cas is an alpha and he was defending his home and mate, Cas killed someone tonight. That kind of thing fucks with a person. They need to talk it out, and then Cas may need to talk to someone else, a therapist or some shit. He needs to know that he did the right thing, that no one blames him for it, that Dean doesn’t blame him for it.

When their eyes meet, however, all Dean can think of is that he almost lost that blue gaze forever. As if by silent agreement, their lips crash together. They kiss fiercely, desperately. Dean’s hands are tangled in Cas’ hair suddenly, and Cas’ fingers grip hard at Dean’s waist. A keening noise rends the air and Dean doesn’t know who it’s from, but it doesn’t matter. They’re both feeling it.

The air is thick with mixed arousal, and Dean’s vision is hazy as his eyes flood with omega gold for the second time tonight. He sees a flash of red in Cas’ eyes, too, when the alpha pulls back to nuzzle and nip at Dean’s neck.

“Alpha,” he gasps, hands moving down to tug at the hem of Cas’ pants. “Need you.”

Cas just growls in agreement and starts to work on Dean’s own pants. Dean grips the counter and lifts his ass off of it so Cas can pull his pants down. Cas steps back to tug them just enough to pull them off one leg, then steps back in close. They dangle off of his other leg, but Dean couldn’t give less of a fuck.

They don’t bother taking any more clothes off. Cas reaches down to circle Dean’s hole with a finger before sinking it into him. Dean gasps and clenches down onto it. The position has him at a disadvantage, so he’s at Cas’ mercy as his mate quickly stretches him until he can take two fingers comfortably.

“It’s good, I’m good, c’mon, c’mon,” Dean pants, tugging Cas’ pants down enough to free his cock, already wet at the tip.

“Not enough,” Cas says roughly, a possessive growl clear in every syllable.

“Cas, alpha, please. Need you so bad, fill me up, please, Cas, I-”

Dean’s babbling must snap whatever control Cas had. Cas snarls again, lines himself up, and thrusts into Dean without further protest. Dean howls, explosive feelings of burning stretch and incredible fullness blowing his sanity to bits. Still, he clings to Cas, wrapping his legs around the alpha’s slim waist to keep him close. His pants still hang from one of his ankles, and Cas is still fully fucking dressed, but it’s so good.

Cas fucks him brutally and gives him no room to maneuver or move. It’s just fine with Dean. He soaks in the closeness, especially when Cas wraps one arm around him and hauls him even closer until they’re pressed together, chest to chest. The drag of his cock within Dean, as well as the friction to his own erection from Cas’ flat stomach, has him on edge in moments.

There’s something missing, though. When they fuck like this, fast and dirty, Dean has almost always come by now, but something is off. Dean is desperate for it, the connection to them, to their bond, to his mate-

Mate!

Suddenly, the fact that Cas is still wearing a shirt is the worst fucking offense. Dean reaches up to yank the collar to one side hard enough to rip the fabric and choke Cas just a little. It doesn’t slow the
alpha down at all, but his rhythm does stutter a bit when Dean sinks his teeth into the mating bite on Cas’ shoulder. Dean moans at the feeling of connection, then reaches and pulls his own shirt collar out of the way enough that Cas gets the idea and bites the mark there hard.

Now, clinging together with hands and limbs and teeth, holding onto one another as many ways as they can, they both come when Cas’ knot locks them together. Dean cries out, long and loud, into Cas’ shoulder. Cas hasn’t stopped growling the whole time, the vibrations making Dean dizzy even as they send elation sparkling through his veins.

It takes a long time, but eventually the fact that he’s bare-assed on a cold bathroom counter sinks in. He shivers, and even though the way it makes him clench down has Cas moaning, the alpha still wraps his other arm around Dean and presses him close, warming him.

There are tears in Dean’s eyes all of the sudden, and he releases Cas’ shoulder (Which he didn’t realize he was still clamped onto) to press his face into his mate’s neck. He’s cold and sticky and his arm hurts like a bitch.

“Thought I lost you for a second back there, alpha,” he says, voice wobbly.

Cas runs his fingers through Dean’s hair, cooing softly as Dean, much to his humiliation, cries.

“Shh, sweetling, I’m right here. Shh, now, you’re safe, I’m safe, no one will hurt us, no one will separate us, shh.”

Later, Dean won’t remember Cas’ knot deflating, or them cleaning up or getting redressed. He never remembers getting into bed or flicking the light off. He just remembers the way Cas’ arms feel around him, the way Cas calls him “sweetling” and “omega” and “mate,” and drifting off to sleep, ignoring the sounds of the guards at the door.
Chapter Sixteen

Castiel’s first thought upon waking is, *I probably should have lost more sleep last night.*

It’s said that losing sleep is a sign of remorse, and he thinks he should probably feel at least *some* remorse for taking a man’s life. For the gods’ sake, he killed the man with his own bare hands! He should feel *something,* right? Guilty, maybe?

When he opens his eyes to find Dean nestled in his arms, however, with his head tucked beneath Cas’ chin, he cannot find it in himself to feel anything of the sort.

Oh, sure, maybe it’s because the man was sent to kill him. Royals have been dealing with assassins since the dawn of royalty itself. Or because Castiel’s an alpha, perhaps. There may be some merit to the stereotypes of alphas being mindless brutes. But Castiel thinks there’s a much simpler reason that he doesn’t feel bad about killing a man with his bare hands.

Dean was in danger, and that is simply not to be tolerated. While Castiel draws breath, his mate will be protected at all costs, and he will never feel guilty about it.

“Stinking up the place, Cas,” Dean grumbles into his neck.

Knocked out of his thoughts, Castiel realizes that the room reeks of fierce alpha protectiveness. He chuckles. “My apologies.”

Dean burrows closer. “Sleep. No more talking.”

“Of course, Dean.”

Oh, yes. Castiel will defend this no matter the circumstance.

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*We should have stayed in bed,* Castiel thinks grimly at the breakfast table a few hours later.

Dean leans over to murmur in his ear. “We should have stayed in bed.”

Breakfast is livelier than it has been since the King and Queen died. Instead of his solemn siblings eating in silence next to their mates, they’re joined by several guards and advisors. The opulent room is incredibly loud, and almost all of the seats at the long dining table are taken. Dean and Cas are the only ones not in formalwear, both of them still in t-shirts and pajama pants. It was something Cas felt nervous about for half a second upon entering the room, before Dean snorted, rolled his eyes, and strode into the room proudly, leaving Cas to follow him like the love-sick pup he feels like.

Worst of all, Castiel is only on his second cup of coffee. He thinks longingly of his bed.

“I propose a total lockdown,” the captain of the guard, the man Dean defied just last night, says. “No one in or out of the palace.”

Michael nods. “I can see the reason in that.”

“Seriously?” Dean asks, incredulous.

The only good thing about this morning is that Dean has left his habit of biting his tongue and being painfully polite by the wayside somewhere. He’s been more outspoken since they sat down than he ever has, much to the shock of the oldest Novak princes (with the exception of Gabriel, who’s quite
“They got in to attack the King and Queen. They got in last night to attack us. What makes you think they can’t get in again?” Dean shakes his head. “If you tighten security, all you’re going to do is force them to get smarter.”

A snort from the other side of the table brings all eyes to Lucifer. “Ah, yes. Let’s listen to the kept omega, surely a security expert.”

“That’s funny,” Dean sneers, “because I didn’t see you defending a goddamn thing last night, you useless.”

Lucifer surges to his feet. “Why, you little-”

Castiel rises, too, his chair flying backward behind him. His temper, already frayed by the lack of silence and caffeine, snaps at him.

“Lucifer,” he snarls. “You’re going to want to choose your next words very carefully, brother. I’ve already killed a man for my mate, and I don’t want to say that I’ve been looking for a reason to strangle you, but-”

He’s interrupted by Lilith’s outraged gasp and Gabriel’s delighted howl of laughter.

“Oh, man,” Gabe wheezes, impervious to the venomous glare Lucifer is sending his way. “It’s about time someone put you in your place, Luci.”

“Enough,” Michael booms. Silence follows, and the eldest Novak glares down the table. “I expect each of you to behave as befitting your station as royals.” Castiel bristles at the way his brother’s eyes linger on Dean. “All of you.”

Only Dean’s gentle had on his arm keeps Castiel from growling. His chair has been righted, so he sinks back into it as Michael goes on.

