Gabriel was screwed. Royally. He thought staying in a female vessel would be fun. No harm, no foul right? I mean, what's the worse that could happen? He really should know better than to tempt fate like that. He knows next to nothing when comes to raising a nephilim. Fledgling? Sure, done it before. Human? Eh -hand waver-. Father/daughterOC, mention of infanticide, maybe OC/Cas, slow start
Over the millennia since His departure from Heaven and all the responsibilities that came from being, well, God with a capital G He’d sneak a peak at some of His angelic children on Earth. See how they were taking His final command and if they were actually following it. Not that He’d interfere if they weren’t. After all, it’s not free will if you’re constantly following orders and not making decisions for yourself.

As the millennia passed less and less of His angelic children visited and interacted with His newest creation, and children, the Humans. Instead of being in wonder and awe of all that these little soulful and willful creatures, and all the potential they contained; His oldest children, the Children of Heaven, looked down upon them in contempt as something Other. Most saw something foul and insignificant, filled with all the sins of creation that Lucifer, the Morningstar, His second son, tempted and ultimately tainted them with. Granted some looked upon them as something not concerning them or had a more neutral view of them. Fewer looked upon them with slight interest. Even less saw them as something they were supposed to protect to the extent He had wanted. And among the throngs of angels that remained after Lucifer and his followers’ Fall were the fewest still who saw the Humans He created, His somewhat (okay a lot) flawed masterpiece as something that was truly worthy of His love.

It wounded God to see any of His children in pain, and to see such a rift between the two Sibling species. Granted the Humans now a days aren’t too sure if angels or even Himself is real or just a way to explain the once unexplainable phenomenon He had littered the Earth with, His bible being filled with old archaic notions that kept them in the dark and from striving forward technologically and socially. Honestly He should have proof-read that thing before it was mass produced and distributed. So much conflict and wars might not have happened. But again, it was their choice to interpret His word, spoken through Gabriel to some of the earliest prophets, as such. He really didn’t care who loved whom or being in a relationship with multiple partners. As long as everything was consensual He didn’t care, love was love, it was a connection be it of the emotional kind or just the physical. After all, one shouldn’t have to go through life without connecting to someone else. That’s why Lucifer’s final punishment of being sent into the Cage was so cruel and heartbreaking. In the cage he could speak to no-one and no longer hear the Heavenly Host, all hopes to connect were lost to….

Chuck paused in his writing. He could tell he wasn’t leading into the story he wanted to write the way that he wanted to. He was able to lead up to Gabriel but then went onto a slight criticism of religion, connection, Lucifer’s punishment, and how God is supposed to think.

‘Although,’ he thought with a slight smirk, ‘I would know better than anyone how God would
think. At least the connection aspect came through alright.’

“Alright Chuck just keep typing, worry about flow in the edits, just get everything down first…” he mumbles to himself as he continues writing.

(Chuck writing)

God was currently in Toronto, Ontario, Canada watching one of His angelic children, His fourth created son Gabriel who was being creeped on by a tall dark-haired, fair-skinned man at a nightclub. He was slight in build, boarding on lanky with little muscle, his dark hair was combed over with what looked like hair gel. If one got close enough to this man the rank body odor he produced would lead to a different conclusion. His face had red blemishes from acne, and one nostril seemed a little too big. His lips were thin, chapped, and slightly bleeding from where he’d bit at the loosened and dried skin there. He wore plain shirt that had a myriad of small burgundy flecks all over it and worn jeans stained with paint. From a distance he was quite unassuming, easily looked over and ignored. So why then would an archangel be want to be near him? Was he more interesting than he looked? Did his voice get less raspy and nasally the more comfortable he got around someone? Was he the next Van Gogh of the art world as his shirt and pants might suggest and just needed a little heavenly inspiration? Was he a soon-to-be prophet of the Lord? None to any of the above.

This man was guilty of murder. If this was the case, then, why is Gabriel still letting himself be creeped on by him? Why would an archangel have business with a fiend who took joy in slowly killing women who rejected his less than subtle and creepy advances in a sketchy club? It was simple really. Gabriel no longer considered himself an archangel. Not since he fled from Heaven all those millennia ago. No, now, now he was the infamous Trickster god, Loki.

Who changed his appearance into that of a female version of his personally made vessel. Dirty blonde hair, golden eyes, and a petite figure. Didn’t look like they could fight their was out of a paper bag. In other words: a good potential victim.

God watched as His son said an especially mean rejection to the man and walked off, with a knowing smug smirk. All the while the man starred after him with hate filled predatory eyes. Eyes that did not leave as he danced with other, more attractive, men in the club.

God watched as His son left the club and began walking the darkened streets of Toronto.

God watched as the man from earlier slipped out of the club minutes later and began following His
female son, keeping a distance and out of the streetlight.

God watched as this man ducked into an alleyway and headed off His son. Watched as His son was pulled into an upcoming alleyway that the man took a shortcut to. Watched as the man “knocked-out” His son and made his way to his apartment, telling the odd passersby how his friend never could hold her liquor.

God watched as His son was “woken up” by being splashed in the face with ice water. He “bound and restrained” to a kitchen chair in a dingy old apartment which looked to have frequent visits of mice or rats if the droppings were anything to go by.

The man approached with a malicious glint in eyes and a generic knife from the knife block. He, of course, began to monologue in true villain fashion about why he was doing what he was doing, when Loki couldn’t take it anymore and busted out laughing. Angered, he took his knife and made a deep gash appear across Loki’s cheek. Loki was silenced for a mere quarter second, if that, before he started snickering again, commenting how pathetic the man was. In a rage the man began making cuts and gashes, varying in depth all across Loki’s body but none of it deterred Loki’s laughter. Feeling enough was enough and he wasn’t going to get any begging from his bound and bleeding captive audience the man sunk the knife into Loki’s gut and twisted. He waited for a scream of indescribable pain to occur, but none did. Loki looked down at the knife in his gut, and then looked back up at the poor bastard that thought he was human. A wide smile spread across Loki’s face that would almost look serene if it wasn’t for his own malicious twinkle in his eyes.

“Well,” Loki began, “since you’re all done with the foreplay.” ropes strained and broke, the man scrambled backwards in fear, leaving the knife in Loki’s gut. “Let’s get on to the main event.” He purrs as he takes out the knife.

God watches as His fourth son does everything the man had done to previous victims, while having a candy bar and there. He watches as His son makes an incision in the jugular vein big enough to be life threatening but small enough to draw out the experience of dying for as long as possible. His son snaps his fingers and vanishes.

It would be days before a one Steve Dowing was found murdered in his apartment, in his own kitchen chair, with a crime scene littered in various candy wrappers. It would be another 10hrs afterwards that police figure out that he was the Toronto Nightclub murder when a new female golden eyed intern points out he looks like one of the regulars at a nightclub. Police will find he was a regular at all the night clubs where women have disappeared from, as well as find multiple different samples of blood in the apartments plumbing and lots of blood residue on the kitchen knives.
This story, however, isn’t about a Trickster archangel fighting crime in the mean streets of Toronto, Canada. This is about God giving His son a gift (or maybe a lesson), for being one of the few of His angelic children that sees what he sees in Humanity. When he’s not going after the assholes, dicks, douchebags, and human monsters that is.

But whether Gabriel, or Loki, (or Gabriella/Loka at the moment) will keep it or throw it away will be their choice to make.

Chuck grabs his beer bottle and takes a long drink, leaning back in his chair and rubbing his eyes tiredly. Looking at the red blaring numbers of 2:02am on his clock he knows he should call it a night and go to sleep. Who knows when the next ‘ideas’ for his main book Supernatural will come. That will be so much fun! Not.

Looking back at his screen he lets out a sigh at the last sentence he typed. ‘Free will and making choices…always so difficult to write about.’ He thinks as he starts typing again, ‘30 more minutes then sleep…’

March-ish, 1990 Toronto, Canada

Gabriel was enjoying a well-deserved sweet treat in his motel room outside of the ever-lovely Canadian city of Toronto. That asshole he played his latest ‘trick’ on has received his comeuppance, the local po-po know what he did and all the families that lost loved ones to him got some closure. Maybe. He was pretty sure they’d rather have their daughters, sisters and friends back. Gabriel shrugs with a Snickers bar sticking out of his mouth when he catches his reflection in the mirror. He has to admit, he makes a smoking hot female if he says so himself. Short blonde curls, bright honey gold eyes, full lips, subtle curves, and short. ‘What am I? 5’2”?’ he thinks. It took some serious mojo of the pagan variety to turn his vessel that he made millennia ago to go a complete 180 of the sexual variety.

Gabriel contemplated changing back to his regular sexy male self. He was about to snap his fingers when he hesitated and a smile came to his face. ‘Maybe I can keep this body to see how the fairer sex lives, or more importantly has fun.’ After all, since he wasn’t just a pagan god now, he still had all the powers of his archangel-y-ness there’s really no harm in staying female.

For the next couple of weeks Gabriel has some sexual fun in his altered vessel. Did some more tricks against assholes that thought they were God’s gift to women. Which he knew for a fact they weren’t. It was women’s more natural ability to multitask and become really scary and badass.
when their kids are threatened. He often got cat-called or inappropriately hit on so he usually turns it around on them and goes on to confront them and subsequently humiliate them in front of their macho friends.

Gabriel also learned of the unique community that the female sex tend to have with each other. He will probably forever remember heading towards the hotel he was staying at when a couple of females approached him and acted like they were friends meeting up with him. He was about to ask what they were doing when one whispers how they noticed a large male watching him and had started to follow him. Raising his eyebrow he looks behind him to see a large figure start to make a hasty retreat. They told him they’d walk with him till he got to his hotel. Needless to say he asked if they’d want to meet up sometime to hang out. They smiled and agreed, bidding him a goodnight they called a cab and went to their own homes. This was how Gabriel made a couple of human friends in Kira and Lucy.

Over the weeks they’d meet up hang out, had some fun and lots of laughs. He became closer to Lucy than Kira, admiring her stubbornness, will, and her never say die attitude. She also took no shit from any one. She was a hoot. But she also had a quote-unquote ‘bleeding heart’. She held so much compassion and care for others that she put his brothers and sisters to shame. She was what his Father saw in humans. Their potential to be better.

May-ish 1990, Toronto, Canada

Unfortunately all good things come to an end when it became obvious that a Canadian hunter had caught wind of his tricks. He set everything up to eventually get “caught” by the hunter. Shame really. He really kind of liked the guy. Definitely saw the irony and jokes in his tricks, even the more lethal ones. Also had some of the best reactions when he played more harmless ones on him. They even had a couple of really nice nights together before he realized who he was. However, nothing kills the mood quicker than a bloody stake through the chest. Lucky for him that he switched places with a double before his bed partner actually woke up. As the hunter leaves the hotel room Gabriel makes an anonymous complaint to the front desk about a possible violent altercation in his room.

He stays unseen has the staff come up and find his ‘dead’ body.

He stays unseen as Kira and Lucy come to the morgue to identify his body. He stays silent as Lucy breaks down into uncontrollable sobs and cries of pure anguish. He didn’t silently laugh at the human women for crying over someone they honestly didn’t truly know. Through them he’d learned how quickly humans form emotional bond with each other. Learned how strong they can be, even in such a short time. Part of him felt regret for not letting him know he wasn’t really dead. Regret for not telling them what he was. Regret for causing them pain.
Both women took over funeral arrangements and had the body double cremated. Gabriel filled the urn with wood ash once it was sealed. No need for anyone to wonder how ashes disappeared from a sealed urn.

It was four months after his ‘death’ and he kept an eye on his human friends, especially Lucy since she was taking it the hardest. He was actually there when they admitted their feelings for each other. ‘Called it.’ He thought with a sad smile, wishing he could be there to tease them endlessly and be a pillar of support for their new found relationship. Seeing that his friends would be alright now he leaves a couple of candy bars on the counter and snaps his fingers to head back to an apartment he started renting.

However when he arrived he felt tired. A simple flight to his apartment across town shouldn’t have even put a dent in his power levels! A lesser angel would be able to do that no problem, so an archangel shouldn’t even be feeling anything different!! Something was wrong. Ignoring his fatigue Gabriel begins pacing while looking inside himself to see if he could sense the problem. His pagan powers were intact nothing amiss there, so it had something to do with his grace. He immediately noticed that his immense grace was being siphoned off to somewhere else. ‘Father…’ it was even wrapping itself protectively around something inside him! It was small but it was slowly growing larger… inside his vessel’s womb.

“WHAT THE HELL?!”

Gabriel’s body had stopped moving and even his mind made a full stop, complete with imagined screeching brake noises, as he tried to process what he discovered. There nestled comfy cozy in his vessel and his immense grace was…was…a child. A child with a human soul and an archangel’s grace.

“A nephilim…” Gabriel let out in a stunned whisper. The next whisper that came out of the usually loud Gabriel was decidedly more horrified, “A nephilim of an archangel.”

Present

(Chuck writing)

*God watched as His son made the discovery of the little gift He had given him. Watched as he began freaking out and attempted to destroy it with his grace. It failed spectacularly. His son’s grace didn’t recognize the new little life growing inside of it as anything harmful or deadly. Instead, in an ironic twist of fate, it just circled and created an even stronger shield around the innocent life nestled inside it. So of course when he tried his pagan powers they couldn’t even scratch the surface of the grace’s shield, not that they had much of a chance before. With the extra*
shielding Gabriel began feeling even more tired.

God watched as Gabriel contemplated using his archangel blade to just stab it, but ultimately dismissed it. To kill it he would have to go through his own traitorous grace first, which of course would have the unpleasant side effect of killing himself as well. It would be an hour of failed plans and ideas before Gabriel would give up trying to get rid of the child growing inside of him. Gabriel, if asked, would deny that it had anything to do with his newfound tiredness that he threw in the towel for the time being. He of course would be lying.

God watched as Gabriel flopped onto his couch in a huff and glared heatedly at his stomach. Which, that now that he looked at it, had developed a slight bump. Physical proof of the predicament he found himself in.

God listened as Gabriel gave a prayer to him for the first time in a long time.

“Dad if this is some kind of joke it is NOT funny. Why? Why would you curse me like this?” God didn’t respond, not that Gabriel expected him to.

God smiled sadly, unseen, at His son. He hopes that Gabriel will see past His mistake of having all nephilim destroyed indiscriminately, thus labeled by the Host as dangerous abominations, and see the treasure that He encouraged to happen. The chance to experience the choice they have to make everyday. The one Gabriel admires about them. The choice to be and do better.

God leaves.

Satisfied Chuck reads over what could be considered a first chapter, or maybe a prologue? Shrugging he rubs his tired and strained eyes then looks at the red numbers of his clock scream 3:30am.

‘Ugh…sleep is a thing that is needed. A beautiful, beautiful needed thing…’ Chuck thinks before his head is filled with images and voices and pain. Minutes later the images and sounds disappear but the echo painfully remains. Despite his tiredness he is filled with the overwhelming determination to write out the events he has just witnessed.

‘Goodbye sweet sweet bed…’ Chuck laments as he saves his first bit of writing for a side book, or maybe a spin off series, before opening a new document on his computer and begins writing the next book for his Supernatural series. After a few shots of some heavy duty whiskey.
September-ish, 1990 Toronto, Canada

Gabriel wakes with a start on his couch, not realizing he had fallen asleep. Normally angels don’t need sleep, but it looked interesting enough that Gabriel had mastered the ability to conk out just over a millennium ago. He can honestly say he was probably addicted to it now, same as the refined sugar humans invented. Best. Human. Invention. EVER! Next to porn, of course. However, even though he was awake and alert he still had that faintness, that slight fatigue that he had when he flopped on the couch. It was better now, but not by much.

His vessels heart rate increases as he remembers, finally, the previous night’s discovery. He, Gabriel the Messenger of God, was pregnant with a nephilim child.

“Oh for fuck’s sake. I am so screeeeeeeewed,” he bemoans rubbing his face. Any and all ideas he had the night prior wouldn’t work to get rid of…of…this parasite growing inside of him. He’d thought last night about turning his vessel back into a male, no womb, no safe place to grow, instant abortion, problem solved!! No such luck. His grace more or less acted as a booster pack of power for the pagan powers that he acquired when he became a trickster. Thus making him more powerful than your average run of the mill trickster, and what made him THE Trickster god Loki. Now, however, with his grace betraying him it refuses to give more humph to his pagan powers. Therefore, the pagan mojo used to turn his custom made vessel into his current sexy female self wouldn’t be able to reverse the process.

“When this nightmare is over, and I am my regular gender again, I am NEVER turning female EVER AGAIN! I’m using solid fucking illusions to lure in male assholes instead!”

Gabriel angrily stares at the blank wall across from the couch with his arms crossed over his chest. He was slowly coming to the realization that the only way out of this was to wait until this thing was born and out of his body. Which if he guessed right from the size of the fetus should be in another 5 months or so. In which case the babe is born and the universe is torn apart from all the new power coming into existence. And he’d might be dead not long after the birth. Maybe. Probably.

“Shit…” he mumbles as THAT realization reaches his mind. Of course that’s if the Heavenly Host doesn’t shish kabob him before then for even getting pregnant in the first place… “Double-shit!!”
The only reason he could think of for not being found out was because of the little parasite being completely encompassed in his own grace, hiding it. However, with the way its feeding off of him he knew that as time progresses his grace won’t be strong, or large, enough to keep it hidden. He’s going to need to figure out a way to suppress its grace enough that it; a) doesn’t get him found out, b) doesn’t rip the known universe apart, and most importantly c) doesn’t kill him on the way OUT!! All this before all his angelic powers become too weak to do anything other than protect the nephilim and feed its growing grace.

The only thing he can think of to bring down the number of problems from three to two would be making sure he’s not found. It’s easy enough to carve Enochian sigils on a human’s ribs to hide them from demon and angel eyes, granted those humans were fully formed adults and didn’t have a traitorous archangel’s grace acting like an impenetrable shield.

Gabriel takes another look at the humanoid fetus growing inside him. Bone structures have formed but most of it was still cartilage, only having just begun absorbing calcium. Gabriel ponders over this. If the sigils appear in the cartilage will they stay when they’re converted to bone? It should work…but how to get around his grace?

“UGH!! It’s too early to think about this without a serious intake of sweet chocolately goodness!!” Snapping his fingers he uses his pagan mojo to conjure up an array of sweets and cakes. Gabriel smiles as he takes a large bite out of particularly fudgy chocolate cake. “At least cake hasn’t betrayed me!” That was the only thing he was thankful for at the moment, food not betraying him. Since he was four-ish months along he was able to skip over morning sickness. Probably. Maybe. Groaning in another bout of aggravation he realizes he doesn’t really know what to expect. He knew enough that it was hard on human females carrying their young, but he didn’t really know many specifics other than dramatizations seen on TV, the obvious belly enlargement, and that childbirth SUCKS! So yeah, totally looking forward towards THAT in five months. Note the subtle, not subtle, sarcasm.

Finishing his feast of sweet treats he figures the only way to get through this is to be as prepared as possible, which means he needs to know what to expect. ‘Humans have been doing this since their creation. They gotta have something on human pregnancy,’ he thought and goes to the only place he really knows that has a wealth of human information. The library. Snapping his fingers he flies to the Toronto Public Library. On Steeles. Because Toronto has three libraries all with the same name. What the Hell Toronto?

Gabriel staggers and grabs onto one of the bookcases, feeling that fatigue once again wash over him, as well as a wave of dizziness. Taking a few moments he waits till the dizziness is gone before straightening himself and looking around. From the looks of the book titles he has found himself in the Religion section. There’s some poetic irony here, he can taste it! Giving himself a small chagrined smile he makes his way around looking for a directory, which has obviously been masterfully hidden to annoy all the university students that go to school nearby.
He also must look so out of place that a library assistant asks if he needs any help finding something. Gabriel feels a brief flash of annoyance. He was the archangel Gabriel! Messenger of God! The pagan Trickster god Loki! He didn't need help finding one measly book in a maze of tall bookcases filled with thousands, or more...oh look the building is multistoried. With his grace going haywire and having no clue with what exactly he is looking for, he gives a defeated sigh and nods. Yes he needs help. Ouch. That hurt. Right in the pride and ego.

“I’m looking for books on pregnancy,” he asks. He wasn’t embarrassed. Nope not at all.

“Alright,” the assistant asks with a pondering look on their face. “Any specific topic of pregnancy?”

“There’s more than one?” he asks incredulously, eyes wide. Okay. That was unexpected.

“Yes, it all depends what you’re looking for,” they nod understandably. “Are looking for something more academic or medical? Maybe something more along the lines of prenatal care and development? Or…”

‘Development’ had piqued his interest. “I’m guessing development? I just kinda wanna know what to expect in the coming months…” Gabriel admits with a shrug. He totally was pulling of nonchalance, because after all he was not embarrassed. Nope! Definitely n-

“No need to be embarrassed!” Or he was totally embarrassed and his nonchalance has failed. “Congratulations by the way. How far along are you?”

“Um about four months?” he responds cautiously. The assistant nods in understanding and asks him to follow her.

“I’ve had three children myself, all pregnancies were different. Just little things mind you. Most general symptoms were the same.” The kindly old librarian assistant starts as they walk through the maze of shelves.

“You went through this three times?! Why?!” Gabriel asks gob smacked. Sure he knew humans reproduced it seemed like rabbits but why would you subject yourself to it three times!!

The oldish woman lets out a laugh, keeping it quiet. “Well not all of them were planned, obviously.
But if you think three’s a big number you should know my mother had me and seven other children.”

Gabriel almost felt like his eyes were going to pop out of his skull. Eight? EIGHT?! “Please tell me your mother was Wonder Woman.”

She lets out a loud surprised snort before muffling her laughter. “No, but she was wonderful. Did all she could for us kids. Made sure we knew how much we were loved and wanted…” the woman’s eyes grew slightly distant and sad “…granted our family was small compared to the others on the reserve. It was expected to have large families when not all the children made it past childhood.” Gabriel could feel the uneasiness rise inside of him. “My parents, my mother especially, would grieve as though the world had ended when anyone of my siblings didn’t make it. Probably why I cherished my children, despite being a bunch of surprises. Never know when your whole world will come crumbling down.”

Part of him wanted to relate, but he couldn’t really imagine it. The closest he came was when He left, but even then he got more mad then sad. Gabriel remembered the deep sadness of when his brother Lucifer fell and when Michael caged him, but it wasn’t the same sadness that this woman described.

“Sorry,” his voice sounding more confused and like he was asking a question. The woman just waved off his attempt at consolation.

“In the past. I’ve long since come to terms that only my sister, brother and I made it to adulthood. Pneumonia in young children,” she explained, “nasty business.”

After that they ascended some stairs, and it was a just few more feet before they reached the prenatal/parenting section. There had to have been hundreds of books. When he voiced this out loud he received a small laugh and the kind old library assistant pulled a few books for expecting mothers. Apparently the look of relief on Gabriel’s feminine face garnered another small chuckle before being left to his reading.

Four Months (12weeks): Changes to Your Body

Dizziness (yes)
Congestion (no)
Mild swelling of ankles and feet (checks…nope)
Sensitive gums (not sure…check with ice cream…fuck…yes)
Achiness in lower abdomen (not yet)
Varicose veins/hemorrhoids (nooooo-maybe)
Weight gain, which includes increased appetite (this when it starts happening)

Mood-swings ie. Irritability, forgetfulness, apprehension as looking plump
Wreaks havoc on sex-life ie. Mood-killers fatigue and nausea (nausea might still be a thing?!!) or if really lucky extra blood flow to the right spots (please please please)
Still safe to have sex and won’t harm or emotionally scar the baby (what about my emotional scarring for being pregnant?!)

Gabriel skims over the pregnancy ‘do’s’ and latches onto ‘maternity clothes’. Looking down at his less than loose clothing, and knowing the thing was going to get him to start packing on the pounds, looks like maternity clothing will be a must. Thank Dad he can still alter his clothes using his pagan magic.

Making a mental note of where this section of the library is, he snaps his fingers and appears back in his apartment. Cue more dizziness and fatigue. Gabriel lounges on the sofa, eating a candy bar as he contemplates more on his predicament. He knew now what to expect for the next little bit, when his grace decides that the thing growing inside him needs more of its power to supply its own growing grace than he does. Despite being what some may think of as a goof, Gabriel was pretty smart. Had to be in order to avoid every hunter that’s come after the Trickster and for coming up with new tricks. He could hazard with a good guess that when he needs to start eating more for the fleshy part of the thing to keep developing/robbing his vessel of nutrients, it will do the same thing to his grace. This means he’s got to think of something fast before the thing starts guzzling too much of it.

Unfortunately, the only thing he can do at the moment is try to put Enochian warding sigils on the cartilage that is slowly turning to bone. Gabriel pushes the coffee table further away from the couch, incase he pitches forward. Who knows if his grace will deign it necessary to heal him? Sitting back and getting comfortable, he places a hand on his lower abdomen where the thing was developing. Carefully he uses some grace and begins probing at the shield again with more innocent intentions. He shouldn’t need to since he’s supposed to be in control of it but it has gone rogue, in his opinion. The shield doesn’t budge. Sure it’ll let him see how far it’s developing but actually letting him have power behind it close to the fetus? Mmmmmm-no. Maybe if he projected that he wanted the same thing? Had the same purpose as the shield? Well the warding was more to protect him than the thing but if he’s safe then it is safe. Sending that emotion into the grace he still could control, the shield let him pass. Gabriel knew if he even tried to change his intentions from protection to ‘get rid of’ the shield would shut down his connection to the bit of grace he has before his vessel’s heart made a single beat.

Slowly his grace flowed into the thing’s developing body, more accurately mapping out the cartilage structure that will become its skeletal system. Carefully he carves each symbol in the rib section. It was quick, but he could tell the thing jumped from the sudden searing pain. Thankfully nothing else happened. The shield didn’t cut him off, sensing that in the long run it’d be for the best. Gabriel retracts his grace from behind the shield and the shield closes. Focusing he finds that
the developing new grace has been fully hidden, along with the beginnings of a soul.

That’s one problem solved. Now no matter if the thing’s grace gets too big or his grace can no longer keep it hidden, the Heavenly Host will be none the wiser that there is a nephilim gestating on Earth. Inside an archangel. How screwed was he?
Of course the warding won’t matter much if the birth itself starts tearing at the fabric of the universe and he still has the chance of biting it.

Despite his vast knowledge he never really paid attention when God was teaching him and his older brothers when they were younger. Learning to fight? Sure. Learning special angel magic that could help with pranks? Oh hell yes. But trying to suppress another angel’s grace? Eh. Gabriel knew that if he wanted (read: needed) to suppress this thing’s growing grace enough to keep the universe from self-destructing, and from being axed when giving birth, he needed a special book. A book that was only found in a place called the Heavenly Archives. So he’d basically have to sneak into Heaven, get to the Archives, find the book, and then sneak back out. Simple right? No, not really when you take into account the entirety of the Heavenly Host and his remaining older brothers the archangels Michael and Raphael. So, fun times ahead.

Gabriel knew he’d have to make the trip soon since he gets fatigued and dizzy just from flying to a library within a city. If he doesn’t act soon he won’t be able to make it up to Heaven. Gabriel consumes more of his sugary treats, hoping that the extra energy will give him a slight boost, before snapping his fingers and taking off towards Heaven.

As he approaches he keeps a large distance between himself and Heaven’s Gate. No way he was waltzing through the front door and getting made right off the bat. Thankfully though, over the last couple of millennia, he had discovered something interesting about Heaven. It had back doors leading into it.

Gabriel can feel his fatigue growing the longer he stays in flight. He pushes his six wings to get to the back door closest to the Archives, just making it. The back door is just a small little tear in the walls that surround Heaven, in a long forgotten room, down a long forgotten hallway. It was behind the stands in which the Heavenly Choir once stood to sing their Father’s praises and their love for Him, hidden further by organized piles of forgotten instruments. As Gabriel pulls himself into the room, just past the tear and still hidden by the instruments, he takes a few minutes to rest. Thankfully no dizziness that time.

During his rest is when he finally notices how quite the room is. Where are his younger siblings? Why aren’t they still singing? Gabriel remembers hearing their songs as he fled Heaven. Even long after, until he just tuned out all their voices all together. Shaking off the slight sense of dread he picks his way through the piles of instruments that if they were on Earth would probably have the thickest blanket of dust and grime ever covering them. Reaching the end of the stands he looks out into the vast cavernous room that echoed in nothing but silence. He makes his way through the
emptiness towards the one of the doors finding it thankfully still unlocked. After all, why would they need to lock up an empty room filled with nothing but stands and old instruments?

He peaks his head out to see if anyone was around before putting on his best casual face and starts walking towards the center of Heaven. He’d have to cut through the Garden before making it to the Archives. The closer to the center he gets the more angels he begins to see. Some he recognizes instantly, others he barely recognizes, and then there were those where he had to keep himself from doing a double take. Those were the angels that he knew well, that he could recognize instantly from just the way they carried themselves in their vessels. This was before he fled Heaven. Now if it weren’t for the most unnoticeable brush of his grace he would have thought they were some new uptight angels he hadn’t had the chance to get to know. One such angel was a seraph named Castiel. Catching a look at his face was disconcerting. A face that once looked upon everything with endless curiosity and questions, now showed very little. His face fixed in the direction he wanted to go, eyes barely flickering around. There seemed to be no trace of that buoyant, happy, curious fledging he had seen before he left. He pushes back another wave of dread.

Another thing he noticed before seeing his first angel was that no one had his or her wings out. They were in Heaven; there really wasn’t any need to keep them hidden. Well, unless they were horribly under groomed and were too embarrassed to showcase them. Good news for him since he won’t have to pretend he was a busy little angel that didn’t have time to properly groom his feathers, and wouldn’t have to decline anyone offering their assistance. Still the lack of wings was a little unsettling. As with how militant everyone seemed to act.

Gabriel releases a slight sigh as he makes it unimpeded to the Garden. Now all he has to do is make it past its Gardener, Joshua. He does his best to remain stealthy, knowing Joseph was one of the older and keener angels than the ones he passed on the way in. He was almost-

“Hello Brother,” a voice came from behind him. “It has been quite some time since you were last here. If I recall you left. Or that you were dead being the consensus.” Gabriel stops. Turning around to find Joshua standing there with a serene and happy smile. “I am glad that the later was just a rumor, Gabriel.”

Oh shit.

“Heeeeeeeey Joshua. Fancy seeing you here. Yeah no I’m, obviously, still alive as you can see. Just passing through…going to the Archives…for a book.”

Joshua raises an amused eyebrow at the sheepish archangel, not calling him on his less than ‘I-am-totally-not-up-to-something-I-am-totally-innocent’ response.
“I see,” Joshua says with a knowing smile. “So does this book have nothing to do with the little bundle your vessel is currently carrying?”

“You need to lay off the angel weed little Brother. My arms are empty,” Gabriel responds with his trademark smirk, spreading his arms out in a ‘see’ gesture. Though inside his panic levels were rising.

“Mmhmm,” Joshua hums knowingly. “You know the Archives contain many different kinds of books, including ones most angels don’t know about or ever thought to look for. Such as one our Father made after the genocide of all nephilim on Earth. After all,” Joshua pauses as he looks at Gabriel meaningfully, “most of the nephilim that turned against their human parentage might not have if their mothers had survived their birth.”

‘Oh he knows,’ Gabriel thought. ‘He totally knows.’ Cue more internal panic.

“Yeah that’s real interesting, but…uh not looking for a book on nephilim. Thanks though. Great chat. I’ll-”

“Come back to speak with me on your way back from the Archives,” Joshua interrupts and gives Gabriel a pointed look. “We can talk more then.” With that Joshua turns his back on Gabriel and walks further into the Garden, his fingertips brushing against trees, bushes, and tall grass.

Gabriel takes moment to calm his vessel’s racing heart and quell the rising panic.

‘Well hasn’t this gone to Hell in a hand basket.’

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!
Whatchu Talkin' About Willis?

Chapter Notes

AN: I realized after reading other supernatural fanfiction that I didn’t have the right dates I wanted for when Gabriel’s daughter will be born. This also means she’ll be younger than I wanted but I can work with this…hopefully. Ah well.

As it is in Heaven, then so it shall be on Earth.

Gabriel tries to keep calm. Really he does. He tries to reason with himself that if Joshua knows about the thing currently growing inside him, and didn’t out right try to stab him in the back, and wants to talk more, he probably won’t alert the rest of the Host. Hopefully. On a normal day he’d probably be able to take on most of the Host, because, hello! Archangel! But in his current condition? That’s pretty iffy.

Gabriel reaches the other exit from the Garden and has to take more time to calm his freaking nerves. He still has to stealth (ie: don’t-mind-me-just-another-generic-angel-nothing-suspicious-here) a little ways towards the Archives. Once again none of the other angels took notice of him, and neither of the remaining archangels were anywhere to be seen.

Reaching the entrance to the Archives Gabriel pokes his head in through the large, heavy, ornate doors. Much like the Choir/Music room the room he entered was cavernous in its enormity with rows upon rows of shelves that reached high into the dizzying heights of the ceiling, only dwarfed by the sheer enormous space of this room. You could look down one row of bookshelves and not actually see where it ended. Gabriel could hear the faint echoing flutter of wings within the stacks, but just the one pair.

Gabriel’s eyebrows furrowed in confusion. Wasn’t there supposed to be more than one angel looking after the entirety of the Archives? With how far the pair of wings was, from how faint the echo was it was safe to assume the angel was in some far corner of the Archives. It was unlikely that they would run into each other. Now on to the problem at hand, finding a book on sealing grace. He could only be thankful that there was a book directory. Unfortunately it was in the form of the largest book and thickest book ever created, with very small print; and pages that seemed too fragile and thin to be turned without ripping.

Gabriel makes his way over to the podium with the directory and about to turn the pages to where the book he has in mind should be listed when he remembers what Joshua had told him. Curiosity surges and he turns the pages to where books on nephilims might be. He carefully reads over the different book titles till he finds some on nephilims. There were a couple and Gabriel is unsure which one Joshua was referring to. Noting the titles and their locations he makes his way further
into the stacks of the Archives.

In a far off corner of the Archives was where he found himself, seemingly in another forgotten corner of Heaven. Gabriel could tell by the conditions of the books that none of them had been touched for a very very long time. As he reaches one section of the book self he finds the first of the handful books on nephilims. Grabbing the first one he skims the book to find it is a brief history/origin story of nephilims.

“Nephilims were the offspring of the sons of Heaven and daughters of Adam, most forcefully sired by the Fallen angels that had followed the Morning Star in his rebellion against God…”

“…unfortunately for the time period, when a child was born out of wedlock, and the mother having always died from childbirth, leaving the child at the mercy of…”

“…most of these children grew up unloved, unwanted, and fell prey easily to the sins Lucifer unleashed upon mankind, the predominant one being hatred for those who wronged them…”

“…when they were fully grown and their grace fully developed and cultivated did the hatred for those that wronged them was acted upon. They turned against humans and unleashed horrible destruction or forced their way into power to subjugate…”

“…God saw His creations’ distress and had ordered Michael to take Heaven’s Army and destroy the tainted nephilim. They obeyed, and slaughtered blindly.”

Gabriel paused after reading those last two sentences. A feeling of dread curled inside him. He remembered the order, having related it to all of Heaven, but he hadn’t participated in it. He remembered when the soldiers came back they were filled with pride for fulfilling their Father’s request. He also remembered his Father hiding His sadness behind closed doors. At the time he thought it was because those nephilim had caused His human creations such pain and strife.

“…destroy the tainted nephilim. They obeyed, and slaughtered blindly.”
‘Were there good nephilim?’ Gabriel wondered. Shaking the thought from his head he quickly put the book back and grabbed another one. Which was decidedly more helpful than the impromptu history lesson. This one contained information on the biology of nephilim and their growth.

“When nephilim are born they unleash a burst of powerful energy into the universe, the more powerful the angel parent the more powerful the energy burst. Unfortunately this burst of energy is what kills the human mother…”

“…as nephilim grow, so does their power. Over time the nephilim will become more powerful than their angel parent, from the nephilim’s grace being powered, unfiltered, by its own soul…”

‘Well that’s not good,’ frowned Gabriel. This thing he was carrying, if allowed to live, would become more powerful than even he is! And he’s an archangel! ‘Definitely not good…’

“Unlike their angel parents nephilim are born without wings and don’t have the ability to fly…”

“…has the soul of a human and grace of an angel, two parts sharing the same body, neither superseding the other. This is different than when an angel inhabits a vessel where the human soul is pushed back, leaving the angel in control of…”

“…in the womb nephilim are not as vulnerable as a human child in case of the mother’s illness or injury during the pregnancy. Only after, when the nephilim is born, is it completely helpless. However, as the nephilim grows, along with its power, the less helpless it becomes.”

Sighing through his nose Gabriel closes this one and goes to put it back on the shelf, but hesitates thinking it could be useful later on. Giving a mental shrug he shrinks the book down and places it
in one of his pants pockets. Looking at the bookshelf he sees the final book on nephilim and picks it up. It was definitely newer than the first two. The style of the binding suggested it was less than a couple hundred years old. He doesn’t dwell on it too much before opening it up.

A flutter of wings was heard close by. Cursing Gabriel closes the book before reading anything and shrinks it down as well and slips it in another pocket. Carefully Gabriel makes his way to the exit heading in the opposite direction of the sound flapping wings. When he could anyway. But luck really hated him today and his stealthing skills were apparently not up to par.

“He Hello Sister,” came a young voice called out before he could get out of sight. Stopping he comes out from around the corner he almost turned to look at a very young angel. Young, of course, being relative. Gabriel couldn’t recognize the young angel looking at him with a slight head tilt. ‘Must have been a fledgling when I left. A really young one if he doesn’t even realize I’m a male angel in a female vessel,’ were Gabriel’s thoughts as he also gives a greeting.

“Hello Brother,” Gabriel gives a small smile but that drops as its not returned. The young angel’s face remains pretty emotionless other than the remaining head tilt. It was kind of creeping him out to be honest. At his age he could hardly keep still let alone just standing there like a statue.

“What are you dong in the Ancient Archives Sister?” he asks. Thankfully his tone of voice wasn’t as devoid of emotion as Gabriel was able to pick up that faint tone of curiosity. So the kid wasn’t accusing him of anything. Good. “Were you looking for something? Can I help?”

‘Oh Dad the precious innocence of little brothers…’ Gabriel thinks as he negatively shakes his head to the angel’s request.

“Nope. I’m good. I found what I was looking for. Thanks though.” The young angel nods his head and goes to turn around. “Hey I don’t think we’ve met. What’s your name kid?” Gabriel can’t help but ask. Come on it’s a sibling he doesn’t really know! Gotta at least know his name right?

The young angel gives a slight indignant frown at hearing being called a ‘kid’ but responds, “Samandriel. My name is Samandriel. What is yours Sister?”

“Gabriella,” easily rolls off his tongue. Nodding Samandriel turns and heads further into the Archives.

Gabriel turns and makes his way to the exit releasing a silent sigh of relief. Making his way out the
do not want to take the chance that Joshua would alert Heaven to his presence and the presence of the little illegal tag along he has taking up space in his vessel. He makes it to the Garden, once again, unnoticed. Moving through the foliage he makes his way to the center of the Garden knowing Joshua would most likely be there...and he was right. Joshua had his back to him while tending the plants.

“Your back,” Joshua stated, not turning around still tending to the plant he was focused on.

“Well didn’t have much a choice did I?” Gabriel says sarcastically.

Joshua chuckles softly at his response. “Perhaps,” Joshua says as he turns around, “but you still could have chosen not to come back.”


“I trust you found what you were looking for in the Archives?”

“Yep,” Gabriel responded shortly, arms crossed.

“So you had enough time to look through the book to make sure it has the information you’re looking for?” Joshua inquired, raising a questioning eyebrow.

Gabriel couldn’t hold back the slight stiffening of his body.

“After all, it must have taken a great deal of energy to come all the way here in your condition,” insert pointed look here. “I don’t think you would be able to make the trip again should you try again.”

It was silent between the angel and the archangel as they stared each other down. Gabriel tries to keep his posture straight, relaxed, unconcerned but Joshua could still see the tension in his shoulders. Minutes passed before Gabriel releases a sigh and slumps a little.

“Alright, what do you know Joshua?”

“Yeeeeaaaaah, but it’s being handled. I’ll get rid of it once it’s out of me.”

Joshua stares at the archangel in front of him blankly at what he just heard.

“You will kill the child once it’s born?” Joshua asks bewildered, “Your child?”

Gabriel narrows his eyes at the Gardner. “It’s an abomination Joshua. It shouldn’t even exist! Dad even ordered for the destruction of all nephilim---“

“All tainted nephilim.” Joshua interrupts softly. Gabriel stops whatever he’s about to say, remembering what he read on their origins. Seeing this Joshua continues “Do you not wonder why our Father sequestered Himself away after the armies of Heaven returned celebrating the destruction of the nephilims on Earth?”

“Figured He felt for His human creations that suffered at their hands.” Gabriel didn’t like where this was going. He was already having little bits of doubt, but the nephilim had to go. It would grow to be too powerful. If Heaven found out it would be hunted for the rest of its life, not to mention him for carrying it. And then there were the denizens of Hell. If they ever got wind of it they’d also hunt it down for its power.

“Our Brothers and Sisters misunderstood, as it seems you have as well. They were to destroy the nephilim that were evil, whom used their powers to do great harm.” A look of sadness crosses his face. “They also slaughtered those that were devout and used their powers to help and heal, as well as the children that had yet to choose who they wanted to be. Not all were out of the womb yet, and not all were tainted.”

A pit of dread sat heavy in Gabriel’s stomach. “It shouldn’t exist.” Gabriel forces out, his voice soft and lacking the earlier certainty.

“Why?”

Gabriel scoffs. “Wh-why?! It’s not right! It’s a parasite that’s leeching off my vessel and my
grace!! Let's not forget it’s just going to be hunted by Heaven and Hell and damn near everything else in between! A-a-and it'll be too powerful! It could go psycho and destroy—! It-i-it’s not—!” Gabriel stops himself, but Joshua knew exactly what he was about to say.

“Not natural?” Joshua offers. Gabriel doesn’t move as he looks away from the other angel. “If it wasn’t natural, or possible, then nephilim wouldn’t exist period. Our Father wouldn’t have made it possible.” Gabriel knew that too.

“What do you want me to say Joshua? That I’ll let the little thing live and grow up? That I’ll raise it? It’s the nephilim hybrid of a human and an angel! Scratch that. Of a human and an archangel. This thing could grow up to be some extremely powerful being whose only match may be my older brothers. Or Dad if he wanted to get involved. This thing could destroy everything.” Gabriel told Joshua, in tones of slight defeat and pleading. He wanted Joshua to stop trying to change his mind on the fate of the thing growing inside him. Wants him to stop feeding the doubt he was having. Gabriel tenses, waiting for another round of verbal sparring. He does not see the answer that Joshua sends his way.

“You’re right,” Cue the confused blinking face of Gabriel.

“What?”

“You’re right. The child could very well grow up to be a great threat to Heaven and Earth, even Hell. It could choose to go down a very dark and lonely path filled with anger and hatred, especially since its father seems determined to get rid of it. If you did let it live it will go into the foster care system, since you don’t want it, and might end up as those children that fall through the cracks. Might become one of those that know nothing of love and family. That only knows sadness, anger, hatred, abuse, and betrayal.” Joshua replies calmly. “After all, most of the nephilim before it went through such unimaginable horrors before reaching maturity that their human souls became twisted, tainting them.”

“What are you getting at little brother?” Gabriel carefully asks. Feel the suspicious stare Joshua. Feel it.

“Did it ever occur to you to raise your child as a loving and caring parent? That if you did so, the child won’t be as likely to follow the same path as its predecessors?”

Gabriel snorts. “Sorry bro, no dice. Not happening, and that’s if I don’t put my angel blade through its heart once it’s out.” Nice try Joshua, but sorry, not sorry.
Joshua gives a long sigh, staring at the archangel in front of him. “Very well. Though…please stop comparing your child to the nephilim of the past. It’s yet to choose its path and you shouldn’t assume it’s not an innocent child because of events it had no control over.”

“You done Joshua?” Because Gabriel was just about done.

“Almost,” Joshua says with a small smile, “I suggest you look at the book you obtained and for your flight home you can take the Garden’s exit from Heaven. Much easier flight currents, and is no longer patrolled as it once was.”

“Not going to keep trying to change my mind?” Gabriel asks sarcastically as he pulls out the second, newer book he swiped from the Archives.

“I only have one more question,” Joshua responds. Gabriel rolls his eyes and nods his head at him, telling him to go ahead. “Have you thought of trying to be better?”

“Be better at what?” Gabriel asks exasperated.

“Being a better father than our own.”

“I’m done Joshua,” Gabriel states seriously, his grip on the hapless book tightening. He was now done with his brother. He was so close to whacking the shit out of him.

“I’ll leave you to your reading.” Joshua yields, “Find me when you’re ready to leave.”

Gabriel watches as he leaves, going further into the trees. Giving a satisfied huff, Gabriel turns his attention to the book he didn’t have time to look at earlier. Flipping through the first set of pages he realizes something very quickly.

It’s a fucking guide on how to survive being pregnant with a nephilim. Seriously?! If nephilim weren’t allowed why would there be a guide on how to survive birthing them? ‘Probably was supposed to help the poor women that got pregnant with them…’ Gabriel thought.
Gabriel couldn’t stop the flinch when he heard Joshua’s voice in his head, from what he said earlier. He could admit to himself that his little siblings made a mistake killing the human mothers along with the abominations they carried. Then celebrating about it. That wasn’t cool. Probably why the book was created. Save the mothers but get rid of the nephilim brat. Right?

The doubt inside him wouldn’t let him accept that excuse.

Looking inside the book Gabriel finds what he’s looking for. A way to suppress its grace, and from the looks of it it would be an almost complete suppression of it. Gabriel studies the sigils, their placements, and their function.

He will need to create the grace suppressing sigils between the layer of skin and the muscles. The imprints will ingrain themselves so completely that only another angel that knew what they were doing could break them. Also from what he can tell the Enochian sigil imprints will push the nephilim’s grace down almost completely within the human soul. Only a small part of the grace would be peaking out. This greatly reduces the amount of power the grace can wield or utilize.

So in other words, the nephilim will be born almost completely human. No large energy burst threatening all of creation, and no energy that will kill him when he gives birth. Yay!

Looking at more of the text he sees that he’ll have to do this soon. It’s going to require a lot of angel mojo, but will he have enough? From what the book says of when during development that he’s got to do this, his time was almost up. If he could get away with it he should try to do it now before he leaves. Being in Heaven he has better access to its power and he’ll replenish his own grace quicker than down on Earth. Then again, because it requires so much juice he just might alert all of Heaven to his presence here. Even if he manages to flee before anyone reaches him they would all know that he’s alive, since most believe him dead. That might just start an archangel hunt on Earth that right now he really doesn’t need.

“Need help Brother?” Gabriel nearly jumps out of his vessel at the sudden sound of Joshua’s voice.

“Jesu—ah—jeez it! Not calling that twats name. Damn it Joshua!” Joshua gives a totally unapologetic smile to the startled archangel. Sighing, after calming down, Gabriel answers Joshua’s question, “Yeah I might. I need to use a whole lot of angel mojo for imprinting these Enochian sigils on the nephilim.” Gabriel shows Joshua the sigils. “Thing is it would be better for me to do it here since I won’t become completely drained and I’ll recover faster than on Earth…”
“But to do it in Heaven would be running the risk of attracting the attention of Heaven. Which given your status at the moment is unwise.” Joshua surmises. Gabriel nods in affirmation.

“Exactly. You know if the Garden’s got a hidey hole for me?” Gabriel partially jokes.


“Whatchu talkin’ about Willis?”
He Knew?!

Chapter Notes

AN: I got a message about the book from last chapter saying that nephilim don’t have wings, since Jack has wings. I’m not watching season 13 till its on Netflix but I still do research so I shouldn’t say something now and not have it line up with season 13 later on.

Anyway, I only put that in the book ‘cause I don’t remember Jane (first nephilim on the show) being able to teleport/fly. So I assumed it was because her angelic parent was a lesser angel, where as Jack and Gabriel’s daughter are/will be children of archangels, the most powerful angels.

I’d also like to point out that my OC won’t have the same powers as Jack because her development had different circumstances with the suppression sigils. So its like she’s a nephilim, but also not.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gabriel looks at Joshua dumbfounded, giving him the best ‘seriously?’ face he could muster.

Joshua just stands there looking a little smug. The twerp.

“Care to elaborate on that little Brother?”

Joshua chuckles, “Not really no.” His small grin gets a little larger. Gabriel crosses his arms in a huff.

“Well then how do I know that when I make the Enochian imprints that I won’t have the Heavenly Host on my ass?” Gabriel asks suspiciously.

“If that was my intention then you would’ve been caught ten times over by now,” Joshua responds glibly. Gabriel frowns impressively knowing he was right. If Joshua really wanted to out him, and his condition, he’d have done it by now. Not keep quiet and give him a direction to follow when looking for the book he needed, or offer an easier escape route. There was something going on and Gabriel wanted to know what.

“Well excuse me for being a little bit paranoid—“
“You are excused,” Joshua interrupts amicably. Gabriel pauses as he looks at Joshua, trying to figure out if Joshua was being literal when he excused him, or he made an attempt at a human joke. Joshua looks at Gabriel with a self-satisfied smirk. The cretin made a human joke. Huh. Sadly Gabriel was in no mood to give praise to Joshua for his understanding and successful application of human jokes.

“As I was saying,” Gabriel gives a pointed stare as he continues, “sorry for being a little paranoid when my life, and secondly the fate of the universe, is on the line. So if you can tell me how the entirety of the Garden can suppress a serious spike of archangel mojo it would be greatly appreciated.”

“The same way the Garden was protected from when Michael and Lucifer used to fight and their grace would crash against it in hostile waves,” Joshua pauses thinking on his next words. “It was how we kept fledglings safe here in the Garden. None in the Garden would realize that Michael and Lucifer were fighting again if it weren’t for their voices carrying.” Joshua waits as he stares as Gabriel expectantly.

Gabriel knew all this. Hell he was one of the ones to help put up all the protection sigils. All this kept outside grace out, but it doesn’t explain how—wait a minute.

“You reversed the protection sigils,” Gabriel stated, as he looks at Joshua surprised. It was so simple. Add a sigil here; replace another here, and bam! A way to keep massive amounts of grace contained and undetected.

Joshua nodded in confirmation. “Granted, what I added and changed will only last for one power spike as I am not another archangel.”

Gabriel nods in understanding, but also wonders. When could Joshua have had time to do this? He couldn’t have possibly known Gabriel was pregnant until he showed up today. To make all the changes and make sure that nothing interferes detrimentally with the original protection sigils… he’d have to have known about his condition for at least a few weeks before his arrival today.

“Joshua,” Gabriel says looking Joshua in the eye, “exactly how long did you know I was pregnant? To do all this you would have had to know about the nephilim longer than I have. And I’m the one carrying it!” To Joshua’s credit he didn’t flinch or back down from the growing anger of the normally laid back archangel. Though that didn’t mean he didn’t silently acknowledge the mood change from contemplative to something slightly less than murderous. Regarding the seething archangel Joshua chooses his next words carefully.
“Our Father spoke to me about your arrival and asked me to aid you,” Joshua pauses looking at Gabriel to gauge his response, finding an impatient eyebrow raise he continues. “He said you’d be arriving when you discovered the nephilim child within you. He guided me in temporarily reversing the effects of the sigils on the Garden.”

“You spoke to Dad,” Gabriel stated calmly, his face blank except for his eyes. Those barely held back the rising rage he was feeling. He was the fourth son! The fourth archangel in all of creation! His Messenger! But instead of him, He chooses to converse with this random seraph?! This Gardener?!

“Not speak. I only listen to what He has to say. Conversations between us are very one-sided,” Joshua eyes Gabriel, deftly picking up on the rising anger in the archangel in front of him. Thankfully Gabriel’s anger was not directed at him, but at Him.

“He knows and is leaving me like this?!” Gabriel asks enraged and hurt. Does his Father think so little of him that He’d let him be put through all of this? Was He that disappointed in what he’s been up to for the past few millennia that He felt this was necessary? There was some irony in this, he knows it, but he was too ticked off to really care.

“I was under the impression that He saw this as a gift—“

“A GIFT?! HA! More like some fucked up curse or punishment!” Gabriel barks out in a self-deprecating laugh. “Am I going to expect wrathful retribution if I kill this thing before it has the chance to give out its first cry?” He sneered cruelly at the shocked Gardner.

Joshua stares at the archangel. His eyes flickered briefly to the barely noticeable bump on the archangel’s female vessel. His eyes filled with sadness for the babe not yet born and the fate that awaits it should its father go through with his cruel intentions.

Sighing sadly Joshua responds to Gabriel’s demand in a soft voice, “No. Should you go through with choosing to end the child’s life once it is born there will be no punishment.”

An unkind grin worthy of a mischief making, chaos causing Trickster spread across Gabriel’s face at Joshua’s answer. He leans slightly forward with his hands on his hips, “That’s all I needed to know little Bro.” Gabriel straightens then claps and rubs his hands together conspiratorially before announcing gleefully, “Now if you’ll excuse me, I have some suppressing sigils to imprint to keep myself and the universe from being torn apart.”
Joshua watches, disappointedly, as Gabriel walks away to find a quiet spot to concentrate. “Please Father,” Joshua prays quietly and pleadingly, “help him see the gift he was given.” He doesn’t know if he was heard, and if he was, he was unsure whether He would interfere. After all, free will was such a tricky thing. To have it and to use it was to accept all the benefits that come from it, as well as all the consequences. Sighing Joshua returns to his duties tending to the Garden.

It would be a couple hours before Joshua feels the spike in archangel magic increase in a large swell before disappearing as quickly as it appeared. The reversed protection sigils held and were now disintegrating from the rest, leaving the original protections for the Garden in place and unchanged. Now there was nothing left to do but to wait until the child was born and its fate decided. Joshua leaves his pruning to go check on Gabriel to see how he was fairing with the energy drain caused by imprinting the sigils under the underside the nephilim’s skin. He found Gabriel lying on his back, hidden under a willow tree’s branches, unconscious with his legs still crossed. He observes as Gabriel untangles his legs in his sleep and rolls to one side in a fetal position to instinctively protect his mid-section, to protect the new life growing within.

Joshua gives a little smile. Perhaps Gabriel will change his mind before the child was born, or when he first holds them. Whether Gabriel knew it or not the little one was getting to him. As more of Gabriel’s grace was siphoned off for the child, the more human the archangel was becoming, increasing the natural occurring instincts that most humans experience when confronted with babies and children. The innate desire to protect and love them. He leaves the slumbering archangel be, for now, and tends to a part of the Garden nearby. It wouldn’t do to have another angel visit and stumble upon the weakened and nephilim carrying archangel.

Gabriel lets out a groan as he wakes up stretching his limbs like a cat. Looking around he tries to recall what happened. Oh. Right. Used up a lot of angel magic imprinting suppressing Enochian sigils in the underside of a still developing thing’s skin.

He felt like crap. He could feel an achiness in his vessel he was unaccustomed with, as well as the general tiredness he was more used to since his discovery, what? Two days ago now? Doesn’t mean he had to like it. His grace was still feeding the thing’s growing grace, that was now engulfed within its little soul, but was replenished enough from being in Heaven for him to make the flight back to his apartment. Picking himself up he makes his way around the Garden looking for Joshua. Best to make a break for it before he uses up the good luck he’s been having so far.

It was nice being home, but it would be better if there wasn’t a metaphorical and, probably, literal sword dangling over him the longer he stayed. Though, with the way all the angels he’s seen have been acting, it might be for the best he wasn’t able to stay.
Spotting Joshua with his back to him he approaches. “Heeeeeeeey Joshua. Wanna help a Brotha out?” He says with a smirk.

“I assume you’re talking about the back door to Earth from the Garden?” Joshua confirms without taking his eyes off his pruning of some orchids.

“Yeeeeeeeeeeeeees~. Can you show me~?” Gabriel asks with a childish grin and a singsong voice. Joshua gives an amused snort before motioning with his hand for Gabriel to follow him. Gabriel was slightly surprised that the tension from the earlier conversation seemed to have disappeared, not that he showed it. He was honestly not going to bother questioning Joshua’s improved mood, since he really didn’t want to get into it again, and he wanted to get out of there ASAP.

Joshua leads Gabriel to a forgotten corner of the Garden, filled with wild and untamed plants, and trees growing however they wanted. Gabriel raises an eyebrow at the overgrown brush, then turns to Joshua giving a questioning motion with his hand of ‘what’s this?’. Joshua gives a secret smile before pushing aside some thick underbrush, showing a large old, sagole baobab tree with multiple extremely thick trunks growing out of the same spot. It wasn’t as tall as say a giant sequoia tree, but it was one of the thickest trees, with lots of creases and crevices. Joshua pulls himself up onto one of the thick branching trunks/branches, turning to see if Gabriel was following. Rolling his eyes Gabriel, too, pulls himself up into the tree to follow. Joshua climbs further between the thick trunks towards the inner ring of trunks and branches before stopping and motioning for Gabriel to look at the center of the ring.

“Admittedly it will be a tight squeeze,” Joshua smiles good-naturedly as Gabriel gets a peak at his escape route. “But that’s one of the reasons why Heaven’s Army doesn’t guard it as they used to. With the opening so small and all the twisting and turning and thick underbrush it would be hard for any demon to get very far.”

Gabriel snorts a laugh as he looks at the possibly too small opening. “Yeah, if they don’t get stuck all the noise they’d make trying to navigate the brush would have you coming at them with an angel blade. You’d probably even yell ‘YOU DARE TREAD ON MY LAWN?! PREPARE TO DIE HEATHEN! FOR I AM THE HEAVENLY GARDNER! BEHOLD MY FURY!’” Gabriel mock yells in an exaggerated imitation of Joshua’s voice; if he acted like an ornery old man who cared about his lawn too much.

“I’ll try to keep that in mind should there be an attempted invasion.” Joshua chuckles quietly. “Before you go perhaps you should keep this book, incase you need.” Joshua holds up the newish book that had the suppression sigils within its pages. Shrugging Gabriel plucks it from Joshua’s hands, shrinking it down and putting it in one of his other pant pockets.
“Thanks Little Bro.” As Gabriel makes his way down towards the opening he looks back at Joshua, “Glad it was you who found me out, even if you had some…help.” Joshua gives a kind smile and nods in acknowledgement, watching as Gabriel circles the small opening to get a feel of how to approach it. Gabriel decides it’s best to go in headfirst and squirm his way through till he can pop out into Earth’s atmosphere and spread his wings. As he crouches down he glances up to a still watching Joshua and narrows his eyes. “You know this is going to make me look really undignified don’t you?”

Joshua gives a grin and a twinkle of a little bit of mischief in his eyes. “I have to get my entertainment from somewhere with so few amusing angels that come to visit.” Gabriel gives an amused snort, shaking his head in exasperation at the grinning Gardner.

“Thought you enjoyed watching the grass grow and pruning? Which, by the way,” Gabriel gestures vaguely to where they were currently situated, “you missed a spot.”

“Variety is the spice of life, as the humans say, is it not Brother?” was Joshua’s joking reply. It was clear Joshua had no intentions of missing the sight of one of his most powerful older brothers try and squeeze through a small hole, headfirst with a wriggling ass in the air. Such a sight was closer to the realm of the impossible. But then again, Gabriel was the least conservative of the archangels, who didn’t really mind, nor care, about making a fool of himself.

Rolling his eyes good-naturedly Gabriel begins the process of squeezing his way through the small opening. It takes some maneuvering and well placed ignoring of the muffled chuckles of the observing Gardener before he finds himself in free fall heading back down to Earth. Gabriel spreads his three pairs of wings and begins maneuvering his way back to Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Joshua was right when he said the air currents were easier and there was very little (read: none) in the way of a Heavenly patrol. Though the flight back took less energy than the one on the way to Heaven it was still tiring. It doesn’t take long to see the city lights light up the night sky and cast silhouetted reflections of skyscrapers and the CN Tower into the water of Lake Ontario. Gabriel keeps himself hidden from keen eyes as he makes his way through the city towards his end of town.

Once he was on his apartment buildings roof he snapped his fingers and appeared in his bed lounging as he soaked up the comfort and warmth that it, and the blankets and pillows, provided. Beds were cozy and warm. And you don’t need to be sleeping in them to fully appreciate the sensation of relaxing and just snuggling in under the covers. Which was exactly what Gabriel was essentially doing. Because, Dad damn it, he needed this! His body was still achy and the ground in Heaven’s Garden, though softer than Earth, was not soft enough. His back can attest to that. Not to mention he was tired from the flight down. For the next hour he lounges in his bed, munching on chocolate bars and other candies, before drifting off to into a deep restorative sleep.
Chapter End Notes

I know this chapter seems short but this is the only place where it would make sense to break up the really long chapter I had written. So if you’re followers you probably already know of the next chapter being posted not long after this one. I had gotten into the zone.
Holy Fucking Shit!

Chapter Notes

AN: This chapter will be Gabriel going through the rest of his pregnancy and the birth of his daughter.

Warning: close call of infanticide
Remember to keep in mind the politics and views on nephilim in Heaven are very negative, and very few angels look upon them favorably or tolerantly. They have a law to kill the nephilim and its angel parent.
This doesn’t reflect on my, or Gabriel’s, views of what should happen to unwanted children who had no choice in whether or not they exist

October-ish 1990, Toronto, Canada

It’d been about another month since his discovery of the growing thing inside him, but Gabriel at about 20 weeks/ 5 months into his pregnancy. His curves had become softer from some extra weight gain and his breasts were tender from growing a cup size. More and more of his grace had gone to the thing’s ever growing grace and its general healthy development. This meant less grace for him and maintaining his vessel. It was slow at first, starting with the general fatigue and dizzy spells, but slowly he started experiencing more of the biological aspects of being human. Like craving certain foods or being repulsed by certain smells, which led to vomit. That was not a fun experience, especially since the thing, apparently, liked raw vegetables. Bleck! With his grace switching priorities he was starting to feel more of the symptoms of pregnancy coming on. If he already had a good deal of respect for human women it has definitely increased by at least 200%.

At the moment Gabriel was sitting on the couch watching the old idiot box, mostly channel surfing, while eating his current craving of (eugh!) carrot sticks, sliced peppers, cucumbers. With no ranch dip. Ranch dip at the moment was a vomit inducing trigger smell. It was obvious the thing was purposefully trying to torture him. Gabriel paused and decided to watch a new Seinfeld episode, snickering at Kramer’s antics. About half way through he felt something odd from his abdomen. A light fluttering type feeling.

“What the—?” Gabriel looked at his mini bump where the thing was nestled, waiting for the feeling to come again, unsure if he just imagined it. When nothing happened he returned to watching George do something stupid, when he felt it again! He quickly snapped his head to his stomach. His eyes remained glued to his stomach while passively listening to the TV. Nothing. He looks up and—there! Again! Gabriel refuses to look back down and the fluttering feeling continues for a good 30secs before finally stopping.
He couldn’t help himself. Honestly, he couldn’t. Gabriel let out an amused snort as he unconsciously caressed the side of his little bump before shaking his head and moving his hand away. The thing had played a joke on him. The old I’ll-do-something-while-you’re-looking-away-but-when-you-look-at-me-I’ll-be-totally-innocent-and-not-doing-anything-honest! It had to be one of the oldest tricks there was and, just at 5 months, this thing pulled it off, against him. ‘Maybe…’

“Nooo! Nope! Nuh-uh! No way!” Gabriel says shaking his head and pushing any inkling of growing fondness for the thing inside him down, and burying it deep under metaphorical cement, then tossing it into the abyss. “Nice try kid, but the moment you’re out, you are toast! So don’t even bother.” he says to his mini bump glaring. Gabriel almost expects a response of more fluttering, any minute now. Nothing. Good. Good. He didn’t want it responding to his voice. He didn’t need to get attached to the thing growing inside him, nope. This was good. Definitely did not feel the slightest bit of guilt from speaking to it so harshly. Nope. Nothing. Just as Gabriel turns to look away, just in time to see the ending scene of Seinfeld, he felt another flutter of movement.

“Son of a bitch,” he curses. He gets another flutter in response, almost like it was laughing at him.

Wonderful.

November-ish 1990, Toronto, Canada

Gabriel felt bloated. It probably had something to do with all the weight gain and the now even larger bump. It has become obvious to passersby that he was, probably, pregnant. Not fat. He tripped people when they thought he was fat. Petty? Yes. Did he care? No. By now he no longer felt comfortable wearing tight clothes and had adjusted his wardrobe accordingly, using his pagan magic. Since his grace now seemed to be solely focused on the thing inside him. The turncoat.

Even with his pagan magic working to mitigate the pregnancy symptoms it didn’t stop him from fully experiencing what humans go through on a daily basis. Hunger pain? Check, took an increase in a craving to get rid of the hunger pain to realize what he was feeling. Full bladder? Like a fucking dam was about to burst, holy shit. Which brings him to solid waste removal…not fun, and gross. It was probably from knowing enough of the basics of human biology and from watching them for millennia that he had an inkling of what he was experiencing. TV helped a lot too.

Then there were the intense emotions. Now, Gabriel wasn’t sure if it was from the pregnancy and his hormones, or if humans were normally this emotional. This wasn’t to say he didn’t feel emotions before, but being an angel he had enough control to keep them from being overly, well, overwhelming. Like normally watching a sad movie that would have most people tearing up or
crying, he’d feel the sadness, sure, but it wasn’t overpowering enough that he’d cry his eyes out.

Gabriel had gone out to watch a movie that came out. He hadn’t expected the wave of emotions he felt when he connected to the main character and their story. During an emotionally charged scene he found streaks of tears coming from his eyes and his eyes becoming slightly stuffy from the crying. Talk about a major empathy boost. When he walked out he had to grab napkins to dab at his moist and blotchy face, eyes red and puffy. Blowing his nose and throwing the used napkins out he turned to make his way to a nearby streetcar stop to begin his journey back to his apartment. As much as he wanted to just fly into his apartment with so little of his grace and energy available to him he was grounded. Which sucked. A lot. So public transit it was. What he didn’t expect was to see his previous human friends to walk onto the same streetcar. Kira and Lucy. ‘Ah crap.’ Using his pagan magic he slightly warps reality around him, like a second skin. It changes his appearance enough so that they wouldn’t recognize him as the friend they lost last spring.

While he was disguised he watched his friends interact. Lucy had her arm on the back of the seat behind Kira, and Kira leaned contentedly against her with her head on Lucy’s shoulder. Gabriel couldn’t stop his face from splitting into a smile, or those couple of happy tears from escaping. He wipes them away, annoyed that they escaped. Stupid out of control emotions. Gabriel was happy for them. That they were doing okay and that they were still together and had each other.

The good feeling however was replaced when an obnoxiously loud passenger made a disgusted noise as they boarded they streetcar and saw the way Kira and Lucy were sitting. Instead of sitting away from them and ignoring them, they chose to sit close-ish to them, talking to the friend that came on with them. The insufferable asshole said less than pleasant things about the fag couple on the streetcar. Kira and Lucy were tense, doing their best to ignore them.

Gabriel felt the little thing stir uneasily in his abdomen, and he couldn’t help but agree with its unease. Everyone else in the streetcar was also shifting uneasily, obviously wanting to say something but didn’t want to cause a scene either. Gabriel was about to conjure up a few pigeons that would have an unnatural interest in the asshole and their friend. They would have been leaving lots of white presents on those two. But the streetcar made an unscheduled stop, the driver putting it in park, and walked up to the two douchebags.

It was, in Gabriel’s opinion, beautiful the way the guy tore into those assholes verbally, and then physically muscled them off the streetcar for disturbing the other passengers. Everyone clapped in approval of his actions and he gave a bashful smile before giving a respectful nod to Kira and Lucy who were smiling brightly and gratefully at him. The thing in his abdomen even fluttered lightly, showing their approval as well. He dutifully returned to the front of the streetcar and began driving again.

As Gabriel kept a discreet eye on his friends he also realized that it might be time to move on from Toronto. It may be a big city but his luck won’t always hold out like it did today. It didn’t help that
they all liked the same places. It wouldn’t be right to make them think they’re seeing a ghost of somebody they lost everywhere. When Gabriel finally made his way to his apartment he decided it was time to make his way back to the States to one of his safe houses.

December-ish 1990, Somewhere, New York, United States

As Gabriel left the Albany International Airport in New York State he grabbed a cab to take him to Gloversville. Gabriel gave the cabbie the address to the house he owned then leaned back in the cab’s back seat and let out a sigh of relief. His back was killing him! Not to mention his feet were swollen. Gabriel glanced down at his protruding stomach as the nephilim shifted its growing limbs restlessly in the confines of his womb. Sighing tiredly he closes his eyes, leaning his head against the car window. He doesn’t consciously realize that he was rubbing his stomach to calm the nephilim. The nephilim pushes one of its limbs into his hand and settles.

“Hey, we’re here lady,” the cabbie called back to him. This caused Gabriel to jolt awake blearily as he tried to look around to see where he was. It had become common occurrence some days where he’d just decide to rest his eyes and then find himself jolting awake from an impromptu napping session. Apparently now was one of those times. Looking out he sees the house he owns, well his “family” owns. It’d look a little suspicious if the same person owned the same house for the last 100 or so years. Paying the cabbie he grabs his small carry on case and walks up to the front door. Never bothered with much luggage since he can just snap up whatever he needs with his pagan magic.

The house was about 1200 square feet on the main floor and 2 bedrooms on the second floor. There was a half bath on the main floor near the kitchen and a full one in the corner on the second. Despite being at least a 100 years old the house was well maintained with off white wood siding and an old stone hearth with a chimney off the living room. The windows were intact and did not look like it hadn’t been lived in for the last 30 years. Thank you magical abilities. Magicking the key Gabriel unlocks the front door and peaks inside before entering the whole way.

The furniture that remained was dated and slightly covered with dust and the walls had a slight yellow tinge to the wallpaper (hey it was fashionable okay?!) from the sunlight. The fridge in the kitchen was especially dated. It was considered an antique, along with the stove and cabinets. Yeah it might take a few snaps of his fingers to get the house up to standards if he was going to be living here for the next couple of months. Maybe once the nephilim was out, and dealt with, he should make his way around all his safe houses to see how they’re holding up and update them as he goes. For now though, he updates the old phone and orders in a couple of pizzas and snaps away all the dust in the house. He could always snap up food, but he’s found ordering in or making his own always tasted better.
A couple of swift kicks from the nephilim showed its agreement, if he decided to interpret it as such. Gabriel catches himself this time absent-mindedly rubbing his stomach. Scrunching his face in disgust he swiftly removed his hand as though he’d been burned. He gets a couple of jabs to his bladder, which had him quickly racing to the bathroom.

“Thanks a lot,” he says sarcastically to his bulge. He seemingly gets an innocent feeling of a flutter of limbs. “Cute. *Reeaal cute.*” Gabriel’s pretty sure it was laughing at him.

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**January-ish, 1991, Gloversville, New York, United States**

During the rest of December Gabriel took his time getting the house updated and conjuring up a mode of transportation. Sadly with his current status of a single pregnant woman the car couldn’t really be all the flashy as he might have liked. He’s already had the odd curious neighbor or local busybody come around to see who he was. Old biddies that could afford to stay home and gawk and gossip about their neighbors.

Which at the moment was all about him, or the preggo lady living by herself with no man coming in or leaving the house. So far his favorite rumor was that he was pregnant with some really rich married guy’s kid and to keep from telling his wife the guy had to support him and the baby. Gabriel couldn’t help laughing when he first heard it. So he told the old broad, when he heard her speculate, he was pregnant from a one nightstand. Oh the looks of disgust on their faces! Such scandal that a pretty young lady would do the dirty with a complete stranger! Which only fanned the raging rumors hotter. Now he was just some preggo slut who couldn’t keep her legs shut. Needless to say when some of the men in town caught that rumor he had a lot more interest than he really wanted. So he did the only logical thing. Set up a camera with sound so every time a gentleman caller came knocking he had ammo for later.

He even got the police chief fired when he showed the entire department how he threatened a really pregnant lady who didn’t want to have sex with him just to avoid trouble. The police chief’s wife left him; disgusted and professed to him how sorry she was for her husband’s despicable behavior. Gabriel just told her that she was not her husband’s keeper and he didn’t blame her one bit. After *that* fiasco the gentlemen callers stopped coming around. Well, after a few more well placed videos to wives who had no idea that their husbands were such pigs did they stop sniffing around. Gabriel became well known as the *pregnant-chick-you-don’t-want-to-mess-with*, and all this within a month or so. All the while his belly was ballooning up and outward as the nephilim grew bigger inside his womb.

Gabriel snickers a little at the title, overly pleased with himself. Just because he’s pregnant didn’t
mean he can’t create mischief and chaos. He makes it to the couch to rest, huffing and puffing a little bit. With the nephilim pushing his womb upward it was a little harder to breath and he was getting even more tired. Pulling back his maternity shirt he stares at the taught skin of his large belly, noting all the stretch marks from his expanded skin. The need to caress his enlarged middle, to feel the taught skin under his hands was strong. Nope he wasn’t going to do it. There was no logical need to—

The nephilim decided it was either time for the Irish River Dance, or it wanted him to stroke it and wouldn’t settle down until he did. Sighing in exasperation Gabriel gave in and stroked his belly with both his hands. Don’t look at him like that! That kid can kick! The nephilim easily settled down to the occasional long stretch of limbs and the feeling that they were trying to nuzzle back into his hands. Like all other feelings of fondness that tried to grow for the bundle inside him, since he became aware of its movement, was squashed down hard. In another month and half or so the kid will be out and skewered on his angel blade. He refuses to become attached to something he’ll just have to kill later.

He quickly squashed the guilt at the thought of killing it. Nope. Nope. Noppity-nope! Letting it live wasn’t an option. He’d have to raise it if he did since no human would understand what they were dealing with, even with the kid’s powers damn near completely suppressed. Those sigils will break at one point in the kid’s life and then where would they be? No it’s better end it before it becomes a problem. Yep. Totally. He feels the kid once again push to try to nuzzle into one of his hands again.

Stop it!

February-ish, 1991, Glowersville, New York, United States

Dear Dad this was the worst! The kid was putting even more strain on his body than ever before and if he thought he was a balloon before? He’s pretty sure he’s a beach ball now. He was just tired constantly and part of it was from having trouble sleeping. You try getting comfortable in a bed when you have the equivalent of a 20lb medicine ball strapped to your front! If that wasn’t enough he was feeling like Niafra Falls. Constantly running…to the bathroom to pee! He so much as sneezes and he’s waddling as fast as he can to the bathroom. Oh yeah that’s another development. The kid has dropped down to the lower part of his uterus. So now, Gabriel Messenger of God, was forced to waddle in order to walk places.

He wants this kid out of him, now. Unfortunately he still has a few weeks left to go till the big day. Which means he has to make a decision. Take a chance with a human doctor and hope the kid doesn’t do anything out of the ordinary on the way out, or try to deliver the kid himself. Neither
was an ideal option. Then he has an idea. A little risky but it was better than his other two choices.

“Oh Great Gardner Joshua who art in Heaven, I might need your help,” he prayed. He paused waiting wondering where he—oh right. He’s blocked his signature. Sending a prayer with his address it wasn’t long before the doorbell goes off. Waddling over to the door he peaks out to see a middle aged black man, or in other words the Gardener Joshua.

“Hello,” Joshua greets as Gabriel opens the door to let him in. Once through the threshold Joshua looks around the house, taking note of all the Enochian and even pagan warding all through out the house. “I see you haven’t lost your touch with going overboard.” He says with a smile. Gabriel shrugs as he closes the front door.

“Eh, you can never be too careful especially in my situation.” Joshua nods in understanding. “I’ve also come across a…slight problem.”

Joshua takes in Gabriel’s heavily pregnant form, as he walks towards the Gardner, and gives a slight mischeivious smirk. “I can see that. You are *waddling*.” Joshua gets a stony “really?”-bitch face from Gabriel.

“Yeah. Ha ha. Lets laugh at the pregnant guy.” Sarcasm drips heavily from his lips. “Listen,” Gabriel begins. “The kid’s going to be due soon and so far I’ve only had two options. Go to a human doctor and hope the kid, or me even, doesn’t do something supernatural, or try and deliver the kid myself.”

Joshua considered Gabriel’s options and already had a good idea of why he was asked for help. However, the one thing Joshua focused most on, though he didn’t show it, was how Gabriel referred to the child. Keeping the slight relief from his features he calmly responds, “I see. Am I to assume I am the third option?”

“Got it in one Bro.” Gabriel nods. “Think you can hack it?”

“I believe so. I will be able to catch the babe and heal you should something arise in your weakened state.”

“Exactly!”
“I am also quite honored you’d allow me to do this.”

“Don’t read too much into it. You’re the only angel that knows, and the only one who’s not going to kill me.”

“Regardless,” Joshua waves off Gabriel’s rebuke. “I intend to treat it like the honor that it is. I will listen for you in the coming weeks. Just say my name.”

March-ish 1991, Glowersville, New York, United States

This was the month. The big show, the great premiere of Gabriel the archangel giving birth to a nephilim. He was nervous as fuck. He thought he was nervous when he had to tell the Virgin Mary she was preggers with the Son of God. The twat. Now that doesn’t even compare to how he’s feeling. For the last couple of weeks his cervix had begun to dilate, slowly. No water breaking or contractions. He definitely felt ready to POP!

March 20 1991  6:48am

This was the date when Gabriel went through the most excruciating process he’d had ever known. Birthing another living being. He’d waddled into the kitchen for that last piece of cake he had when he felt everything below the belt get drenched. Did he just pee himself? He looked down. Nope. His water broke.

HOLY FUCKING SHIT!

It wasn’t long before he felt the first of many contractions. With a snap of his fingers, between contractions, his pagan magic flared. His bed had a plastic under cover; there were towels all over it, and a bucket at the side of his bed. For what he wasn’t sure yet, but you need a bucket right? Right. The front door clicked, unlocking as he sent a prayer to Joshua.

“Joshua, doors unlocked.” That was it and that was all that was needed. Joshua came striding through the front door and helped Gabriel up the stairs to his bed, propping him up with the mountain of pillows he conjured.
“Alright Gabriel,” Joshua began calmly. “I am going to need to take your bottoms off and get a look at how you’re doing.” Another contraction ripped through Gabriel, causing him to let out a pained grunt, before nodding his consent. Needless to say, it was weird having your little Brother with his hand up your who-ha, angel or not. Gabriel tenses stiffly from another contraction raking his body.

“It seems your little one is eager to meet the world Brother. You’re almost fully dilated and your contractions are almost on top of each other.” Joshua says with a serene smile, obviously hoping to keep the archangel calm. Honestly Gabriel just wanted to smite him something fierce because of it instead.

It wasn’t long before Joshua notified Gabriel that he was going to check again. “It seems you’re fully dilated Gabriel. On the next contraction bear down and push.” Joshua instructed. By this point instinct was taking over so he didn’t bother asking what to ‘bear down’ on or ‘push’. It was time to get this kid out of him!

Oh dear Dad!

It felt like he was being split in two, and not in the fun way! Gabriel huffed and panted and let out a pained cry here and there as the child made its way through his birth canal. Joshua sat between his legs giving encouragement and telling when to rest.

“The child is crowning Gabriel. Just a few more pushes then they are out.” Joshua informs the labored archangel. Nodding exhaustedly, Gabriel finds what little strength his body has and gives a few more large pushes. The head was out and the shoulders came a second later, and Gabriel’s whole body went lax.

Joshua cut the baby’s umbilical cord and began cleaning them of the amniotic fluid and placental blood. This was when the child let out its first cries as it took its first lung full of air. Joshua gazed at the little life cradled in his arms, as the first morning’s light filtered through the windows. It was a little girl with a full head of exceptionally dark brown curls; from her human father most likely but the rest of her was all Gabriel in the face. Her eyes remained shut as she fussed in Joshua’s arms, no longer crying. As far as Joshua was concerned she was beautiful and perfect, and greatly resembled the morning’s first rays of light. He carefully swaddles the child and looks up at Gabriel who was staring emotionlessly at the child. His golden eyes no longer bright gold but dark and foreboding.

Swallowing nervously Joshua informs Gabriel of the child’s gender. Gabriel gives a noise of acknowledgement, before summoning his archangel blade.
“Give it here Joshua, unless you want to do it?” Gabriel motions for the child while raising a questioning eyebrow at Joshua. A large part of Joshua wanted to flee with the child, but God had made it clear that this was Gabriel’s choice. Joshua reluctantly walked to the side of the bed and placed the squirming infant in Gabriel’s free arm. She seemed to instantly recognize who held her as she began to coo and nuzzle into Gabriel’s chest lovingly.

Gabriel brought his blade and lined it up with the thing’s fluttering heart. He watched as it nuzzled into his chest and grab at his shirt, cooing. It let go to stretch and yawn cutely, before finally opening its eyes to look up at him. It looked up at him, reflecting his own rich golden eyes. It even let out a small baby laugh with a smile as its little fists reached out for his face. For a moment he forgot about ending it, forgot about the angel blade above its heart, forgot what its existence could reap. All the entirety of the universe seemed to fall away as a smaller pair of golden eyes reflected the morning light and chased away the darkness he hadn’t seen growing inside of him. Little eyes flicked away from his to focus on this silver-shiny-thing right above it. Her. His daughter. His child.

That brought Gabriel out of whatever trance he was in as the darkness left his eyes. He realized what he was holding above his daughter so carelessly and flung his blade away in a slight panic. Scratch that, lots of panic. The movement jostled the newborn causing her to start crying in alarm. Gabriel all but squeezed her to his chest as he talked soothingly to his daughter. Every emotion he tried to stamp out during his pregnancy with her came rushing forward with a vengeance. Fear, guilt, and shock gripped him at what he almost committed. Against his own daughter! He’s played deadly tricks on assholes over the millennia that went through with what he almost did.

He didn’t fight the feeling of parental love welling up inside him as it gripped his entire being, and anchored him to the little life he created in his arms.

He was doomed and he couldn’t be happier.

Joshua let out a sigh of relief as he watched Gabriel fling the blade away from his child and begin comforting her when the movement startled her. He watched as the love, Gabriel fought so hard against, filled his eyes. His daughter immediately became the single most important thing in existence to the archangel.

“Is this what Dad felt when he first created Michael?” Gabriel wondered as he stared at his tiny daughter, completely absorbed in her. A couple of tears made tracks down his face. He lets out a small curse as he wipes them away, before giving a breathless chuckle.

“Perhaps,” Joshua says warmly as he watched the baby mouth at Gabriel’s chest. Gabriel grabbed another towel and laid it over his chest and the baby before pull his shirt up over one of his breasts
underneath. Joshua chuckled at Gabriel’s face when the unseen child had latched onto his nipple and began suckling.

Gabriel tried to glower at Joshua but he was still trying to get used to the feeling of his daughter breast-feeding from him. It was very odd feeling but also relieving as it lessened the pressure from the milk his body was making. The action sent another wave of love and affection for his daughter through him as his free hand caressed her face under the towel.

“Have you decided on a name?” Joshua inquires.

Gabriel’s body stiffens. He hadn’t even thought of it, because he never intended…

Moving the towel he peaks at his suckling newborn, her eyes closing in contentment and her hands grasping along the swell of his breast. Only one name came to mind, but as far as he was concerned it was perfect in its beauty and uniqueness.

“Maya. The morning light that chased away the dark, the true morning’s glory.” Gabriel answered with a love filled eyes.

“Maya, Morning’s Glory,” Joshua says, tasting the name and title. “A very fitting and apt name.”
March 20 1991  8:02am

Gabriel gave a tired sigh of relief as his body expelled the last of the placenta from his womb. With a snap of his fingers his pagan magic disposed of it and all the other waste fluids. Any and all evidence that he had given birth disappeared as well, leaving the room just as clean as before Maya’s birth.

‘Maya…’ Gabriel looked over to where Joshua was standing with his baby, humming a biblically old tune and gently rocking her side to side.

Joshua, looking up from the content infant, catches Gabriel’s eyes and smiles amusedly as he makes grabby-hands for Maya with a bright smile on his face. Chuckling, Joshua moved to Gabriel’s side and reluctantly handed Maya over to her Father/Mother. Her eyes open briefly at the feeling of being moved, but quickly close again as she settles/snuggles into Gabriel’s arms.

Gabriel stared contently at his drowsy daughter as he leans back comfortably against the plethora of pillows stacked against his headboard. His eyes become heavy as he lets out a tired yawn, one mimicked cutely by a sleepy, swaddled Maya.

“I believe that it is time that I left,” Joshua whispered softly to Gabriel. “Is there anything else you needed Brother?” He carefully sent out his grace to check over Gabriel’s body, as his grace was still weak.

“Mmmmmnnooooo, ~yawn~, we’re good.” Gabriel mumbles tiredly, shaking his head as he snuggles further back into his mountain of pillows, with Maya sleeping soundly cradled in his arms.

Finding no possible complications and a steadily growing stronger grace, Joshua nods and turns to leave. “Very well. It is best I make my way back to Heaven before any notice I have disappeared.” Pausing at the bedroom’s door Joshua turns and calls out softly “Congratulations on a beautiful daughter.” Gabriel doesn’t respond, having already let himself fall into a tired sleep. Giving one last smile to the newly formed family Joshua made his way down the steps of the house.
The Enochian sigils that blanketed the house kept him from flying out, just as they kept him from flying in, so he had to go out the front door. As he made his way to the front door, in burst a squad of policemen with their guns raised pointed at him, yelling him to get on the ground with his hands behind his head. Some of the squad split off to search the house. Joshua wasn’t afraid of their mortal weapons in the slightest, but decided it was best to comply. What did worry him was all the noise they were—

A baby’s scared wail tore through the air, along with a very distinct angry voice.

Gabriel was not amused. He was startled awake after just falling asleep, after just giving birth to his daughter, to a loud bang, a cacophony of loud shouting, and his child screaming in confused terror. Oh no. He was not pleased, at all. From what he heard all the noise was from the police.

“What are these idiots doing here?” he mumbled to himself grumpily as he tried to calm his wailing daughter. Hearing hurried footsteps make their way up the stairs, he snaps his fingers so there’s a pile of linen and towel in a corner, soiled with blood and other fluids from Maya’s birth. The bucket he had forgotten to get rid of now held the placenta and umbilical cord.

The police stormed in with their guns raised and flashlights pointed right into his and his daughter’s faces. They begin trying to talk over each other asking if he was alright and if he was injured.

“SHUT UP!” Gabriel said in a raised voice, as he stood up from his bed, swaying and rubbing Maya’s back soothingly as she still let out hiccupping whimpers and small cries. His movement brought attention to the swaddled infant in his arms and he was bombarded with even more questions. Gabriel was unimpressed.

He shoved his way past the policemen, who were trying to keep him in his room, and down the stairs to an interesting sight. His brother Joshua, in the vessel of an aging black man with grey and white speckling his scruffy beard, on his knees with hands behind his back being handcuffed. What the freaking hell?

Shoving his way to the new police chief with his back turned to Gabriel, he demands “What the hell is going on here?!” The police chief whirls around with a confident smile, in a presuming job well-done kind of way, on his face.
“We got a tip from one of your neighbors about loud noises that sounded like someone was in serious distress, earlier this morning. Luckily we got here since this black man was obviously—”

“Going home after successfully delivering my baby.” Gabriel interrupts looking pissed at the man.

“—going to the kitchen to get a knife to…” The police chief pauses, registering what Gabriel said and looks dumbly at the small blonde, sweaty woman before him and the whimpering infant in her arms. His face flushed with embarrassment. “Well we still need to take him in to get a—”

“No. You don’t. Are you doing this because he’s black or are you refusing to believe what I say because I’m a woman?” Eye daggers initiated.

“Ma’am it’s not like that at all, we just need to ascertain the situation—”

“I’m pretty sure I just told you what the situation was. I called my brother, who is a registered pediatrician, when I went into labor and had him deliver my baby. If you don’t believe me there are blankets and towels upstairs and a bucket that say otherwise.”

“Well now I know something is up. How can this black man be your brother if you’re clearly white? Miss?” the police chief criticized sarcastically, that being the only thing he got out of Gabriel’s words. “Perhaps we should get you checked out at the hospital to make sure you’re not delirious—”

Gabriel snapped his fingers to get his attention, and to shut him up. “It’s called adoption ass-hat. I also don’t need to go to the hospital. My brother cleared me for resting and taking it easy. Which, by the way, I’m not now because of you and your idiot brigade thinking you got yourself a would-be murderer! If anything I should be charging you chuckleheads with breaking and entering!”

The police chief spluttered indignantly, while the rest of the officers looked around uncertain. Did they have an arrest or not? Maya released more whimpers, attracting the attention of the remaining officers.

One of the younger officers looked around uncertain of what to do but decided to approach the amused and handcuffed Joshua. Grabbing the keys from one of the frozen officers he proceeded to un-cuff him.
“At least one of you has a couple of brain cells to rub together,” Gabriel snorts, seeing the young officer release Joshua. The police chief whirls around to see what Gabriel saw and begins to reprimand the officer.

“Johnson! What do you think you are doing?! You can’t just release the suspect because of some tramp’s words!” His loud voice caused the whimpering infant to start crying again from the sudden loud noise. Angry eyes looked down on the crying infant in Gabriel’s arms in annoyance. “Shut up brat!” he barked.

Oh. He. Did. Not. Any uncertainty in the remaining officers disappeared like a puff of smoke, replaced with disgust. If the uncertainty didn’t clear because of the tramp statement, since most of these officers liked the spunky and funny petite woman, it definitely did when he yelled at the newborn. It became pretty clear there was no real situation, other than the one the soon-to-be ex-police chief was trying to create. Talk about making a mountain out of a molehill.

The police chief tried to regain order of his officers back, as they apologized to Gabriel and Joshua before leaving in their squad cars. Some hung back to make sure the police chief didn’t try anything, the incident from the previous police chief fresh in their minds. Some sent sympathetic looks to Gabriel as he tried to soothe his distraught child.

“Buh-bye Chiefy!” Gabriel said cheekily, using a free hand to wave at the embarrassed police chief who turned to send a murderous glare as he left Gabriel’s home. Once the area was clear Gabriel felt a couple of farewell pats on his shoulder from Joshua before he flew back to the Garden.

Closing the door Gabriel turned his attention back to his poor whimpering child, her face red from tears falling from her eyes. He gently wipes away at her tears keeping his voice in low and soft murmurs.

“Someday you had huh kiddo?” Gabriel softly says, rocking and rubbing Maya’s back as she sniffs. She responds by rubbing a snotty nose into Gabriel’s shirt, seeking his warmth and comfort. Gabriel wrinkles his nose a little in disgust but doesn’t stop her; after all she can’t help it. Letting out a sigh he goes back up stairs, sending the soiled sheets and placenta bucket away again before lying back down in his bed, Maya once again cradled in his arms. It takes a little time, some soft singing, and being stroked gently before Maya was calmed down enough to drift back to sleep.

Gabriel stayed awake for a bit longer admiring the little life sleeping, tucked safely in his arms. He just knew that, outside of his daughter being a nephilim, she was going to be something special. Though that might be how all parents feel towards their kids.
Gabriel lets sleep take him, until a hungry Maya wakes him up a couple hours later.

‘Ah so the sleepless nights and dirty diapers begins…’ he complains mentally, though never regretfully.

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**February-ish 1992, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States**

The year flew by for Gabriel as he raised his daughter, watching a small pink helpless newborn that couldn’t even hold her head up to a fast crawling troublemaker whose has started trying to take her first steps. Not quite there yet, but Gabriel could tell it would be soon. Along with her speaking her first words, baby babble didn’t count.

There were some ups and downs, and a close call over the last 11 months but Gabriel was happy with his little troublemaker. He was now back in his usual male form, since Maya had stopped nursing and her teeth started coming in. Oh man, when he first transformed back into his male self the tears and screaming! Poor Maya didn’t recognize him. So Gabriel would switch between male and female until she was comfortable with his male form, then he slowly fazed out his female form. Now after a few weeks Maya recognizes him as her male parent. Though, he does catch her looking around for the female version that birthed her, but that too has been decreasing.

Another hiccup had been with that new police chief he met the day he gave birth to Maya. He was a right racist and sexist asshole, and his Trickster nature couldn’t help but rear its head, especially with his restored grace acting as a pagan magic booster pack. The asshole’s still alive, but disfigured. In his crotch. They still haven’t caught that black dog people said they saw around the old graveyard.

Feeling good about getting back to playing tricks, he did a couple more on a few more people that ticked him off while pregnant. Such as the married men he caught on camera that thought he was easy. They all received a dose of crabs. The size of marsh crabs. Instead of itching they would be pinched if they even thought about other women that weren’t their wives. It was hilarious seeing them try to act normal then jump three feet in the air from being pinched in a sensitive area. Of course they could see them, just not anybody else. That was fun seeing them go to the doctors and
point at their junk to show them the crabs that the doctors couldn’t see.

Unfortunately, a Hunter caught wind of his shenanigans. The Hunter even came around his house asking about the strange occurrences that linked back to him. The Hunter thought him a witch that waited till her babe was born before practicing again and creating hexes. As much as Gabriel wanted to play around with the Hunter his first priority was Maya. So, as soon as he could Gabriel snapped the place clean of food, baby supplies, and anything personal or supernatural related. Once he was done, he wrapped Maya up tight against his chest, then stepped outside through the backdoor, and flew away. The Hunter missed their mark, and Gabriel had Maya a good few states away in Illinois at a random motel.

That was about 4 months ago, he had just gotten Maya weaned and had started introducing his male form. It wasn’t long when he found a small apartment to crash in above one of the small businesses in Harrisburg. Which was where he was now. Rent wasn’t an issue since he could just conjure up the cash easily enough, it also helped that the old couple that he was renting from, and owned the business downstairs, had to be one of the sweetest old couples he’d had the pleasure of meeting. They were sincere in their compliments and down right blunt in their honesty. He’d met them in his male form since he had already planned to ease Maya into it and knew it would be better in the long run not having to have to control an illusion of his female self constantly. Talk about tiring.

He easily charmed the old couple with a sob story of being a single Dad with an infant daughter from a one-night stand that had tracked him down and dumped Maya on his doorstep. Not even a name on her birth certificate. The elderly couple congratulated him on him taking responsibility and taking on the role of a single parent, and cooed unashamedly over Maya who was also charming it up with big eyes and infectious giggling. Gabriel knew Maya was the one that sealed the deal for the apartment.

The apartment was mostly furnished with a pull out couch and kitchen table and chairs. The living space wasn’t big but it did have two bedrooms with a full bathroom off the kitchen area. It wasn’t much, but for just him and Maya it was perfect. It also helped that he could pull a TARDIS with the apartment if he wanted to. Maybe turn his closest into another room for Maya to play in. With a snap of his fingers everything was set up and furnished how he liked it, along with every protection and concealment ward he could think of.

It wasn’t long after moving in that Maya got really mobile. She took to this new form of freedom with gusto. The minute Gabriel would put her down to play with some of her toys she was off. He enjoyed watching her move around and would follow her wherever she went as she explored. He also liked teleporting to a corner she was about to turn and surprise her. He liked seeing her little face light up at seeing him before laughing and trying to crawl away in the opposite direction. He’d laugh at her and watch as she crawled away only to stop and look behind her to see if he was chasing her. Gabriel would move to go after her and she’d let out a happy squeal before redoubling her efforts to get away.
Despite the joy this milestone brought, there were some instances that Gabriel could have happily lived without. The biggest being when he had gone down to the elderly couple’s shop to help them move some large items. He liked them, so he didn’t mind. Besides, he thought he had left a napping Maya on a soft pad on the floor, safe in her playroom. Gabriel figured she would be fine for a few minutes and didn’t think to even close the door to the apartment. Needless to say when he went to make his way up the indoor set of stairs he saw a very excited Maya looking down at him, ready to crawl towards him. **Down. The. Stairs.** Did you know it was possible for an angel to have a heart attack? Because Gabriel sure didn’t!

“**MAYA NO!”** Gabriel yelled sharply up at his daughter. That stopped her right in her tracks her eyes wide and scared, before sitting back and start to cry. Relieved that Maya wasn’t about to take the tumble of doom down the stairs he quickly pops up beside her, taking her in his arms. Gabriel soothes and murmurs reassurances to her as she clings to him with big fat tears rolling down her cheeks. He feels horrible for scaring and yelling at her like that. But between yelling at her and her falling down a flight of stairs? He’d rather yell. The elderly man came running to the bottom of the stairs and looked up at Gabriel asking what happened. Gabriel told the man what happened and reassured him that Maya was fine. Scared and upset, but fine. Gabriel didn’t make that mistake twice. Every time he put her down for a nap it was in her crib, no exceptions.

Currently, Gabriel sat on the couch, the TV playing in the background, as he watched his little troublemaker hold onto the coffee table while taking shuffling steps around it. Every now and then Maya would look up from her feet to stare at him, flashing an open mouthed smile. The next time she did Gabriel gave her a big smile of his own.

“**Come here Maya! Come to Daddy! Come on baby girl!”** he encouraged, reaching his arms out, his hands moving in a ‘come here’ gesture. Squealing in delight Maya makes her way slowly around the coffee table on wobbly legs. As she gets to a point where she stood in front of Gabriel she lets go of the coffee table. She wobbles as she stares at her frozen father smiling widely. Maya teeters as she picks up one foot and takes a step forward, her arms out in front. Balancing herself again, she takes another step, and another before all but collapsing into her father’s out stretched hands.

The weight of Maya in his hands and her delighted laughter bring Gabriel out of his sense of shock. She took her first steps. His baby girl took her first steps! He quickly brings his happy daughter in and gives her silly kisses to her neck, tickling her. Maya squirms and squeals from the tickles he gave her, and tries to hide from him in his neck. Gabriel laughs, his face split in a proud smile at witnessing her walk for the first time.

“I love you so much my little pudding pop,” Gabriel whispers into her dark brown curls as he hugs her close. His heart filled with so much love and pride for his daughter he felt like he could burst.
Maya pulls her head away from his neck smiling and looking at his face. She starts to talk in her baby babble and Gabriel listens and talks back, though he doesn’t understand a word. Not that it mattered. Maya was just happy to have him talk back to her. Thinking her father understood her she tried to demonstrate what she wanted.

Maya stuck one of her arms out, touched her thumb to her middle finger, and moved them against each other soundlessly. She’d then look around and got frustrated when she didn’t see what was supposed to appear. Looking at her father she babbled in an obvious show of complaining at what she tried to do didn’t work.

Astonished, Gabriel realized she had tried to snap her fingers to do magic like she’d seen him do. Huh. Gabriel held out one of his hands for Maya to see him put his fingers in a ready-to-snap position. Maya’s face lit up from her frustration as she looked at his extended hand expectantly. With a snap of his fingers floating bubbles surrounded them. Maya squealed in surprise and delight, moving in her father’s arms to touch the bubbles and laughed when they popped. Gabriel smiled as he tried to hold on to the excited bubble-popping child.

April-ish 1992, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States

Maya has recently turned 1 years old. Gabriel kept it simple with him, Maya, and the elderly couple that own the business. There was a small cake for the birthday girl and another one for the adults. It was small and they kept it short with so few people, but Gabriel wouldn’t change it for anything, especially with all the embarrassing baby photos he has to embarrass Maya over when she’s older. Insert mischievous grin here. Just because she was his daughter didn’t mean she was safe from his tricks. Well, the harmless ones anyway. The only damper however was that Maya has yet to say her first words. She still talks mostly in her baby babble and Gabriel has been trying to encourage her to say some simple ones, the most important being “Daddy”. When he told the elderly couple of his concerns they reassured him that Maya would talk when she was good and ready. She already understood more than most her age. She was probably waiting to catch him off-guard.

It was late in the month when Gabriel took Maya out for a walk around town, just to get out of the apartment, when he ran into Karen and her baby squad at the park. He’d just taken Maya out of her stroller, all bundled against the last bit of chill from winter, when Karen and her group rolled up with their strollers. Apparently he had taken their spot under the tree in the park that they normally congregated under, again. Gabriel didn’t care, and sat down with his daughter in his lap, ignoring
them. Oooooh if that didn’t piss Karen off.

Karen and the other three mothers in her squad all looked at him disapprovingly, like because he was male and not (to their knowledge) a mother he had to give up his spot. Well sucks for them because if they hadn’t noticed, he’s a parent too with a young daughter right there in his lap. A daughter who was tired of sitting still and decided it was time to toddle off to go exploring, right to where the other babies were.

Maya babbled happily in greeting ready to make friends, ignoring the slightly hostile eyes of their mothers.

“Is she retarded or something?” sneers Karen at Gabriel. Gabriel’s body stiffens. Seeing that she finally hit a nerve she continues, “She’s not even saying real words and she’s what? One already? My Matthew said his first word at 10 months. He’s quite intelligent that way.” Karen puts on an air of haughtiness. Matthew, unaware and unconcerned with what his mother was doing, sits in his stroller with dull eyes gazing uninterestedly around him.

“At least Maya doesn’t sit like a fat lump gazing into the void,” Gabriel drawls out glaring at Karen.

“At least my son has both his parents. What happened to the mother? Did she take one look at that thing’s ugly mug and run?” Karen’s voice, just like her words, was cruel and disgusted. Some of the other mothers in her company shifted uncomfortably at her insults about the friendly child that innocently babbled at their own children. A familiar flash of shame swept through Gabriel when Karen referred to Maya as a thing, the same way he thought of her during his pregnancy. His daughter in his eyes was precious and most definitely not a thing!

Done trying to make friends with the new babies, Maya makes her way back to her Daddy. Her face scrunches as she sees her Daddy with a frown and narrowed eyes. Why Daddy not happy? Make Daddy happy! Maya toddles excitedly to her Dad and crashes head first into his lap. She laughs as he straightens her out and gazes lovingly up at his face.

Gabriel smiles at his daughter’s antics before looking up and starring Karen straight in the eye. “Well at least my daughter won’t be raised by a bitch like you.”

Insulted and eyes filled with rage, Karen was about to let loose a scathing retort when a small voice from Gabriel’s lap spoke up.
“Bitch!”

Gabriel’s eyes widen in shock, but his smile only grew bigger. Seeing his smile grow Maya decided to say the word again.

“Bitch!” Maya exclaimed, beaming up at the adults. The mothers were floored. Gabriel started laughing his ass off with his head leaning in one of his hands that were propped on his knee.

“That’s right Maya! Karen is a bitch!” Gabriel guffawed, encouraging her. He was just starting to calm down when Maya points at Karen, with a big smile on her face.

“Bitch!” Maya once again says happily, pointing at Karen. She was happy to make her Daddy laugh. Gabriel was about to bust a gut. This kid!

“I’d say my daughter’s plenty smart if she can point out what you are.” Gabriel said between bouts of laughter. Karen’s face was red with rage and embarrassment, her followers hiding their smiles behind their hands. In a huff Karen leaves with her snickering followers in tow.

Leaning back against the tree Gabriel tries to catch his breath as he chuckles quietly. Of course only his kid’s first word would be saying ‘bitch’ to a bitch.