“We have a responsibility to our country to act with clear heads. We all know the commoners tend to gossip, and word of this attempt is already spreading like wildfire, I’m sure. We must present a strong image, something our simple subjects can believe in…”

Castiel gratefully zones out as his brother drones on and on. He really didn’t realize how… Awful his older brothers are. Not only openly disrespecting those they rule, but insulting their intelligence so blatantly. And being so dismissive of Dean, regardless of the fact that the concerns he raised were quite valid.

Have Michael and Lucifer always been like this? So pompous and prejudiced? How did Castiel not notice they were becoming this way? And their mates! Cas has always believed that Amara and Lilith were among the strongest, most willful women he’s ever known. Now, though, it’s obvious that they’re both painfully submissive to their mates. When either Michael or Lucifer has acted outrageously, neither of their omegas has made a peep.

Every time Castiel has begun to get aggressive this morning, Dean has either backed him up or calmed him down. Dean would never just let Castiel do what he wants. Hell, Dean has never just let Castiel do anything. Dean constantly questions or challenges him, always demanding the best Castiel has to offer.

All of the sudden, he’s intensely grateful for his mate. It’s not a new feeling, but it overwhelms him for a few moments.
Dean’s hand tightens on his own, bringing him back to the present. He gives Dean a tight-lipped
smile, squeezes his fingers gently, and begins paying attention again.

Apparently, just in time.

Another officer of the guard is speaking. “The other option we have is to send the four of you into
hiding while we investigate.”

Michael frowns. “Hiding?”

The officer nods. “We’ll think of a cover story to explain your absence. You’ll be placed in a few
small suburbs in a less affluent part of the Eastern neighborhoods. You’ll—”


The officer blinks. “Um, well, Your Highness, it stands to reason that you’ll be recognized easily in
places where nobles, or even the more… Ah, comfortable commoners live, as you are relatively
well-known and often seen there. If you go into hiding, we’ll place you somewhere you don’t
frequent to lessen the likelihood of the operation going awry.”

Michael is frowning. “I don’t know if all of that is necessary.”

The captain of the guard clears his throat. “Forgive me, Your Majesty, but I believe it will be. If a
lockdown isn’t the way you’d like to go, I firmly believe that this is our next best option.”

“So, our only real option, you mean?” Dean asks.

As the captain glares, Lucifer rolls his eyes. “Of course you would like the plan,” he sneers. “Cassie
found you on the street, didn’t he? You’ll probably feel right at home in some filthy tenement
housing unit, sharing a bathroom with twelve other people, don’t you think?”

The growl that explodes from Castiel’s chest harmonizes rather nicely, he thinks, with the growl that
Dean also lets out. However, when he tenses to stand and confront his brother, Dean’s hand lands on
his arm again, tight, restraining. Castiel looks over incredulously at him. Dean is staring daggers at
Lucifer, but is otherwise calm, and his growl has already tapered off. His scent has remained even
through the entire affair.

Lucifer is smirking, insufferable in every moment of his life, but Castiel subsides at Dean’s silent
demand.

Michael protests over the noise that he doesn’t think relocating is necessary. He’s less obvious about
it than Lucifer is, less overtly condescending, but Castiel knows better. Michael doesn’t want to give
up the luxuries they enjoy for even a few weeks, which is hopefully as long as the investigation will
take. His objections have nothing to do with what’s best for the people, or with budgetary concerns.

My gods, are all of us this shallow? He looks at Dean, who looks just as disgusted as he himself is.
Probably, he thinks ruefully.

“Well, I don’t really wanna do that, either,” Gabriel admits slowly, much to Castiel’s disappointment.
“But I think it’s the best plan for you guys.”

Michael frowns harder. “‘You guys?’”

Gabe grins. “Well, yeah.” He slings his arm around Kali, who rolls her pretty eyes but leans into his
side. “I’m goin’ home with Kali, here.”
“If we go back to India,” she says, her low, accented voice already soothing rising tempers, “I doubt very much that we will be pursued. Who would follow the third son of a king across a sea?”

The captain nods. “That will work very well. Thank you, Your Highness, for your graciousness.”

Michael is shaking his head. “That’s all well and good, but I refuse to flee to another country in the face of a threat.” He ignores Gabe’s snort. “And I refuse to run. We must present a strong front.”

Again, they are pretty words, said in the right order and with the right inflection, but Castiel can see right through his big brother. Michael doesn’t want to be inconvenienced, and he won’t be persuaded otherwise. No matter that it may save his life, or that it is for the best of the entire Novak family. Gods forbid Michael isn’t catered to hand and foot twenty-four hours a day.

There was a time when Castiel gave his brother leniency for his more childish behaviors. Michael was…Persnickety, maybe, about the brand of coffee served at breakfast and the grade of beef at dinner, but he was being groomed to run the country. It’s an incredible amount of pressure, Cas is sure, and he tried to be understanding in regards to that before.

Unfortunately, his eyes have been opened.

Michael isn’t just opinionated and a bit spoiled, he’s a snob. Worse, he’s a sexist, for both primary and secondary genders. Quite frankly, Cas is no longer sure he wants his brother on the throne at all.

Castiel looks over at Dean, aghast at his family’s behavior and wanting to share it with his mate.

For just a moment, he’s spellbound by his mate. Sunshine pours through the big windows high on the walls down onto Dean, highlighting his stunning features. His green eyes, trained seriously on Michael as if he’s actually listening, almost sparkle in the light. His broad shoulders and chest fill out his t-shirt distractingly well.

Dean, he thinks, rather dazed.

Dean, who is the strongest, most selfless person Castiel has ever met. Despite everything Dean has been through, the hardship and sacrifice, he maintains his sense of honesty, his sense of humor, his sense of righteousness. Dean, who is by far the best person Castiel has ever had the pleasure to know (love). Even if he did have a problem with living among normal people for a while, which he doesn’t, Dean would have banished it in an instant. Dean grew up like that, and Castiel likes (loves) Dean more than anyone he’s ever met. How bad could it be?

“I’ll go,” Cas says, eyes still on his mate. Dean whips around to stare back at him, mouth parted in shock.

“... Your Highness?” the captain asks.

“I’ll go. Undercover. As long as Dean agrees to go with me,” he says, holding his hand palm up on the table between him and his mate, “I’ll go wherever you tell me to.”

There are stars in Dean’s green eyes as he interlaces their fingers on the table.

“Wherever you go,” Dean says, using old words of tradition, of loyalty, “so shall I follow.”

Cas’ answering smile is fierce.
“Idiots!”

“Look, we-”

“You moved without authorization!”

“You told us to hit where security was weakest!”

“...”

“... Sir?”

“You’re right, you’re right. Sorry.”

“Uh... Okay.”

“...”

“Uh, what do you want us to do now?”

“Wait for my call.”
When the security team asks, Dean is able to give them a short list of people he trusts with his life. When they ask again, he can give them one person he trusts with his and Cas’ lives.

Benny moved across the country a few years ago, and he’s ecstatic to hear from Dean. Once the situation is explained, he immediately opens his home and his spare bedroom to them. It’s in a poorer part of town, at least a three-hour drive from the palace. Because of the distance, and the general apathy the middle class has for royalty (and doesn’t Dean hate thinking like that), there’s little chance of Dean being recognized. Cas spends a minimal amount of time in the public eye, outside of the week surrounding their wedding, so there’s not a lot of risk there, either. Still, the security team insists they both wear baseball caps and aviators on the way to Benny’s.

Once they get there, they take a couple of days to settle in. Dean catches up to Benny, and Benny and Cas get acquainted. Dean and Cas both stop shaving to assist with the subterfuge, and while Dean only succeeds in looking kind of scruffy, Cas’ perpetual five o’clock shadow becomes a full, thick beard quickly. Dean is irritated to find that it’s incredibly sexy, much to Cas’ endless amusement.

The days fall into a rhythm fairly easily. Benny owns a bar and grill now (a childhood dream, Dean knows), and he had a server’s position open when they got there. Dean insisted that Cas take it rather than himself. Benny tried to get Dean to come work there, too, but Dean knows what kind of shit businesses can catch for hiring omegas. Benny isn’t established enough to take that kind of risk.

Cas, though, he takes to working like a duck to water. He likes talking to people, Dean thinks, likes hearing their stories and their theories. Cas is proud of the tips he brings home in a way he never has been about the books he reads or the things he’s learned in all his years of schooling. The day Benny invites Cas to join the softball team for the league the neighborhood has, Cas confesses in bed that night that he’s so excited and nervous it makes him nauseous. It’s incredibly endearing.