“As epic as that first word reveal was pumpkin, I would’ve liked it if your first word was ‘Daddy’ instead.” Gabriel said, smiling down at his daughter.

Maya’s little honey gold eyes looked up at him smiling in a way that reminded him too much of his own mischievous smiles.

“Daddy!” Maya says excitedly, and perfectly. Gabriel stared at his daughter in shock.

“Son of a—”

“Bitch!”

Chapter End Notes
I plan to try to do important milestone/events in Maya's childhood. Some will be important later, most not but it does give a look at how Gabriel handles being a father.

I've also introduced Karen. Suburban nemesis. I chose the most white sounding name I could think of that would be that mom no one likes to deal with.

Im planning to have Gabriel and Maya stay in Harrisburg for a few years till an important event happens that causes Gabriel to pack up and leave.

So enjoy baby Maya and Daddy Gabriel.
September-ish 1992, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States

Since that day in late April Maya has been talking non-stop. She’d point to familiar objects and try to say their name. Sometimes she gets it, sometimes she doesn’t, but she was improving constantly. She was already better spoken than most others at 18 months.

Her favorite word at the moment was ‘snap’. When she wanted Gabriel to do some magic for her she’d get his attention, stick her arm out in a direction, try to snap her fingers, and excitedly say “SNAP!”, or her best rendition of the word.

Gabriel found it endearing that Maya would try to copy him, but he’d had to feign tiredness when that’s all she wanted him to do.

After the fifth snap of his fingers in a row, in the last hour, Gabriel fakes a yawn to his daughter, “Sorry baby cakes, Daddy’s too tired now.” Gabriel fake stretched and lay down on the floor and closed his eyes, listening as Maya made her way over to his face. Feeling a pudgy hand pat his cheek he opens one gold eye to see Maya’s face right in his own face.

“‘ired?” Maya tried to whisper.


Maya scrunches her face into a pout. “No nap.”

“Yes nap.” Gabriel grins at his daughter as she huffs crankily.
“No nap!” Gabriel had to admit she was pulling off an excellent pout but it was definitely naptime for all little nephilim.

“Sorry. Naptime for Bonzos!” Gabriel says smiling wide. Maya sees she’s not going to win, so she gets up and attempts to run. Gabriel chuckles as Maya does a faster version of her toddling gate, her legs not yet coordinated enough to move faster. In an easy stride Gabriel picks up Maya with out stopping and takes the fussy whining toddler to her crib.

“NO NAP! NO ‘IRED!” Maya protested greatly. Gabriel ignored her protests and placed her down in her crib, grabbing her favorite stuffed toys. Maya yelled and threw a tantrum as he turned off the light and partially closed the door. He didn’t like hearing Maya so upset, but until she could go a whole day without a nap he needed to keep a nap schedule for her. He was thankful though that he soundproofed their apartment. Gabriel didn’t think the customers in the business down below would appreciate a screaming child in the middle of the day.

It didn’t take long for Maya to realize her Daddy wasn’t going to come because of her screaming and crying. Sniffling in the dark Maya lies down clutching a stuffed blue elephant with red pokadots, having expended the last of her energy. Closing her eyes she drifts off tiredly to sleep.

The tenseness in Gabriel’s shoulders leaves as Maya’s cries quieted. He never liked doing that to her, but last thing he needed was her falling asleep later and not being able to sleep through the night. Being a responsible parent was tough, especially when all he wanted to do was play and have fun with her.

It was a couple of hours later when Gabriel heard shuffling blankets and soft calls of ‘Daddy?’ coming from Maya’s room. Turning on the light he found Maya, standing up in her crib holding on to the bars. The moment she saw Gabriel her face split into an excited smile and she made ‘grabby hands’ in his direction, wanting to be picked up. Gabriel was more than happy to oblige and give his daughter a quick snuggle once she was in his arms. Giggling Maya twists in his hold, one hand clutching his shirt, as she leaned away and pointed down into her crib.

“ ‘phan!” she said, making a grasping motion with her outstretched hand.

“You want your elephant?” Gabriel asked smiling as he bends over to pick up the stuffed toy.

“ ‘phan! ‘phan!” Maya squealed happily as Gabriel handed the toy to her, and proceeded to hug the toy via a chokehold before snuggling back into her father. It was moment like these that Gabriel chose to remember every time he had to be the responsible parent and do something that Maya didn’t like. It was moments when Maya was happy and content to just stay in his arms, knowing
she was warm, safe, and loved.

“Love you sweet pea.” Gabriel murmured lovingly.

“’ove ‘ou Daddy.” Maya replies back, hugging him with a squished elephant between them.

Gabriel felt his heart melt at hearing his daughter tell him for the first time she loved him back. Tears pricked at his eyes as he squeezed his daughter a little tighter, swaying, and gave her silly kisses to her neck, sending her into peals of happy laughter.

‘This must’ve been how Dad felt when we were old enough to tell him we loved him back. Oh Dad it’s everything!’ Gabriel thought as the love he felt for his daughter intensified.

March 20 1993, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States

Maya turned 2 years old this morning, and decided to run around like a maniac. Gabriel was so proud. As far as he can tell his daughter has been ahead of the curve of other infants her age by about 6 months. Where others were starting to run more at this age, Maya was a rocket trying to barrel around every corner. Her legs were stronger and more coordinated now, but she was still getting a hang on the movement. That didn’t stop her from being a fast little troublemaker though. Gabriel found that the moment her took his eyes off her for more than a minute she was already running around a corner. It was fine when she did it in the apartment, but it became terrifying when she’d almost disappear in public. Which was what happened today.

Gabriel had taken Maya to the park to play in the wide-open spaces so she can have more room to run around. He planned to celebrate Maya’s 2nd birthday when they went home for the evening and the elderly couple closed up shop at the end of the day. He was pretty sure they decided she was their unofficial grandchild with the way they doted (read: spoiled) on her. Gabriel didn’t mind in the slightest. He had willing babysitters he could trust when he had a chance to get some ‘me time’. Though most of that time was spent worrying about a certain dark hair and golden-eyed child of his.

Maya was having a blast in the park. She was playing a made-up game of chase with one of the other toddlers that also frequented the park often. They both laughed as they ran around the playground, momentarily out of sight of any adult, even Gabriel’s.
Gabriel watched as the other toddler Maya was chasing come back into view without Maya right on his tail. Narrowing his eyes in worry he made his way over to where he last saw her and began calling her name. His heart started pounding when he didn’t hear the answering squeal of ‘Daddy!’ or sees a small toddler come barreling towards him. Picking up the pace Gabriel starts looking around, frantically calling out Maya’s name. His actions easily caught the attention of the other parents, most of who had become accustomed to seeing him with a small dark haired little girl. They too started looking around for the lost child.

Gabriel was panicking. His daughter was gone! He started moving further away from the playground, desperately trying to find any clue of his daughter’s whereabouts. Never had he regretted the Enochian warding sigils on her ribs more than he did in that moment. Sure no angel would be able to find her, but that unfortunately included him as well. He was about to yell out her name again when his angel hearing picked up a faint but familiar cry of ‘Daddy!’

His head whipped around so fast that if he were human he’d certainly have whip lash. He caught sight of a woman holding a squirming and crying child in her arms as she rounded a corner. With his enhanced sight it was easy enough for him to see the child had dark brown curly hair and honey gold eyes. **MAYA!**

No one noticed a distraught father disappear into thin air, or reappear behind a woman trying to get a struggling and crying toddler into a car seat in an inconspicuous van.

“WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING?!” Gabriel bellowed. This caught the attention of any passersby, as they stopped to see what the commotion was about.

The woman, startled, let go of Maya as she whipped around to see the angry face of Gabriel and a growing crowd of on lookers.

“I was trying to get **my** daught—“ the woman tried to stammer out and look as weak and pathetic as she could. Last thing she needed was the crowd against her, but Gabriel was quick to interrupt.

“Excuse me?! You’re daughter?!” Gabriel’s eyes flared in rage at this disgusting woman. Oh he looked into her soul and saw something right foul. She nabbed little kids to sell them off to perverts, and apparently golden eyes were quite rare and were priced as such. Gabriel was livid.

Seeing her Daddy Maya squirmed in the car seat trying to get out, but the mean lady kept her pinned. “Daddy!” Maya complained, wanting her Daddy to get the mean lady to let go.
The woman tried to take the opportunity to make it look like she was the little girl’s mother. “It’s alright sweety, we’ll go see Daddy soo—“

“Ha! Last I checked I was her father and she doesn’t have a mother.” Gabriel sneered, wanting to wretch the foul creature in front of him away from his child. “So I ask again. What. The fuck. Do you think. You are doing?!“ he snarls.

Maya whines as she reaches out to her Daddy with grabby hands. “Daddy! ‘elp!” Everyone on the open side of the van saw that.

Police sirens wail and surround the parked van; someone in the crowd had called the police about the standoff. Woman looked around scared and tried to push through the crowd, away from the police. She didn’t get far and was grabbed by the passersby until a police officer handcuffed her.

The moment the woman was away from his daughter Gabriel all but lunged to her, scooping her up in his arms, holding her close and kissing anywhere he could reach on her face. As he soothed his shaken child the police respectfully asked him questions about what happened, waiting patiently when Maya would start to cry again and he had to calm her down again. He knew some were skeptical about him being her father, since most stereotyped men as child abductors, but from talking to the parents in the park it was clear he was Maya’s only parent. It also helped that she had his, apparently, rare gold eyes. Can’t fight genetics bitches!

One of the parents from the park was kind enough to bring him back his stroller for Maya, though in Gabriel’s mind it was unnecessary. He could always just snap it back home, or conjure up a new one. He gave his information to the police so they could contact him should they need him to testify. Gabriel was done and just wanted to go home, lie in bed, and curl protectively around his frightened child. Once Maya and him were out of sight he snapped them and the stroller back, and did just that.

It didn’t take long for Maya to calm down in her father’s arms, her body draped on top of his own, and an ear listening to his calming heartbeat. The same one that kept her company in the womb. Sleep claimed her easily in the safety of her father’s arms.

Gabriel on the other hand was wide-awake. He thought he’d known fear when he found out he was pregnant, when he might have had to fight against his older brother, when he helped Dad and his older brothers fight against Auntie Amara. Literal darkness. None of that compared to the fear he felt when he thought Maya was gone. His arms tightened slightly around the snoozing toddler, with one hand gently stroking her hair and back, reminding him that she was still here.
“Some birthday huh pumpkin?” he murmured softly, gazing at Maya’s lax features.

Gabriel and the elderly couple celebrated Maya’s birthday two days later. The couple was immensely happy for Gabriel, or ‘Loki’ as they knew him, that he was able to rescue his daughter in time. Not all child abductions had a happy ending. Though Gabriel was indeed happy for the safety of his own child there was the matter of the woman and the other children she’d stolen over the years. So far she was tight lipped with the police, only admitting to them about trying to take Maya for the bogus reason of wanting to raise her herself.

However, miracle of miracles happened and the woman started singing like a canary admitting to abducting many children over the last ten years all over the country and whom she sold them to. Gabriel had nothing to due with the solid illusions of children that the woman abducted haunting her, telling her she killed them and that it was her turn to feel their pain. Nope, not at all. You can prove nothing!!

It baffled police when after all the information she gave, they found her dead in her locked jail cell with all sorts of abuse on her body.

It made headlines all over when some of the children were found, still alive but physically, mentally, and sexually abused. Another miracle was that the woman apparently kept meticulous and damning records of the people she sold to. Gabriel so didn’t plant it.

A lot of affluent men and women found themselves in jail, not all of them surviving. Did you know most hard-core prisoners absolutely detest child molesters and abusers? Apparently it reminds them too much of their own childhoods. Gabriel so wasn’t part of the information leak that caused some of the prisoners and guards to find out. Nope, he just stayed home and loved his daughter.

Some families were happily reunited, though they had a lot of work ahead of them. Other families were given the horrible news that their child didn’t make it, but it did offer closure for those who had been grieving the loss already for all these years.

Gabriel practiced great restraint on during this whole ordeal. Okay maybe not, but with everything so spread out no Hunter came sniffing around.
June-ish 1996, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States

“So is Maya going to Kindergarten in the Fall?” asked Brian, the elderly man who sat across from Gabriel at the Trickster’s kitchen table.

Gabriel stiffens with a fork in his mouth from eating his piece of cake. Swallowing he asks “What?”

“Come now Loki, surely you thought about sending her Kindergarten? It’s mandatory that she goes.” Brian smiled at the deer-in-headlights look he was being given. “I figured you weren’t thinking about it.” He sighed. “So I sent in an application to the school nearby back in April before they were due.”

“Oh well, um, thanks Brian, but I, uh, I don’t think Maya would want to go to school filled with a bunch of strangers…”

“Funny. I thought that most of Maya’s friends from the park were also going to that school. Since it’s nearby.” Brian said pointedly.

“Well maybe she just doesn’t want to go!” says shrugging and adverting his eyes from the knowing eyes of the elderly man.

“Mnhmm,” Brian hums unconvinced. Turning around looking away from Gabriel he calls out “Maya! Come here sweetheart.” Cue the thundering footsteps of a sprinting 5-year-old Maya. Maya had grown a lot over the last three years. Her hair was longer, held back in a curly ponytail with short bangs and some fly away hairs. All her baby teeth had come in, and her eyes still a bright gold that reflected the morning light. She even had a splash of freckles across her cheeks and nose. Maya was adorable.

“Hi Pop-pop!” Maya says looking up at the elderly man smiling at the grandfatherly figure. Brian smiles happily at the name while placing his hand on her little shoulder.

“Maya, would you like to go to school in September with all your friends?” Brian asks. Maya’s eyes lit up at the mention of her friends, and started nodding her head vigorously.
“Yeah! Yeah! School!” Maya says excitedly. Brian smiles mirthfully at Gabriel’s defeated face.

“Doesn’t want to go to school huh?” Brian’s eyes sparkle amusedly.

“Shush up you,” Gabriel pouts, slightly betrayed by his daughter’s excited babbling about going to school.

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**September-ish 1996, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States**

Gabriel stood near the Kindergarten entrance amongst some of the other parents with a good grip on an excited Maya’s shoulder. She just wanted to bolt. Gabriel was both proud and sad. He’d been worried about Maya’s out-going attitude disappearing after the whole near-abduction fiasco, but in true young child fashion she was resilient. She didn’t let it get to her. She was damn near fearless. He was kind of wishing she wasn’t at the moment, if only to have her cling to his leg like some of the other more nervous children.

One of the teachers came out and told the parents to give their last goodbyes for the day.

Gabriel rubbed his face sighing before kneeling down and turning Maya around to face him.

“Hey baby cakes you gonna be okay being here all day? ‘Cause if you decide you can’t handle we can turn around and go home right now.” Gabriel told her. Maya looks into his eyes seriously, as much as she could anyways, and puts one of her hands against his face.

“I be okay. You my Daddy!” Maya replied before giving him a big hug. “Love you Daddy!”

“Love you too puddin’. See you later kiddo.” Gabriel said through a slightly choked voice, fighting back tears.

The teacher called attention and beckoned the new students to follow. A lot of students had some slight separation anxiety, even Karen’s little snot Matthew, but not Maya though. Take that Karen!
Gabriel was so proud of his daughter’s courageous nature, but sadness also welled up inside him. His little girl was growing up. He was not cool with that idea. It meant that at some point she’d no longer need him. Ouch.

“What’s wrong Loki? Worried your little girl won’t be able to handle being away from you? Only you would raise such a pathe—“

“Go suck a cock Karen.”
December 18 1996, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States

Gabriel didn't remember the part of parenthood that had him being conscripted by the PTA Dictator. He was pretty sure that was nowhere in the parenting books. Not that he read them. Nope. He was naturally an awesome Dad. Dad-ing was a breeze…shut up.

Apparently Karen had volunteered him at the last teacher's conference to bake, or buy (insert Karen's disgust) a decorated gingerbread house for a fundraising raffle, and didn't tell him till late yesterday that he needed it done for tomorrow, and to have 20 decorated gingerbread men cookies for Maya's class's Christmas party. She then stated smirking how she had all her Christmas cookies for the class already, and she baked them herself. The bitch. That passive-aggressive bitch.

Oh Gabriel could just conjure up everything, but it wouldn't beat the homemade stuff. Store bought? Sure. But whatever Karen baked homemade? Not likely. Gabriel was not about to let that vile woman win! So while Maya was at school today Gabriel looked up gingerbread recipes for cookies and houses, and a template for a very special cookie. Hehe.

It was easy enough to snap up the ingredients, cookie cutters, templates, and all the fixings for the decorations. By the afternoon however the kitchen was a mess of flour and gingerbread cookie dough from putting the mixer on the high setting too soon. He managed to get the gingerbread men into the oven, and was cutting out the pieces for the gingerbread house. It was going to be epic. He couldn't wait to see Karen's face when she sees it! Cue cackling.

Loki paused in his cackling when the door to the apartment opened and revealed Harriet, Brian's wife.

"Hello Loki. Is that maniacal cackling I hear?" she greeted with a mischievous gleam in her eyes. Loki smiles a little too broadly to be perceived as innocent at the elderly lady.

"Me? Cackling evilly while I make a gingerbread confections?" feigning innocence and failing.

"I never said evilly Loki." She pointed out. "What are you up to?" she inquired curiously with an
"My dear lady you wound me with such accusations!" Loki responds with a hand over his chest feigning mock hurt. "I would never be up to dastardly deeds while baking confections for my darling daughter's classmates!"

Harriet gave him a knowing, but amused look. "Yes you would."

"Yeah I would." Loki shrugged smirking before returning to his careful cutting of the gingerbread house pieces. "The PTA Dictator that is Karen just told me yesterday evening that I was volunteered to make a gingerbread house for a raffle, and have 20 decorated gingerbread men for Maya's class's Christmas party. Which is tomorrow."

"That bitch." Harriet cursed, scrunching her face in disgust. Loki had to put down the knife as he laughed. A sweet little old lady calling someone a bitch was just so funny. You'd never expect it.

"Would you like me to pick-up Maya for you?" Harriet asked after Gabriel calmed his ass down. Gabriel blinked at Harriet then looked at the clock cursing. "I'll take that as a 'yes please oh most wonderful lady'." Harriet chuckled at the relieved look on Gabriel's face. She turned to leave the apartment, but before she does she yells back grinning "Don't let the gingerbread men burn Loki!" Gabriel cursed loudly as he quickly checks on the baking cookies, while Harriet gives her own brand of cackling as she walked out the door. Gabriel mentally applauded Brian for marrying that woman, and staying married for all these years. Harriet was a joker after his own heart. It was no wonder they got along like a house on fire.

It didn't take long for an excited Maya to come rumbling up the stairs and burst into the apartment with an exuberant "Daddy!"

Gabriel had just put the gingerbread house pieces in the oven and finished cutting out the pieces from the special template, putting those up on the fridge away from Maya's young eyes. Seeing his daughter he crouched down with arms wide and a big smile on his face, "Hey ginger loaf!" Maya ignores the mess that was his clothes and launches into his arms all smiles and giggles. "How was school candy cane?" he asked as he picked her up and propped her on his hip.

"It was good! I play and readed books. I make snowfakes and snowpeople!" Maya continues talking, telling her Daddy all about her day, until she notices the gingerbread men. Gasp! COOKIES! She tries to snag one from the counter but Gabriel kept her away.
"Woah, there kiddo! Sorry fruitcake but those are for your classmates tomorrow. Unless you don't want them to have cookies for the party?" Gabriel asked with a raised eyebrow. Watching with amusement as emotions flitted through Maya's golden eyes. He could tell she really wanted one of them. Instead of asking for one, she huffs and slumps in his arms in defeat.

"No that make 'em sad. I wait." Maya mumbled eyeing the cookies longingly. Yep his daughter was an angel. Well, more so than most of his siblings can truly claim that's for sure. Gabriel was so proud of his young daughter, but it was definitely a good thing that he made more than the 20 he needed.

"Aw don't pout gummy bear. I made more than enough. I'm sure it wouldn't hurt to have one or two tonight." Oh Dad did that get a reaction. Complete 180 from sulking to an excited ball of energy. "Buuuuuuuuuuuut, would you rather eat one now oooor have one once it's all decorated with icing?" Gabriel grinned as he watched Maya's eyes go wide.

"Icing! Icing!" Gabriel laughed at her excitement as he put her down.

"Well go wash your hands and get your apron. I'm going to need an assistant cookie decorator." Squealing Maya kicks off her coat, shoes, and backpack, before running into the bathroom to wash her hands. Then she was barreling into her room to grab her apron.

Gabriel quickly made the decorating icing, separating it into a few different bags before snapping his fingers to change the white into festive Christmas colours. As he places them on the table he feels a small lump barrel into and cling to his leg. He looked down to see a smiling Maya wearing an apron looking up at him. It was black with dark purple, silver, and gold poka-dots. Once the apron was tied around her waist he picks her up and snaps up a stepping stool and places her on it. He brings over the trays of cooled gingerbread men and tells Maya to try to keep the icing in the trays. Then he says the magic words that all little children like to hear when it comes to decorating. Go nuts. Maya does so, promptly.

Gabriel watches his little girl have a blast squeezing icing out from really high and making large sweeping motions across the one of the trays. The other tray was less abstract, in that Maya tried to make the gingerbread men have faces and clothes. It was fun to watch her little face scrunched in concentration with her tongue poking out a little. He looked away when the timer went off for the gingerbread house pieces. Gabriel swaps the house pieces with the super-secret-special-template pieces. Setting the house pieces aside to cool, Gabriel muscles in beside his daughter to help her decorate the remaining gingerbread men.

Gabriel and Maya had a blast and a half decorating and putting together the gingerbread house. Gabriel used his mojo to harden the icing gluing the pieces together quicker. It looked like Santa's workshop covered in snow, and candy. There was a large main house, with two smaller ones
attached, one to each side. Although, half of the whole thing looked like Maya decided to go abstract again, with drizzling icing and random placement of Christmas candy. It was still epic though.

After the gingerbread house was done he got Maya some dinner, and the promised two gingerbread cookies. Maya, the sweet heart, gave him one of them.

Once Maya was tucked away in bed, and the kitchen snapped clean, Gabriel took down the special template cookie pieces he'd set aside. Since this wonderful evening with his daughter was all thanks to Karen he figured he make her something special. He let loose a quiet cackle of glee as he decorated and put it all together. Granted it was only three pieces but the look on Karen's face when she sees it? Another round of quiet cackling.

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December 19 1996, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States

Gabriel was grinning at a scowling Karen beside him. The gingerbread house he made and decorated with Maya was across the room being raffled on. Many were in awe that it was homemade and constructed by 'Loki', but would chuckle knowingly from the label that said, "Decorated by Maya Godson". Then there was the fact that the majority of Maya's classmates wanted their gingerbread cookies over the sugar cookies that Karen made. When asked most of the little kids said because they had the most icing on them, whereas Karen's were neat but had very little icing.

It was a nice little party for the kids and parents that could come, and a great way to kick off the holiday break. Once it was over and everything was being packed up Gabriel caught up with Karen with his special gift.

"Hey Karen wait up!" Karen turns to scowl at him.

"What do you want Loki?" she asked with a hostile tone.

"Whoa! Chill on the hostilities! I've got a thank you gift. 'Tis the season after all." Gabriel smiled while handing over a large bag. "Wouldn't have had a blast decorating with my daughter last night if you hadn't volun-told me I had to make a gingerbread house and a bunch of gingerbread men."
"Merry Christmas!" says a smiling Maya up at an uncertain Karen.

"Um, thank you, and merry Christmas." Karen replied unsure. Gabriel turns in the opposite direction and leaves with Maya, disappearing around a corner.

Karen opens the bag and got a whiff of gingerbread. She pulls out the large cookie and stared at it in shock. It was a foot long penis with balls, covered in flesh colored icing, shaded veins, and hairy balls. Written fancily in white icing down the shaft was a message:

**EAT IT KAREN!**

"LOOOOOOOOOOKIIIIIIII!"

Gabriel stopped peaking around the corner and had bent over laughing.

Maya, not knowing what's going on, laughs with her Daddy. She likes it when he laughed.

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**June 7 1997, Harrisburg, Illinois, United States**

Maya woke up today tired with a sore itchy back. It wasn't bad just annoying, like there was something just under her skin. Her back muscles ached in protest as she put on her school clothes. This has been going on for what seemed like forever for a little Maya. She didn't want her Daddy to worry so she hasn't said anything about it. After all it didn't really hurt, was just annoying.

"Hey pumpkin, you okay?" Gabriel asked, looking at his sleepy daughter. Maya nodded mumbling that she was fine. "You sure? If you're not feeling okay you can always just stay home today." He asked concerned.

"No, I'm okay. Just tired." Maya smiled at him a little sleepy. "Pancakes?" she asked hopefully, acting more like her regular self.
Gabriel gives a snort as he scoops a couple onto her plate, before piling his own sky-high stack of pancakes. With nothing else seeming out of the ordinary Gabriel took Maya to school.

It would be around the time of morning recess when Gabriel gets a call from the school. Something's happened to Maya. Gabriel popped in, unseen, and made his way to Maya's classroom. Outside the classroom stood all of Maya's classmates and the teacher's aid. All of them were talking and looking curiously at the door to their classroom. The teaching aid gave perturbed and wary glances.

A pit formed in the bottom of his stomach. Something was seriously wrong. Striding into the classroom he finds his daughter on a nest of bloody blankets whimpering in pain. Gabriel's heart stopped seeing all the blood, but he just about died from terror at the cause of all the blood.

On Maya's back were two little folded wings that reached from a few inches over her shoulders down her back where the tips brushed her calves. He couldn't process. Maya's teacher tried to gain his attention, demanding answers but he couldn't respond.

"...I suggest we call the paramedics and get her to the hospital..." that woke him up a little. Gabriel snapped his fingers, sending his pagan magic through the whole school, freezing everyone but him and Maya. Rushing forward he scoops up his daughter, along with some soiled blankets and flies directly into his apartment.

"Daddy...it hurts." Maya whimpered plaintively.

"I know sugar cane. I'll make the pain go away." Gabriel murmured to his daughter as he used his grace to heal the sliced skin around the base of her wings. His baby has wings! Actual, physical, on display for the world to see wings! They weren't like his that were hidden on a different plane of existence. If he wanted humans to see his wings he'd have to do a light show so they could see the shadows they cast, unless they wanted their eyes burned out.

Maya lets out a sigh of relief as the pain in her back faded and disappeared. She heard another snap of fingers and the sticky wet feeling from her blood was gone.

"Daddy?" Maya queried tiredly, as she tried to look at what was so heavy on her back, but instead felt the press of two fingers on her forehead, and she was out like a light.

Gabriel took Maya and laid her on his bed, on her stomach, to get a better look at her. With her
body at ease in sleep her wings also relaxed from their tense folded position. With gentle hands Gabriel carefully manipulated the new wings, extending and retracting them, feeling how they weighed in his hands, checking joints and feathers. Other than being a little too heavy, and with a weird nub on the bent portion over her shoulders on each wing they were normal for a fledgling at her physical age. However, the fact that she had wings at all was concerning. She was a nephilim; she wasn't supposed to have wings!

Gabriel didn't have much time. Although all the occupants in the school were frozen he couldn't keep them that way forever, and he couldn't just wipe their minds of the incident. To make them all forget he would have to use a lot of angel mojo and that would put him, and consequently Maya, on Heaven's radar. No his best bet was to go to another one of his safe houses. Leaving his daughter to rest he snaps his fingers and every personal and supernatural item in the apartment was sent to his next safe house. His closet turned playroom was a closet once again. Snapping his fingers again Maya's furniture and the things in her room were also sent over. Gabriel was about to make the food in the fridge disappear when the door to his apartment opened.

"Hello Loki," came Brian's greeting as he looked at the depersonalized space. "I didn't see you come back from the school. How did you get up here?"

Gabriel was frozen for a second before smiling, "I snuck in. I am an amazing stealth ninja when I want to be." Brian walked further into the apartment looking around, seeing all pictures and all of Maya's drawings had disappeared. He froze when his gaze looked towards Gabriel's room. The room with a door left wide open. *Shit!*

"Oh Loki, what happened to Maya?" There was no shock in Brian's voice, just concern. Gabriel didn't expect that and watched dumbfounded as the elderly man hurried to his daughter's side. He watched as Brian lightly stroked his daughter's wings that responded to the touch by slightly opening and closing. "Was this what the school called about?" Brian asked, as he did his own little assessment on Maya's condition.

"Um, yeah, but there was a lot more blood but…how come you're not, I don't know, freaking out?" Gabriel queried cautiously, eyes looking for any kind of wrong move. He liked the old man, but that was his daughter he was standing by.

Brian rips his eyes away from Maya's wings and gives Gabriel an unimpressed stare. "My wife and I may be old, but we aren't stupid. We suspected you weren't quite human. A little digging on the name 'Loki' and we had a pretty good idea what you were and what you were capable of."

"How long?" Gabriel was tense. They knew about him, and probably guessed some about Maya as well.
"6 months after you moved in we suspected you were a Trickster. A Trickster god of mischief and chaos, who liked doling out just desserts. It wasn't until the strange incidences around the woman that tried to take Maya when she was two that we knew for sure." Brian replied looking calmly at Gabriel. "There were other suspicious things you did as well, but the just desserts that that woman got, along with her customers sealed it."

"Doesn't explain why you let us stay here so long, knowing what I'm capable of. Most would call me a monster." Gabriel pointed out, suspicion lacing his voice. The response he got wasn't one he expected. Brian laughed at him.

"You are many things Loki, but a monster? A true monster? Not likely. You are a good man that does bad, but justly deserved, things to worse people."

"You don't know that." Gabriel countered.

"I do. I see it everyday when you drop-off and pick-up Maya from school. The way you talk to her, and even when you scold her I see the pain in your face. I see it in the way she responds to you, the way she looks at you with complete trust and unconditional love in her little eyes. No monster could ever hope to be as good a father as you are with Maya Loki. You are a good man, and an even better father." Brian looked away from Gabriel to stare at the slumbering little girl on the bed and her wings.

In Brian's opinion they matched the little girl he had gotten the pleasure of seeing grow. It was the colors of her wings that matched her. The tops were a bluish-black that had specks of silver, and as the eye travelled further down the blue became clearer with streaks of purples, pinks, oranges, reds and yellows. Near the tips of her inside feathers was a pale yellow verging on white that created a slight arc. Another slightly darker pale yellow moved across the very tips of her other away from the arc and her body.

Brian could tell that when both her wings were spread they would create an image of the morning sun, just as it peaks above the horizon to chase away the night, shedding light onto the darkness. Just as Maya seems to shine with her own inner light. They were breathtaking.

He didn't question the existence of Maya's wings. Since he looked up Loki he also knew of his other less than human children. Wings were small change to being born an eight-legged horse.

Gabriel stared at Brian flabbergasted. Not really sure how to respond. Humans. Always with the
surprises, and never staying on script.

"We can't stay." Gabriel finally got out.

Brian nods, "I assumed as much. Can't you make them forget? You are a god."

"Don't got that kind of pagan juju." Gabriel smirked sadly shrugging his shoulders. "Froze the school, but can't keep them like that forever."

"I understand," Brian sighed sadly. "Let me just get Harriet so we can say good-bye." Gabriel nods and watched as Brian left the apartment and descended the stairs.

Gabriel returned to Maya's side and began absentmindedly stroking her hair as he stared at her wings. Touching them he could feel Maya's grace pulsing strongly through them, much more strongly than normal fledglings, but it shouldn't be outside her body at all with the suppression sigils under her skin. He'd have to investigate those to find out why they didn't work. Thankfully the sigils on her ribs kept her grace hidden. It was only when he touched her wings did he sense anything at all.

Gabriel looked up at Brian and Harriet shuffled into his room. Harriet, the ever-bold woman, looked him straight in the eye. "So god of mischief eh?" she asked smirking.

"Guilty." Gabriel shrugged, watching as Harriet turned to Brian and gave him a light whack to his stomach.

"Called it! Pay up." Harriet held out her hand expectantly, as Brian shucked out a hundred to his wife. Gabriel grinned at Brian amused.

"So you're not stupid, eh Brian?" Gabriel teased. Brian snorts in good humor.

"Let me rephrase what I said earlier. My wife isn't stupid."

"That's right! I've trained you well." Harriet says pleased. Brian just gives a loving and entertained smile to his wife. Gabriel laughs at Harriet's response. Oh Dad was he going to miss that woman!
He was going to miss both of them. They were the closest thing to grandparents Maya was probably ever going to have. Maya was not going to be a happy camper when she woke up. That somber thought calmed Gabriel down.

"Maya needs her rest, but we can't stay. Times running out." Gabriel told them. Two elderly sad eyes stared back at him. They didn't want Maya, or him, to leave either. They both gave a sleeping Maya their last hugs and sweet kisses good-bye, tears filling their kind old eyes. To Gabriel's slight surprise they rounded on him and squished him in a hug as well. Harriet pecked his cheek, and Brian placed a firm hand on his shoulder and gave him a meaningful look. "You are a good man, and an even better father," didn't need to be said. Gabriel felt his own eyes water as he gave a shaky smile back to the man. Harriet came back for another hug and handed a picture to him.

The picture was from a timer camera and it was Maya's 6th birthday. They were all gathered around Maya smiling at the camera. Maya's face peaked over the lit candles on her birthday cake with her own face splitting grin. Turning it around Gabriel expected just to see names and a date, instead it was a note for Maya.

_Dear Maya,_

_We have never known the joys of grandchildren till you and your father came to us. Though you are not of us, you are still a part of us, just as we are a part of you. We are family, and we will always love you._

_Love,_

_Pop-pop (Brian) & Grammy (Harriet)_

_March 20 1997_

"Thank you. I'll make sure she gets it." Gabriel said as he moves over to Maya and scoops of his slumbering child, her colorful wings hanging limp. It doesn't take much effort to snap a blanket around her, securing it and her wings. Looking back at Brian and Harriet he sees the slight awe of that little display of magic, but it was overshadowed with grief. With an exchange of sad smiles, and a snap of fingers, Gabriel and Maya disappeared.

At the nearby public school staff and students looked around dazed. It doesn't take long for word to spread of how a little girl had sprouted wings in a flurry of screams and blood, after climbing too high in a tree and falling out of it. Any blood in the classroom or schoolyard had disappeared, along with any school record of a 'Maya Godson' and her father 'Loki Godson'. Some reporters, and undercover Hunters, asked around about the father and daughter duo. None got very far.
As the last of them left, an elderly couple that owned a little business with an empty apartment had finally took out all the pictures and mementoes they had of the Trickster Loki and his sweet little girl Maya. They'd smile sadly at the happy moments and laugh softly at the funny ones, but mostly they hoped to see them again someday before they passed.

Chapter End Notes

I kind of wanted to have more entries of Gabriel's and Karen's interactions but the timeline in my head was getting smaller. Though I will try to have moments later when Gabriel will remember those instances.

I also probably made you feel things at the end. Sorry. Not really. :D
Like Father Like Daughter

August-ish 2000, Rutland, Georgia, United States

It had been about 3 years since that day in Harrisburg, and right now Gabriel was at a loss. Maya was curled up on her motel bed, under the blankets, facing the window and ignoring him. He tried to make what happened earlier today a good thing, a way to introduce her to the line she'd eventually cross when she's older and a fully trained Trickster. Or half-Trickster as he explained to her what happened 3 years ago when he woke her up at his safe house in North Dakota. He wanted her to get used to it now when she's young than be too hesitant when she's older and facing against a Hunter or other dangerous beings.

After all a Trickster has to be able to take the trick all the way if the jerk they were tricking doesn't learn their lesson, or, more likely than not, justly deserves it. In other words, Maya needed to be able to take a life. Gabriel doesn't like it, but with the way Maya was and the way the world was heading she couldn't afford to be as merciful and as kind hearted as she actually was. Not if she wanted to survive.

"C'mon pumpkin, don't be like this," Gabriel tried to cajole, placing a hand on her shoulder. "The guy injured and killed multiple people in a horrible hit and run and didn't even bat an eye in guilt. So what if your trick didn't go as you planned it? The guy deserved what he got. So lets celebrate! Your first fatal trick! C'mon sunshine!" Apparently those weren't the words Maya really wanted to hear. She just curled herself up tighter and roughly shrugged off his hand.

"Celebrate?" Maya let a disbelieving snort. "I just got someone killed, practically murdered them, and you want me to celebrate?"

Gabriel let out a weary sigh. "Maya it's what we do. We're Tricksters! We play tricks on the high and mighty types, the assholes and the jerks, and give them their just desserts, teach 'em a lesson —"

"That has to include killing them?!" Maya interrupted as she abruptly sat up and whirled around to stare at her father, a face full of desperate questioning and distress. "What do they learn then? Who decided we are judge, jury and executioner?" she questioned, voice filled emotion and uncertainty. "My mark, that hit-and-run driver, was making his way to the police station to turn himself in! I was able to use my illusions to make him face what he did and for him to feel guilty, remorseful! He learned his lesson! He was ready to make up for it anyway he could! HE DIDN'T DERSERVE TO DIE!" Maya exploded. Her undeveloped chest rising and falling with her pants as she stared at her Dad beseechingly with wide gold eyes now on the verge of angry and anxious tears.
Gabriel stared at his daughter wide-eyed. Other than normal little kid tantrums she'd throw when she was smaller, filled with petulant childish whines, she'd never yelled at him like this before.

Don't get him wrong, he loved his daughter's kind, compassionate, and merciful heart. It's what made her so much better than what he could ever hope to be; and in a perfect world he'd leave it be. However, this was not a perfect world. It was cruel, ugly, and dangerous; and Gabriel wanted to make sure that if anything happened to him Maya would be able to make it on her own. He'd have to crack—not break—it. Put enough pressure on it that if push came to shove Maya would be able to do what she needed to do to stay alive. Tricksters were powerful and dangerous beings. Not all Hunters, or most other supernatural beings, had the balls to go after them. That being said if any got wind of a half-Trickster that's not willing to kill? Maya wouldn't have a very long life being constantly hunted.

Gabriel couldn't allow that. As much as he wanted to hold his daughter and tell her she could be whatever kind of Trickster she wanted to be, he couldn't.

"Listen here, and listen good." Gabriel said sternly point a finger at her, his body tense and gold eyes dark with threat of retribution. Maya cowed a little, but held his gaze unwavering with her own molten eyes. "I don't give a damn that you're half-human. You aren't one of them. So stow whatever emotions or conflict of morals you got for them. Whether you like it or not you're a Trickster, and that's what you're going to be. A full fledge mischief-maker that rains judgment on the human assholes and human monsters of the world giving them their just desserts, which will include killing them from time to time."

Father and daughter stared at each other with matching sets of golden eyes, the Father's narrowed sternly and the daughter's narrowed in anger, angst, slight betrayal, and mostly defiance. Gabriel didn't let it show, but for a brief moment he saw his older brother's eyes looking back at him. Gabriel wouldn't look away first. This was a test of will now, and he'd been willful a lot longer than Maya has and it showed when she finally lowered her gaze and looked away grimacing.

Gabriel relaxed his body and continued to stare at his daughter. He hated this, but it was necessary. "I'm going to go into town and scope out potential marks. Ones that require more…fatal tricks." Maya's head shot up and looked up at him with wide eyes, her mind already going to what Gabriel had in mind. She started to shake her head back and forth. Gabriel gave a quick shake of his head and raised his voice, "Enough!" Maya stills. "You will stay here in this motel room until I come back. I expect you to be sleeping, but come morning you're going to help me come up with fatal tricks, and help perform them later this week. Understood?" Maya gives a small nod, her face filled with trepidation and her hands balled into fists in the motel bed's comforter. Gabriel sighed and went to put a comforting hand on Maya's shoulder, but she deliberately moved away, her eyes downcast as she avoided looking at him. His hand hovered mid-air for a moment before retracting it, the pain evident in his eyes. Not that Maya saw it.
Gabriel exited the motel room, locking the door, and walked a few feet before leaning his back and head against a wall. He ran his hands through his light dirty blonde hair, front to back as he looked up. His face was tight with regret, grief, and pain. He was infringing on Maya's right to free will. He knew he was, but he also knew in the long run it'd be for the best. He just hoped Maya wouldn't resent him for it later.

Gabriel couldn't help but think back on the choices he made for Maya those 3 long years ago, when out of no where she grew angel wings painted like the dawn.

---

3 years ago…

When he arrived at one of his safe houses in butt-fuck nowhere North Dakota he had placed Maya quickly on a conjured up bed, and used his grace to examine the suppression sigils under skin. They were weakening, slowly. They were never meant to stay so long after Maya's birth, not that when Gabriel had planted them that he expected to still have her still breathing by then. Looking at the sigils around where her wings sprouted he found that they had been damaged by an angel blade.

But that was impossible. If an angel found and knew what Maya was there would be a very loud klaxon over the angel waves, and the angel would have skewered Maya, not just damage the sigils. Gabriel must have pressed too hard with his grace or his fingers, but Maya's wings gave a large twitch and a *shing!* Looking to the side at one of the tensed wings he found, protruding from the weird nub at the bend, a silver angel blade 5inches in length glinting in the light. He looked to Maya's other wing to find its twin just as he wings relaxed and the angel blades receded, and then sheathed by the weird nubs.

**His daughter had built in angel blades…holy shit!**

Worried about Maya's suppressed grace he placed a hand on her side and carefully weaved through the sigils on her ribs. Her grace was still suppressed for the most part. *'Most'* being the operative word. That bit that was visibly peaking from her soul was outputting lots of concentrated power with no-where to go. So it had decided to grow wings to spread her grace out, but the wings couldn't penetrate the sigils under her skin. So it decided to cut its way out by making the only thing that could break past the suppression sigils from the inside. *Angel blades.*

Gabriel couldn't risk putting the wings back inside her body with those angel blade daggers of theirs. They'd just break out again more easily next time with the sigils growing weaker. So he carefully used pagan and angel magic to gently shrink them down till they were no more than 2 ½"
per wing, then turned them into angel wing birthmarks between her shoulder blades. Finally, he repaired the damaged sigils and incorporated new ones to keep her wings as birthmarks, unless they were broken. That didn't solve the other problem he could see forming.

Her wings still provided a way for her to access some of the powers her grace afforded her, but with them locked up no-one, angel or otherwise, could tell how she had them. It was an easy enough solution. He planned to make Maya a Trickster, like him, by having her *discreetly* consume some of his pagan magic infused blood. It would explain her powers, and at first glance she will be dismissed as a pagan demi-god. Neither Maya, nor anyone else, would find out about her true bloodline, while the sigils in her body kept her shielded and her grace suppressed. She'll be human with a few extras, as her power would grow stronger as the suppression sigils grew weaker.

When Maya woke up he explained to her how her 'magic' manifested at school when she fell out of the tree and how they had to leave because people wouldn't accept them. Maya argued that her friends would. Shaking his head he continued, and explained how he wasn't human but a Trickster that played pranks on bullies, that's why he could do magic. He explained that because she was his daughter she could do magic too and she couldn't go back to school.

Maya threw a fit. She loved school, loved learning and playing with her friends. Gabriel had to tell her that she was too dangerous and since she couldn't control her magic yet she could hurt one of her classmates. Maya sighed in defeat. She didn't want to hurt anyone.

Then Gabriel explained the supernatural world and the people that hunted it. Maya was very quiet and very frightened at the idea that all the monsters she'd heard of were very much real. Gabriel then told a young Maya of a monster she needed to fear as much as Hunters, even when she has fully grown into her powers. That if she ever came across one she should flee as fast and as far as she could.

In that moment Gabriel taught her to fear Angels above all else. She was dubious at first, having thought before that angels were nice. Gabriel told her how they don't feel like humans do. How they see humans as something more worthless than dirt and use them as pawns to further their own goals. He told her angels would smite an entire city if it meant it got them closer to their goals and they wouldn't care about the lives they just ended. Just as they would smite her for being part pagan. Maya was of course terrified.

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**August-ish 2000, Rutland, Georgia, United States**

Since that day Gabriel has taught Maya the art of trickery, the most important being misdirection.
Maya was an excellent student, her mind never learning the limits of her imagination as she tried daily to come up with new pranks to play on bullies. Gabriel refrained from letting Maya in on the more grizzly and fatal of the tricks he did, only doing them when Maya was safely tucked away at a motel.

At 9 years old, Maya was able to make illusions similar to holograms. At first glance people would think they're real, but there were still some aspects of them that were off. Like lacking total opacity or just sounds of life, like breathing, footfalls, or rustling of fabric, or moving too stiffly. They made good Hollywood stereotypic ghosts though.

Another ability that she was still working on was snapping up an inanimate object from across the room to her hand, or vice versa. She liked doing this with any candy Gabriel might have had in his hand. One minute he's about to chow down on a 3 Musketeers bar, then next he's biting down on nothing but air and Maya would just be sitting on her bed chowing down on it instead while trying to hold back her laughter.

Gabriel smiled slightly at that memory. It was one of her first successful tricks using that ability. He remembered being unsure of whether to scowl at her thieving his candy or beam proudly at his little Trickster. He had settled for pouting, which got Maya laughing and almost choking on the candy bar.

Snapping his fingers Gabriel disappeared from the motel's hallway and began searching, for the first time reluctantly, for his and Maya's next victims. Early evening and nighttime for some reason or other usually had good pickings.

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**May-ish 2001, Fort Dodge, Iowa, United States**

It was almost year since that night in Rutland where Gabriel had to lay down the law, so to speak, of how Maya's training was going to go. They'd go from town to town looking for scumbags and assholes that need to be knocked down a peg. Maya was more willing in this regard, but every time he tried to get her in on one of his fatal tricks she'd resist, fiercely.

At first she'd try to offer non-lethal alternatives that would send the message, but Gabriel has been around since creation and knew what she was up to. She was trying to get him to change his mind. He wouldn't budge though. Gabriel brought her on all his escapades and has her witness their deaths. It was cruel and wrong, but he needed her not to be sensitive to it. So he figured if he desensitized her she'd be more willing to pull the trigger on one of these assholes.
It half worked. She no longer felt as strongly when they were killed as before, but she stubbornly refused to be a part of it. He could still see that twinge in Maya's eyes whenever he ended someone, the pain and guilt, but would quickly mask it the best she could.

In the last month or two Gabriel had been worried about her. She didn't smile as easily as she used to, or as genuinely. Those only appeared when she'd show little kids in the parks her illusions as 'magic tricks', out of the watchful eyes of their parents. Her bright gold eyes were now dull and almost always downcast. She hardly springs into random song, and barely draws anything anymore. Getting her to laugh was similar to pulling teeth, but getting her to really talk to him was like pulling fangs out from a live vampire trying to eat you. Maya didn't say much to him anymore either. She seemed to have stopped trying.

Gabriel returned around 1:03am having marked only a couple of assholes in Fort Dodge that really needed to be taken care of. Permanently. Opening the door he sees Maya's sleeping silhouette in her bed. Or, at least he thinks its Maya. Something about the room and the motionless sleeping figure unnerved him. Pricking his angel hearing he listened to the sounds of the room. The faucet in the bathroom sink dripped, the refrigerator whirred, and the wind from the outside shuffled the curtains.

'Maya must have left the window open…' Gabriel thought as he moved closer to the other side of the room to close the window. As he gets closer to the window he started to become more painfully aware of something missing in the room's ambient sou—wait. Shouldn't there be a heartbeat? MAYA!

Gabriel whipped around and approached what he assumed in the dark was his sleeping daughter's form. Ripping the blanket back his face paled, his heart dropped and unimaginable fear filled him. On the bed were towels, blankets, and pillows arranged to look like a body sleeping. Gabriel tried to calm his erratically beating heart. Maybe Maya was playing a prank on him to get back at him. He really hoped that was the case.

"Alright Maya," Gabriel called out into the room. "You got me kiddo! Jokes on me, huh? It's what I get for inducting you into the ways of the prankster, right?" Gabriel tried to keep his voice light, as well as keep an amused smirk on his face, but it was difficult the more he looked around the room, and no Maya. The smile falls as his gaze turned back to the open window leading out into the parking lot. No. No, he wasn't going to panic just yet. He looked in every crevice of the room that could hide a 10yr old girl, even sent a pulse of his pagan magic to see if she upped her illusion game and was hiding behind one, but nothing. Looking around more closely he finds that her things were missing too. Realization hits Gabriel like a freight train. Maya pulled a him.
His daughter ran away.

The fear he experienced when Maya was almost abducted when she was 2yrs old came rushing back. He didn't need to look in a mirror to know his face had paled, he could feel the blood draining from it. With his heart beat out of control, his knees gave out from under him, all while he stared blankly at the open window. That wasn't the worst of it though. What came next had the great archangel Gabriel crying silent shocked tears of anguish.

His chest felt like it was being compressed by the largest rock in existence, his vessel feeling like it could hardly breathe. Gabriel had never felt such guilt in all of his existence. He knew the reason why had Maya runaway.

It was him. It was all his fault.

He kept pushing her to be something she didn't want to be. He saw what he was doing to her, but thought he knew better. He didn't hear what she was trying to say, he didn't try to listen. He pushed her buttons till she couldn't take it. He practically pushed her out the door himself!

With shaky feet Gabriel forced himself to stand and push away the overwhelming emotions he was feeling. He'd make it up to his baby girl once he found her, but he, of course, needed to find her first. With the sigils on her ribs he wouldn't be able to pinpoint her location, so he'd have to do it the human way, kind of.

For the next few hours that night Gabriel scoured the town, pulling footage from security cameras and traffic cams. His daughter was clever and well taught though. He had taught her how to spot the cameras in order to stay out of them when she was using her powers. Maya used that knowledge to avoid most of them. He was able to make out she was heading west towards Nebraska. Unfortunately that's where Gabriel's luck ran out. She'd already gone past the city limits into the countryside that had roads crisscrossing across Iowa with nothing but farmland in between, and no cameras.

Maya was gone, and he didn't know how to find her unless she prayed to 'Loki' or called his cellphone.

Gabriel sat on the rooftop of the last building that had any chance of having footage of his daughter before she left the city. There was none. He leaned back against one of the roof's structures and looked over at the rising sun. For the first time since he found out he was pregnant with Maya,
Gabriel prayed. For the first time ever he begged with every ounce of sincerity he could muster.

"Father, please." Gabriel pleaded. "I messed up with Maya. She's gone and I can't find her. Please help me find her. Please, I need to fix this!" His voice started choking on more tears as he continued to beg to an absent father.

"Please…"

(Chuck writing)

God stayed hidden as He watched His fourth son beg and plead to Him to help him find his child. God's heart went out to Gabriel, but this was the consequence of his actions, his choice, to try and crack the kind-hearted soul of his child. Turning His back to His son He disappears and reappears to gaze at, for all intents and purposes, His granddaughter. He smiled softly at what he found.

Maya was sound asleep bundled up in her coat, long pants, and warm socks to keep the cool spring night from her bones. She had made her way up a tree and wedged herself in between two thick trunks, and used a thin sheet from the motel to tie herself in place.

Her hair was short, coming halfway down her neck, and full of dark waves and curls. Maya's bangs had been grown out and her hair parted on the left before being tucked behind her ears. She still had some baby fat in her face but she was slowly looking less like a dark haired female version of Gabriel. Her body had yet to enter puberty, but God had a feeling she might be a bit of a gangly teenager.

Looking past her outward appearance God peered inside of Maya. His eyes widening slightly at what he found. Oh He knew about Gabriel's suppression sigils and how her grace was tucked away mostly into her soul, but He had yet to see her soul, till now. It was beautiful. Yes it was marred from the less pleasant things she'd done as a Trickster but those were very faint. It was the light. Gabriel had named her aptly when he called her Morning's Glory. Her light was similar to her Uncle's, the Morning Star, in its beauty. But it was softer, not as sharp. A light to cut through the darkness, not hide it by being blinding, unlike the Morning Star.

God let out a silent sigh of sadness at the thought of His second son. So many mistakes were made, some of the larger being His own. At least Gabriel was willing to recognize he was wrong and wanted to fix things with his daughter. God stared at the painful gash on Maya's young soul caused
by Gabriel and her's actions. It bled from her father not listening to her and from her choosing to run away, and being too stubborn to go back.

God shook His head. Like father like daughter. God wanted to interfere, but with the hurt Maya's soul was feeling it wouldn't do for her to return now. She'd just not talk to her father, which will just lead to an argument of hurtful words. Causing a possibly irreparable rift between them. No. She needed to stay away for now.

Chuck paused as a well of old emotions overcame him. He had to hand it to Gabriel. He'd been doing a bang up job raising Maya till that day in Rutland, Georgia. Then of course that led to the events of Fort Dodge happening. At least he planned to make the attempt to rectify his mistake. Chuck paused looking at what he typed so far of this little side story. He contemplated writing about the events that took place with Maya while she ran away from her father, and the people she met that would send her back when she was ready.

"No," Chuck murmured to himself, "better use that as a flashback when she meets up with them later." Opening another document Chuck writes out:

**Flashback Material for TD**

*Rockwell City*

*Hypoglycemia*

*R. Singer*
September-ish 2001, Monteplier, North Dakota, United States

Three months ago Maya ran away from her father, and he wasn't handling it well. He was angry when he received no message from God, the one time he really needed his own father to help him. In his anger he took it out on nearly every asshole and jerk in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Gabriel was so bad he found himself being hunted by a whole group of Hunters. There must've been like five. He didn't even bother playing around with them. For the better really. Peeking at their souls he found they were twisted with revenge and hate, and had let all their work hunting monsters turn them into monsters themselves. They enjoy torturing what they hunted. Ugh. He just snapped his fingers and exploded them. With them gone though it wouldn't be long before other Hunters come sniffing around.

He made his way back to his safe house in North Dakota near the Monteplier. It stood hidden by a small forest along the James River on the East side. The same house he brought Maya to 4yrs earlier. For weeks he wracked his brain for ideas of how to find her. Those plans fell flat. Gabriel began to resent the dawn, as it represented just another morning without his baby girl.

Now Gabriel laid about in his bed filled with grief and anxiety over his daughter. He would plan what he would say to her if he ever found her. Sometimes he would just stare at his cellphone, hoping it would ring and she would be on the other end. He'd wonder if today would be the day she would send a prayer to 'Loki' to let him know if she was alright, or where she was. He was no longer sure of what he should do now. He was barely holding himself together.

He tried keeping his spirits up. He tried candy binges, and maybe in other situations eating his absolute favorite candies and chocolates would make him feel better, but not in this one. Instead Gabriel's mind would wonder to times when Maya would try to join him and try to eat her own weight in candy like he did, only to have a very upset stomach later and subsequently emptying it in the toilet. She'd even begun flipping him the bird now when he'd do the 'I-told-you-so' song and dance, while she groaned, puking her guts out. Or when they would hold mock serious debates about which of two random treats were better. Their arguments getting more and more ridiculous until both were wheezing from laughter, especially when they'd start using mock posh voices. Gabriel stopped his candy binges from the grief of not being able to do them anymore with his daughter.

He even tried lots of meaningless sex to get the endorphins pumping. Unfortunately, when he'd wake up with a body curled up beside him he'd momentarily forget the previous night's activities and think it was Maya snuggling him instead. Gabriel would jolt awake to check, his heart soaring, only to find it was just some random woman or man he bedded. His heart would immediately
plummet and fill with pain. His sex-capade marathon lasted only five days. He didn't want to keep waking up to false hope and crushing disappointment.

He thought about getting back into his groove of being a Trickster, but that just brought everything that happened leading up to Maya's disappearance to his mind. He'd fill with deep regret and anguish, flinging away the notion like it was diseased. Being a Trickster and wanting Maya to be a Trickster like him was exactly what made him drive her away. Not to mention his own arrogance at thinking because he was her father he knew best, so he didn't even try to listen to her.

Gabriel wanted his daughter back. Hell, he wanted to go full nuclear archangel on the whole blue marble the old man created. Give the world a taste of the way he felt. Why should the world keep turning if his was already destroyed? The only thing keeping him from falling down that path was the thought that Maya could get caught up in his pain and he'd never know. If she was still alive that is.

Tears fell from his eyes as he choked back a painful sob, while his heart constricted in grief. He couldn't think like that. His daughter was bright, she was kind, and she was so clever. Until he was sure she was—he couldn't think it. Unless he was sure, he'd let the world keep turning. Until then he'd avoid the morning's first light that tried so hard to chase away the darkness wrapping around his heart. Only his daughter had that gift. Only Maya could chase it away now. Only his own little Morning's Glory.

October 7 2001, Monteplier, North Dakota, United States

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

The cellphone goes silent. The cellphone sat idly by on the nightstand in Gabriel's room beside his bed. Gabriel had decided to choose that day to just walk around the overgrowth of his safe house's property. He'd remember when he'd brought Maya here the first time, taught her how to access her Trickster powers, and figure out what she could and couldn't do. It wasn't a lot which was good
when he wanted her to start small and build control, but poor little Maya would get so frustrated when she couldn't go further. Gabriel remembered the day they'd play hide-seek-and-chase. They'd weave in and out of the large maple and oaks trees, and he'd use his own illusions to confuse her and get to try and sense his pagan magic.

Gabriel wandered to the James River at the edge of the property to look at its muddy running waters. He huffed a soft laugh when he remembered Maya's face when her feet felt the muddy bottom of the river when they went swimming. It was filled with shock and disgust, but little Maya wanted to swim so she launched herself into the water, trying to swim without touching the bottom. He started making his way back to the house.

He was having a better day today. The ache in his chest didn't hurt as much, but the Maya sized hole was still there. Gabriel lets out a sigh as he rounds the front of the house and spies someone at the front door shifting their weight anxiously from one foot to the other. His breath catches as he stared wide-eyed with shock. His eyes remained locked on the short figure recognizing the backpack they wore and their jacket. Short dark brown curly hair and a voice he'd recognize anywhere.

"Okay," a young female voice murmured. "You can do this. Just ring the doorbell." More anxious shifting. "C'mon you can do this. Car's here so he's probably here too…unless he poofed somewhere else…no, no he's here! Ring the bell, press the button." She raised her hand ready to press the button, but pauses her posture still unsure, her feet shuffling again anxiously. "You can do this! So what if he's mad that you ran away! He's your Dad! He loves you and wants you—"

If her voice and stature weren't a give away, what she just said was.

"Maya?" Gabriel called out, wincing a little at how broken he sounded. The girl lets out a little scream in surprise as she whips around with wide gold eyes filled with shock. Both stare at each other, taking the other's appearance in.

Gabriel knew he wasn't much to look at at the moment. His gold hair was stringy and unwashed, darker from oil and no longer combed back neatly. His clothes were all wrinkled, ruffled, and worn haphazardly with unwashed stains. Gabriel was unkempt, dirty, and hardly looked like her father. He wouldn't hold it against her if she demanded to know how he knew her name.

Maya on the other hand was clean, clothes fitting her still growing frame, and dark brown curls coming down to her shoulders and framing her face. She looked healthy, and well, looked after. Gabriel was overjoyed that she was alright, and wanted nothing more than to scoop her up in his arms, but he held his ground. He knew Maya needed to come to him first, but he was worried.
Gabriel soon found out that his worry wasn't needed. Maya dropped her bag from her shoulders and made her way slowly towards him, eyes never straying. Gabriel kept his posture relaxed and unthreatening as he stared softly at his carefully approaching daughter. When Maya was just out of arms reach she stopped, staring directly into his eyes searchingly.

"Dad?" Maya softly asked, reaching out one hand. Gabriel feels his heart pounding in joy, as he stared lovingly at his little girl, smiling through his beard. His eyes started pricking with happy tears.

"Hey Hershey Kisses," Gabriel replied, his voice thick with emotions. Maya's own eyes became two pieces of shimmering gold when her own tears started falling down her face. Her teeth clenched as her mouth grimaced in sorrow, letting out one choked sob before hurling herself at him. Her arms wrapped tightly around his neck and her legs around his waist like a koala as she sobbed into him.

Gabriel's own tears fell freely as he fiercely clutched his daughter to him, shaking as his own sobs of relief and joy ripped their way out of him. Gabriel's legs gave out from under him and they both collapsed, clinging to each other, to the ground, Maya seated in Gabriel's lap. Neither knew, nor cared, how long they sat there in the falling autumn leaves holding onto each other, murmuring apologies between heartfelt sobs and Gabriel's kisses to the side of his daughter's face. Even when both calmed down enough to just intermittent sniffling, they didn't move.

It was only as the sun began to set did Gabriel find the strength to pick him and his daughter up and carry her inside, up the stairs, and fall into bed. Both shifted on the mattress till they were both comfortable. Maya lay snuggled up against him, her head pillowed by his shoulder, and her free arm flung across his chest. Gabriel laid on his back, one arm wrapped around her and the other gently stroking the arm across his chest, sending a relaxing tickling sensation through Maya's arm.

Maya could feel herself drifting to sleep, from the warmth and safety of her father, and the light tickles to her arm. Her eyes were heavy from all the crying and she felt emotionally and physically exhausted. Though there was something niggling at the back of her mind of something she forgot to do…

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz' Gabriel's cellphone vibrated on the nightstand furthest from Maya. Maya's eyes shot open to wakefulness as she remembered what she forgot. She was supposed to call her friend to let him know she's with her Dad and was okay.

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz' Gabriel wasn't sure who was calling because they only one's who knew his number was him, Maya, and the odd telemarketer. Apparently Maya had an idea of who was calling as she went from relaxed to rigid to flinging herself across his body, landing on his chest, to reach his phone.
"Whoa! Maya! What's the emergency Skittles?" Gabriel had tried to grab her around the waist to keep her from falling off the bed as she scrambled to pick up the phone. Well he kept her from falling hard on the floor at least; she had leaned too far over to be brought back on the bed. Gabriel looked down at his daughter from on top of the bed, his body pinning her feet, as she talked to the other person on the phone from the floor.

"Yeah he was there…um, no, not yet…I know…lots of crying…wait, what? Uuuuhhh" Maya's eyes drifted to Gabriel's face that stared at her intensely. He raised an unimpressed eyebrow at her and stuck his hand out for the cellphone. "Yeah, yeah he wants to talk to you." Maya handed the phone over to Gabriel.

"Who is this and how do you know my daughter?"

"I'm the one that's been lookin' after her for the past few months." Replied a gruff old male voice. "And apparently fixin' both of your dumbasses' mistakes. Don't screw it up again."

Gabriel winced. "Yeah. I realized the moment she was gone. Lesson learned."

"Funny twist of irony that. A Trickster bein' taught a lesson." Gabriel tensed as his gold eyes travelled to look into Maya's own. Maya stiffened at his stare and gave him a sheepish smile.

"I'm guessing Maya's told you of my penchant for tricks of the ironic variety. Nothing bad really, just some harmless pra—"

"I ain't stupid. I know exactly what you and Maya are. I don't got a problem with Maya, she's a sweet kid, but I don't want ya turnin' her into another Trickster that's got no problem takin' the trick too far. I think you and I can both agree that neither of us want her turnin' into a real monster." The old man's voice grew low and dangerous, but there was still a sliver of fondness when he'd say Maya's name.

"You're a Hunter." Gabriel stated.

"Yep."
"Yet you didn't kill my daughter."

"Why the hell would I? She's just a little thing, a kid. With a damn good set of morals, considerin' who her Pa is." The voice jabbed.

"There are those of you that wouldn't bat an eye and kill her anyway, whether she killed someone, accidentally, or not." Gabriel parried.

"Like that hit-and-run-driver in Rutland, Georgia? Not like Hunters ain't made mistakes before. Though some have turned into those that they hunt. Psychotic bastards." The voice grumped. "Listen, when she starts doin' tricks on her own I'm goin' to head off any Hunters that might come sniffin' after her, as long as she ain't killin'. You are on your own though Papa Trickster. Told her to let me know if you take over, and if she needs a place to crash, doors always open."

"Alright Hunter. My kid's safe, but I'm free game. Good to know. Can I get a name?"

"No."

"You're no fun."

"Don't go repeatin' your Fort Dodge episode. Got the Hunter community in an uproar killin' five of us. Even if they were psychotic assholes."

"No promises." Gabriel sing-songs.

"Hmph." The cellphone released a dial tone. The Hunter hung up on him. Rude, but allowed Gabriel to give his full attention to his very nervous looking daughter lying partially on the floor with her legs pinned on the bed.

"Soooooo," Gabriel drawled. "Been staying with a Hunter? What's that like?" He raised an eyebrow as he drummed his fingers on one of her shins.

"Not all that bad honestly. He's a nice guy, though reeeaally rough around the edges, and grumpy." Maya replied nervously. Her Dad had taught her to stay away from Hunters but the one that saved
"Want to start from the beginning Starburst?" Gabriel sighs as he released her legs and invited her to scramble back onto the bed. He sat up with his back against the wall and soon found himself with a lap full of 10yr old girl snuggling into his chest. He wrapped his arms around her, gave her comforting squeeze, and let her have some time to gather her thoughts.

"Well, it kind of started when I was trying to make my way through Rockwell City. To my horror I had run out of candy…" Maya began weaving her tale how as the hours passed without sugar she started getting weaker and weaker. How she ran into a couple of vampires and was taken to their nest, too weak to fight back. One vamp was ready to have her for dinner, when the Hunter and his buddy burst in and started chopping the vamp's nestmates. The vamp decided they'd just take her to go. Like I was some kind of blood filled Happy Meal Dad! The vamp came to grab her but finding what little strength she had, she conjured up an illusion of a wall of flames around her. The vamp panicked, so they didn't realize there was no heat, and tried to just run for it, but the Hunters had followed it and chop! However they had also seen Maya conjure up the illusion.

She was so tired and weak that the wall of flames lasted only long enough to deter the vamp and suck out any energy she had left. Maya went on to explain the bits and pieces of the argument that the Hunter had with his buddy. His buddy wanted to just kill her saying she was probably a witch. The Hunter said something about her age but checked her for a witch's mark anyway. Finding none they were at an impasse. She wasn't human but they didn't know what she was, so they didn't really know how to kill, though she didn't know it but she apparently was dying. The Hunter had opened up her pack to find a whole bunch of candy wrappers and put the flames and the wrappers together.

They were looking at a Trickster. Since only stake to the heart covered in the blood of their victim could kill a Trickster there wasn't much they could do. They didn't know if she killed anyone. Maya told how she was really out of it for the rest of their conversation, but she got that the Hunter didn't want to kill her and his buddy was being extremely paranoid. Next thing she knew she had a sugary drink to her lips and began chugging, as well as almost choking on the Skittles the Hunter gave her.

"That's when something…weird happened." Gabriel's eyebrows furrowed in concern.

"Weird how?"

"The Hunter said when I was mentally with him enough a small ring of purple light appeared around my pupils for a moment when I stared at him. I remember feeling scared because I knew what he was and I wasn't sure if I could trust him. Then I felt like I was peering inside of him, like I was seeing his heart and in that moment I knew that he was a good man and that he wasn't going to hurt me." Maya stared off into the distance her mind going back to that moment. "He knew such
pain and anguish, but he fights so hard so others don't...I don't know how to explain what I saw."

Gabriel stared at his daughter. This was something he didn't expect her to develop, but she did. Not many angels had this ability themselves; it actually remained mostly with the archangels. When they wanted to they could peer into the souls of humans, or see past the physical vessel. Now, how to spin it so she thinks it's part of her 'pagan' heritage.

"It's a rare ability that, as you said, lets you see into the hearts of people. It will show you who they are deep down, and all that makes them them."

"So when I look at a child's heart I see light, purity, innocence." Gabriel nods. Seems Maya's been experimenting to figure stuff out. "Then those whose hearts are foul looking...but human?" She tilted her head unsure of how to put into words that she was trying to say.

"Are the humans who became human monsters but still mascarad that they're normal people. The murders, rapists, abusers. You name it. The more foul and dark and twisted they are the closer they are to being no better than demons." Maya stared blankly at her father before nuzzling his chest, hiding her face. Gabriel brings a hand to the back of her head combing her hair with his fingers. "You saw some of those huh?" He feels Maya nod into his chest.

"They were horrible. I'd tell the Hunter and he'd investigate. One of them was brutally abusing her husband and her child. Another was...was..." Maya started shaking as tears filled her eyes.

"I know. That's usually how I pick out applicants for my fatal tricks. I've got the ability too, as a Trickster, so if I don't see something right away I use that to find those monsters." Gabriel licked his lips as he swallowed the lump in his throat. They were getting close to the issue that had Maya running away in the first place.

'Okay Gabriel just ease into it, and make sure she knows that he has no plans of forcing her again.' He thought.

"It's kind of why there are Tricksters in the first place. Not just to sow the occasional chaos, mischief and mayhem, but to also get rid of the monsters that Hunters don't go after or the ones the police can't take care of." He feels Maya tense in his arms, her hands fist in his shirt.

"I don't want to kill people." Maya says quietly, but firmly.
"Even if they're monsters and deserve it?" Gabriel held his breathe.

"Did they all deserve it?" Maya countered, face still buried in his chest. She let out a long sigh through her nose, and broaches the topic neither wanted to face. "Why do you want me to be able to kill so bad?" she asked quietly.

"'Cause I was scared for you." Gabriel answered, not even bothering to think on his response. "I was scared that Hunters and other dangerous supernatural beings would hunt you if they didn't have to fear losing their lives. Tricksters are supposed to be deadly, I didn't want them learning of your wonderfully soft heart and taking advantage of it." Gabriel buried his face on the top of her head in her hair, his arms clutching her harder. "If something happened to me I wanted to make sure you'd be able to survive." It came out as a frightened whisper in her hair, and as a plea from a concerned parent. Maya wrapped her arms around his chest and hugged him back reassuringly.

"Just 'cause I won't kill them doesn't mean I'm not above serious maiming and permanent damage." Maya says giving a mischievous smirk. "Also if it was life and death situation that I couldn't get out of I think I could kill who ever had me cornered if I had to." Maya added.

What?

"Wait, what?!" Gabriel pulled away to look down at his daughter's eyes to see serious sincerity there. "I thought you didn't want to kill period?!" Maya rolled her eyes.

"I won't if I can help it, but I know there will be times where it's not much of an option. I just don't want to do fatal tricks…"

Maya and Gabriel stared at each other, realization dawning on both their faces. Their lack of communication had turned what would have been a talk of boundaries into a complete misunderstanding that caused them over a year's worth of pain and heartache. So of course instead of talking it out, and talk about the reasons why, they just let everything fester then boil over. Both groaned at their idiocy and collapsed into each other.

"Well it's a good thing that when you did go missing I had already planned to stop pushing you to do fatal tricks." Maya huffed and rubbed her face in his chest thankfully. "But I gotta know, how come?"

Maya didn't reply right away, thinking about how to word her answer. "I didn't want to become a
monster. I didn't want to wake up one day and not feel the least bit regretful when ending a life. I didn't want to become what we go after." Maya slightly worried about her father's response but was put at ease when he wrapped his own comforting arms around her.

"That's a pretty good reason." Gabriel closed his eyes as he held his baby, her light chasing away the darkness in his heart. His Morning's Glory.

She was everything that he was, and everything that he could never hope to be.

Both relaxed against each other in silence as their father-daughter bond began to mend. It would take awhile, and a lot of compromises, but when it healed it would be stronger than before.

The silence was broken when Maya asked a question he wasn't prepared for.

"Hey Dad?"

"Hmm?" Gabriel hummed in acknowledgement.

"Did you really give birth to an eight-legged horse?" Maya asked looking up at his face.

"I made one sarcastic remark when asked where I got the horse, and all of Asgard and Earth believed it as fact!" Gabriel groaned in annoyance as he banged his head back against the wall.

"Soooooo I don't have an eight-legged horse named Sliepnir as a brother?" Maya's grin was huge, and her bright gold eyes held her laughter.

Suffering sigh. "No Maya. You are, honestly, my only child." Which was true, since the real Loki was the one with all the kids that the myths mention.

"Cool, cool, cool." Pause. "Hey Dad?" Gabriel looked down at his daughter weary; he could tell she was up to something. He knew that fake innocent smiling face, it mimicked his own greatly. "Can I have a baby brother or sister?"
Gabriel splutters, his face going red, as he starts shaking his head no and unable to form a coherent sentence.

Maya falls over in the bed laughing at his reaction. Realizing it was a joke Gabriel just stares at her laughing form and pouts, with dignity damn it!
It's Happened

April-ish 2003, Colorado Springs, Colorado, United States

Over the last year and a half Gabriel and Maya mended their relationship and did their best to talk things out first. Or mainly remembered to give reasons why they did things and not just assume the other was a mind reader. That however was a little on the back burner in comparison to some other developments.

A happy development was Maya's powers and her training as a Trickster. Her illusions were almost perfect. It was just matching sound to movement, like lips, that was still giving her trouble. They were opaque now and looked very real but if they tried to make a sound it was similar to when visual and audio didn't sync up properly on a video. They also still weren't solid, and she could only make a single person or animal at a time. They still didn't stay too long, but stayed longer than they did before, so improvement!

Maya also found she could now summon items to her from a hundred feet away! She doesn't even need to be able to see the item anymore! As long as she concentrated on the mental image of the specific item she wanted she could make it appear in her hand with a snap. Well, as long as it was within a 100ft radius. All the sweets for her!

She'd also gotten used to using her eyes' weird ability to see into people's hearts. She didn't really like it because it made her feel like she was staring at them naked. So if she did use it she did a quick glance, a quick flash of a thin ring of purple light around her pupil. It usually was enough to tell if a person was rotten to the core or if they deserved a second chance after surviving a well-learned lesson from her Dad, or her, it depends.

A not so happy development? Puberty happened.

6 Months ago…

Maya and Gabriel were passing through another small town in the car that Gabriel owned. Couple years back Maya made him get one so she could stare at the moving countryside. Gabriel argued that he could just snap them anywhere. Maya had been prepared and said how was she supposed to get a feel for direction when they just pop up in Point B from Point A? That got him. There was no guarantee that Maya would have his ability of snapping somewhere, but if she did she'd need a
more innate understanding of geography. Maya won, he snapped up a classy car.

It was late when Gabriel pulled into a Motel 6 and they checked themselves in, Maya making a beeline for the bathroom. A pair of pajama shorts and a tank top popped into the bathroom on the counter, along with her toothbrush and toothpaste. The message was clear, get ready for bed.

After going to the bathroom Maya began changing and was lifting off her day shirt when she looked in the mirror, catching her side reflection. Why were her nipples poking out further from her chest? Pulling her shirt off she began staring at her chest in the mirror looking from the front and side angles. What the hell? She even groped at them to get a feel for what her body thought it was doing. Apparently her body was making two small mounds of flesh protrude from her body. Not too sure what was going on she opened the bathroom door and walked out topless to ask her Dad if he knew.

"Hey Kinder Surprise you ready for—" Gabriel looked at his topless daughter for a moment. Normally he wouldn't care, but he noticed what Maya had noticed in the bathroom. He quickly turned around and looked away, his face heating up in mortification. "Maya please go put your shirt on or I will snap it on you." Gabriel choked out the demand.

"Uh sure but can you tell me what's goin' on with my chest? It has these two weird lumps form—" Maya didn't understand her Dad's reaction, but was interrupted before she could continue.

"They're your breasts developing, now please." Gabriel begged with his back turned. "Go put on a shirt."

Maya's face heated up as realization dawned on her and quickly bolted back into the bathroom closing the door. She remembered how her Dad explained why women wore tops to their bathing suits and men only needed trunks. She had accidentally flashed her father.

Gabriel flopped on his bed and threw an arm across his face and sighed. It has begun. Puberty. Ugh. His baby was turning into a teenager. He briefly wondered if her could just de-age her and keep her small. Not having to worry about an angst-y teenager and teenage boys. Hormonal teenage boys. Hormonal teenage boys that might try to get with his daughter! Oh hell no! Gabriel began plotting ways of scaring off any potential suitors, his protective father instincts activating. He didn't hear Maya make her way to his side of the bed.

"Uh Dad?" Maya queried, raising an eyebrow at his slightly maniacal face. He jumped a little in surprise at hearing her voice so close to him.
"You're not allowed to date till you're at least 40!" Gabriel blurted out in shock, pointing a finger at his daughter. Maya laughed at his shocked face, and rolled her eyes before climbing into bed to snuggle him.

There was an awkward pause between them. Neither wanted to address the elephant in the room. Gabriel decided to do the parenting thing and be responsible and talk about what Maya's going through.

"Uh you had a question about your chest?" awkwardly nailed it.

"You said it was my breasts developing." Maya answered trying to feign calm. "Sorry for flashing you. Didn't click when I was in the bathroom." There's the awkward.

"It's alright. You didn't know that's what they were." More awkwardness. "Um…do you understand why or…?"

"Um cause I'm a girl and girls get boobs?" Maya questioned back tilting her head, but not making eye contact.

"Well, um, yes but it's your body going through puberty. You're turning into a woman."

"Oh. Well that sucks."

"Yeah." Gabriel whole-heartedly agreed with that statement. He tried getting rid of the awkward cloud by letting out a sigh and forcing his shoulders to relax. He needed to broach the topic of bra shopping. "Listen you're going to start needing to wear bras now. We can go to the store to check them out tomorrow, see what you like. You're still small so you can get away with just some cloth sports bras or something." He did it. He raised the topic of bra shopping. He's an A++ Dad.

Maya refused to look at her Dad, her face red with embarrassment.

"Do we have to?" Maya whined uncomfortably.
“Yep.”

“Son of a bitch!” She cursed.

"Language!"

"Bite me, hypocrite." Maya sassed.

Gabriel groaned in exasperation. He knew he should have curbed his language around her better.

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**April-ish 2003, Colorado Springs, Colorado, United States**

That had been an extremely awkward shopping trip for both parties. Maya's chest was a little more prominent now since then. She was still relatively flat chested, but it was still obvious to see from her form fitting shirts that she had just started developing.

After the shopping trip Gabriel had sat her down and explained more in detail what she was going to go through over the next few years; growth spurts, body hair, acne, and her period. It was all very awkward and embarrassing, even though Gabriel tried to keep the explanations as clinical as possible.

"*Hate to break it to you KitKat but its all part of growing up.*" Gabriel had told her with a sigh.

"So you'll stop referring to me as your baby girl now?" Maya asked trying to lighten up the conversation. Gabriel snorts and gives her a loving smile.

"*Lollipop no matter how old, or grown up you are, you'll always be my baby girl, my Morning Glory.*" Gabriel smirked as Maya gave a dramatic sigh of exasperation at him, though the pleased smile on her face spoke otherwise.

That was how they ended their puberty talk, and every now and then Maya would find a question to ask him about it. So over time it became less awkward, but not by much.
It was a week now into their stay at Colorado Springs and the sun was shining through the motel window, right in Maya's sleeping face. She scrunched her face and turned away from the accursed morning light in disgust. For the last couple days she's been feeling a little bloated and had been getting pains in her lower abdomen. Maya didn't want to get up and move. Her Dad had other plans.

Gabriel having heard the change in Maya's heart beat decided to be a little shit to his daughter. With a graceful leap he landed across his tired daughter's back.

"Rise and shine Oreo!" Gabriel sing-songed boisterously in Maya's ear. Face buried in her pillow she gave an impressive groan of protest to his loud voice, and his weight on her body. "C'mon! Up and at 'em!" Gabriel proceeded to be a nuisance, poking and prodding his daughter, until she tried pushing herself up.

"Nooooooooooooooo" she whined out as she sat up in her bed, eyes closed still with remnants of sleep. Her lower abdomen gave a clench and she let out another groan.

Gabriel watched humorously as his sleepy daughter made her way to the bathroom to get ready, her eyes barely open. When the door closed he turned to the kitchenette and snapped up the ingredients and utensils for pancakes. Those always made Maya happy. He was about to begin mixing the ingredients when—

"WHAT THE HELL?!!" Maya shrieked fearfully. Gabriel didn't take time to think and snapped himself into the bathroom. Maya let out a yelp of alarm at seeing her Dad pop into the bathroom when she was on the toilet with her pants down. "SHIT! DAD!" Maya quickly covered her lower body with a towel, but Gabriel just looked around the bathroom frantically trying to figure out what scared her.

"Maya?! What's wrong? What happened?!" Gabriel questioned Maya wildly.

"I'm bleeding!"

"What?! Where? Did you hurt yourself?!" Gabriel looked over Maya, who till clutched the towel across her lap, for injuries but not finding any. She looked fine, even if her panicked face said otherwise. Maya reached down to her ankles and brought up her underwear and shorts to show him.
The crotch of her underwear had a large wet dark reddish-brown stain that soaked through the fabric and had started staining her pajama bottoms. It clicked.

"Oh thank Odin," Gabriel said releasing a sigh of relief, his body relaxing. He thought his daughter was seriously injured or in danger. Maya was not pleased with his response.

"Seriously?! I'm bleeding out my privates!"

"You're having your first period gumdrop. This is normal. Don't you remember the puberty talk we had?"

"…you just said I was going to get my period at some point and left it at that."

"Oh. My bad." Gabriel smiled guiltily. Snapping his fingers he hand her some new underwear. "Get cleaned up and we'll go to the store to get you some supplies, okay?" Gabriel told his daughter gently, placing a comforting hand on her shoulder before snapping out of the bathroom.

"Daaad?" Came Maya's muffled voice from the bathroom.

"Yeah?" He called back through the door.

"I can't go."

"How come?" Gabriel furrowed his eyebrows. There was a pregnant pause before Maya answered back.

"…I'm still leaking." Came Maya's embarrassed voice.

"It's okay Maya, you stay here. I'll go to the store and figure out what you need okay?" Gabriel reassured. Oh it was going to be awkward at the store. Thankfully once he knows what Maya needs and prefers he could just easily snap things into existence, same procedure with her bras. Just had to go through one embarrassing trip.

"Thanks Dad, you're the best." Relief was evident in her voice.
"No problem. Be back soon." Gabriel moved away from the bathroom door and walked out of the room, locking it behind him. He snapped himself to the nearest drug store and walked in, straight to the feminine hygiene aisle, and was immediately overwhelmed. Why the hell were there so many products?! Sure he's been around since their invention but that didn't mean he knew what he was looking at exactly. Seriously? How was he supposed to help his daughter when he wasn't sure what to get?

A middle aged woman stared at the young man looking blankly at the tampons and pads that lined the shelf in front of him. Her lips quirked into an amused smile recognizing the look on his face. The same look her late husband had when she asked him to pick pads and tampons up for their own daughter. She had found her husband staring blankly, and with a little panic, at the same products as this young man was. Taking pity on him she approached.

"Need some help?" the woman asked Gabriel. Jolted from his thoughts Gabriel turned to her with a sheepish expression, rubbing the back of his head.

"That obvious huh?" Gabriel sighed. The older woman just smiled sympathetically.

"It's alright. Most men don't usually have a clue. So I'm assuming for your daughter?"

"Yeah, how'd you guess?"

The woman snorts. "Most men wouldn't buy feminine products for their significant other. Afraid they'll be emasculated."

Gabriel snorted in amusement at that then gives a self-deprecating smirk. "They don't know emasculation till they've dressed up for a princess tea party with a four year old little girl and spent an hour pretending to drink tea crouched at a little kids table."

The woman laughed in good humor. "Did she have you dress up as a king or prince?"

"Nope, another princess. She was the Queen and her favorite stuffed animal was Prince 'Phan-'Phan, a blue elephant with red polka-dots." That had the woman laughing uproariously.
"I'm sorry I don't mean to laugh at you. That's really very sweet of you." She stammered out. Gabriel easily shrugged it off. It'd been years and he's not really all that embarrassed. "Alright, how old is your daughter? Is this her first period?" the woman questioned.

"She's turned twelve not too long ago, and yeah. She screamed and, like a mutton head, I kind of charged into the bathroom…" Gabriel catches the raised eyebrow the woman was sending him. He put up his hands in a non-offensive gesture. "Hey! I thought she was in trouble! Parenting instincts kicked in like a bitch!" The woman huffed in amusement, shaking her head in exasperation.

"At least you didn't faint like my husband did. That man. Wouldn't hesitate to go up against someone twice his size, but confronted with periods? One well-meaning big wimp." She reminisced fondly. "Alright let's get started. I also suggest getting a hot water bottle, some Tylenol, and chocolate. I don't know how bad her cramps will be but best be prepared, and chocolate will help her feel a little better. Getting her walking around and being active will also help with the cramps and her moods. So once she's all set to go try to take a walk around near home." Gabriel gave her all his focus as she went through all the products and what would be good for her first period. She also suggested bringing her next time so she could decide what stuff she needed and what she preferred. Thanking the kind older woman Gabriel went up to the front and made a show of paying for his purchases.

Gabriel returned to the motel room to find Maya sitting stiffly at the kitchenette table, her legs pressed tightly closed together. Seeing him Maya let out a sigh of relief and stood up, but then clenched her thighs even tighter before shuffling, thighs closed, back to the bathroom. Poor kid. Gabriel took out his purchases and grabbed the box filled with pads. Walking over to the bathroom door he knocks and called her name.

"Hey cinnamon heart. I've got some pads you can try, so you don't have to worry about bloody underwear, okay? I'm just going to open the door enough to stick my arm in so you can take the box, okay?"

"Yeah," came Maya's meek response. Gabriel opened the door slightly and handed the box over. Once his hand was empty he retracted his arm and closed the door.

"When you're ready I have some other stuff you might want to try at some point, see what you prefer. I also have some Tylenol and a hot water bottle for your cramps, and some chocolate." Gabriel said through the door.

"Chocolate?" Came a hopeful and pleased voice. Of course that would get her attention.
Gabriel gives an amused snort, smiling fondly. "Yeah, but you gotta come out to get it pop rock." Hearing an affirmation he moved away from the bathroom door and went to examine the discarded pancake batter. Unsure if it was still safe for Maya to eat he threw it out. Gabriel then went and flopped on his bed. He lay on his back with his arms behind his head and closed his eyes. He heard Maya emerge from the bathroom, but he didn't make a move to get up. He had a feeling that as much as Maya loved him she probably didn't want him hovering over her as she looked at her feminine hygiene products. He listened as Maya went through the bags taking stuff out and looking at them, before putting them on the table. From wrapper tearing he knew she found the chocolate bars he got.

He finally opened his eyes and looked over at his daughter. She was slumped over the table amidst the products, munching away on a Hershey bar, looking apathetic. Nope, not acceptable. Getting up he strode over to her.

"Alright sour patch, we're going for a walk. It'll help." Gabriel smiled, poking his unimpressed daughter. Maya groaned around the chocolate in her mouth in protest. Gabriel shook his head. "Sorry, but I have it on good authority that it'll help with some of your cramps, and your mood grumpy." Oh if looks could kill! Maya looked like she wanted him to turn into a quivering puddle of a Trickster.

"Do I have a—" Maya began to complain when Gabriel interrupted.

"A choice? Nope!" Gabriel smiled cheerfully giving a nudge. "C'mon!" Maya gives him another glare and with a put-upon sigh she gets her shoes on, and another chocolate bar.

"Can't you just gender-swap me and make me a boy instead?" Maya sighed. Gabriel stopped and thought about that. He wouldn't have to worry about boys coming after her when she got older, but she wouldn't be his little girl...

Seeing his serious contemplation face Maya quickly added, "I'm not serious!"

"Then pleeeeeeaaaaaassssssse don't tempt me."

March 20 2006, Snowflake, Arizona, United States

It was Maya's 15th birthday today. Gabriel could hardly believe 15 years had already gone by. For
Maya didn't look as much like him anymore as more of the baby fat had melted away, but there was still some bits of his features in her, the most prominent being her eyes. They were his eyes all right, all bright gold and filled with so much untamable spirit, so much soul. She still had freckles that dusted across the bridge of her button nose, just standing out against her tanning skin. She was also taller; she shot up like a weed when he wasn't looking. At 5'6" she was only two inches shorter than he was. With the seemingly sudden increase in height Maya looked ganglier with her long legs and thin arms. However, this didn't deter the one major problem with Maya growing up. Boys.

Gabriel noticed it gradually at first; some little boys would look at her, maybe blush before looking away. That was fine; they were like 12-13, just noticing girls for the first time. Too nervous to approach most of the time, or if they did get the nerve Gabriel was usually there to glare them away. No it became a problem when teenagers Maya's age or a little older started leering at her. Sometimes when he'd let Maya go off and do her own thing for a while he'll come back and find males trying to get her attention by catcalling or insulting her when she doesn't thank them for their compliments. It always enraged him to see them disrespecting his daughter like that, though Maya didn't seem bothered. She just ignored them. Or made it seem like that.

No when stuff like that happened Maya used her illusions. Maya had told him of an interesting theory. Men who felt the need to catcall were insecure about their own image of masculinity, and were likely homophobic. (AN: not confirming or denying, just my own thoughts, no scientific evidence that I know of to support this). By this time Maya's illusions were perfect, though the amount was still limited. The more going on with them, the less real they seemed. Sadly she still couldn't snap and make the illusions real. That didn't stop her from whipping up two really buff and really gay men every time a group of males thought it appropriate to catcall or drop insinuations to her. They gay illusions she'd snap up moved and talked as if they were any other person, just had to make sure they weren't touched. So she'd snap them up and have them loudly catcall and make insinuations to the men bothering her. Oh their spluttering faces! They'd try to posture and throw homophobic slurs but Maya's illusions were not deterred. It didn't take long for the men to make a hasty retreat, which got them one last catcall from they gay illusions about their asses.

When Gabriel first witnessed that he had to hold onto a telephone pole to keep him standing as he roared with laughter. Maya would turn to his laughter and flash him a brilliant smile when she spotted him.

As much fun it could be to see the faces of scared 'macho' men, Gabriel planned to be at his daughter's side today as much as humanly possible. So there shouldn't be any incidences. There especially shouldn't be any because of what Maya wanted to do for her birthday this year. Gabriel honestly didn't know how or when, but his daughter was a nerd, an athletic nerd. Don't get him wrong. Gabriel was all kinds of proud, but this was what her idea of a good birthday was? Hiking a total of 7 ½ miles of Nevada backcountry? Maya wanted to participate in some Guided Off the Beaten Path hike at the Petrified Forest National Park. Something to do with mesa petroglyphs? He
wasn't sure how fun this hike was going to be.

Later...

Okay it didn't end up being too bad, especially seeing Maya's face as she looked at the landscape. He had gotten her an unlimited storage and battery digital camera as a birthday present. Perks of snapping into existence just about anything. She flipped and was taking pictures left right and center. Of him, the painted mesas, petrified logs, and the petroglyphs left behind in their destination mesa. After spending so long in towns and cities Gabriel had to admit it was kind of breathtaking, especially when he'd look at his daughter and see her eyes filled with wonder and awe.

They make it back to the motel room, after going out to eat, later in the day. Maya flopped tiredly, face first, on her bed with her feet dangling off the end. Gabriel snickered at his tired girl as she uses her feet to kick off her shoes and inchworms her way up the bed to her pillow. Shaking his head he lets her have some time to rest. This however leaves him with his thoughts as he stared at the rise and fall of Maya's back and her relaxed face trying to burrow its way through her pillow.

His baby girl wasn't much of a baby anymore. She didn't need him as much. Gabriel's eyes grew soft with sadness. One day she'll want to head out on her own and do her own thing. Hell she did that a couple times a year now since meeting that Hunter. Every few months Maya would ask to go spend a couple weeks with the Hunter. Gabriel didn't want to budge at first, but Maya wore him down. They'd meet up someplace of mutual agreement and Maya would leave his safety and go into the Hunter's. They'd always have to go over the rules, every time. Call everyday. Don't follow him. Don't even think, let alone allow, Maya to go on any hunts. Things like that.

It wasn't until earlier in the year, couple months after Maya's 13th birthday, that Gabriel let the notion that these visits were good for Maya enter his brain. Maya had been blossoming physically and like all those years ago in Harrisburg, Gabriel lost sight of her for a few seconds. Before he could start to panic, again, a loud male cursed out, followed by a lot of yelling. Gabriel and a few other bystanders raced to the source to find his daughter standing over a crumpled man who was easily twice her size. The man's nose was clearly broken, and from the way he was grabbing his lower left side he'd say he got hit pretty hard in the kidney. Maya had later informed him that the Hunter had been teaching her how to defend herself from humans in case they ever caught onto her not so real illusions.

Gabriel swallowed a lot of pride the next time they met up with the Hunter to thank him for teaching Maya how to fight hand-to-hand. The Hunter brushed it off and said it was no trouble and that Maya picked it up easily enough. They stopped going over the rules that day. Gabriel had called the Hunter and asked him if he'd be willing to take Maya in should something happen to him before she was ready to be on her own. The Hunter told him straight up that Gabriel was an idjit, and to not go getting himself killed, but the Hunter would.
Gabriel wondered if the Hunter suspected how much he was willing to trust him, if he was willing to leave his daughter with him and to take care of her if something happened. Not that he expected anything to since he's not really a Trickster per se. Despite that tentative trust though there was a mutual understanding. Neither was safe from the other if they crossed into the other's crosshairs.

Getting up from his bed he walked over to a napping Maya, carefully brushing the hair away from her face. He looked at her with love filled eyes. He'd have to let her go one-day, but today wasn't that day. He could feel it coming, like a slowly tightening noose, and intended to spend as much time as he could with her.

Placing a kiss to her forehead he murmured the words that wouldn't be heard.

"You are everything I am, and everything I could never hope to be. I love you my little one, my Maya, my Morning's Glory."

Gabriel spares a glance at the clock and seeing the time a mischievous smirk crosses his lips. A birthday isn't a birthday without a birthday cake…to the face. Grabbing a slice from the leftover large birthday cake they had for breakfast Gabriel takes his position.

There was a loud feminine scream of surprise, followed by a man's uproarious laughter that was soon cut off with a yelp as he was tackled, and had summoned, leftover cake dumped on him.
Tall Tales-Part 1

Mid-February 2007, Springfield Ohio, United States

Maya sat at an old style metal and plastic table with a red top and rimmed with aluminum on pale green chairs in the kitchenette of the small apartment her and her Dad were staying at. Most of the table space was taken up with various assortments of cakes and some fruits. What wasn't taken up by food had Maya's notebook and information on a few individuals at the local college, Crawford. It contained important character points, habits, and rough schedules. The most important being was how these guys were assholes.

There was a student called Curtis who was his fraternity's pledge master. For the last semester he'd been putting his house's pledges through the ringer. Some were so humiliated they felt like they had to drop out. Those were some of the luckier ones. Others got sent to the hospital. The most recent being a young boy who was away from home for the first time, and was forced to stand outside for an hour while it was snowing. He wasn't even let back inside, when he couldn't handle it anymore, till the hour was up. He ended up getting serious frostbite and hypothermia. This Curtis dick didn't even feel remorseful for the emotional and physical damages he caused to the pledges. He was too drunk on the power he had over them.

Another was a research scientist at Crawford. Animal testing. 'Nough said.

The last was a professor of the 'Ethics and Morality' course at Crawford, a one Arthur Cox. It was ironic because he wasn't all that moral. He was married with kids, had a decently successful book on; you guessed it, 'Ethics and Morality'. He doesn't practice much what he teaches. Guess it was like that old saying, 'Those who can't do, teach.' This guy takes advantage of his position as a professor, and a minor local celebrity, and coerces young girls into having sex with him. Maya found out he sometimes purposefully gave some girls bad grades on their essay, mostly those on scholarships, and said he'd change their grade or give them recommendations if they put out.

Maya wrinkled her nose at the information she had on these assholes. It was a stroke of luck for them that she had planned to take point in how they were going to get taught a lesson. They were dicks but Maya thought they could change, that they just needed a push, a catalyst. In other words Maya wanted to ruin their lives, not take them. She was still fleshing out her plans, and at some point she was going to have to get her Dad involved. It was because it seemed Maya had hit a block, mental or physical, when it came to her powers. The biggy being that she can't just pop something into existence like her Dad could. It would have made things sooooo much easier.

As she was thinking up ideas, while absentmindedly eating her required piece of chocolate cake,
the door to the apartment opened and her Dad came in whistling merrily.

"Hey Reese's Pieces," Gabriel greeted as he made his way over to the table to sit down, but not before ruffling his daughter's slightly untamable curly hair. He smirked as she went about straightening her hair pouting. He grabs a slice of chocolate fudge cake and looks over at what Maya had in front of her. "Whatchu up to?" Gabriel asked looking at her open notebook.

"Mmmmm trying to figure out ways to dole out just desserts to one of these assholes," Maya replied before letting out a groan and letting her head fall with a thud onto her notebook. "I know what I want to do, just not how to get there." Maya mumbled into her book.

Gabriel grabbed the book and carefully pulled it out from under Maya's face. He glanced over some of her ideas and plans, chuckling when he'd find questions in the margins when she ran into a snag. She was working on how to ruin Arthur Cox's life without the girls he coerced getting hit in the crossfire. Gabriel should probably tell her what he did tonight before coming home.

"These are pretty well thought out ideas Maya, though I wouldn't worry too much about professor Cox," Gabriel watched as Maya's shoulders tensed and she turned her face to stare at him in suspicion.

"What did you do?" she accused, although she had a good idea of what he did.

"Weeeellllll there's this old campus urban legend about a ghost haunting Crawford Hall. Says it's a girl that was having an affair with a professor till he broke it off. She killed herself by jumping out of the window of room 669. Supposed to go that anyone who sees her gets killed, sooooooo…” Gabriel gave Maya a lopsided smile while shrugging his shoulders.

"Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaad." Maya groaned, sitting up to stare at him in disbelief.

"Whaaaaaaaaaaat?" Gabriel mimicked.

"I was working on a way to handle him! Now he's just some professor that had a tragic death—"

"A professor who threw himself out the window and suicided," Gabriel corrected. Maya just rolled her eyes.
"Yeah, but now no one will know what he'd been doing, and no one would dare come forward to speak out against a recently dead, dead guy, especially if they think it's suicide. It would backlash horribly on them." Maya groaned, slumping in her chair and staring at the ceiling. "I was trying to figure out a way to wreck his marriage and his career, not take his life. And hopefully he'd take it as a wake-up call…"

Gabriel wanted to tell his daughter it was easier to just kill him, but he knew how well that would be received. "At least we don't have to worry about him taking advantage of other girls in case he didn't get the memo." Maya quirked a smile.

"Yeah…guess I'm a fool believing people can change or make the right choices," Maya let out, despondent. Gabriel scooted his chair closer to her daughter and wrapped a comforting arm around her shoulders.

"Then I'm the bigger fool thinking they can't." Maya looked at Gabriel giving him a small smile, which he returned. "It isn't wrong to want to believe in the best of people, and it says a lot more about you than them, especially when you can see into their hearts. Yet despite what you might've seen, you still choose to believe and hope that they'll do better, after a good kick in the ass." Maya let out an amused snort and leaned into him. "Now…need any help with these other two?"

Maya gave her notebook a heated glare, if books could shake in fear this one would've. "Not tonight. I think I've fried my brain…" Maya said closing the book a little more forcefully than necessary. "I need more cake!" she announced as she grabs another slice from the assortment on the table. Gabriel barked out a laugh.

"I whole heartedly agree!" Gabriel agreed with exuberance and mischief glinting in his eyes. He puts aside the dessert plate and fork he had and grabbed one of the smaller untouched cakes. Smirking he began eating it with his hands. Gabriel tried not to choke on the cake while laughing at the disgusted face his daughter was giving him.

"At least use a fork, you heathen!" Maya summoned said utensil and stabbed it in the middle of his cake.

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no. You mean Pagan, gummy worm. Heathen's too broad." Gabriel grinned, his face and hands a mess.

Maya gives him an unimpressed glare mixed with some slight disgust. "You're right. I meant pig
but that might be too much of an insult. To the pigs." She began eating her own piece of cake with a fork, and with her head pointedly turned away.

"Oi!"

"No, oink!"

Couple days later…

It was morning time and Gabriel was getting ready to head over to Crawford Hall to keep an eye on his and Maya's next targets. Going into Maya's small room he finds her sleeping, dead to the world, with her mouth open slightly and drooling a little on her pillow. He cracked a smile, before walking over to her bedroom window and flinging the curtains open. Poor kid had the bedroom facing the east. The sunlight had the desired effect of arousing his daughter from her slumber as she groaned greatly in protest, rolling over to face away from the unpleasant light.

Well that just wouldn't do. He dramatically sits at the edge of her bed and starts shaking her shoulders while singing very cheerfully, too cheerful for people trying to sleep.

"~Good morning! Good morning! It's great to stay up late. Good morning! Good morning to you.~" By the end of the little song excerpt Gabriel had flopped on her so his face was right next to her's, beaming. With practiced ease from having to deal with his antics, Maya ignored him, and tried to burrow further into her pillow and blanket.

"Daaaaaaaaaaad, whyyyyyyyyyyy?" Maya complained as she felt her Dad get off of her and then proceed to take her blanket, and throw it at the end of her bed. Flopping onto her back she glared up at the amused face of her Dad.

"Daylight's burnin' Jolly Rancher! We gotta get goin' to the campus." Gabriel said, jerking a thumb over his shoulder.

"Right, right, to your 'job'." Maya air quoted smirking. She thought it was funny how the great Trickster god Loki was masquerading as a janitor. "Why am I going again?" she questioned.

Gabriel rolled his eyes. "Despite what you might assume a Trickster's life is going to be like, you
still need to learn things. So sit in on some of the classes. Learn something, and get new ideas. People watch.” For the most part what he said was true, but he just wanted—

"You just want me nearby so you can keep an eye on me." Maya stated.

She knew him well.

"Yeah pretty much," he shrugged, "but you know I have a point."

"Yeah I know." Maya sighs.

"Great! Now get up, get dressed, and grab your bag!" Gabriel said brightly as he walked out of her room and closed the door.

When she steps out into the 'loudly' decorated apartment, there were a few breakfast burritos waiting, and some chocolate bars. It sucked sometimes being part Trickster, with such a high metabolism. She needed to eat a lot more sugar than was normally healthy so she didn't have a repeat of the Rockwell City, Iowa incident. Talk about the most inopportune time to find out you were on the extreme end of being hypoglycemic. She liked chocolate and candy well enough, but it got tiring and a little sickening some times. When that happens she usually switched over to eating tons of fruit instead. At least she didn't need as much as her Dad. Maya had finally learned to not try to out do him on sweet binges.

Both father and daughter eat a couple of breakfast burritos each and Gabriel made sure that Maya ate at least one chocolate bar, before having her stuff the rest in her bag. It doesn't take long to reach the campus in the car. Before leaving the confines of the car Maya remembered something.

"Hey Dad, we still on for Ghost Rider tonight?" Maya asked excited. Gabriel reaches over and messes up her hair, making her grumble.

"Sure thing kiddo!" Gabriel laughed. "Let's meet at Crawford Hall around 6. We'll go straight there." Gabriel received a bright smile after Maya fixed her hair.

"Great! I'll see you later Dad!" she replied getting out of the car and walking away.
"Love you!" Gabriel called to his daughter's retreating back, his warm breath coming out in puffs in the cold winter air. Maya turned and waved.

"Love you too!" she yelled back smiling.

11:50am

Maya was slumped in a reading chair in the Crawford library with her head tilted back. She was soooooooo bored! She went to a couple of morning lectures she thought were interesting. The last one ended almost two hours ago. Maya guessed she could have gone to the 'Ethics and Morality' lecture, but sadly the class was cancelled for the rest of the year. Insert slight snicker here. She didn't like what her Dad did, and felt bad that the professor didn't get the chance to try to change, but tried not to dwell on it too much. The asshole preyed on impressionable minds and those who relied on a high GPA to maintain their scholarships.

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'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

1 Text Message

D: Heeeeeeeeeeey you good for getting lunch for yourself? I've kinda got my eye on a prissy bitch type that might need a good dose of humiliation.

D: Also any suggestions? :)

Rolling her eyes Maya responded to her Dad's messages.

MG: Queen Bee?

D: With worker bees following her around like her own personal laugh track audience. :p

MG: Let me guess, popular, well-off parents, overly confident, usually perceived as kind and caring except to her targets? A Karen in the making?

D: DO NOT TYPE OR SPEAK HER NAME! LEST YOU SUMMON HER!
Maya did her best to keep her laughter quiet in the library. Her Dad used to tell her stories about the mean woman known as Karen. Maya vaguely remembered her, if only because she made her Dad mad. Though if the stories were anywhere close to the truth Maya was glad she didn't remember her.

**D:** But yeah.

**MG:** Show her cronies and the people her true colours, make her lose her confidence.

**MG:** I'm stuck on paint balloons outside Crawford Hall when classes end.

**MG:** Let all see her true colours! Lol.

**D:** Lol! I like it! Simple and elegant. Good work butterscotch.

**D:** I'm getting on it. You good for food?

**MG:** Yea I'm good. Get video!

**D:** As you wish! Lol.

Smiling at her Dad's antics Maya packed up her stuff and made her way off campus to a local pizza place. Buying some slices and a drink she takes a seat at a window booth and watch as people walk by. She tries to think of possible lives they were leading based on their faces, how they dressed, even how they walked. Golden eyes latched onto an odd pair walking towards the pizza place.

They were both male, the younger one early twenties longish brown hair, really tall build, and soft brown eyes. The shorter one was slightly older so mid-twenties? He had striking green eyes and dark short and kind of spikey dirt blonde hair. Both had that certain walk that Maya recognized as the soldier walk, though the tall softer one didn't really stand his ground as his shorter companion. It honestly looked like he was trying to look less intimidating, and kind of working if Maya was honest. Almost looked like a puppy in a giant man suit. The short one he exuded a kind of easy don't-mess-with-me vibe, but still had some kind of approachable charm to him. It was probably the eyes. Maya turned her head to keep her eyes on them as they walked past her in the window.

The shorter one pointed to the pizza shop with a crooked smile, saying something Maya couldn't hear. The big one gives what can only be described as a bitch-face before rolling his eyes. The shorty just grinned triumphantly before walking in through the door, the Sasquatch following close behind. Seriously! Maya thought he was tall from when he was approaching but he's got to have 9 inches on her and built like a…a…a moose!

"Alright Sammy I'm feeling meat lovers for me, but I'm guessing you want some craptastic veggie pizza instead?" the shorter one, not Sammy, elbowed the taller man known as Sammy jokingly.
Sammy gives the short one a long-suffering sigh. "It's Sam, Dean and no, I'm getting the chicken Caesar salad." Sammy-correction Sam- replied. Dean looked at Sam like he'd grown not one, but two more heads.

"Sam," Dean said seriously, looking at Sam. "It's a pizza joint. You don't go in to buy salad," he said the word with disgust "you go in to buy pizza!" Dean made a point by gesturing to the ready-made pizzas under a warming light. "And maybe the occasional pound of chicken wings." Dean added.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just order the food Dean. I'll grab us a seat." Sam had rolled his eyes again. It was obvious that they've had similar conversations about food before.

Sam walked towards her and Maya met his eyes. The behemoth of a man gave a small gentle smile and a small wave. Maya returned it with her own small smile before turning back around, as Sam moved past her and took the empty booth in front of her, with his back to her. For a few moments Maya returned to people watching and slowly eating her pizza slices. The corner of her eyes caught Dean sitting down heavily across from Sam.

"Ah, food of the gods Sammy!" Dean sighed happily after taking a bite of his pizza.

"Dean what is this?" Sam questioned, annoyed. Maya could only guess at his exasperated face, but she quirked a slight smile at her imaginings.

"Some classic pepperoni pizza." Dean answered happily.

"It's not what I wanted." Maya could just hear the tick in Sam's voice.

"I know. You wanted some rabbit food crap. I got you some real food instead. Your welcome." Dean said pleased. Maya didn't need to hear anything to have an idea that Sam was giving Dean another bitch-face. Maya couldn't cover up the snort she released.

"Something funny sweetheart?" Maya turned her head at Dean's question. Meeting an eyebrow raised over intense green eyes. Sam turned his upper body to look at her questioningly. Maya could feel a shiver of fear travel down her spine under their gaze, well mostly Dean's anyways.

Have you ever had those moments where you say something without thinking? Like there was no
brain to mouth filter? Maya had one of those moments.

"Just imagining the look on Gigantor's face when you said 'your welcome' for switching his food." Maya wanted to take back those words and go with the default of insulting Dean's face, he looked a little vain. The intensity of Dean's eyes faded as he picked up on the name she called Sam, whereas Sam's intensified instead as he gave her a seriously?-bitch-face. It was impressive.

"You've been watching us since we came in." Sam stated. "Why?"

"Technically since you were walking up the sidewalk..." She received unimpressed stares. Stupid brain to mouth filter. "I people watch okay? It's what I do when I get a window seat at a restaurant. I watch people walking by and try to figure out their stories." Maya let the truth come out; she didn't think she could pull off a lie under the pressure these two were giving her. "Sorry." She mumbled out meekly, looking small and harmless.

Maya hadn't realized how tense the two older men had gotten until they relaxed her shoulders, believing her.

"It's fine, sorry if we made you nervous." Sam sighed giving her a reassuring smile. Damn it was disarming.

"So sweetheart, why'd you keep watching us when we came in?" Dean asked, a self-confident smirk on his face. "It's cause I'm devastatingly handsome isn't it? Sorry, but you're a little too young for me. Give me a call in, 5 years okay?"

"Dean!" Sam turned to Dean, admonishing him with a reprimanding voice. Dean just gave him a helpless shoulder shrug mouthing 'what?'. Sam shook his head before turning back to Maya.

"Sorry about him. He can be a bit of an ass." Sam apologized.

"Bitch!" Dean responded to Sam's insult.

"Jerk!" Sam easily replied. Maya had a feeling it was a thing they did affectionately to each other.
"No worries. I've had worse come-ons since the girls started really developing from larger douche nozzles than him." Maya said calmly. Sam and Dean on the other hand looked concerned at her words.

"You shouldn't really sound as okay with that as you do sweetheart. Not every guy will stop at only words." Dean's green eyes flashed with anger, mirrored by the concerned pinch in Sam's face.

It was refreshing to find guys that were angry over the assholes of the world like the ones Maya encountered.

"I know," Maya said acknowledging their concern. "But it helps too that I know I can put down guys bigger than me into the concrete." Maya gave them a crooked smirk while they both appraised her.

"Really?" Sam wasn't completely convinced, but Maya could tell it wasn't to be insulting.

"What's your go to move then if a guy grabbed you?" Dean asked all of a sudden, giving her a serious stare.

"Other than screaming my head off for help? Probably the SING combo, stomach-instep-nose-groin." Maya listed off. "I have also been told I have a mean kidney jab." A self-satisfied smirk crossed her face.

Dean laughed and gave her a thumbs-up. "Nice! I bet all the guys are afraid of you." Sam looked a little more satisfied knowing she could handle herself, but that slight bit of worry was still there.

'bzzzzzzzzzzz'

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

Maya quickly answered her phone knowing who it was.

"Hey Dad…no I'm still at the pizza place…yeah alright, I'll eat and run…see you soon…love you! Bye!" Finishing the call she looked over at Sam and Dean.
"Sorry fellas, but my Dad noticed I'm gone. Gotta get back."

"Wait, shouldn't you be in school?" Sam asked furrowing his eyebrows.

"I am...kinda. Dad has me doing some alternative learning program. I spend most of my time at the Crawford library and sitting in on auditorium lectures." Maya explained. "Not sure how good it is, but I learn what I want, and get to spend a lot of time with the old man." Maya noticed a flash of pain enter their eyes but it was gone soon enough.

"Wait, you said Crawford? You talkin' about the college?" Dean questioned, his eyes focused on her.

"Uh, yeah? What else?"

"Nothing. We just heard about that professor's suicide. Did you attend some of his lectures?" Sam asked gently. Maya shrugged her shoulders, non-committal.

"Yeah, just a couple. 'Ethics and Morality', right? Thought the course material was pretty interesting. Like, is what doing what's right the same as doing something that's morally right? Gets ya thinking, you know?" Maya said looking at them. She held her tongue on what exactly she thought of the professor himself though.

"You ever hear of the urban legend of the ghost girl and a room numbered 669?" Dean asked bluntly, before Sam, probably, could offer words of comfort to Maya for the toll the death of the professor might have caused her. He gave Dean an exasperated look.

"What Dean means to say, is we're sorry you had to go through that." Sam said staring Dean down, who did not look apologetic in the slightest.

"Bite me Sammy."

Maya gave a huff at their antics; pretty sure they must be brothers of some kind, if not by blood then definitely by bond.
"Listen I really gotta go. I've heard of the legend but I don't give it much stock. I mean, who ever she's the ghost isn't supposed to survive to tell the tale right? Yet the tale gets told anyway. It's probably just a made up legend to scare freshmen." Maya stated. It wasn't a lie. There was no ghost, or a history of a girl committing suicide. Just her Dad playing pranks of the harmless, and deadly, variety.

"Right. Sorry, and thanks." Sam said.

"Later sweet heart." Dean gave her a mock flirtatious smile while waggling his eyebrows jokingly. Sam rounded on him, reaching across the table to smack up side the head.

"Dean!" Sam hissed. Maya laughed, grabbing her bag, and remaining slice of pizza.

"Later Gigantor," Sam looked at her with annoyance, while Dean smirked. "Later douche nozzle." Their expressions switched. Maya began walking out.

"Bitch!" Dean called after her.

"Ass face!" She yelled back not turning around and sticking her arm in the air to give him the middle finger as she walked out laughing. She then proceeded to walk by the window of their booth. Tapping the window to get their attention or more specifically, Dean's. Dean gave his own version of a bitch-face as she smiled teasingly at him, wiggling her fingers. Scowling, he leaned on the table with one of his elbows and flipped her off.

Maya raised her brow at it, and then looked at Dean's face. A mischievous gleam entered her eyes as she stared Dean down, looking straight into his own green eyes. Without breaking eye contact Maya spread her legs, took her free hand, put it over her crotch, and did a Michael Jackson crotch grab with pelvic thrust.

Dean sat straight up looking at her in shock, eyes blown wide and his mouth dropping a little. That had nothing on Sam's expression though. The poor giant had been taking a swig of soda when she did the crotch grab. When she grabbed and bucked her hips he did a spit take and was currently hunched over the table, burying his head in his arms and shaking his shoulders in laughter. Laughing Maya gave them a final wave before making her way back to campus.

Sam and Dean
"Shut up Sam!" Dean groused at his brother's hunched form.

"Oh God! Your face!" Sam wheezed, trying to calm down. Sam sat up rubbing his face and took some deep breaths. He looked at Dean's own brand of bitch-face, and bust out one more laugh.

"Saaaaaaaaam." Dean said warningly.

"Right. Right. I'm done. Sorry." Sam's smile and tone of voice suggested he wasn't apologetic at all.

"Bitch." Dean scowled.

"Jerk." Smirked Sam.

"So," Dean started taking bites out of his pizza and talked with his mouth full. "'ink it's a 'auntin'?" Sam gave him a disgusted face. "'wha'?"

"You're disgusting." Sam stated as Dean just shrugs off the insult. "Not sure. Curtis and…did you catch the girl's name?" Dean shook his head.

"Just call her Goldy." Dean suggested.

"Goldy? She's not a goldfish Dean."

"Yeah, but she did have gold eyes." Dean pointed out.

"Your right. That's a pretty rare colour though, especially that intensity of gold. No mistaking it for a light hazel, that's for sure." Sam pondered. Dean just shrugged as he ate his pizza. Unless they were black or yellow he didn't really care much about someone's eye color. "Anyway, neither of them believed the legend to be real." Sam said, thinking over what they had so far.
"Don't mean it's not a haunting. Not every haunting becomes a local legend, or even what started the legend. Could be a completely different ghost." Dean added, washing the pizza down with his soda.

"Guess we'll have to check out the scene, see if we pick anything up." Sam sighed as he ate his own pizza, however much he didn't want it in the first place.

"Great. Probably should go in when most staff and students have gone home then. Last thing we need is provoking an angry ghost around a bunch of nerds."

"Can't go in as investigators, the scene's been cleaned up and any investigator's would have shown up already by now." Sam pondered, eyes narrowed in thought.

"Maintenance? Plumbers?" Dean suggested.

"No, that wouldn't get us access to the professor's office." Sam thought aloud then snapped his fingers. "But electricians would. It would also explain away the EMF detectors as equipment for finding wires."

"Awesome. We can probably get in tonight if we talk to one of the cleaning staff." Dean said, rubbing his hands together anticipatory.

Finishing their food they leave the pizza place and went to go get ready and get in touch with a member of the cleaning staff.

5:45pm

Gabriel checked his watch as he waited for the electricians that called in earlier today. He was elected to stay behind to let them into the rooms at Crawford Hall. Ugh. He didn't want to spend however long taking these guys around the building to check the wiring. However, if he wanted to keep his cover he had to suck it up. He hoped Maya wouldn't be too upset. She'd been looking forward to seeing Ghost Rider since the commercials came out.

5:47pm
The two electricians had finally arrived, walking through the front doors and holy shit! The one was a freaking giant! Built like one too.

"Hey," giant man greeted. "I'm Sam, and this is Dean." He threw a thumb over his shoulder at the shorter man, who was still taller than Gabriel.

"Sup." Dean greeted simply.

"Nice to meet ya. I'm Gabe." Gabriel smiled, offering his hand for a handshake. He knew exactly what these two were. Not only was it a little suspicious to check wires at this time of day, it was the way they carried themselves and the way their eyes scanned the room, like soldiers, or, more specifically, Hunters. Oh this was going to be fun.

After shaking their hands Gabriel asked, "You guys going to take long? I've got to meet someone later."

"Hot date?" Dean smirked at him. Gabriel snorted.

"Something like that. If I don't meet her, she'll come after me." Gabriel smiled, knowing Maya would hunt him down to demand why he was taking so long.

"Kinky." That earned Dean a swat to the head by Sam.

"Dean!" Sam hissed at Dean, before turning back to Gabriel. "I'm sorry about him. It's been a long day." Sam said looking apologetically. Gabriel just waved it off.

"No worries. I'd honestly say the same thing to someone else." Gabriel gave them a devious smirk while shrugging his shoulders. "Well let's get started!" Gabriel said cheerfully.

Sam nodded in agreement. "We only really need to check around the offices on the top floor, so it shouldn't take too long."
They get up to the top floor and Gabriel would unlock a room, they'd go in check it out then come out, and locked the door behind him. Then they got to the dead professor's room.

"How long have you been working here?" Sam asked conversationally as Gabriel unlocked the door.

"I've been mopping these floors for six years." Gabriel said as he opened the door, walking in and flicking the light switch. "There you go guys." He said unenthused. Time was ticking till he was supposed to meet Maya. Thankfully it was the last room.

Sam pulled out a gadget with lights. Pretending to be ignorant Gabriel asked about it. "What the heck's that for?"

Sam looked back at him then looked around the office. "Just to find the wires in the walls." He said simply. Gabriel kept the snort of disbelief from coming out. Yeah, sure buddy.

Gabriel leaned up against the archway in the office as he watched Sam look at the EMF detector while walking around the room. Yeah Gabriel knew exactly what that was.

"Ah. Well. Not sure why you're wiring up this office. Not gonna do the professor much good." Gabriel put out there, looking around the room.

Dean looked over at him questioningly. "Why's that?" he asked.

"He's dead." Gabriel stated simply. Dean looked at him in slight interest, not really surprised.

"Oh. What happened?" Dean asked as he spotted the bowl with chocolates in it and began to help himself.

"He went out that window. Right there." Gabriel replied, pushing away from the arch and pointing at the open window, curtains billowing slightly in the night breeze.

Sam walked behind him to his other side and sounded genuinely interested. "Yeah? Were you working that night?"
Gabriel turned to look at Sam. "I'm the one who found him."

"You see it happen?" Sam questioned.

"Nope. I just saw him come up here and uh…" Gabriel paused smirking. "Well…"

"What?" Sam asked with a congenial smile.

"He wasn't alone." Gabriel said waggling his eyebrows.

Sam gave a slightly impressed 'hm' face and released a small chuckle, smiling in amusement. Dean came over with a couple pieces of chocolates he was still working on in his mouth.

"Who was he with?" Dean asked, still chewing the chocolates.

"He was with a young lady." Gabriel gossiped and Dean gave an impressed nod. "I told the cops about her, but I guess they never found her." He shrugged.

"You saw this girl go in, but did you ever see her come out?" Sam enquired.

"Now that you mention it, no." Gabriel gave another small shrug after a moment of thinking. Well it wasn't a lie. She didn't come out, he just vanished her away. Internal snicker.

"You ever see her before, around?" Sam pursued, Dean ate a couple more chocolates.

"Not her." Gabriel answered, with a slight eyebrow waggle.

"What do you mean?" Dean asked grinning.
"I don't mean to cast aspersions on a dead guy, but, uh…Mr. morality here? He brought a lot of girls up here." Gabriel answered. "Got more ass than a toilet seat." That joke had both Dean and Sam laughing, as he gave his own amused smirk, but that faded. Sam noticed.

"What's wrong?"

"I ain't all that sad to see him kick it to be honest." Gabriel grimaced at the memory, the reason why he didn't wait for Maya to come up with a non-lethal plan.

"Ain't that a little…harsh?" Sam asked furrowing his eyebrows.

"Not when you decide to meet your kid after his class and watch as he tries to coerce her into having sex with him by threatening to give her a bad grade." Gabriel deadpanned.

"He did what?!" Dean demanded.

"He can't do that!" Sam said in disbelief. "Did your daughter report him?"

Gabriel shook his head. "No, but she gave him one hell of a sucker punch to the kidneys. He tried to threaten her with assault charges, but she beat him back by saying she wasn't afraid to tell the police he was trying to coerce a minor. I walked in after she had him on the ground and gave him my own threats. I had her stop attending his lectures."

"Wait, how old is your daughter?" Sam asked. Dean was pondering over what Gabriel had just said.

"Sweet 16 next month." Gabriel smiled, puffing up a little in pride.

"Why is she in college already?" Sam queried. It was rare for someone so young to already be going on to secondary education.

"Alternative learning program." Gabriel shrugged. That's when it clicked for Dean.
"Goldy!" Dean exclaimed after snapping his fingers and pointing at Gabriel, who consequently had gold eyes as well.

Gabriel raised a confused eyebrow, "Uh, yeah I've got gold eyes…why does…?"

"Nah, nah," Dean shook his hands in front of him. "Goldy is just a name I came up with for this kid we met earlier today. Didn't catch her name, but she said how she had a mean kidney punch and was doing some alt learning thing at Crawford. Also that she went to some of this douche bag's classes." Dean said smiling.

*Oh, that's not good.*

Sam then cut in when his brother left out a detail. "Yeah she had shoulder length, curly, dark, brown hair, freckles across her nose, and intense gold eyes, kind of like your's." Sam added.

Gabriel let out a disbelieving huff. Of course Maya would some how run into two Hunters and from the looks of it, slightly endear herself to them.

"Yeah that sounds like my Maya." Gabriel quickly looked at his watch. "Uh, speaking of which, wanna wrap this up? She's probably waiting down stairs for me…or prowling about trying to hunt me down." He twirled a pointed finger in the air in a 'hurry it up' motion.

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6:13pm

Her Dad was late. Not even a message to tell her what's going on. Groaning she entered the hall and made her way to the top floor, better to go from top to bottom. Walking into the hall of offices she hears voices, familiar voices. She made her way to where the voices were coming, the dead professor's office.

"…prowling about trying to hunt me down." Came her Dad's voice from the open doorway. Peeking in she sees her Dad standing with Sam and Dean. What were they doing here?

"Yeah, yeah, just one more thing. This building—it only has four stories, right?" Sam asked.
"Yeah." her Dad replied shortly.

"So there wouldn't be a room 669?" Sam asked with a tone of voice that said he kind of knew what her Dad was going to say.

"Of course not. Why do you ask?" Her Dad enquired. Why indeed.

Walking quietly Maya slipped into the room to hide behind the wall of the arch on the right side, keeping her out of her Dad's sight but not Sam and Dean's. Dean noticed first when she crept in but Maya made slashing hand gestures at her throat and putting a finger to her lips. She nodded her head in the direction of her Dad. Dean gave a casual nod and smirked at her, before looking away. Sam by some miracle didn't notice her.

"Ah, just curious. Thanks." Sam replied and turned with his back towards her. Dean was looking anywhere else but her. Her Dad came around the open archway, looking at the guys, and not in her direction. The stars have aligned and Maya seized her moment!

"RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" Maya shouted as she jumped on her Dad's back. Sam, not knowing she was there, jumped a couple feet in the air and whirled around with eyes wide in surprise. Dean was bent over wheezing in laughter.

"GAD ZEUKS!" her Dad shouted, grabbing her arms and keeping her in place. He turned his head to get a look at her. "Really Maya? A jump scare? You trying to give me a heart attack?" he released her arms and let her fall off his back, before wrapping his arm around her in a headlock.

"Gad zeucks Dad? Really showing your age there, old man!" Maya exclaimed from around the arm wrapped around her head, trying to twist out of it.

"Who you calling old, Twix bar?" Her Dad proceeded to give her a noogy. "Say it!" Gabriel demanded with a playful voice. Maya struggled for a bit longer before finally, relaxing.

"Fine! Uncle! Uncle!" Maya cried out. As soon as she was released she gave her Dad some mock punches that he pretended to block. Both of them laughed as they exited the room, Sam and Dean following behind watching them.

Maya and Gabriel didn't notice the brief flashes of grief going through the two young men's eyes,
before hiding behind a carefully constructed wall of amusement.

After saying their goodbyes to Sam and Dean, Maya and Gabriel went back to the car.

"Hey, I gotta go do something real quick. Be back in a snap!" Gabriel said winking to his daughter with a snap of his fingers he disappeared. Maya just rolled her eyes and sat in the car waiting for him. He was back almost an instant later smirking to himself, at a joke only he knew.

"So, where'd you go?" Maya asked curiously as Gabriel started the car.

"Well, Sam and Dean?" Gabriel said, giving Maya a side-glance. "They're Hunters."

"Shit! Dad I had no idea!" Maya said a little panicked. They didn't seem like Hunters when she first saw them, but it might be why she thought they were so odd earlier. Thinking of their walk, their suspicion at being stared at, their question about the professor…it should have been a lot more obvious. Maya hits her head back in the seat, groaning at the realization. "I should've known." Maya mumbled.

"Ah don't worry too much. They don't know anything. I also kind of made sure it would be a lot harder for them to figure it out." Gabriel smirked. Maya peeked an eye at him.

"What you did when you disappeared?"

"Yep!" Gabriel chirped. "Might be hard to look stuff up on the Internet if their laptop's frozen on porn…Deano looked the type." Maya let out a laugh at that.

"Yeah, he does doesn't he?" Maya said smirking. "So…Ghost Rider?" she asked brightly.

Gabriel laughed and nodded. "Ghost Rider."

"Yes!" Maya cheered excitedly.
AN: Holy crap this is long. This episode is just getting away from me! There should be one more part after this. I'm ending here cause it's a good enough place to end for a really long chapter. Thanks for reading!

Following day…

"Hey Twizzler," Gabriel said strolling into the kitchenette area where Maya was looking at her notebook again…and reading an urban legend newspaper? "What you got there?"

Maya turned to him with a sly smirk, while leaning back in her chair. "Well I've got some ideas for pledge master Curtis and our scientist friend."

"Oh?" Gabriel asked with an eyebrow raised as he sat himself down beside her. "Do tell."

"Well Curtis is a guy who likes being in charge, in control. Makes him feel all powerful and tingly inside when he uses that power to humiliate someone." Maya wiggled her fingers while scrunching her nose. "So best way to go about dealing with him is to make him lose all sense of control and power he has. However, it has to be done in a way that no one would believe a word he says, discrediting him, and humiliating him. No one will believe or respect him, or be intimidated by him." Maya said, pausing as she flipped the pages of the newspaper to a page titled:

An Alien Made Me Its Love Slave: Has She Found True Love At Last!

Maya smirked as she continued, "Figure an alien abduction should do the trick, with something extra." Gabriel was smirking in amusement.

"Something extra?" Gabriel queried.

Maya nodded. "Yeah something extra, aside from the normal expected alien abduction stuff. Something to take it into the realm of completely unbelievable and embarrassing."
"More embarrassing than getting probed?" Gabriel snorted, smiling with pride. His kid was growing up to be a clever little Trickster. "Any ideas?"

"Well..." Maya began. "There was one thing that came to mind because it just sounds so ridiculous for an alien to make somebody do."

"What is it?" Gabriel had a feeling it would be good.

"Slow dancing." Maya said uncertain, her voice making it sound more like a question than a statement. Gabriel kept calm for all of a second as he visualized it and burst out laughing.

"Th-that's perfect!" Gabriel gasped. "With the alien in a prom dress and prom lights and cheesy romantic music!" It took a few calming breathes before Gabriel could stop laughing. Maya watched him with calm amusement and a quiet huff here and there. "Okay...what do you have for the animal abuser?"

"Well it's not as funny as a slow dancing alien, but I was thinking along the lines of Peter Pan, or more specifically Captain Hook." She said, turning the pages to an article about an alligator terrorizing sewers. "Not only does he like testing on animals, but he is also greedy. Saw him find a lost wallet, pocket the cash, then throw it away. So I think losing a hand to a gator would be fitting. Some retribution for testing on animals, and some payback for being a scumbag. There's also a sewer grate near Crawford Hall that he walks by when going to the parking lot. Good place for a trap."

"Sewer gators, and aliens, oh my." Gabriel laughed. "Where'd you get the idea for using urban legends?" Maya snorted.

"You started by using that local urban legend with the ghost coed. Figured it could be a theme." Maya stated shrugging.

"I like it!" Gabriel exclaimed happily. "Who should we do first?"

"Pledge master." Maya stated confidently. "He can be abducted tonight when he's walking across campus from his night class. The research scientist can be tomorrow night since he works late at the office on Thursdays so he can leave earlier on Friday night." Maya bites her bottom lip a bit in worry before tentatively saying, "I can't do the tricks myself...it's okay that you do them, right?"
"Hey don't worry about it Jelly bean!" Gabriel said brightly bringing his girl in for a shoulder hug. He knew she didn't want to come across as using him, but Gabriel didn't mind. He was fully aware of why her powers and body was weaker compared to his, and it wasn't her fault. "You know you don't need to keep asking if it's alright." Maya relaxes into his hug and nodded.

"I know I just didn't want to assume anything. For all I know you have your own tricks to plan or something."

"Other than the she-who-must-not-be-named duplicate I didn't really have any planned. Besides, I like working with you, even with your strong 'no-killing' morals."

Maya snorted. "Yes they do make extracting appropriate just desserts difficult, but that just means I have to be smarter." She smirked slyly. Gabriel stared at Maya. She was hinting at somethi—

"HEY! You saying I'm dumb?!!" Gabriel demanded with no real heat in his voice.

"No, no, no, no, no...maybe." Maya said, before bolting out of her chair and his reach, then out the front door laughing.

"Oh! IT'S ON Gobstopper!" Gabriel called after her as he began the impromptu game of 'Chase the Trickster'. It was like tag but they both had to use tricks to catch the other.

"Arcade is the finish line!" Maya yelled back as she burst through the apartment building's front doors. This was a variation on the game where the chaser had to catch the Trickster before they made it to the finish line, which in this case was 3 blocks away. Also the chaser, if it was Gabriel, couldn't use his teleporting abilities to just ambush the chasee, Maya, at the finish line.

It was a fun game of dodging, weaving, reacting, and in Maya's case creating illusions. When Gabriel lost sight of her for a brief moment, Maya had created an illusionary double to distract him, while she took another route to the arcade.

Gabriel chased the illusion Maya till she 'accidentally' took a wrong turn right into a dead end. It was only when Gabriel caught up to the illusion did he sense the faint difference between the real Maya and the fake one in front of him. Fake Maya turned to look at him cheekily before disappearing into faint purple smoke. Misdirection. His baby girl was learning well. Gabriel continues on his way to the arcade to find Maya standing outside the entrance leaning up against
"Good job M&M! Didn't notice the difference till I caught up with her." Gabriel smiled proudly. Maya's smile broadened as he approached.

"Thanks Dad. Wanna see if you can win against me at air hockey? See if your reflexes are up to par?" Maya said with a teasing lit to her voice. Gabriel playfully narrowed his eyes.

"Is today 'Make-fun-of-Dad' day or something?" he said good-humoredly as he followed Maya into the arcade.

They played a few games together before Gabriel had to head to the campus for the night shift, and be ready for pledge master Curtis to be abducted, by aliens. HA! Maya told him that she planned to stay for another hour or two before heading back to the apartment.

The arcade grew a little more crowded as school let out for the day. Maya didn't pay much mind; too busy trying to not get eaten by the ghosts in Pac Man.

"Um, hi?" came a sudden voice from beside her. Maya's body tensed in surprise causing her hands to jerk on the joystick in the wrong direction, right into the path of a ghost. Dead Pac Man noise. Damn. Maya looked to see who spoke to her. What she finds was a teenage boy around her age, looking at her nervously. "Uh…sorry?"

"It's fine." Maya sighed in exasperation as she finds her score in 10th place. Quickly typing her name for the scoreboard she turns to look at the boy again. "You want next game?" she asked gesturing to the machine.

"Oh! Uh, no! I was wondering if you wanted to go out tomorrow night? With me?" he asked shifting uncomfortably, his eyes shifting off to one side. Maya just stared at him. Huh.

"Really?" she questioned suspiciously, raising an eyebrow. "Why?" There was something about him.

"Well um…I…my…" poor guy was so nervous. He looks at her and Maya gives him a small encouraging smile. He takes a deep breath and lets out a steadying sigh. "My friends wanted to do a group thing but didn't tell me we were supposed to bring a date. Or-no they suggested it, but now
they all have dates and are trying to help me find one so I don't feel left out and were telling me to
ask you out because you're pretty…NOT THAT I DON'T THINK YOUR PRETTY!" he said
panicky shaking his hands. "You're just not…well, what I mean is…" he looked at her
apologetically.

Maya glanced in the direction where his eyes darted sometimes to see a group of boys watching in
exasperation at their friend's fumbling. The boy's eyes seem to lock onto one of the others, his face,
ears and neck reddening in embarrassment. Ah. That's what it was.

"I just don't have the right plumbing between the legs?" Maya asked with a smirk. Oh his face!
Eyes wide in shock, his face going even redder, as he tried to deny what Maya was insinuating.
"Me thinks the lad doust protest too much. It's alright I'm not judging." The boy's shoulders relax
in defeat.

"That obvious?" he asked despondent. Maya gave a sympathetic nod. He groaned.

"Hey let's make a deal," Maya began catching his attention. "I go on this date with you, as friends,
and I use this as a way to play a prank on my Dad." She finished smirking. She knew how much
her Dad would flip and with another night shift and just desserts planned he'll be too occupied to do
anything.

"…your Dad won't kill me right?" he asked nervously. Maya waved him off.

"Nah, but I gotta tell him when I'm home that you're batting for the other team, that'll save you. I
won't tell anyone else. I swear." She smiled reassuringly. "I'm Maya by the way."

"Jason, and thanks." He said relieved. "High school drama sucks." Maya laughed at that, gaining a
friendly smile from Jason. "Want to meet the yahoos watching us?"

"You're funny. I like that, but I must warn you." Maya said giving him a mock serious face. "I have
been known to be devastatingly witty. You're friends may not survive the encounter." That got a
laugh from Jason.

Next morning…


Maya had gone to bed the previous night, not bothering to wait up for her Dad to come back from the prank on the frat boy. Sleep was a beautiful thing, unless you have a Trickster Dad that decided to jump on your sleeping body as a way to wake you up.

"AGAIN?!!" Maya said raising her voice in sleepy aggravation. "What do you have against sleep?!!"

"It's already 9," the asshole smirked. "Besides, I thought you'd wanna hear how it went last night." The less-of-an-asshole enticed. Maya raised herself in a very Dracula-esque fashion to a sitting position, eyes still closed.

"Teeeeeeeelllllllll meeeeeelee." She groaned still partially asleep.

"How about you wake up some more," Gabriel said rolling his eyes at his daughter's antics. "And while we're eating I'll tell you how it went."

Gabriel waited for Maya to give a response, or move. She stayed sitting up, swaying a little, but didn't really move. He poked her shoulder.

She collapsed back into her bed with a soft thump and a light snore, once again asleep.

Huh. Well then. Gabriel snapped his fingers and a bucket of ice water appeared in his hands. He proceeded to dump it on his sleeping daughter. That woke her up.

"DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAD!" Maya screeched as she jumped out of her bed and stared at her laughing father. She tackled him into the wet sheet and comforter in retaliation.

It was in the afternoon when the door to the apartment opened to show Gabriel saunter in with a laptop under his arm.

"Really?" Maya said raising her eyebrow at the laptop, having a pretty good idea of where it came from.

"Yep," Gabriel snickered. "What's a little more chaos and tension between Hunters?"
Maya rolled her eyes at him, but her lips were still quirked in amusement.

"So ready for tonight?" Maya asked.

"You know it!" Gabriel said plopping the laptop on the couch, and then snapped his fingers to make some pizza appear on the kitchen table. "C'mon. I know you're hungry."

"How do you know?" She queried.

"You've got your hungry face on." Gabriel said pointing at her face.

"I do not have a hungry face!" Maya protested.

"Yeah you do."

"...shut up." Maya mumbled as she tucked into the pizza, studiously ignoring Gabriel's smirking face.

"Off to the night shift?" Maya asked her Dad, waiting for him to leave so she could call Jason.

"Yep." he said. "Remember, no throwing parties! Unless I'm there of course. See ya later alligator!" Maya laughed at him as he left the apartment.

Maya waited a few minutes to be sure he was gone before she called Jason.

"Hey man it's Maya," she said into the cellphone held up to her ear. "So where am I meeting up with you and your friends?...The arcade? Alright. See you in a bit." After hanging up Maya went to get changed in some slightly nicer top than the dark Kansas world tour band t-shirt she was wearing. Finding a burnt orange spaghetti top she put that on, paired with the dark fitted jeans she was already wearing. Grabbing her light brown leather she puts her wallet and phone in the pockets
and leaves the apartment, locking the door behind her.

Crawford Hall

Gabriel was boooooored! This guy had decided to work extra late tonight in his office at Crawford Hall. It was what? 8:12pm already? He'd already visited his lab to set the animals loose. Gabriel ended up taking the male, brown and white Jack Russell terrier that gave him the biggest set of puppy eyes he'd ever seen! Poor guy just wanted some love. The little guy kept him company while he waited, in boredom. To quench his boredom he took out his cellphone and calls Maya, while giving the pup a good belly rub. He was so cute.

She doesn't answer. Gabriel tried again. Thankfully she answered this time.

"Hey Dad! Wait, give me a moment…" She responded loudly, trying to talk over the background music and other loud voices. The background noise faded, as it was obvious she made her way to a quieter place. "Alright. Sorry about that! I was a little distracted."

"I know I said no throwing parties, but I was only trying to make a joke. Not spark some teenage rebellion." Gabriel watched as the research scientist finally left his office, and then the Hall. A quick snap of the fingers and an expensive looking watch was glinting in the sewer grate. He gives the good boy scritches behind the ear, and there goes the tail!

"Don't worry I'm not throwing any parties and I'm not at one." Maya reassured. Gabriel snapped up a hungry alligator from the everglades in Florida into the sewer, with the researcher's reaching hand in sight. That guy really wanted that watch. The dog was as happy as could be getting positive affection for probably the first time in a long time.

"Well then what was with the loud background noise?" Gabriel asked. Something was up. The gator snapped its powerful jaws on the scientist's hand and begun its death roll to break it off.

"I'm at the arcade on a date." Maya said calmly, like it wasn't all that important. Gabriel's brain came to a complete stop.

What? What? WHAT?!
"Di-Did you say *date*? I'm hoping that's *not* what you *just* said! I don't of approve this!" Gabriel hissed into his cellphone as he turned around and missed the gator push open the sewer gate to get to the rest of the tasty treat he got a piece of.

"Nothing's happened Dad. Just went to the movies and spent some time at the arcade with his friends and their dates." Maya sighed, though there was something in her voice that had Gabriel suspicious, but the thought of his little girl on a date pushed it aside.

"Apartment. Now Maya." Gabriel said sternly, petting the happy dog with him.

"Okay. Just give me a chance to say goodbye Jason. See you sooooooon~" she sing saged as she hung up. Gabriel scowled at his phone. Oh he was going to have words with that girl. What kind of name was *Jason* anyways? Sounded like a prick to him. He turned back to where the scientist was and—oh. Oops.

All that was left of the scientist seemed to be an arm and half a leg. Gabriel quickly snapped the satiated and happy alligator back to his home in the everglades. Gabriel picked up the Jack Russell and looked at the smiling dog.

"I won't say anything if you won't." he said. He got a whine and some dog kisses as a response. "Good boy." With a snap of his fingers he was back in the apartment and waited for his daughter to get home.

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**Apartment**

The front door unlocked and Maya walked calmly into the apartment to find her Dad and—was that a dog?—waiting for her. Her Dad did not look happy.

"What's with the dog?" Maya asked, kneeling down to pet the Jack Russell. "Aww who's a good boy? You are!" she cooed, ignoring the upset eyes burrowing into her.

"Soooo *Jason,*" he said with slight disgust. "Not the gentleman type to walk you home, huh?" he said with disdain.

"Oh no he offered," Maya countered. "I told him you were pissed and it was probably best that he
didn't." She stood up to look her Dad in the eye. "Even if he batted for the other team." Maya gave a knowing smirk.

"OF COURSE I'M—" Gabriel paused. "Wait, what?" he asked confused. "He's gay?"

CLICK! Maya took a picture of his dumbfounded face, smiling like the cat that got the cream.

"Well yeah." Maya said rolling her eyes with a smirk. "Hasn't come out yet and his friends were pressuring him to get a date for tonight." She continued with a shoulder shrug. "We went out as friends." She stressed. "I helped get his friends off his case and I get to use this date as a prank. On you." Maya finished with a smug expression as she looked at the photo and chuckled.

"I don't know whether to be upset that you went on a date with a guy, or proud that you pranked me by going on a date with a gay guy."

Maya chuckled. "Well let me know so I know whether or not I'm in trouble." She picked up the wiggling dog and took him to the couch to give him pets. All of the pets for the good boy! "So, wanna tell me how it went tonight?" She watched as her Dad tensed a little then relaxed.

"It went great. Even went to his lab and released all the animals there." He said as he sat on the other side of the Jack Russell. "This little guy conned me into taking him home." He stated as he began scratching behind the dog’s ears causing his back leg to start kicking.

"You're not telling me something," Maya said with a suspicious tone.

"The gator was really hungry and I...uh...got distracted." Gabriel said sheepishly. "There wasn't much left." Maya gave a sigh of exasperation and slump in her seat on the couch. The dog took this as an opportunity to jump into her lap and smother her face in kisses. This got her smiling at she fixed her posture and held onto the enthusiastic canine to keep him from giving her more wet kisses.

"Down boy!" She laughed, as she began petting the Jack Russell. "So does this little guy have a name?" Gabriel shook his head.

"Nope. Unless you count Subject 7 as a name." Maya scrunched her nose at that in distaste.
Looking at the little dog Maya came up with name. "He looks like a Puck." Maya stated, pleased. Puck gave a small bark of agreement.

"Puck?" Gabriel questioned, only to have the small dog turn his little head at the sound of his new name. "Look at that he already knows his new name." Gabriel said impressed.

"Of course! Jack Russell terriers are quite clever and can be prone to their own bouts of mischief." Maya stated proudly. "Ready to help me cause mischief clever Puck?" she asked the dog, and getting an affirmative bark in response. "Good boy! You hungry?" Another bark and Puck jumped down from her lap, looking at her expectantly with a wagging tale. Maya looked at Gabriel and he rolled his eyes, snapping his fingers to make dog supplies appear on the newspaper-strewn coffee table.

"If you want to keep him you've got to look after him, alright?" Gabriel stated as Maya looked through the stuff to find Puck's food and food bowl. As she poured the little dog some food she looked at her Dad with a blinding smile.

"I promise!" she said excitedly. Turning back to the hungry dog she put her hand near his food bowl to test his food aggression.

Puck

The little dog saw the girl's hand, and maybe if she and the man were human he would have growled or snapped at it, but he didn't. The newly named Puck understood that these two bipeds had power, but most importantly they projected their emotions a lot more than others. Puck knew he was safe, and with the love coming off the girl, he was now loved. He'd obey the male that rescued him, but he definitively decided that the girl was his friend and master. He'd stay by her side and keep her safe from the evil beings like the one that kept him in the small cage and stabbed him with sharp things that made him feel sick.

Finished with his food his ears perk up at the sound of going outside. The girl grabbed a red strip of leather from the coffee table and placed it comfortably around his neck. Puck had heard of these things, collars, a sign that he belonged to someone, belonged to a family. He jumped at the girl to give her face appreciative kisses, she didn't smack him away, but gently pushed him away smiling. His mistress grabs a really long strip of black leather and attaches it to his collar. Puck, his mistress, and the male leave their home to take him for a quick walk and bathroom break. So many sights, sounds and smells!
They all return and mistress grabbed a small soft bed, his bed, and put it beside her own in her room. Oh it was so soft and comfortable! Puck's mistress was the best! So much better than that bad man and the hard cold cage. He followed her around as she brushes her teeth and change into some clothes. The older male says something about him that causes his mistress to look at him and give a small chuckle, and more pets! Puck was pretty sure mistress was pleased with his company and guarding.

Puck and his girl retire to the girl's room, mistress in her bed, and Puck in his bed. Puck hears the door creak open and he was now wide-awake and alert. It was just the older male. He watched as the older male stroked his sleeping mistress's head fur from her face, before kissing her forehead, and giving her a loving look. Puck recognized the look as one his mother once gave him, this male must be her parent. The parent looks at him and kneels down in front of him.

The male's hand glowing slightly and reached toward Puck's head. Puck wasn't sure what was going on put the power he felt told him to be calm, and that no harm will come to him. He stayed still as the light touched his head and his mind.

"Hey Puck, I'm Gabriel." Said the male. "I've given you the ability to understand human speech." Gabriel said smiling. "I've got an important job for you okay? I want you to look after Maya for me. Be a guardian and a friend. I'm sure she'll figure out what I've done to you but lets let her find out on her own. More fun that way." Gabriel winked. "Nod yes if you understand."

Puck nodded, his tail wagging happily as Gabriel gave him a few more pets before leaving the room. He settled back down into his bed and went into a light sleep. After all, he's been charged with mistress Maya's protection and companionship.

Couple days later…

Sam and Dean

Sam and Dean had just finished telling Bobby about everything that had been going on with their case so far, including the tension growing between them from the frozen on a porn site computer and the laptop disappearing. Dean finished explaining the air being let out of the tires of his Baby, finding Sam's money clip beside the car, and the ensuing struggle between the two for said money clip.
"Okay, I've heard enough." Bobby said, exasperated with the two knuckleheads in front of him.

"You showed up about an hour after that." Dean stated, which brought them all to the present. Bobby stared at them in be wonderment at their thick-headedness. Did the boys seriously not realize what they were dealing with? Apparently not.

"I'm surprised at you two. I really am." Bobby looked at Sam and began his explanation. "Sam, first off, Dean did not steal your computer."

"But I—" Sam tried to protest. Bobby wasn't having it.

"Sh, sh, sh, sh!" Bobby interrupted looking away and holding his hand out in a stop gesture. Dean raised his arms in 'see!' gesture looking at his brother. Bobby looked at Dean and addressed him.

"And, Dean, Sam did not touch your car." Bobby said, like it was obvious. Dean's face looked blank while Sam looked at him smiling in triumph.

"Yeah." Sam chuckled at his older brother. Now Bobby addressed both of them.

"And if you two bothered to pull your heads out of your asses, it all would have been pretty clear." Bobby said, like the answer was staring the two younger Hunters in the face.

"What?" Dean asked confused.

"What you're dealing with." Bobby stated, looking at the two idiots that were not meeting his gaze and obviously didn't know what he was talking about. Great. He was going to have to spell it out for them.

"Uh…"Sam gave an I don't know what the answer is face.

"I got nothing." Dean said in his up front manner.

"Me neither." Sam admitted right after.
"You got a Trickster on your hands." Bobby finally stated, exasperated with the boys. It was so obvious.

"That's what I thought!" Dean said snapping his fingers and smiling. No he didn't.

"What?! No, you didn't!" Sam denied.

"I gotta tell you…you guys were the biggest clue." Bobby revealed looking at them.

"What do you mean?" Sam questioned looking at the older Hunter. Bobby continued with his explanation.

"These things create chaos and mischief, as easy as breathing, and it's got you so turned around and at each other's throats, you can't even think straight." Bobby pointed out.

"The laptop." Sam said realizing what Bobby was saying.

"The tires." Dean said a moment later.

"It knows you're on to 'em, and it's been playing you like fiddles." Bobby told them.

"So, what is it – spirit, demon, what?" Dean asked. Bobby looked away from them and shifted his weight.

"Well, more like demigods, really." Bobby admitted looking at them. "There's Loki in Scandanavia. Anansi in West Africa. There's also Coyote here in America." Bobby listed. "There are dozens of them. They're immortal, and can create things out of thin air, things as real as you and me. Make 'em vanish just as quick."

"You mean like an angry spirit or an alien or an alligator." Dean stated. The pieces of the puzzle they had were coming together.
"The victims fit the M.O., too. Tricksters target the high and the mighty, knock 'em down a peg, usually with a sense of humor—deadly pranks, things like that." Bobby added.

"Bobby, what do these things look like?" Dean asked; he had a feeling it wouldn't be as easy as finding a ghost or a rawhead, but he had a suspicion of whom.

Bobby thought and gave a little shrug as he answered, "Lots of things, but human, mostly." Realization and probable confirmation dawned on Dean's face as he turned to look at Sam.

"And what human do we know who has been at ground zero this whole time?" Dean pointedly asked his brother. Sam pondered, unsure at first, before he too realized what Dean was thinking.

"The janitor, he's been working at Crawford Hall this whole time and he was the one to find the professors." Sam stated, looking from his brother to Bobby.

"Exactly." Dean said, with a look of determination. "Now we can go gank this son of a bitch. Bobby how do we kill it?" he asked the older Hunter. Bobby looked at the boys and scratched his beard thinking.

"Gonna need some wooden stakes and blood from one of its victims. Coat the stakes in the blood and get close enough to stab it in the heart. If it'll let us." Bobby cautioned.

"What do you mean Bobby?" Sam asked concerned, that last bit didn't sound too good.

"Depends whether or not it knows you've figured it out, or if it likes you, I guess." Bobby said shrugging. "They're slippery buggers from what I've read. For all we know it might have already hightailed it out of here." He said throwing his thumb over his shoulder. "Now, if it likes you, it might wanna play with you, so to speak."

"Play with us?" Dean asked incredulously. "What the hell does that mean?"

"Could be anywhere from pranks to bribery to lettin' 'em go, or if they're a confident son of a bitch it might wanna fight you using its powers." Bobby admitted, his mind wandering to a certain Trickster and his daughter.
"So what do we do? We all ambush him at the same time?" Sam offered.

"No." Dean said with a look of concentration. "He'd expect that. Like Bobby said, they're immortal so he's probably run into Hunters before. We need to make him think that he's the one in control, the one with all the cards."

"Boy, are you askin' us to trick a Trickster?" Bobby asked in disbelief. "These things are extremely clever."

"Yeah, but if he thinks that his tricks against me and Sam worked in tearing us apart…" Dean said pointedly as he looked at Sam. Sam nodded seeing where he was coming from.

"He'd be over confident in his ability to handle one measly Hunter, and wouldn't think that the partner would show up to the confrontation." Sam finished. "That's pretty impressive thinking Dean. Did it hurt?" Sam smirked. Dean frowned at his brother's dig.

"Bitch."

"Jerk." A frown crossed Sam's face as he thought of something. "Wait, what about the girl?"
Bobby's eyes furrowed as he looked at Sam and Dean, they didn't mention some girl in their story.

"Goldy?" Dean asked, "What about her? She's probably not even real, like Bobby said they can conjure things out of thin air. I'm guessin' that includes people too." Dean said matter of factly. Bobby had a bad feeling growing inside of him.

"You idjits mind telling me what you're goin' on about?" he asked, kind of hoping for a different answer than what he got. Sam looked at him apologetically.

"Sorry, it's just some girl we met. We saw her first at the local pizza joint and then later the same day when we went to talk to the janitor. Said she was his daughter." Sam explained.

"Didn't think she was worth mentioning." Dean added, shrugging his shoulder and taking a swig of beer.
"First off, don't be stupid, all details are important in a case," Bobby started. Pausing he asked seriously, "Second, was this girl about mid-teens, short dark curly brown hair, freckles, and have bright gold eyes?" The Winchesters looked at Bobby's trepidation filled face with worry.

"Uh, yeah, actually. How'd you know?" Sam asked confused as he leaned forward with his elbows on his knees.

"Was her name Maya?" Bobby sighed. Things just got more complicated.

"Bobby, what's going on? How do you know this?" Dean asked, not liking where this was going.

"The kid's real alright. I've known Maya for almost six years now. She's mischievous like her Pa, but is also a real sweet kid, smart too. Been coming to my place for a couple a weeks every few months for almost six years." Bobby admitted reluctantly. Sam and Dean stared at Bobby in utter disbelief. He had a Trickster spawn in his house multiple times and never ganked her?!

"What the hell Bobby?!" Dean accused. "Why's she still alive?!" That got Bobby angry real quick.

"Because Maya is harmless!" Bobby barked back. "It's her Dad that's killin' folks to teach 'em a lesson. Kid never understood that, 'cause she believes in people having the chance at redemption, of actually learnin' from her lessons. She refuses to kill people in pranks!"

Sam shook his head and raised his hands in a placating gesture. "Alright, let's calm down." Sam said calmly, looking at the irate Hunters staring each other down. "Bobby, maybe you should explain from the beginning? How'd you meet Maya?"

Bobby looked at Sam then at Dean, who looked back expectantly. He rubbed his face and let out a sigh as he sat down on the motel room's couch.

"Alright, it will be six years this May when I first met Maya, or more accurately when I rescued her. I was in Rockwell City, Iowa with Rufus huntin' down a small vamp nest. We found the bloodsuckers hiding out in some abandoned warehouses near the old industrial park of the city…

Flashback
Bobby and Rufus had found the vampire's nest in an old and dilapidated warehouse. They kept silent, using hand signals, as they moved through it. It was a small nest of maybe five or so vampires and wouldn't be much of a challenge for the two experienced Hunters.

They were careful as they snuck in to find the bloodsuckers sleeping like they do during the daylight hours. There were a couple of bodies tied up, but from the lack of movement they were too late for them. Bobby and Rufus were about to go hacking off heads when one of the vamps stirred and got up. Another mumbled out a question of what it was doing.

"Feelin' a little peckish. Going take a sip from the kid Reggie and Tyrone brought in." it said and made its way over to a dark corner, where low and behold was a little girl with her hands and feet bound. Bobby could tell from his hiding spot that there was something else wrong with her. She was awake, but barely, and could hardly move. She should be wiggling around like mad with the vamp coming at her, but she barely pushed herself up.

The girl couldn't wait. Bobby quickly jumped from his spot, Rufus cussing out his name and following him into the melee. They chopped two sleeping vamps before the others woke up, but they were made quick work of. The vamp going after the girl saw him and had decided to just grab the girl and flee instead of fight. Bobby sprinted after it and watched as the girl stuck out her bound hands in front of her and cast a goddamn wall of fire around her. The vamp reared itself backwards at the sigh of the flames and stumbled back, neck in prime position for his machete. **SLICE!**

"Bobby!" Rufus called as he ran up beside him. "What the hell was that?" he yelled pointing at the flames that all of a sudden vanished, and at the heavily breathing girl that summoned them. "We gotta kill her Bobby." Rufus said with certainty as he started to move towards the weak child.

"What?!" Bobby asked incredulous. No would ever claim that Bobby was an idiot when it came to the supernatural or the world in general. He also knew that not all creatures were evil, and so far all they knew of this girl was that she just tried to protect herself. That's it. Not a good reason to slice her head off! So Bobby grabbed Rufus by the scruff and pulled him back.

"What the hell man!!" Rufus exclaimed.

"We don't know if she killed anyone, and look at her she's just a kid!" Bobby pointed out, gesturing to the kid in question who wasn't looking so good. "Besides, we don't even know what she is. How do you know your machete will actually kill her?"
"Wouldn't hurt to try." Rufus shrugged. "Probably slow it down some."

"Yeah and if she was so powerful why did a couple of vamps grab her and almost make a meal out of her?" Bobby observed. "Not to mention there's no scorch marks on the floor…" he said kneeling down where he saw the ring of flames just moments ago. "I don't even remember feeling any heat from the fire."

"Bobby, she's probably a witch, lets just gank her and get out of here." Rufus suggested. Bobby admitted to himself that Rufus had a point but then again she seemed too young to be a witch and if she was a witch why not just kill the vamps with her hocus pocus? Or make a real wall of flames? Bobby told him so.

"So? She might've used too much juice and got snatched when she was too weak to fight back." Rufus argued getting antsy. "I bet you a round of shots that she's got a witch's mark." He said nodding towards the girl. Bobby wasn't too sure, but he was willing to take that bet.

He walked up to the barely with it kid, up close she looked even worse. Pulling back her shirt he looked at her back and showed Rufus. No mark. Rufus started cussing up a storm. Bobby began checking her vitals and they were getting weaker. While he was doing that Rufus had found a backpack that had a photo of the girl and what appeared to be her parent in the front pocket. Opening up the main compartment he was met with a bunch of candy wrappers, with clothes and other personal items buried beneath them. Conjuring illusions, even if they're not real, out of nothing and a major sweet tooth?

"Bobby, it's a fucking Trickster!" Rufus yelped. "The illusionary fire, the backpack full of candy wrappers, it's a Trickster!"

"That might be why she's so weak. Blood sugar too low to keep her high metabolism stable. Hypoglygemia." Bobby pondered a loud, before turning to Rufus. "Rufus, go to my truck. There should be a case of coke in the bed, grab me a can."

"What are you thinking Bobby?! It's a Trickster! I say we get some blood covered stakes and put 'em through its heart." Rufus suggested walking over to where Bobby was with the girl, her backpack in hand.

"We can't. Don't know if she killed anyone to get the blood from. So until I know for sure I'm goin' to help her." Bobby countered. He wasn't budging on this.
"You've finally gone insane haven't you?" Rufus accused. Bobby just glowered at him.

"Shut up you idjit and go get that pop!" He ordered. Rufus threw his hands up in the air.

"Fine! But if it kills you later I'm gonna to spit on your pyre and do an 'I-told-you-so' jig on your fuckin' ashes! And don't think that I won't!" Rufus yelled as he jogged out of the warehouse to Bobby's truck.

Bobby looked at the dark haired little girl and took in her features. She was dirty, looked like it'd been a few days since her last bath and her clothes were stained. Her hair was dark and stringy; she had freckles across her nose that stood out against her pallor skin. She started shaking slightly. Putting a hand to her forehead he found her skin was becoming clammy. Oh no. He checked her pulse and found it beating rapidly. She was going into shock.

"RUFUS! HURRY UP!" Bobby bellowed, to where Rufus disappeared.

"SHUT UP SINGER! I'M COMIN'!" Rufus yelled back, running back into sight with the pop can in hand. "Here ya go ya stubborn bastard." Rufus groused, handing the pop to the other Hunter. Rufus finally took a look at the Trickster he was ready to decapitate. Damn she didn't look good. "What's wrong with it?"

Bobby opened the can, having to hold it away when it fizzed over. Holding the girl in his arms he adjusted her head and brought the open can to her open lips. The moment the sugary drink touched her tongue her bound hands made a grab for the pop can. "Easy girlie, you're alright." Bobby muttered as he watched the girl take gulp after gulp of the carbonated liquid. She squinted her eyes as she experienced the carbonated burn in her throat, and stopped chugging to take a breath, before going right back to chugging till the can was emptied. Her eyes were opened, unfocusedly, and revealed beautiful bright gold irises.

"Still don't think this is a good idea Bobby," Rufus sighed. The kid's state was getting to him. Grumbling at his conscience he grabbed the package of Skittles in his coat pocket and handed it to Bobby. "Here, these things are practically pure sugar. Should help pick her up enough to ask what's going on."

Bobby took the Skittles and tore the package open with his teeth. Maya must of smelled the sweetness of the candy because her eyes focused enough to lock onto the package. Bound hands once again made a grab for the sugar and she started taking mouthfuls of the sugary candy, crushing them between her teeth. Bobby had to pull at the package a little so she slowed down enough that she didn't choke.
"Rufus, can ya cut the ropes on her wrists and ankles?" Bobby asked, keeping a careful eye on the candy-eating girl, her eyes becoming more focused. Rufus shook his head but did as asked.

"Hope you know what you're doin' Bobby." Rufus muttered.

Bobby sighed then muttered, "You and me both." He hefted the girl into his arms to carry her bridal style. "You grab her bag, I'm takin' her to my truck." With that he walked out of the warehouse and to where his truck was stashed, Rufus' own car not too far from his. Rufus, apparently, decided to be helpful and open the passenger side door of Bobby's truck so Bobby could put the girl in.

Bobby kept her seated up right till he got the seat belt on her. He straightened himself out to be met with two small lucid gold eyes staring at him fearfully. Bobby held her stare, but almost jumped back when a thin small ring of purple light appeared around her pupils, shimmering. He held perfectly still and felt utterly exposed and naked, like she was looking right into his goddamn soul. As quickly as it happened the ring disappeared, along with the naked feeling he had felt. The girl's eyes were no longer fearful of him, he could also tell she was tentatively trusting him. Imagine that, a Trickster trusting a Hunter. Bobby watched as the girl relaxed into her seat and closed her eyes; she was out like a light in seconds. He made sure her pulse was normal and the clamminess in her skin had disappeared.

"What was that?! Bobby?" Rufus demanded, having seen the whole exchange. Bobby grabbed the kid's bag from Rufus' hands and placed it at her feet then shut the door.

"Think I just got my soul scanned." Bobby said bewildered. "What ever she saw must've put her at ease, went right to sleep after." Bobby scratched his head at that.

"They can do that?!!"

"Gee I don't know, maybe? I doubt a Trickster ever thought 'Hey why not tell a Hunter all my secrets so they can kill me easier'" Bobby said sarcastically.

"Don't get sarcastic with me!" Rufus said putting up his hands. "I'm just askin' is all."

Sam and Dean
"Then what happened, Bobby?" Sam asked intrigued.

"Took her home, obviously." Bobby shrugged. "About an hour from Sioux Falls she woke up with a bit of a start but calmed down easily enough. Got her some more pop and candy, and we talked."

"What you talk about?" Dean asked, not knowing what you'd talk about with a Trickster.

"Got her name, how old she was, and that she was a runaway." Bobby answered.

"Really? But she's with her Dad now." Sam pointed out.

"Well for three months or so she was with me. After a couple weeks she finally opened up and explained what went on that made her run away. Her father, a year before, had tried to turn an accidental killin' she did into a positive thing. A way of introducin' her to deadly tricks."

"So she IS a kill—" Dean accused in anger, but was cut off by Bobby.

"What part of accidental don't you get? What you never accidentally got someone killed before? Either of you?" Bobby said, knowing full well neither boy had ground to stand on. Sam and Dean didn't meet his gaze. "That's what I thought.

As I was sayin', her Pa tried to make it a positive, but Maya wasn't havin' it. The death she caused had traumatized her and she couldn't understand why her Dad wanted her to kill people, even the real human monsters in the world. Apparently her Dad got it in his head that he'd have to force her to make sure she'd be able to kill someone if she found herself in a tight scrape."

"Wait a minute," Sam interrupted. "Maya doesn't want to kill people to teach a lesson, but her Dad wanted her to be able to kill people in order to defend herself? Those aren't really the same things. It's one thing to willfully kill someone for a prank, it's completely another thing when you're forced to kill someone in self-defense."

"That's the gist of it. They had a bad bout of miscommunication and battles of will for an entire year till the kid couldn't take it anymore and had to get away." Bobby said nodding in agreement. "Four days later I find her in Rockwell City about to be vamp food."
"Okay, so kid's not a killer." Dean amended. "What I don't get is how she could have been jumped by vamps in the first place. Like you pointed out these things are powerful." Dean said looking at Bobby, who nodded.

"You'd be right, except Maya was and, still is, very much still a child. You aren't born already knowin' how to talk, you gotta learn it. When the vamps jumped her she was low on blood sugar and couldn't even teleport something to her hand from a store without seein' it or bein' in the same room as it.

Even then Maya only had less than perfect illusions that weren't solid. Those vamps would've tracked her down anyways if she managed to run. She can't do everythin' her Pa does."

Bobby let that information sink in to their thick skulls. Honestly, after the whole moral debacle with Lenore and Gordon, he'd think the boys would've realized, or at least remembered, that the world ain't black and white.

"Right," Bobby decided to continue the story. "After findin' out what happened I essentially spent the next two months bein' a listenin' ear till she was ready to talk. Her big fear was that her Dad didn't love her anymore, but by that point I was pretty sure the Trickster was just tryin' to prepare the girl because he was scared."


"Dean," Sam started. "What's the biggest fear a parent could have?" Sam and Bobby looked at Dean expectantly. Dean opened and closed his mouth as he tried to think of an answer.

Dean's only experience was with John and his fear was the yellow-eyed demon or some other supernatural fugly coming after...ah hell. A pang of sympathy went through him. "Scared of his kid getting hurt, or worse." Dean said, voice low, as he rubbed his face with his hand in vexation. This case was getting a little more complicated.

"Exactly. This son of a bitch was scared shitless because he thought his kid didn't want to kill, period, even if her life was in danger." Bobby groused.

"So he tried to force her to do it to make it easier when she was threatened." Sam sighed.
"Yep, but it backfired spectacularly. I was able to convince her to finally call him, but when he didn't answer I took her up to the nearest safe house to Fort Dodge, Iowa that she knew of. Her Dad had been quiet with his activities for the most part, so he was probably hidin' somewhere not too far away.

We get up there and the car they had was there. Poor thing's nervous as hell trying to get up the nerve to knock on the door. I stayed in the truck just at the end of the drive-way behind some trees to keep an eye on her. Apparently the Trickster was out walkin' about the property and came up behind her and called her name.” Bobby paused remembering that scene and all the emotion going on between the two. Made it hard to remember that the Trickster kills people.

"Well, obviously they made-up." Dean pointed out. Bobby nodded.

"Yeah, it was, as you say Dean, a real chick-flick moment, lots of tears, huggin', and just holdin' each other. From what I saw the bastard looked like shit, unkempt, and nothing like you'd expect from a demi-god, but he was shaking with relief at having his kid back in his arms. You can say all you want about him, but he's a good father. I called the number Maya gave me a little while after he carried her inside the house and told him what's up. He was fair game, but as long as Maya doesn't start killin' people she's safe.

Apparently I had also left quite the impression on Maya as she somehow convinced her overprotective Pa to let her some to my place for a couple weeks every few months. Taught her some self-defense moves that proved useful for her when some pervert tried to nab her. Even taught her some of the language I know from reading the supernatural lore, she picked those up right quick, and just about devours information like a sponge.” Bobby finished.

"So now what?" Dean finally asked. "We can't just leave! Her Dad is killing people! I'll agree to leave Maya alone if she ain't killing, but where does that leave us?" he asked in frustration.

"We'd be making her an orphan. Who knows what path she'll take then." Sam sighed resigned. "Does she have another parent she could live with?" Sam asked curiously.

Bobby shook his head. "No, bad idea." He said with finality

"Why?" Dean probed tiredly.
"She's half-human, and the human parent? They're a Hunter." Bobby intoned deeply.

"No fucking way." Dean said in disbelief. "Some Hunter chick slept with the Trickster and let him take her baby, nine months later?"

"Not exactly. Tricksters can be anythin', can even change how they look, even change their gender." Bobby insinuated.

"Her Trickster Dad, is actually her Mom?" Dean laughed; it was pretty funny to think about a demi-god getting knocked up by a human.

Sam rolled his eyes at his brother before looking at Bobby's fed up expression at Dean. "So chances are if we take her to her Hunter father he'd probably just try to kill her on the spot." Sam reasoned with a scowl.

"Yeah, and with Maya being half-human she's pretty much mortal. Good shot to the head and that's it." Bobby said. He remembered that conversation, the Trickster had trusted him with the information, as a way to keep her safe.

"So what're we going to do with her?" Dean pondered aloud.

"I take her in. Far as I know I'm the only one that knows about her and can keep her safe till she can look after herself." Bobby revealed with a shrug. It was the arrangement he had with the annoying pain in the ass Trickster.

"You sure Bobby? If any other Hunters find out you'll have one hell of a target on your back." Sam said concerned.

"Course I'm sure. I like the kid well enough and I ain't no push over, as well you both know." Bobby said pointedly at the two boys he's known since they were small.

"Alright," Dean surrendered with his hands up, non-offensively. "Now we just got to figure out how to kill her Dad…it's going to be a shitty night isn't it?" Dean uttered with dread. The other two hummed their agreement to that.
"Just leave Maya out of it." Bobby added.

"Why?" Dean stupidly asked. He's not a parent so you couldn't really blame the poor guy.

"Do you really want a pissed off parental demi-god Trickster on your asses for threatenin' his kid, or puttin' her in danger?" Bobby demanded with a raised eyebrow.

"No." "Nope." Came the unanimous responses from the Winchesters.

Tall Tales-Part 3

Chapter Summary

Last part to Tall Tales episode. I have no idea why it was kicking ass so much.

Next day…

Maya had gone to Crawford's library after a couple of lectures that morning to do some reading. Puck loyally followed her wherever she went, in his little medical assistant vest that her Dad snapped up so he could be allowed into buildings with her. She was also pretty sure her Dad did something to his intelligence, and after a slight glucose deficiency incident yesterday…well she was pretty sure Puck could now tell when her blood-sugar got too low. Why? Because that's what he put on Puck's vest.

I am a medical assistant dog to make sure my human doesn't go into insulin shock from low-blood sugar. I am always working please don't disturb me and let me follow my human wherever they go.

Maya petted Puck behind his ears and scratched his neck. This resulted in Puck looking absolutely blissed out, which caused Maya to smile a little bit. Oh yeah she was definitely attached to her little canine shadow. He also lived up to his name. Puck enjoyed grabbing something of hers, or her Dad's, and run away with it or hide it under the couch or one of their beds. He never chewed anything that wasn't his or made messes. Puck knew if he wanted to play he just had to grab one of his toys and bring it to her; or when he wanted to go outside he'd grab his leash. He was really well behaved. Yeah she was sure her Dad did something to his intelligence.

Maya looked back at her book that held a collection of Shakespeare's works and closed it. She'd already been here most of the day and it was going to get dark soon, and her Dad wouldn't get off for a bit. He told her to stay at the campus for a few extra hours. Apparently, Sam and Dean had figured out that Dad was a Trickster and Sam had gone back to their place to find some evidence. That was sometime before noon this morning, so the Hunter was probably gone by now.

"C'mon Puck, let's go back to the apartment." Maya stood up and grabbed the book to put it back on the shelf. Puck faithfully following her as they both left the library and started making their way back to the apartment building. She grabbed a bus to shorten the walk. The apartment building was one of the older brick apartment buildings that weren't all that big or all that tall, maybe five stories maximum with a laundry basement. Each apartment was also accompanied with some questionable fire escapes. Maya and Puck entered the building and began making their way up to the fourth floor where their apartment was. Neither noticed the Sasquatch of a man leave a 1967 black impala from
across the road and enter the building behind them.

Leaving the staircase Maya gets to the apartment door and paused. She looked back at the staircase doors furrowing her eyebrows, she thought that she heard something. The hairs on the back of her neck were standing up; even Puck was tense as he let out a low growl at the staircase. With her heart pounding she took out her key to the apartment and shakily put it into the lock.

"Puck," she whispered looking down at the Jack Russell. Puck turned his attention from the staircase to Maya. "Get ready." Puck gave a quiet whoof and Maya took a breath and turned the deadbolt in the lock. She didn't see as much as heard the heavy footsteps run towards her as she turned the handle and pushed the door. Puck was already in and Maya followed quickly behind and turned around to push the door closed. She almost made it.

Just before the door closed completely a heavy weight shoved into it from the outside. It jarred Maya enough to push her back enough to allow the guy to push himself into the opening, keeping her from closing it. She stepped back from the door to gain distance between her and the intruder.

"Sam?!" Maya looked up at the giant of a man incredulously. "What the hell do you think you're doing?!" she demanded angrily. Puck took a protective stance between her and Sam, looking as fearsome as he could for such a small dog. Sam's eyes glanced down at the little dog baring its equally small teeth at him, before closing the door behind him. Maya shifted nervously on her feet.

"I know what you and your Dad are Maya." He started walking forward cautiously, eyes darting to the vigilant Puck acting like a barrier between them. "Your Dad's the Trickster that's been hurting and killing people."

"And me, mammoth?" Maya tried to put some bravado in her voice, but failed as her heart tried to pound its way out of her chest.

"You're his half Trickster kid that I'm going to need to not interfere." Sam stated looking at the teenager in front of him, kind of wishing he switched roles with Dean in his little plan. Maya just looked fragile, even though he knew Bobby had been teaching her self-defense.

Maya gave him a confused and surprised look. "You're not going to kill me?" Sam gave her a piteous look shaking his head negatively.

"No, I have it on pretty good authority that you don't kill people. Me and Dean only go after the
“I really thought you were the smart one Sam,” Maya gave him a smirking grimace, waving the knife pointedly at him. "But if you think I'm going to sit by while my only family, my only parent, is in trouble? You're a lot dumber than I originally thought.” She tried to sound confident, but she was afraid, and it showed in her hand with the knife shaking.

"You don't want to hurt me. Put the knife down and call off your dog." He tried to reason.

"Mmmmmm, no." Maya made a shallow lunge, hoping to just get him to back up. She should've known better. He was a Hunter after all.

Sam turned his body away from the knife and grabbed her wrist that had it, twisting the arm behind her back, while keeping her a little at arm's length with his other hand on the shoulder with the twisted arm.

"Drop it." Sam hitched her arm further up behind her back, getting a pained groan from the smaller girl. This is where Puck made his move, going for Sam's ankle. Sam cursed and kicked the little dog off his leg. Puck went sliding across the floor but was running back into the fray.

Sam hitched her arm higher. Maya's shoulder felt like it was on fire. She panted angrily as she let go of the knife and sent it clattering to the ground. Sam kicked it away out of reach, after shaking Puck off again. Sam made to reach inside one of his coat pockets for a zip tie. Maya took the opportunity to spot where his legs were and kicked back to hit the inside of his knee. It was enough to get him down on one knee and to let up on her aching arm.

Maya twisted around to land a kick to the side of his head, sending him sprawling to the floor. She made a move to run to her bedroom when Sam swept his own legs and she went tumbling to the floor instead. Sam had to dislodge Puck from his arm before jumping on a struggling Maya who had flipped over onto her back. He grabbed her wrists, after she gave him a mean right hook to his
eye, and bound them together with a zip tie. If he thought Maya would stop struggling he was wrong.

With Sam straddling her, Maya used her hips knock him off balance and to buck him off of her. With Sam on the ground again and on his back Puck made a move for his face. Sam had to grab the dog that was trying to eat his face. He flung Puck away, who went sliding across the kitchen floor into the lower cabinet cupboards, letting out a yelp.

"Puck!" Maya called worriedly as she spun on the floor bringing a leg up and bringing her heel down on Sam's stomach, a little close to his pelvis. He curled up into a slight fetal position from the blow with a groan. A little too close to—

"Oops, I missed." This. KID!

Maya tried to scramble away but Sam recovered enough to grab her leg and pull her back, avoiding another kick to the head from her other leg. He grabbed another tie and bound both her legs together. Sam rolled over on his back to catch his breath for a moment. Only to have her two bound legs come down on his nuts. He clumsily crawled further away from her, face red and groaning in excruciating pain, before looking back at her smug face.

Puck, recovered, went for the downed Hunter's face again.

"AW, C'MON!"

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Sam closed the door to Maya's room leaving a frantically barking and scratching Puck on the other side of the door. He could feel his left eye beginning to swell and his one heel throb in pain from Puck's bite. His tender area between his legs wasn't doing much better either as he tried to walk towards a bound half Trickster still on the floor eyeing him warily, and a little smugly too.

He pulled out one of the kitchen chairs then went over to Maya and picked her up, placing her in the chair. Grabbing more zip ties he ties her upper body at her elbows to the backrest and her mid thighs to the seat.

Sam walked around in front of her. "I'll be back with my brother and our friend Bobby once we
take care of your Dad, to untie you." Standing up Sam went behind her to leave the apartment.

"You're really going to kill him? You're really going to make me an orphan?" Maya didn't turn around to look at him. Her voice quiet, soft, and sad. Sam looked at the back of her bowed head, his hand gripping the door handle tightly.

"I'm sorry Maya, but we can't let him keep killing people. None of us want to take away your Dad, but there isn't much choice."

Maya let out a sardonic huff of laughter. "There's always a choice."

"Yeah, you're right. And the Trickster being your Dad, made it an even harder one to make." Sam sighed wearily.

Maya let out a snort of disbelief. "Yeah right. Good luck killing him." Sam looked sadly at the Trickster's daughter. Dean was right. Tonight was going to be shitty. Now he really wished Dean was here instead of him, or better yet Bobby. Unfortunately, Bobby had pointed out that she might resent him for keeping her away from helping her Dad and might not go with him when they came back for her. She'd already be upset with him for helping gank her Dad, even if it was expected at some point, but they didn't need any extra tension. Sam closed the apartment door, locking with the key he snatched off Maya, and went to the impala to go pick up Bobby.

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Crawford Hall Entrance...

Dean just finished, surreptitiously, reading a text from Sam. Maya was tied up and him and Bobby were on their way, ETA 5mins. Dean made a little bit of a show quacking his pacing in front of the Crawford Hall building, looking out at the empty night cloaked campus for Sam then back at the hall. He rubbed his lower face.

"Eh, screw this." He then started to walk up the stairs towards the front entrance, to show his patience had run out. He heads towards the basement to start top from bottom, his flashlight illuminating the darkened halls. He descended the staircases and checked to see if the Trickster was at his locker, he wasn't and went back up the stairs putting his flashlight away and taking out the bloody stake. He was about to go up another flight when some Barry White 'Can't Get Enough of Your Love Baby'. He turned around, pocketing his bloody stake, and began following the sound of the music to the theatre auditorium.
He opened the door and is hit with some mood lighting and a lovely scene on the stage. There's a large round bed with red sheets and red cushioned back board, two nights stands, each with a red and black lava lamp, a wet bar with martini glasses, and a spinning disco ball centered over the bed. On the bed were two scantily clad women in strapped heels. A blonde and a brunette.

Dean made his way down the stairs towards the stages, eyes glued to the two sexy women on the comfy looking bed. Ooooh the temptation was strong but Dean had a job to do and had to keep telling himself that they weren't real, even if their boobs did look really real.

As he got closer to the stage the women moved to their hands and knees to the foot of the bed erotically.

"We've been waiting for you Dean." Purred the brunette, as her and the blonde sat at the edge of the bed.

"Y-y-you guys aren't real." Dean stopped in front of the stage admiring the sight, and what a sight!

"Trust me sugar, it's going to feel real." The brunette smiled at him. Dean couldn't hold in that slight nervous gasp because, c'mon, hot chicks. Scantily clad, hot chicks!

"Come on. Lets give you a massage." Blondie hummed.

"Wha—" Dean's eyes were wide and he was slightly gaping. Oh man was this tempting! "You know, I'm a—I'm a sucker for a happy ending." Dean admits smiling. "Really, I am, but…" his eyes roved their chests. "I-I'm going to have to pass." He finally gets out, no matter how much he wanted to just indulge, they were a trick, and he was here to gank a Trickster.

"They're a peace offering," came a familiar voice from behind Dean. Dean turned to find the Trickster sitting with his feet up in the second row of the auditorium seats. "I know what you and your brother do. I've been around a while. Run into your kind before." He smirked taking his feet down and sitting up properly to regard Dean.

"Well then you know that I can't let you just keep hurting people." Dean said with a slight smile, because this guy had style.

"Come on!" The Trickster rolled his eyes and tilted his head back in exasperation. "Those people
got what was coming to them. Hoisted on their own pertards." He smirked pointing up. "But you and Sam—I like you." He smiled pointing at Dean. "I do. So treat yourself…long as you want."

The Trickster reached into his front shirt pocket, pulling out a chocolate bar. "Just long enough for me to move on to the next town." He began unwrapping it. He wasn't about to mention Maya incase they thought, like many other Hunters, that she was just another fake being he conjured up.

Dean gave a tight smile and shook his head. "Yeah, I don't think I can let you do that."

"I don't want to hurt you." The Trickster paused looking at Dean pointedly. "And you know that I can." He took a bite out of his chocolate bar.

Dean couldn't keep the slight grin off his face as he shook his head. "Look, man, I—I got to tell you, I dig your style, all right? I mean," he turned to look at the women on the bed behind him and gives a chuckle before turning back. "I do. I mean," insert another chuckle, "the slow-dancing alien —" that had both the Trickster and Dean laughing.

"One of my personal favorites. Yeah." The Trickster laughed pointing at himself. Dean chuckled some more and shook his head.

"But, uh, I can't let you go." Dean said calming down, the situation was coming to a head.

"Too bad." The Trickster said regretfully. "Like I said, I like you. Sam was right." The light-heartedness in his face faded slightly as he looked at Dean seriously. "You shouldn't have come alone." Dean ticks his head a little and clicked his tongue.

"Well, I'll agree with you there." Dean agreed as the sound of doors opening and closing echoed in the cavernous room. The Trickster furrowed his eyebrows in confusion and looked behind him.

Sam came in through one door with a bloody stake and was mirrored by Bobby coming in through the other door.

"That fight you guys had outside—that was a trick?" he asked Dean, as he turned back to look at him, impressed.

Dean gave a shrug smirking as he looked at his brother. "Yeah it was. Though…" he narrowed his eyes at his brother. "Sammy what they hell happened to your face, and why you walkin' weird?"

Sam gave Dean a bitch-face, because, really? Right now?
The Trickster turned around and actually took in Sam's appearance. He looked like he got into a bit of a scrap with a nice black eye and torn pants at his ankle? "Woah, I thought if you were planning on taking me down you'd avoid getting beat up before hand." He snickered. Bitch-faced redirected to the Trickster.

In pain, and slightly sassy, Sam probably said something he'd quickly regret. "Yeah, well, Bobby taught your kid pretty well."

The Trickster's entire demeanor changed. Whiskey eyes hardened and his body tensed in rage, eyeing the bloodied stake in Sam's hands. This caused the two descending Hunter's to stop in their tracks. Dangerous gold-filled eyes turned to look at Dean, as a threatening growl left his throat.

"What, did you do to my daughter?" The Trickster's voice low and dangerous. If Dean was a lesser man he might have pissed his pants, but he wasn't.

"We've got no problem with Goldy, we just needed her out of the way so she doesn't get hurt trying to save your ass." Dean answered pointing his bloody stake at the Trickster.

"She's tied up at your place, no harm done except for a couple of bumps and bruises from when I was trying to restrain her." Sam gestured to himself, chagrined. "I've got the worst of it from the scuffle." That had the Trickster smiling in pride.

"What can I say?" he shrugged smirking. "My kid's all kinds of awesome. What I can't believe is —" he paused as he turned to Bobby. "Hunter! Long time no see! But seriously? You're name is Bobby? I thought it'd be something more badass. I was really hoping it was actually Hunter." He said a little disappointed, earning himself a glare and a muttered 'idjit'. He turned back to Dean, mischief glinting in his eyes. "Now that that's all settled…wanna see a real trick?"

The sound of a chainsaw revving appeared right behind Sam.

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Back at the Apartment…

Maya scowled at nothing in particular in front of her, it was a general scowl at the world kind of thing, but more in the I-can't-believe-I'm-in-this-situation-the-world-sucks! kind of scowl. She waited a bit, to make sure Sam was gone, before she tried to do anything, other then calming a whining Puck with her voice. Poor brave puppy. As much as she put up a fuss with Sam about her
Dad, Maya had every confidence that he would be okay. After all her Dad has been doing this for as long as people like the Hunters existed. There wasn't much they could come up with to get the drop on him. She doubted they'd realize they merely cornered a copy of him and not the real deal. Maya had to play it up a little to Sam so he wouldn't tell Dean and Bobby that something was up.

Maya gave a sigh at the thought of Bobby. She knew of her Dad and Bobby's little truce of promised mutual destruction should they cross paths. She hoped both of them made it out of this little confrontation. Sam and Dean she was a little iffy about, and that was why she wanted to get out of these stupid zip ties! Maya trusted Bobby, but the boys? Eh. She could always look at their souls and see if they actually mean her harm but…it wasn't always the most reliable. You can be a good person but still make bad choices.

Twisting around to glance at the clock it's been 7 minutes since Sam left. Time to pull off a daring escape! A snap of fingers and the discarded knife was back in her hands and carefully slid under the tie on her thighs. It wasn't long before that tie came off. Now came the trickier one, the one tied around her arms and torso, resting in the crevice of her elbow. It took some maneuvering of her hands and some steady and slow sawing away at the plastic tie before it fell to the ground. The one around her ankles were off much more quickly. Standing up from the chair she moved to the table and placed the sharp edge of the blade parallel with the tabletop edge and had it over hanging just a little. Maya used this as a way to anchor the blade and carefully saw at the tie that bound her wrists. It took a while till she was free.

Maya opened the door to her room and Puck came racing out to jump up into her arms, licking her face earnestly. The poor thing was worried about his mistress, who he was supposed to protect.

"Hey! Hey, it's alright Puck! I'm alright! You were so brave! Thank you for trying to keep me safe." Maya put him back down on the ground, giving some reassuring pets. Puck gave a few more whimpers before calming down and grabbed her pant leg to pull on it, in the direction of the door. "Don't worry Puck. We still got time, just let me pack and leave a little…gift." A mischievous smile curled her lips.

Crawford Hall Auditorium...

Sam and Bobby were fighting with chainsaw massacre and Dean was getting thrown around by the skimpily clad women, and not in the fun way. The Trickster was laughing, having a ball enjoying the show around him.

Dean finds himself taking an impromptu flying lesson right into the first row of seats in front of the Trickster, who was greatly enjoying this.
"Nice toss, ladies!" The Trickster clapped, "Nice show." Dean groaned in pain when he spotted a bloody stake on the floor in front of him. His and Sam's eyes met and he nodded earnestly.

"Dean…Dean, Dean, Dean." the Trickster said disappointedly as he stood up from his seat. "I did not want to have to do this." Dean stood up as Sam tossed him the stake. In one swift moment Dean brought the stake down, right through the Trickster's heart.

Dean looked right into the Trickster's surprised eyes. "Me neither. No kid should have to lose their Dad like this." Chainsaw massacre and the two bimbos disappeared in transparent blue smoke as the stake slowly killed the Trickster that made them, along with the music and the lights.

Grunting Dean grimaces as he pushes the Trickster's body back into the seat, extracting the stake with a squelching sound.

Dean looked at the Sam and Bobby as they walked up to him, looking at the Trickster's body. "You guys okay?"

"Yeah." Sam got out breathless. "I guess." Sam frowned; he could feel the guilt well up inside him, as he looked at the dead Trickster, a dead father.

"All I gotta say is…he had style." Dean smirked at Sam. They turned to leave and Dean groaned from the movement caused the pain from being thrown about by Amazonian women.

"Bobby, thanks a lot," Sam panted as they burst through the front entrance and down the stairs towards the impala.

"Hey, save it!" Bobby interrupted. "Let's jus get the hell out of dodge before somebody finds that body." Sam made a sound of agreement as they reached the impala.

Sam opened the passenger side door and stopped to look over the roof of the car at him brother. "Look, Dean, um…I just want to say that I'm, uh…um…" he was a loss for words.

Dean looked at Sam as he opened the driver's side door. "Hey. Me too." At this point Bobby gets out from the back to interrupt the idiots having a moment when they should be making a get away,
preferably towards Maya.

"You guys are breakin' my heart. Could we please just leave? Night ain't over yet. Still gotta go get Maya." Bobby went back into the car as the boys stared at him. They nod to each other, both giving a little chuckle and a smile at Bobby before, finally, getting into the impala themselves.

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**Apartment Building...**

Dean puts Baby in park and looks at Sam and Bobby. "Okay, how are we going to do this?" Sam was the first to speak.

"What do you mean, Sam?" Dean looked at him confused. "We just go in there, grab the girl, and leave." Dean said simply. It's not that simple.

Sam bitch-faced at Dean. "Dean, we just killed her Dad. I, not one hour ago, pretty much attacked her and her dog, and tied her up." Sam gestured to himself, glaring at Dean with his non-bruised eye.

"Riiiiiiiiight," Dean nodded looking at the apartment building then whipped his head back at Sam. "She has a dog now?!"

"Dean!"

"What?! I don't want no dog in Baby!" Dean defended. Bobby put his head in one of his hands and shook his head.

"You're both idjits." Bobby grumbled. "Sam, you stay here. Maya will definitely not want to see you again so soon." He ordered, pointing at Sam. Sam handed Bobby the apartment key as he got out of the impala and walked around to the driver's side to knock on Dean's window. Dean rolled the window down as Bobby pointed at him. "You, get to come with me."

Dean groaned as he rolled up the window and exited the impala.
Dean and Bobby made it to the apartment door and unlocked it. What they found had both of them cursing. Maya wasn't tied to the chair like Sam said she was. Dean looked around at the bachelor pad style apartment and smirked. Damn that guy had style.

Bobby noticed a knife sticking straight up from the kitchen table, keeping a piece of paper in place. He picked it up and began reading it out loud.

**Dear Losers,**

*I in all my awesomeness have escaped your chair of zip tie doom. If you're reading this I have already vanished into the night like Batman with my trusty canine sidekick, Puck. (Ask Sam. Him and Puck got acquainted earlier.) (PS. Puck is NOT a reference to hockey. Attend a play heathens!)*

*Bobby, don't worry you're still in my good graces and I hope to see you soon for another visit. If Sam's there, I might be inclined to apologize for the heel jab to the nuts. I know it's frowned upon hitting below the belt, but I figured it was worth a shot even though both my hands and feet were bound at that point. I regret nothing.*

*Dean, there's consolation pie in the fridge if you want it.*

*Maya*

Dean laughed till he was wheezing when he heard about Maya getting his brother in the nuts when she was fully incapacitated. He was so going to tease Sam about this when he got back to the car. At the mention of pie though he started making his way over to the fridge.

"Dean!" Bobby barked, getting the idjits attention. "Leave the pie! What part of daughter of a Trickster don't you comprehend?"

Dean gave him a pleading look. "Aw c'mon Bobby! Can't I at least see what kind of pie it is?"

"No." Bobby deadpanned as he glared at Dean. "Now help me look around this place. She might just be hidin'. Maya!"

*Bark!*
"No! Puck!"

Dean and Bobby gave each other looks as they went to the closed door where the muffled bark and voice came from. Dean went to push the door in and heard the scrape of furniture as he did.

"Shit! We've been made! C'mon Puck!" Maya yelped, from the other side of the door.

"Maya, what're you doin'?" Bobby called as he helped Dean shove the door, and the furniture barricading it.

"Sorry Bobby! But I'm not about to go anywhere with these assholes!" Maya answered back, her voice sounding further away. With one more shove Bobby and Dean burst into what appeared to be Maya's room and an open window that led out onto a fire escape. Dean stuck his upper half out the window and looked through the grate of the fire escape to see Maya racing down the stairs with a small dog on her heels.

"Maya! We ain't going to hurt you!" Dean yelled at her. He pulled out his cellphone and called Sam while Bobby tried to get the girl to come back.

"Dean, I heard yelling, what's going on?" Sam asked as he got out of the impala and made his way across the street.

"Maya got out of her binds and has made a break down the fire escape. It's too rickety looking to hold Bobby or me. Think you can chase her down?"

"Yeah I—Shit! Gotta go! She's just started booking it down the street!" Sam hung up and began chasing the girl and her dog.

"Sam's going to try and catch her." Dean informed Bobby.

"I wish him luck then. Maya's a fast runner and slippery like a snake." Bobby sighed as he rubbed his face. "Hate to tell ya this but with Sam banged up as he is I don't think he'll catch up to her."

Dean frowned at him.
"Well, what'd you want to do then?" Dean crossed his arms as they left the teenager's bedroom, side-eyeing the fridge.

"Not much to do to be honest. She's like any Trickster, or Hunter for that matter, worth their salt at disappearin'. If she doesn't want to be found, she won't be." Bobby held up the note she had left. "She'll find her way to my place when she's ready. She's probably runnin' not wantin' to face the reality that her Dad's gone." Bobby let out a weary sigh. Dean winced at the reminder. He caused a kid to lose her father and be orphaned.

Bobby turned to leave the apartment, "You comin'?" Dean shook his head.

"Nah, I kind of want to look around." Dean motioned to the apartment. "See what kind of family they were." Bobby stared at him.

"Don't touch anythin', and give me the keys." Dean tossed Bobby the keys, knowing he'd treat Baby well. Bobby was about to turn when he stopped and pointed at Dean. "Don't eat or touch the pie."

"I-I'm not—" Bobby gave him a really pointed look. "Fine!" Dean conceded. Bobby nodded and made his way out to the car. Dean looked around the living room area; it really looked like a bachelor pad of a guy who liked to entertain the ladies.

Dean snorted at the thought. Hard to entertain with a teenager around. He kind of wondered if Maya was ever unfortunate enough to walk in on her Dad having fun. Dean laughed at the imagined look of utter horror on her face. He went back to Maya's room, which from the furniture upheaval was a mess. As he stepped further into her room there was a loud crack underfoot. Finding the light switch he turned on the light. He had stepped on a picture frame. Moving aside the busted frame and glass he pulled out the picture.

It looked like it was from a family vacation, but from the inscription on the back it was from an outing on Maya's 15th birthday, so almost a year ago.

*Maya's 15 th Birthday Outing*

*Petrified Forest National Park, 7 ½ miles in Nevada backcountry, Petroglyph Mesa*
It was bright and sunny in the picture and both Maya and her Trickster Dad stood in front of a large rock wall with old engraved pictures. Looked Native American. Both were dwarfed by the amount of the pictures on the wall behind them, but that didn't dull Maya's radiant and excited smile. Her Dad had his arm wrapped around his shoulder, keeping her close, a relaxed and amused smile on his face, his own gold eyes filled with happiness and pride. Maya reciprocated his grip by having her arm wrapped around his waist and leaning into his shoulder, her own eyes dancing with glee. They looked like an incredibly happy family. Dean's gut twisted. He knew he did the right thing, but why did the right thing have to suck so badly?! Dean put the picture down on the bed and left to go check out the Trickster's room.

Oh, my, god! Big porno bed, a lava lamp, a pin-up calendar, and it's own little wet bar. Damn. Dean opened a nightstand drawer and immediately closed it. Did not need to see that. Looking at the other nightstand he opened the drawer to find an album? He flipped it open.

It was filled with family pictures of Maya and the Trickster, from when she was a little baby with some blonde chick, which was probably the Trickster in his female form. He flipped a few pages to see when he changed back, and when it looked like he and Maya moved. Then it seemed for about 6 years they stayed in one place, with two elderly people showing up here and there. Honorary grandparents, probably.

The one that had him chuckling was a picture taken of him and Maya, covered head to toe in flour, batter, and icing, with a messily decorated and lopsided cake between them. Maya looked about 5 and was beaming up at the camera with a face splitting smile that mirrored the one on her Dad's face. After it seemed that, as Maya got older there were more and more pictures from different places till it seemed that barely any were in the same place twice. It looked like they were living similar lifestyles if all the motel pictures were anything to go by, with few that seemed to be taken from within an apartment or house.

Dean closed the album and put it back where he found it. He didn't want to look around anymore, to be shown the lives of a family that he tore apart. Dean walked by the fridge on his way out and paused. He needed pie; he doubted it would kill him since Maya wasn't into killing people like her Dad.

Dean went to the fridge and opened the door to a big surprise; a whipped cream pie to the face.

"SON OF A BITCH!"
Sam hung up the phone on his brother and began chasing Maya down the street, her dog running right at her heels.

"Maya! Stop!" he called after her, trying to keep pace but it was hard with the pain he was in.

"Never!" Maya yelled back with a laugh. Of course she'd treat this like a game. They ran for a couple of blocks, not much cover with most people at home and asleep at this time of night. Maya made a turn and Sam followed panting as he slowed down. She had run into a dead end alleyway. She turned to face him smirking.

"Maya, I swear to you, me and Dean," he motioned to himself, "we're not going to hurt you, a-and you know Bobby won't hurt you. Hell, if me and Dean even thought about it, he'd shoot our asses full of rock salt." Sam reasoned walking closer to her quirking a smile as eyed her and her dog. Maya huffed a laugh at that.

"Oh, I know Bobby wouldn't hurt me. He's like my Uncle. It's you and your brother I'm not too sure about."

"Can't you just look into our souls?" Sam furrowed his eyebrows. Maya shrugged.

"I could…but that's not always a guarantee." She gave a lopsided smile. "Good people can still sometimes make bad choices."

"Even if we already decided not to hurt you?" Sam countered; now a couple arms lengths away from her. Puck growled at him threateningly. Sam stopped moving.

"Well, I don't like doing it okay. Feel like I'm a peeping tom, or something." Maya shifted uncomfortably.

Sam narrowed his eyes in thought. "It scares you doesn't it?"
Maya snorted. "Wouldn't it not scare you? Seeing just how bad people are under all those pretty faces? Able to see the abusers, the rapists, the murderers, and the pedophiles in a crowd? It's terrifying." Maya breathed out breathless.

Sam gave her a sympathetic face; he understood the fear she was feeling from trying to understand his own visions. "At least you can control it, right?" he gave a small smile that was returned a little timidly.

"Yeah, and I guess…I kind of like you guys." She crossed her arms. "Don't mean I'm ready to be anywhere near you assholes after you went after my Dad."

Sam put his hands up in a surrendering gesture. "You're right. After tonight, you shouldn't be giving out your trust freely, but at least trust me enough to get you back to Bobby. He's willing to take you home with him, he's worried about you, and he cares about you. You don't need to keep running." Sam held out his right hand to her, his eyes pleading with her.

Maya tilted her head at him, regarding Sam with curious gold eyes. She smiled and stuck her own hand out to meet his. Sam gave a relieved smile and leaned to take her smaller hand, only to have his hand pass right through her own. He straightened his posture in surprise and looked at her with wide eyes. Maya laughed at him.

"Oh your face!" Maya laughed smiling. "Sorry Sam, but you've just been on a wild goose chase. Me and Puck here?" She motioned to herself and her dog. "We're illusions, and the real Maya and Puck are long gone. Don't worry, real Maya heard your words." Fake Maya gave him a wink, before her and her fake dog disappeared in wisps of blue transparent smoke.

Sam's shoulders sagged in defeat. Beaten by what amounted to a baby Trickster, after beating a full grown one. Dean and Bobby were going to skin him. Sighing he pulled out his phone.

"Yeah, Dean? I just spent a couple of blocks chasing illusions of Maya and her dog."

"WHAT!" Dean yelled over the phone. "Are you shitting me?"

"Nope. I don't even think you two actually saw the real Maya. She might be around, but we aren't going to find her." Sam suggested.
"We got out done by a baby Trickster, right after taking out a fully grown Trickster?!” Dean sighed over the phone. “Son of a bitch! Gah! All right, Sam, where are you? We'll come pick you up."

**Apartment Building…**

Maya watched from the roof as the black 1969 Chevy impala pulled away from the curb and down the road where her illusions led Sam on a merrily good chase. She sat down on the roof of her building and began petting her canine sidekick Puck as she leaned against the half wall of the roof.

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

'bzzzzzzzzzzzzz'

Maya took out her buzzing phone and smiled at the caller ID.

"Hey Dad. Still alive?...yeah they came by but I already escaped and left a little present for Dean and had Sam go on a goose hunt…spring loaded pie in the fridge and chasing my illusions over town…hiding up on the roof with Puck…yeah I'll go back in in a little while, stars are out…okay, see soon! Love you!"

Maya closed her cellphone and adjusted the enchanted blanket on the ground so she could lie on it. It kept her dry and her back and ass warm. It was awesome. She laid back, bundled in her coat, and looked up at the night sky and the stars that broke through the light pollution of the town as she waited for her Dad to come home.

**Sam and Dean**

Sam watched as the impala pulled up, he went around to the passenger's side and got in. "Sorry about not catching her Bobby." Sam apologized as he got in looking at Bobby in the back seat.

Bobby waved him off. "It's alright. Maya may not be as powerful as her Dad, yet, but that just means she's got to be extra clever. When she comes to terms that her Dad's gone, she'll find her way to me. She'll be fine."
Sam gave Bobby a concerned face, "She's 15, it's okay to be worried about—" Sam stopped as he caught a look at Dean. "Dean, what happened?" Sam asked, trying to hold back his laughter. Dean glared at him, though it wasn't as effective with patched of missed whipped cream in his hair and some whipped cream globs on his jacket, along with slight transparent streaks of sugar on his face.

"Shut up Sam." Dean growled out his hand gripping the steering wheel tensely.

"Idjit didn't listen to me when I told him to *not* go into the fridge. Maya said she left a consolation pie, for not keeping her tied up." Bobby grumbled in amusement. "He got pied."

"SHE TAMPERED WITH THE SANCTITY OF PIE, SAM! PIE!" Dean shouted in outrage.

Sam lost it.
April-ish 2007, Chattanooga, Tennessee, United States

Gabriel watched as Maya packed her bag to go to Bobby’s. He still really wanted his name to be Hunter, because, c’mon, Hunter the Hunter? Ha.

“Sure you want to go to Bobby’s, Push Pop?” Gabriel was worried that Maya would run into the Hardy Boys they met in Springfield, Ohio. Maya had told him details of what happened that night and he was proud of his clever little Trickster giving seasoned Hunters the run around, but still concerned. The fact that Sam had overpowered her was worrying, because if she can’t fight off one Hunter, what will happen if she ran into another one--or more than one--that wouldn’t hesitate to take that shot at her? The only thing keeping from forbidding her from going was that he trusted Bobby enough to keep her safe, even from other Hunters.

“Dad I’ll be fine. I’ll have Bobby looking after me.” Bark! “And Puck.” Maya added with a smile and an eye roll, pausing to pet the pleased brown and white Jack Russell terrier.

“What if those brothers show up? Do you really think they won’t try and kill you? Bobby or not?” Maya paused as she stared at Puck, before a gentle smile crossed her features. She turned to look straight in his eyes.

“Yeah, I’m sure.” She continued packing. “I hate to say it, but Sam was holding back. He could have easily killed me and made it look like an accident, but he didn’t. He tried to talk me down, even when I had a knife pointed at him.” Maya looked at her Dad’s concerned eyes. “I believed him when he said that him and Dean didn’t want to kill me.”

Gabriel walked over behind his daughter and drew her into his arms, hugging her close. Maya leaned back into his chest and laid her head on his shoulder, her hands holding onto his clasped ones.

Gabriel squeezed his arms. “I’ll trust your judgment Maya, but you got to do something for me if you run into those two again.” Maya turned her head to look at his face curiously. “You need to take a peak at their souls.”
“Dad…” she sighed rolling her eyes in annoyance, looking away from him. He knew how she felt about using that ability.

“I know it scares you, and it doesn’t show everything a person might do, or be capable of, but it’ll give you a better idea of who they are.” Gabriel reasoned as he turned her around to stare into her eyes. “I just worry about you because you’re my baby, and I want you to be safe.” He smiled, bringing her in for another hug and kissing the side of her head. Maya hugged him back and nuzzled into him. “Promise me, if you don’t feel safe you call me, okay?” he murmured into her hair.

“Alright, I promise.” Maya promised with her voice muffled by his shirt. “I love you Dad.”

“Love you too, Gummi-worm.” Gabriel tightened his arms around his only child. He hoped he wouldn’t regret this visit with Bobby.

April 15 2007, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Bobby leaned up against his blue 1968 Ford F-360 across from the bus stop in town, waiting for a certain half-Trickster to make her appearance. The grey hound bus pulled up and its passengers began disembarking. In a few minutes a familiar teenager appeared around the bus looking around, with a little Jack Russell on her heels. Bobby lets loose a whistle and waved a hand to get her attention.

Maya saw Bobby across the road and gave a wide smile and her own little wave. Looking both ways Maya and Puck quickly crossed the road.

“Bobby!” Maya ran up to him excitedly to give him a hug.

“Hey Maya.” Bobby returned her hug chuckling gruffly, patting her back before letting her go. “How you doin’ kid?” he asked her concerned.

“I’m doing alright,” Maya shrugged. Bobby gave her a pointed look; he wasn’t buying her bullshit answer. Maya rolled her eyes good-naturedly, “I’ll tell you back at the scrapyard, okay?”
“All right.” Bobby jabbed his thumb behind him at his truck. “Get in the truck kid,” he glanced at Puck “and grab your rat.”

Growl...bark!

“His name’s Puck and he understands people talk.” Maya said as she opened the passenger door and let Puck jump in first, before climbing in after him.

“Of course he does.” Bobby grumbled as he climbed into the driver’s seat.

Bobby unlocked the door to his house and Puck ran in and began sniffing around curiously. Maya walked in and went straight to the couch, tossing her bag off, and flopped facedown on it as she released a sigh. Bobby quirked a small smile as Puck decided to jump onto the couch, and climb onto Maya’s back to try to lick at her face. Maya gave a muffled squeal and tried to cover her face from Puck, but then he just went after the back of her neck.

“Puck! Stop it!” came her muffled laugh, moving her hands to cover the back of her neck. Bobby moved to shoo Puck off the giggling girl, but Puck wasn’t having it and turned to growl at Bobby threateningly.

Maya shifted, causing Puck to jump off her back, and let her stare at the little dog sternly. “Puck, no. Bobby’s a friend.” Puck gives an apologetic whine, going to his belly and using his paws to cover his eyes. Bobby looked at the little dog impressed. Maya’s face softened a little, “It’s okay Puck, you were just doing what Dad asked you to do.” She leaned over and gave the little brown and white dog a few good head pets.

“Your Dad gotcha a guard rat?” Bobby asked with a raised eyebrow looking at Maya.