So, a few weeks in, things are going smoothly. They have a safe place to stay with someone they trust. Someone would have to be paying very close attention to suspect that “Jimmy,” friendly waiter with a killer throwing arm, and his easy-going mate “Derrick” are actually Castiel and Dean Novak. Cas’ dry wit and sharp intelligence make it easy for him to make friends, and Dean can get along with damn near anybody, Cas’ oldest brothers notwithstanding.

So being undercover isn’t so bad.

Not to say that it’s always easy. There are a couple of blights that make it less than ideal.

The first problem, the hardest problem, is Dean being reminded what it’s like being an omega in the real world.

He would have thought, because of the problem that brought him here in the first place, that he wouldn’t have been able to forget. But his time in the palace, where’s he treated like, well, royalty, must have made his memories fade a little. Because this? This sucks.

He has absolutely no luck finding a job that lasts longer than a day or two. No one hires omegas for real work, and especially not without a few innuendos, inappropriate offers, and outright sexual harassment.
He manages to get his hands on scent-blockers, which are almost prohibitively expensive, because he
can hide his emotions but not his subgender from his scent. They only help a little, however. Without
his scent to give him away, his size usually has people assuming he’s a beta or even a small alpha, so
he gets a few day laborer gigs. Unfortunately, no one trusts a person who feels like they have to hide
their scent. Sure, for a project that will take a day or two, but not for anything longer than that. He’s
faced with the same dilemma he had before he enrolled in finishing school, although admittedly he’s
in a much better place now since he’s not actually in this situation.

Their neighbors, however, a sweet couple named Inias and Hester, are looking at the same problems.
Inias has steady work at a local bookstore (he and Cas hit it off immediately), but Hester and Dean
often find themselves at home after fruitlessly trying to find work.

It’s frustrating, and heartbreaking to watch others go through the same, but Dean is used to it. Cas,
though? Cas is furious.

“You’re overqualified for every position you’ve applied for,” Cas rants one night, frustrated when
Dean comes unsuccessful once again. “As is Hester! There’s no reason not to hire the two of you!”

Dean is lying on their bed where he flopped after he took a shower. He shrugs. “It’s because we’re
omegas.”

“Yes, but that’s not a reason!”

Dean’s nose twitches. “Cas, babe, calm down. You’re gonna make me sneeze.”

Cas deflates. He trudges to the bed and sits on the edge, leaning down to brace his elbows on his
thighs. “I don’t understand how you’re so calm about this,” he admits softly.

Dean heaves himself up and scoots until his legs bracket Cas’ and he’s leaning against his alpha’s
back. “It’s always been like this,” he says. “It blows, but there’s no use getting worked up over it.”

Cas sits up a little and looks over his shoulder at Dean. “Maybe not right at this moment,” he says,
“but when we get back to the palace, there are going to be some changes.”

Dean smiles. “Yeah? Gonna save the omegas, alpha?”

“They don’t need saving,” Cas replies seriously. “If they were given a fair chance, they would save
themselves and put the rest of us to shame.” He shakes his head a little. “I just want to give them,
give you, that chance.”

Dean stares at him for a moment, then shudders and scoots back urgently. “Come here,” he says
roughly. When Cas turns and cocks an eyebrow, Dean rolls his eyes. “It gets me all hot and bothered
when you go all ‘equal rights on me,’ so sue me. You gonna come over here and reap the rewards,
or am I flying solo tonight?”

Cas growls and pushes him down into the mattress, much to Dean’s delight.

So maybe Dean’s got a lot of time on his hands, but he finds ways to fill it. He knows, from personal
experience, that it could be much worse.

There’s really only one other problem.

Benny is an alpha.
Catching up with Benny has been amazing. Benny is one of Dean’s best friends, someone who has had Dean’s back through some of the shitty parts of his life. There was, once upon a time, maybe some extra feelings there. If life had gone differently, Dean could have quite easily seen himself with Benny forever. A few pups, a big alpha to fuck him into the mattress and hold him after, and a nice little house? Shit, it’s all Dean wanted.

He has Cas now, though, and he’s so thoroughly wrapped up in his mate that he kind of forgot he used to have a little crush on Benny (his first real practice at hiding his emotions in his scent, actually).

Despite that, it appears that Cas is jealous.

Oh, he’s polite and even friendly. He and Benny strategize for softball games, talk about the bar, carpool to work every day, and gang up on Dean to tease him. They’re *friends*, for gods’ sakes.

Dean knows, though. It’s in the subtle but possessive touches when they’re around Benny. The less subtle scent-marking that has become much more frequent. The intent, fierce way Cas fucks him after the days Benny touches Dean maybe more than usual.

It would be irritating, maybe, if Cas ever said anything, or dropped any hints. Then they could have it out and Dean could demand that Cas get over himself. Dean is gonna have friends and some of them are gonna be alphas, Cas is just going to have to adjust. Then it would be over.

Or, if Cas were upfront about it and maybe a little self-deprecating, it would be funny. It could become an inside joke, maybe something to tease one another about, something to make their already good sex *really* good sex every once in a while. That could have been fun.

Instead, Cas says nothing. Even more telling, there’s no trace of jealousy in his scent. The fact that Cas is absolute garbage at hiding his emotions is the biggest giveaway. It occurs to Dean that Cas doesn’t even realize he’s doing it.

And shit, that just makes it sad.

He decides to get to the bottom of it one evening while they’re cuddling in their tiny full-sized bed in their tiny borrowed bedroom.

Cas is nuzzling at Dean’s mating mark, his big hand splayed possessively on Dean’s belly and keeping his back pressed to Cas’ chest. It’s warm and comforting and kind of perfect.

*Almost.*

“You know,” Dean starts a little nervously, “you, uh, you don’t need to be jealous of Benny.”

Cas freezes. “I beg your pardon?”

“Benny. You don’t have to be jealous of him.”

Cas’ scent turns confused. “I don’t understand.”

Dean shifts and moves until he’s turned around in Cas’ arms, looking at his mate from a few inches away on a shared pillow. “The scent-marking and the extra touching. I don’t think you’re doing it consciously, but it, uh, it follows a pattern.” He feels his cheeks heating in a blush. “And, uh, the pattern is Benny.”
Cas frowns in the dark. “I… I didn’t realize I was doing that. How incredibly disrespectful. I’m so sorry, Dean.”

Dean shakes his head. “No, I… That’s, thank you, but that’s not what I was gunning for. I just want… Look, you don’t need to be jealous of Benny. We’re mates, Cas, and we’re a lot more than what we were in the beginning.” He shrugs. “I guess I just don’t really get it. I’m yours.”

Cas is quiet for a while and Dean lets him think.

“It is rather easy to see the affection you have for Benny,” Cas says finally. “And though it’s true that we are mated, I’m not blind. Benny is an alpha, but he’s also smart, laid-back, and a good provider.” Cas frowns again. “I suppose he’s also attractive in a rather cuddly way.”

“Cas, I-”

Cas hushes him with a gentle finger against his lips “It’s not that I doubt you in any way, sweetling, or that I lack trust in our relationship. I suppose it’s because… Well, I imagine he could have been a strong contender for a potential mate at one time.” His blush and the embarrassment in his scent call Dean out. Cas chuckles. “I thought as much.” He presses a tender kiss to Dean’s forehead.

“I know we are mated, married, and that our relationship is in a good place. It’s just that Benny, had one of you made a move earlier, could have given you a… Simpler life. One with much less pressure, fewer eyes constantly on you, less danger. A small but pleasant home, pups that wouldn’t have to go to classes dedicated to manners and speech patterns, something simple.” He heaves a sigh. “Something that I, no matter what I do, cannot hope to match.”

Dean’s distress must telegraph itself in his scent, because Cas gathers him close.

“Shh, shh, I don’t believe anything but the best of you, sweetling,” Cas murmurs, incorrectly diagnosing why Dean is upset. “I’m just… Well, I suppose I’m a bit sad, or maybe wistful, at the thought that your life would have been easier without me.” He kisses Dean softly. “That must be why I’ve been acting this way, though I didn’t realize I was doing so. However, I do not for a moment think that you’re anything but faithful and loyal, Dean. I’m sorry to have implied otherwise.”

Dean groans and buries his face in Cas’ neck. “That’s not why I’m upset, Cas, c’mon.”

“… Then why-”

Dean pulls back and looks at Cas incredulously. “Cas, come on.”

“What?”

Okay, Dean’s not really scared to say it. He’s eerily attuned to Cas’ scent, and he can smell the subtle difference, both in his mate’s scent and his own. It’s not that he’s scared to say it, he just can’t believe he has to.

Dean runs gentle fingers along Cas’ cheekbones, staring into his eyes. “You’re it for me, alpha. You gotta know that you’re… You know.”

Cas is smiling a little. “I’m…” He nods for Dean to continue.

Dean rolls his eyes but can’t fight his own smile. “I’m in love with you, you jackass. You’re it, you’re the one, my mate. All that sappy omega flick shit.”

Cas is beaming, and his scent is so delighted that Dean is helpless to do anything but grin right back.
“You love omega flicks,” the love of his life, a jackass, points out.

Dean groans and Cas laughs out loud, arms pulling Dean impossibly closer. “I love you, too,” Cas says, his words no less sincere for coming between rumbling laughter. “I know we didn’t meet the way we should have, but I spend each day grateful that you’re here and that you’re mine, as I am yours.”

Dean’s throat is a little tight, so he hides his face in Cas’ neck again. “Sap,” he murmurs.

Cas nuzzles his temple. “Takes one to know one.”

Dean laughs. “Shut up and go to sleep, alpha.”

There are a few beats of silence, then, “I love you, Dean.”

A secret, tender smile graces Dean’s lips. “I love you, too, Cas.”
While they live in the lap of luxury at home, which means massive beds that they could both sprawl out on completely and never touch once, Castiel thinks there’s something to be said for twin beds.

He wakes slowly, leisurely. It’s his day off (another novelty, *days off*), and he’s in no hurry to move from where he’s wrapped around Dean. His omega is pressed to him from shoulders to ankles, and Cas’ face is buried in Dean’s neck. He must have been unconsciously seeking the comfort of his mate’s scent after their fraught conversation the night before.

Cas kisses Dean’s sleep-warm skin gently. He didn’t realize before Dean brought it up that he was jealous of Benny. His alpha is normally rather obnoxious, and Cas is surprised he didn’t notice his possessive behavior.

However insecure he was before, though, he’s been thoroughly reassured. Dean’s soft, sweet admission demolished any lingering fears he had, made his heart swell with contentment and adoration.

“I’m in love with you, you jackass.”

Less than traditional, perhaps, but Cas wouldn't have it any other way. He nuzzles at Dean’s neck and lets himself drift off to sleep again, pulling his mate impossibly closer.

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Castiel likes being undercover.

Here, he’s not an aimless, spoiled prince with more formal education than anyone ever really *needs*. He’s not the fourth son, an afterthought to an afterthought, a last, unnecessary insurance policy to make sure the throne will remain under a Novak

No, here, he’s just Jimmy. An alpha who moved here because his mate wanted to reconnect with an old friend. A server and soon-to-be bartender who pitches a softball well and has begun to make *friends*. A man with a gorgeous, smart, tough omega mate named Derrick. A man who’s becoming notorious for getting almost disgustingly affectionate with said mate.

It’s *wonderful*.

It’s also eye-opening.

He can see now, more than ever, that he’s been willfully ignorant to the plight of his nation. In real time, Technicolor, and surround-sound, he has seen the consequences of the outdated laws his family upholds. He has listened to Dean relay stories of being sneered at, cursed at, propositioned, and laughed out of job opportunities because of his subgender. He has watched, helpless, as Hester wept quietly because she cannot help provide for her family.
It’s heartbreaking, and he refuses to continue to stand for it.

He is, once again, painfully amazed by Dean. Everything Dean has gone through is much more vibrant, more real now. While he cannot truly bring himself to regret what brought them together, Castiel will do his damnedest to make sure it doesn’t happen to anyone else ever again.

He shares these thoughts with Gabe on their weekly (and quite illicit) phone calls.

“I expect,” Cas says, strolling up and down the sidewalk in front of the modest home they share with Benny, “that Michael won’t be pleased.”

On the other end of the line, Gabe cackles. “Oh, buddy, he’s going to shit himself. Little baby Cassie coming out from his dusty library, spouting off about omega rights? I’m gonna sell tickets.”

Cas chuckles. “I suppose I haven’t been particularly involved.”

“Kiddo, when’s the last time you even sat in on one of those gods-awful lawmaking snoozefests?”

“... Quite a while.”

“Yeah, Michael is going to throw an absolute bitch fit,” Gabe says dreamily.

Castiel smiles. He misses Gabriel. The phone calls help, but Gabe is his best friend, his favorite brother. The only person Castiel has ever been able to tell everything to. Quite simply, he misses his big brother.

He would die before telling Gabe that, though.

“I look forward to the spectacle,” he says instead. “But I’m not backing down this time, Gabe. Real changes need to be made, and if Michael won’t see to them on his own, I’ll make him see to them.”

There’s no hesitation in Gabriel’s reply whatsoever.

“I’m behind you all the way, little brother.” There’s a silent, tense moment before he continues. “Hey, I’m proud of you, y’know. You’ve done a lot of growing up since you settled down.”

Castiel’s cheeks warm at the genuine affection and admiration in Gabriel’s voice. “Thank you.”

They stay silent for a moment or two before Gabriel speaks again.

“So-o-o, how’s sex outside of a palace?”

“Come on, I don’t wanna be late.”

Castiel smiles and shrugs on the leather coat he was given as part of his disguise (and that both he and Dean have become quite fond of). “We have plenty of time.”

Dean frowns. “But parking-”

“Benny has already agreed to drive us so we don’t have to worry about that.”

“And the tickets-”

Castiel pulls the two tickets and backstage passes out of his coat pocket. “I have them right here.
Where you put them. Twenty minutes ago.”

Much to his amusement, his loving mate gives him the stink-eye. “I know you’re making fun of me,” Dean says with a scowl.

Castiel smiles again. “I’m sorry, sweetling.”

“No, you’re not.”

“No,” he agrees easily.

A cute, perky beta named Anna came into Benny’s bar a few days before during the lunch rush. Dean happened to be visiting Cas at work and promptly lost his mind. Anna, apparently, is part of a little-known punk rock band called Blackened Angels that Dean follows religiously. Anna noticed that Dean was freaking out and talked to him about the band for several minutes (well, she talked, he mostly blushed and stuttered) before whipping out two tickets and VIP passes, handing them over, and insisting that “Derrick” and his “yummy alpha mate” join them at the grungy venue where they were booked next.

“Meg is just gonna die when she sees how cute you two are.”

Dean has been over the moon ever since, and now he’s fidgety with anticipation and impatience. He looks good (as always) in a dark t-shirt, jeans, and his own leather jacket. Castiel matches, although his own t-shirt is white, and he’s wearing sneakers instead of Dean’s boots.

“Jackass,” Dean says, but his voice is fond. “Let’s go.”

The Fallen, where Anna’s band is playing, serves alcohol, but that’s where the resemblance to Benny’s place ends. The Fallen is tucked back into the corner of a grungy alley. The outside walls are painted black, as is the door, making it hard difficult to even see that there is a door there unless one already knows that it is. There’s no sign above said door or anywhere else around.

It’s likely not a place Castiel would visit of his own volition, but Dean is vibrating with excitement next to him.

Besides, Castiel relishes this, the chance to see another part of Dean’s world. Dean has told him about pop-up concerts in places like this, or about going for a drink and walking out with a group of new friends. Dean has tried to describe the grittiness, the smoky, mysterious atmosphere, and the low-lit wonder of dive bars where punk rock bands come to play for forty or fifty people, but he’s always gotten frustrated and given up with a, “We’ll just have to go to one someday, alpha.”

And here they are.

The alpha who meets them at the door is big, wearing a black sleeveless shirt and tight jeans. He’s posturing threateningly as they approach.

To his own great surprise, Castiel has to take a moment to fight down the urge to react aggressively to the other alpha’s actions. As much as his instincts are often ridiculous, he has fairly good control of them and himself. It’s not often he has to actively work to get himself to behave.

Dean shows the bouncer their tickets. While the man checks the clipboard for their names, Castiel studies him intently. He finds nothing overtly threatening or remarkable about the man. He’s just an alpha doing his job, for the sake of the gods.
He follows Dean into the darkness of the bar without giving the other alpha a second glance, deciding to wait until after the concert to sort himself out.

The only lights that are on are above the bar, which dominates one side of the room, and there are a few above the stage on the opposite side. There are two dingy doors in one corner, one labelled RESTROOM and the other EMPLOYEES ONLY. The floor and walls are painted a flat black, which somehow has the effect of making the space seem bigger instead of suffocatingly small.