“He was one of the animals the research scientist was using in his study. Dad had released all the animals, and Puck here,” Maya motioned to the Jack Russell “used his puppy eyes to get my Dad to take him home. Then we bonded like that.” Maya snapped her fingers.

“The vest real or…?” Puck sat up and seemed to puff his chest to show off his medical assist vest that he wore.

“I may of had a…a low blood sugar incident. So, Dad made it possible for Puck to sniff out my
blood sugar levels, and tell me when they start getting too low.” Maya revealed reluctantly.

“Right, so the vest is real.” Bobby looked at the teenager on his couch expectantly. “Anything else I should know about?” Maya bit her bottom lip, before averting her gaze and shaking her head.

“Nope.” She said popping the ‘p’. Bobby arms crossed his chest as he stared down at her.

“So, you’re not goin’ to tell me why you seem perfectly fine after losin’ your Dad just little over a month ago?” The suspicion in Bobby’s voice was great. “I know you My,” Bobby said using the nickname he sometimes called her, “you wear your heart on your sleeve.”

Maya looked up at her pseudo Uncle. “You can’t tell Sam and Dean, okay?” Bobby nodded. “I mean it! You have to swear it!” Maya pointed at him.

Bobby rolled his eyes. “Yeah, yeah, I swear kid.”

“You guys didn’t kill my Dad. You killed a copy.” Maya stated bluntly. Bobby looked at her with wide surprised eyes.

“Balls.”

April 20 2007, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Maya had made Bobby re-promise not to tell Sam and Dean, and Bobby reluctantly agreed. Knowing the boys, they’d probably try to hunt the Trickster down to get another shot at him, and pester Maya endlessly on where he could be. Bobby knew Maya wouldn’t tolerate it for long, and the boys, would undoubtedly run out of patience. Bobby didn’t want to get caught in the middle of some prank war between the Winchesters and a Trickster. He was also pretty sure Maya would win, he’d bet good money on it.

During the last five days or so, Bobby had been getting Maya up bright and early to work on her self-defense. Just like her Dad, Bobby had been worried about Sam’s take down of her, when he had restrained her. He liked Maya; she was a good kid who, unfortunately, had a Trickster for a
father, and he wanted her to be able to look after herself. So, Bobby had her doing exercises and sparing for a couple hours, since he could only go a couple hours against a sugared-up Trickster. He hated getting old. They’d break for lunch, spend a hour or two reading some of his lore books, wouldn’t hurt to have her know some of the creatures out there, and how to defend herself against them. He’d also switch it up with some lessons of the languages he knew, mostly written translations.

It was the afternoon and Bobby was bent over and elbow deep in a car’s engine that was brought in for repairs. He would sometimes hear in the stacks of wrecked cars Maya singing away without a care in the world, or her amused laughter when she works on her illusions away from prying eyes. For Bobby, hearing such lightness always eased his nerves and made the world seem a little less dark; a little more worth risking your life for.

Bobby heard footsteps coming noisily up behind him and stood up too look behind him to find a teenage boy looking confidently at him. Oh boy.

“Need some help, son?” Bobby asked leaning against the grill of the car wiping his hands with a rag to get some of the grime off.

“Does Maya live here?” He asked smirking self-assured.

Bobby narrowed his eyes. He already didn’t like this kid. He looked like the kid that always got what he wanted, and didn’t take no for an answer.

“Why?” Bobby’s tone was gruff and aggressive. He knew Maya could handle this punk, but it didn’t mean she should have to.

Kid shrugged his arms; “Saw her walking around town the other day. One of my friends said her name was Maya and she stayed with you at Singer Salvage Yard. I was wondering if I could talk to her.”

Bobby regarded the boy in front of him, the way he held himself with an air of overconfidence and self-perceived charm. Narcissistic bastard. He itched for his shotgun.

“Hey Bobby, what do you feel like for dinner?” Maya had walked around a stack of cars coming into view and walked up beside Bobby. She was wearing a tight dark purple tank top and some dark fitted jeans that flared at her calves. She had a open red cotton flannel button up over her tank
top with the sleeves rolled up to her elbows. Her freckles as prominent as ever, hair parted on the side and pulled back into a short ponytail—now that it was long enough—and gold eyes sparkling in the sunlight.

“Hey,” Maya turned slightly to look at the teenage boy. “I’m Drake, and you must be the lovely Maya.” Drake’s eyes made a slow sweep over her body. Maya’s eyes narrowed as she frowned and moved slightly closer to Bobby, creeped out.

“Alright,” Bobby frowned with narrowed eyes. “You talked to her, now get lost.” Bobby jerked his head, shoulders and body tense. He didn’t like how this Drake eyed the girl beside him.

“I’m talking to the pretty lady, you old drunkard,” he sneered at Bobby. “Hey Maya want to go catch a movie tonight?” He smirked. “Get to know one another, better?”

Bobby had enough and was about to chase this yahoo off, but Maya put a calming hand on his shoulder. Bobby raised an eye at her, but Maya shook her head and walked up to the asshole, stopping a few feet from him.

“I suggest you leave Drake.” Maya said unimpressed, thumbs looped in her front pockets, posture confident, and gold eyes narrowed.

“Aw don’t be like that, babe.” Drake rolled his eyes at her.

“Not your babe, and I’m telling you, now, to leave.” Maya gave him a look of disgust.

“What? Think you’re too good for me? You’re nothing, but some drifter bitch!” Drake grimaced in disgust from being denied. He walked a couple of feet closer trying to be intimidating with his football build.

“And yet you wanted to ask me out. So, what does that say about you?” Maya said cheekily, smiling with a raised eyebrow at him. Drake’s eyes flashed and his nostrils flared; he went to punch Maya.

Maya had squared her shoulders, widened her stance, grabbed Drake’s hand and using his momentum flipped him on his back, hard. She let go and backed away from the writhing mass of adolescent male on the ground.
“Son, you better get off my property, or I’m gonna fill your ass full of buckshot.” Bobby growled down at the moaning kid at Maya’s feet.

“I think she sprained my throwing shoulder.” Drake moaned holding his shoulder as he lay on the ground. “I’m gonna call the cops on you bitch for assaulting me! You probably just cost the town its game Wednesday!” He threatened. Maya looked at Bobby in disbelief at this guy.

“You stupid or somethin’? You attacked her first! If anyone’s gettin’ arrested for assault it’s you!” Bobby yelled, taking a threatening step toward him, which got him scrambling to his feet.

Drake started running out of the salvage yard but yelled back, “Like anyone’s going to believe some drifter or drunkard!”

Maya gave Bobby a worried look; she didn’t want to cause him any trouble.

“Don’t worry about it. Every few years some hotshot football player from the local high school get’s it in his head that he’s better than everybody else, and can get away with shit.” Bobby waved off her concern. “He might be too embarrassed to even go to the police. Supposed to be embarrassin’ getting’ your ass handed to you by a girl.” Bobby snorted at that. “Those idjits never met a female Hunter. Ain’t nothing weak, or fragile about them. They’d beat your ass for even suggesting it.” Maya smiled and laughed at that.

April 24 2007, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Bobby was working on another car, talking with Maya and showing her all the parts of the engine and how they worked together. Her eyes kind of glazed over a little bit at all of the information.

“Just not gettin’ it huh, My?” Bobby asked looking at the girl from under the car hood.

“No, I am not.” Maya said sheepishly. She prided herself on learning, but some things just don’t click, like automotive repair apparently. “Just tell me what to turn and what to hand you.” she added wanting to be helpful.
Bobby chuckled, “Alright, but I’m gonna to make sure you learn basic car maintenance, tire changin’, and hot wirin’.”

“Why?” Maya looked at him curiously.

Bobby took his hands out of the engine to lean on the edge of the open hood and looked at Maya with a dubious look. “You sayin’ you got powers now to fix vehicles, and get them to start with a snap of your fingers?”

“Um, no.” There was hesitance in her tone.

“You positive you’d develop ‘em later on?” Bobby questioned.

“Uuuuuuh…” Maya looked at Bobby, her eyes flitting to and from his face in uncertainty.

“How about if you somehow get drained and don’t have access to your mojo, but need to get somewhere in a hurry?” Bobby crossed his arms looking at the nervously shifting teenager.

Maya smiled sheepishly then gave a nod to the engine in defeat. “Please keep teaching, Bobby.”

“That’s what I thought, idjit.” The older man groused, returning to the engine.

“Hey!”

“Shut up, and c’mere.” Bobby started pointing out important basic things and even showed her how to change the oil and check the battery. Hot wiring would come later on one of his more wrecked cars. Every now and then Bobby would stop and verbally test her to see if she was paying attention, and where she might’ve gotten confused.

This went on for another 30mins before they were interrupted.
“SINGER!” bellowed a male voice near the front gate of the salvage yard.

Bobby looked to where the voice came from then looked at Maya. “Well, _that_ can’t be good. Go grab my shotgun—just in case.” Maya nodded and scampered off with Puck to Bobby’s house.

Bobby moved around to the front gate to see Drake, and what appeared to be his father. Great.

“Singer, you get that little _bitch_ back here! I’ve got a score to settle for what she did to my boy!”

the other man growled, his face set in an intimidating snarl. Well, intimidating for someone who wasn’t a Hunter and faced nightmares on a semi-regular basis.

“Watch it! Your boy threw the first punch; Maya was just defendin’ herself, and, let me tell you, she could’ve done a whole lot worse to him than a sprained shoulder.” Bobby growled lowly with narrowed eyes. “Besides, from what I hear his substitute played real well, and won the game. So, what you grippin’ about?”

“She cost him his chance to perform in front of college scouts, there’s no chance for him to get a full ride now! She cost him his future!” the man snarled taking a threatening step towards Bobby, Drake--the little shit--was smiling smugly at the confrontation.

Bobby rolled his eyes. Drake’s father looked like some self-important asshole with an average build, domestic life obviously softening some of his muscles from youth. He was clean-shaven, probably somewhere around mid-thirty to forty years old. Bobby might not be, no, spring chicken anymore, but he could easily kick this jackass’ face in, his son’s too. He was also dressed well, so probably made some decent money and could just pay for his kid to go to college.

“You look to be doing alright. I doubt your boy needs a scholarship.” Bobby pointed out. Maya came up behind him, with Puck, and handed the shotgun over to Bobby.

“That’s not the point! My boy, is the best player, and should be rewarded for being the best!” This guy was now red in the face, then his eyes landed on Maya. “You!” He took a threatening step towards her but had to jump back when the ground in front him exploded. “The hell Singer!”

“Listen, and listen good. Your boy, tried to assault my girl here, and she defended herself. He was in the wrong, and it was his own stupid fault for wreckin’ his shoulder tryin’ to attack her. It’s his own fault he didn’t have the chance to show off in front of them college scouts.” Bobby cocked his shotgun looking at the two frightened assholes in front of him. “I _strongly_ suggest, you get your
asses off my property.” His eyes were narrowed in threat. Drake and his father made a hasty retreat.

“You didn’t—“ Maya started before Bobby interrupted her.

“Yeah I did.”

“Thanks Bobby.” Maya hugged the gruff old Hunter in gratitude. Bobby hugged her back, before motioning back to the car.

“C’mon, we got work to finish up.”

April 26 2007, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Drake and his father tried stirring up trouble, but with Drake’s previous run-ins with flouting the law no one gave credence to his claim of being assaulted. As for being threatened with a shotgun, well, the whole confrontation was caught on a camera that over looked that area of the salvage yard. It was obvious Mr. Douchebag went to attack Maya, and Bobby shot the gun in defense. Losers.

A call had come in today from a Hunter about a monster they were having trouble identifying. Bobby couldn’t name off the top of his head so he had to do some research, which Maya had jumped in to help. It didn’t take long and it turned out to be some changelings. Bobby told them to kill it with fire. They did and ended up rescuing a bunch of captured children. This got Maya thinking of when her soul scanning ability popped up; when she first met Bobby, and her own thoughts of being a Trickster.

She understood going after dicks to teach them a lesson, but that was just punishing the bad guy. Sure, there might be times where you save someone from the asshole by killing them, if you’re her Dad, or getting them in trouble with the cops, but what about those times where innocents are in trouble with the supernatural? Don’t get Maya wrong, she loved playing tricks, but couldn’t there be something more she could do?

“Hey, Bobby?” Maya looked up from her sketchbook on the kitchen table to look at the old grizzled Hunter reading a book and sipping some beer across from her.
“Yeah?” Bobby sipped his beer, eyes on a new lore book he got.

“What would you say if I was thinking of not being strictly a Trickster?” Maya queried carefully. That had Bobby putting his book down and looking at Maya cautiously.

“What you mean, kid?” Bobby felt a twisting of dread in his gut.

“Well, what if, hypothetically, I end up in a town with strange deaths going on or I spot a monster or vengeful spirit—”

“No.” Bobby interrupted sharply. He knew where she was going with her questioning.

“You didn’t let me finish—“

“Don’t need you to.” Bobby leaned on the table in front of him looking Maya in the eyes sternly. “You wanna ask if you could be a Hunter, and the answer’s a hard no.”

“I’m not saying all the time! Only if there happened to be something—“ Maya tried to defend her idea.

“No.” Bobby said resolutely. There was no way she was getting into hunting, not if he could help it. It was one thing to learn about monsters and how to defend yourself from them, it’s another to go out and gank them yourself.

“But you taught me—“ Maya tried to point out.

“To defend yourself in case you get yourself in a bind! Not to seek those sons of bitches out!”

“So I should just, what? Sit back and watch innocent people get hurt?” Maya’s face twisted in disbelief and anger.
“You call me, and I get someone out there. You do not go in yourself.”

“But, what if no one else is nearby? Innocent people would be dying—“ Maya looked at him pleadingly, and it was obvious her heart was hurting at the thought of not being able to save people if she could.

“That sucks, but I won’t have you riskin’ your neck!” Bobby barked in finality. He then sighed and rubbed his face; he did not want to be having this conversation. “Maya, I care for your tricky little ass and I don’t want you seekin’ out, or goin’ into dangerous situations. I may have taught you, but you have no field experience. Readin’ about somethin’ and actually facin’ somethin’ are two very different things. As well you know.” He gave her pointed look at this, both of them remembering the vamp nest Bobby found her in. “The huntin’ life ain’t pretty kid, and not every Hunter keeps what makes them human. I don’t want to see you go down that road.”

“But, if I have the ability to help, shouldn’t I? You know, with great power comes great responsibility.” She tried to make it sound like she wasn’t quoting something, but she failed.

“…Did you just quote Spiderman at me?”

“No?” Bobby gave her a blank stare.

“Still not letting you hunt.”

“Balls.”

Despite their disagreement about Maya being a Hunter they easily fell back into their normal routine. Maya respected Bobby’s feelings and opinions; and, honestly, he brought up a good point. She had no real life experience and she doubted Bobby, or her Dad, would take her on an easy ‘salt and burn’ to get practice and ease her in. However, as much as she wanted to do and be more--than just some Trickster--with her abilities, she was also afraid. Maya put the idea of being a Hunter on hold, maybe one day, but it was obvious it wouldn’t be today.

April 29 2007, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States
Bobby exited his truck with one less passenger and her dog. He had just dropped Maya, and Puck, off at the bus station to catch the bus that’ll take her to wherever her Dad was. After making her promise not to go out hunting, especially by herself, not that her Trickster Dad would let her go, at all.

Bobby knew it would be another few months before he would see the girl again, but hopefully she’ll remember to call more often. Having her around was almost like having Sam and Dean around, when they were younger, but involved more boy trouble. Well, at least he can say he threatened a boy that came sniffing around his girl with a shotgun.

His girl. Just as he considered Sam and Dean his boys, it didn’t take long for him to consider Maya as his girl. Bobby snorted in amusement at the thought of those three being some kind of siblings through him. Honestly, Maya probably would fit right in with the Winchesters, down to the need to save people.

Dean would probably like her for her humor, which can sometimes be as crass as his own, and her taste in old rock music. Sam would probably like her quick clever mind, and her thirst for learning and knowledge. Then both would lament over her stubbornness that would give them both a run for their money.

Bobby entered his house and not long later his home phone rang.

“Hello.” Bobby answered the phone to his ear.

“Bobby.” Came Dean’s haggard voice.

“Dean?”

“Bobby, Sam’s gone. Demons took him. I’ve had Ash looking since last night, but I need your help.”

“Of course. Give me a couple hours to look up and map the latest demon omens and signs.” Bobby paused. “We’ll find him Dean.” Bobby reassured, even though he wasn’t so sure himself. It’d been awfully quiet.

“Thanks Bobby, see you soon.” Dean gave an address not too far away, a back road between farm
fields.

Bobby looked at his phone receiver; something twisted inside him something awful. Shit was going to hit the fan, he just knew. Hopefully, when it did, Maya will already be with her Dad. He may be a pain in the ass, but he was powerful and loved her above all else, he’d keep her safe.

Chapter End Notes

It was a little tricky writing this chapter because I thought I’d have the boys show up but then it might still be hard to explain to them why she didn’t stay with Bobby...so they’d probably not find out till later in season 3.

I plan to do something with "Mystery Spot" to show just how far Sam went off the rails when Dean died "permanently".

I'mma punch you in the feels.

Sorry, not really.
Tricky Angel

Chapter Notes

WARNING: mention of child rape and pornography
Nothing graphic

See the end of the chapter for more notes

May 2 2007, Chattanooga, Tennessee, United States

Nighttime...

Gabriel was watching some movie on the television in the motel room, Maya leaning against him, her breathing calm as she dozed. That's when he felt it; a huge pulse of demonic energy burst forth onto the earthly plane. His body jolted in surprise and tensed, his arm wrapping protectively around his sleeping daughter. It came from...Southern Wyoming? But there shouldn't be any—the Hell Gate, it's open. That can't be good.

Gabriel reinforced the wards around the room from his spot, the last thing he needed was some powerful demon popping in unannounced. He already sensed that the seven deadly sins had escaped, those were some nasty ass demons. Then, as quickly as it began, it was over. The gate had been shut, but from his estimation? Not before a couple hundred demons dragged their scraggly asses out of Hell.

Maya shifted as she blearily woke up. "Is the movie over?" she yawned.

"No, but if you're this tired maybe it's time for bed?" Gabriel suggested as he paid attention to some ominous slithering clouds of black smoke outside. Maya grunted her ascent as she sluggishly moved away from him and went about getting ready. Once she was in bed and asleep, with Puck lying vigilantly at the foot of her bed, Gabriel stepped outside and locked the door. Using some angel mojo he made it impossible for anyone, but him, to walk into the room.

Gabriel spent the night combing the city for the fresh-out-of-Hell demons that thought this would be a good place to get their meat suits. They were so wrong. They picked the one city with not just an angel, but the one with an archangel, who happened to have their kid with them. He smited eight demons.
He wasn't sure if he got them all, before they disappeared from the city, or hid themselves, but it was eight less demons in the world that could stumble across his kid. Shit was hitting the fan and he didn't like where it was heading.

Why did this have Winchester written all over it?

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**Early July-ish 2007, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States**

Sam and Dean were at Bobby's trying to find demonic omens to hunt down the sons of bitches that were released from the Hell Gate a couple months prior. Didn't help that the Hunter community was blaming *them* for it opening in the first place and releasing all those demons. It was fucking Jake, dammit! They went to stop it, or at the very least close it, which they did.

Sam poured over possible omens and Dean helped Bobby with deconstruction and reconstruction of the Colt, trying to figure out how it worked. At this point Bobby was carefully taking it apart and labeling each piece and making notes of where each piece fit in relation to each other. Dean was creating a cast for the special bullets the Colt used.

Sam moved a stack of lore books from the kitchen table to an out of the way corner in the living room, near the couch when he noticed a corner of a relatively thin book peaking out from under it. Curious, he grabbed the dusty book; it looked like a sketchbook. A ring binding and a black matte cover with the initials 'M.G.' in gold pen.

Curious, and in need of a little break, Sam sat down on the couch and opened the book. Each page was filled with doodles, studies of shapes, perspective, shading, and movement. Every couple pages there would be a full sketch of a scene, landscape or portrait of a random person, until he recognized one of the people. It was a page of different expressions of the Trickster him and Dean killed in Ohio. The next page was of the facial expressions of the Trickster's daughter, Maya. After a couple more pages, there was a quick sketch of Bobby's dilapidated house, even some common poses you can find the old gruff Hunter in. The next page was a scene of Bobby bent over an engine, back to the viewer, head turned to look at Maya to his right. She was leaning up and over the side of the car, trying to see what he must have been telling her about.

He flipped through more pages seeing animals, real and not, places, people, and one picture that had Sam smiling. Getting up from the couch he walked over to Dean.

"Hey, Dean, check this out." Dean looked up from what he was doing.
"Find some demonic omens?" Dean asked, putting aside the Colt bullet cast.

"No, not yet, but I think you'd want to see this." Sam opened the book and showed Dean.

Dean's eyes went wide in delight. "Oh man, is that Baby? Damn, even as a drawing she looks good." Dean looked up at his brother. "Where'd you find this?" He flipped through more pages. "This a sketchbook?" Bobby looked up from the pieces he was handling.

"Saw it under the couch." Sam shrugged. "I think it's Maya's."

"Goldy?" Dean raised an eyebrow. "Gotta give it to her. She got Baby down pretty good. Some things are off, but still. Kid's got skill." He admired the drawing of his car again.

"You should hear her sing," Bobby reached for the book, Dean handed it over to him. "Maya must have forgotten it last time she was here."

"She'd been here recently?" Sam asked. He had wondered what happened to the Trickster's daughter. He'd almost expected to see her when Dean brought them to Bobby's after bringing him back with that demon deal, but she wasn't around.

Bobby nodded. "Yeah, for the second half of April. I'd just walked back into the house after takin' her to the bus station when Dean called sayin' demons got ya."

"Hold up," Dean fully turned to look at Bobby incredulous. "You let her leave? By herself?"

Bobby shrugged. "Kid's not used to hangin' around any place for long. Besides, there's not much I can do to make her stay. If I did try to lock her up, she'd just end up resentin' me, and when she did get out she'd never come back." Bobby defended. "At least this way she'll call to let me know how she's doin', and if I should expect her anytime soon."

"So, you're in contact with her?" Sam asked. "Is she doing alright?" His face showed his concern. It couldn't be easy for Maya to be out in the world all on her own.
"As well as expected. She's got that rat with her, and some tricks up her sleeve to keep her outta trouble." Yeah, he wasn't going to tell the boys that the Trickster's still alive. The last thing they needed on their plate was hunting him down, and pissing off Maya.

"Next time I see her, I'm getting her back for that pie prank." Dean scowled at the memory, as he returned to the bullet cast he was making. Sam rolled his eyes at his brother and went back to looking for omens.

Bobby snorted in amusement as he returned to the Colt gun pieces, "Not likely." Dean might get lucky, but then Maya would just take it as an excuse to start a prank war with the older Winchester. That wouldn't end well for anyone.

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**Early November 2007, Manchester, New Hampshire, United States**

It was a crisp winter day in the city of Manchester, New Hampshire, where Gabriel was scoping out some potential targets at the local university. So far, just the normal hazing that's taken too far, and some uppity rich kids who think the rules don't apply to them. Nothing a little humiliation and some traumatizing experiences wouldn't fix. Though, he wasn't sure if Maya would be up for it. She'd been acting a little off lately. He knew she wanted to ask him something, and if her hesitancy were anything to go by, he wouldn't like it.

Seeing no point in hanging around, he snapped his fingers and found himself back in the little apartment they were renting for the next couple months. It wasn't big, a two bedroom, one bathroom, with a big open area for the kitchen, living room and dining room. Maya had taken charge of the decorating so it didn't look like an apartment you'd see in a porno video, again. Overall, it was average looking.

Maya glanced over at him from the TV when he popped in, then went back to watching some show on Discovery. Gabriel walked over and plopped himself beside her, the side without Puck, and leaned back into the couch with an arm resting behind her head.

"So, is there a particular reason why we're watching *How it's Made*, and…what is that? Steel wool?" Gabriel stared at his daughter, her face in a slight frown of concentration, but not on the program. She worried her bottom lip.

"Maya?" She looked into his worried eyes, before turning away, closing her eyes and taking a deep calming breath.
"Dad…" she paused, not looking at him. "What would you say if I wanted to leave…on my own?"
She tentatively looked at her father's confused face.

Gabriel was at a loss, and really confused. Maya wanted to leave him? Why? Did he do something to upset her so much that she wanted to leave? He couldn't think of anything. Why did his baby girl want to leave?

"D-did I do something to make you want to leave?" He looked at her with hurt honey eyes.

Maya rapidly shook her head. "No! Dad, no! I-I just want to try to figure out what I want to be!"
She launched herself at him and hugged him tight, feeling his arms wrap around her. "I love you, but I feel this is something I need to do on my own." She pulled back to look him in the eyes. "This isn't me running away again." She told him earnestly.

No, this was his baby wanting to leave home. She was just sixteen, granted seventeen in a few months, but still! Maya was too young, she needed more training, she-she…she was growing up, and there was nothing he could do about it.

"I don't want you to," Gabriel held a hand up at her attempt to protest. "But, I understand the need to figure stuff out on your own, away from your family." Away from me. He sighed. "This is what we're going to do, you are going to go to the next town over and do everything yourself. I'll be watching, but I won't interfere. You'll have till mid-December to deliver justice to a target of your choosing. If you're able to do this and get away with it—without me interfering—we'll discuss more on you leaving." He pointed a finger at her and told her seriously, "You need to prove to me you can look after yourself, and Puck, on your own. Deal?"

Maya looked at him with wide surprised eyes, she honestly didn't think he'd handle that very well, seeing how protective he was of her. However, here he was giving her the opportunity to prove herself. This was huge! She'd only ever come up with plans or played assistant, she never done tricks completely on her own before. Well, minus minor pranks on her Dad and the odd person.

She pressed her face into his chest as she chanted, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

Gabriel held her close as he smiled at his excited teenager, trying to quell the sense dread coiling around his heart. He knew Maya would one day want to go out on her own, but he didn't want it to be so soon, especially with the influx in the number of demons out there.
Yeah, before she even thinks of going off on her own he's teaching her how to make wards to keep them out.

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Mid-November 2007, Bedford, New Hampshire, United States

Gabriel had to admit, Maya was doing well. Although she couldn't just snap up anything into existence she easily transported items straight into her bag from stores without entering them, same for cash from ATMs. Even found a motel to hole up in that allowed her to have Puck with her.

For a few days he watched, as Maya would walk around, a little directionless. Usually it was him who had ideas of where to look, for potential targets, but this time Maya had to figure it out on her own. At some point she took a break to play fetch with Puck at the park. It was the weekend and families were out with their young children playing in the snow. Some would come up to her to ask to pet her dog and Maya was more than happy to let them. She even let them throw the ball a couple of times so Puck would chase after it.

There was one little girl that caught her attention though. She was very shy around Maya, but relaxed when Maya let her pet Puck. When Maya made a sudden move the little girl flinched away from her, like she was about to be struck. Maya slowly crouched down in the snow, to be less intimidating to the girl.

"You know," Maya began. "Puck is a really special dog." Maya stuck her hand out to her canine friend who walked to her for pets. "He's able to tell when I'm about to be sick from not eating enough, but that's not all." Maya looked at the shy girl mischievously. "Puck here understands our people talk." The girl looked at her confused, didn't all dogs understand?

"Don't all puppies know what we say?" The blonde haired little girl asked. Maya shook her head.

"No, see most dogs only know certain commands that they were taught, but understand emotion really well. That's why they try to comfort their human friends when they're sad, or protect them when they're scared." Maya scratched Puck behind the ear. "However, Puck here is like a magic dog. Go on. Ask him to do something, and he'll be able to follow the command."

The little girl was doubtful, but also curious of the strange older girl and her dog, who looked up at her earnestly. "Puck, jump up on your back legs five times." The little girl ordered. Maya gave Puck a nod and Puck did exactly that. "Woah! He did it! Just like I said!" She looked back at a
calmly smiling Maya in wonder. The little girl told Puck how he was amazing, and a really good boy. The little girl could see how her words sent Puck's tail wagging happily at her words, and her grin widened.

"How did he become magic?" the little blonde asked the older dark brunette.

"It's because I'm magic," Maya's eyes flashed a thin shimmering purple light around her pupils at the little girl.

"Wow! Are you a faerie? Oh! Oh! Are you a faerie princess?!" the little girl asked excitedly. Maya laughed good-naturedly.

"Not exactly, but I do like helping people when I can." Maya smiled, but her eyes became a little sad. "My eye trick has a very special purpose though. It let's me see into the hearts and souls of other people."

"Really?"

"Mmhmm, and it let me see your's." The little girl shifted. "You're hurting. If you'd let me, I'd like to help. Will you tell me who hurt you?" The little girl became sad as she focused on petting Puck, who looked at the little girl and whined as he tried to lick her sadness away.

"My Daddy." The little girl admitted. "He says I'm pretty like Mommy, but better."

"How does he hurt you?" Maya asked with concern, she had an idea, but she still hoped she was wrong.

"He touches me down there. I don't like it." She scrunches her face and tightened her little glove-covered fists.

"I can take you away from him." The little girl looked up at her sharply with watery eyes. "It is not your fault, but what your Dad is doing to you is very wrong and he should be in prison."

"But he's my Daddy…" the little girl tried to protest.
"Not if he does that to you." Maya said in a soft but stern voice.

"You'll keep me safe?" Maya nodded solemnly. "Mommy doesn't know."

"Then when your Dad is behind bars I'll make sure you get back to her, alright?" The little girl smiled thankfully, she loved her Mommy and her Mommy was so nice and kind and not like Daddy. "I'm Maya."

"My name's Melody."

"Want to play with Puck a little longer before we go?" Maya asked. Melody smiled widely in agreement.

Melody's mother didn't know that her daughter had made two very special friends, which were going to help her daughter get the justice she didn't know her daughter needed. All she saw was her eight-year-old daughter playing fetch with another park patron's dog. The older girl looked to be in her mid-teens with dark curly hair, light blue jeans, dark snow boots, and a white winter jacket. She looked away for a few minutes to talk with some of the other parents.

No one noticed when Puck went to chase a ball but didn't come back; or take too much notice of Maya carrying 'Puck' out of the park as she left 'Melody' behind. 'Melody', left behind, puddled around the park for a little bit before going off behind a tree. Once out of sight she disappeared into wisps of blue smoke. Melody's mother noticed her daughter wasn't in her sight and began calling her name, but no answer came back.

On a calm November afternoon in the suburb town outside Manchester, New Hampshire, a little girl named Melody Johnson disappeared in broad daylight, and completely shook the community.

A few days later a note was carefully left on the door of Melody Johnson's house.

Melody's mother was the one who found the note when she went to get the morning newspaper in her tired fatigue. When she read it her whole world shook on it axis.
Dear Johnsons,

Your daughter is safe with me, but she was not safe in your house, so I took her. One of you knows the reason why. Take your stash and turn yourself into the police or face the very public consequences.

Signed,

*Their Awesomeness*

Someone had taken their daughter, their baby, because she was not safe in her own home?! And what was this stash the note mentioned? There were no drugs here! Was there? What was she going to do? Could she believe what the note said, that her daughter was safe with this stranger? What could this stranger know that they'd demand they go to the police to turn themselves in?

Melody's mother was so confused. She didn't touch the note and decided to call the police. Mr. Johnson looked at his wife confused as she raced from the front door and dialed the phone. He saw the note and all blood drained from his face. He didn't touch the note and made an appearance of comforting his wife, after he made sure his photos were well hidden.

The police were there promptly and gave a cursory sweep of the house with K-9's for this supposed stash the note mentioned, assuming it was drugs or guns. They found nothing.

That night, as the snow fell, Mr. Johnson went to the fire pit deep in his backyard and tried to burn all the photos he had. What he didn't know was that someone was watching in the woods that bordered the back of his house and was taking pictures.

The photos had just begun to burn when a menacing growl came from the underbrush. Mr. Johnson froze and looked up to meet a pair of glowing yellow eyes as a large black dog came out, baring its yellow teeth at him. So petrified in his fear he didn't realize that as the black dog walked closer it didn't sink into the snow. Finally tapping into his self-preservation instincts he sprinted back to the house, forgetting the partially burned pictures. The black dog chuffs, and then disappears into blue wisps. A teenage girl comes far enough out of the woods to snag close-up images of the photos that were being burned.

The remnants of footsteps in the woods were distorted from the fresh layer of snow, and any remains of the photos were buried.

For the next few days a large black shaggy dog with yellow-eyes would follow around Mr.
Johnson. It seemed to lurk around corners when no one else was there, baring its teeth silently at him, then disappeared just as quickly as it came when he tried to call attention to it. He had a feeling of why the dog was following him. Whatever it was knew his sins. People had begun to whisper that the stress of his daughter's kidnapping had begun to make him snap. Other's, who knew about what the note said, had begun to think he had something to hide, and it manifested in this delusion of a rabid black dog that was following him.

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**Mid-November 2007, Albany, New York, United States**

It wasn't long after defeating a vamped up Gordon when Dean checked their one of their cellphone messages, seeing that a voice mail was left, from Bobby while they were decapitating a *vamped up Gordon. Seriously?* Like he wasn't a pain in the ass before!

"*Hey Boys, it's Bobby. I might have a case for ya if you're anywhere near Bedford, New Hampshire. A few days ago a little girl was taken from a park in broad daylight. Now, it wouldn't seem all that supernatural if the little girl's Dad hadn't said he started seein' a black dog followin' him everywhere. A black dog that only he keeps seein'. Might be a hellhound case, but not too sure how his kid's abduction fits into it. Figured you might want to check it out.*"

Sam looked at his brother questioningly. "That's pretty weird. Want to go check it out?" Dean closed his phone. "It's pretty close by, about 3hrs."

"Yeah, mind as well. We've travelled farther for less before. What I don't get is why show up when the kid goes missing?" Dean furrowed his eyebrows, grimacing. "If it's a hellhound it should only go after the Dad, and why's the Dad not dead yet?"

Sam shrugged. "Maybe it was kind of like your deal. Maybe it was altered."

"Maybe. But first," Dean headed for the motel bathroom. "I want to get all the vampire, and vampire Gordon stank off me." Sam rolled his eyes as he bandaged his bleeding hands from when he practically decapitated vamp Gordon with razor wire, and sheer adrenaline filled strength.

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**Mid-November 2007, Bedford, New Hampshire, United States**

The Winchesters were up bright and early the following morning and made their way to the suburb
community of Bedford, New Hampshire. They arrived sometime in the afternoon. After fulfilling Dean's demand for pie, they went to the police station as FBI agents and got details on the case. When they got a look at the note they were stumped. It couldn't be a demon deal, because last time they checked, most demons didn't go grabbing kids to keep them safe and demand one of the parents to turn themselves into the police.

After the police station they went to question the parents, again, bupkiss. Neither the Mom, nor the Dad, had a really good bout of fortune within the last ten years that turned their life around, like in most deals. They asked the Dad when he first saw this black dog; it was the night of the day when the note was discovered. The Dad was frazzled and jittery, a dog barking outside had him nearly jumping out of his skin.

"So you haven't seen this dog, Mrs. Johnson?" Sam asked the weary mother who shook her head. Dean walked around the living room looking for any signs of the supernatural.

"No, no one has, other than Pete." She gestured to her husband.

Looking away from a family picture, that had Dean slightly on edge, he looked over at the husband. "Can you tell us about your first encounter with this black dog, Mr. Johnson?"

"I-I was restless, I couldn't sleep, be-because I was worried about my daughter being kidnapped, so I-I went out back to walk around the yard." He stuttered nervously. Sam regarded the man in front of him. Dean went to the backdoor of the house, seeing the faint depression of footprints, slightly filled in from snow those few nights ago.

"In negative degree weather?" Sam furrowed his eyebrows. "It was snowing that night too wasn't it?"

"Y-yes, but the cold felt good and—"

"You said you were walking around?" Dean interrupted from behind. The couple turned to look at Dean. "Cause I can make out your old footprints from the depressions in the backyard there, and they go straight to and from the fire pit you got, way at the back." Dean slanted his face to the side as he grimaced, walking to stand in front of the man who was fiddling with his hands. "Now, that doesn't seem like walking around, and like my partner said it was cold that night. Worried, or not, I don't think I would've walked all the way back to that fire pit, and back again, with no good reason." Dean stared straight into the nervously shifting man's eyes. "If I go back there, and move some of the snow, I'm not going to find anything, am I?"
"Agent Stone, what are you saying?" the wife demanded.

"I think I'm saying that your husband here, is the reason someone felt the need to nab your daughter." Dean said bluntly. The wife looked at Dean speechless, she was suspicious from the note, but with no drugs, or even guns, found she didn't really believe it.

"You're accusing me of being a danger to my daughter! G-get out of my house!" the husband stood up pointing to the door.

"Pete, I understand why you're so angry, but if there is nothing there, then this can all be cleared up by them going to look around." The wife said calmly, though her stomach was filling with dread with the way her husband was acting. What was her daughter in danger of that involved her own father?

Sam and Dean were made to leave the property by the angered and nervous man. Once gone the woman confronted her husband about his behavior, and what he was hiding. She begged him to at least tell her, but he refused. The woman broke down weeping, and wondered how her life fell so completely apart. The husband wondered how he'd keep his ass out of prison.

The boys went to a diner that night as they discussed the case.

"I'm not sure anything supernatural is going on Dean. Maybe, whatever the husband is hiding is making him feel guilty enough to create hallucinations of a black dog." Sam suggested. Dean stabbed at his steak and potatoes, warrior food, with a frown on his face. "Dean, what is it?"

"It was the family portrait in the house. Looked like it was not taken too long before the kid was taken."

"What about it?"

"The little girl was leaning into her Mom and looked like she was trying to cringe away from her Dad's hand on her shoulder." Dean gave him brother a pointed look. "What's jail worthy, harmful to kids, and can't be sniffed out by police dogs?"
A look of dawning horror showed on Sam's face, "No."

"Yep." Dean gave a grim nod, as he forcefully stabbed a roasted potato. "Monsters, I get Sammy, but humans are nuts, and really sick." He snarled in disgust.

"What're we going to do then?" Sam leaned back in his booth wearily; it was obvious the mother didn't know. She was going to be devastated when she finds out.

"See what survived the fire and snow, I guess," Dean muttered around a mouthful of food.

They left the diner to find some dark haired teenage boy taking a picture of the impala. "Aw man, wait till Dad sees this!" they heard him mumble.

"Hey!" Dean called out to the kid. The kid turned showing dark green eyes framed by short curly dark brown hair. He wore a black jacket that was open with a Kansas band t-shirt peaking out, and light blue jeans tucked into black snow boots.

"Hey, this your car? She's beautiful!" the kid grinned brightly. Sam looked at the young man in front of them who looked slightly familiar. Okay, maybe a lot familiar but he just couldn't place it.

"Yeah she is," Dean grinned with a broad smile as he patted the top of the car affectionately. "You a car enthusiast, or something?"

The kid shook his head, "Not really. Know some makes and models, but not a lot. I just like the way classic cars look, ya know?" He gave a shrug. "What is she by the way?"

"1967 Chevy Impala." Dean said proudly, puffing his chest a little.

"'67? Wow! She's forty years old?! She looks like she could be new!" the kid said in awe.

Sam snorted, "It helps when you have a car nut and auto junkie as your brother." The kid laughed while Dean rolled his eyes at the teasing.
"Bitch."

"Jerk." Sam said without preamble. "Anyways, it was nice meeting you…?"

"Max," the kid supplied with an easy smile that Sam returned.

"Right, well Dean and I need to get going." He thumbed behind his shoulder.

"Yeah, sure thing." Max nodded.

"Later shrimp!" Dean grinned at the short adolescent, who pouted at him.

"Bye Sam," Max waved, then gave a light glared at Dean, "Bye Assface." He walked away around the corner. The goodbye seemed a little familiar, but Sam brushed it off. It wasn't until he got into the impala that he noticed something.

"Dean, I didn't tell Max my name, and neither did you." Sam and Dean shared wide-eyed looks. They quickly got out of the impala and ran in the direction Max went, only to find he'd already disappeared.

"Son of a bitch!" Dean cursed. They climbed back into the impala and drove off to their seedy motel to wait till it was later in the night and most people were sleeping.

It was late at night when Pete Johnson went down the stairs into his kitchen for a drink of water. As he filled his glass from the tap an all too familiar growl echoed behind him. Shakily he turned around to find the black dog that's been stalking him. Its hackles raised and yellow teeth bore in a threatening snarl. He threw the glass at the dog but it dodged by jumping back, letting the glass shatter on the floor.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?!!" Pete yelled. "LEAVE ME ALONE!!" He gripped the counter behind him, his eyes wide in fright, as he watched the black dog change shape. It turned into his daughter, Melody.

"Wha—Melody?" he stammered out. Her hair was stringy and her face slightly hollow and gaunt,
her eyes shallow and slightly sunken, and pale, she was so pale her lips were a bluish purple.

"Why you touch me Daddy? I didn't like it. It hurt so much. Why did you do this to me?" her voice was hallow and raspy. "Was it my fault?" black tears began falling from her eyes. "Why?"

"No, please, leave me alone." Pete's whole body shook. "LEAVE ME ALONE!" he shouted.

"No." her raspy voice filled with finality. "I won't. You didn't when I asked you to, so why should I when you ask? As long as no one knows, I'll never leave you Daddy." She appeared to teleport a couple of feet closer to him, till she was just a foot away. Pete screamed bloody murder.

This was when Sam and Dean burst in through the back door with shotguns filled with rock salt and iron crowbars. Melody looked at the intruders and vanished.

"Shit," Dean cursed. "Is the kid actually dead now?" he asked his brother who was looking at Pete. Dean turned to look at him as well.

"It's all my fault. I did this. She'll never leave me alone. All my fault..." Pete had collapsed to the ground hugging his knees, muttering as he stared blankly ahead. "I need to confess, or she'll never leave me alone."

"Pete, what did you do?" Sam asked, dreading the answer that would confirm his and Dean's suspicions.

"I raped my daughter and took pornographic pictures of her." Pete whispered out.

Even though Dean suspected he didn't want to be proven right, and exploded at the man, "YOU DID WHAT?! She's your kid?! Why would you ever—"

"You raped our daughter?!" came a voice from the living room entry way. It was the mother and she looked at her husband in disgust and horror. "How could you! She's only 7 years old!" Tears began streaming down her face her knees quaking. Sam moved to hold her up.

"I couldn't help it. She was soooo beautiful..." Pete said slightly dreamily. Dean saw red and
punched Pete into unconsciousness.

Sam looked worriedly at the woman in his arms as she sobbed into his chest muttering, "I didn't know…God, how didn't I know."

Dean called the police about what occurred, minus anything supernatural. The police arrested Pete, took possession of his laptop where they found the digital copies of the photos he mentioned, and raked through the fire pit, finding unidentifiable remnants of photographs. When the police returned to the station they would find an envelope containing pictures of Pete trying to destroy the physical photos he had. There was no escaping a prison sentence for Pete Johnson.

After that night Sam and Dean hung out in their motel room trying to piece together what happened.

"So we've got the kidnapping of the girl, the black dog haunting the Dad which turned into the ghost of the girl, and Dad going nuts and confessing to his crimes against his, still missing, daughter. Not to mention that suspicious Max kid." Dean listed off. He couldn't figure out what kind of monster, if it was one that they were dealing with.

"Don't forget the note, Dean." Sam added. "It seemed to demand justice, in order for the girl to be returned."

"Yeah, but the girl is still missing, if not actually dead." Dean pointed out as he took a swig of his beer. Sam was about to continue when there was a knock at their door. They looked at each other confused before Sam goes to carefully open the door; his eyes go wide when he sees who's standing on the other side.

It was Melody Johnson, alive and well. Dean comes up behind Sam, his own eyes going wide in surprise.

"No freakin' way." Dean muttered.

Melody stared up at the two intimidating men, shifting nervously on her feet.

"Hi, I'm Melody." She offered the envelope in her hand to Sam, who was taking up the whole doorway with his bulk. "This is from my angel friend. She said you'd take me home to Mommy
now that Da—Pete's gone." Melody looked at them expectantly.

Sam shook his head to clear his thoughts before taking the envelope from the little girl. "Yeah, no problem. Um, do you want to come in?" He moved out of the way, shoving Dean a little so the little girl could make her way into the motel room. Both brothers watch as she entered their room and made her way to sit on the couch, looking around curiously.

"Gimme that." Dean grabbed the envelope out of Sam's hands and began reading the letter. "Son of a bitch." He shoved the note at Sam to read.

Hey Losers,

I'd say nice to see you again, but I'm still a little salty about Ohio. But, hey, congratulations! You two stumbled onto my first stint as a Trickster! I think I did pretty good. Punished the Dad, got him sent to prison, and kept Melody safe with Puck and me. Just desserts well served!

Since you assfaces are already here, can you drop Melody off at her Mom's? I would do it myself, but, you know, trying not to be all too suspicious, and you losers are playing FBI aren't you? Not too weird for Federal agents to find a missing persons after all. Thanks a bunch!

Hugs and Kisses,

M

"No way." Sam let out a gasping laugh. "Have to hand it to her Dean, she did good."

"Yeah, yeah. Let's just get Melody back to her Mom, okay?" Dean huffed, as he turned to Melody. "C'mon kid!"

It was a very tearjerker moment when Melody was re-united with her Mom, both Sam and Dean found themselves squished in a tight hug from the relieved mother, Sam took it in stride, but Dean coughed awkwardly afterwards, too touchy feely for him. After they left, the mother asked her daughter about the person that had had her.

"She's my angel Mommy, even though she says she's a Tricky, I'm pretty sure she's an angel." Melody answered honestly.
"Why do you say that Melody?"

"I prayed for someone to help me, and she came! She's my Tricky Angel!" Melody said brightly. "She tried to tell me no, that she didn't hear prayers, but she still came!"

"Are you going to pray to her again? Even if she might not hear you?" Her mother questioned. She was a little worried about the person who had taken her daughter, but, then again, this was the same person that had saved Melody and punished her despicable husband. Maybe it wouldn't hurt to pray to her too.

"Yes! 'Cause maybe one day she will hear them, and she needs to know how much I loves her for saving me!" Melody said with conviction. The mother smiled warmly at her daughter.

"Then I better pray to her too," Melody looked at her mother in slight surprise. "After all, how else will she know how grateful I am for her helping you when I couldn't, and taking care of you? Do you know her name?"

Melody nodded, "Huh huh! Her name is Maya, and she's my Tricky Angel!" Her mother scooped her up in another hug and held her tight in her arms. Even though Maya had caused her such grief by taking Melody from her, she couldn't be more thankful for her intervention.

_I don't know if you'll ever hear this prayer, but Maya, thank you. Thank you for saving and protecting my daughter. Thank you for punishing my horrible, soon-to-be, ex-husband. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, and with all my soul._

The mother put all of her heart and soul into that prayer, a prayer that wouldn't reach it's intended recipient's ears.

Further up the street Maya watched the reunion of Melody and her Mom with a smile on her face. Puck nudged her leg. She looked down as Puck jerked his head in an _it's-time-to-go_ motion. Maya rolled her eyes and followed Puck back to the place they'd been staying.

"So, I think that went very well." Came the voice of her Dad as she opened the door. He was lying on his back on her bed with his hands behind his head. "Didn't expect you to kidnap the kid
"I didn't want her staying in that house with that—*that monster.*" Disgust and venom dripped from her lips.

"True, but the trick wasn't all that funny." Maya rolled her eyes at his criticism.

"But, there was some irony. Just as he was making her constantly afraid, I made him constantly afraid. A little taste of his own medicine." Maya smirked. "So?"

"Sooooo, what?" Gabriel teased, smirking at the 'really?' bitch-face she was giving him.

"Oh, you know, talk about me leaving to go out on my own?"

"What makes you thing you proved yourself?" Maya was stopped from protesting when Gabriel held his hand up. It was a conflicting two weeks as he watched his daughter do her stuff. On the one hand, he wanted her to succeed, but on the other, he really didn't want her to succeed, because if she did she'd be leaving. So, it was a bittersweet moment when she not only got just desserts for the little girl, but also danced around the Winchesters. "You passed, as much as I hate to say it." He sighed sitting up to watch his daughter pump her fist in victory with a wide smile. Gabriel was so proud of her, but also sad. His little girl wasn't so little and she hardly needed him anymore. Shaking his head it was time to get down to setting down some rules.

"C'mere jumping bean, we need to go over your little solo road trip." Gabriel motioned for Maya to sit beside him on the bed. "First things first, no leaving till after the holidays. Get some last minute practice and I want you around." Maya smiled and gave him a nod. "Good, next, you'll call me or text me every night. It's non-negotiable!" he pointed at Maya as she opened her mouth to protest. "And, let me know the town where you plan to set up shop." Gabriel raised his eyebrow at her as she gave a nod. "Finally, no hunting." He looked at her seriously. It was one thing to go after humans, it was an entirely different thing going after monsters that Hunters do. Maya looked at him with wide eyes.

"Wha—? Hunting? Why would I—?" her shoulders sagged when it was obvious he wasn't going to believe whatever she was going to say. "Bobby?"

"Bobby." Gabriel confirmed. Oh yes, that old Hunter had called him about *that* conversation and how he didn't approve, and told her as much. Good to see they both agree on that.
"He pretty much gave me the riot act for that. I didn't plan to do any hunting while I'm gone, especially if I'm by myself." Maya sighed, she had a feeling she'd never live that conversation down. "Bobby already made me promise not to, and to call him if I stumble across something."

"Good, that goes double for me, you don't go after anything not human, alright?"

"Promise." Maya smiled sincerely.

Gabriel nodded, "Good, also you know if you're ever in trouble to call me, right?"

"Duh!" She snickered.

"You're hilarious." He said dryly. "C'mon, let's go back to Manchester. It'll be December in a couple of days and I want to decorate!"

Chapter End Notes

Also I didn't mean for Sam and Dean to stumble onto her, but she forgot to tell Bobby of what she was doing and the boys were up in Albany, New York not too far from Bedford, New Hampshire around the date I had decided to use.

So it became longer than I had anticipated?
Gabriel was in the kitchenette with Maya making a slew of freshly made Christmas cookies. Both were covered with flour, spices, and egg here and there. They could never seem to bake without becoming complete messes themselves. Neither Gabriel nor Maya really celebrated the religious aspects of Christmas, but more the general meaning behind the holidays. After all, as far as Maya knew, her Dad was the Norse pagan god of mischief and chaos, why would he actually celebrate a Christian holiday? No, Gabriel had started celebrating after Maya was born as a way to celebrate what they had together, family. It also helped that there were lots of sweets and goodies and presents.

They were about to start icing the gingerbread army they created, when Maya's phone went off. Looking at the caller ID she saw that it was Bobby. Quickly wiping as much gunk off her hands she answered the phone.

"Hey Bobby, Merry Christmas!" she greeted happily, sticking her tongue out when her Dad rolled his eyes in exaggeration.

"Merry Christmas My." Bobby chuckled. "Listen, this isn't much of a social call as it is more of a business one. I need some confirmation on a bit of info on a type of pagan god."

"Oh, sure thing, and if I don't know," She looked at her Dad as he tried to shake his head no, even making exaggerated 'no!' movements with his arms. "I'm sure my Dad would love to help." He threw his arms up in defeat and pouted. Maya rolled her eyes, putting her phone on speaker and on a clean spot on the counter.

"Thanks kid. The boys seemed to have stumbled upon a winter solstice god, Hold Nickar. Someone's been given a shop owner meadowsweet wreaths to sell—"

"MEADOWSWEET WREATHS?!" Maya shouted in disbelief. "You gotta kill the fucking bastard with an evergreen stake! Don't got a stake? Use the fucking Christmas tree and shove it up his ass!" Maya ranted. Then she began ranting about setting their house on fire. Gabriel casually grabbed the phone and took it off speaker.

"Sup Hunter." He greeted cheerily as he watched his daughter rant angrily, even if he was mad
from the memory of what happened as well, Maya honestly looked like a puffed up kitten when she was trying to rant angrily.

"Loki, what's got Maya all riled up?"

"Couple a Christmases ago Maya had gone to a local shop and bought a really nice smelling wreath." Gabriel waited, knowing Bobby would make the connection.

"Balls." Bobby cursed. "Meadowsweet?"

"Yep. I was away most of that night, but got home just in time to find Maya gone and hear some loud thumping across rooftops. I tracked him down and tackled that asshole. Told him he should know better than to snatch another god's kid, half-human or not." He finished with a growl.

"Was Maya okay?" Bobby asked concerned.

"Yeah, a bit shaken up, but she was alright. She was, however, royally pissed off when I told what he wanted her for."

"Of course I was PISSED! He wanted to EAT ME! Do I really look that delicious?!!" Maya yelled, throwing her arms up in exasperation.

There was a pause of silence between Bobby and Gabriel over the phone.

"Did you get that?" Gabriel watched as his daughter fumed. Yeah, just like an angry puffed up kitten.

First vampires, then pagan gods that demanded human sacrifice. Does every human preying monster on this blue marble want to eat her? Can none of them tell she ain't all human and probably shouldn't eat her? Or, does she have an invisible sign that said 'Come eat me! I'm delicious!' Were Maya's general thoughts.

"Yeah, I heard. So, evergreen stakes?" Bobby asked to confirm.
"Straight through the heart. Have fun!" Gabriel snapped the cellphone shut, ending the call. "Want to skip the icing and angrily eat your half of the gingerbread army?" Maya scoffed at him.

"Psssh, no! They need icing you philistine!" Maya got up and went back to the table with all the cookies. "If we weren't icing them, then we might as well have just made them round and boring, instead of awesome gingerbread men." Gabriel laughed as he joined his daughter in icing the cookies. They got through a third before they got lazy and just decided to drizzle the icing in large sweeps across all the cookies.

"Hope they gank that son of a bitch." Maya muttered at one point.

"Language?" Gabriel asked hopefully.

Maya snorted. "Bitch, please."

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December 24 2007, Ypsilanti, Michigan, United States

Later that night…

Sam and Dean woke up tied back to back in a couple of dining room chairs, their arms bound to the armrests, in the way to festive kitchen of the Carrigan's. Who were both gods of the winter solstice. Not one, but two gods. The Winchester luck holding true to form, right there.

"Dean? You okay?" Sam asked, the first to consciousness, as he heard his brother stirring behind him.

"Yeah, I think so." Dean groaned, that was one hard hit to the head.

Sam released a long sigh. "So, I guess we're dealing with Mr. and Mrs. God." He nodded his head. "Nice to know."
"Yeah." Dean agreed. A pair of footsteps was heard coming into the kitchen.

"Oooooh, and here we thought you two lazybones were gonna sleep straight through all the fun stuff." Said Mrs. God cheerily, as Mr. God walked around the kitchen island with a smoking pipe in his mouth.

"And miss all this? Nah, we're partyers." Dean said sarcastically.

"Isn't he just a kick in the pants, honey?" Mr. God smiled at the Mrs. "You're Hunters is what you are." Mrs. God busied herself around the kitchen and started putting on her apron, over her bright red Christmas sweater.

"And you're pagan gods. So why don't we just call it even and go our separate ways?" Dean smirked, not really believing it would work.

"So what? You can bring back more Hunters and kill us?" Mr. God took out his pipe chuckling. "I don't think so."

"You should have thought about that before snacking on humans." Sam pointed out.

"Oh, now, don't get all wet."

"Oh, why, we used to take over a hundred tributes a year. And that's a fact." Mrs. God placed a napkin over Dean's lap. "Now what do we take? What, two? Three?" She walked over and did the same for Sam.

"One, that one year when I had to give back that second one. Remember? I came home all bruised?" Mr. God reminisced.

"Oh yes I remember." Mrs. God looked at Sam and Dean. "Silly goose here picked up a thirteen, fourteen year old girl—"

"I thought you only nabbed the adults?" Dean demanded.
"Oh I would've, but she was home alone, and, well, I didn't like it, but she just made the cut-off age." Mr. God pointed out with a shrug. "Little did I know, that little treat wasn't all human. Wouldn't you believe it, Madge? A Trickster half-breed. What a world we live in." He gave a little laugh. "Her father was right mad when he caught up to me. I was lucky he didn't kill me on the spot and was more concerned for his daughter."

"Honestly, Edward, how you didn't smell her pagan heritage I'll never know." Mrs. God shook her head fondly at Mr. God. "Well, other than that little kerfuffle, we average only two or three a year."

"Hardy Boys here make five." Mr. God pointed out smiling.

"Now, that's not so bad, is it?" Mrs. God asked delighted.

For Sam and Dean, that was a few too many. It was by another stroke of luck, as the gods were about to take Dean's tooth when the doorbell rang. They both answered it and came back to find Sam and Dean out of their binds. The brothers were able to make makeshift stakes out of the Christmas tree and stab the two gods in the heart, killing them.

Driving to the motel…

"Well, that's one way to spend Christmas, stabbing Mr. and Mrs. God." Dean chuckled. "Hey, Sam, you think they were talking about Goldy?"

Sam looked over at his brother nodding. "Probably, I mean, how many female half-Tricksters have you heard about?" Then he gave his brother an exasperated look. "And really? Goldy? You know she has a name."

"Yeah," Dean shrugged. "But I like Goldy." He smirked. Sam just rolled his eyes at his brother.

January 20 2008, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, United States
It'd been about a couple of weeks since Maya left her Dad with her faithful companion Puck at her side. She'd been taking in some of the sights, playing some well-deserved tricks here and there, before moving on before a Hunter could catch wind of her. Which brings her south to the town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Why here? Well, there was a craft expo going on for local small business owners and local artists. It was her creative and curious side that was wondering what kind of art these people were making and selling. There was even a pottery competition going on.

And if she happened upon some well deserving targets among the pompous assholes of the art community, well win-win.

The place was full of the locals as they perused the stalls and looked at the pieces submitted for the pottery competition. Puck being the awesome medical assist dog that he was was able to come in with her, as long as he was on a leash. Maya smiled, as she looked at all the creative art wares for sale, and then began looking at the contest pieces. Basically, take a ballot and put it in the box with your favorite, the most ballots wins the contest. Maya lined up with her ballot and looked at all the different pots and plates, a lot of them were really good, others average and some that were… what's the polite way of saying this? Too avant-garde? They weren't the best.

When Maya was passing one of those pieces her attention all of a sudden felt drawn to it. She tried to look away, but couldn't. Dark whispers telling her to vote for this piece of trash pot. Maya glared at it, but that's when she sensed it. Something dark and evil that emanated from it, that held an undercurrent of something familiar. That undercurrent was magic, but not the pagan magic she was used to from being around her Dad.

Wait, dark magic? Holy shit! Witchcraft! There be a witch in town!

Maya fought off the weak compulsion spell and quickly placed her ballot in the box for the next decent piece she saw. She looked behind her to see more than a third of people putting their ballots in for that awful pottery piece. No wonder the spell was weak. Last thing the entrant needed was someone wondering how he or she received all the ballots in the contest for a landslide win.

Well, that was just cheating. Maya reached out her senses to locate the hex bag, which of course was in the fucking pot. She silently thanked all the games of hide-n-seek she played with her Dad to exercise this sense. With a snap, her right coat pocket had the hex bag, and the people behind her were free to vote for the best pieces.

Now, Maya had a little problem as she left the building with Puck. She had a witch's hex bag. She may not have thought this through completely. Bobby was going to ream her ass. Maya looked at Puck when he let out a huff at her, his little doggy face looking like it was scolding her. Great. Even her dog felt the need to scold her.
"I know, I know. Let's just get back to the motel. Bobby'll know what to do…after chewing me out." Puck snorted in agreement. "Good to know whose side you're on."

When back at the motel Maya called Bobby about what she found. She didn't need to put the phone on speaker to be able to hear what Bobby was saying he was so loud. Bobby told her he'd get someone to come out to take care of the witch, who knew what their next spell would be.

Maya snuck off to behind the motel and lit the hex bag on fire, watching it burn in blue flames, the feeling of evil disappearing. Not really feeling comfortable wondering around a town after dark with a witch in it, Maya opted to stay in her motel room and order pizza.

In Renee Van Allen's house, that afternoon, her little alter for her weak compulsion spell burst into blue flames. She didn't find the destroyed alter till she returned from the craft expo. She was confused, worried, and scared. What had happened?

Later that night, Janet Dutton became a victim of witchcraft that caused her to lose her teeth and choke on her own blood. Shit was escalating, and Maya was stuck. On one hand, she could book it out of town, but on another, what if whomever Bobby sent doesn't find the witch in time and they kill someone else? Maya knew there was no way she was facing a fucking witch, but that didn't mean she couldn't do some of the research…technically, not hunting.

"Puck, we've got some snooping to do." Maya said determinedly. Puck let out a grumbly growl.

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**January 22 2008, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, United States**

Sam and Dean arrived at the motel that Bobby told them to go to for cheap room and Wi-Fi.

"So, any idea who would want to hurt Janet? Husband said she was liked by everybody." Dean asked as he exited the impala. Sam had a puzzled thinking face.

"But you said the husband was a little dodgy when you asked him about it." Sam pondered, as he closed his door to the impala. "What if Janet's not the victim?"
"She's dead, Sam, I'm pretty sure that screams *murder victim*." Dean deadpanned, giving his younger brother a 'duh' look.

"Well, yeah, but what if her death was a means to an end? A way of hurting someone who cared about her?" Sam proposed.

"Like her grieving husband?" Dean suggested. "He probably knew someone and pissed them off, it'd explain his behavior."

They both entered the front room of the motel and were met with a familiar voice.

"Hey Assface," Maya greeted Dean. "Gigantor." She nodded to Sam, her face with a giant grin on it. She was leaning up against the empty front counter with Puck sitting at her heels, looking steely at Sam. Oh yes, he remembered the last time he met the giant man.

"What you doing here Goldy?" Dean narrowed his eyes. He was a little suspicious now. Was Maya the one practicing black magic? He doubted it, but couldn't be too sure.

Maya scrunched her face at Dean's choice in nickname, "*Goldy*? Seriously? That's the best you've got? I've got a name too you know." Her voice filled with annoyance and slight disbelief.

"Oh—I know," Dean smirked. "I just like Goldy better." He was slightly impressed when Maya gave him an *almost* Sam worthy bitch-face.

"Maya were you responsible for killing Janet Dutton using witchcraft?" Sam showed her the hex bag he had in his pocket. Maya looked at him shocked, angry, and…disgusted?

"First off, I'm not a fucking *witch*," her glare was scathing. She could understand their suspicion, but that didn't mean she had to like it. "Second, I was the one that called Bobby in the first place about finding traces of black magic. Finally," she gave the two brothers a very pointed stare. "You're not dealing with one witch. You boys got yourself a damn coven." Maya turned quickly and hit the bell on the desk.

Before the brothers could pepper her with questions the absent attendant arrived from the back. Sam hastily stuffed the hex bag back into his pocket.
"Ah, Maya, what can I do for you?" the blonde haired male receptionist inquired.

"Hey Mike, can I transfer my last two nights to these two?" Maya requested over her shoulder. The attendant gave a curious look, and then pondered on her request.

"Yes that's fine." He nodded. "Room's paid in full, so it's no trouble changing over names." Mike pulled up some papers on a clipboard and put it on the counter, pushing it forward. "Can I ask why?"

"They're friends of a good friend of mine. We were going to meet up, but something's come up last minute, and I gotta bail on them." Maya shrugged looking apologetic. "Figured, as an apology gift, I'd give 'em my last couple nights here." Sam stepped forward to Maya's right and took the clipboard, writing down his and his brother's aliases and information for the room transfer. Dean kept his eyes on Maya, and Puck kept his little doggy eyes on Sam.

With Sam and Mike busy with the clipboard and no one else at the sign in desk Maya looked at the staring Dean. With a smirk, she flashed a small light purple ring around her pupils, getting a glimpse at his soul. Dean's body tensed seeing the change in her eyes and glared suspiciously, wondering what the hell she did. Felt like he got deep scanned to his very core.

Mike took the clipboard back and looked over the information Sam put down. "Alright, looks good." He nodded. "Enjoy your stay guys, and nice meeting you Maya."

"You too Mike," Maya smiled over her shoulder at him. "Alright, boys, follow me to the room, if you please." She said sassily, as she walked with Puck past Dean, a smirk on her face. Dean scowled at her, before looking at Sam who just shrugged his shoulders helplessly and followed Maya out. Dean followed reluctantly.

"So, what makes you think we've got a coven on our hands, Goldy?" Dean asked once they were out of earshot of the motel attendant.

"I did some snooping." Maya admitted as she got to the motel room and turned around to face them. Her eyes flashed the purple ring again as she looked at Sam, her shoulders relaxing a little bit, though there was a bit of confusion in her eyes afterwards. Sam was surprised at the purple ring, but he remembered what Bobby had told them when he first met Maya. It definitely felt like how Bobby described it, like she peered right into his soul.
"Okay, what the hell are you doing with your eyes?" Dean demanded angrily.

Sam answered for Maya, "She's peaking at our souls." Maya nodded at him.

"Basically, yeah." Maya shrugged. "I don't like it, but I'm not about to go into an enclosed room with two big Hunters and no idea of who they are."

Dean stared at Sam then at Maya. "Well, I feel a little violated now." Maya huffed a laugh and rolled her eyes as she unlocked the door.

She looked back at Dean, "Imagine how I feel? Feel like a peeping Tom violating your privacy." She walked inside the room, her back completely exposed and the only exit filled up by Hunters. It didn't escape either of Dean or Sam's notice of the trust she just put in them to not attack her.

Maya sits in one of the chairs at the kitchenette table with a neat stack of papers. "Couple days ago I went to the local craft expo the town was having to look around. A part of the expo was a pottery contest where patrons voted on their favorite piece." She looked at the boys, Sam was obviously willing to listen to her, but Dean looked skeptical.

"What does arts and crafts have anything to do with killing someone?" Dean asked sarcastically, crossing his arms.

Sam turned to his brother and hissed, "Dean!"

"What? It's a valid question!" Dean defended.

Sam rolled his eyes before looking back at a less than amused Maya. "Continue, Maya." He encouraged as he sat across from her. Dean begrudgingly took the last seat.

"Thanks, Sam." She sniffed as she looked at Dean. "And Dean, it's relevant because one of the most ugliest pieces I've seen was trying to compel me to vote for it. I pulled myself out of it and was able to pick up on the dark magic emanating from it." Sam's eyes widened in surprise, Dean raised an eyebrow. "I don't like cheaters, so, I ported the hex bag from the pot into my pocket."
"Wait," Sam put up a hand. "You can sense black magic?" Sam asked amazed.

Maya shrugged. "Dad and I used to play hide-n-seek, a way to encourage me to try and sense his trickster magic. Magic's got similar undercurrents, but where it comes from tends to be where the differences are." Sam looked like he wanted to burst with how many questions he wanted to ask.

"You said ported the hex bag, what were you talking about?" Dean asked. Maya looked at him.

"Sam's seen it." She motioned to Sam. "In Ohio, I teleported a knife to my hand. And, before you ask, I can only do it to non-living things." Dean looked slightly impressed, but kept his eyes hard.

"Anyways," Maya continued. "I get back to the motel and called Bobby about what I found…and did." Maya sucked in a breath with a grimace. "Bobby was not happy with me grabbing that hex bag. Told me if I was stupid again he'd shoot my ass with rock salt." She gulped from the memory of that conversation.

Dean snorted with a grin, "Sounds like Bobby."

"So," Sam attracted her attention. "What did you do with hex bag?"

"Burned it, like Bobby told me to," She stated with a shrug. Her eyes narrowed as she frowned. "That night Janet Dutton was killed and from the sounds of it, it was from the black art of *bitchcraft.*"

Dean snickered at her play on words. Sam rolled his eyes, but his own lips were quirked in a small smile.

"So the one who made this pot, you think she killed Janet?" Sam asked.

Maya shook her head. "Nope. Different bitch. The pot that offended my creative sensibilities belonged to Renee Van Allen, who happened," Maya reached for the stack of papers she printed out to show Sam. "to win a lot of craft competitions over the last couple months with God awful pottery. Not only that, but her at-home pottery business is getting off the ground. I've been to her website. Her products suck." Maya said with utmost seriousness. She then pulled out a town map
that had circles around some houses in a suburb.

"I got her address and went to walk Puck around that neighborhood to see if it was actually her with the black magic and not a well meaning friend." Maya explained. "Her house definitely gave off some traces of black magic, so the hex bag I found was most likely hers. Now, imagine my surprise when going down the street my awesomeness picked up on more black magic coming from different houses." Maya pointed at two circles side-by-side. "I can't remember which house, but one of them had some out of season plants that were not normal for a suburban garden."

Sam was obviously impressed as he looked over the notes she collected and the mapped she marked. "Maya this is really impressive." Maya gave a proud smile.

"Yeah, but how do we know you're not playing a trick?" Dean asked suspicious, not wanting to admit he was also slightly impressed at her amateur sleuthing. "Have a little laugh, while we try to save lives with your bogus info." Maya's smile faltered at that.

"Dean," Sam looked at him warningly.

"It's fine Sam," Maya stopped him. "I may be a Trickster, but I'm also human, Dean." She looked Dean straight in the eyes. "I don't play deadly tricks, and that's exactly what you're saying I'm doing. I did this because I wanted to give you a hand to prevent any more deaths from happening." She gave him a hard stare, her shoulders tense. "If you don't want to believe me, fine. Besides," Maya gestured to her work. "This was just a suggestion." Maya stood up from her seat and walked over to one of the double beds that had her bag on it.

Sam was giving Dean a disapproving look.

Dean mouthed 'what?' at him.

Sam's eyes shifted pointedly to Maya then back to Dean. Maya walked silently to the door with her bag, and Puck following obediently.

Dean sighed, rolling his eyes as his shoulders slumped.

"Goldy wait," Dean got up and stood to face Maya. Maya's gold eyes took him in, but her face remained blank. "Most of your info is guess work, from an ability that you have, that me and Sam
had never worked with before. So, I'm a little suspicious of its accuracy." Maya gives a nod, conceding the point. "But, I'll try to keep the coven idea in mind."

Maya smiled. "I'd also keep in mind of how could one person go from a weak compulsion spell, to murder in one night."

"She's got a point Dean." Sam piped up. "Winning a craft contest to murder is a pretty big leap for one person to make."

Dean rolled his eyes still unsure. "We'll see." Dean turned back to the girl at the door. "You hanging around? See if I prove you wrong?" Dean smirked, teasing a little.

Maya gave a snort of amusement. "Sorry Dean, but I've got a bus to catch."

"What? Why?" Sam asked, Maya could be really helpful and she seems to want to help.

"One," she held up a finger, "other than being kidnapped by supernatural creatures, I'm pretty damn green." Dean snorted at that. "Second, because I'm so damn green it wouldn't be a good idea to go up against one witch, let alone a coven." She shot Dean a look. She still thinks she's right about there being a coven. "Finally, Bobby would skin me, and you two, alive if I went on a hunt." Not to mention her Dad, but they didn't need to know that.

"So, good luck guys." Maya waved goodbye and stepped out of the motel room, closing the door behind her. She was about to reach the street when she heard Sam call her name behind her.

"Maya!" Sam jogged up to her. "Hey, before you go can I ask you something?"

Maya raised her eyebrow at him. Didn't she give them all she had on the case? "Uh, sure Sam. Shoot."

"When you looked at my soul," he shifted nervously. "What did you see?" His eyes nervous and uncertain.

"Seriously? Why do you want to know?" Maya was surprised. Sure there was a little something
funky going on with his soul, but it wasn't that concerning. Sam's soul was beating that black stuff back like a fucking champ!

"I—" Sam hesitated, he wondered what Maya would think of him when he told her. "W-when I was six months old, a demon bled into my mouth, tainting me, giving me visions."

"Woah," well that explained some things. "Why would it do that?" she asked curious.

Sam looked at her. She wasn't afraid, surprised and curious yeah, but not afraid. "To open the Hell Gate in Wyoming and lead an army of demons." This would make her nerv—

"Did you?" Or not? Sam shook his head. Maya just looked at him, with warm eyes, waiting for his response.

"No, there were other kids like me. I-I didn't make the cut. Some other guy named Jake opened the gate. Me, Dean, Bobby, and our friend Ellen went to stop him, or at least close it again. We ended up doing the later."

"So, did a whole bunch of demons got out when the gate was open?" Sam nodded; he looked ready for her to yell at him. "No wonder Bobby told me to watch out for demons."

Sam's face creased in confusion. "You're not mad at me and Dean?" Now Maya looked at him in confusion.

"Why the hell would I be? You didn't open the gate, you closed it, and if you didn't there'd be a fuck-ton more demons out and about." Incredulity in her voice. Tension that had risen in Sam's shoulders left as he relaxed.

"Most Hunters have been blaming us, saying we should have stopped it all together." Sam gave her a sad, but grateful, smile.

"Did you give it your all?"

"Of course."
"Then screw everyone else." She told him with conviction. How dare those assholes make this gentle giant feel bad for something he had no control over, and did everything he could to stop it.

Sam couldn't help the laugh that escaped him. She sounded so much like Dean right then, down to the look of steely determination she was giving him.

"I also wouldn't worry too much about that taint you got." Sam stopped laughing.

"So I am—"

"No!" Maya pointed at him, with a look that dared him to continue. "I said no worrying! The taint is so fucking small it's laughable. I laugh at it! Ha ha ha!" She did a mock superhero laugh, in a superhero stance of fist on her hips, legs spread. "It's like a small black sludgy spot, and your soul? It's fighting it like a champion boxer! It's so bright and good that that demon blood you're worrying about can't make much headway. Long as you don't give in to the dark stuff you'll be fine, Sam."

"Dark stuff?"

"Well, I'm no expert but it's like," Maya paused to think how to explain it. "Killing for the sake of killing, or giving into blind rage or obsessive revenge. Demons are vile creatures. So, it makes sense that vile acts and losing yourself in them would make it easier to blacken your soul. You get what I'm saying?"

"Yeah, I think so." Sam tested, still unsure, especially since him and his brother kill things for a living.

"Oh good, 'cause I'm barely getting it myself." She smirked at him, which of course caused him to laugh a little.

"You saw Dean's soul right?" Sam asked curiously. "How was it?"

"Righteous." Maya answered with a shrug. "Best way I can describe it."
Bark! Puck got both their attention as he looked up at Maya with pointed eyes. Time to go.

"I gotta go Sam." Maya smiled apologetically.

"Right. And Maya?" Sam looked at her like one small weight was lifted, something still weighed on him, but Maya didn't know what. "Thanks."

"Don't mention it." She smiled widely; at least Sam for sure liked her. Dean seemed to flip flop a little. "See you when I see you." She said cheekily as she gave him an exaggerated two-fingered salute.

Maya and puck made their way to the bus station and was on the bus going somewhere in America. She looked out the window as she thought about the two Hunter's souls. What she tried to say to Sam was very true, to her at least, but she wondered if she should have told him what she saw briefly on Dean's soul.

It looked like someone stamped their name on it, but not in any language she's ever seen. It's probably nothing important. Some souls are just that unique.

That night…

Sam and Dean had walked into Amanda Burns' darkened house, finding her on her coffee table in her nightgown dead, with three long vertical gashes on her forearms from elbows to wrist.

Dean suggested it might be suicide, after she believed she killed Paul Dutton. Then Sam found the hex bag wedged in the corner of the glass coffee table. He tossed to Dean.

"Looks like we got a hit, huh?" Dean opened the hex bag; finding ingredients, including a razor wrapped in Amanda's hair. "A little witch-on-witch violence."

"I guess." Sam said as he watched Dean call the police, hanging up before giving them a name.

"Why are witches ganking each other?" Dean asked looking at Amanda's body.
"I don't know, but I think Maya was right." Sam looked at Dean seriously. "Looks like we might got a coven on our hands."

Dean bit his bottom lip and tilted his head to the side away from his brother. "Is this also one of the houses that she marked too?"

Sam smirked as he pulled the map she made out of his pocket. He opened it and looked for 309 Mayfair Circle. "Yep, right there. 309 Mayfair Circle, circled in red."

"Son of a bitch." Dean cursed. "Give me that map." He looked at it as he walked out of the room and the house, Sam following behind his slightly amused.
AN: This has been asked before, on FanFiction.net, about how weak and mortal Maya is even though she's a nephilim child from an archangel. I'm pretty sure I mentioned this but her circumstances are different than Jack's. The biggest one being the suppression sigils that bottle most of her grace inside her soul, so she can only really access a little bit, and with most of it contained in her soul and her wing "birth marks" her body isn't as hardy or as strong as Jack's, so mortal. She gets a little more powerful as she grows older and the sigils weaken, but having her grace suppressed for so long will have permanent and detrimental effects on her power level even when the sigils are broken.

I bring this up now because of what I'm about to do in this chapter.

February-ish 2008, Broward County, Florida, United States

Monday…

Gabriel was sitting at the local diner having some homemade pie, yum. He was feeling quite pleased with himself, because a couple days ago he played a pretty good trick on a putz of a professor. Seriosuly? Who went around to family establishments like the Mystery Spot and put them out of business with his debunking? Did he have a problem with some family touristy fun? Pompous ass.

So, when he followed the guy as he toured the local Mystery Spot and said he didn't believe in wormholes, well…one opened up beneath him and swallowed him.

Goodbye Dexter Hasselback.

Gabriel paid the cashier, who he noticed was skimming money from the register. Well hello next target. He left the little diner and began walking back to his motel when he noticed a very familiar black 67' chevy impala drive by. A mischievous smirk spread across his face. Looks like Roy lucked out, because he now had the two Hunters who tried to kill him to play with.
Gabriel kept tabs on the impala and watched, unseen, as the brothers exited the vehicle talking to each other. Their conversation revealed something very interesting. Seemed Dean-o sold his soul to bring Samsquatch back from the dead, and now had less than a year till his bill came due. Dean seemed to accept his fate, but Sam? Oh, he thought he could find a way to save his brother. Well that's pretty arrogant of him.

Gabriel knew exactly what to do to get through that giant melon of his that he can't save his brother.

What better way than to relive the same day over and over again, trying to save Dean, and never succeeding?

With a smirk he snapped his fingers. Let the 'day-that never-ends' begin!

A Tuesday…

Sam and Dean had come to Broward County to look into the disappearance of a one Professor Dexter Hasselback, who had disappeared while touring the Mystery Spot. Sam thinks that the Mystery Spot could possibly be legit while Dean was all kinds of skeptical saying that it was just another tourist trap. Sam pointed out that even if it might not be real they should still check it out. Dean conceded and that night they sneak in after closing.

They were caught by the panicky owner, with a shotgun aimed at them. Sam tried to get the man to calm down, but as the owner saw Dean move his gun down he swung the shotgun around on him, telling Dean not to move. Dean tried telling him what he was doing, but the owner was so nervous and shaky that he accidentally pulled the trigger shooting Dean in the chest.

Sam held Dean as he choked on his blood and died in Sam's arms.

Tuesday, again…

Sam wakes up in the motel with a start to the sound of "Heat of the Moment" by Asia playing on the radio. Sitting up straight in bed to looks over to find a dressed Dean tying his boots on the bed next to him cheerfully, and very much still alive.
"Rise and shine, Sammy!" Sam looks at the radio that was playing Asia, just like yesterday morning? Dean sees him looking at the radio and grinned happily. "Dude. Asia." Dean went back to tying his boots.

"Dean." Sam said, his face looking slightly freaked out. Things were happening exactly the same, but it couldn't have could it? Was all of yesterday just a dream?

"Oh, come on. You love this song and you know it." Dean nodded at Sam before turning up the volume and begin rocking out and mouthing the lyrics as he headed to the bathroom.

Sam brushed his teeth and watched his brother gargle water for an obscenely long amount of time, perplexed. Dean spits out the water and looks at Sam, wondering why he's staring at him.

"What?" Dean asked his weirded out little brother. Sam just looked confused and shook his head a little.

"I don't know." Sam really didn't have a clue. Maybe it was all just a dream.

"You all right?" Dean wiped off the moisture from his face with a towel as he looked in the bathroom mirror.

Sam's brows furrow in confusion as he looked away from Dean. "No, I think I…" Sam starts, but it must have been all a dream. One weird, very vivid dream. "Man, I had a weird dream." Sam accepted the idea that what he thought had happened was all some weird dream.

Dean picks his teeth as he asked "Yeah? Clowns or midgets?" Whipping his head to look at Sam, who just sighed at him with a small shake of his head.

They get to the diner for breakfast where everything was once again happening like it did in Sam's supposed dream, from actions of the various people, right down to the exact words in conversations. Then Dean said something that had Sam nervous when he looked at the specials board.

"Hey. Tuesday." Dean smiles as he looked at Sam. "Pig 'n a Poke." Sam does a double take from the board to his brother sitting across from him.
"It's Tuesday?" Sam asked a little surprised.

Dean gives him a little 'you-crazy?' look. "Yeah." Dean confirmed, when the waitress came to take their orders. Dean ordered the exact same thing; from what Sam was beginning to think wasn't a dream at all. Sam decided to order nothing, being a little freaked out.

Sam was looking around the diner nervously as Dean leaned back in his booth seat telling him that the job was small fry and that they should be hunting down Bela, who stole the fucking Colt off them. Dean looks at his spaced out brother.

"Hey!" Dean snapped his fingers, getting Sam to look back at him. "You with me?"

"What?"

"You sure you feel okay?" Dean leaned on the table between them concerned.

"You don't...you don't remember any of this?" Sam asked.

"Remember what?" Dean was confused, what was Sam going on about?

"This. Today." Sam said pointedly. "Like—like it's—like it's happened before?" Sam asked, his voice going up at the end of the question, unsure of how to explain it.

"You mean like déjà vu?" Dean asked trying to understand what his brother was getting at.

Sam had to tell Dean a couple times that it wasn't déjà vu as he tried to explain it a different way. He stopped when the waitress came with Dean's coffee. Sam looked at the tray in her hand with the hot sauce bottle tilting back and forth precariously. Sam's face pinched in confusion and saw it tip off the tray, like yesterday, but this time he reached out and caught it before it could smash on the floor.

The waitress looked at Sam in shock and smiled, thanking him. Dean looked impressed and gave a
chuckle. "Nice reflexes." Sam's eyes shifted to Dean as he clenched his jaw and gulped in trepidation.

After breakfast they walked outside, passing the same golden retriever barking at them. Dean still did not believing what Sam was trying to sell him, and Sam just kept trying to get him to believe him.

"Okay look. Yesterday was Tuesday, right?" He looked at Dean to see if he was following. "But today is Tuesday too!" Sam said agitated. This was getting ridiculous.


"So you don't believe me?" Sam asked exasperated. Deans scoffs at him as a woman with light blonde hair and pink jacket bumped into him, excusing herself sadly. Dean watched her go behind him, face pinching in confusion.

"Look, I'm just saying that it's crazy, you know?" Sam looked at his brother in disbelief as he continued talking. "Even-for-us crazy. Dingo-ate-my-baby-crazy." Dean said trying to make a point.

"Hey, maybe it was another one of your psychic premonitions." Dean suggested, as the lesser crazy option.

Sam shut it down. "No. No way. Way too vivid." Sam decided to try to explain what happened the previous Tuesday. "Okay, look. We were at the Mystery Spot, and then..." he paused not really wanting to say it.

Dean looked at him, "And then what?"

"And then I woke up." He dodged what really happened. They walked by the same two guys struggling to get a too large desk through a too narrow doorway. That's when Sam had an idea, the Mystery Spot. "Wait a minute! The Mystery Spot. You think maybe it..." he paused looking at Dean.

"Maybe what?"
"We gotta check that place out." Sam was certain it might be the cause of what's going on. Dean scoffs, but Sam interrupts him. "Just go with me on this."

Dean shrugged as he nodded his assent. "Alright! We'll go tonight after closing. Get ourselves a nice, long look."

Sam sharply turned to look at his brother, his hand stopping him from walking further as he looked at him in alarm. "Wait, what? No." he said firmly.

Dean stopped walking and looked at Sam confused and annoyed, "Why not?"

Sam pauses and decided not to tell him what happened the previous Tuesday. "Uh…let's just go now. Right now. Business hours. Nice and crowded."

Dean looked a little freaked at how Sam was acting and told him so. "My God you're a freak."

"Dean." Sam gave him a look just asking him to go with it.

"Okay! Whatever. We'll go now." Dean agreed annoyed, as he walked in front of Sam, and not looking both ways as he crossed the street was hit by a car, and went flying into the air over the car as tires screeched.

At the impact Sam had stopped walking and flinched, but then looked in horror at his brother's body in the middle of the road.

"Dean!" Sam ran to his brother and held him in his arms. "Dean. No. No. No. Come on. Dean." He looked at the still green car to see the old man from the diner earlier look out his driver side window at what he had done. "Hey Dean. Dean. Dean." He jostled his brother a little, hoping he was still alive, but it was in vain.

Dean was dead. Again.
"Heat of the moment!" was what Sam woke up to, breathing heavily. He looked to his right to find his brother alive and once again tying his boots on his bed looking at him.

"Rise and shine, Sammy!" Dean said smirking happily at him.

Everything happened exactly the same, from the gargling to exactly what Dean said at the diner when he saw the Tuesday special. Sam explains what he think was going on with him, of how he was stuck in some kind of time loop. Dean compared it to the movie "Groundhog Day". Sam confirmed it in relief that his brother understood what he was trying to say. But Dean still didn't believe him.

Then Sam finished his sentence when he talked about their kind of crazy, with 'dingo-ate-my-baby-crazy'. Dean was surprised that Sam knew what he was going to say. Sam was getting more riled as the conversation dragged on and begged Dean to just go with him on this, even though it came out a little haggard. Dean tried to calm him down, but Sam wasn't having it.

"Don't tell me to calm down. I can't calm down. I can't because..." he paused in distress. He saw Dean die twice now, he couldn't—

"Because what?" Dean demanded, because what ever was freaking his little brother out must be something big.

Sam looked Dean in the eyes with a stern expression. "Because you die today, Dean."

Dean looked at him incredulously. "I'm not gonna die." He shook his head, but then quickly amended. "Not today."

Sam's face goes blank. "Twice now, I've watched you die and I can't." he shook his head slightly looking away. He then he gave Dean a pointed and serious stare, "I won't do it again, okay? And you're just going to have to believe me." Sam kept Dean's searching stare. "Please."

Seeing Sam so serious Dean agrees with equal amounts of seriousness. "All right. I still think you're nuts, but...okay. Whatever this is, we'll figure it out."
As they walk outside the diner everything happened as it did before, but this time Sam kept his brother from being hit by the car, and told Dean that he peed himself when he asked if it looked as cool as it did in the movies.

They questioned the Mystery Spot owner but he only had the joint since last March and didn't know what happened to the missing professor, and Sam was getting aggressive with his questioning. It was nighttime when they were walking back to the motel, not a single step further in figuring out what was going on. Dean came up with the idea that to break the time loop he just had to make it to Wednesday, and once the loop was broken they'd figure everything out. It sounded plausible to Sam and most importantly doable which gave him a sense of relief. When Sam agreed with Dean he suggested they grab some Chinese and lay low till midnight. Dean takes a few steps down the sidewalk and was crushed instantly by the large desk from earlier that fell when the rope snapped.

Sam looked at the surprised movers and his brother doing an excellent impression of the wicked Witch of the East being crushed by Dorothy's house. Sam looked at his thrice-dead brother in helplessness.

Tuesday: Sausage Strikes Back

"Heat of the moment!"

Sam sits straight up and sees his brother on the bed beside him tying his boots.

"Rise and shine, Sammy!"

Sam lays back down in exasperation and impending dread.

Dean tried to switch it up today by ordering a side of sausage instead of bacon. He choked on the sausage.

Tuesday: Most at home accidents happen in the bathroom
"Heat of the moment!"

Sam tells Dean, while he's in the shower they weren't leaving the motel room and he'd thank him when it's Wednesday. He hadn't told Dean what was going on, yet. Dean scoffs, "Whatever that means."

Sam was looking out the motel window when he heard Dean yell out as he slipped in the shower and an ominous crack sound.

Tuesday: Taco Tuesday

"Heat of the moment!"

Taco food poisoning.

Tuesday: The Last Shave

"Heat of the moment!"

Electrocution.

Tuesday: Crazed Ax Maniac

"Heat of the moment!"

Sam thinks it's the Mystery Spot so convinced Dean to tie up the owner and let him take an axe to the establishment that night. Dean suggests letting the terrified owner go. Sam vehemently refused as he continues to hack away at the walls of the Mystery Spot. Dean decided enough was enough and tried to get the ax away from Sam.
Dean gets axed.

Tuesday: 100 Ways to Kill Dean Winchester!

Sam nabbed the old man's keys, so no getting run over. He told Doris, the waitress as she took their orders that he'd like her to log in more hours at the archery range. She was a terrible shot. Sam was done, he was sick of it all and it showed in his grumpy attitude.

Dean was still skeptical of the time loop so he started proving it about how he knew everything that was going to happen, starting with the hot sauce and saying everything, no matter how ridiculous, that dean said as he said it. Then he started pointing out the things that people in the diner were doing. Like Randy the cashier was skimming from the register. Judge Meyers was a Furry. Cal was going to rob Tony the mechanic on the way home.

He tells dean how he went through every possible Tuesday and no matter what he does to save Dean's life he still dies, and then he wakes up and it's Tuesday again. As they walk down the street Sam would point out things that would happen or what would be said.

Dean does something different after the blonde girl in the pink jacket bumps into him. He turned around to talk to her and get a flyer she was carrying. He walked back to Sam.

"A hundred Tuesdays and you never bothered to check what she was holding in her hands?" Dean said as he showed Sam the flyer. Sam shook his head, and then stared at the flyer. It was a missing persons for Dexter Hasselback. "This the guy who went missing?"

"Yeah."

"That's his daughter back there." Dean nodded his head back at the retreating form of the young woman.

Seeing the lead Sam took the flyer from Dean's hands and jogged to catch up with her, leaving Dean behind with the golden retriever tied up.

Dean smiles at the dog, "Hey buddy, somebody need a friend?"
The dog mauled him.

Gabriel was having a ball! He'd give it to Sam; he didn't give up and accept the inevitable. He was like a hungry dog with a bone; he wasn't giving up on the desperate hope to save his brother.

Dean though today had pointed out a pretty good clue about flyer girl that'll help Sam figure out what was going on. Gabriel knew the number of Tuesdays that were left was numbered, and honestly? Thank Dad! As much fun as it was to come up with different ways to kill Dean and watch Sam damn near lose his mind trying to save him, the trick was getting a little old. It also looked to be ineffective, as Sam was just not getting it! Looks like he'll have to change it up.

Gabriel did a few more Tuesdays, letting Sam research the professor and try out a few more interesting deaths on Dean. Who knew someone could die from eating too much chocolate X-lax?

Finally a Tuesday came when Sam showed Dean all that he dug up on the professor. As Sam talked about the professor Gabriel, disguised as a white haired older gentleman in a grey suit, decided to give him a bone and switched up the syrup he had with his pancakes from maple to strawberry.

Let's see if he'll notice.

**Tuesday: 100+**

"Heat of the moment!"

At the diner Sam talked about the professor who was also a journalist, one who gets his kicks debunking mystery spots and other similar tourist attractions. He'd write on his blog and has already ended up putting four places out of business. They both agreed he was a pompous ass who was completely full of himself. As they get up from their booth in the diner Dean chuckles.

"What?" Sam asked, wondering what his brother thought was so funny.

"It's funny, you know. I mean, this guy spends his whole life crapping on mystery spots and then
he vanishes in one." Dean smirked in amusement. "It's kind of poetic, you know? Like just desserts."

Sam nods as he thinks over what Dean just said. "You're right. That is just desserts." Then he looked over at the diner's eat-in counter and sees leftover pancake with strawberry syrup. He frowns in confusion because that's not supposed to be strawberry syrup, it's supposed to be maple, always maple.

Dean turned around as he was walking out to see Sam still in one spot looking perturbed. He walked back to his brother asking, "What's wrong?"

Sam looked out the window in surprise as the guy in the grey suit walked by down the street. "Guy has maple syrup for the past 100 Tuesdays—all of a sudden he's having strawberry?"

Dean looked at the guy's plate, not getting it. "It's a free country. Man can't choose his own syrup, huh? What've we become?" Dean said sarcastically.

Sam shook his head, his face serious in contemplation, "Not in this diner. Not today. Nothing in this place ever changes—ever. Except me." His face was dead serious as he begun to figure out what was going on.

Sam blacked out, but Dean hadn't died.

The Last Tuesday…

"Heat of the moment!"

Sam knew what he was dealing with, and it messed up the previous Tuesday, so it did a reset without Dean dying.

Sam watched the guy in the diner as Dean chowed down on his breakfast, and waited for the guy to finish and leave. When he does Sam grabbed the paper bag beside him and followed the guy discreetly out of the diner, a confused Dean right on Sam's heels.
When grey suit was out of sight Sam rushes him and pushed him up against a fence with a bloodied wooden stake and holds the point threateningly at his neck.

Sam interrogated the disguised Gabriel and Gabriel played it up like he was just a normal human with a family who was absolutely terrified of the large man holding him against the fence with a stake to his neck. Man was Sam unhinged, Dean wasn't sure what to do as he looked between the two.

"Mister, my name's Ed Coleman. My wife's name's Amelia. I got two kids. For crying out loud I sell ad space!" Ed pleaded his case that he wasn't this Trickster this lunatic said he was. Insert internal snickering.

"Don't lie to me! I know what you are!" Sam shouted, he was so done with this Trickster's lies and its games! "We've killed one of your kind before!"

Oh, Gabriel couldn't let that delusion continue. Seemed the jig was up.

Sam and Dean watched as the man's face changed shape and white hair turned a golden colour and whiskey eyes looked back at them with a smug smirk. Sam looked down at the pinned man in shock not expecting him.

"You're right! I've only got the one kid. But, actually, bucko, you didn't kill one of my kind before." Gabriel smirked at the two Hunters pinning him. Dean was just as shocked as Sam, looking between the two in surprise. "I'm still here!"

Sam was breathing heavily as he glared at the Trickster in his hands. "Why are you doing this? Is Maya part of this too?"

Gabriel looked at Sam in slight disbelief. "You're joking right? If Maya knew about this she'd find a way to tear me a new one. For whatever reason she's fond of you two chukle heads, and also? You two tried to kill me last time." He smirked at Sam. "Why wouldn't I do this?"

"And Hasselback, what about him?" Dean questioned.

Gabriel gave him a side-glance. "That putz? He said he didn't believe in wormholes," he smiled in amusement. "So, I dropped him in one." He laughed at his own trick. "Huh?" Looking at the two
for a laugh. He got none. Oh well.

Sam kept his deadly glare, and iron grip on his shoulder, in place.

"Then you guys showed up." He smirked with a little fond shake of the head. "I made you the second you hit town." He asserted, smiling. Not like he was in any danger from the bloody stake at his neck. That doesn't kill archangels.

"So this is fun for you?" Sam's jaw clenched tight in anger. "Killing Dean over and over again?"

"One? Yes, it is fun," Gabriel nodded; it was amusing finding different ways for Dean to bite it. Dean looked a little taken back at that. "Two? Maya's out on her own and I'm bored. And three? This is so not about killing Dean." He shook his head a little and looked Sam in the eye, in the very angry and agitated, at the end of his rope, eye. "This joke is on you, Sam. Watching your brother die everyday. Forever." Gabriel knew which buttons to push to try to get the behemoth that was Sam Winchester, to finally get it.

"You son of a bitch." Sam gritted out through clenched teeth, his body shaking slightly in barely controlled anger.

Gabriel smiled at that. "How long will it take you to realize you can't save your brother…" Dean looked down at that with a gulp remembering what Ruby confessed to him after they had faced the demon, and its duped suburban witches. "…no matter what."

"Oh yeah? I kill you, this all ends now." Sam pushed the point of the stake further into the Trickster's neck.

Gabriel played along, arching his back a little trying to get his neck away from the point. "Oh, hey! Whoa. Okay. Okay. Look, I was just playing around. You can't take a joke, fine. You're out of it. Tomorrow, you wake up, it'll be Wednesday." Gabriel glanced at Dean before looking back at a very murder-y and determined Sam. "I swear."

"You're lying." Sam growled, not believing him.

"If I am, you know where to find me—having pancakes at the diner."
Sam looked at Dean before turning back to the Trickster. "No. Easier to just kill you."

Gabriel shook his head, "Sorry, kiddo can't have that." Gabriel snapped his fingers.

What neither brother knew was that Gabriel dropped them into a larger time loop. One that didn't reset automatically, unless he decided to reset it. Hopefully, Sam will finally learn to move on after Dean "dies" for the last time. If not? Well, it's not like he can't just end the loop, and they all go back to the main timeline right when it all started. So, everyone and everything in the loop? Real, but once it pops everything gets reset back to Wednesday.

**Wednesday: The First Hump Day in Forever…**

Sam was exultant in his happiness. It was Wednesday! He wouldn't have to watch his brother die! He loved the song that was playing on the radio all for the fact that it wasn't Heat of the Moment by Asia. Sam asked Dean if he remembered yesterday and he did.

Dean remembered Sam acting whacked out and running into the Trickster, but that was it. Sam told Dean to grab his stuff, they were leaving town immediately, without breakfast.

Dean had the trunk of the impala open putting his duffel bag in when he heard footsteps come up behind him, thinking it was Sam he turned around. It was Cal from the diner with a gun pointed at him demanding his wallet.

Sam was in the motel room when he heard the gun shot come from outside. Rushing out and down the stairs he sees Cal run away and Dean on the pavement by the impala, shot in the chest. He holds his brother trying to get him to wake up, denying that this was happening. It wasn't supposed to happen today, not today! He even closes his eyes to see if he'll wake up to another Tuesday, but he doesn't.

Dean was dead and he was staying dead.

Sam's soul broke.
Maya was sniffling and wiping her eyes as she left the movie theatre after having watched Marley & Me with Puck by her side. God damn it! That ending! She just wanted to get back to the motel and cuddle Puck in her bed.

"Hey Maya," came a familiar voice, but the suddenness of it caused her to jump.

"Jesus!" Maya quickly turned around to see Sam leaning against the theatre wall with his arms crossed and a tight smile. He looked tense, hunt go wrong maybe?

Maya plastered on a pleasant smile as he pushed off the wall and walked over to her and Puck. Puck was giving low growly noises in the back of his throat, looking at the giant man. "Hey Sam, long time no see. It's been what? Seven months?" Maya smiled.

"Yeah, just about." He responded a little strained. Weird.

Maya gave him a worried look. "Uh, you okay Sam?" she asked concerned, seeing pain flash in his eyes.

"Um, well…” Sam sighed. "Not really, no. There someplace we can talk?"

Puck shifted nervously on his little paws as he eyed the large Hunter, something was wrong, but he wasn't sure what. Maya looked at Sam and thought something was wrong as well, but she was along the lines that Sam was hurting. She knew from when she saw his soul all those months ago that he was a good guy, so she wanted to help him.

"Yeah, we can talk back at my motel room. C'mon." Maya motioned for Sam to follow her. "We can cut through the park."

As they come to the deserted park Maya asks, "So, what's up with you Sam? You seem a bit off. Hunt go bad? You and Dean get into a fight or something?"
Sam stopped walking as he tensed at the mention of his brother. Maya looked behind her to see Sam's eyes downcast, his hands shoved firmly in his jacket's pockets.

"Sam, is it about Dean?" Maya asked cautiously.

"You don't know?" Sam looked perplexed as he gave her a searching stare. "He was killed six months ago."

"Oh, Sam, I'm so sorry." Her gold eyes glittered in sympathy, though she found it difficult to imagine the pain he was going through. "Is there something I can do for you?" Maya offered, though she didn't know if there was anything she could do.

"Can you bend time back six months?" Sam asked wearily with very little hope. Maya looked at him confused.

"Time manipulation? No, I can't do that. Maybe my Dad could, but I can't." Maya gave Sam a helpless look as she sighed.

Sam took his hands out of his jacket and rubbed his face tiredly. Maya walked closer and put a comforting hand on his upper arm and gave him a gentle smile. "C'mon, let's get going, the motel's not far from here. Just gotta cut through some trees." Maya encouraged and takes a few steps forward to lead the way.

"Maya," Sam followed behind her. "When was the last time you saw your Dad?"

Her shoulders tensed, "Sam, you and Dean got my Dad over a year ago in Ohio I—"

"Me and Dean had a run in with him before Dean was killed." Sam interrupted. "He put us in a time loop for over a hundred Tuesdays and made me watch Dean die every Tuesday, and no matter what I did, I couldn't stop it." Maya sucked in a breath as she looked at the pained look on Sam's face.

"Oh my God, Sam! I had no idea he did that!" Maya was pissed. That was just cruel. "Ooh when I get my hands on him—" her words became mumbled growls and curses. Taking a calming breath she sighed. "Last time I saw him was three months ago when he wanted to check up on me to see how I was doing." Maya shrugged. "So, I guess that's why you asked me if I could reverse time?" She asked as they entered the last stretch through some trees.
"Yeah, I was kind of hoping you would be able to do it." Why was there regret in his voice? The hairs on the back of her neck stood straight as Puck growled and snarled fiercely at Sam, going for his ankles. Maya didn't look behind her as she tried to sprint forward into a run, but Sam was quicker.

Sam had lunged at the small teen and wrapped a strong arm around her neck from behind, pulling her to his chest. He kicked Puck away who ended up hitting a tree with a yelp, and laid still.

"Puck!" Maya choked out.

The lack of air caused Maya to panic as she clutched at the appendage around her throat. She tried aiming back to hit his face but the height difference made it impossible. Maya was able to turn a little bit to look at Sam with twin purple rings of light in her eyes, and her eyes widened in horror at the state of his soul.

That little bit of black sludge she saw all those months ago had spread and mostly covered the once shining soul. He killed because he wanted to, even if they were monsters, it became less about protecting people. In his grief and obsessive rage he gave in to the darkness.

Sam took out a bloodied stake from within his coat with his free arm; he didn't want to do this. Even now looking at those pleading gold eyes, what was left of the old Sam Winchester tried to fight through, to let Maya go. She was innocent. It wasn't her fault he lost his brother because of her father.

Whatever inner light Maya had, tried to illuminate the darkness inside Sam, and an old part of him saw what he was doing, but that part turned away from that strong gentle light, Morning's Glory, at the thought of having his brother taken, too soon, from him. At least this way he could get him back.

"I'm sorry," Sam whispered. "But I need the insurance to get Dean back." Inside he chose to turn away from the light, and swiftly plunged the stake into Maya's chest. He loosened his arm around her throat, but held her firmly to him, keeping one hand on the stake to make sure she couldn't remove it.

He looked straight ahead into the night, not looking at what he'd done. Sam did his best to ignore the gurgle of blood filling her lungs as she tried to take shuttering breaths, but spat out blood instead. He tried to ignore the weak hands clutching at the stake in her chest, trying in vain to
remove it, as if it would make a difference now. He pushed down the feelings of regret when her head lolled to one side and her hands fell away from the stake, as she let out one final breath.

What he couldn't ignore was the vacant look of terror filled golden eyes, cheeks stained with tears, and blood dripping from her open mouth. Sam let out a shuddering breath as he picked up Maya's lifeless body and went to the motel she was supposed to be staying at, and where he had parked the impala.