Several people are already milling about and the bartender is busy. Castiel looks around curiously, one hand resting on the small of Dean’s back, as Dean himself beams over at him, excitement written in every line of his body.

Castiel lets Dean lead him around, and they find themselves talking to other people, other couples there to see the band. Everyone is excited, and when Castiel has to sheepishly admit that he’d never heard of them until a few days ago, there’s another man who admits the same, a friendly beta who says his wife dragged him here.

He likes it here. He likes seeing Dean so comfortable, so obviously in his element. Here, as in their rooms at the palace, there is no line of tight but subtle tension in Dean’s spine. There’s no tightening of his eyes or straining in his smile. There’s just Dean, tossing his head back and laughing freely at someone’s offhand remark.

It’s lovely.

Cas opens his mouth to reply when the lights dim and four young women take the stage in the dark. The lights above the stage are the only ones that come back up to show the women, in various stages of torn jeans, leggings and t-shirts, hair wild, smiles infectious and huge. Two of them, one blonde and one brunette, have guitars slung across their chests, Anna is sitting behind a set of drums, and another raven-haired woman is standing in front of a microphone.

“So, on our way here,” she drawls with a wicked smirk, “the guy who’s driving our bus is new. Kinda scruffy, wearing a bathrobe, honest to gods a bathrobe,” she says through a smattering of laughter. Dean laughs, too, and leans into Cas’ shoulder a bit.

“So we get all the equipment put away,” the woman continues, “and we’re boarding the bus, right? I’m the last one because I’m an alpha and I’m an asshole,” she says with a wink, “and as soon as the doors close behind me, this guy pulls out, and I’m not making this up, a full bottle of Jameson.”

The crowd is split between laughter and gasping.

She nods. “I know, I know. So I’m like, ‘Hey, brother, you good?’ Because I don’t want to fucking die. And he says, looks me dead in the eye and says, ‘Sister, none of us are making it off this rock alive. May as well have a good time on this eighteen-hour drive.’”

Everyone laughs, and the woman grins. The rest of the band is clearly ready, and the singer steps back a little to stand in a line with the others.

“So, if an eighteen-hour stretch with a bottle of Jamie sounds right up your alley, hang out with us the next hour or so, because none of us are making it out alive, so we may as well have a good time!”

With that and a shout that sounds like a battle cry, the band starts to play in earnest.
Castiel doesn’t catch most of the words, and he mostly doesn’t realize when they’ve transitioned from one song to another. What he does notice is how elated all of the scents around him are. How everyone in the crowd is watching, dancing, or singing along with glee.

And he notices Dean.

Dean, who is laughing along with the members of the band. Who has Cas’ hand in a death grip, fingers entwined tightly, and keeps turning with sparkling green eyes to include Cas in his mirth. The moving, flashing lights are changing color periodically, bathing Dean in an aching sort of beauty. At the very least, it makes Castiel ache.

At the chorus of one of the songs, with happy scents swirling around him and Dean bopping a bit to the beat, Cas can’t stand it anymore. He tugs on Dean’s hand until his mate is facing him, cups his jaw gently, and kisses him.

He means it to be chaste, quick, loving. A gentle, physical reminder of how much he appreciates Dean, how much he loves his mate. Instead, it quickly becomes more, harder, and Dean is whimpering into his mouth as Castiel claims him thoroughly in the middle of a crowd of people.

Cas doesn’t realize that he’s got his other arm locked around Dean’s waist, or that he’s grinding what’s going to be a sizable erection against Dean’s hip, or that he’s growling as he kisses Dean senseless, until Dean pulls away with a gasped, “Alpha!”

Cas blinks. Sometime between when he closed his eyes to kiss Dean and now, his eyes must have gone alpha red because his vision is hazy. Dean’s eyes glow with gold around the edges even in the darkness of the bar.

“Cas,” Dean says, voice breathy and excited. His scent is becoming warmer, sharper, aroused as he clutches at Cas’ shoulders.

“Cas, you’re in rut.”
“Excuse me?”

“You heard me.”

“I believe I must have misheard, actually.”

“My ass. You heard me just fine. The plan has changed.”

“And what, precisely, has it changed to?”

“Oh, ye of little faith-”

“Gods help me, if you don’t-”

“Shut up. I have a new plan, a better one.”

“Please, enlighten me.”

“Okay, so first, I need you to…”

- I'm such a dick, I'm so sorry.
Chapter Twenty-One

Dean has been listening to Blackened Angels since their first hand-labelled album was sold from a box kept under a bar, and he’s been a huge fan ever since. When Anna, freaking Anna, walked into Benny’s bar, Dean nearly went into cardiac arrest.

As such, there are very few reasons Dean would voluntarily leave a Blackened Angels concert. If the building was on fire, probably. If someone was shooting at them, he supposes, or if there was a bomb threat.

Or, of course, if his mate went into rut unexpectedly.

There are car services that only employ betas that are specifically designed for people who find themselves in the throes of a spontaneous mating cycle. Dean somehow manages to call one of them to request a car (which is incredibly pricey, but gods know they have the money and this is kind of an emergency), call Benny to let him know what’s going on so he can make himself scarce when they get home, and hold Cas off while his alpha shamelessly scentmarks him and nips at his neck and shoulders.

Dean drags Cas outside to wait for the car. It’s obvious that his alpha is in rut, his scent is broadcasting it as surely as his red eyes, and people give them a wide berth on the sidewalk. Even so, a deep, rumbling growl comes from Cas’ chest anytime someone gets too close, and his arm around Dean’s waist tightens possessively.

It’s ridiculous, but Dean’s inner omega is positively cooing over the idea that just being in his presence threw his alpha into rut. Dean knows it was a combination of lack of planning and being around the truckload of pheromones that accompany a rock concert, but his instincts are telling him to preen to show off, to entice his alpha even further. He studiously ignores them.

Cas bares his teeth at a group of teenagers who walk by and Dean can’t help but laugh a little and blush at their amused expressions. Once they’ve passed, Cas sighs and drops his head to rest against Dean’s shoulder.

“I’m sorry,” he murmurs.

Dean chuckles and shrugs with his other shoulder. “Sokay, Cas. It’s not your fault.”

Cas growls a little and it makes Dean shiver.

“Don’t excuse deplorable behavior because of my biology,” Cas says sharply.

Usually, Dean agrees wholeheartedly. People are people first and no one is anyone’s property. Saying shit like “alphas can’t help themselves” or “omegas are asking for it” drives Dean crazy.

Right now, though? Coming out of a high-energy rock concert that already had his blood flowing a little faster, standing out in the cool night air with his alpha, whose rut has him running hot and getting progressively handsier? Arousal is starting to hum just beneath Dean’s skin and he’s having trouble keeping the smile off of his face.

His glee increases tenfold when he tugs at Cas’ arm and it immediately loosens from the possessive hold at his waist. Gods, I love him.

Dean turns in Cas’ embrace and drapes his own arms around Cas’ neck. His alpha looks good, all
heated gaze and disheveled clothes. Cas’ hands settle on Dean’s waist, thumbs immediately rubbing small, maddening circles at the jut of Dean’s hips.

“Let’s do this,” Dean says huskily. “If you behave the whole car ride home, if you get a hold of yourself and control your instincts,” he steps closer and lowers his mouth so he’s speaking directly into his panting mate’s ear, “I’ll do all the work when we get home. I’ll let you lie back and watch me blow you first, then let you get hard in my mouth again before I ride you until you catch me on your knot and we’re both too tired to move.” Dean stops trying to fight his wicked smile. “What do you think, Cas? Think you can handle that for me?”

There’s a deep, rumbly growl in the way Cas says “Dean,” desperate and turned the fuck on.

The car pulls up at the same time and Dean laughs, light and knowing, as he drags Cas into the backseat.

Their clothes don’t make it even halfway to the bedroom with them.

Dean ends up on his knees, swallowing Cas down as his alpha snarls and thrashes and holds himself back from fucking into Dean’s mouth hard and fast.

It’s with real regret that Dean pulls away from Cas’ knot when he starts to come. He wants Cas to knot his mouth, he wants it a lot, but during rut is a bad time to do it. Not only is his knot going to last longer and risk injury to Dean, but his alpha is also about to knot more frequently than normal. By the end, it’ll be swollen and tender, and Dean doubts that marks left behind by his teeth will be very comfortable.

Instead, he does the next best thing and lets his mouth fall open as he jacks Cas off, letting the incredible amount of alpha come pool on his tongue and splash onto his face and neck. Cas’ red eyes burn brighter and he gnashes his teeth even as he shudders through his pleasure.