He had spent the last couple days tailing her to figure out where she was staying. Seeing no one around he placed Maya against the car and took out a blanket from the trunk and carefully wrapped it around her impaled body before putting her in the back seat.

A few days prior he had gotten a call from Bobby about finding a way to summon the Trickster, Maya's father. He wanted to meet at Broward County Mystery Spot. Sam had gotten back to him and asked him to give him a few days to tie up a case. Sam didn't have a case; he had found evidence of Maya's little tricks, and tracked her down. He was honest when he asked her about any time ability, and he planned on getting her to get him in contact with her Dad, but this was more poetic. He was sorry he had to do this to her though. But if her Dad was going to take away one of the most important people in his life, then he would pay the same price. If it all worked out like he hoped, then both Dean and Maya would be alive, so really her death was only temporary.

That's what he told himself, but really, he wanted the Trickster to feel a portion of the pain he felt.

**August-ish 2008, Broward County, Florida, United States**

**Next night…**

Six months. Sam Winchester had been hunting him down for *six fucking months!* He was able to give the Hunter the slip three months back when he went to check up on Maya. She was doing well, but he couldn't hang around long with Sam looking for him.

Sam wasn't going to stop, so, Gabriel decided to have one more confrontation. Getting Sam's number was easy enough, same with shifting his voice to match that surly old Hunter, Bobby. He left a message on Sam's phone about finding a way to summon him and to meet him at the Broward County Mystery Spot. Easier to pop the loop if Sam was in the general facility of where it was created. Sam told him, fake Bobby, that he'd be there in a few days, just needed to finish up a case.
That was a few days ago and Gabriel was getting anxious. He hadn't heard from Maya yet today and it was getting well into the night. However, Sam would be here any minute now, so he couldn't go to her last location to look for her. Gabriel heard the roar of the impala outside and quickly snapped everything into place, including a fake Bobby. He remained in the main room of the Mystery Spot invisible and watched as events unfolded.

His Bobby copy was excellent; he really got his personality and mannerisms down. Right down to where he would sacrifice himself than some innocent shmuck off the street for the *summoning ritual*.

Gabriel didn't actually think Sam would stake the Bobby copy from behind, taking the chance that Bobby wasn't real, and was actually him. He was a little relieved to see Sam look at the dead copy of Bobby in horror, so he couldn't be too far-gone. However, his obsessive vengefulness against him was…off putting. Welp! Time to face the music and see how this was going to end. More time without Dean, or go back to the main timeline?

The dead copy of Bobby disappeared into wisps of blue smoke and Gabriel used some telekinetic power to bring the stake sailing into his hand. Sam had followed the stake to look behind him, he was a little stunned to see Gabriel. Gabriel smirked.

"You're right. I was just screwing with you." Gabriel gave a wink. "Pretty good, though, Sam. Smart." He said using the stake to point at him as he walked around the now less stunned Hunter. "Let me tell ya." Gabriel kept eye contact as he walked to stand in front of Sam. "Whoever said Dean was the dysfunctional one has *never* seen you with a sharp object in your hands. Holy *Full Metal Jacket*." He laughed smiling as he looked at the stake in his hand.

"Bring him back." Sam looked at him pleadingly.

Gabriel looked back at Sam still smiling. "Who? Dean?" he gave a faux confused face. Gabriel knew exactly what Sam wanted from him. "Didn't my girl send you flowers? Dean's dead. He ain't coming back." He looked at Sam seriously. "His soul's downstairs doing the hellfire rumba as we speak." Well that was a lie, for now at least. Yay time loop!

"Just take us back to that Tuesday—or Wednesday. When it all started, please." Sam begged. "We won't come after you. I swear." Sam promised desperately.

"You swear?" Gabriel gave him a disbelieving look, even though he knew the Hunter very much
meant it.

"Yes."

Gabriel made a show of rolling his head as though thinking it over. "I don't know. Even if I could…"

"You can." Sam pointed out.

"True." Gabriel amended nodding at Sam. "But that don't mean I should." Gabriel looked at him seriously. Sam needed to learn this lesson, or shit will hit the fan, more than it will when Dean gets to Hell. "Sam, there's a lesson here. That I've been trying to drill into that freakish, cro-magon skull of yours."

"Lesson? What lesson?" Sam gave a helpless look at Gabriel.

"This obsession to save Dean." He told him exasperated as he took a few steps towards the Hunter. How could Sam not see it? "The way you two keep sacrificing yourselves for each other. Nothing good comes out of it." Like Dean going to Hell and popping the first seal, the Cage's cherry so to speak.

Oh, he knew who these two were, and where everything was headed. He just hoped to give Maya as much time on this blue marble as he could, before he'd have to grab her and go into hiding. Like, pocket reality hiding. She was not going to like that.

"Just blood and pain. Dean's your weakness. The bad guys know it too." Gabriel looked into those large vulnerable eyes as comprehension dawned in them. Maybe he got it? "He's going to be the death of you, Sam." Nope, he was willing to give it his all to get his brother back. Gabriel rolled his eyes as he stepped back. "Sometimes you just got to let people go."

"He's my brother." Sam responded, like that was a good enough answer.

"Yep, and like it or not, this is what life's gonna be like without him." Gabriel shrugged. Hopefully this will deter the numbskull from going down the path to popping the last seal, if he could just learn to cope without his brother.
Sam was giving him wet puppy dog eyes filled with sadness and pleading. "Please, just—please." He begged.

Gabriel rolled his eyes and shook his head exaggeratedly, as he sighed. "I swear, it's like talking to a brick wall." He drawled looking at Sam's beseeching face. Nope. He wasn't going to end the loop yet. Maybe another few months?

"Not happening, bucko."

Something changed in the giant of a man, any pleading was gone, and replaced with something cold and hard. Sam gave a breathless laugh as he broke eye contact.

"Yeah, I had a feeling you wouldn't." Sam looked back at confused whiskey gold eyes. Gabriel didn't like that look, but there was nothing Sam could have that would actually hurt, let alone kill, him. "Give me a minute. I've got something you might want to see." Gabriel raised an eyebrow and gave a go ahead gesture.

Sam walked out of the room and down the hall a little ways. He came back carrying something big and wrapped in a blanket. What the Hell? Gabriel watched as Sam placed it in the middle of the room and took a few steps back, leaving it lying between them. He couldn't get a handle on the shape under the blanket with something, obviously, acting like a tent pole at one end, distorting the shape.

"Uh, what's this?" Gabriel snorted looking between the blanket-covered thing, and the eerily blank faced Hunter across from him.

"Insurance." Sam said blankly as he nodded at Gabriel to remove the blanket.

Gabriel raised an eyebrow and melodramatically rolled his eyes as he walked up to it. Grabbing the loose fabric where it tented he pulled it away, and his hand froze mid air as the one end was exposed.

Gabriel's heart pounded as he looked in shock and absolute horror as a familiar face stared unblinkingly back at him with vacant and cloudy gold eyes. He ripped the rest of the blanket away, and fell to his knees.
It was his Maya, with a stake plunged in her chest. Her lower mouth soaked in her own blood, her complexion pale, and her shirt blood soaked.

Gabriel hands shook as he gently touched her face, it was cold and rigid. The reality sunk in at what he was seeing. His baby girl was dead.

"No, no, no, no, no..." Gabriel desperately muttered as he brushed away her hair, over and over, as his heart started shattering. "Please, no..." he choked out as he grabbed her upper body to clutch her tightly to his chest, his face in her hair as his jaw clenched in an anguished grimace. He couldn't hold back the sob that escaped his lips. So, lost in the all-consuming grief he felt, he had forgotten that they were all in a time loop, and had forgotten that Sam had been watching him.

"What you're feeling, right now, is exactly how I've felt for the last six months since you took Dean from me." Gabriel's shudders stopped at Sam's detached voice. He looked up into Sam's face with complete and utter rage and murder. He saw slight fear flash through his eyes, good. He should be afraid.

"Wrong, what I'm feeling is so much worse." Gabriel growled through clenched teeth. "You? Your soul shattered when Dean died, but you got pieces left over to put yourself back together. This?" He jostled Maya's body a little. "This is my entire world, my entire existence, disintegrating into nothingness!" He yelled at the Hunter. "You think living without Dean is tough? I can find ways to torture and kill you in so many different ways you'll be begging for death, but even that won't be close enough to how I feel, right now." Gabriel held up a hand in a ready snap position with a cruel smile twisting his lips. "You think I was bad before? You've got no idea what I'm capable of."

"But everyday you spend torturing me, is another day Maya stays dead." Sam quickly pointed out. That had Gabriel pausing. What was Sam...of course! The time loop! End it and everything will reset to that Wednesday. No dead Dean. No vindictive Sam. And a living, breathing daughter. Gabriel kept the relief from showing on his face.

"Like I said," Sam gestured to Maya. "She's insurance that you'd set everything back. You get Maya, and I get Dean." Sam bargained. Sam gave Maya a sad look. "I really didn't want to, but I felt I was out of options if I didn't have something to get you to agree."

Gabriel gave a hard stare at the Hunter. Oh, he was telling the truth about being regretful of taking Maya's life, but he still could've chosen to leave her out of it. Carefully placing Maya back on the floor, and closing her eyes, he stood up, walked over her and stood a couple feet in front of Sam. Sam held his gaze.
"Fine. You win, but I've got a condition," Gabriel gritted out. Sam nodded solemnly, letting Gabriel know he was listening. "You and Dean will never, ever, use Maya's life as a bargaining chip ever again. If you do…well…you really don't want to know." Gabriel growled deep in his chest, letting his power leak out a bit to let this Hunter know exactly what he was dealing with.

Sam gulped nervously, but nodded. "Deal."

Gabriel snapped his fingers.

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**February-ish 2008, Broward County, Florida, United States**

**Wednesday 2.0**

Gabriel watched as Sam kept Dean in his line of sight at all times, not letting him go anywhere by himself. Dean had no idea what had gotten his brother so touchy feely all of sudden and griped about it as they entered the impala. Sam was less tense, less sad, and more importantly less murder-y and desperate. He could tell that whatever negative effect on Sam's behavior from Gabriel 'killing' Dean seemed to have been reversed as well. Well, at least he wouldn't have to worry about a homicidal Sam hunting down his baby girl to get back at him. His soul was no longer broken, for now at least. Hopefully when Dean went to Hell he'd be able to handle it, because he was not messing with time outside a time loop.

Once he was sure that the Winchesters were gone he whipped out his phoned and dialed Maya's number. Intellectually Gabriel knew that Maya had to still be alive, but tell that to his rapidly beating heart.

"Hey Dad, what's up?" Came Maya's voice through the phone. Gabriel shuddered out a sigh of relief. "Dad? What's wrong? You okay?" Maya asked worriedly when she heard him sigh.

"Yeah, Pocky. Just—just needed to hear your voice."

"Ooooookay. You going to be all right?" Maya said concerned. Yeah, he was…nope he needed to hold his baby.
"Where are you exactly, right now?" Gabriel asked. Maya didn't respond right away.

"You need a hug?" Maya said warmly.

"Yeah…" Gabriel admitted. He was an archangel but he couldn't calm down, or get the image of Maya dead in his arms out of his head. He couldn't find it in him to be ashamed that an archangel, such as himself, needed his daughter's presence to calm down. He needed to reassure himself that she was all right.

"Louisville, Kentucky. Room 12 at the Monty Python motel." Gabriel snapped his fingers into her room. Maya closed her phone as she saw her Dad and stood up to greet him. "Hey Da—"

Maya couldn't finish her sentence because Gabriel immediately pulled her into a bone-crushing hug, holding onto her desperately. Maya had no idea what was going on but she knew her Dad well enough that he was really upset about something. So, she just hugged her Dad back, just as fiercely, and buried her face in his chest.

Gabriel took shuddering and relieved breaths as he held his little girl close to him, stroking her hair with one hand. She was here, she was soft and warm, and she was breathing.

"You going to tell me what's wrong?" Maya's muffled voiced asked.

"No." Gabriel muttered into her hair. There was silence for a few moments.

"Wanna help me teach a homophobic pastor the concept of Free Love?" Maya smiled as she felt her Dad shake in laughter.

"Oh, Pixie Stix, I would love to!" Nothing like spending a couple days playing tricks with his daughter to reassure him that his Morning’s Glory was still here.

Chapter End Notes

I regret nothing!!
You're welcome for the feels if you got them.
February-ish 2008, Emory, Texas, United States

It'd been almost two weeks since the whole Mystery Spot fiasco and Sam had only told Dean some of how he acted after he 'died' that Wednesday in that final time loop. How he'd become some hunting machine, taking bigger and bigger cases, all the while looking for any signs of the Trickster. In other words, he'd turned into John Winchester after their mother was killed. Sam had told Dean he became militaristic, ruthlessly efficient, and filled with obsessive rage. Willing to do anything, and risk anyone to achieve his goal of getting Dean back. Sam had told Dean how he took the chance that the decoy Bobby wasn't actually Bobby, but the Trickster, and staked him when he offered to sacrifice himself instead of some innocent guy off the street. Sam, however, didn't reveal the worst thing he did.

Although he had the memories of his time in that time loop he knew he wasn't that Sam, not now. He still had his brother, for now at least, and wasn't broken. The near unbearable pain he had felt when he had to live those six months without Dean became nothing but dulled memories. The pain easing the longer Dean was at his side and became more detached from those memories. He may not be that version of himself anymore, but that didn't ease the horror and guilt at what he did before he confronted the Trickster. The one thing he didn't tell Dean, and especially not Bobby.

He didn't tell either of them that in his obsession to save Dean, and to hurt the Trickster, that he had tracked down Maya, and when she didn't have the ability to help him, he put a stake in her chest. For insurance. A sick feeling would well up inside him whenever it crossed his mind. He killed an innocent girl, someone he had slight fond feelings for, just because of what her father did. He remembered the slight clarity of mind he had before plunging the stake into her chest, the part of him that he was now, trying to dissuade the him that he became. However the larger part that was filled with rage and pain had won out.

Sam wondered what his brother would think of him, of what he'd been willing to do, how far he was willing to fall to get him back.

Bobby would probably shoot him, and not with rounds of rock salt either. It wasn't lost on Sam that the surly old Hunter cared for Maya as he did him and his brother.

Unfortunately, keeping that moment in the time loop secret was never meant to be. Bobby had called with a lead on Bela Talbot, the thief that stole the Colt from them, and Dean wanted to call Maya for a favor. For whatever reason, Dean's brain had selectively remembered that she could
teleport objects into her hands, an ability that would be handy to have when stealing the gun back.

Sam knew he had to tell Dean. If only to give Dean a heads up when Maya refused to help them because of what he'd done. He doubted the Trickster kept what happened to Maya in the time loop to himself, so that she wouldn't want to be anywhere near them anymore.

Dean finished writing down Maya's current number that he'd gotten from Bobby, and bid the old Hunter goodbye. He had to argue a little bit with the grouchy old man, but the fact that they weren't going after anything supernatural, and the promise to leave her be if she said no, got him to cough it up.

"All right Sam I've got Goldy's number," Dean waived the paper at him. "You wanna call her? She probably likes you a bit better than me after the bitchcraft fiasco she helped us out with." Dean smirked, remembering Maya's creative play on the word 'witchcraft'. His amused smile lessened when Sam shifted nervously on his bed in their motel room with an uncomfortable look on his face, not meeting his eyes.

"That…that might not be a good idea." Sam's eyes flickered to Dean's confused ones then looked away.

"Okay, dude," Dean was giving him a confused look. "What the hell's going on? Last I checked you two seemed pretty chummy. Probably from being both girls." Dean snarked, but his face pinched when Sam's eyes filled with guilt as he worried his bottom lip. Okay, something was up if Sam wasn't giving him a bitch-face for that comment. "All right, Sam. Spit it out."

"It-it was in that last time loop. I told you how I went kind of…" Sam didn't want to add that last word, but Dean nodded for him to continue, he knew what Sam meant. Sam sighed. "I-I wasn't myself, not as I am now, you know that right?"

"Yeah." Dean affirmed, not knowing entirely where this was going.

"There's something I left out about what happened. It was right before I went back to the Mystery Spot to confront the Trickster…" Sam gave Dean a slightly helpless look. "I had found Maya, hoping she could affect time like her Dad did, or to get in contact with him. But before I approached her the Trickster, who I thought was Bobby, had called about a way to summon him, guaranteed. I thought it would be my one shot to get you back an-and I was so desperate Dean." Dean's gut twisted as his little brother looked at him so guilt-ridden and with so much pleading, it was heartbreaking. Whatever Sam had done was bad, really bad.
“What did you do Sam?” Dean was giving him an assessing look, his voice a little rough; a part of him didn't want to know.

“She couldn't manipulate time a-and I knew if the Trickster loved her as much as I thought he did, he'd do anything to get her back…” Sam looked away trying to swallow the dry mouth he was experiencing.

“So, you what? Took her hostage?” Dean asked, hoping that was what happened, but with the way Sam was acting…

Sam leaned forward on his legs with his head bent down, his long hair shielding his face. He shook his head.

“I went dark side, Dean. I put a stake threw her chest and killed her, for insurance.” Sam said, disgusted with himself as Dean blinked owlishly at his baby brother in astonishment. “I took her body to the meet up, and when the Trickster said he wouldn't end the time loop I showed him her body. He was furious and it was terrifying.” Sam gave a breathless laugh, not looking up. "If I hadn't pointed out that for forever how long the Trickster tortured me, the longer Maya would stay dead, I doubt we'd be out of that time loop. He ended it when I promised that we'd never use Maya's life as a bargaining chip again."

“Well, I'd like to think that goes without saying,” Dean snorted. He was still in a little shock at what Sam had done when he 'died', but that wasn't this Sam in front of him. That was a Sam that had lived six months in an obsessive, pain-filled, rage and had become desperate in finding the Trickster that 'killed' him. Much like their late father, and the irony wasn't lost on Dean. The son that had never wanted to be anything like their old man had become just that in that blasted time loop.

Dean sighed as he walked over to his hunched brother, he could tell how guilty the poor guy felt, but that wasn't him that plunged the stake in the girl's chest, not anymore. "Sam, you're not that man in that time loop." Sam looked up at his serious brother's face, who believed everything he was saying as he put a hand on his shoulder.

“But, Dean, that's a possible me I could become when you're gone!” Sam protested, but Dean shook his head.

“You planning on cutting Bobby out again?” Dean asked. Sam shook his head. "You plan on
killing innocent people for something as stupid as insurance?"

Sam's eyes widened, as he shook his head, "No, I—!"

"Then there you go!" Dean interrupted smirking as he stood up straight, removing his hand as he spread his arms out. "You'll have Bobby to keep you sane, and you already decided not to go stabbing people willy nilly." He grinned at Sam's look of disbelief. "See! Already a different possible future you in the making." Dean smiled, though inside he was still worried about how Sam's been acting since he came back.

"Thanks Dean," Sam gave a small smile. "Though, if you still want to call Maya, you better be the one to talk to her. Wouldn't be surprised if her Dad told her what I did to her in the time loop. Doubt she'd give me the time of day at the moment." He finished a looking a little morose.

Dean gave an exaggerated head roll, "Yeah, yeah. Give me the hard job." Dean took out his phone as he began dialing. He brought he cellphone to his ear listening to it ring. "Bitch." Dean shot at his brother.

Sam huffed, "Jerk."

Dean rolled his eyes as he looked away to focus on the voice on the other end of the phone.

"Hey Goldy, how's it going?" Dean greeted. "Listen, we need a favor." He said as he walked in a circle rubbing the back of his head. Man he hated asking favors. Him and Sam could steal the Colt back themselves, but its Bela. Best get all the help they can get when dealing with that sneaky bitch.

Same day, Witchita, Kansas, United States

Maya

Today had been pretty productive. A few days ago Maya had found a woman who was cheating on her husband with a boyfriend AND a lover. None of them knew of each other. Like seriously, how could this woman keep this up? Witchita can't be that big that none of them had run in to each other while with this woman! Not to mention all the running around she'd have to do…ugh it sounded
exhausting.

Well nothing a little tailing, number swiping, and voice mimicry couldn't rectify! Maya had found out that her and her husband were going out for date night at a fancy restaurant. It was interesting to watch as the boyfriend and lover show up with flowers, waiting outside the restaurant, only to see Karen (Yes her name was fucking Karen!) walk up on the arm of her husband. Gasp! The shouting match that ensued between all the men was loud and dynamic. Some of the staff had to hold them back. Then when all the men realized just how long each of them have been with Karen and not knowing about each other. Well, lets just say Karen's life crumbled before her eyes. All with a very public audience. Take that Karen!

Seriously? What's with bitches named Karen?

'Maybe because Dad still gets on tangents about that one Karen from when I was little…' Maya thought as she entered her motel room with a bag of Chinese takeout, and Puck wagging his little butt like a maniac. Maya may or may not, treat the little dog when she gets Chinese takeout and orders short ribs. Puck loved gnawing on the bones and chowing down on extra pieces of stir-fried beef added to his kibble. So he tended to get excited at the mention of Chinese food.

Maya sets the food on the table and began taking the takeout boxes out when her phone started going off. She raises an eyebrow at a number she didn't recognize. She answered it.

"Hey Goldy, how's it going?" Came Dean's voice through the speaker. "Listen, we need a favor."

Maya snorted. "And why would I want to help you? Or, more specifically, your brother?" She drawled unimpressed. Oh yeah, her Dad finally let her know what exactly happened two weeks ago in Florida. What he had put Sam through was a very cruel trick and a very ineffective one. Her Dad only played into his obsession and painted a giant attainable target on his back for Sam to go after, and she yelled at him for it. Needless to say she was pissed at him, but not sure how to get back at him. Yet.

That didn't mean she all too happy with Sam at the moment. She still wasn't sure which she was madder about, him killing her for fucking insurance, or hurting her Dad with that stunt. Maya, of course, had no memory of any of it so there was a real disconnect between what happened in the time loop and what's happening in the here and now. She could guess Sam was no longer the same Sam that had staked her in the time loop, but she did see what it did to her Dad.

"You know huh?" Dean sighed.
"Yeah," Maya in a breathy huff. "Got it out of my Dad after a couple days of him almost clinging to me and not letting me out of his sight." Her voice became serious. "Your brother nearly destroyed my Dad, Dean. Give me one good reason why I should want to be near your brother, let alone help him, and you?"

"Well I know you like teaching people lessons, and we got someone in mind. Her name's Bela, she steals supernatural artifacts, sells them to the highest bidder, and doesn't care who gets hurt or killed in the crossfire." Dean's voice filled with disgust. "She stole a gun from us and we want to steal it back."

Maya would admit, it was tempting, thieving from a professional thief. Very down her alley, but she really didn't want to be around Sam.

"That it?" Maya asked nonplussed. She'd need a better reason.

"Poetic justice against a no morals thief not good enough?" Dean said irritated.

"For being around Sam for, however long? No, I need an even better reason."

"Fine!" Ooh Dean didn't sound happy with her. "How about that this gun will be able to help us save lives?"

Seriously?

"Uh Dean, don't you already have a trunk full of weapons you use to save lives? What makes this gun so special?" Maya asked confused. All this fuss over some little gun?

"It's called the Colt and it was made to kill any supernatural creature on God's green earth with one shot. Including demons."

Well shit. Maya had read about how tricky and dangerous demons were when it came to dealing with them. To have a gun that all you had to do was aim and fire, and BAM! No more demon? That would save a lot of lives, or at least make it easier…
…damn her conscience!

"You know where this Bela is?" Maya sighed. She was actually considering this. Better the Winchester's have the gun and put it to some good use than some fat cat who'd just use it as a decorative piece.

"You'll help?"

"I'm considering it," Maya stressed. "So, where is this Bela?"

"Got a lead she's in Monument, Colorado, for now at least." Dean revealed. "Are you in or not?" he demanded.

"Swing by El Dorado Inn on I-35 north heading into Wichita, Kansas. I'll let you know after I talk to Sam in person. Give me a call when you're close by. Later Assface," Maya hung up and turned to Puck.

"Ready for dinner buddy?" Maya asked with a smile. Puck gave a happy whine as he fidgeted excitedly.

Sam and Dean

Dean groaned as he closed his cellphone and rubbed his face.

"Well?" Sam asked, not all that hopeful. Dean looked at him and shrugged.

"Eh," he did a hand waiver. "She said she's considering it, but see wants to talk you in person first."

"Really? She'll talk to me?" Sam was surprised.
"Don't get your hopes up Sammy she sounded pretty pissed." Dean warned as he went to get a beer. "She's on the way to Colorado. We'll stop by, you two talk, and we'll see if she'll come with us." Popping the cap he took a swig.

"And Puck." Sam reminded. It hurt that the dog seemed out to get him, especially since he was such an avid dog lover himself.

"Who?" Dean asked, pausing in taking another drink as he looked at his brother.

Sam raised an eyebrow at his brother. "Her dog, Dean. You know? The little Jack Russell that follows her everywhere?"

"The hell I'm letting a dog inside Baby!" Dean looked as though just the thought of a dog in his precious car was blasphemous.

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**February-ish 2008, Wichita, Kansas, United States**

**Afternoon next day…**

Maya leaned against the wall outside her motel room, waiting for Sam and Dean to arrive. Dean had given her the heads up call not too long ago. Though, she still wasn't sure if she would go with them to get this Colt. It all depended now on how Sam handled this little meet up.

Maya watched as the black '67 impala pulled into the parking lot. As they drove closer Maya waved a hand to wave them over to her. The classic car engine rumbled and purred as it pulled into the vacant spot in front of her room and two familiar men stepped out.

"Hey Goldy," Dean smirked, pocketing his keys as he closed the driver side door.

Maya rolled her eyes at Dean's nickname for her. "Sup, Assface," she greeted Dean with her own smirk as her eyes flashed a ring of purple at him. Then she looked over at Sam with a blank look.

Sam gave a small nervous smile. "Hey," came his soft and nervous greeting as he closed his door.
Maya didn't return the greeting, but flashed a ring of purple light all the same. His soul was just as it was in Massachusetts, just as bright although bogged down with more pain, more guilt, and more regret.

"Sam," Maya said seriously. "You and I need to talk."

Sam sighed and nodded, "Yeah."

Maya's eyes flickered between the two and she motioned to the door with her head, "C'mon, we can talk inside." She turned and walked through the door of the motel room where Puck laid on a bed relaxing near her bag. He immediately sat up as he eyed the two Hunters, mostly Sam, that followed behind Maya into the room and closing the door behind them. Maya walked to the far bed with Puck on it and sat down. Puck got up and moved to her side to lie against her, and receive pets while keeping an eye on the two Hunters.

Sam looked at Maya guiltily with sad a face. He didn't know how to start. The last time he saw Maya, he killed her in the time loop but that was also the problem. How to you even begin to apologize to someone for killing them in a time loop after a psychotic break that no longer happened?

Thankfully Maya was the one to get the ball rolling.

"Soo," Maya drawled petting Puck. "Something inside that Cro-Magnon head of yours," Maya pointed and circled her finger in Sam direction, "thought that killing me and taking my body to my Dad was a good idea."

"It wasn't. I-it was desperation, a-and Maya I'm so sorry."

Sam gave her heartfelt eyes of regret. "I lost myself those six months in the time loop," his eyes held a far away look, remembering that time remorsefully. "Even then I regretted what I did to you, and I swear to you Maya that I'm not that Sam anymore." He looked pleadingly, wanting her to believe him.

Maya gave him a blank look and raised an eyebrow, "And?" she asked expectantly.

Sam looked at her confused, what was there else to say? He shook his head a little bewildered, "I-I don't..."
Maya rolled her eyes exaggeratedly with a sigh and looked very much like her Dad in that moment. "I know you're not *that* Sam. I'm not even all that mad at you for staking time loop me, because that was a *different* Sam." Maya shrugged her shoulders, though her face held a look of extreme annoyance.

Both Winchesters looked at her in confusion. Then what could she be mad about?

"Then why the hell do you still sound so pissed?" Dean demanded. Maya shot him an exasperated look before rolling her eyes.

"Same reason you're both pissed at my Dad. He made it too personal by messing with your family. Dad killed Dean over and over to drill a lesson into Sam's head, so pretty good reason to be mad at him." Maya looked at Dean. "You're pissed at him because of what he made Sam go through, and that's where I'm at." Maya's eyes locked with Sam's, "I'm pissed at what Sam made my Dad experience by killing me and bringing him my dead body."

Maya's eyes held so much emotion that Sam had to look away. "My Dad clung to me like I'd disappear if I was out of sight too long when we met up. Sam," he looked back at her. "You nearly destroyed my Dad. Your brother gave a pretty good reason to help you, get the gun to help save people, but I'm gonna need one more. So tell me," Maya stood up with hands on her hips and gave Sam a hard stare as she leaned forward slightly. "Why should I help you, Sam?"

Dean rolled his eyes exasperated, "Aww c'mon! How many reasons do you need?!" Dean demanded.

"One more." Maya said simply as she crossed her arms, standing up straight while she kept her eyes on Sam.

Sam looked at her helplessly. "All I can tell give you is that the Sam that hurt your Dad, that sunk down to such a level to get back at him is not the me right now." Sam rubbed his face wearily with a sigh. "But even that still sounds like too much of an excuse, because *that* Sam was a possible version of myself." Sam gave her the puppy-dog eyes, "A version of myself that killed a innocent girl for something as pathetic as *insurance* and then dangled her dead body in front of her father. That's something I never want to become again. I'm sorry I hurt you, and I'm sorry I did it to hurt your Dad, all to get what I wanted."

Sam painted a very pathetic looking picture with those sorrowful eyes and a presence that made
him seem smaller than he actually was. *Like a goddamn puppy in a giant man suit.*

"Wow," Maya responded impressed. "I would've accepted the *it-was-a-different-me* argument."

Sam's face scrunches in confusion, "Then why did you let me…?"

Maya gave a snort. "You were on a roll. Far be it from me to stop you." She turned around and grabbed her bag off the bed, slinging it over her shoulders. She walked by the slightly stunned Hunters, opening the door, and walking out with Puck dutifully following.

"Wait, that's it?" Dean demanded looking back at her. Maya looked back at them through the doorway nonplussed.

"Yeah," she replied in an obvious tone. "Thought it over more last night and, although I'm still plenty annoyed at this Sam, the Sam that hurt my Dad is different than the one in the room here. Also, hard to be pissed about an event that didn't technically happen, or won't happen?" Maya gave a slightly confused thinking face before shaking her head. "Ugh, I hate time manipulations." She wrinkled her nose in disgust.

"You don't hate me?" Sam asked tentatively as he walked towards the door.

Maya shrugged with a hand waiver. "Eh, hate is such a *strong* word. Not your biggest fan at the moment, sure." Sam gave an understanding nod at that. "But, like I said, the event didn't or will no longer happen, especially since you *seemed* pretty serious about *not* becoming that Sam again." Maya raised an expectant eyebrow as she walked to the impala with Puck.

Sam gave a breathy relieved laugh as he walked through the doorway. "Definitely not," Sam agreed. Dean followed behind him with a put upon sigh.

Maya went to one of the passenger door on the driver's side and looked back at the boys expectantly.

"Dude, you gonna unlock the car? Don't we need to get to Monument?" Maya asked Dean with a confident smile.
"You're coming?" Sam asked surprised as he went to his regular shotgun seat. Dean also looked a little surprised too, as he stopped at the driver's side door. Sure Maya seemed more amicable towards Sam now, but that didn't mean she'd want to still help.

Maya smirked as she gave Sam a mischievous look, "Bitch, there's an immoral thief about to be robbed themselves, just desserts right there. Like hell I'm missing that!" Her grin was broad and her gold eyes danced excitedly. Puck gave his own bark of agreement, though he stilled stared down Sam's feet from under the car.

"Alright Goldy!" Dean matched her broad grin and gave her a high-five.

They all clambered into the car, Sam and Dean in the front, Maya and Puck in the back. That's when Dean seemed to pick-up the fact that there was a dog in his car. He turned around to stare at the little dog sitting calmly in his little medical assistant vest beside Maya on the backseat. Sam saw Dean's less than pleased look of the dog.

"Dean," Sam warned. "I told you, where ever Maya goes, Puck follows."

Maya looked at Sam arching a brow, "Doesn't like dogs in his car?"

"No. I don't." Dean answered grumbling. "Can't we leave him here and your Dad can get him?" Puck gives a whine and snuggles into Maya's lap and does his best to look pitiful.

"Sorry Dean. Where I go, Puck goes," Maya shrugged helplessly as she petted the small dog. "I promise he won't make a mess in your precious car, as long as we pull over when I tell you to."

"Fine." Dean gritted out, already getting that slight dog smell in the cabin. He put the car in gear and pulled out back onto the highway, and started heading towards Colorado.

"Hey Sammy, pop in AC/DC will ya," Dean instructed his brother. Sam just rolled his eyes and rummaged for the requested cassette tape.

"What's AC/DC?" Maya asked innocently confused from the back. She's heard of the band, but wasn't too sure on their music. Sam paused as he looked at his brother to see his face. It was hilarious and he had to keep himself from laughing.
Asking who AC/DC was to Dean, was like asking who Jesus was to a theology professor. Maya was going to get schooled.

"You don't know AC/DC?!" Dean looked in his rearview mirror aghast, catching Maya's confused eyes.

She shrugged, "I don't know. I just listen to songs that I like. Lot of Green Day, and 80's rock."

"Well, there's still some hope for you then…" Dean muttered. There was no way he wasn't teaching Maya about good tunes. "Sam you got it?" Dean asked.

Sam held up the cassette labeled AC/DC, smirking in amusement. Dean grabbed it and put it into the cassette player on the dash. Music started filtering through the cabin.

"Get ready for some quality musical education Goldy," Dean said looking back at Maya with a large smirk. "Lesson one: AC/DC rules."

Then the lyrics to the song came on and Maya's eyes lit up as she began to recognize it.

"Wait, this is Highway to Hell. This was AC/DC?" Maya began bobbing her head to the music with a large grin.

"Damn right it is!"

"Awesome!"

Sam side-eyed the two as they began rocking out and shook his head. He just knew Dean would make it his mission to introduce Maya to all of the rock tapes they had growing up. Sam leaned back in his seat and prepared himself for the trip ahead with the two music lovers.

Chapter End Notes
Ugh, confrontation between Sam and Maya was hard to write.

I also figured that Maya would be more upset over her Dad's emotional state than Sam actually killing her because technically it didn't happen and would no longer happen because circumstances changed back to before being stuck in that final time loop.

Basically Maya didn't experience it or see it, but she saw how her Dad was after. Like hearing about bad news vs seeing it in person. That kind of detachment.
February-ish 2008, Somewhere between Wichita and Monument

They'd all been driving for a few hours now with Dean going through every piece of music he had to 'educate' the young teen in the back seat. He was inordinately proud of himself when Maya told him she planned to get a few of his favorite AC/DC songs on her iPod next chance she got. However, they did into a bit of an argument when she didn't really appreciate Metallica the same way he did. He called her a heathen.

Maya huffed, rolling her eyes good naturedly as she looked out of the impala's windows at the passing scenery. She felt Puck nudge her arm with his nose to get her attention. Maya looked at him and he gave a huffed bark and patted her leg three times with his paw.

"Does the rat need to go?" Dean asked looking at Maya in the rearview mirror, and seeing her shake her head.

"No, he's just telling me my blood sugar's getting low and I need to eat something sugary." Maya rummaged through her backpack and pulled out an Oh Henry bar and began chowing down on it.

Dean scrunched his face in confusion, "Why?"

"She's hypoglycemic, Dean," Sam answered, but then saw the I-have-no-clue-what-you-just-said look Dean was giving him. "She's half-Trickster so she has a very high metabolism. She needs to eat a lot of sugar rich foods to keep from going into hypoglycemic shock."

"Oh," Dean nodded but both Maya and Sam saw from the look on his face that he really didn't get what that actually meant for Maya.
"If I don't eat enough candy I go into shock, and if my blood sugar doesn't get brought up, I will die." Maya explained as the look of realization dawned on Dean's face. "I'm not as resilient as my Dad, so a minor inconvenience for him could be potentially life threatening for me." She sighed leaning into the back seat and looked out the window again as she unwrapped another Oh Henry bar. She put the wrapper from the first bar into a pocket in her bag.

This was when a thought occurred to Sam. The Trickster loved his daughter above everything else, if his reaction in the time loop was anything to go by. So if Maya had met up with her Dad not long after, with the memory still fresh in his mind…why had he let Maya go anywhere on her own so soon? Two weeks wasn't a lot of time to get over something like that.

"Maya," Sam looked at the distracted snacking girl in the backseat, staring out the window. "You said you're Dad was really hurting after the time loop," Maya gave a noncommittal sound to say she was listening. "Then why did he let you go out on your own so soon after? Or go anywhere near us for that matter?"

Dean furrowed his eyebrows at Sam's question giving him a side-glance before returning his eyes to the road. Sam had a point and the tensing of Maya's shoulders did not bode well. Maya finished the second chocolate bar.

It didn't help that Dean couldn't help but think of Ben at that moment either. Even if he wasn't his, that was one awesome little dude. If it were Ben he'd probably have him locked in his house with Lisa until he could hunt down the son of a bitch that was threatening them. It sucked that what he did meant that just hanging around could be a threat to them.

"Yeah," Dean agreed with Sam. "If you were my kid I'd have your ass on lock down, let alone have it wandering around the country by itself."

Maya kept her gaze firmly looking out the window, not meeting Sam's gaze or Dean's eyes when they flickered to the rearview mirror. She fidgeted with the wrapper in her hands.

"Goldy," came Dean's voice in warning. Though it wasn't necessary as Sam began having a good idea of what was going on.

"You weren't supposed to go off on your own." Sam realized.
Maya flinched. Oh yeah, she knew she was in big trouble when her Dad caught up with her ass.

"Um, well, no." Maya mumbled out. "He doesn't, um, know where I've been the last few days since I split." She looked at Sam's unimpressed face guiltily. "I left a note this time explaining myself." Maya added, though it sounded more like a question.

"Maya," Sam sighed, this was not good. "Your Dad is probably worried sick about you. Not to mention he hates my guts at the moment. If he caught you with us, I'm pretty sure he'd kill both me and Dean."

"Like I'd let that happen," Maya snorted. Yeah she wasn't about to let her Dad kill Sam and Dean for something they didn't know about. "Besides," Maya added a little conspiratorially, "that's why I don't plan on telling him."

"Oh yeah, I feel soo reassured," Dean growled sarcastically. "Nothing like the possibility of the Trickster dropping in looming over our heads."

Maya rolled her eyes. "Relax, he can't find me unless I tell him where I am and I've temporarily blocked his number."

"Maya, why'd you leave your Dad?" Sam asked, watching as her eyes went downcast looking at her hands.

"He's been worried about me leaving on my own again. He pretty much wants to wrap me up in bubble wrap and stick me in a bubble," Maya sighed gesturing helplessly. "I get he wants to keep me safe, but life isn't safe, and I don't want to spend it always shielded in his shadow. I just got my independence, there's no way I'm letting go of it that easily." Maya gave a small smirk at Sam. "Besides," she shrugged, "my Dad really needs to learn to let go."

Dean snorted, "And to think he gave you shit Sammy for not letting go." Sam gave Dean a bitch-face, even though he agreed. Seemed the Trickster had trouble letting people go as well.

"Whatever Dean," Sam mumbled not wanting to remember Mystery Spot. He still got antsy when he woke up and it was a Tuesday. "We're still about an hour from Monument. I vote grabbing some late dinner and a room at the motel once we get there."
Dean looked at the clock on the dash that showed 7:02pm and nodded, "Yeah, sounds like a plan. We can hit it hard in the morning. Find out where Bela is hiding out, then rob her blind." Dean gave a crooked grin.

An hour later the three of them, and Puck who got in with his vest, were sitting in a diner booth eating their food. Maya and Dean sat on one side, Maya being inside, and Sam sat on the other. Puck hung out under the table with his own food bowl. Sam, the health nut, had a garden salad, while Maya and Dean both decided to get deluxe cheeseburgers with fries.

Dean was making some pretty inappropriate noises while he was shoveling the burger into his mouth. Sam gave his brother a disgusted and unsettled look, while Maya tried to ignore the sounds the older Winchester sibling was making.

She couldn't keep the snark in though, "Do you two need a room Dean?"

Dean shot her an unimpressed look that was diminished by how pleased he was with his burger. "Shut up Goldy," Dean said around a mouthful of food, before swallowing and continuing, "Can't a man enjoy his burger?" Dean took another big bite, as Sam took a sip of his beer.

Maya gives him a disgusted grimace as she wrinkled her nose, "Oh sure, but I don't think they should sound like my Dad having sex." Two things happened that had Maya laughing hard.

The first was Dean's shocked face of horror that caused him to choke a little on his burger. He had to pound his chest and take a sip of his beer to get the food down. The second was Sam choking on his drink, which caused some of it to come out his nose, and the shock caused him to lose a grip on the beer bottle. It slipped from his hand and spilled on his lap, causing him to curse.

Maya wheezed in laughter as the two brothers got themselves together and looked at her in wariness.

"You know that how?" Dean asked in disbelief and horror, Sam looked perturbed as well.

"I was 12 and I had come back from the arcade early," Maya began as she calmed down. "I accidentally walked in on him having fun with a couple of women he conjured. It took 3 seconds too long to realize what was I was seeing." She shuddered a little bit at the memory. She didn't see any fun bits, thank God, but it was still a little traumatic. "Got a crash course in the importance of knocking." Maya rubbed the back of her head awkwardly. That wasn't a fun time.
"Oh my god," Dean was now wheezing a little bit. He could just picture the mortification on both the Trickster's face as his daughter walked in on him, and on Maya's when she realized what he was doing.

Sam gave her a sympathetic look, he remembered walking in on Dean and the twins not long after finding out about his brother's deal. There were some things of your brother you were never meant to see.

"Did he at least sound proof the rooms?" Sam asked with a pitying smile. Maya gave him a blank stare that spoke volumes.

"He didn't always remember…” Maya muttered. That had both Dean and Sam laughing at her plight. She sent them a pouty glare, "Assholes, the both of you."

Hearing the commotion the waitress came over and began wiping up the spilled beer. Sam took this moment to excuse himself to go to the bathroom to clean up the spilled beer on his lap. A minute later the waitress left giving a flirty smirk to Dean. Dean smirked at her and waggled his eyebrows suggestively as she left, causing her to giggle. Maya rolled her eyes and went back to her food.

Finished with his burger Dean started in on his fries and gives Maya an assessing glance.

"Maya, can I ask you something?" Maya looked at him and nodded. "Back in Kansas, you seemed to forgive Sam prettily easily." Dean gave her a pointed look as he asked, "Did you really forgive him that quickly?"

"Well, I never said I forgave him. Just that I don't hate him," Maya shrugged.

"Then why'd you come with us?" Dean questioned eating some fries.

"You honestly had me at one-upping this thief of yours and getting the Colt back to save people." Maya admitted.

Dean gave her a perplexed look, "Then why the whole thing about meeting Sam back in Kansas?"
Maya stuffed some fries in her mouth chewing thoughtfully, before swallowing and answering, "Because I wanted to see and hear from Sam, in person, that he made a mistake and that he was sorry for it. But most importantly, that he didn't want to turn into that version of himself." Maya took a drink of her pop. "I like to believe in second chances Dean, the chance to learn and be better than what we were before, to learn from our mistakes. Granted not everyone deserves second chances, but I'm not about to take away their opportunity to learn, while serving punishment like Melody's Dad." Maya said referring to her first solo trick that the boys had stumbled upon.

Vibrant green and shining gold met. "I may not forgive your brother completely Dean, or trust him like I might have before, but Sam has a good soul. So, I'm giving him the chance to earn my forgiveness and trust. Don't you think he deserves that chance?" Maya asked not looking away from Dean's serious face.

"Thanks Goldy," Dean grunted as he returned to his fries shoveling them in his mouth. Maya gives him another disgusted look at his eating habits.

Sam exited the bathroom and headed back to the booth. Both Maya and Dean had their backs to him and looked to have been talking, and then Dean went back to being a pig with his food while Maya gave his older brother another disgusted look. Sam chuckled as he came up behind them.

"I'd get used to it Maya," Maya turned around to look at him. "Doubt Dean will be improving his table manners anytime soon." Maya gave him a small-amused smile, while Dean just shot him a glare.

"Bitch," Dean grunted at Sam.

"Jerk," came Sam's easy reply.

"Assholes," Maya chimed in cheekily. Sam snorted in amusement as Dean shot her a half-hearted glare and pushed her head down playfully toward her plate. "'Ey!" Maya protested as she kept her face from getting smushed into her fries.

"Eat your food, midget."

"I'm average!"
Sam went back to eating his salad as he watched the two go back and forth with their insults. He couldn't help think how odd it was that Maya just seemed to fit in perfectly with them. He pushed the thought away as they were barely friendly acquaintances, but that thought also felt wrong. He was probably over thinking it and reading too much into it.

A little bit later the waitress came by with a smile, "You folks all done here? You need anything else?" That got both Dean and Maya's attention as they looked at the waitress hopefully.

"Do you got any pie/cake?" they both said hopefully at the same time, pie for Dean and cake for Maya. Sam's frame shook as he laughed at the shocked looks of confusion on both their faces as they looked at each other. The waitress thought it was adorable.

"Aww that was so cute," the waitress giggled. "She your younger sister?" the waitress asked Dean.

Dean, seeing the opportunity to flirt some more, took full advantage and swung his arm around Maya's shoulders then turned to look at the waitress with a grin.

"Yeah, little sis here just got an A on her calculus test," Dean bragged while Sam gave them both looks of incredulity. It seemed Maya had also caught on to the trick. So she leaned into Dean's side and giving him a one armed hug as she smiled brightly at the waitress.

"Oh yeah, it was really hard and I had to study all week for it!" Maya expressed with a smile. "Big bro here was a huge help."

The waitress smiled at the two, "Well congratulations! I wished I had brothers like yours willing to help with homework and take me out to celebrate." She said wistfully. "How about a free round of dessert, on the house." She offered.

Maya's eyes seemed to get brighter with excitement as her smile split her face. Sam and Dean were reminded of how young Maya actually was.

"That'd be amazing! Thank you," Maya gave heart-felt thanks as she took her arm away from Dean and leaned off of him. Dean also released her shoulders and gave the waitress a thankful smirk.
"Aww you're just the cutest thing." She took Dean and Maya's orders; Sam had declined the offer of free dessert.

Maya and Dean both watched as the waitress walked away and once she was far enough turned back to look at Sam with pleased smiles on their faces. Sam just shook his head at them in disbelief.

"I can't believe you two," Sam sighed. It was like watching two lionesses working together to take down a gazelle. The waitress didn't stand a chance.

Dean smirked and shrugged his shoulders, "Free pie Sammy."

"And cake," Maya added, giving a similarly pleased smile like Dean's. "Free cake."

"It's like there's two of you Dean," Sam shook his head in amazement. It didn't help when they both gave similar scoffs to his statement.

They were out of the diner by around 10pm and found a motel just outside Monument around 10:45pm. Maya was sleeping in the back of the impala, having dozed off not too long after the diner. Long hours and good food tended to do that. She was sitting up and leaning against the driver side passenger door, her head resting against the window. Puck rested tucked up to her side under the hand that had been petting him.

Dean pulled up and Sam went to get a room for the next couple of nights. Once Sam was back in the car Dean drove the car to the corresponding room on the key Sam got.

Turning the car off Dean turned around to Maya, "Hey Goldy, wake up." He leaned over into the back seat to shake her shoulder earning a mumbled groan in protest. Maya sits up inhaling slowly as she looked around blearily her eyes struggling to stay open. Sam had exited the car and went to the trunk to grab his and Dean's bags.

"C'mon sleeping beauty, you can go back to sleep in the motel room," Dean said as he got out of the impala. Maya hit her head on the backrest exhaling with a frown for a moment before unbuckling her seat belt and exiting the impala with Puck and her bag. She closed the door once Puck was out and went to the open motel room door, shuffling her feet tiredly with barely open eyes. Dean followed behind her watching her tiredness with amusement.
Sam was already in the bathroom getting ready for bed so Dean got to see Maya go to the nearest double bed, drop her bag, and just collapse face down on it with her legs dangling over the side. Dean huffed a laugh. It was like watching a tired younger Sam.

"Tired Goldy?" Dean chuckled. Maya turned her head to give a bitch-face to the older Winchester. Oh yeah, very Sam-like.

She stuck out her arm and flipped him off. "Bite me Winchester," she growled, and then yawned. Dean just snorted at her. He walked over to her and rubbed her head, mussing up her chin length dark curls, which earned him an annoyed whine of protest.

"I'm shaking in terror as we speak," Dean laughed. Maya rolled her eyes at him and put her face back down in the bedding, groaning. Sam exited the bathroom in his sleep clothing.

"Bathroom's free," Sam announced.

Dean nodded and shook Maya's shoulder, cue more groaning. "Your turn kid," Dean ordered. Maya begrudgingly pushed herself up and grabbed her bag before heading to the bathroom to change and brush her teeth. Dean took this opportunity to get changed himself while he talked with Sam.

"So, how are we doing sleeping arrangements?" Sam asked as his brother got changed.

"Well I'm not sleeping in the same bed as you," Dean looked at Sam. "You'd go octopus on me and push me out of it again, and you snore," Dean told him.

"Dean!" Sam looked at him annoyed. "That was one time! And I don't snore!" Sam defended.

Dean rolled his eyes as he sat on his bed while putting on his pajama shirt. "Whatever, I'll take my chances with Maya." Dean huffed. This was when Maya left the bathroom yawning. She wore a loose light blue pajama tank top and loose mid-thigh black shorts. Her hair fell messily in wavy dark brown curls with bangs parted to the right. She was less gangly than she had been, her frame maturing and filling out as she aged.
"Goldy you're bunking with me," Dean informed as he watched Maya toss her bag under the table and her black jacket over a chair. Looking over her eyes darted between the two before nodding.

"Good call. Sam looks like a bed hog," Maya replied as she went to the bed Dean was on. Dean chuckled at her response, while Sam sent her his patented bitch-face, before glaring at his amused brother.

"Shut up jerk!" Sam threw one of his pillows at Dean's head who just caught it mid-air, seeing it coming.

"Mine now bitch!" Dean smirked as he tossed Sam's pillow with the others on his and Maya's bed. Dean turned to look at Maya only to find she had slipped under the covers on her side of the bed, laying on her stomach and clutching the pillow like a teddy bear, facing away from him.

"She out already?" Sam asked as he peered at the sleeping girl.

Dean nodded, "Yeah, looks like it." Dean gets up and goes to the bathroom for his turn. When he comes out he turned off the main light and slide under the covers on his side of the motel bed. In the light of the lamp on Sam's nightstand Dean noticed that Puck had hopped up onto the bed as well, sitting at Maya's feet. Dean glared and shook his head.

"Sorry, no rats on the bed," Dean scowled as Puck curled up looking at him. "Off," Dean ordered sternly. Puck huffed at Dean in what appeared to be a sarcastic tone and turned his little head away from him, ignoring him. Dean glared at the dog, then at his brother when he heard him snickering.

"Did I just get dismissed by a rat?" Dean looked at his brother both perplexed and slightly offended.

Sam did his best to hold in his snickers as he shrugged, "I think so." Sam turned off the lamp beside him and went to sleep in his own un-crowded bed.

Dean grumbled as he laid back and tried to get some sleep. They were hunting a thief tomorrow.

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February-ish 2008, Monument, Colorado, United States
Next day…

Sam had been able to narrow down which high-end hotels Bela might have been staying at. Most hotels he asked had not confirmed a guest named 'Bela Talbot', or one of her other known alias' the brothers knew, was staying with them, and the last few had a strict non-disclosure of guest lists. Thankfully it was only a couple.

Sam and Dean each went to a hotel and spent the day looking for Bela to come out, or to go in. Both were careful to remain innocuous and to leave the impala in a nice crowded supermarket parking lot, much to Dean's displeasure. The beautiful car was, unfortunately, a dead give away that the Winchesters were in town.

While Sam and Dean's hotels were a bust, the one Maya was hanging around wasn't. Sam had a black and white security photo of Bela and had Maya take a copy, as well as describing her hair colour, eye colour, and the distinct British accent that she had. So about halfway through the day she saw Bela leave the motel in a bright red jacket, walking briskly down the sidewalk towards her, where she had pretended to lean against a wall to check her phone. Puck sat patiently by her side, vestless, and on a leash. The vest would be too eye catching.

Maya watched as Bela took out her long black wallet, with what looked like a star charm on the zipper of the built in coin case, from her jacket pocket to check for something, before putting it back in her right pocket. That's when Maya had an idea. It was risky, but it could get her Bela's room number without tipping her off.

Taking a breath Maya pushed off the wall, her head still down looking at her phone, as she started walking towards Bela. Puck following on her left. It was only a couple of steps before both their right shoulders collided, and Maya deftly stuck her hand in Bela's right pocket, grabbing the wallet and bringing it in front of her, out of Bela's sight. As she turned, she closed her phone in her left hand and transferred the wallet to her left hand as well. Her left hand was now busy with Puck's leash around her wrist, and holding both the phone and wallet.

Maya put on her best sincere apology face, "I'm so sorry. You all right?" she asked with fake concern.

Bela looked at her with light green intense eyes and she felt like she was under a microscope. Bela looked her up and down quickly taking in her black jacket, fitted navy shirt, and faded jeans. Maya made sure to keep the wallet out of sight.
Bela plastered on a smile. "That's quite all right. Make sure to look up every now and then, yeah?" She said in a slight but distinct British accent as she turned away and began walking down the sidewalk once more.

Curious about Bela, Maya flashed her eyes and got a glimpse of her soul, surely it couldn't be as bad—nope Sam and Dean were right. Maya's face scrunched in disgust as she turned around to keep walking, away from Bela, and check her wallet. Bela's soul was stained with greed and willingness to kill to get what she wanted; lacking any kind of compassion, but there was also something else there. Something she'd seen before.

Maya shook her head and focused on the contents of the wallet; cash, credit, cards, ID, and there! The hotel key card! Quickly taking it out of the credit card holder she looked for the room number. Room 217.

She felt a tap on her shoulder from behind. Maya quickly put the key card back and closed the wallet, before completely turning around to find Bela smiling calmly at her with slightly narrowed eyes. Maya schooled her face into one of shocked surprise, followed by a look described only as 'busted'.

"A word of advice, you really should work on your pick-pocketing technique," Bela examined her nails. "The whole bumping into someone is very old and very obvious. So, from one thief to another, keep practicing the art of subtlety. It'll go a long way." She gave Maya a white toothy grin as she held out her hand. "I'd like my wallet back now, please." She said expectantly.

Maya gave her a sheepish grin as she handed the wallet over back to Bela. Wallet in hand Bela straightened and gave her one last haughty smile before she turned and walked away. Bela didn't see Maya's eyes flash a light purple ring around her pupils for a second time.

Looking around Maya walked further down the sidewalk with her companion as her brows pinched in thought at what she saw in that second look on Bela's soul. There was a very distinct mark on Bela's souls, like a name stamp. The same kind she'd seen on Dean's. In fact it was the same symbol. Maya didn't know what it could mean. Why would Dean and Bela have the same symbol on their souls?

Pushing the thought away for now, she took out her phoned and called Dean.

"Hey Goldy, any luck?" Dean sighed, bored and aggravated.
"Yep, lots of it," Maya grinned. "Just had a run in with Bela, literally. She's at Monument Riverside Hotel, room 217." Maya was quite pleased with herself and it showed in her tone.

"How the hell you pull that off?" Dean asked incredulous.

Maya just rolled her eyes as she made her way to the meet up spot they all set up, "I'll tell you at the rendezvous spot."

All three of them were in a family diner getting some late lunch when Maya explained what happened. The Winchesters weren't exactly happy with her risky play.

"Maya, you could've tipped Bela off that someone was watching her," Sam scolded.

"Exactly," Dean agreed looking at her annoyed. "Bela would be in the wind before we even knew what happened, and we'd probably not get a whiff of her for months!" Dean sat back in his seat and glared at the teenager across from him. They both saw the slight pinch of hurt in her face, but that was easily hidden by her own annoyed glare.

Maya was about to retort when the waiter brought them their food. Once he was gone Maya looked back at the two brothers in front of her. "Bela doesn't know my face. She has no reason to connect me to you two." Maya pointed out.

"Yeah, but Bela's good. She doesn't need to recognize you to know if she's being watched," Dean growled around his bacon cheeseburger.

"If she did figure out I was watching her it can easily be assumed that I was sizing her up for the swipe." Maya twirled her spaghetti and took a bite. "It was a lot less risky than trying to look up guest records at the hotel to find her room."

"You may have a point," Sam conceded as he ate a salad, though Dean grunted a negative to that statement as he chewed his burger.

"No she doesn't," Dean got out as he swallowed his food. He looked at Maya seriously. "You don't
know Bela, Maya. She's sneaky, manipulative, and if you weren't in such a public area I have no doubt she would've hurt you, or worse!"

"I'm aware, Dean. I glimpsed her soul. It's stained with greed and has no compassion for those she hurts when trying to get what she wants. I can handle myself against humans." Maya took another bite of pasta.

"So you say, and you still got caught," Dean pointed out. Maya scoffed and rolled her eyes.

"That was the plan," Maya gave a mischievous smirk. "I knew I couldn't just snap the wallet into my pocket without sending off red flags. I literally saw her check it before bumping into her. She would know something was up if it just disappeared."

Sam's face pinched in thought. "Couldn't you just teleport it back into her pocket?"

Maya shook her head. "No, it's easier to bring items to me than to send them away. I need to practice that aspect of it more. At least this way she'll think it was just a failed attempt of an amateur pick-pocket." Maya smirked. "I'm more grabby, than throw-y."

Dean scowled knowing that Maya made good points, but it didn't mean he had to like it. The kid was growing on him, and it didn't help that Bobby threatened some very important bits if he got Maya killed. That old goat had a soft spot for Maya, which had become obvious whenever him and Sam had a chance to drop in. Just as he said that him and Sam were like his boys, he probably saw Maya as his girl.

That had Dean frowning in thought as he stared at the girl tucking in to her lunch, finished talking. Did that make them some kind of siblings through Bobby?

Maya took a big mouthful of pasta and did one chew before catching his staring. She raised a questioning eyebrow at him, which he just responded with a shrug. Maya didn't move, cheeks puffed with un-chewed spaghetti, but there was a flash of mischief in her eyes.

She leaned over her plate, keeping eye contact with Dean and opened her mouth.

"Wha' you 'ookin' ah?" her words were garbled as she let the pasta just fall from her mouth back onto her plate looking ridiculous. Dean thankfully swallowed his food before she did that and let
out a snorting laugh as he let go of his burger to grip the table. Sam, who had watched them stare the other down, had the opposite reaction.

Sam's face was the mirror of disgust as he watched all the food leave her mouth back onto her plate. "Maya! That's disgusting! Your almost as bad as Dean."

That earned Sam an offended 'Hey!' from his brother beside him.

She just laughed at him and used her fork to put the food back in her mouth to finish eating it. Much to Sam's further disgust.

Next morning...

Maya had to leave Puck in the impala. She hadn't wanted to leave him, but they couldn't have him running around with them in a hotel that didn't allow dogs. Too much of an attention grabber.

Dean, Sam, and Maya were able to sneak in through a back entrance and made their way up to Bela's room on the second floor. This was Maya's moment. Focusing on the room on the other side of the door and the picture of the Colt Sam had shown her on his computer she snapped her fingers. Nothing appeared in her hand. Confused she snapped her fingers again, nothing. She gave the brothers a confused and frustrated look. "Something's not right. You sure the Colt is in there?" Sam looked disappointed, but Dean looked frustrated.

"You sure this is her room?" Dean snapped.

"Yes I'm sure!" Maya hissed glaring at the older Winchester.

"Maya, is it possible that Bela found a way to keep the Colt from being stolen supernaturally? Like a type of warding around a safe or room?" Sam suggested derailing a possible argument. Maya looked confused, but thoughtful.

"Maaaaaybe, but if there is I've never heard of it." Maya scowled at the door like it personally
"Well then," Dean sighed, "plan B it is." Dean looked at Maya. "Think you can swipe another copy of the key card?"

Maya gave a firm nod as she thought of the key card she saw the other day, focusing on as many details as she could, especially the room number, and in the direction of the front desk below them. With a snap of her fingers there in her hand was the key card for the room.

"Thank god for excellent memory," Maya smirked as she handed Dean the card. Dean was pretty impressed. He hadn't seen this ability first hand yet and had been a little suspicious of the claim that Maya could do it.

Dean and Sam took out their handguns just in case Bela was in the room. Dean used the card to unlock the door opening it. Sam went in first with his gun drawn and Maya followed with Dean behind her, gun over her head and closed the door behind him silently.

Maya waited till Sam and Dean checked any possible hiding spots before going further than the door into the room. Sam went to the armoire and found the room safe while Dean looked through the dresser. Maya had started looking through nightstand drawers.

"Any sign of it?" Dean asked rummaging through the dresser and Bela's clothes.

"Nothing," Sam replied after finding that the room safe had yielded nothing. There wasn't any signs of warding either that could have prevented Maya from nabbing it either. "No warding either."

"Nothing here either," Maya chimed in closing the nightstand drawers with a look of frustration on her face. "And before you say it Dean, I'm positive that this is the right fucking room."

Dean got to the third drawer and pushed aside some clothes to find wigs. Picking up a wig in each hand he turned to look at Sam and Maya with an exasperated look. "Oh don't worry. You were right Goldy."

Sam and Maya looked at the wigs in disbelief. That's when the phone left on the bed started ringing beside Maya.
Maya looked at the two brothers in question. Everyone was giving each other *what-the-hell* and *what-do-we-do* looks. Dean walked over and stood beside Maya, eyeing the phone. He gives her and Sam one more look before shrugging and picking up the phone. Dean waits till who ever on the other end talks first and when they do, oh the forced calm he tried to pull.

Seeing the look, Maya promptly invaded Dean's personal space to bring her ear to the other side of the receiver.

"Where are you?" Dean asked as he tried to push Maya away a little with an annoyed look, but she bounced back like a boomerang. She grabbed at the phone and pulled it down a little.

"Two states away by now." Came Bela's voice as Dean kept a firm grasp on the phone and mouthed *stop it* to Maya.

"Where?" Dean demanded as he used an arm to keep Maya at arms length away from the phone.

"*I want to listen,*" Maya whispered quietly, as she tried to move his arm out of her way. Sam was torn between being tense and snickering at the two. He had to cover his mouth with one hand to stifle some chuckles that got away.

"Where's our usual quippy banter? I miss it." Bela answered cheekily. Dean stared down at Maya who kept struggling and just relented with an eye roll. He brought the receiver to the halfway point between their heights and let Maya scoot in close to listen. Sam sent Dean an amused smirk.

"I want it back Bela—now." Dean growled as he flipped Sam the bird for his smirk.

"Your little pistol you mean? Sorry, I can't at the moment."

"You understand how many people are gonna die if you do this?" Dean's voice held accusation.

"What *is* it that you think I plan to do with it?" Bela asked, her voice ever calm with that hint of superiority.
"Take the only weapon we have against an army of demons and sell it to the highest bidder." Dean suggested sarcastically.

"You know nothing about me."

"I know I'm gonna stop you." Dean said confidently.

"Tough words for a guy who can't even find me," Bela quipped back.

Tired of crouching a little Dean straightened up, taking the receiver away from Maya who gave him a look of protest. She sat on the bed and would deny anyone who commented about it that she had been pouting a little. Sam was giving her an amused look, which caused her to pout a little more and stick out her tongue childishly. Sam smiled and rolled his eyes good-naturedly.

"Oh, I'll find you, sweetheart. You know why? Because I have absolutely nothing better to do than to track you down." Dean threatened.

"See, I'd see that as a threat if I didn't have my own sources keeping tabs on you. Black 67' impala. Very distinctive. Then being informed by the hotel staff that someone called asking if I was staying there. Then, as I was leaving town, I get pick-pocketed, but have none of my cash missing? Very sloppy Dean. She your little sister? Tell her she needs a lot more practice." Dean could just hear the smirk in Bela's voice. "Also, you're about to be quite occupied. Did you really think I wouldn't take precautions?" The smugness was very real.

Dean looked at the phone confused for a split moment, until all hell broke loose. The door burst open and gun wielding police officers came running in telling them all to get down on their knees and drop their weapons.

"That bitch!" Dean cursed with his arms in the air as his gun was removed and he was forced to the ground on his stomach while he was handcuffed from behind. Maya soon followed beside him while Sam was also getting similar treatment from his spot in the room. One policeman then cocked a shotgun at them while another told all of them their Miranda rights.

A pair of nice shoes appeared in their line of vision on the carpet and the boys craned their heads up to find FBI Agent Hendrickson looking down at them smugly.
"Hi guys. It's been a while," the brothers looked at each other and gave 'oh shit' looks before letting their foreheads touch the ground in momentary defeat.

Maya craned her head to look at the FBI agent that seemed to know Sam and Dean. If the smugness radiating off him was anything to go by and the looks the boys gave him, she was pretty sure they were in some deep shit.

Hendrickson looked at the dark haired teenager on the floor beside Dean Winchester who stared at him with gold eyes. "Who's your little sidekick?" he asked as all three were pulled to their feet. "You sick freaks like 'em young?" Both Winchesters looked at the agent in both disgust and horror.

"The fucking hell?!" Dean yelled. "She's sixteen! What are you? Some closet pervert?" Dean was yanked hard as he was escorted out of the room for his protest.

Maya snorted derisively. "No offense, but neither are my type and if they did try anything I'd kick their collective asses." She smirked confidently. Hendrickson narrowed his eyes at the girl. She was handcuffed, patted down, being escorted by armed policemen, but she didn't even seem the least bit scared. She followed orders and walked out with them calmly and quietly.

That was until she saw Puck running right towards them with an officer chasing him. She knew that look in Puck's eyes; he was on the warpath and was about to attack the ankles of the officers detaining her. Officers with guns.

"Puck! HEEL!" Maya shouted in panic. Puck slowed and stopped a few feet from all of them. Sam and Dean were already loaded on the truck with new cuffs that chained their hands in front of them and chained their feet. One chain connected the chains around their ankles to each other, unable to move very far without the other. The brothers remained silent as they looked on with worry. They knew how much the little dog meant to Maya.

"So, this little dog yours kid?" The girl tensed as she glanced at Hendrickson, knowing she gave him a way to get to her.

She nodded as she eyed the FBI agent.

"He gonna bite my officers if I get a dog muzzle on him?" Hendrickson saw the girl breathe a slight sigh of relief as she shook her head. Good, he didn't really want to shoot the loyal little dog. He too had seen the vicious look the dog was giving the officers escorting the girl. That dog was
ready to fight with all his little body to protest his master.

Maya was loaded up with Sam and Dean in the back of the transport and had to tell Puck to 'stay' and 'obey', to keep him from following. An officer came over and gave her similar chains as the ones Sam and Dean wore, but didn't connect her to them.

Puck whined pitifully as the door of the truck closed and cut off his view from his mistress.

All three of them looked at each other wondering what they were going to do. Then Dean said something stupid.

"Well," Sam and Maya looked at him, "at least it can't get any worse." Dean shrugged. He received two bitch-faces for that. "What?"

"Great, you probably just jinxed us, Assface." Maya groaned hitting the back of her head against the metal of the transport truck.

Dean rolled his eyes. "Whatever, Goldy." Sam just shook his head wondering how they were going to get out of this one.
February-ish 2008, Monument, Colorado, United States

Dean, Sam, and Maya looked at the transport's door as it was opened.

"Alright you three, let's go," motioned the agent known as Reidy. Sam and Dean were brought off first followed by Maya. Reidy led the way to the local police station with Sam and Dean in tow, Maya behind them, and two armed policemen bringing up the rear. One of which had Puck muzzled and on a tight leash. The little dog strained to walk right beside Maya as they entered the station.

Reidy stopped and they all paused to look at the female secretary (Nancy Fitzgerald), agent Henriksen, the deputy and the police chief in the bullpen. Sam looked around a little worried, Maya had a façade of confidence, and Dean smirked at the serious faces looking at him. Nancy looked nervous and scared, clutching her rosary.

Then Dean, of course, opened his mouth, "Why all the sourpusses?" He smirked widely. No one was amused, except Maya who decided to take a dig at Dean.

"Maybe 'cause they have to experience your ugly mug in person now," she sassed. She smirked as Dean looked behind him to glare at her.

"Ah, screw you Goldy! I'm adorable." He smiled confidently, until Maya spoke again.

"Yeah," she agreed, "the same way a really ugly dog is adorable." She was openly smiling now in amusement. Sam just shook his head at the two, because really? They're in some serious trouble and they're cracking jokes?

Dean scowled and put up a face of mock hurt as he patted his chest over his heart with his bound
"That's enough," Henriksen ordered. All three of their attention goes to him. "Take the Winchester's to their cells," he nodded to Reidy as he walked towards them. "Leave 'Goldy' here," his eyes trained on the teenager who had stopped slightly between Sam and Dean. "I want to know who she is and why she's hanging around these psychopaths." Henriksen made a mental note at the subtle shift the Winchester's bodies made. Sam drew himself up a little taller behind Maya and Dean shifted a little more in front of her, both gave him hard stares. Even that confidence Maya tried to cultivate cracked just a little and she leaned a little more behind Dean.

"What's wrong Henriksen? Tired of me and Sammy already?" Dean smirked at Henriksen, but it didn't reach his eyes. Reidy grabbed his arm roughly to get him moving.

"Hey! Watch the merchandise!" Dean protested as he wrenched his arm out of Reidy's grasp, but kept walking, shooting Maya a pointed glance then looking at the scared secretary's face as they walked by in rattling chains. "We're not the ones you should be scared of Nancy." Sam gave Maya a comforting pat on her shoulder with his big hand as he shuffled by her.

Winchesters were taken to their cell with their chains rattling all the way. The one guard handed off Puck's leash to Henriksen as he walked by when the FBI agent motioned for it. Apparently Maya wasn't worth armed escort. *Hmph.* Henriksen looked at Maya and took her arm and guided her into the bullpen. He sat her down at one of the chairs beside the desks.

Henriksen looked down at the teen sitting there looking up at him. Puck did his best to sit beside Maya and face the hostile man but the leash was still too short, he let loose a little whine behind his muzzle. Maya's eyes flickered from Henriksen to Puck at the whine, then back up.

"I'm going to un-cuff one of your hands and attach it to this desk here beside you," Henriksen motioned to the desk that had a bolted steel loop on hits side. "If you don't try anything I'll let you hold onto, Puck is it? I'll let you hold on to his leash, but the muzzle stays." He warned as he waited for an answer.

Maya stared at him, assessing him, her eyes flickering back to Puck now and again. She gives an agitated sigh and begrudgingly nods her agreement. Henriksen unlocked her right cuff and attached it to the desk before handing over Puck's lead.

The little dog immediately tried to jump up into her lap but Maya's one free hand kept him down and petted him reassuringly. Puck huddled against the front of her legs and started staring down Henriksen, letting out warning growls and huffs behind the muzzle. It was official; Henriksen was
now on Puck's shit list with Sam.

"All right," Henriksen brought Maya's attention back onto him, "I've gotta make a call but when I'm done we're going to have a chat about your choice in company."

Henriksen went to the phone on the other side of the desk and dialed a number as he took off his bulletproof vest with one hand.

"It's me. Is Steven in?...Well, get him out of the meeting," Henriksen pulled off the vest and waited for this Steven guy to answer on the other end of the phone. "I got 'em plus an extra...yeah some teenage girl and her dog...well, they'll be at Supermax by morning and the girl will be sent to some adolescent detention center in the next couple of days. I'm more worried about the Winchesters... armored bus, loaded with men...look we're taking every precaution...whatever you think is best... yeah?" Henriksen looked annoyed with whatever the guy on the other end was saying to him. He placed the phone back on the receiver in agitation and looked over to the Sheriff who just walked in.

"There's a chopper on its way," Henriksen informed the Sheriff.

The Sheriff looked up from his papers, "Yeah, but we don't have a helicopter pad."

"Then clear the damn parking lot," Henriksen answered annoyed as he walked around the desk, pulling up another chair and sitting in front of Maya. The Sheriff went to do as ordered.

Maya's lips twisted into a smirk as she regarded the FBI agent, "Rough day?" she asked in mock concern.

Henriksen gave a snort as he stared at her intensely. "Not really, because, see, I just caught myself two murdering psychopaths with a penchant for grave desecration and armed robbery. So, it's been a pretty good day," he leaned back in his chair hands spread before bringing them back together for a light clap. "Then there's you," his clasped hands pointed at her, "had my man Reidy look in your bag and not much there, not even something with your name on it. Nothing all that incriminating either, unless you count the amount of candy you got horded in there," he joked which got a little twitch of Maya's lips in amusement.

"What can I say?" Maya shrugged. "Got a bit of a sweet tooth." Puck performed a very specific whine at her feet that had Maya's eyes briefly flicker down at him. "Mind tossing me one of
"Tell me your name and I'll get you one," Henriksen offered with a shrug. He watched as Maya weighed her options in her mind as her left hand drummed on the desk rhythmically.

"All right," Maya agreed. Henriksen grabbed her bag from the floor on the other side of the desk. He pulled out a Hersey Bar and sat back down in front of her. She held out and as he made to give it to her he pulled it back close to his chest out of reach.

"Name first kid."

She leaned back in her chair and rolled her eyes, "What? Don't you trust me?" she said with faux innocence as she batted her eyes at him. Henriksen gave her a blank look. "Fine," Maya held her uncuffed hand up in surrender. "I'm Maya. Now, may I please have the chocolate bar?"

"Last name too," he demanded. He needed to find out who she was and if she had any parents that he could get a hold of.

Maya clicked her tongue in reluctance and shook her head. "No, I don't think so. Besides, you didn't ask for a full name, just a name." Maya grinned. Taking in the agent's serious face she knew he wasn't giving her the chocolate bar.

Henriksen leaned forward in his seat, using the Hershey bar to point at her, "Listen, Maya, do you realize how much trouble you're in? You were caught breaking and entering a hotel room with two known fugitives high on the FBI's most wanted list. Just being associated with them can get you in some serious trouble that will follow you for the rest of your life." he said threateningly. Maya wasn't fazed.

Maya tilted her head and scrunched her face in disagreement. "Mmmm no, I don't think so."

"You really think you're going to get out of this?" Henriksen scoffed, but the teenager's small smirk just grew wide with a knowing gleam in her eyes. She leaned forward.

"Oh, I know I will." She gave a little laugh before straightening up in her chair. "See, catching me? Was a goddamn fluke, and for me? It's actually really embarrassing." She actually gave a little bit of an embarrassed smile.
"I'm like you Mr. Henriksen, I don't like murderers, rapists, abusers, psychopaths, or any other scum of the earth types." Her face wrinkled in disgust. "I also make it a point of *not* hanging around them either."

"Yet you willingly went on a B&E with the Winchesters?" He asked incredulously. What was wrong with this girl?

"Exactly," Maya just sat back looking at him smugly.

"You've been sipping the same Satan worshipping and monster hunting Kool-Aid that the boys' Daddy been feeding them too, huh?" He narrowed his eyes at her as Maya couldn't help but burst out laughing.

"Oh Henriksen," Maya sighed in amusement, "if *only* you knew." She gave him a big smile at his less than entertained face.

"*Fine,*" Henriksen had enough of her attitude, "you wanna play the cool criminal? That's fine, but you're gonna have to hand back over the leash, and see how you like it behind some nice wrought iron bars." Henriksen stuck out his hand and Maya reluctantly handed over Puck's leash.

The little dog whined and growled in protest, but Maya shushed him. "It's all right Puck. Just behave okay?" Puck let out another whine and nudged her hand and legs once more.

"Smart dog," Henriksen commented with a raised eyebrow. Maya just gave him a knowing smirk. "Nancy?" Henriksen turned to the secretary who had been side-eyeing them the whole conversation.

"Yessir?" She asked nervously. Henriksen brought the little dog over and tied the leash to one of the legs on her desk.

"Keep an eye on him, okay?" Nancy nodded as she looked at the little dog sitting calmly beside her desk as he sent puppy eyes and another whine at Maya. Henriksen turned back to Maya, as he put the chocolate bar in his pocket. He had both her hands cuffed once more, "Let's see if a little glimpse into your future will have you in a more-*cooperative mood.*" he grabbed her arm and took her the holding cells.
"Hey boys," Henriksen called out as they entered the room, "brought your little friend too see you." He opened the door to the empty cell beside the Winchesters and nudged Maya in. She shuffled in without complaint and flopped down on the wall-mounted bed. "Look around kid," Henriksen gestured around them as he looked at Maya, "this is five stars compared to what they've got in juvie. So, I'd take this time to think about your," he looked over at the Winchesters "life choices." He finished.

Dean just sent the agent a smug devil-may-care smirk his way and Sam remained slouched and impassive beside him.

Henriksen walked over and stood in front of their cells looking at them in satisfaction.

"What? Am I not interesting anymore?" Maya called then gave a little laugh at the deadpanned glare sent her way by Henriksen, before ignoring her as he turned his attention back to Dean. She got an amused huff from Dean and a small quirk of the lips from Sam.

"You know what I'm trying to decide?" Henrikson asked Dean, who didn't look at him shaking his head with a scoff.

"I don't know. What? Whether Cialis will help you with your little condition?" Dean asked blandly. Maya gave a strained smile as she contained her laughter.

"Might need a little more than that," Maya commented from across the room, but Henriksen ignored her.

"What to have for dinner tonight, steak or lobster." All three of them looked at the agent like he was nuts. "What the hell, surf-and-turf. I got a lot to celebrate." Henriksen smirked. "I mean, after all, seeing you two in chains…"

"You kinky son of a bitch," Dean smirked as he turned his head to the side to look at Henriksen, "We don't swing that way." A smug smile plastered on his face.

"Oh yeah, that's funny," Henriksen commented dryly.
Maya pursed her lips and scrunched her brow, "I don't get it. Dean," She drew all their attention. "How are chains *kinky*?" Sam covered his mouth to suppress his laughter as Dean gave her a blank stare. Henriksen just rolled his eyes.

Dean looked at her intensely then shook his head, "Nope. No way. I'm *not* explaining BDSM to you. Not touching *that* topic with a 10ft pole!"

Maya just looked at him confused, "But *Dean*—" Dean made an abrupt *stop* movement with his hand, not looking at her. "Fine," Maya scoffed as she looked at Sam expectantly, "Sam can—" Sam just made a choking noise as he shook his head violently. Maya then looked at Henriksen.

"Don't. *Even.*" Was the annoyed response she got from the agent before she could even ask.

She slumped back down in her seat and pouted a little. What's wrong with wanting to know? *This was not over!*

Dean shook his head at the girl as he turned his attention back to the FBI agent who was, for all intents and purposes, gloating. "You know, I wouldn't break out the melted butter just yet. Couldn't catch us at that bank, couldn't keep us in that jail..." Dean trailed off with a smug smile.

Henriksen gave a self-depreciating smile, "You're right. Screwed up. I underestimated you. I didn't count on you being that smart. But now I'm ready."

"Yeah, ready to lose us again?" Dean asked looking around the jail cell, all smug.

"Ready like a court order to keep you in super maximum prison in Nevada till trial," that had Sam looking at the agent in concern. "Ready like isolation in a soundproof, windowless cell so small that, between you and me—it's probably unconstitutional. How's that for ready?"

Maya gave an impressed whistle at that. This guy *really* wanted the Winchesters behind bars for shit he doesn't even know the full story for. "Shit guys, I think you're in some serious trouble." She snorted in amusement. Sam and Dean just sent her withering glares in her direction that she just shrugged off.

"I wouldn't be talking sweetheart. I've got you in association with the Winchester duo here, as well as your B&E. You ain't walking out of here either, unless it's in chains on your way to an
adolescent detention center." Henriksen addressed.

Maya scoffed, "Sure I will." She smiled cockily, looking very much like her Dad.

"Oh yeah? How's that?" Henriksen huffed, not at all believing her. Sam and Dean saw the mischievous smirk cross her face. Oh, this was going to be good.

"I'm a demi-god, duh." She gave a very straight and very bland face.

Henriksen gave her a blank stare, "What?"

"You know, half human, half god, all awesomeness? Well," Maya paused, "I'm more of a half Trickster with demi-god status. Got powers and all that jazz. Just be glad my old man isn't here, yeesh," Maya grimaced at what her Dad would do if her saw her chained up and behind bars.

Henriksen laughed derisively, "Oh yeah? And whose your Daddy, Hercules? Zeus?"

Maya snorted, "That blowhard? Please, think Norse Pantheon. Trickster god of chaos and mischief; Loki."

Sam and Dean gave each other looks wondering if Maya was telling the truth.

Henriksen regarded the teenager who was probably a few marbles short of a full handful if she really believed that this Loki character was her father. "Might need to get you a psych eval and get you treated for your delusions."

"You calling me crazy?!” She yelled in shocked outrage that was completely undermined by her large unrepentant smile. Sam and Dean did their best to hide their smiles. "You're the crazy one if you're honestly following orders from lizard people wearing human meat suits. Those fuckers are everywhere, infiltrating our governments, telling us in the know we're all nuts. It's a conspiracy!" Maya hissed out with a smile before busting up in laughter at Henriksen's reaction of disbelief. He let out a groan as he rubbed his face.

He glared at Sam and Dean who were now a little more at ease as they shook a little from
repressed laughter.

"I wouldn't be laughing Dean." Henriksen said, getting the older Winchester's attention. "I'd take a good look at Sam, and chuckles over there. You three will never see each other again." Any amusement left Dean as he took in the seriousness of the agent's words. "Aww. Where's that smug smile, Dean? I want to see it." Henriksen asked with a smile and fake concern.

Dean rolled his eyes away as he shook his head ruefully. "You got the wrong guys."

"Oh, yeah. I forgot. You fight monsters," Henriksen pointed at Sam and Dean mockingly. "Sorry Dean. Truth is, your Daddy brainwashed you with all that Devil talk, just like your probably doing to our young friend over there, and he no doubt touched you in a bad place." That had Sam sitting up straight as he joined his brother in staring down Henriksen on the other side of the bars. Henriksen continued, "That's all. That's reality."

"Too far man," Maya mumbled as she watched from her cell.

"Why don't you shut your mouth?" Dean growled at the agent.

"Well, guess what? Life sucks. Get a helmet. 'Cause everybody's got a sob story, but not everybody becomes a serial killer." Henriksen turned his gaze over at the lounging teenager in the adjoining cell. "Or follows the same highway to hell as one."

"Oooh that sounds familiar," Maya smirked as she let her eyes get a far off look as she thought, her mind thinking of a song and that ring of keys and chocolate in Henricksen's pockets. They all looked at the small window in Sam and Dean's cell as they heard chopper blades and saw a bright light filter through the small opening.

Henriksen looked back at the boys, "And now I have two less to worry about." He brought his watch up and tapped it as he looked at the boys smugly, "Mm. It's surf-and-turf time." He lets out a laugh as he walked away, Dean giving him a sarcastic grin. Then he stopped in front of Maya's cell. "You don't have to go down with their ship, Maya. All-

SNAP!

Maya had snapped her right fingers in a eureka moment, "That's it! AC/DC's Highway to Hell!"
She grinned broadly at the unimpressed agent. Dean was smirking proudly at her. "What? Don’t know it? It goes like this:

*I'm on a highway to hell!*

*On a highway to hell*

*Highway to hell*

*I'm on a high—*

"Hey! Where you going?!" Maya called out after belting out, uncaring of pitch, most of the chorus as Henriksen shook his head and walked away out of the holding cell. "Hmph. *Rude.*" Maya sniffed, as she looked at an amused Sam and Dean.

"Lizard people, Goldy?" Dean sent her a smirk. Maya shrugged as she stuck her hand in her coat pocket grabbing the chocolate bar Henriksen had stuck in his pocket earlier during their *chat.* "Where?" Dean stopped himself and just rolled his eyes as Maya gave a toothy grin as she chowed down hungrily. Took less energy to nab something close by than far away, and her blood sugar was running low.

"Hey," Sam called out. "What you said about your Dad being Loki, that true?"

Maya swallowed the last piece of chocolate, balling up the wrapper, as she smirked at him. "I can neither confirm, nor deny that Loki is my Dad." Mischief twinkled in her golden eyes. That’s when they heard Puck barking his head off like a maniac.

Maya’s brow pinched in concern as she looked at the open doorway beside her cell listening as Puck barked and yipped frantically. *Something was very wrong.* Puck barked sure, but it was usually only one or two to get her attention.

Sam and Dean tensed at her perturbed expression.

"What’s up with Lassie?" Dean asked, not liking how Maya was so tense listening to her dog pitch a fit.

"Only time Puck barked like this was when he saw Sam as a threat back in Ohio," Maya revealed her eyes narrowed at the empty hall. "Something’s here, and it *ain’t* friendly."
"We're locked in cells in a station full of un-friendlies," Dean pointed out. Sam shifted in his seat, as he became more painfully aware of the cuffs and chains restraining him and Dean.

"Yeah, but Puck knows I can handle them. Whatever he's barking at," Maya paused as she heard a loud whine as his barking ceased. Maya gulped nervously, "it's a lot more dangerous." She shuffled further away from the cell door, and subsequently the open doorway, on the mounted cell bed.

That's when a man in a black suit with a blue and black pinstripe tie walked in and slid the metal door of the holding cell room closed. He…didn't look all that impressive. Looked like some desk jockey. Didn't mean he didn't give Maya the creeps. He glanced at her briefly, but ignored her as he walked to Sam and Dean's cell with hands on his hips and a pleased smile on his face.

Dean stood up to eye the well-dressed man on the other side of the bars, Sam remained sitting but wasn't any less attentive. Maya was tense in her cell, face nervous, but ready to act all the same.

"Sam and Dean Winchester," the man said pleasantly. "I'm Deputy Director Steven Groves." Sam and Dean looked at each other before looking back at Groves. "This is a pleasure." He took a step closer to their cell.

"Well, I'm glad one of us feels that way," Dean droned, looking away. He shouldn't have.

"I've been waiting a long time for you two to come out of the woodwork." Groves smiled with a head tilt, as he whipped out a gun with a silencer, nozzle through the bar, and shot Dean in the shoulder.

Everything that followed happened so fast. Maya was shocked as she watched Dean collapsed back onto the wall bed clutching his shoulder, and Sam launching himself at Groves, grabbing at the still firing gun through the bars. Seeing Dean try to avoid more bullets coming his way and Sam struggling to wrestle the gun from Groves' hands had Maya acting.

With a snap of her fingers the gun and silencer were in her hands, "Got it!" That got Groves' attention as he looked in her direction with a feral smile as his eyes turned completely black. He was possessed by a demon.

"Nice little friend you got there," the demon smiled as he looked back at Sam, who still had a hold
on his gun hand through the bars. Sam's eyes widened as he quickly began chanting an exorcism in Latin.

Maya watched with wide terrified eyes as the demon's head shook back and forth, gargling as Sam did the exorcism. She had never been this close to a demon it was petrifying.

Sam finished the exorcism and the demon snapped his head back to look at him with a demented grin, "Sorry. Got to cut this short. It's gonna be a long night, fellas." his voice garbled roughly, then he turned to look at a terrified Maya, "Gonna have some fun with you too, sweetheart." His head snapped back and noxious black smoke poured out of his mouth and into the ventilation in the roof with a loud shout that garnered the attention of everyone in the precinct.

Sam let go as the empty and dead body of Steven Groves fell to the floor, just as the door to the holding cell slid open and Henriksen, Reidy, and the policemen came in with guns drawn shouting at them.

Guns were trained on Maya since she's the one still holding the weapon. Keeping the weapon out front she carefully put it on the ground in the middle of her cell, moving away, and used her foot to carefully slide it over to her cell's door. She backed up to a far corner and got on the ground like they demanded. Maya was silent through the whole thing, still a little bit in shock.

With Maya so far away from the door and the gun, the Deputy reached through the bars and grabbed the gun and silencer.

Henriksen had his gun trained on the Winchesters during this forcing them to get on their knees with their hands above their heads. Sam was talking loudly telling the officers that Maya didn't shoot anybody, since he could tell Maya seemed to have lost her voice.

"He shot me!" Dean griped as he held the wound at his shoulder to stem the bleeding.

When the gun was in their possession Sam started talking to the FBI agents. "We didn't shoot him. Check the body. There's no blood." The FBI agents glanced at each other. "We did not kill him."

"Go ahead, check him." Henricksen gave the go ahead for Reidy. Reidy checked the body finding no blood, or bullet wound, and definitely no pulse.
"Vic, there's no bullet wound," Reidy looked up to his partner.

"He's probably been dead for months," Dean groaned.

"What did you do to him?" Henriksen questioned.

"We didn't do anything!" Dean shouted.

"Talk, or I shoot!"

"You won't believe us!" was Dean's rebuttal to Henriksen's demand.

Sam looked nervously around and decided to tell the truth, "He was possessed." Of course Henriksen didn't believe him and ordered Reidy to fire up the chopper to take them out of there, which Dean agreed to with annoyance. Though he demanded Maya and her mutt come with them. He wasn't about to leave the poor girl behind, who knew if any more demons were going to come out of the woodwork. Her reaction and current silence made it obvious that this was her first encounter with them. Dean and Sam weren't sure if they were happy she survived, or sad that she had to experience it at all.

Getting Maya and Puck to come however became a moot point when Reidy's CB radio spat nothing but static. Henriksen motioned for Reidy to go outside to get the chopper ready.

An explosion from outside rocked the building.

Henriksen tried to call Reidy through the CB, but got nothing. Reidy didn't come back. The Sheriff and Deputy left the holding cell, while Henriksen stayed behind looking at Sam and Dean, then glancing at Maya who seemed to have sunk in on herself. He left the holding cell.

Sam and Dean went back to sit on the cell bed, Dean clutching his wounded shoulder. Sam nudged Dean and nodded towards Maya. Looking away from the bullet wound Dean took in Maya's appearance, and he felt his heart break a little.
Maya had brought her knees up tucking them to her chest as she wrapped her arms around them. Her head was down, hair obscuring her face from view. She looked so small curled up by herself, and vulnerable. Humans she said she could handle, but supernatural baddies? Dean was pretty sure she didn't have any fighting experience against them. Reading books and field experience were two very different things.

"It's going to be all right Goldy," Dean tried to reassure, even if he didn't feel all that confident himself. They were after all cuffed, chained, and locked in cells. Maya didn't even move. "That your first demon encounter?" Maya gave a small nod and seemed to curl tighter into her self. "Well, you handled it pretty well, got out of the shock in time to save my ass that's for sure." Dean tried to lighten the mood; he saw her shoulders shift from a huff of amusement.

"C'mon Goldy, I need you to look at me, okay? Let me see those big beautiful gold eyes you got hiding under that mop top you call a hair cut." Dean teased. There was a muffled mumble that came from Maya that suggested she said something snarky to him. Sam watched his brother do his thing. Sam could handle talking to adults, being formal, but that never really worked well for kids and teens. Dean always seemed to be able to read and connect with them better.

"Oh, I'm sorry, what was that? Dean Winchester is the most handsome man you've ever seen? Gee thanks Goldy, real ego boost there since I'm not at my most attractive at the moment." Dean smirked as Maya raised her head and rested her chin on her knees.

"Which is when exactly? Never?" Maya quipped, letting a small smile grace her face. Dean gave a mock hurt face.

"Always with attacking my good looks. You jealous?" Dean teased. Maya snorted, her eyes lighting up a little.

"No, just figured someone needed to hack that ego down to size. You might be able to drive faster if the impala wasn't weighed down by how massive it is."

"That's what she said," Dean gave a lewd smirk at his joke and snorted at the shocked/disgusted face Maya gave him, which melted into a chuckle. There was comfortable silence for a few moments when Dean looked seriously into her eyes. "Do you trust us?" he asked. Maya looked at him and Sam, before focusing more on him. "Well, me at least?" Dean amended. She gave a slow careful nod. "Then trust me that I'm not going to let anything happen to you, okay? Not if I can help it." Sam was a little hurt by her mistrust of him, but he understood it. Didn't mean he had to like it.
Maya nodded and gave another smile, "Okay."

"And, if there's time I'll save your rat too," Dean added jokingly. Maya scowled playfully at him.

Then the lights went out, Maya remained seated as she looked around worriedly. Sam and Dean weren't much better. They heard the backup generator going but the lights remained off.

Dean looked from Maya to Sam, "That can't be good."

"Not much we can do about it," Sam sighed as he looked at Dean's shoulder. "We gotta slow that bleeding." Dean rolled his eyes as Sam went to work on his shoulder, pressing a cloth to it tightly.

Dean closed his eyes and groaned in pain. "All right. Don't be such a wuss," was what he got from nurse Hatchet, aka Sam. When he opened his eyes he caught Maya's worried expression, he sent her a reassuring smile.

Then Henriksen stepped through the door, "What's the plan? Kill everyone in the station, bust you three out?" He walked up to Sam and Dean's cell.

"What the hell you talking about?" Dean asked confused, they all were.

"I'm talking about your psycho friends. I'm talking about a blood bath."

"Okay, I promise you, whoever's out there is not here to help us," Dean tried to convince Henriksen.

"Look, you got to believe us. Everyone here is in terrible danger." Sam added.

"You think?" Henriksen already knew that, but just not from what.

"Why don't you let us out of here so we can save your asses?" Dean demanded.
"From what?" Henriksen watched as the Winchesters gave pointed looks between each other. "You gonna say demons? Don't you dare say 'demons'!" Henriksen shook his head in disbelief, gun waving in hand. "Let me tell you something. You should be a lot more scared of me." With that he walked away, but stopped at Maya's cell to look at her. The cocky kid was gone and now he saw a worried and nervous girl staring back at him. "Finally see what they are kid?"

She shrugged, "Ask me that when you finally see it, Henriksen." He scoffed at her before leaving. "Jackass." She muttered, much to Dean's amusement.

"How's the shoulder?" Sam asked looking at the bleeding wound on Dean. Dean pulled back a bloody rag and looked at Sam pointedly.

"It's awesome," Dean sighed sarcastically throwing away the dirty rag. "I'll live. You know, if we get out of here alive. So," he looked at Sam then at Maya, "anyone got a plan?"

"I could nab the keys but I'd be grabbing at every key in the station since I don't know the specific ones we need," Maya shrugged. "I'm also still pretty low on energy. I do that and I'll probably be out of it till I get some more sugar." She sighed rubbing her face a little. The chocolate bar helped earlier, but she still needed more. She could feel the fatigue coming on.

"Yeah," Dean drawled, "let's not have you checkin' out on us when demons are probably surrounding the place." Dean groaned as Sam moved his shoulder to get a better look at it. That's when he looked up and noticed Nancy looking in nervously from the hallway. "Hey," Sam noticed Dean looking at something then looks where he was looking and sees Nancy too.

"Hey," Sam called out to her. Maya looked over seeing the nervous secretary as well. Sam turned away from Dean to give Nancy his complete attention. "Hey. Uh, please. Please. We need your help," Sam pleaded motioning to Dean. "It's—it's Nancy, right? Nancy my—my brother's been shot. He's—he's bleeding really bad. You think maybe you could get us a towel? Please? Just one clean towel?" Nancy looked at him warily, and Sam turned on his puppy eyes. "Look at us. We're not the bad guys, I swear." How can such a large man make himself appear so small?

Nancy rolled away from the door and left. Maya watched her go down the hall best she could from her vantage point.

"Bring chocolate too, please!" Maya yelled before looking back at the brothers giving her 'really?' faces. "What? I've got a condition! You know this!"
Dean rolled his eyes, "Nice try guys." Maya heard footsteps coming back down the hall and perked up. There was Nancy with a towel and…chocolate bars!

"Nancy you are a godsend!" Maya breathed out in something akin to almost worshipfulness. She looked over at Dean and Sam, "Sorry guys, but you just got demoted on the awesomeness scale."

"Least now we know the quickest way to your heart, Goldy." Dean scoffed good-naturedly as he rolled his eyes.

Nancy shuffled to Maya's cell and tossed the two chocolate bars onto the cell bed. "Thank you," Maya gave a sincere smile that was returned tentatively, before Nancy made her way to the boys' cell.

Sam did the whole disarming look and hunched shoulders thing that made him look less threatening. Nancy gave him a smile when he thanked her and actually stuck her right hand through the bars to hand him the clean towel. Then Sam grabbed her wrist pulling her flush against the bars scaring the crap out of her and causing her to scream in terror.

"Let her go! Let her go!" The Deputy came in running with a shotgun and pointed it at Sam. Sam complied, raising his hands in the air with the towel. Dean raised his own hands as he backed up. "You okay Nance?" the deputy asked looking back at the scared secretary holding her self. He looked back at the Winchesters, "Try something again, and get shot. And not in the arm!" The Deputy and Nancy backed out of the holding room, gun still pointed at them.

"Way to be nightmare fuel Sam. I think you just traumatized her for life," Maya scowled as she unwrapped the first chocolate bar. What was Sam thinking?

"What the hell was that?" Dean hit Sam in the arm.

Then Sam held up Nancy's rosary. "Holy water. Burns demons like acid."

"Huh," Dean chuckled. "Better than nothing."

"Where you going to get the water?" Maya asked, after gulping down another bite of her chocolate bar, already feeling better.
Sam and Dean looked at each other, then Sam's eyes landed on the something in their cell. Maya followed his gaze and almost choked on her chocolate.

The toilet. *Toilet water. Holy toilet water.*

"Gives the phrase, 'paying homage to the throne' a whole new meaning," Maya snickered as she finished off her first chocolate bar and began on the second. "Ooh! Ooh! *The Holy Swirly! Swirly of Holiness!*" she laughed after swallowing.

Sam shook his head at her, while Dean snorted in amusement beside him. "You done, Maya?" Maya quieted down and waved him off that, yeah, she was done.

Sam dropped the rosary in the toilet after handing Dean the clean towel to put on his wound. Sam recited some Latin over the toilet and that was it. All they could do now was wait for the shoe to drop.

It didn't take long.

Sam and Dean sat back on their cell bed waiting anxiously.

"We're like sitting ducks in here," Sam sighed as he leaned forward, resting his weight on his knees.

"Yeah, I know. Would it kill these cops to bring us a snack?!" Dean voice shouted pointedly.

"I can grab a couple of candy bars from my bag," Maya offered holding her hand up in a ready to snap position. Dean raised his eyebrow at her in a look that said, 'should you though?'. Maya may be better but if demons were coming she'd probably need all the strength she can get. She lowered her hand and gave a sheepish grin. This was why she had to make sure not to skip meals and to snack often.

"How many you figure are out there?" Sam asked Dean as he thought.
"I don't know,"

"However many there are, they could be possessing anyone. Anyone could just walk right in."

"It's kind of wild, right? I mean, it's like they're coming right for us. They've never done that before." Dean paused thinking. "It's like we got a contract on us. Think its cause we're so awesome? I think its cause we're so awesome." Dean grinned, but noticed Maya's confused and concerned face. "What you thinkin' over there?"

"Why have a hit out on you two?" Maya asked. "My Dad mentioned a deal you made Dean that was a lot shorter than what's normal, so why take a hit out on you two?" Dean and Sam had tensed at the mention of said deal. "No offense, but Dad made it sound like you don't have much time Dean, so why bother with a hit? I'd see it if you weaselled your way out of it, but not now."

Dean sighed and shook his head. He was tired of all the talks about his demon deal. It was done, nothing you could do. Not that Sam believed that.

"Also, why shorten the deal? That's not a normal crossroads deal. What difference does the amount of time make? They'd get the soul in the end…” she noticed Dean's strained and annoyed face.

"Oh, umm, sorry Dean," Maya apologized. "It was…I just…"

"It's okay Maya," Dean sighed. Damn it, if she didn't remind him of Sam when he'd question something to death instead of accepting things as they were. Granted that also made him a good Hunter.

That's when the Sheriff walked in and went to the boys' cell, unlocking it.

"Well, howdy there Sheriff," Dean greeted in a fake southern accent as he stood up with Sam as the Sheriff slid the door open.

"Uh Sheriff?" Sam questioned warily as the Sheriff seemed really serious. Echoed barking started up again from the hall. Maya stood up and tried to look down it. The last time that happened Puck saw a demon, and it came right for Sam and Dean.
"It's time to go boys," the Sheriff said as he walked into the cell, causing Sam and Dean to take a step back.

"Uh…you know what? We're just comfy right here. But thank you." Dean replied keeping an eye on the man. Then Henriksen entered the picture and walked swiftly to the boys' opened cell.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Henriksen demanded. Maya narrowed her eyes; something was off about the man now.

"We're not just going to sit around and wait to die. We're gonna make a run for it." The Sheriff answered.

"It's safer here," Henriksen countered.

"There's a SWAT facility in Boulder," The Sheriff informed. Maya noticed Puck had stopped barking, but instead was whining loudly in distress. Something was wrong.

A small purple ring flashed in her eyes as she looked at Henriksen widening in terror at what she saw. Behind the human face was a foul and terrifying creature filled with bloodlust, hate, sadism, cruelty, and a twisted visage that would haunt nightmares themselves. Maya had seen despicable souls before that made her cringe and shudder, but there was something still human about them. Nothing about this thing was human and she couldn't keep the scream from tearing its way out of her throat.

"DEMON!" Maya screamed, but it was too late. The Sheriff had already been shot in the head, dead. Sam and Dean were the first to react. Dean managed to get the gun out of the demon's grasp as Sam twisted its arm back. They both maneuvered the struggling demon over to the sanctified toilet water where Sam begun dunking its head in the toilet and reciting a Latin exorcism.

The Deputy ran in with his gun, but Dean trained the gun he got from the demon on him, "Stay back!" he ordered. Dean kept glancing back at his brother as the exorcism continued, "Sam, hurry up!" Nancy walked in and stayed in the doorway of the holding room scared at what was happening, if only she knew.

The demon struggled to keep its head out of the burning holy water as it gave its warning, "It's too late. I already called them. They're already coming!" Sam grimaced as he pushed the head back down into the water and finished the exorcism. Henriksen's body went rigid as he went ramrod
straight with his head snapped back and yelled as black smoke exited him. Once it left Henriksen, demon free, collapsed on the ground.

Nancy stepped forward looking into the cell, "Is he—is he dead?" she tentatively asked, wringing her hands. Henriksen jerked as he coughed and came back to consciousness.

Sam also sitting on the ground addressed the bleary man, "Henriksen. Hey. Is that you in there?" Henriksen looked around dazed and confused as he climbed himself up onto the cell bed.

"I…" Henriksen paused in guilt and uncertainty, "I shot the Sheriff."

The Dean being Dean tried to put a light spin on it, "Well, at least you didn't shoot the Deputy." He smiled, but that fell when he caught Sam giving him a bitch-face from his seat on the ground.

"So," Maya piped up from her cell, "who wants to give the 'truth is out there' talk?"
They were all released from their cuffs and chains. Sam began spray-painting devil's traps in front of all the doors, while Dean had his shoulder wound treated by Nancy. Maya sat on a chair next to Dean comforting a distressed Puck after removing his muzzle.