It’s kind of weird being on this side of the mating cycle, Dean thinks. He’s never helped an alpha through a rut, but he knows the gist. It’s just novel to be the one with a clear head while Cas is out of his mind with lust.

Cas has stopped twitching and moaning, but his every breath still comes out with a little growl, and Dean suspects that only the barest edge has been knocked off of Cas’ need. A blowjob can’t hold a candle to knotting a warm, willing omega.

Dean’s own arousal is making his skin feel too tight and he can feel that he’s starting to leak slick. He wants his husband, wants his rut and his knot and his big alpha cock filling Dean up and forcing him to stay, to take all of it.

Gods.

Dean cleans Cas leisurely with his tongue. He savors the way their scents are mingling in the air, the way his alpha has claimed him over and over, first with the wedding ring that sits comfortably now on his left hand, then with the mating bite on his neck that he can hardly remember not having, and now with his come, the basest form of scentmark there is. He shudders as he pulls Cas’ cock into his mouth again, suckling gently to urge his alpha back to hardness.

Cas shudders and fists his hands at his sides, presumably to keep from fucking Dean again. It’s incredibly hot, seeing the restraint in his mate, fighting his basest, most violent instincts just because he values Dean so much. It’s kind of a miracle that Cas came from his shitshow of a family with such integrity still.
Integrity like that, Dean thinks as Cas cock slowly thickens up in his mouth, should be rewarded.

Once Cas is hard again, his breath heaving and unsteady as he forces himself to lean back against the wall and let Dean do as he pleases, Dean lets him slide out of his mouth with a pop and gets to his feet again. His own cock is hard, too, and it rubs against Cas’ as he pushes his mate into the wall and kisses him hard. Cas moans at the taste of himself and his hands fly up to clutch at Dean’s hips, pulling him closer and grinding against him.

“Come on, alpha,” Dean murmurs. “Let’s go to bed.”

Cas growls and flips them so that Dean is the one pressed against the wall. He nips at Dean’s neck, making him gasp, then steps back and wraps his fingers around Dean’s wrist to pull him along. Dean laughs and follows, eager and happy.

Their little bedroom is bathed in moonlight from the open curtains, but Dean only has eyes for Cas. He gently maneuvers his mate so that he’s on the bed on his back, propped up a little on their pillows. His eyes are almost glowing, and the red has receded enough so that the blue that Dean loves so much is peeking through. He’s looking at Dean like he’s precious, like he’s cherished, and it makes another pulse of want go through him.

Dean slowly moves up so that he’s straddling Cas’ hips. The tip of his alpha’s cock, already fully hard and leaking again, brushes against his hole and Dean shudders again. He reaches a hand behind himself, gathers his own slick on his hand, then gently coats Cas’ cock with it, watching in delight as Cas gasps and bucks.

Their scents are so strongly wrapped around one another now, love and mates and omega and alpha and Dean and Cas. It’s a heady aphrodisiac, and it makes Dean dizzy and a little bit reckless. He takes Cas in hand again, positions the tip of his cock against his dripping hole, and lets gravity do the rest.

Normally, Dean is a big fan of prep, but he’s already flushed and desperate, unwilling to wait any longer for his mate to be inside him. It hurts, a stretching, too-full burn for at least a minute before his ass is resting snuggly against Cas and he’s impaled on Cas’ cock. He moans and arches his back, shifting to get himself to adjust faster, his hands resting on Cas’ chest.

“Dean,” Cas snarls, his hands clamping down on Dean’s hips and holding him still. Dean moans in response, his nails digging into the skin on Cas’ pecs.

“M good,” Dean slurs, dizzy with desire and pleasure. “M good, please, Cas, alpha, gotta move.”

“No yet,” Cas says between gritted teeth. His eyes have slipped close and his face looks pinched. “Too fast. Can’t hurt you.”

Dean’s heart thumps hard in his chest and he smiles down at his mate. Gods. “Won’t hurt me,” he says, clenching down and watching in delight as Cas’ spine bows and he snarls. “Want it.”

“Dean.”

“Fuck me, Castiel,” Dean snaps, clenching around Cas’ cock again and putting as much authority in his voice as he can.

Cas moans and complies.

Dean tries to keep up, but an alpha in rut is a force of nature, and Cas’ hands at his hips end up guiding him up and down Cas’ length, then finally holding him immobile while Cas fucks up into
him. When Cas’ knot starts to swell, making him work to move in and out of Dean, he moves Dean abruptly, drawing a yelp, and then a long moan when Dean realizes that Cas repositioned him so that he could hit his prostate which each forceful thrust.

Jolts of pleasure make sparks dance up and down Dean’s spine, and his world narrows to the man beneath him, the way Cas moves against him, inside him. The way Cas’ hands are leaving bruises that they’ll both cherish on Dean’s skin. The way Cas is watching him, just as enraptured with Dean as Dean is with him.

Dean comes in just a few minutes, scratching long, almost bloody lines into Cas’ chest as his orgasm washes over him. He feels Cas’ knot swell impossibly, then lock them together as Cas growls again and comes, filling Dean impossibly full of cock and come.

As they come down and Dean slumps against Cas’ chest, he watches as the red in Cas’ eyes fades completely, leaving just sated, warm blue eyes in its wake.

Cas runs a soothing hand up Dean’s side. “How are you feeling, sweetling?” His voice is like gravel. Dean thinks about doing this for two or three more days. All the positions they can try it in, how sore and used he’s going to feel after. How many bruises shaped like Cas’ fingers he’s going to have littered all over his body.

He grins down at his mate, drunk on orgasm and closeness and love.

“I’m awesome.”

Three days later, Dean is just as sore, bruised, and happy as he thought he would be.

They wake up on the fourth day and he can already tell that Cas’ heat is over. There’s no urgency in his alpha when Cas nuzzles at his neck, his hand resting on Dean’s belly as they slowly pull themselves from sleep.

That hand, proprietary and loving and protective all at once, sets something off in Dean. Not arousal, he doesn’t think he could possibly get aroused again so soon, but something… Warmer. Deeper. He doesn’t recognize it yet, but it’s strong, almost overwhelming.

He lets it stew while he tugs Cas off of the bed and gets them both into the tiny shower off of their bedroom. He keeps the water cool but not cold, since they’re both tender and sore, and he washes Cas as gently as he knows how. When Cas returns the favor, and once again presses a kiss low on Dean’s belly, he gets it.

The possibility that Dean is pregnant is pretty damn high now. He’s not in heat, but Cas’ rut means there’s definitely a chance. Since he’s no longer in the hold of a new mating bite and his body isn’t going through any more drastic changes, it’s definitely a possibility.

He pictures a grumpy, dark-haired little boy crawling into bed between he and Cas. He has emerald green eyes and a semi-permanent frown on his chubby face, but he’s fearless and insistent when he snuggles between the two of them. In this fantasy, Cas doesn’t even wake up, but he wraps his arms over the boy and Dean both, alpha protectiveness clogging the air around them.

Oh, gods, I want that.

Happiness floods his own scent, and subsequently the bathroom. Cas looks up and cocks an eyebrow from where he’s running a loofah down Dean’s legs.
Dean just smiles. He’ll tell Cas later.

“Just love you,” he says instead.

Cas beams up at him. “I love you, too, Dean.”

Dean is just pulling his t-shirt on over his head when there’s a knock at the front door. It’s faint, but it has authority and gravity that he kind of recognizes.

He meets Cas’ eyes across the room and they head toward the door at the same time. Cas doesn’t have a shirt on yet, and it’s fairly obvious what those scratches are from, but Dean figures he’ll have time to feel embarrassed later. Because the only people who knock on doors like that are people who are looking for royalty.

Maybe they’ve been discovered, or maybe they’re just being summoned home, but either way, it probably means that something has gone horribly wrong.

There are ten armed, muscular, solemn betas at the door. Dean knows they’re armed because he can see the outlines of the guns beneath their jackets, and a couple of them are carrying openly and scanning the surrounding area restlessly. The guard in front is holding a cell phone that Dean vaguely recognizes as Cas’ phone from before they went undercover.

“A call for you, Your Highness,” he says gravely.

Cas nods, imperial and cold, and takes the phone from the guard. He puts it to the ear closest to Dean and leans so that Dean can hear the words, too.

“Hello?”

“Castiel,” Bela says, voice crisp and businesslike. “I need you to return to the palace.”