Henriksen and the Deputy brought in some guns from the station's gun locker, but Dean immediately dismissed the weapons, comparing them to using BB guns against a bear. He told them that they needed salt and lots of it; Nancy suggested the road salt in the storeroom. Dean agreed and ordered salt at every window and door, while he made a run to his impala out in the impound lot out back.

Maya helped the others as they salted every window and doorway leading out side the station. They just finished up when Dean returned from the impala shouting, "They're coming! Hurry!" The lights flickered and electricity buzzed ominously in the air. Large black clouds of smoke battered against the building, blocking out the outside light as they looked for a way in. The building shook and rumbled from the barrage, as everyone looked around nervously in the bullpen. Puck whimpered and whined loudly, pressing his little body to Maya's legs as she, herself, stuck close to Dean. The pounding and rumbling intensified before abruptly stopping as the black smoke clouds moved on.

"Everyone okay?" Sam called out.

"Define 'okay'," Henriksen answered.

Dean went to the bag he brought back from the impala, grabbing four necklaces with a round pendant on them. "All right, everyone needs to put these on. They'll keep you from being possessed," Dean said as he handed them out. Maya gave him a weary smile as she accepted the pendant and put it on.

"What about you guys?" Nancy asked. Sam and Dean moved the necklines of their shirts enough to show fire encircled pentagram tattoos.

"Damn those are cool," Maya commented, receiving a smirk from Dean.

"And smart," Henriksen added. "How long have you had those?"

"Not long enough," Sam replied looking out one of the windows. There was a tense silence as the implications of that sentence settled in everyone's minds.

"We're safe for now at least," Dean sighed. "Doesn't mean they won't be back. We better get ready." He grabbed his bag. "Anywhere I can set up?"

"Yeah," Henriksen nodded. "Sheriff's office. Mind if I tag along?"

Dean shrugged, "Whatever floats your boat." He looked over at Maya who looked a little lost.

"The rest of us can keep look out," Sam offered. "Make sure the salt lines stayed intact."

Dean nodded then gazed at Maya who looked a little lost, "You doing okay there, Goldy?" Maya's eyes focused on him before giving him a curt nod and a small smile as she bent down to pet Puck.

"Yeah, just a little overwhelmed and a little shaky," her voice quivered a little as her heart pounded
in her chest. Being surrounded by a horde of murderous bloodthirsty demons was way out of her
league. "I'll help keep a look out. C'mon Puck," she patted Puck's side and slung her bag that she
found over her shoulders. Dean nodded as he and Henriksen made their way to the Sheriff's office.

"Hey," Sam called softly as Maya went to walk past him. She stopped to look at his gentle and
earnest face. "It's going to be alright, okay?" She gave him a small smile and nod in return, but the
nervousness remained.

Maya and Puck walked around half the station, looking at salt lines and out the windows for any
sign of the demons returning. So far there were none. She took out another chocolate bar from her
pack and started eating it as she crossed the bullpen to where Dean was setting up with Henriksen
and heard this snippet of conversation.

"So, turns out demons are real," was Henriksen's voice stated amongst the echo of shotguns being
loaded.

"F.Y.I-so are ghosts are real too. So are werewolves, vampires, changelings, evil clowns that eat
people." Dean replied.

"Evil clowns?"

"Hol' up," Maya popped her head in with a mouth a little full of chocolate and getting the two men's
attention. After swallowing she continued with incredulity, "Evil people eating clowns are a thing?"
She walked in the room with Puck on her heels as usual.

Dean shrugged, "A rakshasa, if you want to get technical about it. Dressed up as a clown to get the
kids to trust him and invite him into their house-then eat the parents."

"...well that's...terrifying and a little bit reaffirming,"

"How the hell are people eating clowns reaffirming?" Henriksen asked a little disturbed at Maya's
answer.

"When it reaffirms the notion to never trust a fucking clown," Maya shook her head. "I mean,
c'mon! Their smiles are painted on! Their faces hold nothing but lies!" Maya hissed out. She never
liked clowns. It didn't help when she had accidentally watched the movie It either.

"Scared of clowns, Goldy? That's funny coming from you," Dean snorted at her reaction.

Maya crossed her arms and scowled, "Not afraid. Severely dislike. There's a difference, Assface."

"What did he mean, 'coming from you'?

 Henriksen asked Maya, gaining her attention.

"You don't remember? I'm a Trickster," she snapped her fingers, pointing out her index as small
fireworks seemed to come out of it and spell Trickster in the air. "Well," more came out to spell
Half- above the previous word, "half-Trickster anyways." She amended with a shrug. Henriksen
starred at the teen before him in disbelief. That's when Dean cut in.

"Yeah, Tricksters are real too," Dean smirked as Maya made the display disappear. "Pain in the ass
too." Maya childishly stuck her tongue out at him.

"Okay, then." Was all Henriksen could say. What else could he say? Everything he thought he
knew has been turned upside down on its head. There was a whole other world that he didn't even
know about and was, from what he was gathering, a heck of a lot more dangerous too.
"If it makes you feel any better Bigfoot's a hoax," Dean smiled cheekily as Maya snorted in amusement. Maya was pretty sure Bigfoot, Yeti, Sasquatch and all the other mythical big apes were created by her Dad and other Trickster's around the world. A kind of global prank on the science community who thought they knew everything.

"It doesn't," Henrikson said dryly. "What's a Trickster anyways? All I'm thinking is its some kind of supernatural prankster."

"Not too far off there," Maya smiled. "We're basically beings with godlike powers, able to conjure up anything we want and it will be as real as anything in this room." She gestured around the room. "The more powerful the Trickster the more they can do. We generally like going after the high and mighty types, jerks and arrogant pricks, and deliver just desserts with a wicked sense of humor and a sweet tooth like an insect."

"Don't sound too bad. Almost like what I do at the FBI," Henriksen watched as Maya looked pointedly away from him in discomfort. Dean gave a derisive huff as he shook his head.

"Yeah, if every agent was judge, jury and executioner," Dean checked his gun. "What Goldy's leaving out is that a Trickster's pranks are usually deadly in nature." Henriksen's eyes turned to Maya, hardening. Dean noticed. "Hey! Hey! Don't go looking at her like that! Goldy here doesn't prescribe to the same morals as her old man. She does pranks sure, but strictly non-lethal."

"Really?" Henriksen asked skeptically. "How come?" he met Maya's eyes as she looked at him seriously. Dean also looked at her wanting to hear her answer.

"Don't want to wake up one day and find that I've become no better than the assholes and human monsters I target," Maya sighed. "I don't want killing people to be something that's easy to do." The corner of Dean's lips quirked into a smile at her response. It was a good answer.

"So, what do you do to these human monsters then?" Henriksen asked curiously. For a half- whatever-she-was she had a lot more morals than some agents he'd come across over his career.

Maya smirked gleefully, "Why, I play tricks of course! And either get them to turn themselves in or send in enough evidence to get them convicted. When it's just regular pricks and assholes it's more about the humiliation and reputation destruction." She gave him a wide smile as mischief danced in her eyes as she all but sashayed out the office door with Puck.

She heard Henriksen ask about the amount of demons before she was out of earshot. Maya turned to look into what appeared to be a kind of small break room if the vending machine was anything to go by. That's when something hurled itself through the window and right into the demon trap. Maya felt no shame in the high-pitched yelp that escaped her throat as she backpedaled away from the open door. Puck stood in front of her barking and growling threateningly at the demon in the trap. Dean and Henriksen were the first to arrive with shotguns raised as the demon stood up.

She had long blonde hair, a dark burgundy red leather jacket, black jeans, and a dark navy blue shirt. There was also a cut above her eyebrow that was bleeding slightly.

"How do we kill her," Henriksen asked, gun cocked and raised.

Sam arrived not a moment later and placed a hand on Henriksen's gun barrel to lower it, "We don't." Maya, Nancy and the Deputy peered into the room from the open doorway, Puck still growling low in his throat.

Henriksen looked at Sam, "She's a demon."
"She's here to help us," Sam's eyes never leaving the she-demon as he walked further into the room and closer to the devil's trap.

"Are you kidding?" The Deputy asked disbelief. Maya agreed whole-heartedly with the Deputy.

"I second that," Maya said as she watched Sam walk closer to the trapped heavily breathing demon. "I know jokes Sam and this? This is not funny!" Maya looked to Dean who looked annoyed and resigned as he shook his head.

"Are you going to let me out?" the she-devil asked, keeping eye contact with Sam. Sam took out his knife and bent over to break the trap.

"Sam! What are you doing?!" Maya demanded in astonished disbelief.

Crouched down Sam looked over his shoulder at her and gave a placating gesture, "Hey, it's going to be okay." The she-beast gave Maya a triumphant smirk as Sam broke the devil's trap.

"And they say chivalry's dead," the demon said looking back at Sam.

Maya grumbled with narrowed eyes, "But obviously stupidity's not."

That earned her a bitch-face from Sam and an amused stare from the demon.

"Collecting kids now are we boys? Name's Ruby kid." She drawled. She scratched the back of her head as she left the devil's trap, "Now, does anyone have a breath mint? Some guts splattered in my mouth while I killed my way in here." As she left the room she stopped in front of Maya, who plastered her self against the wall, and a growling Puck with his teeth bore in threat. "Cute dog," she commented with a quirked brow. "Though, if you want to keep his guts from spilling out I'd put a muzzle on him," she left down the hall and Maya felt she could breathe a little easier.

Maya's eyes shifted to Sam's pleadingly, "She's a demon, Sam. You can't trust her."

Sam shook his head with an annoyed sigh as he went to fix the salt line on the window, "This coming from the half-Trickster." Maya's face flinched from the insult. Sam looked immediately guilty as he turned to look at her, "Maya, I—"

Maya was already gone from the doorway, following the demon bitch Ruby at a distance to keep an eye on her. Dean scowled at Sam before leaving the room as everyone else dispersed.

Seeing Maya, Dean came up from behind her, causing her to jump a little as he put a comforting hand on her shoulder as he walked by. He needed to talk to Ruby.

Maya hung back with Nancy when she came into the bullpen with the others, Puck paced agitatedly at her feet. So far there were 30 demons and counting outside, a new demon overlord—overlady?—named Lilith was rising and was gunning for Sam, Sam didn't tell Dean that he knew this, Dean's pissed at Sam, now demon bitch Ruby was asking about the Colt. Neither Sam nor Dean met Ruby's eyes as she looked between the two of them.

"Where's the Colt?" Ruby demanded.

"It got stolen," Sam admitted.

"I'm sorry, I must have blood in my ear. I thought I just heard you say that you were stupid enough to let the Colt get grabbed out of your thick, clumsy, idiotic hands," She demanded at Sam. "Fantastic," she said sarcastically as she stood up and paced around the desk. "This is just peachy."
"Ruby—" Sam tried to talk to her, but Ruby interrupted him.

"Shut up!" Ruby had her back turned towards them. "Fine," she said after a moment and turned around to look at everyone. "Since I don't see that there's any other option, there's one other way I know how to get you out of here alive."

"What's that?" Dean asked from his perch on a desk.

"I know a spell," Ruby revealed. "It'll vaporize every demon in a one-mile radius—myself included."

A demon willing to sacrifice herself for humans? Maya raised her brow at that. From what she understood demons were anything but trustworthy and self-sacrificing. She narrowed her gold eyes in suspicion.

Ruby turned from looking at Dean to looking at Sam, "So, you let the Colt out of your sight, and now I have to die. So, next time, be more careful. How's that for a dying wish?" She sat back down in her chair.

"It's great, especially the you dying part," Maya returned the glare sent her way for that comment. Dean exchanged worried glances with Sam. This wasn't going to end pretty.

"And what are you exactly? I think I overheard Sam call you a half-Trickster?" Ruby drawled raising an eyebrow. "That would explain your pagan stench."

"At least I was born this way. What happened? Needed a little something something in the black magic department to get ahead, so thought a little soul prostitution was in order?" Maya crossed her arms tensely as she glowered at Ruby. Who gave her a raised eyebrow in slight surprise. Maya shrugged, "The remnants of your black magic wielding bitchcraft days still clings to you like rot on an old corpse."

"Lovely imagery there kid," Ruby rolled her eyes. "I would've expected you to be more powerful, even for a half-breed Trickster, but here I am completely...underwhelmed. Your parent's power level that low on the Trickster hierarchy?"

Sam snorted at that, "If you call her Dad sticking me in a time loop low level."

"Time loop you say?" Ruby smiled a disgusting smile as she turned to look back at Maya who shifted uncomfortably. "Well that would put your Daddy up near the top then wouldn't it? Oh, he must've been sooo disappointed when you were born. Spawning something as weak and pathetic as you."

"Alright that's enough!" Dean demanded looking at Ruby pointedly. Ruby just shrugged noncommittally though her eyes gave away at how pleased she was. Dean glanced at Maya who seemed to have shrunk in on herself, her face troubled and filled with self-doubt. Apparently Ruby touched a sore spot for Maya, with a red-hot poker.

Dean turned back to Ruby, "We don't have time for this. Alright Ruby, what do we need to do for this spell?"

Ruby clicked her tongue as she tilted her head at Dean like he said something precious, "Aww. You can't do anything. This spell is very specific. It calls for a person of virtue."

"I got virtue," Dean said confidently.
Maya bit her lip a little. She knew what Ruby meant. You don't grow up with a pagan god for a Dad and Bobby's library not to understand what was meant when something wants or requires a person of virtue.

"You a virgin Dean?" Maya sighed looking at him. Dean chuckled at her, but Maya didn't smile.

"You're serious Goldy?" Dean looked at Ruby who shrugged.


Dean looked around and stated with certainty, "Nobody's a virgin." Ruby looked at him unimpressed and her eyes drifted over to where Maya and Nancy stood together. Everyone else's eyes followed suit.

"Well," Ruby began, "we got two right here."

Dean looked at the two standing off to the side, Maya shrugged her shoulders and Nancy fidgeted a little under everyone's stare not meeting their eyes. Dean looked at Nancy, specifically, in surprise.

"No. No way. You're kidding me Nancy. You're—" Dean cut himself off as Nancy looked at him.

"What? It's a choice okay?" Nancy defends.

"Wha-so y-you've never…not even once? I mean not even…wow." Dean finished looking impressed at Nancy. He really couldn't imagine a life not having sex.

Maya huffed a laugh at him, "I love how finding out I'm a virgin you don't even question it, but heaven forbid Nancy's one."

"W-well you're what? Sixteen? You're too young to be having sex," Dean wrinkled his nose in disgust at that thought.

"Hypocrite," Sam coughed into his hand to hide his smirk as he received a glare from Dean.

Maya rolled her eyes at them, "I'm seventeen next month, plenty old enough for a roll in the hay. Maybe to celebrate I can lose my V card—"

"Don't!" Dean cut her off shaking his head. He didn't want to think about it.

Rolling her eyes again Maya turned her stare to Ruby. "So, this spell…what can I do?" Ruby raised her eyebrow at that offer; her eyes flickered to Dean briefly before returning to Maya's narrowed ones. "I'm not going to like it, am I?"

Ruby pushed out of her seat and stalked towards Maya. "Mmm-no," Ruby hummed, as she got closer to a tensing Maya and a growling Puck. "But your weak ass pagan blood might affect the spell too much. So, congrats. Your out of the running," Ruby stopped to look at Nancy, "So, what do you say Miss Innocent Human Virgin?"

"What do you need me to do?" Nancy asked with a small smile wanting to help.

"I'm going to need you to hold still," Ruby raised her large inscribed knife from her jacket. "While I cut your heart out of your chest." Nancy's eyes grew wide in terrified surprise at Ruby's words.

"What?!" Maya exclaimed with wide eyes as she moved to stand slightly in front of Nancy, Puck placed himself between them and growled menacingly at the encroaching demon.

Dean burst from his chair, grabbing Ruby's arm to lower the knife as he shouted, "What are you,
Ruby looked at Dean in annoyance, "I'm offering a solution."

"You're offering to kill somebody," Dean corrected.

"What do you thinks going to happen to your precious virgin when the demons get in?" Ruby pointed out.

"We're going to protect her. That's what." Henriksen said, very much in a similar mindset as Dean.

Maya watched things unfold tensely when she heard Nancy meekly call out behind her, "Excuse me?"

Maya turned to the woman behind her, "Nancy, what are you doing?"

"I have to do this," Nancy said softly.

Maya shook her head, "No, you don't. We can find another way."

Nancy shook her head, "Those are all my friends out there being possessed, and put in danger. If it can save them, then I'm willing to do it."

Maya didn't know what to say to that. Nancy was willing to sacrifice herself to save the people she cared about. She was willing to make that choice. Maya pushed her hair out of her face and rubbed the back of her neck before giving a reluctant nod and stepping aside. Nancy gave her a kind smile before turning back to the bickering occupants of the room.

Maya didn't want Nancy to die. She didn't want anyone in this station to die. Well, she didn't care what happened to the demon bitch. There had to be some other way out of this.

"Excuse me," Nancy was again ignored.

"You're all gonna die. Look, this is the only way." Ruby said in exasperation.

"Yeah, yeah. There's no way that you're gonna—" Dean started but Nancy forcefully interrupted.

"Would everybody please shut up?!" That got everyone's attention as they all turned to look at Nancy. "All the people out there…will it save them?" Nancy asked Ruby earnestly.

"It'll blow the demons out of their bodies. So if their bodies are okay…yeah." Ruby answered.

It was a tense few moments as Nancy finalized her decision, "I'll do it."

Dean shook his head, "No, no. You don't need to do this." He stared pointedly at Nancy. He was impressed at her stepping up, but if he wasn't about to let her be put on the chopping block.

"Those are all my friends out there," Nancy responded calmly.

"We don't sacrifice people," Henriksen told her. "We do that we're no better than them." Him and Dean shared a moment of meaningful eye contact.

"He's right Nancy," Maya gently grabbed Nancy's elbow, gaining her attention. "We can find another way," Maya pleaded one last time, hoping she would change her mind.

"There is no other way and we don't have much of a choice," Ruby pointed out.
"Yeah, well, your choice is not a choice," Dean refuted angrily.

Ruby looked to Sam who'd been quiet the whole time, "Sam, you know I'm right?"

Dean looked at his little brother with a breathy chuckle. "Sam," Dean waited a moment for Sam to immediately deny Ruby's claim. When he didn't Dean shook his head. "What the hell is going on here? Sam, tell her," Dean ordered but Sam remained tensely silent.

"It's my decision," Nancy spoke up resolutely.

That got Ruby to smirk at the secretary, "Damn straight cherry pie."

"Stop!" Dean shouted. "Nobody kill any virgins!" Dean looked around before looking pointedly at his silent brother. He purposefully walked over to him with a hard stare, "Sam, I need to talk to you." Dean walked by him into the adjacent hall with Sam following behind him. Leaving everyone else with the demon bitch Ruby. Great.

"So, I'm curious," Ruby drawled as she looked at Maya. "How does a half-breed Trickster like yourself end up running around with a couple of Hunters? Doesn't seem all that smart." Maya looked at the demon with assessing eyes ignoring the insult.

"Do you really care?" Maya raised an eyebrow.

"No," Ruby admitted glibly. "But it beats waiting in silence while the boys have their little pow-wow. How about you tell me how you ended up with the dynamic duo over there, and I'll let you ask a question? Anything you want," Ruby purred invitingly. Ruby wondered however how her involvement might change the things to come.

"If you'll actually answer and answer honestly then we've got a deal," Maya smirked seeing the slight annoyed vein pop in Ruby's forehead in annoyance.


"Boys called me up asking for a favor in stealing back the Colt. I said sure. The end." Maya shrugged enjoying Ruby's expression of disbelief.

"That's it?" Ruby honestly expected more, but if this was a one time team-up the half-breed would probably be gone once they all got out of there, if they got out. Guess she won't be a major supporting player then, not that she'd be much of one with how weak her pagan magic was.

"You never stipulated how much detail you wanted," Maya smiled mischievously.

"You sure your Daddy's a Trickster and not some crossroads demon?" Ruby snorted.

Maya ignored the dig, "So, about that question?"

"What do you want to know half-breed?" Ruby smirked at the slight tick on Maya's face from her less than complimentary term she'd been using for the teen. Well, if the shoe fits. Before Maya could ask Sam and Dean came back. Ruby smirked, "Maybe later, half-breed."

Dean looked between the two a little concerned, "What's all that about Goldy?"

Maya's eyes flickered to Sam and Dean who stared at her questioningly. "Nothing that can't wait till later," Maya answered vaguely.

Henriksen huffed a sardonic chuckle at that, "If there is a later."
"And there will be," Dean said firmly with a smirk. "I've got a plan. It's risky, but it doesn't involve killing virgins." Dean looked pointedly at Ruby her rolled her eyes in irritation.

"Let's hear it," said Henriksen.

Needless to say everyone, but Ruby, thought it was the better plan even if it was riskier. Sam would record an exorcism that will play over the PA system in the station. Sam, Dean, and Henriksen will break the salt lines and devil's traps at the doors to let the demons in, Sam and Dean acting as bait/distractions. Henriksen fights his way to the recording, hits play, and instant mass exorcism. Maya, Puck, Nancy and the Deputy will hide on the roof till all the demons were inside then salt the outside of the doors and windows to trap them inside.

Ruby gripped that it was stupid and wasn't going to work as Sam left to the PA room. Having heard enough of Ruby, Maya and Puck went with him.

"So, any particular reason you followed me?" Sam asked casually as he looked for a recorder.

"Had enough of demon bitch's voice," Maya shrugged as she looked around the room. "Needed a break till the big finale."

Finding the recorder Sam paused before looking at her, "Listen, about earlier, I didn't mean—"

"We're good," Maya interrupted. "We've only been hanging out for a few days…and I'm guessing it doesn't help that my Dad left a bad taste in your mouth when thinking about Tricksters?"

"Yeah…" Sam admitted rubbing the back of his neck.

"At least try to remember I'm half-human too, okay?" Maya gave him a lopsided smile, before dropping it a little in guilt. "I've also haven't been too trusting with you either Sam. If you haven't noticed I've been a bit chummier with Dean than you. That's my bad."

Sam huffed as he looked at the recorder, "Yeah, well, after what your Dad told you about what happened it's expected you wouldn't trust me that readily. It's fine Maya."

She shook her head, "No, I want to trust you, but that's a two way street. Give a little get a little, right? So, I'm sorry." Maya unleashed her own version of the apologetic and guilty puppy eyes, the Shimmering Gold Edition.

Sam gave her a thankful smile, "Me too…Goldy."

Maya looked at him in abject horror, "No. Not you too! I've almost accepted Dean using it constantly, but not you too! Will I never hear my real name around you two?!"

Sam shot her a mischievous smirk and said in an evil and conspiratorial whisper, "Never."

"You asshole!" Maya hissed and Puck huffed at her feet in agreement.

Sam rolled his eyes and had the gall to rub the top of her head mussing up her hair, earning himself a squawk of protest from the small teen. "Twerp. Now, c'mon I need to get this exorcism recorded and set up."

"…sleep with one eye open, Sammy." Maya growled with no real heat behind it.
"It's Sam," he corrected.

"Not anymore~" Maya sing-songed back smiling.

"Twerp," Sam muttered.

"Asshole."

Sam, Maya and Puck left the PA room, meeting up with Dean and Ruby in the bullpen.

"Get the equipment to work?" Dean asked.

"Yeah," Sam replied less than enthused.

"So?" Dean looked at his brother questioningly.

"So, this is insane," Sam pointed out.

"You win 'understatement of the year'," Ruby muttered.

"Look, I get it. You think—" Dean began but was harshly interrupted by Ruby.

"I don't think. I know. It's not gonna work." Ruby bit out in annoyance. Maya raised a suspicious eyebrow at that. How could Ruby possibly know that the plan won't work? It's risky yeah, but all of them should be able to walk out of here, lives intact. Ruby stood up from her seat and walked past them, "So long boys, half-breed."

"So you're just gonna leave?" Sam asked the retreating demon.

Ruby turned around to face them, "Hey. I was gonna kill myself to help you win. I'm not gonna stand here and watch you lose." She took a few purposeful steps toward them staring Sam in the eye, "And I'm really disappointed…because I tried. I really did. But, clearly, I guess I bet on the wrong horse." Maya's eyes flickered between Sam and Ruby as they stared tensely at each other, until Ruby looked towards the front door of the station. "Do you mind letting me out?" she asked expectantly.

Maya didn't follow Sam as he went to let Ruby past the devil's trap and salt line. She watched from a window as Ruby exited the front doors of the police station and drew that inscribed knife again as she faced the large crowd of waiting hostile demons. That knife again.

"Hey Dean?" Maya called out as she watched the demon crowd split like the red sea.

"Yeah?" Dean called back, and from the sound of it was giving his shotgun another once over.

"What's up with the knife demon bitch has? The other demons just got out of her way when she drew it," she asked as Ruby cleared the crowd.

"It's the demon-killing knife," Sam answered as he sidled up beside Maya looking out the window as well, after re-trapping and salting the door. "Kills the demons you stab with it."

"Really?" Maya asked sounding a little too interested. Now, she didn't know about the boys, but something like that seemed a little bit too useful to be letting a demon skank walk around with. Maya could just see Ruby beyond the crowd and still within range. Maya also never got the chance
to ask her question, so the way she figured it, she was owed.

Sam frowned at the tone in her voice, which also attracted Dean's attention fully from his gun. "Maya what are you—" Sam tried to ask but was cut off.

SNAP!

In Maya's right hand was the demon blade, and then came the loud outraged shout from outside. Ruby had turned around and glared straight at Maya in the window who held the blade tauntingly between her two hands as she did a little gleeful shoulder shimmy, while smiling like a lunatic. Snarling at her Ruby carried on her way, unable to do anything about the pilfered blade.

Sam stared down at Maya in shock. She just stole from a demon then thought it was a good idea to taunt said demon.

"Why did you do that?" Sam asked in disbelief. Ruby had saved their asses before and was trying to help them with the Lilith problem, despite their differences in species. Now she was vulnerable, but also, probably really pissed.

"What did Goldy do?" Dean asked as he sauntered over to them. Maya held up the demon-killing knife with a triumphant smirk. That got a satisfied chuckle from Dean. "Good job Goldy," Dean complimented smirking as he held out his hand for the knife. Maya easily handed it over.

"Dean!" Sam reprimanded, even though he knew it wouldn't do much good.

"What?" Dean shrugged. "We've got more need of it than her at the moment. At least the demons will be less likely to go all out when they get a load of this in our hands," Dean smirked before giving Maya a high-five. Sam shook his head as he looked up having a 'why me' moment.

"Whatever," Sam sighed. "Lets just get the holy water ready."

Maya snickered, "You mean the holy toilet water?"

"Shut up, Goldy," Sam countered. Dean got a big shit-eating grin as he heard Sam use his nickname for her while looking at Maya's scowling (read: pouting) face.

"Assholes," Maya hmphed looking more like an angry put out kitten.

Dean snorted, "That your angry face? Cause, hate to break it to ya, Goldy," oh the glare sent his way, "but it's adorable, like an angry fluffed out kitten!" Dean grinned as he teased her.

Maya scrunched her nose frowning him, which just added to the whole angry kitten effect. Sam tried to cover his smile and suppress a laugh but his strangled voice betrayed his amusement, "You're right Dean. An small angry ball of fur."

"I hate both of you," she bitch-faced both of them and walked away in a huff leaving the boys chuckling behind her.

Ruby

Ruby seethed as she stood a distance away watching as that little half-breed smiled triumphantly before moving away from the window. She had to admit she underestimated the cretin a little bit, but not by much. If she didn't have to worry about staying on the Winchesters' good side, or neutral side at least, she'd take great pleasure in hunting the half-breed down. Then taking her time as she
flayed her slowly after breaking every bone in her body, to start off with anyways.

One of the demons from the crowd walked up beside her, they'd possessed a tall black middle-aged man who had worked at the police station. Well, after all was said and done he wouldn't be stuffing his face with donuts or writing police reports anymore. Not with that deep nasty slash across his throat.

"I'd be wary if I were you," Ruby drawled. "Walking straight into a trap, so I'd want to stick close to an exit." With that Ruby finally left.

Let's see how their little plan holds up now. Not that she suspected anything different. After all, who would ever make a bet against Dean not being righteous enough that he'd take a risky plan over a sure fire one if it meant not killing an innocent person? Definitely not this demon.

Maybe now in the fallout those Winchesters will be more likely to listen to her. Nothing hurts a Winchester more than failing to save those you had sworn to protect.

Rooftop

"When this is over I'm going to have so much sex," Nancy said nervously as they all watched the demons start streaming into the building. Feeling the Deputy's eyes on her Nancy added, "But not with you though."

Maya snorted in amusement at that while she tried to quell her own rising nervousness. "I don't know about lots of sex but I think I might go through with losing the V-card too. Seems like being a virgin is too much of a hassle," Maya let out a soft breathy laugh that belied her nervousness to the other occupants on the roof of the police station. Puck nuzzled the side of her leg in comfort.

"We better move guys," Nancy announced, as the last demon seemed to enter the building. Nancy, Maya, and the Deputy all made their way down from the roof. They threw the road salt bags onto the ground and climbed down. Maya turned to look up at the roof's ledge where Puck was looking over nervously.

"C'mon! I've got ya!" Maya called out softly as not to attract attention. Puck gave a little scared whine because that was a big fall for a little dog, but Puck trusted his mistress. One more nervous whine then he leapt off the roof and into Maya's arms. "Good boy, now we got a job to do. Keep a look out alright?" Puck gave an affirmative huff.

Maya began helping Nancy and the Deputy salt every door and window on the outside of the police station while a cacophony of aggressive and pained yells, pounding, glass shattering, and gunshot sounds raged inside the building.

Maya became worried when for a few tense moments it seemed to stop, then she heard the PA system go off and the recording of Sam chanting the Latin exorcism come through the speakers.

"Last door! Hurry!" Maya urged. Nancy, with the last salt bag, started salting the door but before she could finish a demon busted through.

"AAH!" Nancy screamed as her back hit the door in her crouched position. The demon was one of the cops killed before the siege fully began, a black middle-aged man with a large slash across his throat. He turned and scowled at a cowering Nancy, a tense Maya, and an aggressively growling little dog who was showing off his little fangs. The Deputy stood to the side with his gun cocked at him.
After another tense stare the demon looked to the door where the exorcism was still taking place. He turned and began to run away. The Deputy went to Nancy who stared after the demon petrified from her close encounter, while the Deputy took the salt bag from her and finished the salt line.

Maya stared at the demon and a chilling thought entered her mind, 'What if he was getting reinforcements? Or telling his boss where they were.' She glanced at the terrified Nancy. They'd all be in danger again and Sam and Dean can't hang around with their wanted fugitive status still a thing. She was scared about what she knew she had to do, but she couldn't let these people get hurt or killed.

Maya decided to do something stupid. Something really stupid.

Sam and Dean turned their heads as the swirling mass of black demon smoke on the ceiling combusted into red and orange flames that burned away without a trace. The demonic telepathic hold that kept them pinned to the brick wall disappeared and they collapsed into heaps on the ground.

They panted and grunted as they picked themselves up and Henriksen entered the room giving Dean a look as he wiped blood away from his busted lip. Dean gave him a little 'what-can-you-do?' shrug. It's what Sam and Dean did. They were just glad they all seemed to get out of the ordeal relatively intact. The lights started to flicker on and some of the possessed people started coming to. Seemed like tonight would be a happy ending for everyone involved, until hurried footsteps caught their attention.

"SAM! DEAN!" Nancy shouted as she came barreling down the hall at them in a panic, the Deputy not far behind her but also lacking his gun.

"Whoa Nancy," Sam put up his hands in a calm down gesture, "take it easy. It's—"

Nancy shook her head frantically, "No! One got out before we could get the last door! Your friend and her dog went after it. She told us to wait till the chanting stop—" She didn't finish as Sam and Dean went barreling down the hall Nancy and the Deputy came from.

Bursting out the doors they frantically looked around calling Maya's name, but they didn't need to as they heard the barking of a familiar little dog and said dog coming into view. Puck barked at them then turned around, ran a few steps away, stopped, looked back, and whined at them.

Dean still wasn't sure about the dog but right now they didn't have much of a choice, "All right Lassie, lead the way." Puck did so promptly as the two brothers followed behind him into the night. Then they heard a scream of pain from a female voice. MAYA!

They pumped their beaten bodies to move faster as they rounded a corner. Sam almost tripping over a very broken and very bent shotgun and Dean snarling out in anger as he pulled out the demon-killing knife, "LET HER GO! YOU BLACK EYED SON OF A BITCH!"

Maya laid struggling on the cold, concrete ground, the demon pinning her by her throat. The demon added more pressure, cutting more of her airway off as she choked trying to breath. Her right hand grasped uselessly at the hand that pinned her. At hearing Dean's voice she managed to turn her head slightly to get him into view.

The demon eyed the pair warily, especially Dean who had the demon blade, but it knew it had the upper hand. "How about a trade? The demon-killing knife for your friend here?" its voice was
raspy and halting, from its meat suit having its vocals chords almost destroyed from the gash on
the neck.

Maya was losing consciousness, as her vision seemed to spot, as her eyes grew heavier, and her
mind foggier. But through the fog she did pick up something. Demon-killing knife, but was it in
range? She tried to focus, to judge the distance between her and Dean who looked ready to hand it
over.

Dean felt helpless as he watched the life start to drain away as her face become paler. There was no
guarantee the demon would keep its word if he handed over the demon blade. He glanced at Sam
who didn't hesitate to nod. Glancing back at the demon hovering over Maya as she struggled to
breathe, he watched as her right hand fell away from the demon's wrist. Maya's life wasn't worth
the knife. They had to chance it.

"Tick tock boys," the demon smiled cruelly, "your friend here is running ou—" it was cut off as it
seemed to be electrified from the inside flashing an orange burning skeleton.

Dean noticed the instant the blade had disappeared from his hand, but in that same instant Maya's
right hand shot up, demon-killing knife in hand, and stabbed the asshole right in the chest.

The moment the grip on her throat loosened Maya used what strength she had to shove the bastard
off of her, which had her unfortunately shifting her left shoulder. Her left dislocated shoulder. She
didn't try to stop the pained short scream that escaped her lips, because damn did it hurt. Now her
throat hurt from screaming after getting almost strangled to death.

Sam, Dean, and Puck were instantly at her side. Sam kneeled and began checking her over, and
Dean who crouched and glared at her. Puck attacked the side of her face with relieved doggy
kisses.

"Maya, what the hell were you thinking?!" Dean shouted. "No. Don't even answer, because I
already know the answer. You weren't!" Dean had cut her off before she could say anything.

Maya was about to try defending herself when Sam put pressure on her left shoulder. "GAH!" she
shouted in pain and tried to flinch away from Sam's giant hands, but Sam instead used them to
guide her into a sitting position. Puck whined frantically as he decided to huddle between her legs
and watches the proceedings anxiously.

Sam grimaced as he gently touched the shoulder feeling under her jacket, "Sorry Maya. You've
dislocated your shoulder."

"No shit," Maya let loose a couple of raspy coughs, her voice aching.

Dean's hardened face softened a bit seeing Maya in so much pain as she panted with raspy breaths.
Her bottom lip was busted and her right upper check under her eye looked to be forming a nice
bruise.

Dean rubbed his face tiredly letting out a sigh, "We're gonna need to pop it back in." He caught the
look of trepidation cross her face as she inhaled and then exhaled with a sigh then nodded
reluctantly. "All right bring it in," Dean went to her right side and used his good arm to get her lean
her right shoulder against him and to hold her steady. "I'm going to hold you steady while nurse
Hatchet over there," cue Sam's bitch-face, "pop's it back in." Maya used her right arm to wrap
around his torso as she carefully put her forehead on his left shoulder, mindful of his gunshot
wound.
Sam took that as his cue to put his hand firmly on the popped joint, earning a whimper from Maya. Now what Dean said next was, either really smart, really insensitive, or really stupid. "Oh, don't be such a baby," Maya's head shot up from his chest with fire in her eyes as she glared heatedly at him.

"Oh, well, excuse me for having a dislocated shoulder," she said in outraged sarcasm, as she coughed and rasped. "Sorry that excruciating pain isn't a common occurrence for me. So, I don't give a damn if crying out in pain makes me sound like a goddamn baby! If I feel the need to whimper in pain while waiting for Sam to do that stupid 1-2-3—AARRRGGHH!" Maya shouted as Sam popped her shoulder back in. She whipped her around to stare at Sam in shock as she let go of Dean.

Sam shrugged, "You were distracted. Figured I'd take advantage."

Maya's shocked face turned into an intense glower. "Asshole," she rasped softly, her throat hurting.

"Twerp," Sam smirked as he carefully helped her up. Maya's face twitched in pain as her shoulder shifted but nothing like before. "Let's head back to the station, they'll have more medical supplies handy," Sam suggested.

Dean nodded, "Yeah, just let me grab the knife." He walked over to the dead police officer that now sported a knife jutting from his chest. Putting his foot on the body to keep it still, Dean pulled out the demon-killing knife and turned around to find Maya's face paling in horror and her eyes watering a bit. *Uh oh.*

"I killed him," Maya rasped in horror. "Whoever that demon was possessing…I killed them too when I...oh God." She brought her right hand to her mouth but seeing the blood quickly drew it away and stared at it, shaking as tears started to fall.

"Oh, hey, n-no tears," Dean stammered awkwardly as Maya looked on the verge of sobbing. "Y-you can't think like that. Dude was already dead when he got possessed, an-and if he wasn't you'd be doing him a favor!" Dean tried to point out.

Maya keened. Oh god, emotions.

Sam looked at Dean who by that point wasn't sure what to do. Sam looked back at the distressed girl between them and gently pulled her towards him wrapping his arms around her in a comforting hug. Maya appreciated the gesture greatly and returned it with her one good arm as she buried her head in the tall man's chest.

"I-I didn't…I-I c-could've…" Maya stuttered.

"What could you have done?" Sam asked gently as he held her. "Did you have an exorcism memorized to use? A way to keep him from escaping while you performed it?" Maya shook her head in his chest. "If you did get the demon out, and the man was by some miracle still alive, do you have healing abilities to heal that fatal gash on his neck?" She shook her head again. "Even if he was alive being possessed by that demon he would have been in constant agony from his wounds and forced to watch what the demon did to others with his body. What Dean meant was if he was still alive you probably saved him from that." Maya looked up at him with red rimmed and big shimmering gold eyes. "Don't feel bad doing what you had to do to survive," Sam smiled. She nodded reluctantly as she let go of Sam, ending the hug.

"I'll try," she rasped emotionally.
Dean clapped his hand on her good shoulder as he sighed, "All you can do. Now, lets go. I don't know about you two, but I'm about ready to crash."

Maya started walking ahead with Puck and Dean hung back a little bit with Sam, both still sore from earlier.

"Good job with the whole crying thing," Dean said awkwardly too his brother.

"Well, out of the two of us I'm the one more in touch with their emotions, and don't suffer chronic emotional constipation," Sam drawled with a smirk at Dean's offended face.

"Bitch."

"Jerk."

"Hurry up Assholes!" Maya called back, but immediately regretted it as it sent her into a slight coughing fit.

"Hey! Hey! We're hurtin' here! We fought off a horde of demons! You fought the one," Dean yelled back at her. Then he remembered something, "And don't think we're not going to talk about you chasing down that demon by yourself!" Dean watched as her back straightened and she started speed walking away from them. "Yeah, you better run!"

They all made their way back to the station where everyone else who was possessed had woken up and was being treated for any injuries sustained during the ordeal. With everyone helping each other it didn't take long till people started exiting the police station.

Henriksen looked at the two men that just saved everyone's lives and the teenage girl sitting on a desk with her left arm in a sling who did the same. "I better call in," he informed them. "Hell of a story I won't be telling."

"So, what are you going to tell him?" Sam asked.

"I'd avoid the truth. Unless you want a fast track to the loony bin?" Maya quipped with a smirk.

"I'll keep that in mind," Henriksen huffed. "I'll probably tell them the most least ridiculous lie I can come up with in the next five minutes," he shrugged.

"Good luck with that. Uh, not to pressure you or anything but what are you planning to do with us?" Dean asked.

Henriksen then said with a serious and straight face, "I'm going to kill you." There was a beat of tense silence, and then he continued. "Sam and Dean Winchester were in the chopper when it caught on fire. Nothing's left. Can't even identify them with dental records. Rest in peace guys." Sam and Dean smiled relieved as Henriksen looked over at Maya who raised an eyebrow at him expectantly. "Chuckles here was never completely identified, but was determined to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and released."

"They die in flames of glory and I just, get what? Dismissed?" Maya scoffed in mock outrage.

"Yeah, yeah," Henriksen dismissed her with a smirk. "Now get out of here."
February-ish 2008, Pueblo, Colorado, United States

They had left the station and went couple of towns over to Pueblo and got a motel room at the edge of town. Maya nabbed the shower first and found out how painful it was to move an injured shoulder. Catching herself in the mirror she gingerly touched the darkening bruise on her upper right cheek and flinched her hand back with a hiss. She also found bruises on her left wrist from when the demon got a hold of her and dislocated her shoulder. The more worrisome was the bruise forming on her throat from an iron grip that had tried to squeeze the life out of her.

Maya sighed under the warm spray of water as the heat eased some of her aches and pains. She quickly washed her hair and body then changed into her tank top and pajama bottoms before brushing her teeth and exiting the bathroom, towel drying her hair with her good arm.

"All free guys," Maya announced and watched amused as they put on serious faces and did rock-paper-scissors. Dean lost.

Maya walked over after brushing her hair and shaking it out a little, "So, which one is Sam sleeping in?"

"That one," Dean pointed to the one closest to the bathroom. He watched as Maya went to the other bed and get under the covers ready to go to sleep. "Sorry Maya. Can't sleep yet." Dean said as he walked over and sat across from her on Sam's bed. Maya groaned but sat up to look at him.

"Why'd you go after that demon tonight? Last I check supernatural assholes weren't your thing," He asked seriously.

Maya bit her lip and let out a sigh, "I was worried it was going to go get reinforcements or let Lilith know where we were."

"We'd have been long gone by then though," Dean pointed out.

"Yeah, but not the people in the police station," she rubbed her face tiredly. "Look I get it, okay? Going after it was stupid, really stupid, but I couldn't let it get away."

"You almost died tonight Maya," Dean stressed. "You shouldn't even be involved in stuff like this. You're a kid! You can't just go running off on your own with no experience like that."

Maya gave a sardonic laugh, "Dean, I'm already involved. Everyday when I wake up and use my powers, every breath I take...I'm half-Trickster. I was born into all this. Also," she added, "I wasn't alone. I had Puck with me." Puck gave an affirmative woof to that.

"Yeah, 'cause the rat was soooo helpful," he said sarcastically.

"Yes. He was," she said firmly. "I told him to go get you two didn't I?"

"I'll give you that," Dean acquiesced reluctantly. "But what went through your head that made you think you could take down a demon?"

"I wasn't trying to take it down. I was stalling for you two," Maya admitted. "I know I can't take it down on my own, but I figured I could at least stall for a few minutes till you and Sam got there. That's why I told the others to get you once the exorcism was done. I took precautions—"

"Some precautions," Dean snorted sarcastically. "I think that bruise on your neck there and your raspy voice says otherwise." Dean rubbed his face tiredly. "You scared the crap out of me and Sam
tonight Goldy. If you died it would've been our fault for dragging you into this—don't try to say it wouldn't have been," Dean held up his hand to stop her protest. "Me and Sam could've easily gone after Bela ourselves and not involve you. At all."

"I-I'm sorry Dean," Maya apologized her voice thick with emotion as she looked guiltily back at Dean.

"We're good. Just—just don't go running off after monsters on your own again, okay? The rat doesn't count," Dean pointed out then he thought of something. "Also we take this night to our graves and don't tell Bobby, or your Dad for that matter," Dean added. "I'd rather stay alive and buckshot free for whatever time I've got left."

Maya smiled, "Agreed."

"What are we agreeing on?" came Sam's voice as he left the bathroom dressed in his own nightclothes as he dried his hair.

"You better have left some hot water. I swear you took longer than Goldy here, and she's an actual girl," Dean complained good-naturedly as he took his back and went into the bathroom.

"Seriously?" Sam deadpanned as he gave Dean a bitch-face as he walked by. Sam turned to look at Maya and asked curiously, "So, what are we agreeing about?"

"Not telling Bobby or my Dad what happened tonight," Maya watched as Sam's face paled at the thought.

"Y-yeah. Lets not," Sam sat down then laid back in his bed. Maya did the same and was about to go to sleep when Sam called her attention, "Hey. Maya?"

"Hmm?" Maya hummed.

"If we had some how gotten a hold of your Dad, would he have helped us out?" Sam asked curiously.

Maya groaned before answering, "Mmm probably not. He'd just see me surrounded by demons with the Winchesters, and with the Mystery Spot fiasco still fresh in his mind…"

Sam put the pieces Maya left out together, "I take it I, at least, might not be here?"

"He'd probably explode you, maybe Dean too, then grab me and Puck and disappear," Maya let out a yawn. Sleep sounded so good right now.

"What do you mean explode?!" Sam sat straight up in his bed looking at Maya shocked. "Is he that powerful?"

"Mnhmm," Maya hummed, sleep calling to her. "Snap and guts and blood goes everywhere… probably coulda prayed to him and he'd have saved me…"

"Uh, why didn't you?" Sam asked concerned. He really hoped she didn't have a death wish.

"Losing consciousness…yawn…barely picked up demon-killing knife. Had to focus looo-yawn-oooots. Now, lets me sleeexxeeeep," Maya whined burrowing her face in her pillow.

"Alright, alright." Sam gave the sleepy teenager in the other bed a chuckle. "Night, Goldy." He smiled at the groan of protest as she turned her head to sleepily glare at him.
"Fuck you Sammy," Maya turned her head back and was out not long after.

It's been a long night.

February-ish 2008, Pueblo, Colorado, United States

Following morning…

Everyone was dressed and just take a couple hours to relax after the previous night's activities. Sam watched Maya sketch and munch on some candy, taking note of how'd she wince in pain when she moved her injured shoulder wrong.

Dean noticed Sam's concerned staring at Maya while he started packing up their gear. He had a pretty good idea why Sam was concerned; he was too to be honest. Maya was pretty hurt and by the end of the day they'd probably go their separate ways. While him and Sam were also injured, himself with a gunshot wound, they still had each other to watch their backs. Maya only had the dog and now an injured shoulder. It wouldn't hurt to have her tag along? At least till her shoulder was healed up, right?

"Hey Goldy," Dean called, gaining her attention. "You need to be anywhere anytime soon?"

Maya looked at him confused, "Umm, no? I was just going to the bus station later. Figure it out from there." Her voice still had a raspy quality to it, but was better than the night before.

"Well, if you got no where to be…wanna hang around with us for a bit?" Dean asked taking in the look of Maya's surprised face. "At least till your shoulder's healed up," Dean added awkwardly.

Maya's face lit up in excitement, her gold eyes sparkling brightly as she gave him a big smile, "Really?! That'd be great!"

"But just so you know, driver picks the music-," Dean began but Sam interrupted and finished for him.

"Shotgun shuts their cakehole," Sam parroted with a groan. "I hope you realize you've just agreed to subject yourself to hours of mullet rock for the foreseeable future?"

Before Maya could answer there was pounding at the door. Dean and Sam exchanged looks before Dean got up to answer the door, finding Ruby on the other side. He moved out of the way to let her in, then closing the door.

"Turn on the News," Ruby ordered with her arms crossed. Sam sat up staring at Ruby then grabbed the remote from the nightstand and turning on the TV to the News.

Everyone at the police station was dead. The News claimed it was a ruptured gas main that caused the explosion that killed everyone. Maya stared at the TV in horror and grief as the pictures of Henriksen, the Deputy, and Nancy were shown as those among the deceased. Everyone they had saved was now dead. As it finished Ruby went and turned the TV off then looked back at the stricken brothers.

"Must have happened right after we left," Sam said looking at Dean.

"Considering the size of the blast…" Ruby tossed the boys some small pouches. "…smart money's
on Lilith."

"What's in these?" Dean asked looking at the pouches.

"Something that will protect you," Ruby answered. "Throw Lilith off your trail. For the time being, at least."

"Thanks," Sam said looking at the annoyed demon.

"Don't, thank me. Lilith killed everyone. She slaughtered your precious little virgin, plus a half dozen other people," Sam and Dean looked away in guilt at that. "So, after your big speech about humanity and war, turns out your plan was the one with the body count," she scolded. "Do you know how to fight a battle? You strike fast and don't leave any survivors, so no one can go running to tell the Boss," Sam and Dean shared a quick look with each other at that. Didn't Maya get that straggler?

Maya having stayed silent, holding onto a growling Puck's collar perked up at Ruby's words. "But there were no survivors," Maya pointed out. "I k-killed the one that got out of the trap. With the demon-killing knife," Maya gave the demon a big grin at the mention of the knife. "Thanks by the way."

If looks could kill the glare Ruby sent Maya would have her dead on the floor. "Speaking of which, I'd like to have that back," she growled. "Well, obviously there must have been more than one that got away, or one that didn't go into the building." Ruby held her hand out to Maya, "My knife?"

Maya left her face blank not moving from her spot and gave a nod in Dean's direction. Ruby turned her gaze to Dean raising her eyebrow expectantly.

Dean looked at Ruby with a reluctant face but Sam's pointed glare had him rolling his eyes and handing over the knife.

"Thanks," Ruby drawled.

"It's later and I'd really appreciate an answer for a question I've got," Maya rasped out to Ruby, gaining the attention of every occupant in the room.

"What she talking about Goldy?" Dean asked in a serious tone.

"Oh when you two went to talk me and the vocally challenged half-breed here made a little deal," Sam and Dean tensed at that proclamation with worried expression. "Don't worry boys just a little info for a little info. No soul selling went on. Though I wonder if your little half-breed even has a soul? Or even half a soul?" Ruby queried in fake curiosity. "Go ahead. Ask away."

"How do Hellhounds know which souls to drag down?" Ruby raised her eyebrow at that question, while Sam and Dean tensed. Why would Maya ask that?

"That's it? Your one question and you waste it on that?" Ruby laughed. Oh she knew the answer, and there really was no harm in actually being honest. After all she's not a crossroads demon and could've easily fed the half-breed some lie if she asked a less than ideal question. There was nothing of consequence that the little cretin, or the boys for that matter, could do with the answer. Like giving a starving man a fishing pole and told him to go fish, while stranded in the desert.

"What? Don't know the answer?" Maya teased.

"No, I do, but don't know what good the answer will do for you," Ruby scoffed. "When a demon
deal is made the holder of the contract basically stamps their name on the soul. The stamp gets
darker the closer the due date comes. The hounds track the soul through the mark. It's why you
can't hide from Hellhounds. Now, if that's all?" Ruby looked around annoyed. "Great, now maybe
next time we find ourselves in a shithole of a situation, we'll go with my plan." Ruby turned on her
heels and walked out of the motel room, slamming the door behind her.

Everyone stared at the door in tense silence. Sam was the first to speak up.

"Why'd you ask Ruby about Hellhounds?" Sam queried. Maya looked over at Sam and Dean.

"I've seen something weird on Dean's soul," Maya admitted. "I didn't know what it was but it
looked like a stamp of a name or something. I didn't question it at first, until I saw the same stamp
on Bela's soul."

"Hold up. You saw something on my soul and didn't think—I don't—to tell me?" Dean demanded.

"I didn't know what I was looking at!" Maya coughed a little as she defended herself. "I thought it
was a unique marking, but then I saw the same thing—the exact same thing—on Bela's soul. If it
were like a soul version of a birthmark, Bela wouldn't have had it too. It got me thinking about
what could leave a mark like that and that's when—"

"Your deal, Dean," Sam interrupted realizing where Maya was going. "The only likely thing that
might leave a mark like that, a mark of ownership, on a soul."

Maya nodded at Sam, "Exactly! But then I thought of how they were collected. I mean, how would
a Hellhound know to collect this specific soul? It had to be able to track something. I get souls are
specific but what about people with the same names? Go collect so-and-so! No the other so-and-
so! Not that one!" Maya mimicked. "It'd be easier to leave a trace or something on the soul that
made the deal."

"Then why didn't you just ask Ruby about the mark?" Dean questioned. "Why ask about
Hellhounds at all?"

"Figured she wouldn't tell me the truth if I asked. Deal wasn't exactly kosher and she's no sales
rep," Maya shrugged. "So, I asked a question that wouldn't raise any red flags. Asked for a bit of
info that I'd probably have no use for. Well, as far as she knew anyways."

"You think she's hiding something?" Dean asked seriously.

Maya sighed, "I don't know. She was pretty sure your plan would fail, and her excuse for how
Lilith found the station seemed a little flimsy but was still probable."

Sam shook his head, "Ruby's just trying to help guys." Maya gave him an uncertain stare that held
her doubt and Dean just rolled his eyes.

"If that's true, why did she bail last night when you needed her?" Maya asked seriously.

Sam couldn't answer that as he looked away.

Dean decided to change conversation direction, "So, this mark? Can you read it?" Despite Dean's
apathetic attitude for most of the year about his future permanent residence in the pit, this little bit
of info Maya had gave him the barest shred of hope.

Sam looked up hopefully at the teen sitting at the table. Maya looked between the two before going
back to her sketchbook and opening up a new page, before turning her eyes on Dean.
They saw her eyes light up with the purple rings around her pupils as she stared intently at Dean, or more specifically his soul. Dean shifted uncomfortably at the intense stare and the feeling of being revealed. It was a tense 7 secs; he counted, as Maya's eyes would flick between Dean and the sketchbook she was drawing in.

Once she was done the purple rings faded and Maya fluttered her eyes as she adjusted.

"Sorry to say I can't actually read it," Maya admitted as she stood up and handed the book to Dean. She had copied down the symbols that spelled the name of the demon holding his contract.
"Whatever this language is I've never come across it, and it feels ancient." Dean passed the book to Sam.

Sam looked up at Maya, "What do you mean 'feels ancient'?"

She gave him a shrug, "Just a thing I have with languages. For whatever reason I can not only pick them up, but also get a feel for how old they are." She frowned looking at the page. "Sorry it's not much help," she muttered.

"Best lead we've got so far," Sam smiled at Maya, and then gave a hopeful smile to Dean.

Dean sighed somberly as he looked at the two in front of him. He may have had a shred of hope but he still wasn't sure if Maya's lead would be any good. He didn't want to get his hopes up. It was already going to suck when Sam's came crashing down.

"We're not quitting hunting to go chasing after a language that Goldy just said felt ancient," he told Sam sternly and kept him from protesting by holding up his hand. "We can send a copy over to Bobby. If he doesn't have a book he'll probably know more on how to track one down. We can't spend all our time trying to track this down when there are people out there needing our help," he finished firmly.

Maya stared at Dean in concern. He sounded like he was ready to give up.

"Alright Dean," Sam compromised. "We'll send it over to Bobby and keep hunting till he finds something we can use." He looked over at Maya holding up her book, "Do you mind if I?"

"No. Go ahead. Just make sure it's clean," Maya nodded. Sam grabbed the page in the sketchbook and carefully ripped it out.

"Now that that's settled," Dean clapped his hands then rubbed them together. "I don't know about you two, but I'm feeling burgers for breakfast! Let's go!" He grabbed his bag and walked out of the room. Sam and Maya stared after him then looked at each other before grabbing their own bags.

"How long?" Maya asked as she put her sketchbook, sans one page, back into her bag.

Sam didn't need to know what she was referring to before he answered, "Little over two months."

"Well, whatever happens…best make it a damn good couple of months then," She gave Sam a weak smile. Sam returned it.

They jolted slightly at the sound of the impala's horn blaring.

"LETS GO!" Dean's shout came from the open doorway with another loud impatient honk. Sam, Maya, and Puck came out of the room and filed into the impala. "Bout damn time. I'm starving!" Dean exclaimed as he put the impala into gear.
"Hello starving. I'm Maya," she gave a chuckle at the Dad-joke she used.

"Nope. It's Goldy," Dean rebuked then grinned pointedly at Sam. "Right Sam?" Sam rolled his eyes but he was smiling too.

"Sam, don't you da—" Maya warned but it was for naught.

"Dean's right, Goldy," Sam teased; easily shrugging off the bitch-face she was giving him.

"One eye open, Sammy. One. Eye. Open!" she growled as she sat back in her seat in a huff, but flinched when it jarred her shoulder. Stupid shoulder.

AN: I can't believe how long this is! Gaaaaaaah! I hope this makes up for the wait!
No Chick Flick Moments!

February 22 2008, Somewhere Between Towns, Oklahoma, United States

Maya was seriously contemplating a double homicide.

She almost regretted tagging along with the Winchester duo that was Sam and Dean. Almost. It'd been a few days since Monument, and only a couple since Maya thought about killing them. Now, what could the Winchesters have possibly done that Maya would consider murdering them in their sleep?

They refused to use her given name and used that dreaded nickname Dean came up with when they first met, Goldy. They'd even use it when they didn't even need to use her name! They'd be dropping the name almost every other sentence! Then they'd smirk all smug at her in amusement when she'd huff or glare angrily at them. This only had them grin wider at her, because, apparently, she was adorable when she looked angry. The Jackasses.

They were driving in the car talking about plans of where to stop at the next town for something to eat, when Dean and Sam addressed her.

"Hey Goldy, you feelin' up for fast food burgers or diner burgers?" Dean asked innocently enough, though the upturned quirk in his lips in the reflection of the rearview mirror said otherwise. Maya gave him a pointed glare. "What, Goldy? Goldy, if you're not feelin' the burgers you can always get something else for yourself. Ain't going make you eat something you don't want, Goldy," Dean was full on smirking knowing exactly what he was doing.

"Do you really have to say that damn name in every sentence?" Maya seethed.

Dean put on a look of mock confusion as he peaked at her adorable angry face in the rearview mirror, "I have no idea what you're talking about Goldy." He turned to Sam who was failing to hide his own amused smile. "Do you know what Goldy's going on about Sam?" Dean asked as innocently as he could. He failed miserably.

Maya's eyes sent metaphorical laser beams at Sam's head trying to silently threaten the larger Winchester. She could handle Dean using the nickname, she was just fed up with both of them ganging up on her with it. Maya was pretty sure Dean was doing it because he was an asshole, but she had thought Sam would be better than that. Apparently not.

Sam turned slightly in his seat, an amused smile still plastered on his face as a look of mischief
passed through his eyes.

"Sam, don't you fucking dar—" Maya's threat was interrupted.

Sam looked pointedly into her gold eyes and said, "I have no idea what Goldy's going on about."

*Oh that was it!* Maya composed her face into the best blank/disinterested face she could do with the sheer amount of annoyance running through her. They wanted to tease her? Play a little joke on her? Fine.

But it was probably time she played back.

A look of slight concern washed over Sam's face at her own reactionless one. Oh yes, he probably realized they might've pushed the normally easy-going teen too far.

"Alright, you wanna play at not knowing my real name? Have it your way," Maya leaned forward as Sam leaned his face away giving a nervous look to Dean at her tone. "I'd hoped at least you, Sam, would drop it since you seemed like less of an asshole than you, Dean, but if this is how you two want to play? Fine. *Let's play,*" she all but purred with a look of pure mischief on her face.

Sam looked nervous at Maya's face, "Uh Ma—" Dean cut him off from using the teen's real name.

"Those sound like fighting words, Goldy." Dean challenged with a smirk.

Sam looked sharply at Dean and knew exactly where this was heading. Probably not the best idea to start a prank war with a Trickster, whether they're half of one or not. There was no way he was getting in the middle of this. It was bad enough when it was just him and Dean.

"I'm out!" Sam declared putting up his hands in surrender. Maya and Dean looked at him funny.

"What? You chicken Sammy?" Dean snorted.


"Got you there, Dean," Maya grinned wickedly. "I've spent almost everyday for nearly 10 years learning and coming up with tricks and pranks. No shame in backing out now, Dean-o."

Dean's narrowed eyes met Maya's in the rearview mirror, "And I've been pranking Sammy for longer. So, state your terms, Goldy."

Maya gave him an amused smile, "I win, and you cool it on the nickname. I've given up on the idea of you never using it again, but I'd appreciate it if you didn't use it in almost every,
goddamned sentence!" Maya looked at Sam, "Since Sam already backed out, he forfeits use of it all together." Sam shrugged his shoulders with a nod, agreeing.

"And if I win, Goldy?" Dean prodded, his eyes on the road.

"I won't complain about you using it ever again," Maya crossed her arms, her left shoulder recently out of its sling. "Even if you are an asshole and use it in every sentence," she added. Dean gave a smug and wicked grin, "You're on Goldy. First one to cry uncle or can't one-up a prank loses."

"Nothing that will leave damage," Maya stipulated.

"Goes without saying," Dean scoffed as he gave an affirmative nod. "Excellent. I'll enjoy beating you, Dean." Her smile widened.

Dean snorted, "Not as much as me when I've got you begging for mercy. I've been waiting for a chance to get back at you for that pie in Springfield."

"You actually opened the fridge?!!" Maya fell over her seat in laughter causing Puck to jump to the car floor to avoid being squished.

Dean rolled his eyes and Sam shook his head at the two.

"I hope you both realize this is just going to end in tears," Sam sighed but was dismissed by both of them. "Fine, but I call time limit and no involving me in anyway shape or form."

"Time limit? C'mon Sammy!" Dean scoffed.

"No, Dean!" Sam said firmly. "I'm not putting up with a prank war between the two of you for longer than necessary. You've got today, tomorrow and the day after. That's it!"

"Really? That long?" Maya asked innocently. "I'll have Dean-o caving long before then," she smirked smugly as she noted Dean's grip on the steering wheel tighten.

"We'll see," Dean smirked in determination.

Sam shook his head in exasperation, because a prank war between a half-Trickster and his big brother was definitely not going to end badly. Feel the sarcasm.

Later the Same Day, Bowlegs, Oklahoma, United States

Prank War: Day 1

It Begins
Maya was the first one to make a move.

They stopped at the local diner for a late lunch when Dean being himself had waggled his eyes suggestively at the pretty red head they had for a waitress. After ordering their food Dean went to the bathroom.

This was when Maya struck. While Dean was gone she called the waitress over to explain something completely false to her.

*That their brother Dean was gay and had recently come out to them, but was having a hard time shaking off this macho ladies man persona he had cultivated to not disappoint their Dad.*

"If you could try not to flirt with him back, give him your number, or go back to the motel with him that would be great. Despite having sex with women before he said it never felt quite right to him and would leave him with regrets. I don't want you to be another regret he might have to carry around," Maya said sympathetically.

The waitress nodded seriously, "I completely understand. Tried to do anything I could to get my Momma's approval when I was younger 'til I realized I didn't need it. Good for your brother for trying to grow past it." She turned to go back to her duties.

"Can you also not mention I said anything? I don't want him feeling embarrassed," Maya called out.

The waitress looked back with a smile and a wink, "Sure thing sugar."

During the whole little conversation Sam had struggled to keep his laughter and grin in check. At one point he even had to look away and focus on something on the wall beside him while he listened to the teen sitting beside him tell the waitress about his brother's recent coming out.

Sam checked over his shoulder to see if the waitress was out of earshot before he let himself shake in silent laughter. "I can't believe you did that!" Sam wheezed.

"Yeah, and I want to keep this going till the last day, so pull yourself together!" Maya nudged his side with her elbow grinning. Honestly she wasn't so sure how she'd hold it together either.

Dean came back a little suspicious from noticing Sam doing his best not to laugh and Maya giving him a wide-eyed innocent look. Oh the kid was up to something and Sam knew what it was.
Dean looked at Maya warily, "What did you do?"

Maya grinned widely as she hummed, "Now, Dean. That would be *telling.*"

When the food came Dean tried to flirt with the waitress again but seemed to strike out. Couldn't figure out why though, since she seemed receptive to his flirtations earlier. Noticing Maya and Sam's smiles he immediately went on edge. He made sure to double-check his food, the weird acting waitress forgotten as his second love (after Baby), burgers, might be in danger. Eyeing the two he took a careful bite and finding nothing wrong devoured his food.

After the diner they found a motel to hole up in while the boys looked for another hunt after having healed for the most part after Monument. This time the motel had a pullout couch, so no sharing beds for the next few days.

They settle in for the most part as Maya commandeers one of the dresser drawers for the few items of clothing she had stuffed in her bag. Once done she lets the brothers know she was leaving to walk Puck and probably stop at the store nearby for more dog food.

"Don't get anything heavy to strain that shoulder," Dean warned as he hefted his duffle bag onto his bed. "You just got out of the sling and won't be 100% for at least a few more weeks." He started looking through the bag a little.

Maya rolled her eyes at him. "Yes, *Mom,*" she sassed back at him. "Later guys," she slipped through the open motel door with Puck on her heels, closing it as she left.

Dean looked over his shoulder as the door closed then went back and rummaged through his duffle bag something, grinning widely as he found what he was looking for. Sam looked up from his computer as he watched, confused, as Dean walked purposely towards the dresser and opened the drawer with Maya's clothes in it.

"Dean," Sam asked suspiciously as Dean grabbed Maya's sleep pants. "What are you doing?" Dean looked over at Sam and grinned childishly as he held up and shook a familiar and dreaded package. *Itching powder.* Sam gave him a bitch-face; "At least you're decent enough not to *put it in her underwear.*" He looked away as he heard Dean chuckle as he sprinkled some of the powder in Maya's sleep pants.

Sam *almost* pitied Maya. Just like he *almost* pitied Dean when he found out what she did at the diner. The key word here being *almost.*
As far as he was concerned they were both digging their own graves with this prank war of theirs. At least he got free entertainment out of it.

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**That Night…**

Instead of going back to the diner, like Maya suggested, they all ate in at the motel having Chinese take-out. Dean had turned on the TV and found some Chuck Norris movie playing. About half way through Sam went to his laptop and looked a little more for a case, leaving Maya and Dean on the couch watching the movie. Dean at one point got up and went to the bathroom.

When he came back he paused in his approach to the couch and looked at Maya with a contemplating look as an old idea from his and Sam's childhood reared its head, and he smirked devilishly.

One minute Maya was leaning against the arm rest at one end of the couch and then the next she had Dean's ass in her face, then his back as he sat down on her, using his heavy ass and back to pin her to the couch underneath him.

Maya pushed at his back and tried to wriggle out from under him, but he just leaned back into her as he faced the TV. "DEAN!" was her muffled cry of protest from under him.

Dean ignored her struggles as he shifted in his seat as he looked over at Sam with a faux innocently confused face, "Hey Sam this couch feels a bit lumpy." He leaned back more with a grin earning a muffled squawk behind him, "And it's noisy!"

Sam looked at the two and rolled his eyes, but let a smile come through. With Dean's deal coming due he was glad his brother was having some fun. Shaking his head he watched as Maya struggled against his brother's larger bulk. "Welcome to my childhood Maya," Sam chuckled as he went back to searching.

Maya pushed against Dean's back, but with only the one good arm it was hopeless, "Get your fat ass off of me!" Maya growled.

"And now it's insulting me!" Dean laughed as he fully draped his body back over the teen underneath his bulk, earning more squeaks and growls of protest. This brought back fond memories of when he'd do stuff like this all the time to Sam when they were kids.

Maya was finally able to maneuver herself till she could get the fat ass on top of her off balance, and shoved him to the other end of the couch. She scowled at the annoying ass that was Dean Winchester, "Be grateful I didn't jab you in the kidneys."

Dean was smiling widely as he settled himself on the other end of the couch still chuckling at her, "Ah you wouldn't do that to me Goldy. I'm too lovable!"
That earned a snort from Sam and a deadpanned glare from Maya.

"Lovable, isn't exactly the word I'd use to describe you," she mumbled as she tucked her shoeless feet up onto the couch and leaned heavily on her armrest, turning her attention back to the movie.

Dean waited all of 8 minutes before pulling annoying-older-sibling-act part 2. He sneakily shucks his shoes off his feet, puts his beer on the floor on the other side of his armrest, then laid down on the couch and proceeded to stick his stanky ass Hunter foot in Maya's face.

Maya immediately leaned away and almost over her own armrest trying to keep the foot out of her face. "Dean! What the hell!? I don't want your disgusting foot in my face!" Maya used her arms to try and pin Dean's legs to her lap while avoiding touching his sock covered feet. "I'm not caving over this!" Maya declared heatedly.

"Oh, this isn't about that," Dean smirked. This was too much fun. "This is about whether my feet stink or not," he pulled back one of his legs from her grip then stuck the foot in her face again. "Now, smell it Goldy!" he laughed at her horror filled and disgusted face as she pins the free leg down with its twin.

"You wanna do this? Fine!" Maya squirmed as she unpinned her own legs from underneath Dean's and did her best to straighten out on the couch like he was. She used her right arm and armpit to pin Dean's feet the best she could and reached with her own feet for his face.

This had the unfortunate side effect of having Dean's larger feet closer to the side of her head which he took advantage of as Maya tried to reach his face. He would shift his right foot to lean towards the side of her face causing her to try and lean her head into the couch further to get away.

Sick of it, Maya quickly summoned a pillow from Dean's bed, sat up slightly, put it over his feet, then lay back down and stuck her foot in his face. "Smell it Winchester!" Maya parroted back at him mockingly.

Dean just copied her and tucked her own feet under his right shoulder and between him and the couch. He, however, had the added benefit of being larger and not have to worry about her feet being able to nudge the side of his face.

They both stared at each other not sure what to do, but not wanting to concede defeat.

Sam had stared at the two on the couch since Dean started round two of his childish couch antics. "I'm surrounded by children," Sam sighed with a smile, before getting up and proceeding to flop
Onto the couch with both of them underneath him, earning double shouts of protests and shoving.

February 23 2008, Bowlegs, Oklahoma, United States

Prank War: Day 2

Per Maya's request that morning they were back at the same diner again for breakfast. Between shoveling eggs and sausage in his mouth, Dean would catch Maya giving him a glare from across the table as she ate her stack of pancakes. Dean would just give her a smug and knowing smirk, which caused Maya to scowl more deeply at him.

Sam ate his pepper, onion, and tomato omelet as he waited for the shoe to drop between the two.

"You put itching powder in my pants," she growled after a bite of pancake.

'There it was,' Sam thought as Dean just gave the scowling teen a cheeky and smug grin.

"Can't go wrong with the classics, Goldy," Dean took a long swig of his coffee and almost choked. He spluttered in disgust as he quickly put the mug down then glared at the offending brown liquid. "Salt? Really?"

Sam did his best to smother his laugh at his brother's expression. He took a tentative sip of his own coffee just to make sure it wasn't tampered with. Although he wasn't a part of this he couldn't be too careful. To his relief his coffee was salt free.

Maya dropped her scowl as a mischievous grin spread across her face and she gave a little shrug, "Can't go wrong with the classics. Right Dean-o?"

Dean snorted in good humor as he pushed the offending mug of spoiled coffee away, "Touché Goldy."

Breakfast continued for the most part without any more incidences, other than Dean seeming to strike out again, except this time with a blonde waitress. Sam caught the knowing smirk adorning Maya's face. She knew exactly what was going on. The redhead from last night had spread the rumor of Dean's recently realized sexuality and him trying to break the macho ladies man stereotype he trapped himself in.

As they were leaving the diner Maya and Sam were held up for a moment when their blonde waitress told them how admirable it was that Dean was trying to come to terms with his true self and how lucky he was to have such two understanding and open-minded siblings.
Both Sam and Maya struggled to keep their smiles sincere, but it was hard when all you wanted to do was burst out laughing. When they left the diner they were sniggering and was confronted by a suspicion Dean looking at them.

"Hey," Dean barked at Sam. "I thought we agreed you weren't a part of this?"

"I'm not!" Sam said with a smile. "I just find what Maya did to be really funny," he revealed without actually revealing anything to Dean.

"Huh uh," Dean raised an eyebrow. "And what would that be?"

Sam shook his head, "Not telling. 'Cause then I'd be helping you." He walked to the parked impala and got in on the passenger side.

"Way to be Switzerland, Sam" Maya mock cheered as she sent a cheeky grin at Dean as she climbed in the back with Puck.

Rolling his eyes at the two Dean climbed into the driver's seat and started the car, smiling as Baby's engine purred.

The day carried on with both Dean and Maya playing childish pranks on one another, while Sam looked up possible cases and had himself a laugh whenever a prank occurred. Sam even opened a document on his computer and kept track of who did what.

So far:

**Maya**

*Switched labels on Dean's body wash and shampoo, leaving the guy smelling like a flower shop*

*Put food dye in the bar of soap in the bathroom (warned Sam)*

*Found electrical tape and covered the transmitter on the remote (Dean couldn't figure it out and seemed a little panicked because Dr. Sexy was playing)*

**Dean**

*Found a way to coerce Puck into hiding from Maya (Lasted 5mins into her mini freak-out before Puck reappeared)(Also proved Puck wasn't a normal dog)*

*Pretended to catch and eat a fly (It was a raisin. Sam didn't know till he spat the raisin back into the Kleenex)*

*Stuck duct tape under the bathroom tap (Maya had to change her clothes…after she nearly tore a part the room looking for them)*
Dean hid her clothes

Left a fake plastic spider with its forelegs raised like its about to attack in the empty dresser drawer (Maya screeched like a banshee as she backed up. Apparently she's scared of spiders) (Dean was pleased with his triple prank)

Dean was ahead so far when it came to regular pranks, but Sam still felt the ongoing one at the diner in town was hands down the best one.

February 24 2008, Bowlegs, Oklahoma, United States

Prank War: Day 3

Last Stand

They were back at the diner for dinner after an eventful day of more pranks. Dean was leading in the number of smaller scale pranks, which had Maya pouting a little. It was the last day and neither had admitted defeat or come up with a prank to top off all pranks. Well, none that Dean knew of at least.

Dean seemed determined tonight to score with one of the waitresses at the diner, and confidently told Maya and Sam to make sure they were scarce for a couple hours tonight. That's how sure he was he was going to get lucky.

Dean caught the shared knowing look between Sam and Maya and narrowed his eyes at them. "All right. You two obviously know what's going on here and why I've been striking out. Spill," Dean demanded then paused. "Are they all lesbians or something?" he asked, as he looked around confused.

Maya was about to put the poor guy out of his misery because there was no way Dean would be able to top this prank when a waiter stopped by to ask how they were doing. He hummed in acknowledgement at Maya and Sam's answers, but his attention was solely focused on Dean.

"I've heard some things about you," the waiter hummed at Dean. "From the waitresses," he added.

Dean looked at the guy with a raised eyebrow, "Oh? All good I hope." Dean said with a smirk thrown at Maya and Sam. The waitresses have been talking about him.

The waiter nodded, "Oh yeah, all good things. It's incredibly brave what you're doing. Going against everything your Dad taught you and trying so hard to break that mold you were put in."
"What?" Dean was completely confused as he blinked at the waiter. What the hell was this guy talking about?

"Of course it helps that you have such wonderful and supporting siblings," the waiter smiled at Sam and Maya who were doing their best to keep straight faces and not burst out laughing.

"What?" he asked incredulously. Seriously, what the hell was going on?!

Maya who sat beside him put an arm around his shoulder, getting his attention. "Dean, it's okay. You don't have to keep pretending to be this super macho ladies man. You know me and Sam both love you, whether you're straight," Maya paused for effect and to get her voice under control as she looked into the dawning realization in Dean's emerald eyes then put her other hand on his arm, "or gay."

Dean looked owlishly at his brother sitting across from him who had a fisted hand covering his mouth as he tried to keep from laughing. Sam put the fist down and gave Dean a strangled smile.

That bitch. No, those bitches. That's why he's been striking out with the waitresses. They all thought he was GAY! He had no problem with gay people; he just wasn't one of them.

Dean struggled to put on a smile as he turned to look at the waiter to try and explain what was happening. "Listen pal—"

"Yeah, I get how nerve wracking it is to come out, believe me," the waiter interrupted, not noticing the growing vein on Dean's forehead. "But if you feel like you wanna try to bat for the other team," the waiter took out a napkin from his pocket and put it on the table in front of Dean, "I'm pretty free later tonight." The waiter gave a wink at Dean and walked, or more like sashayed away.

Maya pulled herself away from a shell shocked Dean and flipped over the napkin as Sam gave into some hearty chuckling.

"Well Dean," Maya held up the napkin for Dean to see. "It looks like you didn't strike out tonight after all," she practically beams at the death glare sent her way. "He even wrote down he that he prefers to bo—"

"Shut. Up," Dean ground out and looked at the trapped teenager sitting beside him. "When?"

"First day when you went to the bathroom. Told the waitress you recently came out and was having a hard time throwing off your macho ladies man persona. Asked not to flirt or give her your number," Maya's smile broadening. "I told her not to mention it to you, but I guess she mentioned it to her colleagues."

Dean let out a strained sigh from his nose as he looked at Sam, looked somewhere else, the ceiling,
then his plate of remaining food like it held all the answers.

"Think you can one up it, Dean-o~?" Maya sing songed as she prodded the older Winchester beside her.

Dean shot her a side look before looking away and shaking his head as he sighed, "Son of a bitch."

"Say it Dean," Maya ordered with a grin as she waited with baited breath.

"Fine! You win!" Dean threw his hands up in exasperation as he leaned back heavily in his seat, not pouting. He totally was.

"Victory!" Maya pumped her fists in the air, not caring of the stares she got, as she let loose a dazzling smile that lit up her golden irises.

Dean's, not-a-pout, quirked up in a smile as Maya did a little victory dance in her seat beside him. Guess losing wasn't so bad. At least he still got to call her Goldy…as long as he wasn't annoying about it.

February 26 2008, Appleton, Wisconsin, United States

Sam had found a hunt a few states over in Appleton, Wisconsin. People disappearing on February 29, every four years like clockwork. Most telling friends and family they were going to stay the night at some old abandoned house in town, referred to as the Morton House. They never come back.

"It's probably a ghost," Sam speculated as they entered their motel room. "But it only shows up on February 29th."

"A leap year ghost?" Maya asked as she unpacked her clothes into a dresser drawer.

"Yeah," Dean answered as he plopped his bag on his bed. "Not all ghosts haunt a place 24/7. Some are even only active when certain criteria are met, like a preferred victim type if they were murdering assholes in life."

"The basic plan is to find out who the ghost is then find the body and do a salt n' burn," Sam informed Maya as he pulled out his laptop to begin researching.

"And shoot it with rock salt and swing at it with iron crowbars when it shows up while you're desecrating its grave," she added, which had Sam and Dean looking at her. "What? Bobby made sure I knew some basic stuff in case I run across stuff," she shrugged.

"I thought you didn't hunt?" Dean asked turning to face Maya.

Maya gave a snort, "I don't. My Dad and Bobby made it pretty clear about their views of me doing
hunts. I.e. *don't do 'em.*"

That caught their undivided attention.

"Hold up. You want to hunt?" Dean asked surprised. "Why?"

"I want to save people if I can," Maya shrugged. "And I didn't plan on actively looking for cases like you two. It's more of a, if I'm in the area and I notice something."

"Then why haven't you started on your own?" Sam asked perplexed.

"And, how many greenhorns get their asses handed to them or lose their lives because they don't know what they're doing?" Maya sighed. "I may not be completely green when it concerns the lore but field experience? Zip. I'd like to think I'm not suicidal," she deadpanned. They were all silent for a few moments in contemplation before Maya started talking again.

"Besides," Maya started. "Whoever heard of a *Trickster* Hunter? If the rest of the Hunter community ever got wind of me I'd *guarantee* you that I'd be hunted down *like a dog.* No matter what I did or didn't do. All they'd see was a *Trickster,* something not human, or in my case not completely human." She gave the Hunter brothers a wry grin.

That struck a cord with both of the brothers. Wasn't it not too long ago that they'd thought the same thing? Their Dad taught them all their lives that if it's not human, it's evil, and they've got to kill it. Once they might've not hesitated to try and put a bullet through Maya's head, because of what she was, and what she *wasn't.*

"Bobby doesn't, and neither do we," Sam pointed out with a soft smile and Dean gave her a serious nod in agreement.

She gave them a sardonic smile, "Thanks. But I doubt all Hunters are decent like you two."

Dean snorted at that, "Hear that Sammy? We're *decent.*" He gives Maya a smirk that spoke of his argumentative thoughts on that, "We lie our asses off everyday, con people out of their money, and constantly breaking the law. Goldy, I think you need to meet new people if you think we're decent."

Maya shrugs noncommittally, but gives Dean a slightly knowing smile, "But not everyone would do all that to save strangers from a world they never knew existed, nor expect so much as a thank you in return."

Dean felt a chick flick moment coming on. Abort! Abort! "Whatever," Dean dismissed as he looked away from the dark haired teen. "No chick flick moments, capiche?"

Maya snorted in amusement as she rolled her eyes, "Well, if there was a moment you completely ruined it. That takes some serious skill, Assface."

"It's a gift," Dean said sarcastically, hiding his own amusement behind his macho man bravado.

"Hey Maya," Sam called from his spot in the room. Maya turned to look at him questioningly. "Thanks," Sam gave her a grateful smile that she happily returned.
"What did I just say?!" Dean raised his voice at the two, gaining their attention. "No chick flick moments!"

Both just rolled their eyes at Dean's outburst.
Hey Sam," Dean turned to glance at his brother in the passenger seat of the impala as they made their way back to the motel after finishing up talking to some of the families who had filed missing persons reports on the people who went into the Morton House.

"Yeah?" Sam enquired as he looked at the pile of missing persons reports that spanned the later half of the last century, almost 50 years.

"Think we should bring Goldy with us?" Dean asked as he kept his eyes on the road.

"Bring her with us where, Dean?" Sam queried cautiously, pinching his eyebrows. "The Morton House?" The look of disbelief was strong. "You think that's a good idea?" Sam didn't. He couldn't imagine what Bobby, let alone the Trickster, would do to them if they found out.

"Yeah," Dean shrugged, his tone of voice sounded less than convincing, as he made a turn. "Kid wants to learn to hunt. It's most likely a ghost, and a salt n' burn is a good a place as any to start."

"Yeah. Maybe. If we knew who the ghost was and didn't have to keep whoever's stupid enough to try and stay past midnight from getting killed by whatever's haunting the place."

"Ah, c'mon. Who'd be dumb enough to try and stay the night in a haunted house?" Dean snorted. Sam gave his brother a pointed bitch face and held up the pile of reports in one hand. "Enough, Dean," Sam said grimly.

"Ah. Right," Dean said awkwardly. "Well, if there are any idiots we can just scare them off by pretending to be cops. They already got the place fenced off. Wouldn't be too much of a stretch for there to be cops around to make sure no one breaks in when its supposed to be haunted." Dean looked at Sam as they waited at a red light. "We'll patrol around the house see if anyone's around, maybe scare 'em off, then go in and gank the son of a bitch. Pretty simple."

"When are our lives ever that simple, Dean?" Sam sighed looking ahead as the light turned green and the impala moved forward. "I still don't think it's a good idea to bring Maya in on this."

"Ah, it'll be fine. Goldy's tough. Went after a demon by herself didn't she? A murderous leap year ghost should be a lot easier," Dean tried to say lightly but failed, the image of her being strangled still fresh in his mind.

"Fine. You get to tell Bobby when she tries to run off in a house with a murderous ghost to kill it, or-or to distract it and gets even more hurt, or killed," Sam said crossing his arms. "The same man who made it clear to her that he didn't want her hunting in the first placeand who is not above filling our bodies with rounds of rock salt. If we're lucky," he stressed. Sam didn't want Maya anywhere near the house, the incident with the demon also still fresh in his mind.

A few moments of heavy silence past between the two brothers.

"I get it's a bad idea and I don't really want her in there either," Dean admitted then continued before Sam could say anything. "But, like she said. She's decent with the lore and that's about it, but she'll need real life experience facing what she's read about." Dean paused. "Besides, how long will her Dad and Bobby's disapproval keep her from trying to hunt on her own when people are in
danger? She went after a *demon* with only a *few rounds of rock salt*, Sam! And thought it'd be
*enough*!*" Dean sighed in aggravation, his grip on the steering wheel tightening.

"Yeah," Sam saw where Dean was coming from, didn't mean he had to like it.

"Look man, I get Bobby wants to keep her safe but he's doing it wrong by limiting her experience.
Experience that might one day *save her life*," Dean pulled into the motel parking lot and cut the
engine. He looked over at Sam meeting his gaze, "I don't know about you, but I wouldn't put it past
her to one day start hunting on her own whether she had real life experience or not."

Sam looked away from Dean and at their motel room's door that held the topic of their
conversation behind it. He knew Dean was right. It wasn't too far of a stretch that her desire to help
people anyway she could would also extend into the *more supernatural threats*. That demon in
Monument being a good example of her running into a fire, completely unprepared, to save people.

"We'll see how her shoulder is first, because that's still healing up. *Then* we'll ask her if she wants to
join us on this one," Sam relented. As much as he didn't want her in danger he knew it would be
remiss of them to not teach her when they could. The world was far more dangerous than the
majority of the population realized and it was better Maya was prepared than being *unprepared*
and finding herself in a dangerous situation.

Besides, better to learn with them than on her own.

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**Later That Night, The Morton House**

Maya was shocked earlier when Sam and Dean asked if she wanted to help them out at the Morton
House tonight, on the condition her shoulder was healed up enough. It was, and she wasn't sure if
the guys were glad or apprehensive about that. When she asked why they wanted her to come they
got very serious. They told her they were pretty sure that at some point she'll try to save someone
from something supernatural, whether she had experience or not. The whole going after a demon
by herself to try and keep people in the police station in Monument safe being a prime example.
They wanted to teach her so she was prepared and had a good chance of coming out of an
encounter alive.

So, Maya agreed to go with them.

However, at the moment she found herself waiting on the front porch of the Morton House for the
ordered delay to be up before she could go in with Puck. Or hide around a corner when the boys
got who ever the idiots were who thought staying the night was a good idea. Earlier they had drove
around blasting music looking for anyone that might be stupid enough to hang around tonight, or
scare them off. They parked around back and when they were coming up to the house heard
muffled voices and saw light bouncing around through the boarded windows.

Idiots.

Sam and Dean went in first to impersonate police officers, and to hopefully, get the losers out of
the house before midnight when all the fun started.

That was about 10 minutes ago. 10 long minutes. Maya had sat down and leaned up against the old
abandoned house as she looked out into the front yard and at the road, in case any real cops showed
up. Puck sat by her side and enjoyed some absentminded petting.
Her heart pounded in nervousness, excitement and fear. Fear for obvious reasons. Her little bit of excitement for possibly facing off against her first ghost. Nervousness? That was a two parter. First part was from possibly facing off against her first ghost, so **nervous excitement**. The second part was for breaking her promise to her Dad and Bobby about not hunting. There wasn't much Bobby could do to her when he found out. Yes, **when**. Not **if**, but **when**. He'd probably rant, maybe yell, then give her the disappointed stare of guilt, but he'd relent. Though he might take a shot at Sam and Dean first. Her Dad on the other hand would undoubtedly never let her out of his sight again, after possibly killing Sam and Dean. Not only had she run off again, but she also broke her promise. As much as she loved her Dad he could be over bearing and over protective when he thought she was in danger.

Maya sighed sadly as she thought about her Dad. She had his number blocked from all the calls and texts he had been sending her, and was probably pretty pissed at her. Just as she was still annoyed at him, didn't mean Maya didn't miss him though. He was her **Dad**, her first and best friend, her cheerleader…but when he wanted her to come back with him so soon…it felt like invisible walls were trying to box her in. Which was ridiculous because they never stayed in any one place for long and her Dad never really ordered or bossed her around or stifled her. She'd probably be classified as a wild child in all honesty.

So, why did it feel so hard to reach out to him now or even consider going back to him? Deep down she already knew why.

Maya was brought out of her musings when the stifled voices on the other side of the front door grew louder. She couldn't make out much still she heard Dean raise his voice.

"...haven't lived to **talk** about it!" Dean shouted.

That didn't sound like something the police would say to trespassers. What was going on? Getting up from her spot she went over to the partially boarded up front door and knocked. The voices quieted on the other side as she heard heavy footsteps approach. The door opened to reveal Sam with an exasperated look.

"Girl scout cookies!" Maya said cheerfully gaining an amused snort from the giant.

Sam stepped aside as Maya maneuvered her way over and under the boards across the doorway, Puck zipping in behind her. Sam closed the door as she took a few steps into the front room and looked at the gathered people there. There was a short nerdy looking guy with glasses and a flashlight fastened to the side of his head and another one that was kind of cute looking dressed in all camo and had a flashlight stuck to his head and…had camera gear strapped all over him? What the hell?

"Wait a minute—you're no girl scout!" came nerdy flashlight head's response when he saw her. "Who're you?" he asked from a makeshift table with a couple of computers on it.

Maya looked at him perplexed then gave Dean who stood beside the guy a '**really?**' look. Dean gave her a 'yeah, **really**' look before answering the guy's question, "That's Maya and her rat dog, Puck. Now can we get back to getting your stupid asses out of here?!!" Oh he was so fed up with these guys.

"Really? You give us shade for being here when you brought a tweezy-bopper?" came nerdy flashlight head's sarcastic response. "I'll admit your missing persons reports look legit—"

"They **are** legit," Sam stressed as he walked up to nerdy flashlight head. "Look, Ed, we ain't got much time here, buddy. Starting at midnight, your friends are **going to die**," Sam finished his epic
'you're going to die speech' just as they heard shouting coming from upstairs and rushing feet.

Dean turned and raised his gun and flashlight at the stairs as three bodies rushed down, the one in front was the one that was shouting 'Oh my god' over and over again as he rushed up to nerdy flashlight head—I.e. Ed—and camo camera guy.

"Corbett! Corbett, we saw one! We saw one!" this guy too had a flashlight and camera stuck to his head and was also nerdy looking, but without the glasses and no beard. "It was a full apparition! It was like a class four!" he said excitedly to camo guy, or Corbett. The other two that followed him down was an oriental girl with long black hair carrying a camera and some equipment and a heftier looking version of Ed who also had a camera.

"It was a spectral illumination! It…” the other girl paused as she and the other two noticed Sam and Dean.

Excited flashlight camera head looked between Sam and Dean, recognizing them. "Hey, aren't those the assholes from Texas?" he asked Ed as he pointed at Sam and Dean.

"Wow. You guys make friends everywhere you go, huh?" Maya laughed quietly.


"Hey! I'm not a tweeny-bopper!" Maya growled out from her spot beside Sam and gaining the attention of everyone else in the room. "I am more than capable of kicking your ass." She stated threateningly as she crossed her arms and wandered further into the room towards the stairs a little to look around. Dean grabbed her arm and gave her a hard shake of his head. She nodded and went back to stand beside Sam.

"As fun as it would be to see Goldy here kick your ass. Let's have this little reunion across the street, guys," Dean ordered, much to the protest of the Idiot Brigade.

"Crap. What are you guys doing here?" Harry asked.

Dean walked towards them to try and get them moving, "Come on, come on. We'll get you ice cream—our treat what do you say? Let's go." It was like herding cats. They moved all right, just not in the manner he wanted them to.

"Yeah, I say no," Harry responded. He then started pointing at one of the screens and talking to Ed, "Look at this. Look, look. Ed, Ed."

They all huddled around the computers as the token girl of the group brought up the video of whatever they encountered upstairs. "Okay honest-to-god proof, all right?" she said as the video came up and started playing. Four of the Idiot Brigade were hunched in front of the monitor with Sam and Dean looking over their shoulder. The last member, Corbett, stood a little ways away filming their faces, but no one noticed when he stopped and walked away, excited at finding a ghost and wanting to capture more on tape.

Except a little dog that saw him climb the stairs.

Maya looked as well and saw an old time looking guy wearing a fedora hat that looked like he stepped out of an old fifty or sixties movie. Watched him say a few words about money then get blasted from gunfire. The Idiot Brigade, as she decided to mentally call them, were geeking out over the evidence they found.
Sam and Dean however, were confused as they walked away from the group Maya following a few paces behind them with Puck, taking out a chocolate bar and munching on it. Last thing she needed was to run low.

"Think we're off on this? That was just a death echo." Sam said perplexed.

"Yeah," Dean agreed. "But what's it doing here? Did anybody get shot here?" he asked.

"Not that I could find," Sam admitted when chubbier version of Ed spoke up.

"What's a death echo?" he asked with a camera pointed at them.

They all looked over annoyed. "We got a problem here. That ghost ain't it." Sam informed bluntly.

"What's a death echo?" he asked again, because apparently it was important for him to know.

"Echoes are trapped in a loop, okay? They keep replaying how they died over and over and over again, usually in the place they were ganked. It's about as dangerous as a scary movie." Dean told him.

"Could it be here for a different reason than maybe dying here?" Maya asked in contemplation, crumpling up her wrapper and stuffing it in her pocket. "I mean, aren't death echoes just unaware ghosts trapped in a loop? They're still ghosts right? So, why else would a ghost be someplace it didn't die?"

Sam put on his pondering face, "Well, if they're not attached to a place it's usually an item that held great meaning for them in life."

"Yeah, or some of their remains are close by, but that doesn't explain how either of those things could've gotten here." Dean added in frustration. "None of this is making any sense. How did all those people disappear? Death echoes aren't dangerous."

"Maybe the echoes not dangerous, but maybe something else is," Sam pointed out.

Dean nodded, "Yeah, you're right. All right, we need to get out of here, guys." Dean joined Sam in trying to muscle the protesting Idiot Brigade into moving towards the front door and out of the house.

Maya hung back under the archway by the stairs as Sam and Dean went off to get the idiots out of the house, when she felt Puck nudge her leg. Looking down at her dog he gave a soft worried huff and pointed to the stairs. Why would Puck want her to go up the stairs? They were finally getting these guys out of…wait…weren't there five in the Idiot Brigade?

Well shit. That Corbett guy was missing, no doubt wandered off to get more footage.

Snapping her fingers a wrought iron crowbar Sam had stashed in his duffle for her appeared in her hands. Shouldn't take too long to find the idiot, especially with Puck's help. It wasn't midnight yet.

Puck led the way upstairs as Maya followed him, intent on snagging the idiot before Sam and Dean blew a gasket. She paused midway up the stairs. The Winchesters had made it clear before coming that she couldn't just run off on her own.

Sigh.

She tromped down the stairs and yelled over the railing, "Guys! One of the Idiot Brigade is
missing!"

That caught everyone's attention as they looked around to realize Corbett was missing. The rest of the brigade started panicking wanting to go look for him, but Sam and Dean kept them at bay.

"I can go get him!" Maya yelled over the noise. "Puck'll be able to find him!"

"The hell you are!" Dean yelled back at her as he tried to keep a protesting Ed at bay. "What did we tell you?! No running off on your own!"

"Dean," Sam called his attention and they shared a look. Maya wouldn't be much help keeping the remaining Idiot Brigade members from following given her slight stature.

Dean growled and barked back, "Fine! Got the crowbar?!"

"Yeah!" Maya held it up.

"Guard up, and trust that mutt of yours. He'll sense whatever's coming before you do! Now go!" Dean ordered apprehensively as he watched Maya disappear up the stairs before turning back to the rest of the group, but more specifically Ed and Harry. "She gets hurt or dies tonight because of your stupid friend, I'mma snap both your necks," he growled threateningly. "Now, I'd suggest you get your asses moving or I start filling them up with rounds of rock salt," he cocked his sawed off with a free hand.

"Y-you guys wouldn't—" Harry stammered out as he looked at the two Hunter and finally realized how threatening they were.

Sam and Dean sent them all a threatening glare that said otherwise.

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**Maya**

Digging out her flashlight from her jacket pocket she followed Puck up the stairs and down the hallways, keep an eye and ear out for whatever was lurking in the shadows. It took all of a minute to first hear Corbett actually *beckoning* the spirit to communicate with him. *Oh not good. It's like dangling a juicy steak in front of a starving wolf.*

Puck turned a corner and slowed to a cautious walk as he growled quietly. Maya steadied her breathing as she pointed her flashlight down the hall and did her best to look all around her. Who knew when the spirit would show itself?

"Hey Corbett!" Maya called out into the vacant hallway as she followed Puck. "It's Maya! Listen, we've gotta get out of here! Whatever's haunting this place, it sure ain't Casper the friendly ghost! It's *not* like what your friends caught on camera!"

"No! We need to get more evidence! This is groundbreaking stuff!" came his excited reply from what she could gather the next doorway. "Uh oh, lights out? Oh, I think I got night vision here." Came his slightly quieter voice. Maya's stomach plummeted. From what she'd seen of the death echo the camera and lights fritzed before it appeared. She really hoped what was coming was just another death echo.

Puck stood in the next doorway, motionless but growled as his hackles rose. Maya turned the corner to see Corbett with his back to her holding up a camera he was adjusting.
"That's better," he said. Of course he didn't see what Maya saw lurking behind him, a tall muscular figure that was obviously starring down at him and made to grab him. *Not a death echo!*

"HIT THE DECK!" Maya yelled as she gripped the iron crow bar tightly in her right hand and swung upward at the spirit.

Corbett turned in time to see the imposing figure reach for him causing him stumble away backwards, dropping the camera. He watched as Maya's iron crow bar dissipated it, sending it away temporarily.

Maya looked around, waiting to see if it would show back up right away, but with Puck no longer in attack mode it seemed the spirit retreated for the moment.

"Oh, my god! Oh, my god!" Corbett chanted as he began to hyperventilate. Maya quickly crouched down in front of him, she needed him to calm down or else he might faint. She was not going to try and guard him while dragging him through a house with a murderous ghost on the loose!

"Hey! Hey!" Maya snapped her fingers in front of him to get his attention. "Corbett, look at me. Look at me," Corbett still hyperventilating focused his eyes on her. "Good. Good. Now I want you to try and breathe with me okay? I inhale, you inhale. I exhale, you exhale. Got it?" Corbett nodded and started to stop hyperventilating as he copied her breathing.

"Thanks," he was able to gasp out as he grabbed the discarded camera on the floor.

"No problem, but we need to get—" Maya was interrupted as Puck began growling and snarling behind her.

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February 29 2008, Appleton Wisconsin, United States

Morton House, 12:00am

Sam and Dean

"No man left behind!" Ed cried as Dean shoved him against a wall to keep him from going after his friend.

"HIT THE DECK!" echoed Maya's shout in the house, causing the gathered bodies on the ground floor to go silent, waiting for another noise to echo.

"Looks like Goldy just saved your friend's ass," Dean commented glibly as he tried to hide his worry at the silence. She probably dispersed the asshole, that's why there was no more—

*BANG!* *THUMP!* *THUMP!* *CLANG!*

Frantic barking and a loud prolonged male scream, "AAAAAAAAAAAAHAAAAAHHHHH!"

This sent the Idiot Brigade into a frenzy as they all rushed past the Winchesters at once and up the stairs calling out to their friend. Corbett's screams echoed in the house, along with his pleas for help. They all arrived in one of the bedrooms to find a snarling Puck standing in front of Maya as she staggered to her feet, clutching the crow bar in her hand like a lifeline.

Cameras and lights were shoved in her face as they all crowded and bombarded her with questions
of what happened and asking her where Corbett was. Dean had stuck with them, while Sam searched the rest of the upstairs, and quickly muscled his way past all of them to get to Maya.

"Maya, you okay?" Dean asked as he held her steady by her shoulders.

"Bumps and bruises mostly," she groaned. "He retreated for a little bit but he came back and threw me into the wall before I could take another swing at him. Grabbed Corbett by the ankle and was gone before I could get my bearings straight."

Sam jogged in. "Corbett...he's not here. Let's go, let's go!" Sam said and began ushering everyone out. Dean joined in while keeping a firm eye on Maya as she followed behind the loudly protesting Idiot Brigade who still called out to their lost friend desperately.

They made it back to the front room with all of the Idiot Brigades equipment. Ed was freaking out, chubby Ed who Maya thinks his name was Spruce was filming everybody, and Harry and Maggie the only girl in the group were at the computers trying to find their missing friend by looking at the camera feeds set up around the house.

Maya was leaning against the banister of the stairs as she watched Sam and Dean try to open the front door, finding it sealed shut.

"Well, it's 12:04, Dean. You good? You happy?" Sam asked in frustration.

"Yeah, I am happy," Dean sassed back sarcastically.

"'Let's go hunt the Morton House', you said. 'It's our Grand Canyon. Let's also bring Maya along to teach her something'," Sam mimicked sarcastically.

"Sam, I don't want to hear this," Dean ground out as he tried to think.

"Dean, you've got two months left," Sam pointed out in frustration as he grabbed an old chair from the ground. "Instead, we're gonna die tonight," he smashed the chair against the door causing a loud bang to ring out. Getting everyone's attention.

"Whoa! What the hell is going on guys?!" Spruce demanded as the Idiot Brigade converged on Sam and Dean wondering what was going on.

"I'll tell you what's going on. Every window, every door, I'm guessing every exit out of this house—they're all sealed." Sam told them in frustration as he gestured to the front door.

"But w-why are they sealed?" Maggie asked scared.

"It's a supernatural lockdown okay? Whatever took Corbett doesn't want us to leave, and it's no death echo," Dean informed.

"Definitely not," Maya added having the attention put on her. "When I chased him off the first time he was focused on Corbett. He was aware of him. A death echo wouldn't have been aware of him, or be able to send me into a wall," she stressed.

"Wait," Dean looked at Maya. "He?"

"Yeah," Maya nodded. "Probably as tall as Sam, broad shoulders, more muscles, very drill sergeant looking with that buzz cut he was sporting. Maybe a soldier or military nut."

"Makes sense. It's one bad mother, and it wants us scared," Dean sighed.
"It's classic scare tactics," Sam pointed out. "The more scared an enemy is, the more likely they'll break rank or make mistakes. Easier to pick them off."

"Or it just wants us," Maggie said shakily.

That did not instill any sense of comfort in anyone present. Then the EMF machine the Idiot Brigade had started beeping and the computer's started showing static and fritzing.

"Uhm, guys? The camera's fritzing again," Spruce informed.

"Who. Whoa. Guys, the EMF's starting to spike," Ed informed looking down at his device. "This is a big one!"

"Everybody, stay close. There's something coming," Sam ordered as he looked off in one direction, his back to the huddling Idiot Brigade. Dean and Maya took similar positions around them to have eyes in every direction. Puck stuck close to Maya growling in one direction.

"Dean," Maya called to Dean to get his attention then motioned to the direction Puck was facing.

Glancing down at Puck and his focus on one spot in the room he nodded at Maya and brought his sawed off up to point in that direction, ready.

"Uhm, what's with the do—" Spruce began to ask but stopped when a hefty man in a tan coat appeared in front of them, where Puck had been staring, and seemed to shuffle around in a drunken stupor. It was obviously another death echo.

"Guys is this the same echo you guys saw earlier?" Dean asked shining a light on the apparition. "And not tall, dark, and creepy, Goldy?"

"Well for one, my guy wasn't pudgy, and two, he wasn't a death echo," Maya snarked as she looked at the harmless echo before her.

"No, it's a different guy," Spruce informed.

"Multiple death echoes? What the hell's going on?" Dean asked confused as he looked back at Sam who was just as perplexed as he was.

"Beats me," Sam responded.

Dean looked back at the death echo determinedly, "Okay. All right. All right. All right." He began moving towards the echo shouting, "Uhm, hey buddy! Hey! Wake up. You're dead! Hello!" The death echo didn't respond or even acknowledge Dean as he tried to get its attention.

"What's he doing?" Ed asked Sam as Harry parroted him right afterwards.

"It's rare, but sometimes you can shock an echo out of its loop if you can talk to the part of the ghost that is still human," Sam began explaining as Dean kept shouting at the echo. "But usually you have to have some kind of connection to the deceased."

"Come on! Wake up! Be dead!" Dean shouted at the inebriated echo.

"It's already dead, Dean," Maya stated dryly.

Dean looked over at Maya in annoyance, "Shut up Goldy." He turned back to the echo as it flickered before turning to face the group as a…train whistle sounded? "Hey! Hey!" he tried again.
"You guys hear that?" Ed asked having heard the whistle.

"What's that sound?" Harry asked.

"Snap out of it, buddy, huh?" Dean yelled in front of the echo's unseeing face. "Come on, what're you waiting for?" A light seemed to shine of the echo's face from out of nowhere as the sound of the train whistle blowing grew louder. "You're gonzo! You're dead! Hey!" The echo brought its hands up to defend itself as a look of confused horror painted its face as all of a sudden it seemed to impacted by something and taken out of view. Dean jumped back in surprise, "Whoa!"

"Where the hell did it go?" Ed asked as flashlights bounced around looking for the echo.

"Looks like it caught the Midnight Express," Maya muttered. "Death by train. Yeesh."

Dean turned back to look at Sam giving him a significant look.

"We gotta figure out what's going on here," Sam said to Dean.

"Please tell me we're not about to split up and look for clues?" Maya asked uneasily as she looked at the brothers.

"No way," Dean shook his head. "We're all sticking together, and looking for clues about what the hell is going on," he nodded towards the hallway. Sam went first and the others followed. Dean motioned for Maya to go in front of him, "Get a move on Velma," he looked down at Puck, "You too Scrappy." That earned Dean an annoyed huff from the Jack Russell as he followed behind Maya.

"Scrappy-doo? Seriously?" Maya asked Dean with a small smile as she followed behind Maggie. Dean snorted, "Too small and not awesome enough to be Scooby, and definitely has Scrappy's attitude."

"Touché," Maya chuckled. "At least I'm not Daphne."

"What's wrong with Daphne? She's hot," Dean realizing what he said about a cartoon quickly backtracked adding, "For a cartoon." Maya turned her head and looked at him with a raised eyebrow and knowing smirk. "Shut up, Goldy," Dean grumbled as he decided to walk past her.

"What? I didn't say anything," Maya said a little too innocently.

Dean threw a glare over his shoulder at her, "No. But you were thinking it."

"Thinking what?" Maya teased. She chuckled as Dean decided to ignore her and walk further in front of Maggie to better talk with Sam.

"Dude, there's no records of any of this here. No one got shot here. Obviously, no one got run over by a freakin' train," Dean groused to Sam.

"Did the echoes take Corbett?" Maggie asked worriedly with her camera focused on Dean in front of her.

Maya was the one to answer her from behind, "No. As you saw with Midnight Express back there it didn't even know any of us were there or that Dean was shouting at it." Maggie turned the camera into Maya's face.

"Goldy's right," Dean confirmed getting the camera on him again. "Whatever took your friend and
sent Goldy here into the wall upstairs was no death echo. Still doesn't explain what's going on, and
that's what we're trying to figure out."

"All right, stay close," Sam told the group again as he let Dean escape the camera by letting him
take the lead and hanging back to talk to Maggie. "Okay, look, death echoes are ghosts, okay?"
Sam began explaining. "Now ghosts—they usually haunt places where they lived or where they
died—"

Dean interrupted and finished the explanation, "Except these mooks didn't live or die here." Dean
gave a sarcastic smile to the camera.

"Right," Sam confirmed.

"So what're they doing here?" Maggie asked.

Dean turned to look at her sarcastically, "Hey, give the lady a cigar." He does a double take seeing
the poor girl focused on looking through the camera screen. Rolling his eyes he asked, "All right,
seriously, does looking at this nightmare through that camera make you feel better or something? I
mean…"

Maggie looked away from dean and self-consciously began bringing the camera down, "Uh…I,
uh…"

Maya walked by Maggie and shoved Dean's shoulder a little, "Give her a break Dean. We all have
our coping mechanisms. Right now I'm plotting possible ways of dying your hair pink…"

Dean pointed a finger at a smirking Maya and warned, "Don't you dare…"

"Making jokes and plotting pranks keeps me calm," Maya shrugged. "Unless you want me jittery
and possibly clingy, or Maggie here panicking while you're trying to concentrate?" she asked with a
raised eyebrow.

Dean gave Maya a considering look then glanced at a nervous and scared Maggie seeing the
tension rising in the other girl's shoulders the longer she kept her camera down. He rolled his eyes
in exaggeration and held his hands up in mock surrender as he turned around to keep walking.

Maya gave a snort of amusement with her own eye roll as she started walking again to follow.

"Uh, Maya right?" Maggie asked her camera up once again. Maya looked over her shoulder.
"Thanks," Maggie said gratefully.

Maya gave her smile, "Ah, no problem. Don't take what Dean says too personally. HE'S REALLY
A SOFTY AT HEART!" She said that last bit a little loudly so Dean could here.

"I HEARD THAT!" Dean barked back. Maya gave Maggie and the camera a mischievous wink,
getting a small nervous chuckle in return.

"So, I've heard Dean call you Goldy…?" Maggie asked curiously as she walked beside Maya.
"Also, your, uh, dog he seemed to know where that echo would show up?"

"Damn you Dean," Maya cursed quietly. "The nickname was something Dean came up with when
we first met and he didn't know what my name was. So, he decided to refer to me by my,
apparently, most prominent facial feature," Maya looked at the camera fluttering her lashes. "My
gold coloured eyes. As for Puck here," Maggie panned the camera to get footage of the dog,
"animals are naturally more sensitive to sensing the supernatural than humans. So, if a normally
calm and laid back dog starts barking and growling wildly at something you're not seeing..." Maya made an ambiguous hand gesture. "If I were you I'd make tracks or get ready for some serious nightmare fuel."

They all reached a room that held filing cabinets, a desk and some taxidermied animals covered in cobwebs and a healthy layer of dust. Sam and Dean immediately started looking through drawers and papers for anything useful. Maya joined in with her flashlight and saw what looked to be a framed award of some kind on top of a filing cabinet.

Maya picked it up, the glass in the frame broken and jagged. Shining a light she saw a name: Freeman Daggett.

"Hey Sam," Maya called as she turned around to show him what she found. "Does a Freeman Daggett ring any bells for you?"

Sam took the framed award from her to get a closer look at it. "Freeman Daggett, house's last owner," informed before reading the award out loud. "Officially commended for 20 years of fine service at the Gamble General Hospital."

"He's a doctor?" Dean asked.

Sam looked at the award before turning to answer Dean, "Janitor."

Dean panned his light around the room, "This looks like his den. When you say he died—'64?"

"Yeah, a heart attack." Sam confirmed looking at something else.

Maya walked over to where Maggie was when Maggie brought her light onto a far corner in the room.

"What are these, C-rations?" Maggie asked. Maya looked over the pile of food and let out a low whistle, impressed. There was a lot of them.

Dean came over to look. "Yeah, army-issued, three squares—like a lifetime supply," he confirmed as he walked away to look for more clues.

"God is that all he ate?" Maggie asked slightly disgusted.

"One stop shopping," Dean quipped.

Maya picked up one of the cans as she looked in trepidation at them. What would a janitor want with military rations? Her attention was drawn away as she placed the can back when Dean tried to open a locked locker.

"Hello. Locked," Dean knew if something was locked there was usually something someone didn't want anyone else to see.

Ed paced around the room, "Oh, come on, guys. This is ridiculous. I mean how the hell is this supposed to find Corbett, huh? We should be digging up the freakin' floorboards right now. Or using the dog to sniff him out!" He gestured to Puck who bowed his head in a whine.

"Puck doesn't know Corbett's scent well enough to find him without an idea of where to look first. Like how he knew to look for a fresh scent upstairs when he saw Corbett go up there," Maya narrowed her eyes. "It also doesn't help that you've all been traipsing around this house setting up your equipment, spreading your scent everywhere."
"Goldy," Dean got her attention. "Let me see your crowbar," he made a 'gimme' hand motion. Maya tossed it to him.


A loud bang diverted their attention back to Dean as he tossed the crowbar back to Maya having pried open the locked locker. Opening the door he brought out a metal container and was faced with Ed trying to scan him with the EMF. Dean was not impressed and shouldered him aside as he placed the container on the desk.

Dean started riffling through the papers found in it muttering, "Crap. Crap. Taxidermy. Okay." Dean then found something that had him asking Sam for clarification, "You said Daggett was a hospital janitor?"

"Yeah," Sam confirmed.

Dean looked at whatever he held in his hands with disgust. "Eeeeww. I've got three toe-tags here. One, death by gun shots, train accident, and suicide," he listed off as he three each toe tag back into the metal box. Dean gave a sniff, his face a little strained.

Sam and Maya shared a look of dawning disgust.

"Ew…" Sam responded with a grimace.

"What?" Ed asked looking up at Sam.

Sam looked over at them, "That explains why the death echoes are all here." Ed and Harry still didn't get it. Sam sighed as he began explaining, "They're here because their bodies are here, somewhere in this house."

Maya shook her head at Ed and Harry, as they still didn't catch on to what Sam was implying.

"Daggett brought the remains home from the morgue to play," Dean said pointedly to the camera directed at his face.

"Nothing like a bit of necrophilia to scream: Mentally Stable Individual," with faux cheer, a tight smile, and some implied sarcasm.

Ed and Harry shared a look as they both gave similar responses of disgust.

Dean looked around as he noticed something, another member of the Idiot Brigade had wandered off, "Where's the chick?"

"Oh crap, Maggie!" Ed called out ready to go running after her. Dean put his hand on his shoulder to keep him from running off.

"Stay. I'll go get her," Dean told him gruffly.

"Like hell you will! That's my sister!" Ed protested.

Dean really wanted to comment on the family resemblance but just shook his head and pointed at Ed and told him seriously, "Stay." Dean left the den. Harry ended up getting past Sam and following.

"You'd suck as a corner back Sam," Maya pointed out teasingly as Harry turned the corner to
follow Dean, earning her a bitch face.

All three of them were back in less than two minutes, Maggie having only gone one room over, when the EMF started spiking.

"Harry. Harry, I got an 8.6 and climbing fast," Ed informed worriedly. "Something huge is coming. Look something big is coming." Yeah that didn't sound ominous at all.

"It's past 11 you guys," Harry said as he looked at the EMF over Ed's shoulder.

"What? No body move!" Dean ordered as all their lights began to flicker. "Just hold on. Everybody stay quiet." Maya took a few steps closer to Dean so they were back to back. He gave her a quick glance over his shoulder then went back to looking around.

Puck was growling as well but couldn't seem to place where the thing would show up. It kept moving around.

For one brief moment all flashlights and cameras flickered off. When they came back on, Sam was gone.

Dean and Maya started frantically calling Sam's name as they started going through every room in the house with the Idiot Brigade behind them calling for Corbett. Puck had his nose to the floorboards trying to pick up a fresh scent trail, but so far nothing. The two of them and Puck got separated from the Idiot Brigade for a couple of minutes looking for Sam.

"Wonder mutt picking up anything?" Dean asked as he walked briskly looking for evidence of his missing brother. Puck let out a disheartened whine. "Apparently not," he muttered as he left that room and began to go into another, when he noticed Maya lagged behind a little. "Hey. Hey, Goldy. Keep up."

Last thing Dean wanted was for whatever nabbed Sam to take Maya as well.

"Ah. Right," Maya jogged the few steps between her and Dean, tension and nervousness strung tight throughout her body.

Dean sighed seeing her nervousness and fear peaking through. He gave her a quick one-armed shoulder hug in comfort. Maya let out a long calming sigh through her nose and gave Dean a small smile in thanks. "Stick close, all right?" Dean said brushing off any creeping tender emotions.

Maya was about to respond when they heard angry yelling and shouting from the next hallway. Dean rushed past her and Maya and Puck followed quickly behind.

Maya watched as Dean broke up Ed and Harry who were apparently trying to fight each other, but looked like they were either trying to embrace each other or push each other away. One also tried to repeatedly knee jab the other, going 'Hiya! Hiya! Hiya!' but failed with how close their bodies were. Amateurs. Nerdy amateurs.

"What the fuck are you doing?!" Dean demanded after splitting them up from their questionable fight. "Cut it out! We're down by two people." Dean looked between the two of them before turning away and shaking his head as he started calling out for Sam again heading down the hallway.
Tensions were thick between the remaining Idiot Brigade members, Maya noted, as they reluctantly followed Dean. Rolling her eyes, because really? She started following them as well bringing up the rear behind Spruce.

That's when lights and cameras started flickering again and Puck began growling and snarling.

"Oh man. Ooooh man," Spruce started swinging the camera between where the others went and Maya who had frozen in her spot with her crowbar up as she backed up against a wall looking in both directions of the hallway.

Daggett in all his behemoth and ghostly glory showed up in front of Maya and began reaching for her.

"Holy shit…" Spruce cursed in a terrified whisper as Daggett appeared and Maya sent him packing with a swing of her iron crowbar.

She turned to Spruce worriedly and walked briskly towards him and began pushing him down the hall towards the others. "Go! Go! Go! Go! Go!" she shouted, getting the heftier man running as she covered his retreat.

"MAYA!" came Dean's echoed yelled from down the hall, followed by numerous thunderous thuds of numerous footsteps and shouts calling Spruce's name. Hearing the shouts distracted Maya from looking behind her as the flashlights flickered and the camera fritzed once more.

Hearing Puck snarling and barking behind her once more had her twisting her body around to take another swing, but nothing was there. Where-?

Puck was barking straight at her. That would mean he wasn't barking at something behind her, but something-! She turned her head with wide eyes to find the ghost of Daggett in the space between her and Spruce. She went to swing, but Daggett was faster.

Dean turned the corner to find Daggett standing behind Maya as she turned. He brought his sawed off up to blast the creep just as she went to swing at the bastard reaching for her. Everything flickered off for a moment, but it was enough.

Just like Sam, Maya was gone and Puck was whimpering and pawing at the spot she'd just been.

"NO!" Dean raged as he punched a crumbling wall, leaving an impressive hole behind. "God damn it!"

"Maya…Hey…wake up," a familiar voice called from beyond the painful haze in her head. "Maya…"

~It's my party and I'll cry if I want to, cry if I want to~

Maya grumbled and groaned as she clawed her way to consciousness. She went to rub her head but found her arms tied behind her back.

"Wha?" she mumbled out groggily as she tried to look around. She really wished she didn't. Maya was sat at a table decorated for a party, with corpses on either side of her from what she could make out from the limited light. A light coming from the…oh no.
"Maya," the voice called again from her left. It was Sam. "You okay?" he asked in concern.

"Y-yeah, but Corbett…" Maya's voice thick with emotion as she glanced at the young man's corpse in guilt. She'd been right there. "I…"

"You can't save everyone Maya," Sam comforted the best he could, given the situation. "It sucks but that's the way it is sometimes."

"I don't like it," she muttered in the dark looking in the general direction of Sam.

Sam chuckled in sullenness, "None of us do."

"Any idea what Daggett wants?" Maya looked around her eyes adjusting a bit, seeing shadows of bodies around the dark room. "Or his deal with the corpses?" Maya paused as the song repeated again, "Or the depressing song for that matter?"

"Company. I'm so lonely~" came a deep gravelly voice behind Maya.

The sudden voice caused her to jump in her seat with an unintentional and unique curse, "Odin's beard! The fucking hell?!" She swiveled her head to get the ghost in her line of limited vision.

"Company?" Sam asked as he stared at the ghost as he moved between him and Maya.

Daggett then started to monologue. An honest-to-God, monologue. Talked about how he lifted the bodies from the morgue, practiced his taxidermy skills, and then threw himself a birthday party. The only guests being the corpses. At midnight he sealed them all in the bomb shelter then went upstairs to O.D.'d on horse tranquilizers.

"I'd greatly appreciate if you both stayed for my birthday party~" Daggett said as he started walking over to Sam.

"Get away from me," Sam growled as he breathed angrily through his nose. He struggled in his own binds as Daggett approached him.

"This won't hurt. It's okay.~"

"The dude said back off," Maya said as she also struggled, not knowing what Daggett was about to do to Sam. Couldn't be anything good given what he did to Corbett.

"It's okay. Relax. Relax.~" There was a snap of a string as Daggett pulled away, revealing Sam unharmed but wearing a lopsided party hat. Maya couldn't help the snort of amusement that
escaped her. The further he walked away the more Sam's breathing calmed, but he still tried to
break the ropes around him to no avail.

~It's my party and I'll cry if I want to, cry if I want to~

Daggett then turned his sights on Maya and approached her.

"Sorry. Party hats ain't exactly my thing," Maya quipped nervously as the ghost grew closer then
crouched down to stare into her face. Daggett reached out a hand towards her face. "Whoa! Whoa!
Back off, asshole!" Maya tried to lean her head away from the ghostly hand in disgust and fear.

"Leave her alone!" Sam snarled as he pulled at his binds with more vigor.

~It's my party and I'll cry if I want to, cry if I want to~

Daggett retracted his hand before touching her and looked over his shoulder at Sam, "~I will. She
will be last.~" He looked back at Maya as he straightened up, "~I don't want such beautiful gold
eyes clouding over quite yet.~" With that he disappeared for the moment.

"…when we get out of this, I'm permanently changing my eye colour. You have no idea how many
creeps come on to me 'cause they have a thing for golden-eyed beauties," Maya complained in
disgust. "I swear I've been targeted like this since I was two!"

"You can—wait, since you were how old?" Sam asked in slight disbelief.

"Gold eyes and dark hair are apparently a hot commodity in certain circles," Maya huffed
sardonically. Sam sent her concerned eyes that restrained his rage at what she had implied, but
before he could ask anything Daggett came back.

Daggett had a long thin metal instrument in his hand as he approached Sam. "~I've been waiting for
some more friends. I get lonely. But you're coming to my party aren't you?~" Daggett asked as Sam
increased his struggling, his jaw and teeth clenched. "~You and the girl will stay a good, long
time.~" Daggett walked behind Sam and fisted his hand in his long hair from the back. Sam shook
as he struggled and grunted from exertion.

"LEAVE HIM ALONE!" Maya yelled in panic as Daggett brought the metal instrument up behind
Sam's head. Like hell she was going to let Sam get skewered!

SNAP!

Daggett looked at his empty ghostly hand in confusion, "~What?~"

The door burst open with Dean yelling their names as he shot Daggett full of rock salt, dispersing
him. Once he was gone Dean quickly began untying Sam, then both went to work untying Maya.
With her hands free Maya threw away the weapon the ghost had been about to use on Sam. Sam
sent her a quick nod in thanks.

They exited the bomb shelter with Spruce filming them, "What's this Daggett guy's problem
anyway?"

"Loneliness," Sam answered.

"What? He's never heard of a realDoll?" Dean asked as he checked his sawed off.

"No, no, no, Daggett was the Norman Bates, stuff-your-mother kind of lonely," Sam said shaking
Maya scoffed, " Barely a step up, Sam. " She tilted her head towards the stairs when she heard muffled barking and whining accompanied with some scratching. Poor Puck must be worried sick.

Sam looked back into the bomb shelter as he wiped some blood from around the wound to his face. " Anyways, so, at midnight, he sealed them in the bomb shelter and went upstairs and O.D.'d on horse tranqs. "

" How do you know that? " Dean asked.

" He monologued, Dean. " Maya told him with a blank face and in a deadpanned voice, before scrunching up her nose a little. " I think he also might've made a pass at me. "

" What? " Dean growled. The dude had to have been about 3x her age in life, let alone the fact he was dead. He looked to Sam and was not reassured by the look he got.

" Said he'd leave her for last so her beautiful gold eyes didn't cloud over, " Sam informed his brother, watching as the familiar look of protectiveness washed over his features. A look he'd seen a lot while growing up, hell, still saw, even now sometimes. If Sam was honest with himself he was pretty sure he had a similar look on his face as well.

Sam and Dean shared a significant look. Looks like they were re-killing a dead man. " All right, so, other than one more reason to gank him, he's what? Doing the same song, different verse? Trying to get people to come to his party? "

" Pretty much, yeah. Stay forever, " Sam sighed.

Dean emptied the empty cartridges from the sawed off and put in full ones.

" Are those real bullets? " Spruce asked filming Dean.

" They're rock salt, " Maya answered looking around nervously. " Ghosts can't do salt and iron. Get hit with it and they disappear for a little bit. They also can't cross a salt line. "

" Dear god, you're like a mini-version of Sam, " Dean snorted as he received two almost identical bitch faces. " Velma here is correct. It's why I had your buddies upstairs draw a salt circle and told them to get in it. Basically acts like a force field against spirits and some other real nasty things that go bump in the night. "

" Still better than Daphne. At least Velma's useful, " Maya snarked earning herself a glare as she insulted Dean's cartoon crush.

" Twerp, " Dean muttered as he went up the stairs. " Sam, come help me with this door! "

Maya and Spruce watched as Sam went to follow after his brother. Spruce turned the camera on Maya.

" So, other nasty things that go bump in the night? " the cameraman asked to fill the science. Maya didn't answer as Spruce said, " Ah, hell, guys. Getting your ghost roll thing. Something's coming. "

Maya turned and found herself once again flying into a wall with an ' eep! '. Spruce followed not long after, but Daggett decided to go after him. Sam came barreling down the stairs and quickly
shot the specter, dispersing him.

Sam went to Maya helping her up before going over to Spruce, as Dean kept watch for Daggett showing up again.

Spruce back on his feet, camera firmly in hand pointed it at Sam and Dean when it rolled again and Daggett appeared behind Dean. "Uh, guys…" Spruce muttered.

"Behind you!" Maya yelled causing Dean to look behind him as Daggett grabbed him and threw him into a wall. He then pushed Sam into a wall as well. Turning to Maya Daggett began approaching her with a less than sane smile on his face; he was enjoying throwing them around.

Snapping her fingers she summoned the gun Sam had and brought it up ready to fire when Daggett stopped his approach and his smile fell before turning around. Looking around the large man Maya saw…Corbett?

Corbett ran and launched himself at Daggett, they collided and began fighting, becoming a whirling mass of white smoke and bright light. The whole thing lasted only moments before they were both gone and everything was quiet.

"Sam, Dean, you guys still alive?" Maya asked breathlessly as she watched them both grunt and groan as they got up from where they were thrown.

" Shut up, Goldy." They both said at the same time in tired annoyance.

Maya sniffed, "Well, see if I ever ask you how you're doing ever again." There was no malice or sarcasm in her voice just light and relieved teasing.

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March 1 2008, Appleton, Wisconsin, United States

Sam ended a call as he turned to look at Dean and Maya who looked expectantly at him.

"So, what did the Idiot Brigade want?" Maya asked as she rubbed the belly of the little dog in her lap, much to his enjoyment.

"They want us to see a preview of the show they compiled together from the footage they shot the other night," Sam intoned unimpressed. "They gave me their address and a time to show up tomorrow."

" Seriously?" Dean asked incredulously. "They got one of their little friends killed and they still want to use the footage?" He shook his head as he took a swig of his beer.

"We gotta do something about that footage, Dean," Sam sighed. "There's no way the whole world is ready to know the truth about the supernatural. Not to mention they'd probably get killed the next time they tried to do another episode."

"So, we go and make them erase their footage," Dean shrugged.

Maya shook her head, "You honestly think they'll do that because you tell them to? No, this is going to need a little more, finesse." A mischievous smile spread across her face.

Sam and Dean shared a look.
"What do you have in mind?" Sam asked interested.

"Well, the internet is so helpful these days," Maya drawled with a smile. "It has all sorts of things, like easy homemade blue prints for a device that'll wipe every hard drive in a room clean of data."

Sam's eyes lit up in excitement knowing exactly what the little Trickster was referring to.

Dean wasn't as quick but he had a pretty good guess, "Electromagnet?" Seeing their smirks a grin spread across his own face, "So nerds, what'd'ya need?"

March 2 2008, Appleton, Wisconsin, United States

Sam, Dean, and Maya had just finished watching the episode the Ghostfacers put together. But, seriously? Ghostfacers? Sounded like a cheap knock-off of Ghostbusters. All three of them shared a look after the memorial credit to Corbett finished.

"So guys, what do you think? You all right?" Ed asked as he saw Dean bow his head to hide his laugh and wiped an imaginary tear as he smirked.

"You know, I kind of think it was half-awesome," Dean said with a smile.

"Half-awesome—that's full on good, right?" Maggie said excitedly. No one noticed the secret look shared between the three.

"Yeah," Sam agreed amiably. "I mean, it's bizzare how you all are able to—to honor Corbett's memory while grossly exploiting the manner of his death. Well done," those comments gained all of the Idiot Brigade's full attention and not notice Dean slip a duffle bag they brought in under the table in front of them.

"Yeah, that's a real tight rope you guys are walking," Dean drawled he went to stand up to leave.

"Yeah. All right, guys," Sam said getting up as well. Maya did her best to keep from snickering. They had no idea what was going to happen.

"No, that's reality, man. Yeah," Ed began a truth-is-worth-the-sacrifice type of speech. "Corbett gave his life searching for the truth, and it is our job over here to share it with the world." Ed motioned to his colleagues behind him.

Maya gave them a 'seriously' look before rolling her eyes at them.

"Right. Well, um, in our experience—you know what you get when you show the world the truth?" Sam said with a smirk.

"A straight jacket or a punch in the face—sometimes both," Dean sassed with a grin.

"Right," Sam nodded to Dean.

"Oh, come on, guys, don't be such 'facer haters because we happen to have gotten the footage of the century," Harry spoke up and motioned to the viewing monitor.

"Oh, yeah," Ed agreed.

Sam and Dean gave each other a look and sucked in a breath with exaggeration.
“Yeah, you got us there,” Dean admitted with no ounce of seriousness. "Yeah, well, we'll see you guys around."

"Hey Maya," Maggie called. "You've got anything to add?"

Maya stopped in the doorway of the garage looking back at them, "I honestly had no idea you called yourself Ghostfacers. Talk about Ghostbuster copyright infringement," Maya played up being sheepish. "I was mentally calling all of you the Idiot Brigade the whole time we were in that house," she shrugged helplessly before exiting.

The three of them, once outside, began briskly walking back to the impala where Puck sat outside waiting patiently.

Maya smiled at her dog, "Ready to go buddy?" She received a bark in agreement.

"We clean?" Sam asked as he jogged up to his side of the car.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

The three of them looked in the direction of the anguished yells before smiling at each other and climbing into the car.

"Well there goes all their evidence," Maya snickered. "Everything wiped cleaned from the electromagnet."

"World just isn't ready for the Ghostfacers," Sam said.

"That's too bad. I kind of liked the show," Dean said with a smile.

Sam and Maya chuckled at that, "Had its moments." Sam turned to Maya in the back seat, "Pink hair dye?"

"Hey! Hey! Hey!" Dean exclaimed with a smirk as he started the engine. "No plotting against me in the car!"

Maya scoffed, "That a new rule Assface?"

"You better believe it Goldy!"
March-ish 2008, Rockford, Illinois, United States

It was early in the morning, a day or so after Appleton, and Sam was the first one to wake up in the motel room. Sitting up he rubbed the sleep from his eyes with a yawn and a stretch as he looked over at the other bed. Dean, for all his complaints about his snoring, was breathing loudly in his sleep, not quite snoring but close enough. That wasn't what had Sam suppressing an amused chuckle though.

Dean was sleeping on his side, back to him as he faced the door, and curled up against his brother's back was Maya. In her sleep she went from sleeping on her stomach, to sleeping on her side and snuggling into Dean's back, her arms stuck between them and her face pressed against Dean's shoulder blade.

Sam smirked as he looked for his phone. There was no way he wasn't getting a picture of this.

Puck, hearing the movement, woke up and perked his head up looking around from his spot on the bed. Seeing it was just the larger of the two males his mistress was travelling with he laid his head back down and let out a sigh. However, he made sure his keen eyes kept track of the male's movements. It might have been around a year since Springfield, Ohio, but Puck still hasn't let it go.

Tossing his phone on his bed, after getting the picture, Sam went to the washroom to grab a quick shower and get ready for the day.

Dean groggily woke up to the sound of water running from the bathroom and…a warm weight pressed against his back? A little confused Dean shifted to look over his shoulder to find Maya pressed up against him. He couldn't see her face but he could feel the warmth of her breath puffing steadily against him. Dean gave a soft huff of breath before pulling away and putting some distance between them.

He settled down again to catch a few more winks when his ears picked up a soft, tired groan of annoyance from behind him. Then the warm weight against his back returned with an added arm draped over him. He felt Maya nuzzle into his back muscles with her face before letting out a sigh and settling down again.

Dean frowned in irritation as he shrugged Maya's arm off only to have it return and hold on to him tightly with an accompanied groan of muffled protest.

"Goldy," Dean called behind him, "you awake?"

He received another muffled groan and a groggy, "No."

Dean gave a disbelieving snort, "Well, awake or not, I ain't your Teddy bear. So quit cuddling me."

"But you're so comfy..." Maya whined a little playfully, as she held onto him a little tighter. He really was comfortable and Maya didn't want to get up yet. She gave a whiney groan when Dean tried to pull away from her some more. So, she did the only logical thing that came to her sleep- addled mind.

"What the-?!” Dean yelped as he felt a weight push him over onto his stomach and settle on his
back. He looked over his shoulder to see a mop of messy dark and curly brown hair. "Do I need to explain the concept of personal space to you?!" Dean demanded.

Maya gave a yawn before answering cheekily and with fake innocence, "What's this personal space you speak of? Never heard of such a thing."

Dean could feel the smile from the cheek pressed against his upper back. "Off," Dean ordered gruffly to no success. He just felt Maya's body give a quick shake from a dismissive huff and a quick nuzzle before fully resting on his back. He could tell she wasn't completely sleeping, but was still pretty relaxed.

Dean gave a put-upon sigh as he decided just to ignore the weight of the teen resting on his back. Not like he hasn't been an involuntary body pillow before when Sam was littler than him. Though if the giant tried what Maya did now, he'd probably put up more of a fight. Like hell he was going to let his little brother pancake him with his weight.

Something inside him whispered that he should be shucking the teenager off of him, that he didn't know her that well to let her invade his personal space like this. Another, larger, part of him told that whisper to go fuck off.

He was brought from his tired musings when the bathroom door opened and Sam walked out dressed for the day and toweling his long hair. Dean looked over his shoulder at Sam and their eyes met. Sam smirked at him.

"Dean, it looks like you've got a large growth on your back," Sam teased, making his way over to his bed.

"Ah, shut up bitch," Dean began pushing himself up to take his turn for the bathroom.

Sam's smile widened as he watched Maya retaliate against her uncooperative pillow by wrapping her legs around Dean's waist and her arms around his neck. Dean cursed at Maya, as he sat up and tried to get her arms to unlatch.

"Morning to you too, jerk." Sam smirked, even as he received an annoyed glare from his brother. Sam watched as Dean tried standing up to use gravity in his favor, but Maya just clung to his back like a koala.

By now Maya was more than awake and was enjoying the spontaneous ride on Dean's back as he walked away from the bed, turning this way and that to try and dislodge her. She smiled brightly at Sam who was watching them with an amused smile.

"What's wrong Dean? Can't handle a teenager?" Sam heckled good-naturedly. Dean spun quickly around to glare at him.
"Like to see you try and get this *monkey* off," Dean shot back, his grimace intensifying at Sam and Maya's laughter.

Then he had a brilliant idea. Dean turned his back and Maya towards his bed, then proceeded to jump backwards. He grinned in satisfaction as she let out a squeal and began pushing at his weight. The bed bounced and Puck decided it was time to get make himself scarce as he hopped off the bed.

"*Dean,*" Maya whined, even if she had a small grin, as she tried to push the large Hunter off of her. "*You fat ass! Get off!*

'Oh, how the tables have turned,' thought Dean gleefully as he pressed his back behind him, earning more muffled protests and shoving. Dean let out a laugh as he finally took pity on her and got up, this time cling-on free.

"*I CAN BREATHE!*" Maya gasped out dramatically as she flailed her arms behind her head with a grin. Dean rolled his eyes and went to the bathroom to get ready. Giggling she tilted her head back so she could look at Sam with a wide mischievous grin.

Sam sat up straighter on his bed at the look, giving her a side eye glare. "*Maya,*" Sam said in a warning tone, "don't even—"

Maya flipped over and launched herself at Sam with a laugh.

Dean had heard the scuffle happening on the other side of the door, along with Maya's carefree laughter and Sam's grumbling, but Dean wasn't too concerned when the noise died down. When he finished up and left the bathroom he found an interesting sight on Sam's bed.

Maya lay draped across Sam's lap on her stomach while he used her back as a table for his laptop. Her arms crossed and hiding her face.

Dean gave them a raised eyebrow, "Do you just wake up ready to cause mischief?"

She perked her head up to look at Dean and gave a wide grin as she shifted her shoulders to let Sam know she wanted to get up. Sam lifted his laptop off her back to let her roll off his legs.

"*Hello~*, Trickster. We eat, breathe, and sleep mischief," she laughed as she skipped to the bathroom, grabbing her bag for clothes.

Dean gave a huff of amusement at the teen before walking over to his brother. "*Goldy seems*
playful this morning. And has no regard for personal space," Dean huffed.

Sam rolled his eyes at his older brother, "Probably her way of showing she likes us. Sees us as friends."

Dean scrunched his nose. "Yeah, but does she have to be so touchy about it?" he complained with no real seriousness in his voice. Maya didn't constantly invade either of their personal bubbles, so he didn't mind it too much. Not that he'd tell Sam or Maya that. "I'd rather be bought pie or beer."

Sam snorted at Dean's complaint as he continued looking at his computer. He knew his brother well enough that Dean didn't mind it one bit. So, being the little brother that he was, he called him out on it. "Like you don't like it, Dean. If you really were against it you would've told her up front to back off. Not let her cuddle your back."

"Whatever, bitch," Dean scoffed indignantly. "I've had to deal with your clinginess growing up, and you were way worse than goldy-eyes," he said teasingly, looking for a reaction.

Goldy-eyes. Golden eyes.

What the spirit Daggett from the Morton House said about her golden eyes and then Maya's reaction to it invaded his mind.

I swear I've been targeted like this since I was two!...Gold eyes and dark hair are apparently a hot commodity in certain circles...

Sam's gut twisted as a surge of rage and protectiveness welled up inside him, twisting his face into a grimace.

"Dude," Dean called his attention at seeing his brother's face. "What's with the face? You look like I froze your computer on porn."

"Something Maya said-after Daggett commented on keeping her alive for her eyes," Sam looked over at Dean with serious eyes. "She said she's been targeted for her eyes since she was two and that they were a hot commodity in certain circles," Sam watched as Dean's eyes turned a darker shade of green as his shoulders tensed.

Before Dean could say anything Maya emerged from the bathroom wearing a dark purple tank top underneath an open red flannel button up shirt with sleeves rolled to her elbows, and a pair of dark blue jeans. She immediately picked up on the tense mood of the room and looked at the Winchesters questioningly. "What's going? What's with all the tension?" she asked as she walked closer to the adults (questionable) in the room.

Dean turned to look at her with a tight face. "You've been targeted for your eye colour since you were two?" he asked bluntly. Sam made a face at his brother's bluntness.
"Yeah," Maya shrugged her shoulders. It was nothing new. Did she like it? No. Could she do something about it? Maybe, but she liked her eye colour. Not that it would stop all of them. "It's a rare colour, and some people are sick freaks," she let out a sigh. "I move around a lot and it just happens. Not to say I don't leave them uninjured, or not rotting away somewhere behind bars." She gave a smirk at that.

Dean blinked at her, uncomprehending, her slightly bland tone. Like she was boringly talking about the weather. "But two?!

Maya gave a tight-lipped smile and huff, "Yeah. Out of Dad's sight at a park for a second. Got my adorable little self nabbed. I remember some lady and me struggling and crying because she wasn't my Dad. Then my Dad rescuing me and holding me tight in his arms."

"That must have been terrifying," Sam said in sympathy.

"I guess, but I was little and I don't remember much of what happened," she shrugged.

"Please tell me your asshole of a Dad did something to that bitch that tried to grab you," Dean growled, God he didn't get people sometimes.

"Dean," Sam said warningly at his brother's insult to Maya's Dad.

Maya just let the insult to her Dad roll off her. "My Dad told me when I was older that he may have visited the jail cell the police were holding her in and might've made her a little more cooperative when confessing, before winding up dead. He also may or may not have planted evidence of records of her clients who she sold kids to. Also not responsible for those that went to jail whom got killed when word got out to some hard core criminals about what their crimes were," she gave Dean a large smile. "Lot of kids got to go home."

Dean gave an impressed snort, "Your Dad did all that?" Maya gave him a nod. "Still an asshole though."

Sam just gave his brother a disbelieving look, before looking up at the ceiling in exasperation, even if he agreed with his brother's sentiments about Maya's father.

Maya barked a laugh at that. "Yeah, but you gotta admit, he's usually an asshole for a reason."

"Agree to disagree," Sam groaned getting up from his bed and putting his laptop away. He didn't feel up to any Tuesday flashbacks.

Maya sent him an apologetic smile, knowing where he was coming from. "Never said it was a good one."

"Again. Asshole," Dean snorted as he went to the front door of the room. "C'mon. There's a diner around the corner and I wanna see if they'll let me order pie for breakfast."

"Really Dean?" Sam asked incredulously.

"Well, he'll get it if he orders quiche," Maya shrugged with a smirk.

"What the hell is a quiche?" Dean asked dubiously with a raised eyebrow.
"Pie crust filled with beaten egg yolk and possibly vegetables or other meat," Sam explained offhandedly.

Dean looked between Sam and Maya with narrowed eyes and a scowl, "That is not pie!" He turned and walked out the room to the black impala, with Maya, Sam, and Puck following close behind.

"It's a pie crust with a filling. It's a pie," Maya argued with a smirk enjoying Dean's annoyance over the topic. "It's a breakfast pie!"

"Not a pie!"

Sam and Maya chuckled at the indignant Dean.

"You both suck," Dean growled as he started the engine.

Local Diner

"Dean I'm serious," Sam gritted as he ate his health nut of an omelet. "You've got two months left. We should be focusing on trying to find a way to break your deal."

"We can't put the job on hold going after something that might not even be possible," Dean scowled as he took a swig of coffee.

"Well, what do you want to do Dean? Just give up?" Sam asked exasperated.

"That's not what I'm saying," Dean sighed rubbing his face. He could hardly focus on his pie. Yeah, he was able to convince them to give him pie for breakfast.

"Really? 'Cause that's all I've been getting this past year from you. That, you've given up and aren't even trying," Sam pointed out. He glanced beside him at Maya who seemed to be trying to studiously ignore their argument as she poked at the last bit of fruit she'd ordered along with her quiche. The conversation from earlier made her crave it. "Maya, what's your opinion?"

Her head tilted in a flinch as her shoulders tensed, it was obvious she didn't want to get dragged into the brothers' squabble. She reluctantly looked between Sam and Dean who had focused their combined attention on her.

"Well...Dean has a point—" 'See!" Dean said leaning back on his side of the booth, while Sam narrowed his eyes at the both of them, "—but Sam also has a point." Maya finished reluctantly. Neither brother said anything but looked at her waiting for her to continue.

She rubbed her face tiredly before looking at Dean; "I'm with Sam about not giving up on breaking your deal, even if I share your viewpoint that it might not be possible. I mean they're pretty ironclad, aren't they? And wasn't there a stipulation about getting out of it?"
"Yeah," Dean sighed. "If I find a way to weasel out of it, Sam drops dead."

"We'll find a way around that. If we can find the demon who holds Dean's deal and kill it. The contract should be null and void," Sam persisted. "We just have to keep searching—"

"I'm going to stop you there, Sam," Maya interrupted. "I meant what I said about not giving up, but Dean has a point about the job you guys do. Whether you find a way to break the deal, or find the demon who has it, there are still people out there in danger who need help," she gave Sam a pointed glance. "People who might die, regardless of whether or not there's a way to keep Dean from going to Hell."

"So, basically keep doing what we've been doing?" Sam groaned slumping in his seat. "Hunting things and trying to find a lead in between?"

"Sounds like a plan," Dean shrugged, taking another sip of coffee.

"Better than you acting like a countdown clock," Maya skewered some remaining melon on her fork before popping it in her mouth.

Sam's head turned sharply to look down at her in annoyance. "I do not—"

"You told him within the last week, today included, that he has two months left, twice already. And don't think I don't catch you scowling at the calendars at motels and diners like you know they're plotting against you," she interrupted and pointed her fork at him offhandedly as she looked at her fruit. Maya decided to stab the watermelon. It was not as flavorful as she hoped.

Dean gave a snort as he took another bite of his pie. That just had the effect of Sam shifting his bitch-face at Maya to him.

"Not like you were keeping track," Sam accused.

"You got me. It's not like I already know my expiration date is coming due soon. Maybe enjoy what time I got left without being reminded exactly how much is left," Dean said sarcastically as he took an aggressive stab at his remaining pie.

Sam gave a pained face and his patented puppy dog eyes, "Sorry."

Dean looked up ready to retort but the eyes killed it and it died on his tongue. He let the tension bleed out his shoulders as he gave sigh and rolled his eyes at his younger brother. "Yeah, yeah. You don't need to keep telling me how much time I've got," Dean put his fork on his empty plate. "I've been keeping track."

Sam went to finish the last few bits of his omelet and Maya looked between the two, glad the argument was settled for the moment. It was also official that she didn't want to be in the middle between them in an argument. Made her feel uncomfortable and awkward like she was supposed to choose sides. She used her fork to stab some remaining grapes.
"Great," she said around a mouthful of food. "So, who should I make my mediator fee out to?" she gave them a cheeky smile as they turned to stare at her. "What? You think it's free? Pfft, please!"

Sam and Dean shared a look before both saying, "Twerp." Though Sam made a point of rubbing her head to mess up her hair. Both Sam and Dean shared a chuckle at her expense.

"Assholes. The both of you," Maya muttered with a frown, though her gold eyes sparkled playfully.

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March-ish 2008, Lawrence, Kansas, United States

A middle aged black woman waited patiently in her home for her 'surprise' guests to arrive. Honestly those Winchesters getting themselves into all kinds of trouble. She wasn't sure what kind this time, but what she's been getting it wasn't anything good.

Hearing the banging on her parlor door she put down her magazine and went to see who it was. Opening the door she finds on the other side of the screen a one Dean Winchester and a one Sam Winchester.

"Oh, Dean Honey, what did you get yourself into?" Missouri shook her head reproachfully.

"What? No 'hello'?" Dean said a little taken back but smirked at the psychic all the same. "I'm guessin' you know why we're here?"

Missouri regarded him thoughtfully, "You got yourself tangled up in a demon deal." She looked over at Sam, "Your soul for Sam's life and only one year. Which is almost up."

Dean rubbed the back of his head and both him and Sam didn't make eye contact with her.

"We were wondering if you might know anything?" Sam hesitated before adding, "Or see anything that can help us."

"How 'bout you boys and your friend in the car and her dog come in?" She gave them a disapproving stare when she picked up on their thoughts and the slight tensing of their shoulders. "I'm not going to do anything to your little friend, or tell anyone 'bout her. Now, go on!" she shooed at Sam who gave his brother an apprehensive look. Dean looked in Missouri's eyes and her raised eyebrow and nodded to Sam. Sam went over to the impala that was out of sight.

Missouri opened the screen door to let him in. "Go on. Have a seat," Missouri motioned to her couch in her parlor. "And don't you put those feet on my coffee table!" She said pointing at him as she took a seat in the chair across from him. Dean tensed and gave her sheepish smile. They turned their heads as Sam, Maya and Puck entered the parlor.

"Oh my," Missouri said in slight wonder looking at the slender teenager in front of her. "What beautiful energy you emit. What a lovely gift."
Sam and Dean looked from Missouri to Maya in confusion and a little bit of concern, though Maya wasn't much better, she had no idea what the lady was talking about.

"What-?" Dean went to ask, but Missouri stopped him.

"Oh hush, there's nothing to be worried about," Missouri dismissed. "It's like when you say someone 'just lights up the room'. It's a little something like that. Again, nothing to worry about." she said flippantly. "Well? Sit down. Don't hover like vultures." She waited until Sam and Maya were seated, albeit a little uneasy. Puck placed himself at Maya's feet between her legs as he stared at the older woman intently.

"Now," Missouri began. "I'm sure you're not here just to talk about Maya here, but about demon deals and Hellhounds?" she queried looking at the trio on her couch.

"Did you guys tell her my name?" Maya asked a little perturbed. The energy bit had her a little freaked out. What did the psychic mean that she was emitting some kind of energy? Why was it a gift? What was it? The way she described it reminded her of something her Dad would call her when she was feeling down about her abilities or feeling really mushy and emotional. Usually happened when she was about to drift off into sleep.

"No," Missouri said with a knowing smile that had Maya sitting up a little straighter. "I can read thoughts and energies in a room. Seems your Father might have an idea of what I was getting at if he calls you his Morning's Glory." Her eyes twinkled at the wide-eyed look of the half-Trickster in front of her, seated on a couch with two other Hunters. What an interesting sight, especially with the thoughts running through the older boys' minds. Honestly, Winchesters and their repressed emotions. That girl couldn't be in safer company, than if she was with her Father.

Maya sat straight up with eye wide as she used her arms to cover the top of her head like it would keep Missouri out, "Stay out of my head!"

Sam smirked at Maya's reaction. "You know covering your head with your arms won't stop her, right?" he pointed out. "Neither will a tin foil hat," he added seeing her open her mouth.

Maya's mouth shut with an audible click as she turned to look at Sam with wide eyes, arms still on her head. "Now, you stop reading my mind!" she hissed.

"Ain't mind reading if it's obvious, Goldy." Dean said with a laugh as Maya leaned around the front of Sam to give him a bitch face.

Missouri watched the three of them bicker and snark at each other. She could feel young Maya's energy brush against the two brothers, pushing at the darker clouds that hung around them. It didn't banish them completely, as in, make the boys believe there wasn't a serious issue hanging above their heads, or Dean's head as it was. No, her energy pushed just enough so the boys could choose to take a moment to enjoy a light hearted moment between them and their young friend.

She could see what was happening between the three, but it was obvious that they were oblivious to it themselves. Her eyes drifted to a less tense Maya, arms at her sides now, and her honey gold eyes, alight with silent laughter, that were trained on the two Hunters to her right on the couch, an easy smirk on her lips.
'Oh sweet child,' Missouri thought. 'I hope you know the pain you've signed yourself up for.' She let out a full body sigh. It was time to move this meeting along.

"If I wanted to listen to children bicker I'd call up the relatives," Missouri said pointedly. At least all three had the decency to look a little abashed.

"Sorry, Missouri," Sam apologized. "We came here wondering if you could help us with Dean's deal."

"Sam here thinks maybe you can get a read on the demon that hold my contract," Dean sighed as he leaned back into the couch. "Or the very least help us find Bela Talbot." His eyes furrowed spitefully as he grimaced at the thief's name.

"I'm sorry, Dean," Missouri apologized. "I can't pick-up anything from this demon you mentioned. And unless you have something of this Bela Talbot, I'm afraid I can't help you there either."

Sam gave her a slightly helpless look and Dean sent her a chagrined one, before schooling the emotions away. Maya's face was sad with the news as she attempted to give Missouri a smile, to tell her it wasn't her fault.

"It's alright Missouri," Dean sighed. "Thanks for seeing us." They all got up, getting ready to leave.

"You're welcome, but," Missouri began gaining their attention, "there's something that's popped up."

"What kind of something?" Dean asked, turning to look at the psychic his interest piqued.

"Now, it hasn't made the papers yet, but a couple bodies have shown up. Drained of blood." Missouri gave them a pointed look, before snapping her eyes to Maya. "Don't you go cussing, young lady!" she snapped.

Maya gave her a deer-caught-in-headlights look with her wide eyes as her body tenses up.

"Vampires? Djinn?" Sam asked speculatively.

"Not sure," Missouri admitted. "My client from the police station didn't see the body."

"You have client's from the police payroll?" Dean looked at Missouri in disbelief.

Missouri gave him a pointed look, "Not all local authority are closed minded. I've been asked to see if I can find a body or a missing person's from time to time."

"Huh." Dean looked away from Missouri's stare and to his brother. "Want to check it out? See if there's something here?"

Sam inhaled like he wanted to protest, to get moving to the next possible lead to break Dean's deal,
but stopped himself. "Yeah," he sighed then looked to the psychic. "We'll look into it Missouri."

"Thanks boys," Missouri smiled at them gratefully before looking at Maya. "While you're busy with that you can drop Maya off here with me."

"Uh, why?" Maya asked confused. "I'm going to help the guys." She crossed her arms at the raised eyebrow Missouri sent her.

"Really?" Missouri looked at Sam and Dean who shared an apprehensive look between them. "I don't think the boys think you're anywhere near ready to take on a possible vampire nest or a djinn."

Maya furrowed her eyebrows in a frown at Missouri before looking at the Winchesters. "Guys?" she questioned, turning to look at them. Sam looked away, but Dean met her gaze head on.

"Sorry, Goldy. You're still on salt n' burns," Dean told her seriously. "Vamps and djinn are a bit more tricky than ghosts. If it gets too much we can't just stick you in a salt circle."

Maya opened her mouth to object when Missouri beat her to the punch.

"Honey, are you sure you won't freeze up when facing a vampire? A mistake like that can be dangerous, and," Missouri pointed out knowingly, "you don't have the best past experiences with them."

Maya pinched her face in thought as she thought about it, frowning before her shoulders sagged in defeat. Her first encounter with vampires was a little traumatic and she was stronger now, but that didn't mean she wouldn't freeze up.

Dean walked over and put a hand on her shoulder, "Hey, don't worry about it. Learning stuff like this takes time. Sam and me will take care of whatever's going on, and later we can teach you how to properly swing a machete." Dean gave her a roguish smirk as he moved his hand from her shoulder to her head, rubbing it and messing with her hair.

"Hey!" Maya swatted away Dean's hand from her head giving him a playful glare as they all headed to the front door.

"It's still early enough we can probably get changed and head over to the morgue to check out the bodies," Sam stated. "Find out what we're dealing with."

Dean checked the time on his cellphone and gave Sam a nod of confirmation. "Sounds good," he looked over to Missouri, "we hadn't gotten a motel room yet, is it okay that me and Sam change here?"

Missouri waved them off, "That's fine, and while you boys are at the morgue Maya can keep me company here." Missouri was on point today because when Maya went to protest staying behind she didn't let her. "Oh, Honey, we all know you're too young lookin' to pass for an FBI intern. Let alone a new field agent."
Maya sent the woman an affronted face as her mind was once again invaded by the psychic. Sam and Dean smirked in amusement, glad to see someone else on the receiving end of Missouri's abilities, other than themselves.

Sam and Dean were changed into their cheap suits with their fake I.D.'s ready within 15mins and heading out Missouri's front door.

"Shouldn't take long to see what's going on," Sam said as he tucked one of his fake badges into his suit pocket. "Good luck with Missouri, Maya," Sam sent her an amused smirk at the glower he received from her. He went out the door to the parked impala.

Maya leaned against a wall as Dean paused in the doorway looking back at her and Missouri. "See ya in a bit Goldy," he gave her a small smile before looking at Missouri, "Anyone asks about her, your keeping an eye on her for her two older brothers."

Missouri raised an eyebrow at that. "Doubt anyone would ask, but all right. We'll just be here baking some sugar cookies anyway."

That little announcement had both Maya and Dean perking up and looking at Missouri expectantly. Dean looked reluctant to go at the mention of freshly baked cookies.

"And talkin' about why she feels it's necessary to avoid her Father," Missouri added on, much to Maya's horror.

Maya whipped her head at Dean and looked at him pleadingly, "Take me with you." Puck gave a whiney huff at her feet. She looked down at the little dog that looked up at her firmly. "Oh c'mon! You too?!” She got a confirmation huff from the little Jack Russell.

"Right," Dean said awkwardly. "I'm out. Later!" Dean made a hasty retreat to the impala and away from that discussion.

"Traitor!" Maya called out behind him, and gave a huffed as the impala peeled out of the driveway. She turned to Missouri to find her looking at her with a raised eyebrow.

"So," Missouri began, "older brothers huh?" She wondered about the boys' emotional intelligence.

Maya just eyed the psychic warily as she gave a shrug. "Good cover if anyone asks why a teenager's travelling with two hulking men. Got mistaken as their kid sister when we started travelling together and it stuck," Maya paused as she regarded the older woman. "Do we…?"

"Oh you can bet your little Trickster behind we do," Missouri confirmed putting her hands on her hips. "If my James pulled the stunt you're pulling right now, Lord have mercy, when he'd finally show up I'd put his black behind through the ringer! He wouldn't be sittin' right for weeks," she marched away from the slightly terrified teen and around a doorway out of sight. Maya stood rooted to the spot, scared to move. She actually jumped a little when Missouri popped her head
from the doorway. "Well come on then. Those cookies ain't going to make themselves," she said motioning Maya to follow as she disappeared again, the sound of cupboards and drawers opening and closing.

Puck went first, trotting to the doorway then looking back at his owner expectantly. Maya tentatively walked to the doorway and peaked around into the kitchen to find Missouri getting everything set up.

"Maya," Missouri said without turning around to look at her, "Check and preheat that oven for me? 350F, please. Puck, try not to get under foot, okay?" Puck gave a small bark in agreement before finding an out of the way spot under the kitchen table.

"You figured out he's not normal, and you're not freaked out about it?" Maya asked as she went to the oven, making sure it was empty before preheating it.

"Honey, I'm a psychic. I see and feel lots of things. An extraordinarily intelligent little dog charged with watching over a half-Trickster is low on the unusual scale," Missouri said as she began measuring out ingredients. "And yes I picked up from your thoughts about what you are and who your Father is."

"Is anything in my head safe?" Maya asked chagrined.

"Just don't think of anything you don't want me to pick up on," Missouri said chuckling as she turned to look at her.

"That's…so not helpful, 'cause now that's all my mind wants to think about!" Maya rolled her eyes in exasperation.

The older woman chuckled at her as she put sugar and softened butter in the large mixing bowl.
"Yes. A bit of a catch-22 isn't it? Cream this please." She handed the bowl and spatula to Maya who began to expertly cream the sugar and butter together.

Maya couldn't stop the memories of when she and her Dad would bake sheets upon sheets of cookies when the mood struck one of them and they had access to an oven. She actually huffed a small chuckle when the memory of the time her Dad made one of the gingerbread men come to life and run around their place when she had opened the oven without him there. Maya had to have been about 8yrs, still too young to work the oven or stove without supervision. Her punishment had been to spend 2hrs trying to chase down that runaway cookie. It was both fun and exhausting, but her Dad also told her she couldn't have any of the cookies that night either.

A readily becoming familiar ache filled her chest as she thought of her Dad, accompanied by her annoyance and some wariness. Maya knew she was in a lot of trouble with him.

"I think that's creamed enough," Missouri spoke up, drawing Maya from her thoughts. She took the bowl back and added an egg and some vanilla extract, before handing Maya back the bowl to begin mixing again. "You miss him."
"Of course I miss him, he's my Dad. I love him and before we were always in touch…" Maya handed the mixed bowl back and Missouri added the flour, baking powder, and salt, and then handed it back to Maya.

"But you're afraid of what'll happen if you go back," Missouri stated solemnly.

Maya sighed as she put the mixed cookie dough on the counter. "I know he'd never hurt me, but I also feel that he'll no longer let me anywhere out of his sight. All over something that happened in a time loop that no longer has the possibility of happening!"

"I can't believe any version of Sam would do that," Missouri said with surprised disbelief at the flash of memory she picked up from Maya's thoughts. "No wonder your Father was wanting you to stay with him. I'd be going out of my mind with worry and fear if something like that happened with my son."

"At least you'd eventually let him go," Maya said a little bitterly. "It wasn't easy getting him to let me have a year on my own, and even then it was cut short by almost 11 months. After what happened in the time loop he doesn't think I'll be safe on my own," she looked down forlornly. "I know he just wants to protect me, but I can't stay with him forever."

"Mmm, true." Missouri admits. "But do you want to spend the rest of your life running from him? At least call the man. Talk to him. No matter how much he loves and adores you, his fear of losing you will overshadow everything else. So, the longer you wait to reach out, the more trouble you'll be in, and the less likely he'll want to listen. All he'll be thinking is how to keep you with him to keep you safe."

Maya let out a slow sigh threw her nose, not looking at the psychic beside her.

Missouri placed a hand on her shoulder. "I may be a psychic, but I'm also a parent. And losing a child? That's one of our greatest fears, and fear like that? It can be all consuming to the point you don't realize what you're doing will be how you end up losing them anyway."

Maya conceded in her mind that Missouri had a point. She'd felt the way her Dad had held onto her so desperately a couple of months ago, like she was about to disappear. It was a couple of days later after teaching that homophobe of a pastor about free love that her Dad had told her about what upset him so much. She was of course shocked and upset from what Sam did, but also pointed out her Dad's mistake. Giving Sam a target to focus on to get Dean back. If her Dad hadn't killed Dean that Wednesday then that whole thing wouldn't have happened. That of course sparked a heated argument between them, and her Dad basically telling her she was sticking with him from then on.

"What? Why?!!"

"You got yourself killed! I'm not about to let you go off on your own again!"

"That was in a time loop of a timeline where you killed Dean! I highly doubt Sam still wants my head on a pike to get back at you."
"You don't know that! *sigh* Tootsie Roll I just want to keep you safe…"

"I get that, really, I do, but you said I could have a year on my own. I passed your test—"

"And you still got staked in the chest! I'm sorry Maya, but you're staying with me. That's final."

"I love you Dad, but I can't stay with you forever."

"That's what you think."

She remembered looking at her Dad and realizing that he'd never really let her go. That when she finally was an adult and wanted to start living permanently on her own her Dad would probably wave her off with a laugh, because what a silly idea. Why be alone when they could stick together?

That thought had scared her. The thought that one day her Dad might become more of a jailer than her Father.

**WHACK!**

"Stop those thoughts right now!" Missouri scolded after whacking her head with a wooden spoon. "The more you let thoughts like those consume you and keep you from talking to your Father, the more likely they will happen. Especially if you keep running away from your problems and they catch up to you," she said pointedly at the guilty teen. "Now your Father isn't all innocent in this either. From what I can gather he needs to learn to not let his fear of losing you blind him, but he can't do that if you run away and don't tell him what's running through that head of yours," Missouri waved the weaponized wooden spoon vaguely at Maya's head.

"I'll think about it," Maya reluctantly conceded as she turned her head to look into Missouri's searching eyes.

"Hmph, good." The older woman nodded at her, "C'mon these cookies won't bake themselves." They both stood on wither side of the cookie sheet and began rolling the dough into balls before spacing them evenly on the sheet.

"You used the allure of baking cookies to get me comfortable enough to talk didn't you?" Maya asked though it sounded more like a statement.

Missouri chuckled, "It worked didn't it?"

Maya gave a huff and pouted as she rolled cookie dough.

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*March-ish 2008, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, United States*
It was a couple of weeks since visiting Missouri and the Winchesters taking care of a small vampire nest that decided Lawrence was going to be its new hunting grounds. Since then the three of them have been visiting every reputable psychic, professor, and some okay non-black magic self-proclaimed witches they could find, while going on hunts in between. Sam and Dean have also been spending some time teaching Maya useful techniques in hand-to-hand, shooting, and decapitation. Mostly shooting though, neither of them wanted Maya getting too close and personal with anything quite yet.

Maya sat on a damp bench beside Dean in a campus courtyard in front of the school's library. Where Dean was eating a hotdog from a vendor, Maya was sucking away on an orange lollipop listening to some music. Sam was in the library talking to a professor who, supposedly, specialized on the occult. Puck was between Maya and Dean on the bench and looked at Dean's hotdog longingly.

"Rat, this is my food. I ain't giving you any," Dean growled to the little dog that gave him a pleading look and pitiful whine. Dean made the mistake of making eye contact with the canine. *Son of a bitch...*

Sighing in aggravation he tarred a small piece of hotdog and bun then looked into the little mutt's excited eyes. "No more whining. This is all you get. Capiche?" Dean said sternly, Puck wiggled excitedly where he sat as he eyed the tidbit in Dean's hand. "I know you can understand me, so nod yes that you know that this is all you get." Puck nodded his head then looked back to his hand expectantly.

Rolling his eyes Dean held out the small piece he tore off to the little dog who wolfed it down appreciatively, then licked Dean's hand. Dean quickly retracted his hand, frowning in disgust as he wiped it on his pant leg, before going back to the rest of his hotdog. Puck stuck to the deal and stopped bugging the Hunter.

Dean looked around the courtyard waiting for Sam to come out when his phone began to ring.

"Yello?" Dean answered around a mouthful of food. "Hey Bobby! What's up?"

Maya popped out her ear buds to look over at Dean as he talked on the phone, from what she could piece together Bobby had a hunt for them. Probably a spirit was his guess. Great, another salt n' burn for her.

Sam exited the library and came trotting up to them as Dean finished the phone call.

"Yep. I got it. Okay, bye." Dean hung closed his phone and tossed Sam an empty can of soda as he stood up. "So?" he asked Sam as he took the final bite of his hotdog. Maya got up and walked up to
"So, the professor doesn't know crap," Sam said exasperated.

"Shocking," Dean said unenthused. Most academic types didn't know what they're talking about, and this professor was a long shot anyways. "Pack your panties ladies. We're hitting the road," Dean said smacking Sam and Maya's shoulders as he walked by. Maya rolled her eyes as she went to follow, Puck at her heels.

Sam turned to follow Dean with his eyes looking confused. "What? What's up?" Sam asked.

Dean pivoted, then looked around Maya who stopped, to look back at his brother, "That was Bobby. Some banker guy blew his head off in Ohio, and he thinks there's a spirit involved."

"So you two were talking about a case?" Sam asked for clarification.

"No we were actually talking about our feelings, and then our favorite boy bands. Yeah, we were talking a case," Dean said sarcastically, walking around Maya to approach Sam.

"So, a spirit—what?" Sam asked.

"Yeah, well, banker was complaining about some electrical problems at his pad for, like, a week—phones going haywire, computers flipping on and off, huh?" Dean said trying to sell the case.

"Uh-uh." Sam agreed, unmotivated.

Picking up on Sam's attitude Dean prods, "This not ringing your bell?"

"Well, sure, yeah, but, Dean, we're on a case," Sam said pointedly waiting for his brother to get it. Maya did and she was not looking forward to the upcoming argument.

"Whose?" Dean asked confused.

"Yours."

"Right, yeah. Could have fooled me," Dean responded, turning to walk away, but Sam wasn't done.

"What the hell else have we been doing lately other than trying to break your deal?" Sam asked in aggravated annoyance. Dean turned around to look at him.

"Chasing our tails, that's what." Sam inhaled a slow breath at that and looked away. Dean stalked towards Sam, "Sam we've talked to every professor, witch, soothsayer, and two-bit carny act in the lower 48. Nobody knows squat."

Maya saw the look in Sam's face as he got an idea, while Dean continued his rant.

"And we can't find Bela. We can't find the Colt. So until we can actually find something, I'd like to do my job," Dean was thoroughly annoyed now.

"Well," Sam began, shifting from one foot to another, "there's one thing we haven't tried yet."

"No, Sam. No," Dean shook his head looking away.
"We should summon Ruby," Sam proposed.

"Demon bitch? Seriously?" Maya asked incredulously.

Sam looked at Maya, "She said she knows how to save Dean."

"Well, she can't Sam!" Dean said raising his voice. Sam looked back at him confused.

"Oh, really? You know that for sure?"

"I do."

"How?"

"Because she told me, okay?" Dean admitted, his voice no-nonsense as he stared Sam in the eye. He couldn't keep the eye contact and looked away.

Maya swayed awkwardly on her feet, not sure what to do. Definitely felt like she intruded on something private. Time to split.

"I'm just gonna..." Maya pointed over her shoulder uncertainly, "yeah..." she walked away with Puck quickly and left them to their conversation. She did not want to get dragged into another argument.

Leaning up against the impala she saw Sam stalking towards her and the car, with Dean a few paces behind him. Ooh, whatever was talked about didn't end well. She could feel the tension between the two...and she's about to get into a car with them. Wonderful.

"Um, so...what's the plan?" Maya asked hesitantly as Dean unlocked the car and they piled in.

"We're going to Milan, Ohio," Dean stated and turned over the engine.

Cue tense car ride for the next day or so.
"I can't believe Dean didn't kill you," Sam commented to Maya as he straightened his tie.

"Yeah, that prank went a lot better than I thought it would," Maya said from Sam and her's bed. "My best case scenario was he'd shoot me with rock salt."

Sam snorted as he went over his FBI disguise. "Still can't believe you did that to the impala," he shook his head reproachfully but couldn't help the smile forming on his lips.

"Hey! I didn't do anything! Well, just some visual and audio illusions…but none of it was really real!"

Sam just gave her an indulgent smile and rolled his eyes at her. "And that's why you're bunking with me for the foreseeable future," Sam chuckled as he straightened out his suit jacket. "So? How do I look?" he said to Maya giving her a here-I-am pose.

"Like an underpaid civil servant in a cheap suit," Maya told him dryly as she ran her hand down Puck's back while he lounged in her lap. The little dog gave a huff of amusement, earning him an affectionate behind the ear scratching.

A flush came from the bathroom and Dean exited a moment later, already dressed in his own FBI suit. He ignored Maya, still annoyed with her, and looked at Sam, "Ready to go?"

Sam nodded, "Yeah." He double-checked to make sure he had one of his fake FBI I.D.'s. "Yeah, I'm ready."

"And don't worry about me. I'll just stay here. Bored," Maya sighed overdramatically as she fell back onto the bed and lay there.

"Did you hear something, Sammy?" Dean asked his brother, not even looking at the sulking teenager on Sam's bed. "I thought I heard an apology for what happened to Baby this morning, but, instead, all I heard was bitchin' and belly-aching."

"I didn't actually mess with your car! It was all an illusion! I practically wrapped a hologram around it! Nothing physical actually happened!" Maya said, exasperated, as she propped her self up on her elbows, leaning back on them.

"You still messed with Baby! You don't mess with a man's car!" Dean groaned, finally acknowledging her. He pointed a stern finger at her, "Why do you think I banished you to Sam's bed?"
"Because you can't take a joke?" Maya snarked with a grin as she watched Dean's annoyed face turn into a blank stare.

Dean shook his head at her and walked to the door, "I'm not dealing with this, right now." He paused at the door and looked back at a smirking Maya. "Still bunking with Sam!" he reminded her sternly as he pointed at her again, before finally leaving the motel room.

Sam shook his head with a sigh as he followed Dean out the door, asking, "And how is bunking with me a punishment?" Maya didn't hear Dean answer as Sam had closed the door behind him.

Maya laid back fully on the bed once more. "Ugh. Now what?" she asked the vacant room. Puck, still in her lap, perked up and looked over to her and huffed to get her attention. Shifting, Maya looked at the little dog's face as he licked his lips.

"Yeah, I can eat," Maya sat up and rubbed Puck's little head. "What treat do you want? Pizza crust or hotdog?"

Huff, huff!

"Hotdogs it is then!" Maya said brightly as Puck dashed off her lap, and the bed, and went to the door. She laughed at the little dog's excitement as she grabbed her wallet from her bag. Opening the door Puck was the first to dart out and began pacing as he waited for Maya to lock up, and get a move on! There's hotdogs to be had!

"Alright, alright! You wanna lead the way?" Maya smiled indulgently as she gestured to the little dog.

Bark!

Puck began walking briskly up the street towards the shops and restaurants, forcing Maya to jog a little to catch up, then maintain her own brisk walk to keep up. He was really craving some hotdogs.

"Puck, isn't this some kind of cannibalism on your part?" Maya asked as she looked around. "I mean, you're a dog and you're going to eat a... hotdog." She giggled a little, but Puck slowed down to a stop. Maya followed suit, and then Puck looked up at her with the best un-amused expression his little face could make. "Oh, it wasn't that bad!" she tried to defend.

...Huff.

Puck trotted away from her to continue his quest to find a place that sold hotdogs. Preferably those 100% beef foot- longs.
"Puck! C'mon! *Wait up!" Maya called a little ways behind him.

Maya pouted on a park bench near a place that sold hotdogs to Puck's liking while eating her portion of the hotdog. Puck sat on the ground beside her feet, enjoying his 4" of the 12" hotdog Maya bought for them.

"Can't believe you didn't wait up for me," she grumbled, taking another bite. "Was it that bad?" she asked looking down at Puck.

Puck paused, swallowing his bite, before looking up at her. He gave a whine as he bowed his head and moved one foreleg to cover his eyes. He then went back to the remainder of his little meal.

"Well...that's your opinion! I still think it was funny," Maya hmphed as she went back to eating, ignoring some of the strange stares she got from talking to her dog.

~*Carry on my wayward son,*

*There'll be peace when you are done.*

*Don't you cry no mo—~*

Maya flipped her phone open to answer it. "Hey Sam. How'd questioning Mrs. Marsh go?"

"As well as expected. Phone was ripped from the wall and the history had a weird phone number around the time of this guy's death. Not to mention a couple of weeks prior he was talking to a woman named *Linda* on the phone. According to the wife, when she picked up the phone to hear who he was talking to there was no one on the other end but static."

"That is weird. Ghost?" Maya asked and felt pawing at her leg. She looked down to see Puck eyeing her remaining portion of hotdog in her hand. With a glare she took a purposeful bite.

"Maybe. Dean's looking up any woman named Linda connected to Ben Marsh. *Right now.*" He finished pointedly.

"Cool." Maya said not picking up the hint as Puck had jumped up onto the bench and was trying to nab her food. She leaned and stretched her arm away, but it was hard keeping the little dog away when her other hand was busy with the phone.

Sam gave a disgruntled sigh on the other end of the line. "*At the motel,*" he added pointedly.
"Was I not supposed to leave room?" she asked tentatively as she continued to lean lopsidedly. Any further and she was going to fall off her end of the bench.

"No. Just—just get back to the motel," Sam told her with a sigh. Puck was leaning on her still trying to get the hotdog.

"Yeah. All right. See you and Assface in a—GOD DAMN IT!" The leaning tower of Maya tilted too far and with Puck leaning against her it was inevitable. She fell off the park bench. "PUCK!"

"Maya, you okay?" came the faint concerned voice of Sam. She brought the phone back to her ear as she watched Puck scarf down the remainder of her hotdog that had fallen from her hand.

She sat up and sent a glare at the little dog that, once finished, turned to look at her with a wagging tail and a smug look. "I'm fine. Just Puck being a little shit," she grumbled. "See you guys soon," she hung up and shoved her phone in her jacket pocket, still glaring at the innocent looking little dog sitting in front of her.

Puck gave a whine and jumped into her lap and began trying to lick her face in apology.

"Aw, Puck! Stop! Aw-C'mon!" she protested as she tried to keep him away from her face. "Fine. Fine! You're forgiven!"

Puck settled down and hopped off her lap then began walking away in the direction of the motel. He paused a few feet away and woofed at her. Maya rolled her eyes while picking herself up from the ground.

"Yeah, yeah. Lead the way mon Capitain!"

Maya got to the motel room and walked in. "So, how're my 2nd and 3rd favorite Hunters doing?" she said, smiling cheerfully as she waited till Puck was inside before closing the door.

"Where were you?" Dean demanded from his hunched position on the couch behind the laptop.

"Out?" Maya said like it was obvious, with a raised eyebrow. Dean glared at her for that and went back to the laptop on the coffee table.
"What Dean meant was, next time leave a note or text one of us," Sam sighed looking away from Dean and towards Maya. "We didn't know what happened to you or where you went."

"I left my bag here. So, pretty sure, I was coming back," she pointed out, gesturing to her knapsack at the foot of the far bed.

"That's not the point, Maya!" Dean said, raising his voice at her. "We had no idea where you were!"

"Uh oh. Using the real name," she said dryly, rolling her eyes as she went to sit on the far bed from the door. Dean scoffed at her and went back to searching on the laptop while grumbling.

"Dean," Sam said tightly giving his brother a look that said cool-it. He looked over at Maya, "We don't know exactly what we're here hunting yet. And, since you're the most inexperienced out of us, it'd just be safer if you told us where you went and when you might be back. Then we'd know whether or not to start worrying about you." Sam was giving her his patented pleading puppy dog eyes.

"Aw, Sam. With the face and the eyes," she tried to look away but it was hard. No man his size should be able to look that vulnerable and have such big pleading eyes. "Enough! You win! I'll let you know when I wander out on my own. Just enough with the eyes...you're like a sad little puppy. No man you're size should be able to pull off that kind of face."

That got a snort from Dean behind the computer, "I know right?"

"You talking to me again?" she asked Dean smiling brightly.

Dean paused at the computer and looked up over the screen at her with a blank face. He held up one finger, "First, you're still banished to Sam's bed."

"Again. How is that a punishment?" Sam asked exasperated. Dean ignored him.

"Second," Dean said adding another finger and continued, "Your 2nd and 3rd favorite Hunters?"

"Bobby trumps all."

"...yeah, he's pretty awesome." Dean conceded. Sam nodded in agreement.

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**Next Day...**

Turned out Linda Bateman was an old flame of the recently deceased, who had died in a head on collision with Ben Marsh, but he had been able to walk away. She was also cremated. So, the ghost theory was becoming a bit shakier. There was also the weird phone number that, according to Sam was about a century old. None of them knew why a ghost would use such an old number to contact someone from beyond the grave.

Sam had the idea of running a trace on the number, which leads us to the here and now.

"Why'd I have to come again? Wouldn't this just make it harder for you guys?" Maya asked with a
raised eyebrow and her hands in her jeans back pockets.

"Figured you could see how we get in to see crime scenes or the morgue," Dean shrugged as he drove them to the phone company nearby. He also didn't want her wondering off on her own, not with a monster or ghost, or whatever on the loose.

"A lot of it comes from acting like you belong there and projecting an air of confidence," Sam added giving her a glance. "If you act like you belong there, people won't question it."

"So, in other words...lots of bullshitting?" She queried.

"Pretty much," Dean snorted. "Guy shows up in a cheap suit with a fake badge and you'll have people telling you anything and everything. There's probably some psychology crap going on there."

"I think there is," Maya hummed. "Pretty sure I read it in a psych textbook somewhere. Talking about how people perceive authority and how authority without strict guidelines can be very bad and easily abused. There's also the phenomenon of obedience to authority and, kind of, passing the buck. It's pretty interesting."

"Dear God Sam," Dean said in mock horror at his brother. "She's a nerd like you. She's like a mini-you."

Sam and Maya bitch-faced him. That just got him laughing, and proving his point.

"She's more your mini-me than mine," Sam deadpanned shaking his head.

Dean just grinned widely, "Hear that Goldy? You're my mini-me. Not Sam's."

"And here I thought I was my own person. Silly me," she responded dryly with a roll of her eyes. "So, Masters of Bullshit, how exactly am I supposed to accompany you? I don't exactly look like I belong," she said pointedly.

Dean sent her a confident grin, "Bring you're kid to work day. Or in this case, your kid sister who you didn't want to leave alone at home, because of her habit to wander away."

He gave her a pointed eyebrow raise in the rearview mirror.

"I said I was going to leave a note or text one of you next time!" she threw her hands up a little as she slumped in her seat. "Do you think that will actually work?"

"Probably," Dean shrugged.

"Either way we don't have any time to find you some clothes to make you look like an intern," Sam said, and then added, "Although, you'd still look a little too young to pass for one anyways."

"You're just jealous that when I grow old I'll still look fantastic!"

"Yep, definitely Dean's mini-me," Sam quipped.

"HEY!" came from both Maya and Dean.

It wasn't long before they were entering the phone company and walking up to the shoulder length black haired receptionist, Wanda, to tell her they were from Headquarters. She called down the supervisor, Clark her husband. When they asked about her they didn't even question the whole
However, she was asked to stay behind with Wanda, since only authorized personal were allowed beyond a certain point. Wanda assured them she'd keep an eye on the prone-to-wandering little sister of (Dean).

"So," Wanda curiously began, "you're staying with your older brother? Why aren't you staying with your parents?"

Maya looked at her from her seat in the lobby. "Uh, got into a fight with the old man. So, I left and went to bunk with Ryan (Dean) for a bit." Wanda looked up at her from her computer with a soft smile.

"That must be tough. Fighting with family," Wanda said sympathetically, her eyes trained on the teenager. "Have you spoken to your Dad recently?"

"Not-not really. He doesn't know I'm with Ryan. Or, if he does, he hasn't popped in yet," Maya shrugged, well mostly true.

Wanda gave her a considering look, "Well, maybe he'll reach out to you first?"

"Not likely. I've got him blocked on my phone," Maya snorted. Granted it wouldn't be much for her Dad to get a new phone and just start spamming her with messages on a new number. "Not ready to talk to him yet."

"Shame," Wanda hummed and went back to work.

Maya didn't notice the soft smile turn into a less than pleasant grin.

Later In Town...

"That was disturbing," Maya muttered as her and Dean left the family shop of a little 84 year old grandmother who was having phone sex with her husband, who died in Korea.

Dean shook his head to clear the mental image, "Yeah. No kidding."

They turned down the street towards the impala as Dean whipped out his phone to call Sam.
"Dude, stiffs are calling people all over town…we just talked to an 84 year old grandmother who's having phone sex with her husband who died, in Korea…completely rocked by understanding of the word 'necrophilia.' It was that moment when a hot brunette in a short jean skirt and black jacket walked by Dean, giving him a disgusted face.

"Timing," Maya snorted with a grin. Some things just happen so naturally and beautifully.

Dean sent her a withering glare as he answered a question Sam asked over the phone, "Beats me, but we better find out soon. This place is turning into spook central…yep." He snapped his phone shut as they reached the impala and Dean opened the driver side door. Maya strolled to the other side and got in the passenger's seat.

Dean was about to get in when his cellphone started ringing again. Flipping it open he answered it, "Yeah, what?...Sam?" Maya looked at him from inside the car and watched as he went from casually leaning against the open door to straightening his posture completely with a confused and unnerved look on his face.

"Dean? What's goi—" Maya stopped abruptly when Dean held out his hand in a stop-and-be-quiet gesture.

"Dad?" he asked in disbelief and uncertainty. He held the phone to his ear for a moment longer before bringing it down to just stare at it.

"Dean, what happened? You look like you just saw a ghost, or in this case heard one," Maya looked at him in concern as he plopped into the driver's seat and shut the car door.

Dean turned to Maya his face holding hidden pain and grief, but mostly a lot of incredulity. "I think I just did."

"Wait. Your Dad's…?" Maya left the obvious unstated.

"Yeah," Dean said curtly as he started up the impala. "Buckle up," he said off-hand when he noticed the lack of fastened seatbelt.

Maya did as he asked. They travelled silently back to the motel for the most part, no classic 80's rock music blaring like usual.

Maya didn't know how to respond to the knowledge that Sam and Dean's Dad was dead. They never really talked about him that much. Guess it was their way of grieving. Her argument and running away from her own Dad must seem so silly and childish to them. Who knew what would happen between now and when her and her Dad crossed paths next? Was it really worth leaving everything as is between them? When one day the other might no longer be there to apologize to?

She didn't want that, but she just wasn't ready yet.

"I'm sorry," Maya offered in sympathy. She could barely imagine a world without her Dad in it, but what she could imagine was painful.

Dean's jaw clenched for a moment before relaxing and letting out a sigh. "Is what it is…thanks though," he finished awkwardly. He just doesn't do emotional crap.
"No problem," Maya watched all the buildings and signs pass by. "Can I say a totally clichéd and chick flick moment worthy comment to show my emotional support?"

Dean gave a huff in amusement before threatening, "Don't you dare. No chick flick moments in Baby!"

Maya gave a dramatic put upon sigh as she threw her arms up slightly in exasperation, looking Heaven wards. "Alright, if you insist. But let it be known it's implied!"

_I'm here for you and Sam._

"Whatever, Goldy." There was a beat of silence. "Still bunking with Sam."

"Aw, c'mon! He's clingy!"

"Dad?" Sam said in disbelief at what Dean just told him. He looked over at his pacing brother from his seat on his and Maya's bed. "You really think it was Dad?"

"I don't know. Maybe." Dean shrugged. His voice unsure.

"Maya, did you hear anything?" Sam asked looking over at the two-seater couch in the room where she sat with Puck resting his head on her lap.

"He was outside the car. I didn't hear squat," Maya propped her feet up on the coffee table, being mindful of Sam's computer and the portable printer they had. She stroked her beloved dog's head and back.

Sam turned back to Dean, "Well, what did he sound like?"

Dean turned around to look at him. "Like Oprah," he said sarcastically. "It was Dad. He sounded like Dad. What do you think?"

"What did he say?" Sam continued the questioning.

"Uh, my name," his face still showed his nervousness over the situation and his incredulity.

"That's it?"

Dean shook his head, "Yeah, the call dropped out."

Sam thought a moment before asking, "Why would he even call in the first place, Dean?"

"I don't know, man. Why are ghosts calling anybody in this town?" Dean shot back.

Maya's ears perked at that question. Yes, why _were_ ghosts calling? Why were multiple, unrelated, ghosts using the _same method_ to communicate to their loved ones?
What if they're *not* ghosts?" Maya put out there. The Winchesters looked over at her. "I mean, none of the ghosts are related but they're *all* reaching out in the *same* way. It can't be some weird ghostly coincidence, right?"

Sam interjected, "The evidence we have so far points to it being ghosts, and, unless we're missing something, we'll just have to work off that theory."

"Besides, other people get to hear from their loved ones. Why can't we? It's at least a possibility, right?" Dean asked with cautious hope. Maya's heart ached for him.

"Maybe," Maya sighed. "But, my opinion is that it's *not* ghosts."

"Ghost or not," Dean said as he sat down across from Sam looking between his brother and Maya. "What if it really is our Dad? What happens if he calls back?"

Maya sent him a confused look; one similar to the one Sam was also giving him.

"What do you mean?" Sam asked with furrowed eyebrows.

"What do I say?" Dean asked, green eyes uncertain. Maya's face turned sympathetic. Whether it was their Dad or not, what do you say? Was there anything to be said? Anything to mend?

*Ah, crap.* Maya's mind went to thoughts of her own Dad. If he managed to get a hold of her right now, what would she say to him? Her mind blanked, but her heart twisted in anxiety, grief, and regret. Her Dad must be going out of his mind wondering if she was all right.

Then Sam answered, "Um, 'Hello'?"

Dean gave his brother a look that translated to *seriously?* "'Hello.'?" he asked in a deadpanned voiced.

Sam had a very *I-don't-know* face going on when he shrugged.

Maya rolled her eyes at the younger Winchester, not that he saw. For someone who seemed somewhat in touch with their emotions, he was just as emotionally constipated as Dean sometimes.

"That's what you come back with—'*Hello'/*?" Dean asked annoyed. Maya didn't blame him.

"Uh…"

Dean shook his head and got up, heading towards the door. He grabbed his jacket and looked back at Sam in annoyance, '*Hello'/*? With a scoff he opened the door and left.
Sam let out a sigh and shook his head. He stood up and went over to where Maya was to keep digging on what was happening in this town, when he saw her look at him. She was giving him a _really_?-bitch-face, complete with raised eyebrow.

"What?" Sam asked, sitting on the opposite side of where Puck was on the couch.

"Hello?"

Sam groaned in exasperation as he pulled his laptop closer to him on the coffee table, "Just—drop it."

It was quiet between the two as Sam started clacking away at the keyboard to continue researching.

"…'Hello'?"

Cue Sam's anguished groan of torment.

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3 Hours Later…

**Milan Public Library**

Maya had left Sam to his research, not much longer after Dean had left, and had made her way to the town library with Puck and his all access vest in place. Specifically, she made herself comfortable in it's computer lab. She gave hourly updates to Sam, and also acted as a sounding board for him when it seemed he hit a wall with the _ghost theory_.

She tried researching things known to mimic people, but had exceptionally bad luck. The first computer she tried, the moment she typed in 'monsters that mimic people' the whole computer fritzed into the blue screen of death.

She notified the librarian, and then went to the next computer. _Internet connection not found_. Okay. She tried again. _Computer virus froze the whole computer screen_. This was getting weird. Maya decided to just go with whatever books were available in the library, if only to get an idea of which direction she should be looking in. So, she went to the library directory and searched for books on 'supernatural monsters'. The entire network crashed. Cries of academic anguish echoed in the silent building.

The librarians were frantically calling tech support and trying to figure out what the hell happened. So, those hourly updates to Sam? Lots of frustrated griping over the electronic databases and
library directory not working.

When there wasn't much that could be done, Maya finally approached one of the workers and asked where the mythology and supernatural section was. It was a good a place as any to start. She worked her way through the stacks till she came upon the shelves that should contain possible leads.

Maya was pretty sure her eye was twitching a little bit. Sure she didn't expect a lot of books, but she expected a good number since academic types liked to write about myths and legends. Where the books she was looking for was supposed to be was an empty shelf.

"You have got to be kidding me," Maya groaned at her wits end. She had just spent the better part of the afternoon trying to find anything at all related to monsters and mimicry, but has ended up with \textit{bupkiss}. It didn't help that she forgot to grab something for lunch. Her saving grace was having some high sugar candy in her pocket to stave off her hypoglycemia, but she was really hungry for some real food. She glared hatefully at the empty shelf.

\textit{~I'm a Barbie girl!}

\textit{In a Barbie woorrrrld!}

\textit{Life's fanta-~'}

Maya's glare lessened only a fraction as her lips quirked up into an involuntary small smile when she answered the phone.

"What Dean?" any good mood brought on by the ringtone and the memory associated with it was pushed aside when her stomach demanded food.

"Whoa, stow the tude Goldy. What crawled up your ass and died?" Dean joked a little.

She was not amused. "Bite me Winchester," she growled. "Wha'd'ya want?"

"Seriously kid, what's up with you?"

"...I forgot to grab some lunch, and Sam should know about why I am pissed off." She heard muffled talking on the other end, obviously Dean asking what she was talking about.

"Well that sounds like some shit luck. You don't have a cursed rabbit's foot on you, do you?...What, Sam?" Sam's voice was muffled as he asked Dean something. Dean sighed, "Okay. Sam wants to know if your blood sugar levels are okay?"

"They're fine. Had some chocolate bars, but I still need real food."

"She's fine Sam!...Bitch. All right. You still at the library?"

"We're heading over to the Thomas Edison museum. Got a possible lead for why so many ghosts are making some collect calls home. Want us to swing by and pick you up? If not we'll probably be another hour—"
"Get me. *Now.*" Maya interrupted with the demand. She was *so done* with this library. Even if she didn't do anything else for an hour she just wanted out of there.

"Okay, okay. See you in 5," Dean hung up and Maya snapped her phone shut.

"C'mon, Puck we're outta here," she said looking down at the little dog in slight relief.

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*Thomas Edison Museum*

"Still don't think its ghosts," Maya grumped as they all exited the museum after getting a look at that *spirit phone*. Dean thinks it's acting like a radio tower, broadcasting ghosts all over town. Sam and Maya could both see that Dean was hopeful that his and Sam's Dad was calling him.

"Best lead we got," Dean countered eyeing the normally mellow and cheery teenager. "You got something different? We're all ears."

She just sent Dean a bitch-face of epic proportions translating into a cross of *you-know-I-don't-stupid* and *I'm-too-annoyed-and-hungry-to-deal-with-you-right-now-bitch*.

Sam's eyebrows went up to his hairline in surprise at the face.

Dean gave an impressed whistle. "Wow. That was a Sammy worthy bitch-face right there," he looked over at Sam. "Sam, I think you're being a bad influence. She's picking up on how to do your special brand of bitch-faces." Sam sent him a bitch-face for that.

"Can we just get some food now?" Maya complained as they approached the impala and she slid into the back with Puck. "I'm already pissed off from the library debacle and I'm hungry. *Not a very good combination.*"

"Well, *hungry*, wha'd'ya want?" Dean smirked as he sat down behind the wheel and turned the engine over, eliciting a rumbling purr.

"Seriously, Dean?" Sam asked him incredulously at the Dad joke.

"I don't give a *fuck* what we get, Dean," Maya said with a glare. "And I'm *sooo* not in the mood for jokes right now."

"Not in the mood for jokes? Damn, you are *pissy,*" Dean chuffed as he pulled the impala out of the parking lot.

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*Next Morning...*
The Winchester Patriarch called Dean again late last night while Maya and Sam slept. He was hyped up saying that their Dad gave him an exorcism that could kill demons. But also that the demon was there with them in Milan, Ohio. Sam still wasn't sure that it was their Dad's ghost calling, and Maya was still pretty sure that they weren't dealing with ghosts at all. Sam had sent a copy of the exorcism over to Bobby to check it out, while he tried his luck at the local library's computer lab. Since Dean commandeered his computer.

While Sam was out Dean also looked up the exorcism and demonic omens to find validity in his Dad's claims. Maya decided to leave Dean to it and go grab some late breakfast for the two of them. Sam said he'd grab something near the library, so he was fine.

There was a diner couple blocks away that did take-out so she went there and got a carnivore special for Dean, and some pancakes for her. On her way back her phone rang in her pocket using the default ringtone. Probably a telemarketer.

Not bothering with checking the caller ID she answered in her best-automated voice she could muster, "Hello! You've reached the Prankster Hotline! Here for all your pranking and mischief making needs! If you—"

"That's pretty good Maltesers. I personally would've gone with 'Ghostbusters. Wha'da'ya want?''" the very familiar voice laughed on the other end. Shocked coloured Maya's features as she stopped walking and stood ramrod straight.

"Dad?"

"Nope. Slimmer," he answered glibly, but something sounded off with his voice.

"You called me?"

"Uh, yeah. You're my daughter, and all joking aside we need to talk," his voice turned a little serious as he sighed at the end. "Listen, I know where you are and who you've been hanging out with."

"No you don't," Maya countered hastily showing her uncertainty. Something wasn't right.

"Milan, Ohio and with those Winchester knuckleheads," he told her, causing her breath to catch and her eyes to widen. Oh shit. "Why are you travelling with them? You know what Sam did in that time-loop."

Maya swallowed thickly. "We've already talked about this. He's not that Sam. He wouldn't hurt me and neither would Dean. Please just leave them alone. They've got enough crap going on, they don't need your brand of tricks popping up right now."

She heard him sigh tiredly on the other end, "Almond Joy, I don't want to argue with you anymore." He paused before continuing, "I got carried away in my parental instincts, and they kind of went into overdrive. But you're my baby girl. I love you and I just—I just wanted to keep you safe." Any suspicion she had was pushed back as the guilt and regret from running away again swelled up inside her from hearing the weary tone in his voice.

"Dad, I—" her voice caught in her throat, her chest tightening. What can she say?

"Shit," her Dad cursed on the other end of phone. "Sorry Baby Ruth. My target just walked in. Listen, I'll call you later tonight okay? We can talk some more and work through this, alright?"
"Y-yeah. Okay," Maya choked out a little.

"Hey, hey," he comforted. "It's going to be all right. I love you, Milky Way."

"I-I love you too, Dad." Maya smiled as the tightening in her chest lessened.

"Good to hear," she could hear the smile in his voice. "Talk to you soon." Then she only heard the dial tone.

Something still niggled at the back of her mind. Something that told her to be wary, that the voice was wrong somehow. How could that be? He sounded just like her Dad, the same pitch and timbre, the same candy-based nicknames…but Dean also thinks his Dad was calling him as well…

Maya pushed the thought aside. Whatever was going on around here they were using the voices of dead loved ones, not living ones. She started walking back to the motel with the less than hot breakfast take-out and checked her recent call history. Just in case.

It was just a random cellphone number. Not that weird SHA33 number that's been popping up. The part of her that told her to be suspicious was drowned out with the overwhelming feeling of relief. Her Dad didn't seem angry with her, but more of a worried-calm combo. Hopefully he'll be willing to listen and keep his overprotectiveness in check when they talk later. Well, maybe not all of it but hopefully enough to avoid a shouting match.

Maya gets to the motel to see the silver rental car that Sam was using parked beside the impala…Baby looked way better. She stopped mid-stride and groaned, remembering a previous conversation from yesterday. She really was like Dean's mini-me if she started thinking of the impala as Baby. Shaking her head she went to the motel room and opened the door.

She wished she hadn't.

"—for months we've been trying to make this demon deal. Now Dad's about to give us the freakin' address, and you can't accept it?!" Dean shouted at Sam who had his back turned to him.

Sam stood a few feet from the now open door where Maya was standing in the doorway with wide eyes. He looked at her with a strained face as Dean continued shouting.

"The man is dead, and you're still butting heads with the guy!" Dean held his arms out at his sides. His eyes momentarily flicker to Maya before focusing on Sam as Sam's patience ran out.

Maya was frozen in the doorway, not sure whether to run or not. She didn't like seeing the two brothers fighting like this, with raised tempers. Ribbing and non-serious arguments (like who's better: Bruce Lee or Chuck Norris?) were fine. It was just some joking around, some lighthearted fun.
"That's not what this is about," Sam said sternly as he turned around to look at Dean in annoyed anger. "The fact is, we got no hard proof here, Dean," he pointed out before raising his own voice and continuing, "After everything, you're still going on just blind faith!"

"Yeah, well, maybe! You know, maybe that's all I got, okay?!" Dean shouted desperately. Maya seeing that the verbal spar had ended edged further into the room and closed the door behind her, Puck sticking close as she went to sit on the nearest bed.

Sam gave Dean a sympathetic look at his other brother bowed his head at his admission. "Please. Please, just don't go anywhere until I get back, okay, Dean? Please," Sam pleaded. Dean looked up with a blank face and they both just stared at each other saying nothing. Sam shook his head as he turned and walked out of the room.

Maya fidgeted on Dean's bed, still holding the semi-warm late breakfast she got.

Dean went to the room's kitchenette and sat at the table staring at his phone, waiting. Maya looked helplessly at Puck, unsure of what to do. Puck just shrugged at her helpfully.

Looking over at Dean's tense posture and the rapidly cooling food in her lap, she let out a sigh and walked over.

She put the take-out bag on the table. "You hungry?" she asked taking the seat beside him. "I got side-tracked on the way back, so it's probably not as warm...but nothing a little nuking won't cure, right?" she sent Dean a small smile. Dean's eyes flickered briefly to her face but returned to their previous staring off into space position. Maya let out a dejected sigh and took out her breakfast of pancakes and little containers of maple syrup, then pushed the take-out bag to an un-crowded corner of the table.

The pancakes were lukewarm at best by now and slightly soggy from the condensation in their container, but Maya still poured syrup on them and ate them regardless. She was still hungry, after all. But this tense silence was unnerving.

"Soooo, where did Sam go?" Maya asked taking bite of her food.

"A, ah, teenage girl named Lanie called Sam saying her Mom called her again last night. Seemed pretty freaked out about it," Dean shrugged but then turned his now focused gaze on her. Uh-oh. "Do you think it's wrong to have some faith in my Dad?" Green eyes sent her a penetrating gaze, seemingly waiting to pass judgment on her answer. Ugh.

"I'd rather not get dragged into a family argument," Maya said fidgeting in her seat. "It's bad enough watching you two argue like that, I'd rather not be a part of it."

"You realize me and Sam argue a lot right?" Dean raised an eyebrow at her as she stabbed her
syrup-drenched pancakes.

"Well, yeah, but those were different," gold met green, "and you know it." She broke his gaze first and took another bite of her food. "Do you still want my opinion?" she sighed, giving him a sidelong glance.

"Wouldn't have asked if I didn't, Goldy."

Maya looked at the wall their table was against and thought about the question. Was it wrong to have faith in *family*?

"Sam's right," Maya said evenly.

Dean's eyes narrowed on her in anger. "The hell he is!" he said with a loud voice, causing Maya to flinch a little. His eyes twinge slightly in regret at the flinch but he still kept his grimace in place.

"There's a reason it's called *blind* faith, Dean. It's the kind of faith that can get people killed; get people to do *unspeakable* things because they blindly follow someone. Because they think that person could do no wrong, so they don't bother asking questions or even look at evidence to the contrary of what they're saying." Maya argued her point. "I'm still not sure if you're actually talking to your Dad since I'm pretty sure none of this is ghost related. But you shouldn't just believe blindly."

"He's my Dad, Maya. I *know* he is," Dean said tightly glaring at her. "So, what? You saying I shouldn't believe in anyone? Have faith in anyone?" the 'Even you', was heavily implied and it stung.

"*No!*" Maya denied vehemently. "I'm saying what Sam is saying. Don't excuse contrary evidence because you don't want to believe it was all fake! If it is your Dad—"

"It is." Dean growled out.

"—then great! But *don't* go after the demon unless you know that exorcism *actually works*. Or, that the person you've got cornered *is* the demon who holds you're contract." Maya looked at him pleadingly, hoping he'll see where she's coming from.

He didn't. Dean leaned on the table towards her, no doubt about to tell exactly what he thought when his phone on the table in front of him started ringing.

"Dean…" Maya looked at him wide-eyed and shook her head a little.

He stared her down, thinking, but on the third ring he answered. "Dad?...Where's the demon?...Right. Got it...Thanks, Dad." Dean finished and hung up while getting out of his seat, ignoring the teenager staring at him beseechingly.

Breakfast forgotten, Maya watched from her chair as Dean started packing up a duffle bag full of
weapons. Getting up she walked over to him.

"Dean, don't—" she began but Dean cut her off and looked at her sharply at her with a glare.

"Don't what? Save my life? Finally gank the son of a bitch that holds my contract?!"

"I was going to say don't be stupid, but it's obviously a waste of time," Maya said sarcastically, tired of him being ticked off at her for giving a shit about him.

Dean sends her a withering glare, growling, "Screw you Maya."

"Gee, sorry for caring what actually happens to you! I'm not trying to stop you from getting out of your deal!" she scoffed her eyes watering a little. "Sorry, I just wanted you to be smart and safe about it! Or what's the point if you get yourself killed while doing it?!" she choked out. As far as Maya was concerned the Winchester's were her friends. So, why couldn't Dean see that she just wanted to help?

Dean heard the emotions strangling her voice and saw glittering gold eyes look at him desperately. His face softened from its glare as he let out a sigh. Here he thought Sam's kicked puppy dog eyes were bad.

"If you're going to do this, at least let me and Puck come with you," Maya asked.

Despite the regret he felt there was no way he was risking Maya in this. Her words about blind faith niggle annoyingly in the back of his mind. He'll risk his neck, but not hers. She was still too inexperienced to deal with a demon.

"Sorry Goldy," Dean shook his head. "Not happening. You ain't ready for demons."

The sound of that heinous nickname sent relief through Maya's veins. Glad that Dean's anger with her has dissipated. It hadn't taken long to associate that hearing Dean call her by her birth name usually meant she was in trouble or he was pissed at her. "Then call Sam to meet you there, or-or something. Just don't go it alone." Maya tried to compromise.

"...Fine. When I'm all set up I'll give him a call." Dean conceded as he headed to the door. "That reminds me. When I leave salt the door and windows, just in case, and..." Dean rummages around the duffel full of weapons, pulling out a machete and anti-possession charm. "Won't do too much, but better than nothing," Dean handed her the items.

"Thanks," Maya sent him a small smile as she put the necklace on. "Be careful, yeah?"

"When am I not?" Dean snorted, but seeing Maya about to answer he added, "Don't answer that!" With that he left the motel room and went to go hunt down the demon that held his contract.
Maya looked out the window and watched the impala rumble out of the parking lot. With a worried frown she went back to the table to finish off her pancakes.

"What the-?! PUCK!" she exclaimed at finding Puck in her seat and eating her food. He looked over and gave a happy bark before continuing his little feast. She sighed, but didn't stop the little Jack Russell. She went over and pulled Dean's forgotten breakfast towards her. When Puck saw what she had, a container full of eggs, bacon, sausages and hashbrowns he let out a whine. "This might've been yours if you left my breakfast alone! Your own fault, you little shit."

Puck stared at her, then hopped up onto the table to try and nab some bacon.

Later…

Sam

After saving Lanie's little brother Simon from becoming a street pancake he got into the silver rental and started heading back to the motel. Maya was right, there weren't any ghosts calling loved ones. It was a Crocotta. He flipped his phone open and dialed Dean's number.

"Dean, it's not Dad." Sam told Dean immediately.

"What is it?" Dean asked.

"A Crocotta." Sam answered; he couldn't believe he didn't see it.

"Is that a sandwich?" Dean asked confused.

"Some kind of scavenger—mimics loved ones, whispers 'come to me', and lures you into the dark and devours your soul," Sam informed.

"Crocotta—right. Damn, that makes sense."

"Dean, look. I'm sorry, man. I know—"

Dean interrupted Sam, "Hey, don't these things live in filth?"

"Yeah," Sam confirmed.

"Sam, the flies at the phone company," Dean pointed out. Realization dawned on Sam's face as he hung up his phone and changed course. Dean would no doubt meet him there.
At The Same Time…

Dean

Dean finished up setting up the house the demon was squatting in with devil's traps and jugs of holy water. He called Sam, like he told Maya he would.

"Sam, I need you to come to this address. It's where Dad told me the demon's been hiding out."

"Dean," Sam sighed. "How do you know for sure what Dad told you is real?"

"Seriously Sam?" Dean asked incredulous. He shook his head as he walked around. "Just come help me out. If it doesn't work it doesn't work and we'll figure something else out."

"Dean, I've got another lead on the case. Solid evidence. Where ever you are, just get out and we'll deal with it together later—"

"You know what Sam? No. If you don't want to help save my life, fine. But the hell I'm letting this bastard slip away!" Dean shouted angrily before hanging up.

'Sorry Goldy, but I can't let this chance pass me by,' Dean thought as he settled in to wait.

Phone Company…

Clark pulled away from the machine, disconnecting from the telephone and Internet network. He turned his shaven head towards Wanda with a satisfied smile.

"All done beautiful," he purred. "You want to lure the last one?"

Wanda brushed a stray lock of black hair behind her ear as she smiled sickeningly at Clark. "You're too good to me my mate," she purred, stroking his cheek as she sashayed up to the machine, syncing in through her touch. "To think, two Hunters brought in such a lovely little delicacy with them. A little Trickster half-ling, all alone, not even fully grown into her powers yet, and no Trickster parent in sight," her smile widened as said half-Trickster answered her phone happy to talk to her Dad.

Clark chuckled at his mate as he kept a look out for that human Stewie who normally worked this area, "Anything for you my dear."
Maya ignored the piteous look Puck was sending her at she was getting close to finishing off Dean's meaty breakfast. Honestly she was pretty full, but after Puck's stunt she was going to try and eat all of it.

Her phone rang and she recognized the number. She quickly answered it excitedly, "Hey Dad!"

"Hey Laffy Taffy! Told you I'd call back," he laughed.

"Yeah, you did. So, how did your latest trick go?" Maya asked, the nervousness of the coming conversation filling her.