Castiel frowns. “What’s going on, Bela?”

“Just come home. Now.”

Castiel is on high alert when they arrive back at his childhood home. He gets out of the car before Dean, then keeps a possessive arm around his mate’s waist as they walk toward the massive front doors. It may be the lingering effects of his rut, but he wants to snarl at the guards for walking too close to Dean, for endangering Dean by bringing them back here.

_Calm down_, he tells his inner alpha firmly. He has a feeling that this situation will require that he have his wits about him.

The guards say nothing as they lead Dean and Castiel to one of the opulent meeting rooms the Novaks have always kept for business meetings. It’s decorated in dark maroons and rich creams, only the highest quality fabrics and furniture are present. Castiel detests this room and always has. So he’s surprised that Bela would bring them _here_ to meet.

The beta in question is sitting on one of the couches in the room. There’s a coffee table in front of her and another sofa placed on the other side of that. When she sees them, she gestures to the other couch and pours them both what smells like a strong cup of coffee from the ornate pot on the table.

Dean’s scent is completely unreadable, as is his face, when he sits next to Castiel on the couch. He
takes the coffee with a murmur of thanks to Bela. Castiel takes his own, too, but doesn’t take a sip.

He looks at Bela, one of his closest friends, and sees the tightness around her eyes. She’s sitting stiffly, like her spine is made of steel, and though she’s meeting his gaze head on, he can tell that it’s more of a struggle for her than it ever has been before.

He thinks about what Dean would do. He thinks about what “Jimmy” would do.

He sets his cup down, leans over, and takes Bela’s oh-so-slightly trembling hand into both of his own.

“Bela,” he says gently. “What’s wrong?”

She looks surprised for just a beat before her face evens out into unreadability again, but there’s a hint of gratefulness and relief in her faint beta scent. Whatever has happened has clearly shaken her, but Bela Talbot did not get to where she is by being easily put off by something difficult.

“I have some… Difficult news to depart,” she says, words slow and measured.

Castiel frowns. “Very well. What’s happened?”

She hesitates for an extremely uncharacteristic moment before she absolutely demolishes everything Castiel thought about the world.

“Lucifer was behind the assassinations of your parents, as well as the attempt on your life.”

Castiel can dimly hear a sort of ringing in his ears. His body is flashing hot and cold. His hands are clammy, he thinks, and he can feel sweat on the small of his back. He doesn’t know where his vision goes for the moments after Bela said… What she said, but when it comes back, he’s staring at the wall just over her shoulder.

It’s an enormous, ancient painting that ironically depicts angels receiving word from the gods.

*I’ve always hated that painting.*

“How…” He swallows. Bela and Dean have both been silent, but Dean is gripping one of his hands fiercely, a constant reminder of his mate’s presence at his side. Castiel is more grateful than he can say for the support, and it lends him the strength to ask what he needs to know.

“How do you know?” he croaks out.

“We found evidence in his rooms and on his person. Once we searched his cell phone records, we found… We found the communications with the group of assassins he was in touch with. That’s not…” Bela leans over and takes Castiel’s hand again. His eyebrows shoot up. “Castiel, Michael was killed, too. It’s how we found the evidence in the first place.”

“*Gods,*” Dean breathed, his hand tightening almost painfully on Castiel’s again.

Castiel… Well, Castiel wishes he was more upset about Michael’s death, but it not only isn’t that big of a deal to begin with, on top of knowing that *Lucifer* hired an assassin to *kill Castiel and his mate,* there’s just not much that will surprise him for a while.

“There is… There’s more, Castiel,” Bela says, very gently, very quietly.

Castiel, who has eyes only for Bela now, can feel Dean jerk next to him. “*More?*” Dean demands. “How much more could there possibly be?”
“Well, in light of these events, Lucifer is to be imprisoned in the West Tower until the gods of death see fit to take him,” Bela says solemnly, repeating old words to describe what must have been the first case of regicide and fratricide since… Gods, since who knows when?

“Of course,” Castiel prompts.

“The next thing that was to happen is that Gabriel was to be crowned King.”

“Yeah, obviously,” Dean snaps, impatient. “What of it? Little dude’s gonna be all right at it.”

“Ah, well… He has…” Bela clears her throat. “He has abdicated the throne.”

Castiel was wrong. He can definitely still be surprised.

“What?” he shouts, too loud. It reverberates off of the walls of the giant room they’re in, echoing back to them in fading repetitions of incredulity.

“He refuses to come back from India.” Bela seems unperturbed by his shouting, but her eyes are wary.

“Can he do that?” Dean asks.

“We can’t think of a way to force him, and Kali’s people have made it clear that any attempt to do so will be considered an act of war.”

“War,” Castiel breathes. “Gods.”

“Okay, okay, hang on,” Dean says. “If Gabe ain’t coming back, what happens next? What does that mean?”

“That means-” Bela starts.

But Castiel wants to be the one to say this to Dean. He has, despite the incredible amount of shocks thrown at him in such a short amount of time, been able to process at least this much, at least the next step.

Ah, my sweetling, he thinks mournfully, we shouldn't have answered the door.

“I will be crowned King,” Castiel interrupts Bela, turning to look his mate in the eye.

Dean’s eyebrows shoot up and his mouth drops open. Castiel braces himself for the panic that he can feel gibbering and rising up in his own heart to be reflected on Dean’s beautiful face. This isn’t what he signed up for.

Instead, Dean starts to chuckle a little bit. His hand, which had slackened in his surprise, tightens on Cas’ again, and Dean’s eyes crinkle as he grins at Castiel.

Something fierce and loyal and huge roars in Castiel’s chest as Dean smiles and leans a little closer. He’s not running away. Castiel doesn’t have words to describe how he’s feeling, or what’s going on in his heart.

“Don’t you worry, little alpha,” Dean says, unshakeable confidence in his voice, “we can do it. We can do anything.”
Chapter Twenty-Two

Gabriel Novak loves his country. Even from afar, even as he watches his *exceptionally* lovely mate sunbathe on their balcony in their suite in India wearing *very little*, some part of him aches for his home.

He’s always loved it. He’s always felt connected to the earth there. He liked talking to the farmers who worked the land, as well as the shopkeepers who sold the produce. He liked walking through markets, as well as attending soirees where he could let loose a little with his people. The advantages granted to him as the third son were many, and it included having the time to really get to *know* the country that his father ruled, the time to fall in love with it.

Which was why it was so hard to watch his father ruining it.

Watching Bartholomew run the country further and further in a direction that was obviously the wrong way was physically painful for Gabriel. The rumors, always getting louder and louder, of rebellion or mutiny were getting harder to listen to. Watching his mother deny that anything was wrong, his brother refuse to acknowledge the problem, and his next youngest brother ignore anything that wasn’t his own idea, well. It’s probably one of Gabriel’s worst nightmares.

Which was why it was *not* hard to do something about it.

Hell, the only family member Gabriel has ever really liked is Cassie, anyway, although at the beginning he was part of the problem, too. And he would have stopped at Naomi and Bartholomew, but gods knew Michael wasn’t fit to rule, and Lucifer would have had them at war before night fell on his first day as King.

It was pretty easy to see what Gabriel had to do.

His phone vibrates in the pocket of his board shorts, the only phone he never loses. After checking to make doubly sure that Kali is asleep, he pulls it out and opens the new message

**From: Hermione Granger**
They’re telling him now.

**To: Hermione Granger**
Who’s telling him?

**From: Hermione Granger**
Bela.

**To: Hermione Granger**
How’s he taking it?

**From: Hermione Granger**
Still in shock, but I think D will help.

Satisfied, Gabriel nods.

**To: Hermione Granger**
You’ve done well. Delete these records and destroy this phone. Stay away from the palace from now on, I can’t guarantee C and D won’t catch on.

From: Hermione Granger
They’re smart cookies. I’ll lay low for a while. Records will be deleted in the next 5, same w/ phone destruction. Throw yours into the ocean or something. Take care, boss. Good time stormin’ da castle.

Gabriel smiles down at his phone, then deletes all of the information off of it, powers it off, and stands. He takes a few steps over to the railing off the balcony and throws the phone out into the ocean, just like Charlie told him to.

Charlie was an easy person to place in the castle, part of a small but dedicated rebellion who were determined to put omega rights at the forefront of the royal family’s perception. Gabriel’s not sure how far they would have gotten, Bartholomew was a champion ignorer of things he didn’t want to acknowledge, but Charlie already had a contact in the palace and was on her way to being placed when she and Gabriel met (though she never did tell him who).

Gabriel will always be grateful for the fiery little omega, and not only because she was the ones to first see the changes in Castiel and question whether he deserved the same fate as the rest of the Novak clan.

Gabriel has never wanted to rule, but he was going to. He was going to take charge of the country he so adored, rule it like he knew was best, and find a way to have heirs with Kali so he could teach the next generation of rulers the same ways. He would have been miserable, but he would have done it. Not a lot got through, especially about responsibility, but he did indeed feel responsible to the people the Novaks ruled. He knew his father was unfit, and his brothers were a joke as far as running a country went.

Then along came Dean.

It was clear petty quickly that not only was Dean a good influence, but that once he and Cassie had some time to settle in around one another, the omega’s presence made Castiel the only real candidate to rule the country. Unlike their father or brothers, Castiel started to care about people, about their rights and lives and using his privilege to help them. Unlike Gabe, Castiel probably has some real talent for ruling, too, once he gets over his shock and nerves.

Once Bartholomew and Naomi were eliminated, and when it had become clear that Cassie was not the poison the rest of the Novaks were, it was very simple for Charlie to arrange for “evidence” to be found in Lucifer’s quarters after Michael was killed. Gabriel was already in India, so that just left Cassie to be crowned once the dust settled.

Yeah, the last-minute change in plans was best, he thinks. Because Gabriel was ready to be miserable and rule the country he loved. Now, however, though he has to leave that country forever, he gets to be with the woman he loves, with no responsibilities in the foreseeable future. And he gets to watch from afar as his little brother becomes a King.

“Such heavy thoughts,” Kali’s sultry voice says, “for such a hot day, my love. Come rub sun lotion on my back again.”

Gabe grins. “Yes, ma’am.”

Sorry, little brother. You’re gonna do just fine.
- ... Surprised? ^^'
Epilogue - Roughly Ten Years Later

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sam Winchester walks up the familiar path to get to the front door of the Novak palace, hands deep in his pockets, enjoying the sunshine. He’s excited to share the news of his impending proposal with Dean, who he’s sure will be thrilled and supportive. Dean adores Jess, and the feeling is mutual.

He’s just entered the door, nodding his thanks to the guard, when an unholy shriek from behind him has him stiffening.

“Uncle Sammy!”

He whirls and crouches, a smile already spreading across his face as his eldest niece, Claire, comes barreling towards him. She hits him like sixty pounds of freight train and it’s all he can do not to bowl over.

“Hi, Claire,” he wheezes a little. “How’s my princess today?”

Before she can answer, another wild call echoes through the halls, and Claire’s younger sister Emma comes hurtling toward them. She hits Claire’s back just as hard as Claire hit Sam, but Sam’s a big guy, and he easily wraps both of his nieces up in his arms and stands.

“Sammy!” Emma cries, cuddling close to his big chest.

“Listen,” Claire says urgently. “Listen, papa has been super busy, but daddy says we can have a picnic for lunch.” Her big blue eyes are shining up at him, worried. “Do you think that’s okay? That we have a picnic, even though we’re princesses?”

Sam smiles. “Sure it is! All princesses should have picnic lunches.”

Claire, the eldest Novak child at eight years old, is an earnest, serious child. She has dark hair and Castiel’s worried eyes, but the genuine way she cares about every person around her is Dean all over. Sam should know, he’s been hovered over by both Dean and Claire at the same time and he’s willing to testify that it was identical mother henning going on.

Emma, on the other hand, is Dean remade over. She’s a six-year-old blonde terror, with sparkling green eyes, an infectious laugh, and a streak for trouble that’s a mile wide and just as vibrant as her father’s. Sam loves all of his brother’s children, of course, but he has a special place in his heart for Emma, as much as she reminds him of his big brother.

“Girls!”

Dean’s tired voice brings Sam’s attention to the door of the kitchen where his brother is standing, three-year-old Jack sitting on his hip and very solemnly chewing on his own chubby fist.

Dean is giving his daughters the stink eye. “Did you two attack your uncle?”

“No!” they chorus together, perfectly innocent.

Dean looks at Sam. “That true, Sammy?”

Sam’s no snitch. “They were great, Dean.”
Dean gives Sam the stink eye, too, but the twitch at the corner of his mouth betrays the smile he’s fighting. “Yeah, I’m sure they were,” he says dryly. “Come on out, we’re setting up in the middle courtyard.”

“Can I help?” Sam asks, following Dean through the kitchen.

Dean shakes his head. “Nah, Rufus has got everything already outside. We just gotta bring the brats.” He bounces Jack on his hip, who gives a little hiccup of laughter before burying his face in his father’s neck again, clearly uncomfortable.

“You’re all right, kiddo,” Dean murmurs as he leads all of them out into the summer sunshine again. “Don’t you worry, your papa will be coming out for lunch soon.”

Sam’s eyebrows go up. “Cas is coming to lunch?”

Dean grins. “If he knows what’s good for him.” As they all settle on the checkered blanket in the middle of the courtyard, Dean says with studied casualness, “Cas knows better to leave his pregnant mate with his three pups all on his own.”

Sam is nodding automatically, always on Dean’s side, when his words finally sink in. “What?!”

Dean laughs and settles down onto his butt. Jack immediately crowds into his lap again, silent and tense until he can sit and lean back against Dean’s chest. Emma and Claire sit between Sam and Dean, but they’re embroiled in their own conversation, so this is clearly old news for them.

Sam is smiling so hard his face hurts. He adores his brother’s children, and he knows Dean has always wanted a huge family. “Again?”

Dean smirks. “What can I say, Sammy? I’m irresistible.”

“Indeed you are,” says a deep, rough voice from behind Sam, although I feel compelled to argue that you are the instigator at least as often as I am.”

Sam twists to see his brother-in-law, looking at least as tired as Dean does. He walks over and sits next to Dean, barely noticing Jack scrambling into his lap as he leans over to press a kiss to Dean’s cheek.

“How are you feeling?” he murmurs, almost too low for Sam to hear.

“I’m all right, alpha,” Dean says just as softly. “Just a little morning sickness, nothing I didn’t get with the first three.”

The obvious care radiating from Cas is almost painful to witness. It’s hard to believe that there was a time when Sam was worried about Dean being taken advantage of, worried about him being hurt or used. It’s clear to anyone who bothers to look at them that they’re still crazy about one another all these years later.

When Cas was crowned King, Sam knows he was a nervous wreck for weeks. Dean, on the other hand, was confident that Cas would grow into his own and figure it out, and Dean was right. Dean was right as hell (and is smug as hell about it now). Castiel is widely acknowledged as one of the fairest, most open-minded rulers the country has ever seen. Not everyone likes it, of course, and there are whispers of a rebellion every once in a while, but it’s nothing like when Bartholomew ruled, and those rumors are taken seriously and ruthlessly shut down by the authorities.

Dean, too, took to ruling like a duck to water. Because he was an omega, and the rule isn’t quite...
what it should be yet, he tended to focus less on politics and more on charity, but Dean seemed to be all right with it. Especially after Claire was born and he could take her with him, be a visible parent who had worries and fears and a difficult baby just like every other parent did, the entire kingdom fell in love with him.

Through it all, Dean and Castiel are still wildly in love. Every move Castiel makes is with Dean in mind. Dean is the center point around which Castiel rotates, always coming back to him, to the home and family they created together. Out of the ashes of a horrible choice and a desperate decision by a scared, too-young omega, they have managed to create a fairy tale.

It’s everything Sam has ever wanted for his big brother. Hell, it’s everything Sam has ever wanted for himself.

But that doesn’t mean he wants to see it.

He grabs a grape from the basket sitting next to him and throws it across the blanket where it hits Dean in the cheek.

“Hey, you two. Cut it out, we’re trying to eat over here.”

The double glare he gets is totally worth the peals of laughter he gets from his nieces.

Chapter End Notes

- Oh, gosh. I'm so sad to see this 'verse go, but I'm so relieved that it's done. I think I did it justice, and I hope y'all feel the same. I love you guys, thanks for hanging out with me till the end, and as always, let me know what you think. <3

- Hi! Popping back in to answer a few questions!
- **Hermione Granger** was just Charlie's code name via text message. I thought it was clever, but it may have just been confusing, lol.
- Bela was the contact that Charlie already had in the castle.
- The laws *used* to state that only an alpha can take the throne. Cas and Dean abolished it and any other sexist legislature basically 1st thing. Claire will present as a beta and be the first to rule the kingdom. She kicks ass at it.

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