"Pretty good. Dished out some just-desserts. The usual," she could hear the smug grin in his voice, but something still sounded off. She couldn't place it. Maya shook her head; she was being ridiculous. Who else could it be? She could count the number of people who had her number on one hand.

"Can I have some details please?" Maya asked with her best innocent and childish voice.

Her Dad chuckled. "Maybe later Wunderbar. After we've had our chat."

Maya sighed, "Yeah, okay. Where do you wanna start?"

"No kiddo, we need to talk in person. I need you to come to me." There was that feeling again, that wrongness.

"Come to you?" Maya asked with a cocked eyebrow. "Depending where you are it might take me a day or two, probably less if you meet me at least half way…"

"I'm here Raisinet," her Dad revealed and Maya's heart dropped. "Ooooor. "Listen I'm not going to —"

"No messing with Sam and Dean," Maya said resolutely.

He huffed a laugh, "But they're so fun to screw with! But fine. I'll leave them alone. That mean you'll come to me?"

"Yeah. I will. But, also, no just whisking me away! Okay? We got to talk this out," Maya added on seriously.

"Sure thing Caramello! Figured we can talk over at that park backed on that nature preserve. Maybe take some of the trails and snap a few photos. You still like taking pictures of nature right?" he asked.

"Yeah, that sounds like fun." Maya hesitated. "But won't it be dark soon? It's still March."

"Ah. Right," he sounded a little dejected but then bounced back. "We meet up at the start of one of the trails and then go for dinner somewhere. I promise to be on my best behavior." Maya could just imagine her Dad crossing his fingers playfully.

"You crossed you're fingers didn't you," Maya asked amused.
"Guilty," he answered with not an ounce of remorse. "Come to me, Spree." Then the call ended.

Maya closed her phone and looked around the salt lined motel room. Would it be okay to go? Unease resurfaced. Something still didn’t seem right with the situation. Something about her Dad’s voice was off. Pushing the feeling away she looked over at Puck.

"Hey, you ready to see Dad, buddy?" Puck gave a happy yip. "Yeah. I'll just text Sam what's going on, then we can leave." Doing that, Puck and Maya went to the door walking past the machete Dean left for her on his bed. She paused to look at the weapon.

Would she need it? She doubted demons were a match for her Dad, but…she could run into them along the way. Deciding to be safe than sorry she picked up the machete and fastened it inside her jacket, keeping it hidden.

"Come on, Puck. Let's go see Dad," she said smiling as she and Puck left the motel room. Though she was nervous she was also glad that they were going to work things out.
Quadruped?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Phone Company…

Sam

It was dark when Stewie finally exited the company to his car, ready to go home. Sam was certain he was the Crocotta and surprised him, holding a knife to the base of his neck and pinning him against his car. However, Stewie's protests and begging confused Sam. Usually by now the monster tended to reveal itself once it knows its been made.

He didn't see Clark coming up behind home with a bat. Sam just felt a blinding pain at the back of his head and everything going dark.

They were all in the basement section of the company with all the machines that held all the data the phone company collected. It wasn't long after getting knocked out that Sam started coming to with a throbbing head, only to find himself tied down in a chair with his hands bound behind his back by what felt like cable. He woke up rather quickly when he saw Clark circling a sniveling and bound Indian man with the knife Sam used to threaten the actually human Stewie.

"I'm—I'm sorry, Clark. I'm sorry for whatever I did to you. I'm sorry. Please," Stewie begged.

Sam could see the look in Clark's eyes as he circled the pleading man. A hungry look. "Wait! Wait. Don't do that," Sam ordered, even though there wasn't much he could actually do in his helpless position.

Clark stared at Sam from behind Stewie as he grabbed the sniveling man's shoulder and leaned over him, his head just by the man's ear. "You're awake," he said not breaking eye contact with Sam as he smiled and rested the tip of the knife on Stewie's upper thigh.

"You're not a killer, Clark. No!" Stewie whined, trying to appeal to something human inside of Clark. Not that he knew what Clark was to begin with and how very not human he was. Sam struggled as Clark turned his head to Stewie's ear, uncomfortably close. "There's a—there's a good man inside of you. I know it."

Clark looked back at Sam, "What do you think, Sammy? Am I a good man?" They both knew he wasn't a man at all.

"Just let him go," Sam said vainly.

"I would," Clark began as he straightened up. "I really would. If only I had more than a salad for lunch," he held the knife at head level with Stewie, causing the poor man to panic more seeing the instrument of his demise. "See…I'm starving," he held the knife up high and brought it down, and into Stewie's heart.

"No!" Sam shouted as he looked away, not wanting to see the moment Stewie was killed.

"Ugh!" was the last thing Stewie said as his head lolled back then tilted forward as Clark released
his grip, blood dripped from his mouth. He was dead.

Sam's eyes flashed with regret then focused back on Clark when something weird happened. His teeth had become like stained, thick, yellow needles that were easily 2-3" long and bones cracked as he did an uncanny impression of a snack unhinging its jaw.

Clark turned Stewie's body to face him, gripping his shoulders, and began inhaling. A white smoke like wisp of light began leaving Stewie's nose and mouth, and into Clark's gaping maw. It even lit up the inside of Clark's cheeks. Once the last bit of Stewie's soul had passed Clark's lips, he closed his mouth, his jaw returning to place. The Crocotta straightened back up smacking his lips and wiping the back of his hand over them.

Sam's mind raced at how the Crocotta got the jump on him. It didn't take long to realize what happened. "My last call with Dean——" he huffed with a chagrined smile. "That was you. You led me here" he looked at the Crocotta in certainty. After all, they could mimic the voices of loved ones; they didn't necessarily have to be dead.

Clark smiled and looked over at Sam, "Some calls I make, some calls I take. But you had to admit; I had you fooled for a while. All that Edison phone crap..." He started backing up to a wall-mounted machine covered in red lights. "Oh, well," he chuckled as he turned to the machine and placed his hands on it. He tilted his head back smiling at he connected to it, creating an electrical buzzing sound and distorted voices.

Sam looked at him in confusion and asked, "What are you doing?"

Clark looked back at the bound Hunter, with a smug smile. "I'm killing your brother," he said then tilted his head in mock uncertainty. "Or maybe I'm killing the other guy. We'll just have to see how it goes."

Sam's face was full of concern as he struggled undoing his bindings and they were slowly coming undone. Just needed some more time.

Clark casually walked back over to Stewie and removed the bloody knife from his chest. Sam knew where it was going if he didn't get free. He needed the guy to keep talking.

"You know, mimicking Dean's one thing," Sam started. Mind as well figure out how he mimicked their Dad. "But my Dad—that's a hell of a trick."

Clark looked at him with a grin, "Well, once I made you two as Hunters, it was easy." He pushed the office chair containing Stewie's body away. "Found Dean's number, then your number, then your father's numbers, then to e-mails, voice mails—everything," he stalked towards Sam as he talked, twirling the knife as he spoke. He crouched in front of Sam, the knife pointed right in his face. "Even found your little Trickster half-ling's number. Oh, what a surprise and delight it was for my mate and I that two Hunters of all people bring with them such a little treat. Not often we stumble across a pagan half-ling with no parent around," Clark smiled smugly as he watched the Hunter's shoulders tense.
"What are you talking about? Why would you want to eat her? Maya's half—" Sam started, but Clark interrupted him.

"Half-Trickster? Yes, but still half-human. With a lovely little, extra sweet, human-ish soul to go along with it," Clark smiled. "I really should thank you and you're brother. Do you know how rare it is to find half-human pagan younglings now a day? Especially of the Trickster variety? Tricksters are notoriously protective over any young they have. So you can imagine my mate's surprise and utter delight at having one practically served up on a silver-and-slightly-estranged-Father platter," he smiled at Sam's stricken face. "Poor girl. Feeling guilty with the way she left things with her Father. So, it didn't take much for my mate to choose a random number, call her phone, and set up a time to...reconnect. It was extremely easy with all the voicemails and texts Daddy Loki left for her.

"So, you see people, and apparently pagan gods, think that that stuff just gets erased. But it doesn't. You'd be surprised at just how much of yourself is just floating out there, waiting to be plucked," he finished in the whispery-voice he'd been using.

Sam was shocked at what he learned. Not only there was another Crocotta out there on its way to attack Maya, but also that her Father was Loki, the Norse god of mischief and chaos himself. He couldn't focus on that yet, right now he was almost free of the wiring and it looked like Clark was getting ready to make a meal out of him. Just a little more time.

"They're not going to fall for this," Sam knew that his brother was smarter than most people, even Dean himself, gave credit for. Maya? Her brain was always on the move with out of the box thinking and being able to think fast on her feet, as well as being literally fast on her feet. "Dean's not going to kill that guy, and Maya won't let your mate get close enough to kill her," Sam said confidently.

Clark shrugged, unconcerned. "Then the guy kills him, and, well, my mate likes doing things a little more...traditionally when given the chance. So, tell me Sammy, can you're little friend outrun a quadruped?"

Sam struggled and squirmed; he needed to get free and gank this asshole. Before it was too late for the little Trickster that waltzed into his and Dean's lives.

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**Edison Park...**

**Maya**

It was still light out when Maya and Puck got to the park. There was a playground, multiple fenced in tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a covered area for people to eat under or hang out, and a huge grass field at the back that was at the edge of the nature preserve tree line. There were still patches of snow here and there, and the ground still semi-frozen. There wasn't anyone else around, given it was the tail end of winter and the sun still liked to hide behind the clouds.

Maya and Puck began walking towards the back of the park towards the wooded area, passing the
baseball diamond and tennis courts, the back parking lot, and crossing the empty field. They saw
the opening to the trails and walked over, stopping at the tree line and looked in. The forest was
mostly evergreens and their branches in the waning light casted large shadows beneath them. With
the sun setting the trail looked ominous and foreboding.

She began looking around for her Dad. He had to be here somewhere? Where could he be? This
was the only trail entrance she could see. Then her phone started ringing. Seeing the caller ID she
answered.

"Hey Dad. I'm here. Where are you?" she asked still looking around. Puck, however, had his eyes
trained on the darkened trail. He smelled something. Something odd.

"I'm here too. Just got curious and walked a bit into the woods on the trail," he laughed, causing
Maya to smile. "Turns out there's only the one trail but it leads to something really cool! You gotta
come check it out!" her Dad encouraged.

Maya's eyebrows pinched as the sun set lower and the shadows in the woods grew darker. "I don't
know Dad. It's already getting pretty dark. You should just come out and we can go grab some
dinner," she shifted warily. She did not feel like getting jumped in the dark by something or
someone, including her Dad. The ass.

"Don't worry. Dinner's covered," there was a strange tone in his voice that set her slightly on edge.
Puck shifted nervously at her feet. "Besides, I'm the only one in here. Nothing to be scared about
and it's not like I'm going to let anything happen to you. So come on! Come to me," her Dad
beckoned her over the phone.

"I...uh..." there it was again. That feeling that said something was up with her Dad's voice. Being
stuck in the quickly fading light and looking into a shadow entrenched forest, the entrance like the
mouth of a monster's lair, she felt more inclined to listen to that feeling.

Puck watched the woods the best he could, scenting the air as well. Whatever lurked in those
woods was not his mistress' male parent. He started growling threateningly as he heard almost
silent footsteps approach from the forest depths.

Maya looked at Puck and the signals she'd been ignoring started blaring inside her mind, as her
body started pumping adrenaline.

DANGER WILL ROBINSON!

"Come to me, baby girl. Come to me," the faint voice on the phone beckoned urgently. "You there
Sno-Cap? Come to me...come to me..."

"Come to me..." Maya muttered, then her eyes went wide with shock and fear as it all clicked into
place. Her theory of all the happenings being a monster mimicking loved ones, the pigsty the
Winchesters told her about at the phone company, and her Dad saying 'come to me' a lot.
Maya started backing away from the lightless forest. Not that everywhere else around her was much better. Night had come and the moon barely shone through the clouds to illuminate the darkness around her.

"You're not my Dad," Maya whispered into the phone receiver as tears pricked her eyes. "You're a Crocotta. You tricked me!" she kept backing up while keeping her eyes peeled on the tree line.

The phone went silent and whatever was on the other end hung up. She snapped it shut and stuffed it in her pocket.

"Aw Razzles," her Father's voice called from the darkness. Puck started snarling and barking as he remained as a barrier between the thing and his mistress. "Of course it's me. You're hanging around those chuckleheads too much. You're becoming paranoid," she could barely make out a shape amongst the shadows of the trees that concealed it, but with all the other shadows had trouble focusing on it.

"Then tell me something only me and my Dad would know," Maya demanded as her heart bounded wildly beneath her chest. "Tell me the special name he calls me."

"Juicy Fruit," the voice sighed. "It's me!" it stressed. "Just come here…come to me"

Maya reached into her jacket and pulled out the machete, holding in a ready position like Dean had taught her. "Then answer the damn question!"

"Wow. You'd really pull a weapon on your old man?"

"When it's not him? Definitely," Maya said with a grimace. "Answer, or back the fuck off."

The mimic of her Dad's voice chuckled. "It's a trick question. There is no one special name that I call you. All my terms of endearment are dessert or candy-related."

"You'd think being a Trickster that it would be a trick question…but it's not," there was a punctuated silence between them. "You're not my Dad."

There was a series of disgusting cracking sounds then a large shape burst through the tree line towards her and Puck. Maya swung the machete as a deterrent, but apparently it had no intention of attacking her. It just wanted to get behind her.

She followed the shape and turning her body to keep it in sight. Maya did not expect to see a large black wolfish-doglike creature with a too wide a mouth filled with hypodermic needle like teeth. It's shoulders reached her fucking chest! Or maybe it was the ridge of stiff fur running along it's back like a hyena's…either way, this didn't bode well.
It opened its maw and a familiar female voice emerged from it, "Can't blame a girl for trying, can you?"

"Wanda?" Maya asked confused, keeping her machete ready. Puck growled at the larger canine promising severe retribution for the threat it posed Maya.

It…she let loose a chuckle with a too wide grin on her muzzle. "Little Trickster half-lings," she mused. "Always the more clever of the bunch, and with much sweeter souls," a large tongue came out of her maw as she licked her chops.

Maya knew she needed to take this seriously but there was a very obvious quip on the edge of her tongue that she couldn't just ignore. "So, your real form is some monstrous wolf-dog hybrid? Good to know the term bitch can be properly used then," she snarked backing up towards the woods, trying to put more distance between them.

"So, like a little Trickster half-ling to make jokes and run their mouths when scared," the She-Crocotta took slow deliberate steps towards Maya and Puck, following them.

"At least I'm not a literal bitch," Maya didn't want to take her eyes off from the threat, but she knew she was getting closer to the forest and the trail. More escape routes being cut off. She could try running through the woods put some obstacles between them, but it'd be damn near impossible with clouds still blocking…the clouds moved on and bright moonlight filtered down.

The sudden light caught the attention of Wanda causing her to look up briefly. Maya turned and ran into the woods with Puck as the delighted laugh of the Crocotta behind her carried on the breeze.

"Run! Run little half-ling!" the whispery voice called. "I do love a chase! Been too long since I've had a good hunt and really got dig my claws in something so delicious!" Loud padded foot falls galloped soon after Maya and Puck into the trees.

Most would think Maya would be having a mantra of 'Oh shit! Oh shit! Oh shit!' Well…'Oh shit!' was prominent in her mind, but the loudest thought was:

*What's with all the monsters wanting to make a meal of her?! This is like the fifth time!*

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**Random House in Milan…**

**Dean**

The sun had gone down and everything was set up for the demon. Dean waited in the archway to the living room by the front door as he heard the tell tale signs of a car pulling in the driveway.
He heard the car door close and the engine cut off as he uncapped the jug of holy water and waited for the son of a bitch to walk through the front door, but no footsteps were heard. Instead he heard something come from the other end of the house, from the back door in the kitchen. He looked between the front and back door in confusion, before the back door bursts open and the demon possessed comes through carrying a shotgun. Dean ducked just in time to miss the shot fired at him, and accidentally threw the open jug of holy water up the stairs.

Dean took cover behind a wall, noticing his jug of holy water was now pouring down the stairs. Annoyed he listened for noise of the demon on the other side of the wall and could hear him reloading the shotgun. Dean quickly ran around the wall and towards the demon, knocking the shotgun out of his hands before he could finish reloading and started wailing on him.

Dean made to grab the shotgun from the floor, thinking he stunned the demon enough to get a hold of it. He didn't and he felt himself get partially picked up by the back of his jacket and tossed on the dining room table where the demon took his turn to start pounding him. Dean grabbed his fists then head butted him and kneed him in the stomach sending the demon to the ground. Dean repeatedly kicked the asshole in the stomach, moving him over the covered devil's trap under the rug.

Once the demon was in the Devil's trap, Dean flipped a corner of the rug so it could see it was trapped. Dean then whipped out the paper with the exorcism his Dad gave him.

Seeing the red spray-painted markings on the dark floor the demon asked confused as he got up, "What is this?"

"Your funeral," Dean told him bluntly then started speaking the Latin exorcism.

The demon stared at him with a dead-eyed gaze as he walked towards the edge of the trap, then out of it. "Did you do this to my daughter too?" the demon asked dead-panned.

Dean stopped speaking Latin and looked at the demon in shocked confusion, "How the hell did you get out?"

"Did you do this to my daughter, too!?" the demon's face was marred with blinding parental rage and anger as he stalked towards Dean.

*Oh crap. Not a demon! Abort! Abort!* 

"Wait. This was a mistake," truer words were never spoken as Dean realized he was dealing with a human. A really pissed off human.

When a parent loses a child the pain they feel tended to be unimaginable, especially in cases of murder. It's like dying, but never receiving the release from the pain, and being forced to live in agonizing grief and rage. So any parent confronted with the murderer of their child, or suspected one in this case, there is no listening to reason or what the other person has to say to defend them. All they tended to feel was the need to seek vengeance and retribution.
Such as the man who believed his daughter told him that Dean was the man who killed her, and was currently trying to return the favor.

"You killed her," the man accused with teary eyes and a bloodied mouth a she got closer to Dean.

"No. Wait—" Dean was cut off as the guy lunged at him.

"You killed her, you son of a bitch!"

Phone Company…

Sam

"Quadruped?" Sam asked as more of the cable wire binding his hands loosened.

Clark shrugged as he straightened up and walked the room a little bit, "My mate and I's more traditional forms. The ones used in the lore about our kind. Bit suspicious if a random person wondered about late at night whispering names, but not unheard of for wolf-dog hyrbids to wander about and whispers to be dismissed as a trick on the senses." The Crocotta smiled as he looked around the room filled with machines.

"Technology…makes life so much easier," he came back over to Sam and used the bloody tip of the knife to move some of his bangs from his face. Sam looked away, swallowing hard. Clark went to walk behind him and Sam turned his head to try to keep the monster in his line of sight. "Used to be my mate and I would hide in the woods for days, weeks, whispering to people. Trying to draw them out into the night. But they had community. They all looked out after each other. We'd be lucky to get one, maybe two souls a year each. So when the phone came along we adapted," Clark now stood in front of Sam again. Clark pointed the knife at Sam, "Now, when we're hungry, we just simply make a phone call. You're all so connected…but you've never been so alone."

Clark opened his mouth to show disgusting yellow needle-like teeth as the bones in his jaw broke to allow his mouth to increase in size. He raised the knife, preparing to skewer Sam's heart, but Sam was able to cast off his bindings and football tackle him to the ground. The knife was knocked from Clark's hand as they landed hard on the speckled tiled floor. Sam lunged for the knife but only just grazes it when Clark tugged him back on his jacket away from it and thrown into the metal screen wall divider on the other side of the room.

Clark had the knife again and ran at Sam with it raised. Sam was able to dodge and they'd grapple over the knife. Sam almost had it when he pinned the Crocotta to a console and tried to take it back, but got a punch to the face for his efforts. Clark came after him again with the knife raised over his head doing a good impression of Psycho. Sam was able to deflect the strike by grabbing the wrist of the hand that held the knife.

As they turned around in a struggle to overpower the other Sam saw a board hung up with metal rods sticking from it. He started pushing Clark towards it. He just needed something to severe the spine from the head. Sam got him close enough and with a final open-palmed hit to the face he
severed Clark's spine at the base of the skull.

Sam panted heavily as he eyed Clark as he died with eyes wide-open and blood spilling from his mouth. *One down…*

Sam took out his cellphone and was about to call Maya when he got a text from her:


"Shit!" Sam cursed as he grabbed the knife from Crocotta Clark's corpse and ran to his silver rental car. He turned on the engine and raced out of the phone company parking lot as he flipped his phone open and called Dean.

"Dean. Maya's in trouble," he started without preamble.

He hoped neither he nor his brother was going to be too late.

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**Random House in Milan…**

**Dean**

Dean found himself on the ground, holding his arms in front of his face as the enraged and grief stricken parent wailed on him.

"She was 9yrs old!" the man screamed, punching at Dean.

"Wait! Stop! I didn't! You got to believe me!" Dean shouted trying to break through the rage filled mind of the other man. Of course it didn't work and as a punch sent him looking over to his left he saw the shotgun. Dean grabbed it and used the butt end to hit the guy in the face, sending him sprawling onto his back.

Dean got up with the shotgun in hand and looked down on the man whose rage was now fleeting at losing the fight, replaced by all his grief that had fueled it.

"Why'd you kill her?" the downed man sobbed.

"I'm sorry," Dean panted out. "I didn't kill your daughter."

"Then what are you doing here?" the man demanded through clenched teeth as he stared up at
"I don't know," Dean admitted. The man before him wasn't a demon, just a grief stricken parent who had lost his child. Sam and Goldy were right. He had followed his Dad blindly, believing that what he told him was true. Hell, Goldy might even be right that he wasn't even talking to h—

His phone vibrated. A text from Goldy. As Dean quickly left the house and the sobbing man behind he opened the message on his phone. His heavy breath got caught in his throat.


Crocotta. He'd heard about these bastards, luring people by mimicking the voices of...loved ones. Dean shook his head and gave a breathless chuckle as he sprinted to the impala.

Goldy was fucking right. It wasn't a ghost and she was about to be its main course.

His phone started vibrating as he turned on the engine, causing the beautiful car to rumble. Seeing the caller ID he flipped his phone open as he put his foot to the gas.

"Dean. Maya's in trouble," came Sam's voice from the other end.

"I know she sent me a text," Dean replied tightly.

"Me too," Sam told him. "I just finished off the Crocotta at the phone company. Apparently Clark and his secretary wife were mates."

"Let me guess," Dean drawled as he made a tight turn on the darkened streets. "The Crocotta bitch is the one after her?"

"Yep," Sam confirmed. "Apparently pagan half-lings like Maya are a delicacy for Crocottas, especially the Trickster kind." Dean could hear the blood vessel in Sam's forehead popping. He wasn't much better either. "They made her the minute they saw her."

"Great. Just great," Dean growled as he made another tight turn, fish tailing the back of the impala a little if the sound of tires screeching was anything to go by.

Like hell he was going to let some fugly ass monster bitch toast the little Trickster. If anyone's going to roast her ass it's him the next time she thinks it's a good idea to prank his car. Besides, he still needs to get back at her for that.

*Edison Park…*
Maya crouched low to the sparsely snow covered underbrush of the woods, just off the trail, forcing herself to breathe slowly and quietly. Puck, who was tucked to her flank, did the same. The lobbing sounds of heavy footfalls drew closer and closer…till they passed their hiding place and stopped not too far away. Her grip on her machete tightened as her ears strained to hear every possible sound.

They both heard the crunch of dead leaves move in their direction when the voice of her illusionary double 'accidentally' shouted out a curse further up the trail.

"Ready or not! Here I come, half-ling!~" came Wanda's whispery sing-song voice as the Crocotta started running off in pursuit. Maya was really grateful that the wind was in her favor, keeping her down wind in the pursuit.

She had to act fast though. When the whole chase started she got a brief look at the map board of the trail. It went around in a large circle before doubling back onto the entrance trail. If her double kept running the wind direction will shift till it was upwind from the Crocotta. She didn't want to find out if being some wolf-dog thing meant she also had their sense of smell. That was…if her double didn't disappear when it got out of range first…

Maya didn't know what to do, but she definitely needed help. Pulling out her phone she quickly sent a text to both Sam and Dean:


She let out a long shuddering breath to calm her self. She had a little time and help hopefully was on its way. Maya just needed to hold out, or figure out a way to gank this bitch.

Getting up from her hiding spot, both her and Puck crept back onto the trail looking back and forth for any sign of the Crocotta. "Hear anything?" Maya asked Puck. His ears were perked as he listened to the eerie silence of the trees, faintly hearing loud footfalls further away. He pawed the ground lightly. "Close or far?"

*Huff, huff."

"Alright. Let's double ba—" Maya was interrupted when she felt her illusion disappear, out of range, and a loud growling roar echo against the trees. "Run," they both took off running down the trail back to the entrance. Unfortunately two legs and four short legs can't stay ahead of something much larger with much longer legs.
"Half-ling!~" the whispery voice sing sioned. "I can smell you!" Wanda's voice added getting closer.

Maya and Puck poured on the speed, the trail entrance coming up. Lights of the houses by the park glittered in the distance. Houses with other people…that might get hurt if they made it that far.

"I smell your fear, little one!" the Crocotta called out behind her. She could hear the sadistic grin in Wanda's voice. Maya looked behind her to see the large four-legged shape lob around the bend in the trail. "There you are my sweet little treat," she crooned sickeningly.

Maya tensed as she faced the four-legged creature, gripping the machete in her hand tightly. Puck jumped in front of her growling aggressively. Wanda walked leisurely towards them.

"Such bravery for such a weak little half-ling," Wanda mocked. "Almost full grown and I can barely smell the Trickster in you. Your Daddy must be very disappointed to have spawned something so pathetic."

Puck snarled angrily, his hackles rising. How dare this thing say his mistress was pathetic and weak!

"Shut. Up," Maya gritted out through clenched teeth as her heart hammered in her chest. The mention of her lack of power tearing at her. "You don't know what you're talking about!"

A wide smile adorned the Crocotta's muzzle. "Oh. But I do. I've listened and read all the blocked calls and texts from your Daddy. Everything," she sneered gleefully.

Then Wanda changed her voice. "I can't believe how weak you are," came the sound of her Dad's voice from the Crocotta's open maw. "You're a daughter of Loki, the Trickster god, but you can't even make solid illusions, let alone conjure up anything real. That's like a main Trickster staple! And what you can do you're so limited!" her Dad's voice said nastily. "You're almost seventeen and you're little better than a human."

Maya knew it wasn't her Dad. Intellectually, she knew, but tell that to her the ache in her heart.

"I can't believe you're my daughter. No wonder I keep you away from my other pagan friends," her Dad's voice sneered disdainfully. "What'd I do to get stuck with a half-breed disappointment like you? One that's more human than anything."

Tears pricked her eyes, as her throat grew thick, "SH-SHUT UP!" She shouted her voice wavering as she kept watching the Crocotta approach slowly.
"Why would I love something like you?" her Dad's voice jeered cruelly.

Maya's heart wretched and hot tears rained down her cheeks, blurring her vision. She clenched her teeth in a grimace and used her free hand to wipe the tears away.

That was a mistake.

Wanda sprinted forward, pouncing at Maya.

Edison Park…

Sam and Dean

Dean found the back parking lot beside the backfield and put the impala in park. He left the car running to use the headlights to light up the field and far tree line. He looked to his right when he saw a silver rental car pull up and his brother stepped out.

"Have you seen her?" Sam asked as he and Dean started towards the trail entrance quickly. Both carried a long knife and a flashlight.

Dean shook his head, "No. Nothing."

"SH-SHUT UP!" Sam and Dean started sprinting towards the trail entrance at Maya's broken shout.

They got there as they saw a large four-legged beast launched itself at Maya. She dodged and went tumbling into the underbrush. The large black wolf-dog thing went to pursue her when Puck, a little dog almost 10x smaller, launched his own little body and clamped his teeth on the underside of its neck growling fiercely.

"Sam, what is that thing?!" Dean demanded as he tried looking around the thrashing beast trying to dislodge the little white and brown menace. "I thought a Crocotta was after Goldy?" He still hadn't seen Maya emerge from the thicket. Did a stray claw get her when she dodged? Was she seriously hurt?

Sam circled the beast looking for an opening as he answered Dean, "The Crocotta. Apparently they have two forms. A human looking one, and this one." He motioned at the Crocotta in front of them.

"Get off me you little runt!" Wanda growled as she turned and shook her large head trying to dislodge Puck.
Dean was about to comment on a talking canine when Maya finally reappeared from the trees with a smirk and the Crocotta still between her and the Winchesters.

"Good boy Puck! Show that bitch whose boss!" Maya laughed, the machete still gripped tightly in her hand.

Wanda gave one final quick shake and Puck had to finally let go. He went tumbling a few feet away, landing beside Sam. Wanda turned her head eyeing the newly arrived Hunters warily, shifting on her paws and growling lowly.

"Forget it bitch," Dean growled with a tight grip on his knife. "You ain't walkin' out of these woods alive tonight," he asserted, looking into the dark eyes of the Crocotta.

"I've already taken care of you're mate," Sam informed watching as Wanda's four-legged form tensed in shock her muzzle dropping open slightly.

"You did what?!!" Wanda barked in outrage, but then her canine face morphed into a malicious grin that only the Winchesters were privy to. She turned and quickly lunged at Maya who stood near the tree line.

Maya dodged to the side, but tripped and went sprawling to the ground, her machete getting knocked out of her hand. She went to quickly get up but heavy paws landing on either side of her head and the heady breath breathing down the back of her neck froze her. Maya locked eyes with Sam and Dean in fear. Puck made to attack Wanda, but Maya looked at him and shook her head. He whined helplessly but stayed by Sam's side.

Sam looked at the scene in front of him in worry and fear for the helpless girl beneath the Crocotta. Dean hid his fear for Maya behind a mask of anger.

"Leave her alone you bitch!" Dean shouted taking a step closer, but having to stop when Wanda lowered her head closer to the back of Maya's neck.

"Ah ah Hunter. I don't think so," Wanda mocked with a widening canine grin. "See, you took someone very important from me," neither Sam nor Dean liked where this was going. Puck was the only one to notice the machete disappear in small wisps of purple smoke.

"And since you're going to end either way...let me return the favor," Wanda opened her maw of needle-like teeth and went to chomp down on Maya's neck.

"NO!/MAYA!" Sam and Dean shouted simultaneously about to double team the Crocotta, but froze at a curious sight.
Wanda's head went through Maya and instead chopped on a lot of frozen dirt. She brought her head back up through Maya and spat the dirt out, then stared at the teen beneath her.

*Maya* smirked and casually crawled out from underneath the beast, even as the Crocotta kept trying to take bites out of her or claw at her. Everything just fazed through her.

"WHAT?!" Wanda screeched as she gave up trying to swipe at *Maya* as the teen stood up and made a show of dusting herself off.

From the look Sam was giving her he was the first to realize what was going on. The *Maya* in front of them was an *illusion*. Dean realized it a second later. Now they just wondered where the real Maya was.

"You seem to forget bitch," illusionary Maya told the Crocotta keeping attention on her, away from the trees and more on the center of the trail. She then turned to look at Sam and Dean, "I'm half-Trickster." She gave a wink as a shape ran from the trees close to Wanda and she disappeared in wisps of purple smoke.

The Crocotta didn't realize what hit her as a machete blade came down through thick fur, flesh, and bone. Her head severed from her spine. It barely stayed attached by the remaining flesh and skin on her neck. The legs gave out and the body collapsed to the ground, the machete lodged in it.

Maya panted heavily as she looked at the body, looking more haggard than her illusionary self. She grabbed the machete handle and pulled it out of the Crocotta, swaying on her feet.

Puck immediately ran over to her and started whining worriedly as she took a knee, her head bowed. Sam and Dean weren't far behind, coming up beside her.

"Damn Goldy," Dean murmured as he came up to her right. "Bitch didn't see you coming," he said impressed as he put a hand on her shoulder. She only let out a shuttering breath. Dean and Sam shared a concerned look.

Sam crouched down on her left and rubbed her upper back soothingly. "Maya, what's wrong? You hurt?" Sam asked trying to see her face.

She sniffled and rubbed the back of her free hand against her eyes. "N-no. I'm fine," she answered as she forced herself to stand on shaky legs, head still bowed.

Sam stood up beside her and looked at her in concern. "You sure?" he asked doubtfully. It was obvious something was bothering her; from the sound of her voice to the way she didn't fully look at either of them.

"Yeah. Just a little tired. So, let's just get out of here," Maya deflected as she started to walk
purposefully to the trail entrance. She made to walk past Dean, but he grabbed her arm to stop her.

"Maya what happened?" Dean sighed with a frown.

She shrugged off his arm roughly and took a side step away. "It's nothing, okay?" she stressed defensively. "I'm just being stupid," she added on with a murmur. It was her problems, her fears, and her self-doubts.

Sam walked up to her to try to get her to talk, but she was already walking away again with Puck at her heels. Sam let out a long sigh through his nose.

"Don't push it Sam," Dean said looking at his little brother. Whatever was going through the teen's head she didn't want to talk about it. He doubted trying to pry it out of her would do any good. "Let's just get back to the motel."

Sam looked ready to protest, but stopped himself, "Fine, but something's seriously bothering her."

"If she wants to talk about it she will," Dean pointed out as they came up on the impala. Sam wasn't completely convinced as he made his way to the rental.

Maya was inside in the back, leaning heavily against a window with Puck's head on her lap. Puck leaned into her abdomen and looked up at her with imploring eyes as she pets his head and scratched behind his ears. She stared pointedly out the window. Dean received the message loud and clear.

Don't ask.

Sighing Dean started the car and took the lead back to the motel.

Late at Night…

They make it back to the motel in relatively one piece. The boys' faces a little busted and bruised, and Maya looking a little more than ruffled. Somehow, Puck looked the best out of all them.

When Maya entered the room she flopped onto Dean's bed, it being the closest one to the door, and kicked her shoes off. Puck hopped up onto the bed and snuggled himself into Maya's side, resting his head on her upper arm to get his head as close to hers as possible.

Dean finally got a good look at his brother's face in the light and commented, "I see they improved
Sam gave a huff and retorted as Dean went to the bathroom, "Right back at you."

Dean looked at a dresser mirror to see his bruised face and the blood that dribbled down the side of his face from a cut on his forehead. He saw his reflection and shrugged in agreement. Sam wasn't wrong. He wasn't looking all that pretty at the moment. He went into the bathroom, wetting a towel and began to gingerly wipe the blood away.

Sam sat down on his and Maya's bed and lay back with his legs hanging over the foot of the bed. He looked over at the teen on the other bed; she hadn't moved or made another sound. Her back rose and fell with her breathing. He was worried about her. It was odd with how quiet she was.

Dean came out of the bathroom. "So, Crocottes, huh?" Dean asked as he went to sit on the end of his bed beside Maya's feet. She didn't stir, but her breathing suggested she was still awake.

"Yep," Sam sighed, sitting up.

"That'd explain the flies."

"Yeah, it would," Sam paused then continued. "Hey um…Look, I'm sorry it wasn't Dad."

"Me too," was Maya's muffled reply. Sam and Dean look over at her, her head still face down in the pillow.

Dean looked away and scoffed. "I gave you both a hell of a time on this one," Dean stated.

"Ah," Sam said in a tone that suggested Dean was already forgiven.

Maya just shifted her socked right foot to nudge Dean's thigh lightly. Don't worry about it.

"No," Dean said shaking his head as he grabbed Maya's ankle and moved her leg away. "You were both right."

"Forget about it," Sam told him amiably.

Dean was tense as he thought about what went down. How he was ready to kill an innocent man on the word of a dead man saying he was the demon who had his deal. Providing a way out of his deal.

"I can't. I wanted to believe so badly that there was a way out of this," Dean shook his head slightly. "I mean, I'm staring down the barrel at this thing…you know, Hell…For real, forever, and I'm just…"
"Yeah," Sam looked at his brother sadly. He knew.

Maya pushed away her own emotional turmoil brought on tonight, flipping over and sitting up, then scooting to sit beside Dean at the end of the bed. She didn't say anything, but leaned against Dean to offer her comfort, resting her head against his shoulder. Dean looked at her, and for a moment gave a small smile.

"I'm scared, guys. I'm really scared," Dean admitted, swallowing thickly.

"I know," said Sam.

Maya nodded in agreement, "Only fools aren't afraid. You, Dean Winchester, are no fool." Then she smirked, "No matter how much you may act like one."

"Thanks," Dean said dryly, but smiled a little despite himself. Her words were appreciated, despite the dig. "I guess I was willing to believe anything—you know, last desperate act of a dead man," he chuckled sardonically.

"There's nothing wrong with having hope, you know," Sam told him.

"Hope doesn't get you jack squat," Dean replied sarcastically. "I can't expect Dad to show up with some miracle at the last minute. I can't expect anybody to, you know?" he said rhetorically. "And the only person that can get me out of this thing is me."

"And me," Sam told him, looking at him with determination and conviction.

"Ditto," Maya added, looking up at Dean with red rimmed gold eyes, slightly red splotchy face, and a small smile. Sam and Dean gave her a questioning look that had her give an amused snort. "What? You guys are my friends. There's no way I want Dean going to Hell. So, I'll help where I can," Maya finished like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"Thanks Goldy," Dean's lips quirked. "But seriously guys, 'And me' and 'Ditto'?"

"What?" Sam looked at him confused; Maya just raised an eyebrow at him.

"Deep revelation, having a real moment here, and that's what you guys come back with—'And me' and 'Ditto'?" he said unimpressed.

"Do you want a poem?" Sam snarked back.

"Give me a minute. I think I can come up with something," Maya said, pushing away her own hurt and sadness, and gave a broad grin.

Dean shook his head, "Nope. Moment's gone." He reached around Maya for the TV remote and turned the tube on muttering, "Unbelievable."

Maya shook her head and stood up to go to the bathroom to get changed for bed. Sleep was calling her name. Closing the door she looked at her self in the mirror. She wasn't exactly a pretty sight. Her eyes held a redness to them and her face was splotchy from her tears. It was obvious she'd been crying. Maya was kind of surprised Sam wasn't prying more. He was the nosey one. They both had
to have noticed. Dean probably told him to back off. Thank Odin for Dean's avoidance of emotions.

Meanwhile in the room…Sam looked over at Dean who was watching the TV.

"Dean. She's been crying," Sam pointed out.

"Yeah," Dean answered. "You're point?" he countered. That earned him an are-you-serious? bitch-face from Sam.

"Dean—" Sam started but then Maya came back into the room and Dean cut him off.

"Sammy wants to talk about what happened with you and the Crocotta," Dean told to her. "You wanna talk?"

Maya raised her eyebrow at him then looked at Sam, "Not really. No." She walked to her side of Sam's bed and flopped down on her stomach.

Dean looked at Sam with a see-gesture. Sam rolled his eyes and looked over at Maya.

"Can you at least tell us how you ended up out there?" Sam asked, though from his conversation with Clark he had an idea.

Maya heaved a heavy sigh in her pillow. She finally grumbled out, "She mimicked my Dad's voice on a new number. Used desert and candy themed nicknames and said he wanted to talk about how we left things when I ran away." Maya kept her head turned away, her mind going to what else the Crocotta said to her. She knew it wasn't her Dad, but hearing what she said using her Dad's voice had cut her deep.

Dean paused his sip of a beer he seemed to have magically acquired at some point to look over at the teen in understanding. Guess he wasn't the only one who had wanted to believe it was their actual Dad calling them, and not some monster that wanted them for a midnight snack.

"Sorry," Sam said sympathetically.

"Thanks," Maya grumbled.

Sam stared at her. There was something else, "Is that all that happened, or…?"

"Night guys," Maya yawned exaggeratedly getting under the covers. That's when Puck jumped up and took a spot against her side, once she was settled down again.

"Maya," Sam said trying to pry further.

"See this? This is me sleeping," she said while making loud obnoxious snoring sounds.

"If something's bothering you…” Sam tried again.
"Good _night_ Sammy," Maya responded pointedly. Sam gave her a beleaguered sigh, and shook his head.

Dean snorted into his drink. "Forget it Sam. She's not talking, so leave her alone," Dean told Sam. Sam sent him a face that told him this was not over. Dean rolled his eyes. _Of course not._

"Jerk," Sam grumped turning his attention to the TV.

"Bitch," Dean shot back easily.

"Trying to sleep, Assholes," Maya grumped.

Sam and Dean shared a look. "Twerp," they both said at the same time.

Maya stuck an arm up and flipped them off.

Chapter End Notes

**AN: HELLOOOOO! I am not dead! Just had some procrastination, and writer's block on how to write the scene in Edison Park and how to deal with Dean's favorite thing. Emotions. Lol. I've also spent a week up at the cottage with the family, so there was that.**

**TD: Outtakes**

I've also created another story where anything I couldn't fit into this story without disrupting the flow gets put. There also might be other bits of fluff that I might leave out of the main story. I'll make sure to clearly label where in the story these shorts happen.

First chapter has cuddles.

**Reviews:**

datajana: Yep. There's the heart break. Don't worry there'll be more when Maya admits to them what happened. Sam just can't leave it alone. Now he knows who her Dad is :)

MLSummers17: :) Definitely not Gabe. Lol.
A Father's Lament

Chapter Notes

Shout out to my faithful readers and my awesome veteran reviewers MLSummers17 and datajana!! Also shout out to my newest reviewer Trenchcoat_Castiel!! Glad to have made an OC canon story that you enjoy!!

Also I did a sketch which had more detail than needed but you know. For general ideas.

ENJOY!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

February-ish 2008, Louisville, Kentucky, United States

Gabriel couldn't believe it. Actually, he kind of could since Maya was his daughter and all, but that didn't help with the shock factor. He rubbed his face in exasperation and annoyance, with a good side of guilt, as he finished reading the note she left for him. *Ugh. Anger, guilt, and worry do not mix.*

’At least there was a note this time’, he thought sardonically, folding up the piece of paper and putting it in the right breast pocket of his dark green jacket. It hurt that Maya still, on some level, felt it was necessary to just run away from him when they butted heads like this.

Gabriel had wanted her to come back and stay with him. He's overprotective, so sue him. Can she really blame him for freaking out after that time loop fiasco he did on the Winchester duo?

Apparently, yes she can.

"You do realize it was a mistake killing Dean over and over again right? And then letting Sam know it was you, basically painted a giant red target on your back," she pointed out.

"I was trying to teach a lesson about letting goo000000. Sammykins just wasn't as smart as I thought he was," Gabriel rolled his eyes at her.

"Oh yeah. I'm pretty sure anybody who watched their family die over and over again, over a hundred times is definitely working on all cylinders," The sarcasm in her voice was very real.

"Hey! I extended that last one to give him proper time to grieve and let go! How was I supposed to know he'd hunt me down!?" he defended. "Or use you to get to me!"

"Sam was obviously at the end of his rope, and also he's a Hunter, Dad. It's what they do. They hunt things, especially those things that killed their friends and family. Like what you did in that time loop." Maya explained patronizingly.
"So, Gigantor staking you was my fault?!" He said aghast.

"No. Well, not completely. Sam still could've chosen to leave me out of it, but it wouldn't have happened if you hadn't killed Dean that Wednesday," she pointed out with a shrug.

Gabriel shook his head and asserted, "It doesn't matter anymore. When I leave this joint you're coming with me."

"What? Why?!" Maya exclaimed.

"You got yourself killed! I'm not about to let you go off on your own again!" Gabriel said slightly panicky, the image of her dead eyes staring into nothingness still very fresh in his mind.

"That was in a time loop of a timeline where you killed Dean! I highly doubt Sam still wants my head on a pike to get back at you," she rolled her eyes at him.

"You don't know that! Tootsie Roll I just want to keep you safe..." Gabriel sighed. Why did she have to argue with him?

"I get that, really, I do, but you said I could have a year on my own. I passed your test—" Maya didn't get to finish as Gabriel cut her off.

"And you still got staked in the chest! I'm sorry Maya, but you're staying with me. That's final."

His voice brokered no room for argument.

"I love you Dad, but I can't stay with you forever," she looked at him pleadingly.

"That's what you think." He told her, hands on hips and slightly narrowed eyes.

Hindsight being what it was, Gabriel admitted he could've handled that conversation better, but that wasn't here nor now. Right now? He had a wayward daughter to hunt down...again. Then ground her ass till she was sporting white hairs and wrinkles!

Gabriel first went to the bus station, pretending to be an officer looking for a runaway teenager. He showed a picture and gave a description, including one for Puck who was obviously at her side. Letting her keep the dog and upping his intelligence was one of his best decisions ever. Not only did it make her stand out a little more, but she also had someone to watch her back.

Sadly, no one at the bus station recognized her or remembered a teenage girl, matching the photo, with a Jack Russell medical assistance dog following her. Gabriel asked to see security video of the ticket booths. No Maya or Puck.

He was about to head over to the different taxi services to see if any of their drivers picked her up, when one of the bus drivers over heard his questioning. They told Gabriel that they didn't see a teenage girl with a Jack Russell but instead a scrawny teenage boy with short curly dark brown hair and gold eyes. The Jack Russell they described matched Puck exactly. They mentioned the boy in case he was a friend of Maya and might know where she was headed.

Gabriel told them he appreciated their help with a knowing smirk, and asked where this boy was. Apparently he went on the bus headed towards Wichita, Kansas. Thanking the bus driver Gabriel left the bus station and reappeared back in the motel room.

Snapping into his regular duds he flopped back onto one of the beds with a proud smirk. Oh, don't
get him wrong. He's smarting a bit at Maya running away and he's plenty mad at her for it, but the pride was still there. She apparently had gotten better at shape shifting. Well, manipulating what she's already got present in her genes anyways. He fondly remembered when she tried changing her hair colour and only got variations of blonde and dark brown. When he told her she seemed to be limited to her genetics she had given him an impressive pout.

She had wanted rainbow hair. Maya had gotten the idea from the Skittles commercial. So, instead of 'taste the rainbow' she wanted to 'be the rainbow'.

Snorting at the fond memory he popped a sucker in his mouth as he decided what to do next. He knew where she was going, and if she wanted to play the Runaway Game again, fine. But this time he wasn't going to lose track of her.

Gabriel decided to give Maya a week head start. Let her think she's given him the slip again, before…SURPRISE! *You're grounded!*

---

**February-ish 2008, Wichita, Kansas, United States**

**A week later…**

Gabriel just finished checking every motel, hotel, inn, and B'n'B in the damn city. Then the bus stations and taxi services…*Nothing!*

Zero. Zip. Nada, and any other variation he couldn't think of right at this moment as he was starting to panic a smidge. Maya wasn't *anywhere*. Anxiety started clawing its way up his chest as his imagination went nuts with possible worse case scenarios. He tried taking calming breaths to calm his vessel's racing heart, and remind himself that Maya wasn't a tiny little girl anymore. She knew how to fight, how to run, how to survive, and she had a faithful companion watching her back. She was exceedingly clever, as her sudden disappearance from Wichita attested to.

So what if she hasn't sent him a message in the last few days just to tell him she's still breathing? That doesn't mean anything was wrong per se. Maya was probably still mad at him for trying to stifle her independence by making her stay with him.

It's not like she's facedown somewhere in a ditch…

**Frantic Parent mode: ENGAGED!**

Gabriel flipped his phone open and dialed his daughter's number…

*Ring…This is Maya! Leave a joke at the beep! Beep.*
"Hey Sugarplum, it's Dad. Duh. I haven't heard anything from you the last few days…so give me a call okay? Or, you know what, just shoot me a text. Okay. I love you sweetheart. Okay. Bye," Gabriel sighed rubbing his face. She'd at least send a text back to let him know she was fine. Right?

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**Next Day…**

Still nothing.

Gabriel dialed Maya's number again.

*Ring…This is Maya! Leave a joke at the beep! Beep.*

"Hey SweetTart. Dad again. Can you please call me? I'm worried about you. Just—please let me know you're all right. Love you kiddo."

---

**Later…**

Gabriel had been checking his phone over and over again just waiting for Maya to get back to him, all day. Right now he's just relaxing—*trying to anyways*—on the couch in his room at a motel. He was worried and scared. Why wasn't she calling him back?

He checked his phone and groaned despairingly. Nothing.

**D:** Maya you there?

**D:** Are you not going to talk to me?

**D:** Please don't be dead.

---

Calls and texts like these continued for the next few weeks. Though he kind of flip-flopped between worry and anger.

"Sugar rush, please, please, please call me…"

"If you don't call me soon, you're going to be in sooooo much trouble Hercules' Trials will look like a fucking *stroll in the park!*"

**D:** Why won't you call me back? Please just send me something to let me know you're at least still
alive.

"…and I can't believe you ran away again! I might not have grounded your ass the first time, but Blow Pop? The longer you drag this out…"

"Maya please just put me out of my misery and tell me if you're okay. You don't even need to tell me where you're hiding!…please…"

D: You have no idea how disappointed I am at you for running away again! I mean, seriously?! I don't care if you left a note, you can't just solve your problems like this!

"…you're still learning you're powers Cadbury, and I get you're smart and clever, but you've still got a lot to learn. You can only conjure up holographic illusions and, no matter how good they are, you're still limited in how many you can do and how far away you can maintain them…"

"You need to tell me where the hell you are this instant young lady! I get that I may have gone over board with the whole Papa bear shtick, but that's all the more reason you should've just stayed and talked to me! We went over this the first time! I get I can be stubborn, but Fun Dip? You ain't no cake walk in that department either…”

March-ish 2008, Fucking Norway

"…Fine! –hic- Do-don't respond! Sheee wha I care!…STOP MOCKING ME CEILING! …stupid judgey roof…-hic-…"

Next Morning….

"Please ignore that last message. I do care. A lot! I love you and nothing will ever change that. You're my everything and…I'm worried which just feeds my anger and…I'm just a hot mess. Which was why I ended up in my private stash of Asgardian mead…I was drunk…sorry…call me."

Gabriel hung up his phone morosely after that last voicemail he left. His head was still pounding a little bit. Say what you want about the Norse pantheon, but those fuckers knew how to brew. Enough to knock this archangel off his ass, that’s for sure. He looked at the slightly trashed state of his bedroom at one of his safe houses. Though, for the life of him he couldn't quite remember which one.

Then Loki's Asgardian asshat of an older brother walked in. Thor. Last he heard Thor was still in
"Oh fuck my life…" Gabriel groaned. Not only did he have to deal with this meathead, but he also had to deal with him on top of a hangover and worrying over his daughter.

"BROTHER!" Thor boomed. 'FML,' was Gabriel's first thought as pain stabbed his brain. "It is good to see you amongst the living once again!" Thor let out a hearty laugh. "Though it seems you have lost your touch with holding your mead, Brother."

"Yeah, well, not many of the other gods know how to brew the good stuff," Gabriel shrugged. "It's been too long since I really tucked into some Asgardian mead."

That had Thor laughing jovially once again, sending his booming laughter through Gabriel's still aching head. He couldn't suppress the wince of pain. Did the guy have to be so loud?

"Aye, and it shows," Thor beamed at him. "Now tell me of this daughter you lament over? I recall you leaving quite the heated message on her cellular device last night."

That had Gabriel seizing up and looking over at the tall and muscled man with long blonde hair that could star in a Maybelline commercial.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," Gabriel lied smoothly as he panicked inside. Shit shit shit… "I've only got the sons. No little princess to dote on and spoil," not technically a lie since he's actually Gabriel and not Loki, who was off somewhere with his own kids avoiding his family. No wonder they got along so well. Yay family issues! Besides, Loki didn't have a daughter, only sons. Gabriel's the one with the daughter who was unknowingly determined to see if she could make an archangel, an immortal being, age.

Thor raised a disbelieving eyebrow at him, "Truly? Because I remember you telling me about the row you had with your current spawn and she had decided to run away. You were quite worried about her. Surely she is as powerful as her older brothers, yes?"

Gabriel snorted, "She's still young, but she's already proving to be the most clever out of all of them." Okay maybe Gabriel was a little bit biased on that one, but what can he do? Despite being miffed and worried sick about her, Maya was amazing. Again, he was really biased.

Thor nodded in acceptance, "That is good to hear, but tell me why you have not introduced her?"

"And risk having her raped or eaten? Sorry, but no thanks. I'll just keep her to myself," Gabriel said remembering a couple of close calls.

Thor gave him a puzzled look. "But if she is your daughter surely the other gods would not touch her lest they incur your wrath," he pointed out.

Gabriel waved him off as he snapped the room clean, "Yeah, well, the pagan blood doesn't run as
"Who then was her other parent?" Thor asked curiously. Gabriel would admit Thor wasn't too bad, especially since he mellowed out his temper over the last few centuries. He was probably one of the few gods that didn't require human sacrifice or needing to devour them to keep his powers. Nor did he see a reason to go all hammer time on the humans. "I assumed you had bedded the giantess Agroboda again," Thor gave him a knowing smirk. Sure Loki did, but Gabriel? Not really.

"Hey! No judging! I can't help it I like my women tall and curvy!" Gabriel said using a paraphrase of what Loki had told him when he became a parent. As well as deflecting the conversation away from Maya's human parentage. He doubted Thor would care, but couldn't be too careful. "Sorry Fabio, but I was the mom this time. I was screwin' around in my female form and wasn't careful. 9months later I'm popping out a baby girl."

Thor let out another booming laugh. Thankfully Gabriel's headache had receded some by then. "Ah Brother, always getting into trouble with your shape shifting!"

Ooh Gabriel knew exactly what Thor was referring to. "I've told you guys! I didn't get knocked up by a horse, and birth Sleipnir the eight-legged wonder of Odin's stables! I found him abandoned because of his rare multi-limb condition, called polymelia by the way, and just rearranged it so he could actually use the extra limbs!" Gabriel defended. Honestly, how long has it been? A millennia? Two?

"Oh relax Brother! It was all in good jest!" Thor laughed then slapped his back, causing Gabriel to stagger a bit. "Besides, how often do us other deities get a chance to one-up the Trickster god of mischief and chaos himself?"

Gabriel straightened himself out and sent a dry look at Thor who just smiled brightly at him. Something twisted in his gut at that look. Thor believed he was spending time with his brother, not some witness protection archangel.

Gabriel shakes his head. It was time to leave. "Yeah, yeah. Yuck it up Romeo," he said dryly. "Listen, I gotta go. Still a missing daughter to find, and I still need to come up with a way to ground her so..." Gabriel trailed off.

"Ah. No worries Brother. I understand," Thor nodded then looked at him hopefully. "Perchance when you find her you'll permit me to meet my newly discovered niece? I understand keeping her secret from Father and the other gods, but you know I would never mean her harm."

Gabriel looked at the god with consideration. If he ever thought of introducing Maya to anyone from the Norse pantheon Thor would be up there on his list. While he might not have actually been Thor's brother, that hadn't stop him from getting slightly attached to the meathead.

Gabriel gave a non-committal shrug. *Eh, maybe.*
Thor beamed at him happily, pleased that his answer wasn't an outright no. "Thank you Brother! And if I might make a suggestion for your troublesome daughter?"

"Shoot."

"I have no doubt your daughter is another Loki in the making, so perhaps a suitable punishment would be stripping her of her powers temporarily?" Thor suggested. "I know you detested it in our youth when Father bound your magic as penance for your mischief," Thor's lips quirked into a smile. "Not that it deterred you any."

Gabriel blinked, blinked again, and one more time before a Loki-patented devious smile curled his lips. "Oh Brother. That's perfect," he all but purred as a plan formed in his mind. It can serve as both a punishment, and hopefully a way to keep Maya close to him.

Then Gabriel noticed something missing from Thor's usual attire. "Thor. Where's Mjölnir?" he asked raising an eyebrow at Thor as he rubbed the back of his head and sent him a sheepish look. Gabriel gave him an I-am-Loki-and-I-am-unimpressed stare. "You lost it again didn't you," he deadpanned. Seriously? How does one lose a giant hammer all the time? He should do Thor a favor and enchant it to come flying to him when he calls it, au du Marvel style.

"Yes," Thor admitted meekly.

"Riiiiiiiiight," Gabriel drawled as he turned to walk away. "Not helping you look for it!"

"But Brother!"

March-ish 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Couple days later…

Gabriel had left the Norway house and Thor behind, and came straight to the house he had in Gloversville. The place where he birthed Maya. Man he hadn't been here for almost 17 years. Time sure flies when raising a half-Trickster troublemaker.

He sat at the kitchen table surrounded by some very important ingredients for a tweaked power-sealing spell. Sure it was technically witchcraft, but it was druidic in origin and was nothing like the powers the humans borrowed from demons to perform their brand of black magic.

This was natural magic; a little something good old Dad gave a handful of the human population quite a few millennia ago. It drew on the energies around them that were found in nature and all living things. It was a shame that most of them feared witchcraft because of a few bad eggs that went to demons for their powers.

Anyways, the tweak to this spell was that he was placing it on some intricate metal wristbands that could only be taken off by him as he weaved some of his power, both angelic and pagan, into the
metal. Honestly, if anyone from the Grand Coven saw what he was doing he doubted they'd recognize the original power-sealing spell, or the binding spell attached to it.

To finish it off Gabriel bit his thumb and pressed the swelling blood in the small well on each band. This bound them to him and his vicinity. Maya would have her abilities as long as she stayed near him, but when she reached the limit of their range her powers go on lock down.

No illusions. No teleporting items to her hand. No shape shifting…

And unable to gaze into the hearts and souls of others.

Gabriel sighed as he watched his blood turn a burnt gold colour and move up the wristbands creating intricate patterns filled with druidic knots and bands on the top. It left some blank circle spots, no doubt for other druidic symbols to appear once they were put on their wearer.

When Gabriel turned over the gunmetal grey wristbands to look them over he found on the bottom of them two pictures he wasn't expecting. The bands at the wrist had moved to the underside of the wristbands and all but covered the bottom of each one with a different picture.

On the right wristband was a representation of the Horn of Gabriel. He'd recognize that thing anywhere. Gabriel had long since buried that thing after skipping out on Heaven. Honestly, why Dad even bothered with a physical horn he'd never know since there was a sigil and accompanying spell that does the same damn thing of drawing angels to it when activated. Though with the addition of the harp strings in the rendition he knew it was to pay homage to his first job.

That he was the Messenger of God, the archangel of communication in all its forms.

The left one made him crack a little smile. It was a sword decorated with candy aspects and details, homage to his time as a Trickster. The candy was for his sweet tooth, and the sword of justice for the generally swift finality of his tricks.

-----A sketch of what I'd imagine the images would be like...minus the shading and probably less detail...think line art-----
Gabriel placed the wristbands down on the table and snapped away everything else. He knew Maya was going to hate this. He just knew it, but what choice did he have? She had to learn she couldn't just keep running away from things, especially with Lilith out and about. He doubted Lilith even knew about her but still...he couldn't keep the anxiety that Lilith might find out about her at bay.

He tried to reason with himself that Lilith had no reason to go after Maya. She'd be too focused on going after Sam, and dragging Dean down to Hell to break the first seal to even think about a wayward half-Trickster. Sadly worry and fear don't lend themselves to logic. Gabriel will feel a lot better once his baby girl was by his side again.

Now he just needed to figure out where the hell she could possibly be...then something clicked and he smacked himself in the head. In his worry, anger, and fear he didn't think to contact the one other person Maya might have gone to.

For an archangel older than the Earth itself, sometimes he was really stupid. So much for being some perfect holy being.

Gabriel flipped open his phone and dialed.

"Hey Hunter," he greeted overly cheerful.

"What'd'ya do to My now?" was Bobby's immediate gruff response.

"Moi, Bobby?" Gabriel said with incredulity. Why'd he assume he did something? Yes he may
have gone a little overboard, but his worry and overprotectiveness was justified! "It's not my fault!"
he defended.

"Uh huh," Bobby didn't sound at all convinced.

"Okay, okay, not entirely my fault!" Gabriel amended receiving a disbelieving snort. He put his
head in his free hand and sighed. "Listen we can point fingers later, cough-Maya-cough, but have
you heard anything from Krackel lately?"

"Last time she called she was over in Lawrence, Kansas about two weeks or so ago," Bobby
answered. He remembered that call. She had gushed over this psychic called Missouri she ran into
and how she knew immediately who and what she was. And how she used a wooden spoon to
whack her. Bobby had quirked a smile at that.

Gabriel let out a breath of relief, "Oh thank Odin."

"Not Odin, Loki," Bobby snorted.

"Shut up, Hunter. I haven't heard from her for over a month! At least now I know that-as of two
weeks ago-Maya was still alive!" Gabriel barked. This was some kind of punishment wasn't it?
Dear old Dad giving him a daughter with a penchant for running away from her problems, just like
him. Oh yeah, he's seen the irony in all of this already. And when he says the little phrase, 'You're
everything I am, and everything I could never hope to be,' this wasn't what he had in mind. "So
excuse me for being somewhat relieved."

"Yeesh. Sorry, don't have another horse," was Bobby's less than apologetic quip.

There was a pregnant pause. "I hate you so much right now," he ground out.

"Noted," Bobby replied gruffly. "Now you gonna tell me what you did that had baby Trickster
runnin' again?"

"...I may have went into Papa bear mode and over-reacted. But my protectiveness is well
justified!" Gabriel defended, and then proceeded to explain the whole time loop fiasco and how
Maya pinned the blame mostly on him.

"...I mean, c'mon! She's my kid! She should be taking my side!" Gabriel finished.

"You done, idjit?" Bobby asked with a sigh, no doubt rubbing his face. When Gabriel didn't say
anything Bobby continued, "First, it was mostly your fault. You don't break a man like that and
expect no serious repercussions.

"Second, just cause she's your kid doesn't mean she has to agree with ya. And if I know My, she's
probably pissed at Sam for hurtin' you like that, regardless if she thinks it's your own damn fault or
not.

"Lastly, I know it's hard but ya gotta control those parental instincts. She's a headstrong teenager
and the more you fight her, instead of tryin' to listen to her, the more she's gonna fight back. Or in
this case run."

Gabriel let out a sigh of frustration. "Yeah, I know. It's hard when I know the kind of people and
things are out there. And when I think of her out on her own, especially after a scare like that, all I
see is my defenseless little baby girl up against some monster and every parental instinct I've got
goes haywire," Gabriel admitted in a moment of truthful vulnerability.
"That's par the course Loki," Bobby told him. "No matter how big they get, when they're in trouble or hurtin' all you tend to see is the little vulnerable kiddie version of them."

"You're being oddly helpful and empathetic, Hunter," Gabriel said with fake suspicion, after getting himself together a little bit. "Gasp! Do you actually like me now?!" he asked with fake excitement to get away from the touchy-feely stuff. "I knew you couldn't resist my Trickster charms forever!"

"...I tolerate you for My and you know it," Bobby deadpanned, unimpressed by his antics.

Gabriel sniffed. "Using me for my daughter. Have you no shame?" he wasn't serious at all. He knew perfectly well that Bobby considered Maya family.

That earned him a derisive snort from Bobby over the line. "Like you expected anythin' different," he scoffed.

Gabriel smirked in agreement, "True."

"Now you done buggin' me? You're cloggin' up the lines."

"Yeah, I'm done just..." Gabriel paused then sighed; "when you talk to her next can you give her a message for me? I'm pretty sure she's blocked me on her phone."

"Fine. What is it?" Bobby asked gruffly.

"That I miss her and...that I love her, and I'm waiting to hear from her," Gabriel finished looking pensively at the wristbands on the table.

"Sure thing Loki," Bobby told him sincerely.

"Thanks Hunter," Gabriel smiled a little. "Knew there was a reason I liked you."

"Whatever idjit. I better not be gettin' any calls from you doin' any of your deadly tricks anytime soon," Bobby warned.

"No promises!" with that Gabriel hung up and slouched in the kitchen chair with a sigh, some of the tension bleeding from his body.

Maya was still alive. Granted the information was two weeks old, but it did give him a sense of relief, no matter how small.

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March 20 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Evening...

Gabriel had stuck around the town he had spent the remaining months of his pregnancy and the first few months of Maya's life in. Just to see how everything panned out after they left when that Hunter came sniffing around. The new police Chief was a no nonsense and morally upstanding character. Gabriel approved greatly. Some of his previous victims seemed to have learned their lessons from before. Others not so much. Though as much as he'd like to help them remember his
previous lesson he just wasn't in the Trickstering mood for it.

It was his baby's 17th birthday today.

The first one it seemed they'd spend apart, and with zero contact with one another. So he spent it pretty much cooped up in the house missing his daughter and wondering when he'd see—or at least talk—to her again.

Sitting on the couch, and not paying attention to the show on TV, he opened up his phone to see if there were any messages. Still nothing. Gabriel didn't know if Maya would respond or if she still had him blocked, but he decided to send her a message anyways. Just in case.

D: Happy Birthday my Morning Glory.

D: I love you.

D: Always.

Gabriel honestly didn't expect his phone to start ringing a few minutes later. Hearing the voice on the other end when he answered almost had him dropping it.

"Did you mean it?" was the hoarse and emotion thick voice of his daughter. "Th-that y-you loved me?" He could pick up sniffing coming through the line as well. Oh Maya.

"That's something I'd never joke about Maya," Gabriel told her seriously. "You're everything to me."

"Thanks Dad," he could hear the teary smile in her voice. "I love you too," she said after a moments pause.

Chapter End Notes

As you can see, emotions run high and somehow and I don't know how, but Thor snuck in here. It was that drunken message probably. Figured only Asgardian mead could knock the socks off an Archangel...then Thor kind of just happened. Might bring him back if I get to a certain pagan god meet-up.
Chapter Notes

Helloooooo lovely peoples! I am not dead! Just procrastination and writing emotional stuff while trying to keep character! At least its really long, right?

Enjoy you're feels.

March 17 2008, Milan, Ohio, United States

Can't believe you're my daughter...half-breed disappointment...weak...pathetic...

Maya shifted restlessly in her sleep at her Dad's cruel words. Her face scrunched in fear and heartache. She gripped her pillow tighter as her disbelief tried to bat the hurtful words away. Her Dad would never say things like this to her. It's not true... Right? Her certainty faltered.

The words, like sharks, smelled her doubt like it was blood in the water. Closing in.

What'd I do to get stuck with a half-breed disappointment like you?...Can't even conjure up anything real....You're too weak to be a child of Loki....You're no daughter of mine...

Words tore through her unconscious mind—and her heart—like well-aimed spears targeting every open gap her doubt and uncertainty created.

Why would I love something like you?

'No, no, no, no...' her sleep addled head shook back and forth to try and dislodge the painful words from her mind. The thoughts sunk their claws in, not going anywhere as a small whimper escaped her lips.

Puck had woken up from Maya moving in her sleep and her feet accidentally nudging him. He watched as his Mistress' face grimaced in her sleep and had heard the faint whimper escaping her lips. Carefully Puck walked the edge between Maya and the edge of the bed to get to her face. Puck
nudged and licked the side of her face till golden eyes slowly began to open.

"Puck?" Maya asked blearily with a hoarse voice as she slowly woke up. Her Dad's words from her nightmare still fresh in her mind.

She pushed up her upper body, resting on her elbows as she looked around the dark motel room. Puck squeezed himself under her arm and licked at the silent tears she hadn't realized were falling.

Red glaring words of the motel alarm clock screamed 5:47am into the darkness like a mocking no vacancy sign.

Maya looked away and focused back on Puck who was trying to get every last traitorous tear to make her feel better. It worked, a little, as Puck's efforts pulled forth a small smile on her tired face. She stopped him from his continued energies by pulling him into a one armed hug and rubbed her face affectionately in his short brown and white fur.

"Thanks for waking me up buddy," Maya murmured, her voice further muffled by Puck's fur. She pulled away to rub at her tired eyes, but she knew there was no going back to sleep. Not with the way her heart was aching, and definitely not when all she wanted to do was sob.

Taking a deep breath Maya did her best to calm herself, but it was hard when a sob wanted to escape her throat. Whatever smile Puck gave her disappeared as she lay back down on her pillow and cuddled him to her chest.

"It was just a bad dream," Maya whispered softly to herself. She knew her Dad. She knew he loved her…so why did the words of a monster terrorize her like this? Despite her tiredness she stayed awake. Maya took some comfort when Sam, in his sleep, decided to cuddle her again. She wasn't as annoyed this time.

It would be a couple hours before Sam woke up first, offering a mumbled apology from cuddling her again. He was surprised when she just shrugged listlessly as she held Puck close to her. Thinking she was still tired he went to the bathroom to get ready. Sam didn't see the remaining redness and puffiness in her eyes.

Driving out of Milan, Ohio, United States

Later…
Sam had noticed Maya seemingly go through the motions that morning. Everything about her just seemed to scream exhausted. Oh she'd crack a joke here and there like normal, but when she smiled it never reached her eyes. That was another thing he noticed as well. Her eyes that were usually a bright and shining gold from some unknown joke that only she knew about were dull and tired like tarnished gold.

It had Sam concerned about her. So when they stopped at a Gas N' Sip to fuel up Sam talked to Dean about it when Maya went to the bathroom.

"And?" Dean grunted as he watched the gas meter climb.

Sam looked at him incredulously over the roof of the impala, "Something's seriously bugging her Dean. I don't think she slept at all last night because of it."

Dean's eyes flickered to Sam's concerned face then back to the gas pump. "Yeah, well, we've all had nights like that Sam. Where the job just gets to us too much and a goodnights sleep is the last thing we get," Dean sighed.

"Dean," Sam said sternly as Dean finished fueling Baby up. "Maya isn't us. She's still just a kid. And from what I've seen she's normally not this... quiet. She doesn't shy away from telling us her opinions or thoughts, and—and the fact that she's so subdued now is concerning. Something is seriously affecting her."

"What do you want Sam? She's entitled to her secrets just like we're entitled to ours, and if Goldy doesn't want to tell us something then she doesn't have to," Dean paid for the gas with a fraudulent credit card and looked at his brother with a shrug.

"She's our friend, Dean, and she's hurting. Shouldn't we—I don't know—try and help her?" Sam asked with his puppy eyes.

"How?" Dean scoffed even though Sam's fretting was starting to get him a little worried as well. Damn observant bastard and his contagious worrying. "Start a fucking share circle? Braid each other's hair? Well, you and Goldy can at least. What with your hippie hair and all, Samantha," Dean smirked at Sam's 'seriously?' bitch-face.

"Dean," Sam complained at his brother's seemingly lack of concern.

"Fine, fine," Dean sighed shaking his head as he opened his door and getting into the driver's seat. "If she's still acting off after the next couple days we get her talking, okay? You happy?" Once Sam was seated Dean moved the car to a parking spot to wait for Maya.

Sam was about to thank him when Maya and Puck came into view and they silently took their spots in the back.

"All good?" Sam asked as Dean started up the car again and began pulling out back onto the road.
Maya gave a tired sigh, "Yeah." She leaned drowsily against the back window but didn't doze off. Puck gave a small concerned whine as he made a home on her lap as Maya wrapped her arms around him and petted him silently.

Dean saw this in the rearview mirror and sighed heavily. When he looked over at Sam he received a slightly smug 'See!-I-was-right' look, but it was tempered by his concern for their young friend.

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**March 18 2008, Des Moines, Iowa, United States**

**Next day…**

That night when Sam and Dean decided to call it a night Maya made the excuse of wanting to finish up a drawing in her sketchbook. Neither brother knew if she actually went to bed because when Sam woke up at *oh-God-o'clock*, Maya was already gone with Puck having left a note about fetching breakfast. When she came back, Dean—*when he finally woke up*—and Sam were able to get a good look at her.

Maya looked terrible.

Her skin was pale, bags were forming under her unfocused eyes, and she looked even more exhausted than yesterday.

Dean being the sensitive and caring person that he was expressed his concern in the only way he knew how. By being emotionally stunted and being kind of a jerk about it.

"Hey, you okay? 'Cause you look like *shit,*" Dean stated taking in her appearance with a frown.

Maya put down the McDonald's breakfasts she got and sent Dean a bitch-face of epic proportions that spoke of the little tolerance she had for Dean's shit and the swift retribution that would follow if he didn't *shut up*.

Her gold eyes darkened and her already tense body stiffened even more. The normally light presence she exuded darkened dangerously.

"*Fuck off Winchester!*" Maya growled lowly at Dean as she turned her attention back to the take-out bag and begun taking the stuff out.
Dean's eyebrows went to his hairline at Maya's moody attitude, while Sam's face pinched in concern. Maya may not be a morning person on a normal day, but that was just normal grumbling about waking up. Usually, once she was awake, she'd be her normally light and playful snarky self, and not this attitude-ridden teenager ready to bite their heads off at the slightest provocation.

"Maya, you look exhausted. If you're still tired you can take a nap after you had something to eat," Sam suggested carefully as he went to swipe a breakfast wrap from the small mountain of wraps she was pulling out of the bag.

"Yeah," Dean piped up as he grabbed four wraps from the pile on the table. "We're going to be hanging around here for a bit till a another case comes up." He opened one up and started scarfing it down. "Mine as well catch up on your beauty sleep, 'cause right now you're not looking so hot." Ooooh the death glare sent his way. Dean would be checking his things before going to sleep tonight.

"I'm fine," Maya stressed as she grabbed a couple of wraps for herself contemplating pay back. "I just don't have the patience to deal with anybody's shit today, okay?" With an annoyed huff she moved to one side of the motel room's couch and started eating, slipping Puck pieces of sausage and egg.

Sam had gotten his laptop out and started searching for cases while he ate, opting to leave the moody teenager alone. Dean had plopped on the other side of the couch, away from the moody teenager, and turned the TV on to watch some shows while he ate his wraps, though he didn't really pay much attention to what was on the screen. He kept taking discreet glances at the teen on the other end of the couch and had noticed when her eyes drooped and her head sag only to then jerk up into semi-alertness. He even watched her take a bite out of thin air, missing what remained of the wrap, and started chewing nothing.

"Goldy, go kick off your shoes, give the wrap to the rat, and go get some more sleep," Dean ordered firmly. "You're so out of it you just tried eating air."

Maya's eyes blinked furiously as they tried to focus on Dean, but everything was kind of hazy. "I'm fine, Dean," Maya said, repeating herself for the second time as she rubbed her dry eyes and tried to suppress a yawn.

"Go back to bed," Dean ordered sternly with narrowed eyes as he crossed his arms.

Maya gave him a defiant glare as she gave Puck the rest of the wrap. Puck scarfed it down enthusiastically.

She crossed her own arms petulantly and said very clearly, "No."

Dean and Maya stared at each other for a tense moment, the random TV show the only prominent
sound in the room. Then, in the next moment, Dean was up like a shot, and easily scooping Maya up into his arms. It was a testament to Maya's tiredness that she didn't struggle right away, her mind trying to catch up with what just happened.

When it did she was pissed. "FUCKING HELL DEAN! PUT ME DOWN!" she said loudly as she struggled weakly in Dean's arms as he carried her over to a bed.

"Sure thing," Dean snarked as he proceeded to drop her onto his bed with her flipped onto her stomach.

"Oomph!" Maya's face hit the pillow as she landed on the bed. She tried to push her self up, but was stopped by Dean who used his weight to keep her down. "Ge' off!" came Maya's muffled shout.

"You gonna go to sleep?"

"Fuck you!" was her tired brain's witty response.

"Really, Goldy, I'm flattered, but uh, you just ain't my type," Dean sassed. He could just feel the death glare that Maya wanted to send his way as she tried to push him off her and failing.

Moving quickly, Dean grabbed the edge of the blanket underneath her and wrapped it over her. It was a struggle because he had to keep his weight on her to keep her from escaping, but he was soon rolling her from one end of the bed to the other. Much to Maya's snarling aggravation.

When Dean was done he repositioned a pillow under her head then took a moment to admire his handy work that was, The Maya Burrito.

Maya was still stomach down with her arms pinned beneath her and further restrained by the wrapped blanket. She squirmed and squiggled in her confines but to no avail. She even tried unravelling her self, but Dean just moved her so that if she did try to unroll she'd take a fall off the bed. There was much grumbling and glaring.

Dean just smirked at her then left her alone, leaving her line of sight. Maya could also make out Sam's suppressed laughter as Puck decided to join her on the bed and proceeded to use her blanket wrapped self as a bed. Further incentive to keep her from trying to escape, since she knew Puck had about as much sleep as she did. But still.

Traitorous little asshole.

For the time being she was stuck and running out of steam, testimony to her recent sleepless night to avoid nightmares. As if the words and thoughts didn't haunt her waking hours as well.

Weak. Pathetic. Can't even outdo one Hunter...
Maya shut her eyes tightly as she began to will the thought away. *It was wrong.* She was exhausted, she didn't have the energy to fight back, and it was *just Dean.* He meant her no real harm.

She sighed as it disappeared, but other similar thoughts lurked at the edges of her mind like wolves waiting for an opening. Maya let herself relax a little bit; taking comfort in the warm confining weight of the blanket burrito she found herself trapped in and Puck's weight on her back. She could feel her eye lids grow heavier as her fatigue made itself more prominent, her eyes staying closed for longer.

"How you doing Goldy?" Dean called from somewhere in the room, probably the couch.

"Planning your murder and—*yawn*—general mass chaooooooos," Maya yawned as she felt herself get pulled deeper into unconsciousness. She tried to fight it, but her body had other plans.

"Better get in line then," Dean quipped and he said something else but Maya was already gone, her breathing evening out as she slipped under.

Sam looked over at a smug Dean as they heard Maya snore lightly in her sleep. "Really Dean? Blanket burrito?" he said with an indulgent smile.

Dean shrugged grinning, "Worked on you when you were being a little bitch."

Cue Sam's signature bitch-face.

Maya would be nudged awake and unrolled in the evening when one of the boys brought back dinner. Maya was just thankful that her spent state gave her a dreamless sleep. Even if a good chunk of weariness still remained she did feel a bit better and mentally cringed at the way she reacted that morning to Dean being, well, *Dean,* and her general attitude.

"Sorry," Maya voiced as they mindlessly watched some action movie on the TV.

Sam looked over at her curiously, while Dean grunted a questioning noise with his eyes glued to the TV and his face stuffed full of pizza.

"For this morning. I was a bitch," Maya sighed as she took another bite of her dinner.

"You said it, not me," Dean quipped around the food in his mouth.

Sam eyed his brother with a disgusted look before turning his attention back to Maya who rolled her eyes at Dean's comment.
"It's alright," Sam assured her with a smile. "We knew it was just from how tired you were," there was a pause of silence as Sam started looking at her with concerned eyes. "Do you want to talk about why you were so tired...?"

"Didn't really sleep," Maya shrugged staring at the TV. "Nightmares."

"Not sleeping isn't going to make them go away," Sam pointed out, receiving a sarcastic look in return. "It might help if you talk about—"

"Hey look," Maya apathetically interrupted pointing at the TV an attempt to deflect Sam's questioning. "An explosion!"

Dean snorted as the screen lit up in flying shrapnel and orange, red, and yellow plumes of smoldering fire.

Sam gave her a hurt look that she was unfortunate enough to catch, "I just wanted to help."

Maya let out a heavy sigh through her nose, "I know. But it's just stupid stuff. I can deal with it on my own."

"But you don't have to," Sam pointed out sullenly.

Maya chose to remain quiet, ignoring Sam, and focused the movie that's plot had become lost on her. The thoughts seemed to sense her hesitancy in talking about what happened the other night with the Crocotta with Sam and Dean. So, they struck, building off the work of her fake-Dad's words from her nightmares.

*Why would you even consider talking to Hunters about your feelings? Are you weak and stupid? Do you honestly think they care about you? Other than how powerful you are and what you could offer them? Which is not a lot.*

'No! They're my friends. They do care! Just like I know my Dad loves me!' Maya frowned at the screen as she mentally shouted at the hurtful words intruding her mind. Taking a deep breath to calm her self she started pushing the negative words and thoughts away, but they took one more devastating dig before being silenced.

*Are you sure?*

She clenched her jaw as she willed the sob that wanted to tear itself through her throat to stay put. It was hard since she was still tired but she managed, somehow. Maya did not look forward to her dreams tonight. As much as staying awake again would keep her from dreaming it didn't seem there was a point if the words invaded her waking mind.
There had to be some other way to help her deal with them. Something to really distract her, or help her forget.

Dean checked his watch as the movie was winding down and grinned roguishly, which Maya noticed.

"Dude, what's with the grin?" she asked, though she was still mentally trying to come up with ideas.

Sam saw Dean's face and snorted, "You don't want to know Maya."

"…now I kind of do," she said with a raised eye brow, her natural curiosity peaked, as she watched Dean get up to grab his leather jacket and his keys. "Where you going?"

Dean looked over at her and smirked smugly, "Met this hot chick at a bar in town and her shift's ending for the day. Going to go meet up with her and have some fun."

Sam rolled his eyes while Maya squinted hers, not getting it.

Dean snorted at Maya's confused look, "Having some drinks and getting laid, Goldy." He huffed a chuckle at Maya's dawning comprehension. "Exactly. So don't wait up," Dean then looked at Maya with a serious face. "I mean it Maya. When I get back you better be sleeping. No more trying to stay up all night, unless it's a case," he finished pointing at her.

"Yeah, yeah," she responded flippantly with a yawn.

Dean frowned and looked over at Sam, "Sam. Burrito her if she tries staying up again." With that Dean left the building.

Maya looked over at Sam warily, "You wouldn't…would you?"

Sam just kind of smiled at her before turning his attention back to the TV, not answering her question. Maya had a feeling that was a strong yes. Yes he would. Too bad for him she planned on sleeping tonight.

"Okay…well if you do I'm bunking with you tonight. No way I'm sleeping anywhere near horn-dog out there unless I know he's showered first," Maya grumbled.

That had Sam bent over laughing.
Mid- Afternoon the next day…

The nightmarish words had come back again in full force, but this time when Puck woke her up she decided to try sleeping again. Though this time she initiated the cuddling with Sam, seeking some comfort. Unlike the brothers, as she learned over the weeks, she was more tactile in her affections. Maya was just thankful Sam didn't question it that morning when he woke up first to find a sleeping mini-Trickster wrapped up in his arms and cuddling his chest. Even Dean didn't say anything, though from his stupid smirking face he wanted to. But he might've just been happy from his previous activities…Maya didn't need details.

Besides, Dean might lose that smirk though if he knew what Maya had planned to help her deal the hurtful words that plagued her mind. If his reaction to talking about losing her virginity during the whole surrounded by demons fiasco in Monument was anything to go by. Maya was thinking of taking a page from his book.

Sex and alcohol.

After all her birthday was tomorrow and she did mention off hand that she might decide to lose her V-card as a way to celebrate. So, why not add a little alcohol to the mix?

Trying alcohol was first.

It was pretty easy stealing some vodka when she went to walk Puck that morning after breakfast. She knew what the bottles looked like since her Dad kept one around, and until now she'd never really wanted to try it. Maya also didn't want to try drinking the beer Dean and Sam usually got, it smelled gross. Tasted worse when Dean offered her a swig, much to Sam's protest of her being under age. Dean had a laugh at her disgusted face.

One of the reasons she grabbed vodka. It's supposed to be odorless and flavorless, so she should be able to mix it in with some orange juice in the fridge.

Puck was giving her judgmental looks as he watched her grab the orange juice from the fridge and the mug by the coffee maker, after it was rinsed out.

"What?" Maya asked looking at her judgmental dog as she sat on the couch and placed her items
next to the vodka bottle on the coffee table. "It's just going to be enough to deal with those words buzzing around in my head. Getting a little buzz should be enough to give me some peace."

She poured in half a cup of the vodka and filled the rest of the mug with orange juice. Maya looked at the seemingly innocent mug of OJ, giving it a sniff and tentative sip. She was pleased at the lack of smell and alcohol taste. It didn't take long before the mug was empty and she was already feeling some of the effects and thought one more would be a good idea before calling it quits.

What Maya didn't know though was that her hypoglycemia condition didn't mix well with alcohol. Alcohol was always metabolized first before other sugars in the liver and affected its ability to release sugar into the blood stream during the day. Then there was its affect on the pancreas that deals with keeping blood sugar levels balanced…

Needless to say her blood sugar dropped unexpectedly pretty quickly and her lack of experience with alcohol had her more than tipsy after the two mugs. Thankfully Puck was there to hide the vodka bottle before her drink addled mind thought to use it as a way to replenish her blood sugar levels. He dug through her bag to get some candy bars and kept an eye on her as she ate them while giggling.

This was what Sam and Dean walked in on. They had caught wind of a strange death in the next town over and went to check it out for the last few hours. Nothing supernatural this time, just a freak accident. What they weren't expecting was a drunk Maya to greet them from the couch when they walked in.

"Shaaaaam! Dee! Whaz up?" she greeted cheerfully with a slight slur to her words. "Whaz…whaz i’ anything?" Maya looked at them with big bright gold eyes as she took another bite of her current chocolate bar.

"Maya are you drunk?" Sam asked incredulously as he walked around the couch to look at her, Dean following close behind with a worried frown.

"Nooooooootactly," she said shaking her head staring at the giant man who kneeled down in front of her. Puck gave a reproachful bark at that. "...maybe. I'm not shuuuurrr. Neva been drunk before!" Maya exaggeratedly shrugged then dissolved into giggles.

"You're drunk alright," Dean deadpanned, not amused, as he looked at the intoxicated teenager. "How much did you have?" Dean looked around for beer bottles but didn't see any. Puck barked to get their attention, then went and retrieved the hidden vodka bottle, bringing it to Dean's feet. Picking it up Dean noted how it was still mostly full, maybe missing about a quarter of the liquid, if that.

"So tha's where izz went!" Maya giggled cheerily then looked dizzily at Puck. "Shilly Pook!~" she scolded, but Puck just made a show of rolling his eyes.

Sam shook his head as he put the bottle on the coffee table and turned back to look at the drunk teenager. "Maya, why were you drinking?" Sam asked concerned.

"Ferget fer a while. Make the mean words go away," she mumbled, her alcoholic induced happiness disappearing. Her eyes became a little glassy as her expression became somber. "Ish stoopid."
Sam looked over his shoulder at Dean giving him a look. It was obvious that whatever was affecting Maya needed to be dealt with. First not sleeping, and then thinking alcohol would be a good solution weren't exactly good habits for her to have. They weren't good habits for the brothers to have either, but it was a little late for them.

Dean nodded at Sam and they both took a seat on either side of her.

"Alright Maya, what's been eating you the last couple days?" Dean asked. Maya wasn't completely out of it that she was nonsensical, but enough that she couldn't think clearly enough to lie or evade the question. "It obviously ain't stupid if its got you acting like this," he made a vague gesture towards her.

"It ish too stoopid!" Maya crossed her arms huffily, slouching in her seat and not looking at either of them.

"Why is it stupid Maya?" Sam asked patiently, turned in his spot to face her while he had his arm resting on the back as he leaned on it.

"Why'zz'you care?" she looked at Sam with glistening gold eyes and sniffled. "I-I's not pow'rful. I can barley…barely help! I…I'm weak and pathetic," tears started trailing down her face as her head tilted down and she just seemed to shrink in on her self. Puck whined pitifully at her feet as he leaned empathetically against her legs, getting a head scratch in return.

Sam and Dean shared a facial conversation over her head, filled with Dean asking Sam to do something, Sam having no clue, and Dean rolling his eyes at his brother's uselessness. So much for that fancy Stanford education.

Dean's big brotherly instincts were in full swing as he put an arm around the crying teen's shoulders and pulled her against his side. He didn't say anything when Maya latched onto him like a lifeline and sobbed drunkenly into his chest, he just rubbed her back soothingly.

"Let's get one thing straight, okay Goldy? You're stubborn, mischievous as hell, inexperienced, and wear your heart on your sleeves, but those ain't exactly bad things. Even when you decide to mess with a man's car when you know full well that he owns a trunk full of weapons," he said pointedly and smiled when he felt her shake a little in silent laughter.

"He's right Maya. You don't give up, you're clever and funny, eager to help and learn, and you don't shy away with showing people how you feel. If Dean and I could do that maybe we wouldn't butt heads as much as we do," Sam said with a wry smile, chuckling when Dean mouthed 'bitch' over Maya's head. Sam mouthed 'jerk' back at him, quirking his one eyebrow at him.

"There are a lot of things to describe you Goldy, but weak and pathetic? They don't even make the list," Dean told her with barely concealed affection lacing his voice as he gave her shoulders a reassuring squeeze.
"And we do care Maya. Just like you said you're our friend, we're your friends as well. It's not one way," Sam added softly, his own affection coming through. "We don't care if you're not as powerful as your Dad," it wasn't too far of a stretch. As far as he and Dean knew the only one she'd be comparing herself to would be her Dad.

"No' s'ppose be thish weak neither…either?" Maya mumbled slightly confused into Dean's warm chest. Damn he's comfortable.

"Because you're Dad's the Trickster god Loki?" Sam asked tentatively. Dean shot Sam a surprised look, not knowing that little bit of information. Sure they suspected it since Monument, Colorado, but Maya could've been playing a trick on Henriksen for all they knew.

Maya whipped her head up from Dean's slightly tear soaked shirt and looked at Sam with big red-rimmed golden doe eyes. "How'd ya knooow?" she asked in surprise, but it quickly turned into a sad frown. "I sho' be stronger but m'not. Ma Dad's Loki! I sho' be stronger thanz I am. Can' even make real stuffs appear. Only...only ghostie lusions. Nothings solice...soli...firm," she waved her hand and a distorted cat appeared and walked stiffly across the coffee table, phasing through the vodka bottle before disappearing into purple wisps of smoke. Maya snorted at her pitiful display. "Stills hazza range befer theyz disappears. Smallz one. Smallz ones fer everythings I'z can do," Maya stuck her face back into Dean's shirt and held onto him again like he was her lifeline. "I's a half…half-fling disappointment," she mumbled. Then she said something that had both brothers' hearts aching for her.

"Why's woulds my Dad love something like me?" she choked out and fresh bout of tears and sobs escaped her.

"Aw Goldy," Dean sighed as he wrapped his arms around her tightly and let her cry. He looked at Sam worriedly. This wasn't good. He doesn't deal with emotional crap like this anymore. Not since his brother was little. "I'm pretty damn sure that asshole loves you more than anything."

Sam and Dean shared a brief look, both of their minds going to the time loop Sam was trapped in and how Loki reacted to his daughter's dead body. Yeah. There was no way that that asshole didn't love Maya. The rage and grief Sam had seen, and then described to Dean...that was something neither brother wanted to face down. It was down right apocalyptic in its intensity. Give them yellow-eyes anyday.

Sam looked back at Maya's tucked head with sad eyes, but he had picked something up in what she said, a term she used to describe herself. Half-ling. She always referred to herself as a half-Trickster. The only other place he heard the term half-ling was...from the Crocotta.

If Sam thought of it, it fit. Maya only started acting off after going up against the female Crocotta in the park. Something must have happened between her and the Crocotta before him and Dean got there. Everything she's mentioned so far...could be a result from the Crocotta trying to get her off balance in the woods, but why would it affect her so much? She should know not to take anything a monster says to heart.

"Maya, what happened between you and the Crocotta before we got there? Did it say something...?" Sam asked tentatively, ignoring the confused look Dean gave him, as Maya's shoulders shook from her sobs confirming his suspicions. "Maya, you shouldn't listen to anything it said. It was just trying to get to you—"
"I's know! I's know…" Maya sobbed into Dean. "but she used my Dad's voice," she added with a choked whisper. "Tha's why so stoopid," she sniffled. "I…I knows no' my Dad, bu'…but I hear his voice sayin' the stuffs! An—an' how I know it no' true?! Sh-she read texts an—an' voice mails, sho…sho i' coul' be true!" Maya was getting worked up, now she'd sob, hiccup, then sob. "I' coul' be true…"

"I highly doubt that Maya," Sam told her as Dean showed a little more of his soft side as he all but wrapped up the small teen further into his arms. It was a side Sam remembered from when he was little and upset himself. Now he tells him to suck it up, and stop being such a little bitch.

Sam licked his lips as he brought up the time loop incident, "When the other version of me…killed you…in that time loop and showed your Dad. Your Dad was destroyed. That's why I doubt any of what the Crocotta said was true," Maya calmed a little as she turned from the wet teary spot on Dean's shirt to look at Sam.

Sam leaned forward with a small smile, even if the memory sent a sliver of fear down his spine. "Your Dad literally screamed at me that you being dead was the equivalent of his entire existence disintegrating into nothing. I don't know about you Maya, but I'm pretty sure he wouldn't have been able to show as much rage as he did if he didn't love you."

Maya gave him an uncertain look. "Bu'…but…yawn~" She tried to protest, but couldn't stifle the large yawn that escaped her and rubbed tiredly at her red puffy eyes as emotional exhaustion started setting in.

"Alright, enough chick-flick-moment crap. All lightweight baby Tricksters need to go sleep it off," Dean proclaimed as he slung one of her arms over his shoulders and grabbed her waist to walk her over to her bed.

"Dee~ I's can waaaalk!" Maya protested weakly as her vision swam a little at the sudden movement.

"Really?" Dean asked looking at the drunken teen doubtfully. "Okay, how about…" he released the unsteady teen, "you walk towards me without falling over." Dean took only a couple large steps away from her and crossed his arms over his chest then gestured her to try walking. Sam watched with amusement painting his features.

Maya sniffed then successfully took one staggering step. She sent him a haughtily smug grin as she swayed a little. As she went to take another step her coordination decided to show just how impaired it actually was. Her foot literally got caught behind the ankle of her stationary leg and she just couldn't get it unhooked. Balancing on one foot while trying to unhook a foot while inebriated was never a good recipe. Maya yelped in surprise as she fell forward and pretty much face planted into the floor. Sam didn't bother containing his amused chuckling.

"That was amazing Goldy," Dean teased as he walked forward and hoisted her back up and walked her over to her bed.

Maya sniffed in offense and slurred grumbly, "Ashface," as Dean unceremoniously dropped her on the bed. She groaned drunkenly as she got into a comfortable position on the bed, which, for a normal person might not be all that comfortable if they had one leg hanging over the edge and the lower half of her body seemingly ready to follow.
Dean rolled his eyes as he grabbed the dangling leg and moved it up onto the bed, ignoring Sam's stare on his back.

"Shanks Dee," Maya mumbled pitifully with a slur as she rested her head on the pillow. "But it's no' night yet…no' have dinner yet!" was her tired and weak protest.

"We'll leave you some pizza to pick at later when you're more sober," Dean informed her as he watched her eyelids start drooping. He furrowed his eyebrows as a question that had nagged him when they walked in and found her drunk trying to forget and block out her thoughts. "Hey Goldy can I ask you something?" he asked.

"Hrmm hmm?" was Maya's intelligent response to let him know she was listening, albeit a little sleepily.

"Why'd you think drinking alcohol was a good idea?" he asked bluntly. The answer Dean got felt like a sucker punch to the stomach that left him feeling breathless and a little nauseous afterwards.

"Is'n it what you do? Have sex n' booze to help deal whish everything?" Maya asked confused, blearily opening her eyes to look at Dean's rigid stance and wide shocked eyes. She looked past him as Sam stood up and walked around the couch towards them. He too looked shocked, but it was quickly being replaced with worry.

"Maya, did you have sex while we were gone?" Sam questioned in concern. He didn't like the idea of some random guy eyeing up Maya, let alone having sex with her. Hell neither of them did.

There've been a couple instances when they'd all be out and Sam and Dean would catch some teenager, or even the occasional adult, eyeing Maya with a little too much interest. Needless to say, Sam and Dean had an unspoken rule between them that they'd 'watch out' (read: look-menacing-and-threatening-to-any-male-that-wanted-to-pursue-Maya-and-possibly-cause-lots-of-bodily-harm-to-them-when-she-wasn't-looking) for the teen. Thankfully, so far, at most all they had to do was act like their cover story for why a teenage girl was travelling with two grown men. A.k.a the two big protective older brothers ready to pummel any guy that even looked at their little sister. Death glares and posturing all around!

So the next thing that came out of Maya's inebriated mouth was both a relief, and something that sent both brothers into big-brothers-with-a-little-sister-mode accompanied by a large helping of mental 'nope'-ing.

"No I did no' have sex," she denied, then added, "Was waitin' to lose my virgi-ninny…virgan? My V-card tomorrow ta celebrates my barf-day…birf-day!" She smiled stupidly at them, like her plan was the best idea ever. The previously mentioned mental 'nope'-ing the brothers were experiencing thought otherwise.

Honestly if the Winchesters could read each others' mind in that instant they'd realize that they both had the exact same thought they might be a little freaked out.
Sam was about to start that awkward conversation when he noticed Maya's eyes were closed and her face lax in sleep. He let out a long exhale through his nose and ran a hand through his long hair.

"Let's order that pizza and deal with this when she's more awake and sober," Sam suggested as he made his way over to the table as he pulled out his phone. He then noticed Dean still by the beds staring down at Maya with a pensive expression on his face. "Dean?"

"She did this because…it's what I do," Dean's brows furrowed, his mouth set in a grimace as he turned to look at Sam. "She thought it'd be a good idea to take a page out of Dealing with Crap: The Dean Winchester Edition. Why would she do that?" he asked in slight distress. He couldn't wrap his head around why the teen would copy him of all people. Why not Sam and his upfront approach with dealing with personal shit?

Sam sent him a shrug. "She's probably trying to find guidance, or an example on how to deal with her fear and self-doubt. If her first attempt at not sleeping failed, she probably thought copying you would help if she perceived you as a well-adjusted person—" Dean interrupted Sam with a barking laugh.

"Well-adjusted? Ha! You died and I made a deal with a demon because I couldn't handle you being gone. What part of that screams well-adjusted?" Dean said sarcastically. He rubbed his face in frustration as he moved away from the bed area and over to Sam. "She shouldn't be copying me," he shook his head and sat on the couch, pouring himself some of the vodka on the coffee table.

"Sam, if you don't want her copying you then maybe try to find different ways of dealing with stuff that doesn't involve excessive hook-ups and alcohol?"

"Sam, my bill's coming due. I'm not not going to have sex and drink when I want," Dean grimaced at the burn of straight vodka running down his throat. "Gotta live it up a little till then. But if Maya's looking for an example then I mine as well show her how not to go about dealing with personal shit." He raised his glass to Sam and took another swig.

Sam shook his head and ordered the pizza.

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March 20 2008, Des Moines, Iowa, United States

Morning...

Maya was slowly waking up to an uncomfortably twisted bra, a slight headache, and voices
talking…which didn't help with the headache. She stretched and buried her face further into her pillow, just taking a moment to enjoy what comfort this cheap motel bed could offer and ignore the slight pounding in her head.

"Hey Sam!" Dean's voice called from her left loudly. "Look who's awake! How ya feeling you lightweight?" he asked, purposefully talking loudly near her head. Jackass.

She released a groan of protest at Dean's loud voice as she turned her face towards him and blearily opened her eyes to glare at him.

"Whhhhyyyyyyyy?" Maya groaned and grimaced at the throb in her head.

"Paybacks a bitch," Dean said with a smug grin. "C'mon. Get up. Hope you like leftover pizza for breakfast. We're going to be leaving soon."

Maya sent him the stink eye before grunting as she buried her face back in the pillow. She didn't feel up to dealing with the world at the moment. Dean had other ideas.

Sam walked out of the bathroom with a glass of water and some Tylenol for the, more than likely, hung-over teen. He stopped to watch Dean act like any obnoxious older brother and be an ass in Maya's moment of self-inflicted pain from her previous night's activity.

Dean flopped across her back and kept talking loudly. "C'mon Goldy! Sun is shining! It's a beautiful day!" Maya struggled and gave groaning protests at Dean's treatment of her.

Sam shook his head as he walked over to Maya's rescue. "Alright Dean. I think that's enough. You can torture her more later," he said with a small grin as Dean got up and Maya, thoroughly ruffled, sat up on the bed.

She gave Sam a grateful smile as she took the Tylenol and water. "Morning Sam," Maya greeted once she finished off the glass of water.

"Oh Sam get's a 'Good morning', but I just get bitching?" Dean said in a mock hurt tone. "That's cold, Goldy. Real cold. And after I made sure you went to bed last night while drunk off your ass."

That had Maya wincing a little. That would explain the slight headache. "I know I didn't have that much. I wasn't even trying to get drunk!" she tried to defend her self.

"Then don't go for the hard stuff, birthday girl," Dean snorted with his arms crossed.

"Wait a minute," Maya gave them a confused look. "How the hell do you know it's my birthday? Wait…it's the 20th right?" Yesterday was still a little blurry but it was slowly clearing up.

Dean huffed a laugh and Sam gave her a smile, "Yeah it's the 20th Maya. Happy Birthday."

"Yeah, Happy Birthday twerp. And we know 'cause you seem to lose your brain to mouth filter
"Huh," her face matched her response. "Um, what else did I say...ooooooh," Maya finished with a look of realization as her memories were no longer as muddled. "Well then...I'm just going to go back to bed now and maybe die a little from embarrassment," she went to lie back down to just bury her face in her pillow in embarrassment.

Sam and Dean rolled their eyes at her dramatics, but Puck beat them to actually getting her up. Puck jumped up onto the bed and began attacking her neck and any spot on her face he could reach with wet doggy kisses, eliciting squeals of protest along with intermittent giggles. Maya tried to shove him off while protecting her exposed areas, but Puck was relentless.

Dean chuckled, "Having some trouble there with the rat Goldy?" He smirked at the bird Maya sent him. "C'mon! Hurry up and get ready. We got shit to do today!" Dean walked away to leave the teen to her torture by her own dog.

"I'd do what he says Maya. Dean's not above dousing you with some ice water," Sam said with a smirk.

Maya groaned as she pushed her self up and got a reprieve from Puck, who sat near her but looked ready for round two. "What are we doing today? Looking for more cases?" she asked as she eyed Puck who was not pulling off the innocent-little-dog look at all.

"Nah," Dean yelled back as he checked the contents of his wallet before stuffing it back into his leather jacket. "Bobby called last night about an odd death in Peoria, Illinois. Looks like another haunting," Dean informed her as he finished packing up his duffle.

"You didn't tell him I'm with you guys did you?" Maya pinched her eyebrows in concern. If Bobby knew she was still with the Winchesters and going on hunts with them? All their gooses were cooked.

Dean sent her a pointed look, "Don't answer that!

Giving a chuckle Maya got up, grabbed some clean clothes, and went to the bathroom to change and get ready to leave. She was pretty sure they were going to corner her in the car to talk about her drinking escapade last night...not that she meant to get drunk. She had no idea such a little amount could knock her off her ass like that. Or send her glucose levels almost into the red zone. She wasn't usre if the brothers were aware of that little tidbit, but Maya was grateful she had Puck or Sam and Dean might've walked in on a dead body.

Maya stepped out of the bathroom pulling on a blue button-up plaid shirt over her army green tank and went over to the table with leftover pizza to grab a slice, or four, before they threw the rest out. What? She was hungry.

"Maya," Sam was looking a little perturbed at how fast she was stuffing her mouth full of pizza, wondering how she wasn't choking.
"Wha'?" Maya asked through a mouthful of destroyed pizza as she walked over to the door where the brothers were waiting with their bags, her own slung over her shoulder.

"There are these things called breathing and not choking. Have you heard of them?" Sam sent her a disgusted look and wondered again how they found the younger female version of his brother.

Maya rolled her eyes and abruptly swallowed the last large bite of pizza she had, regretting slightly for not chewing it more as it struggled to go down her throat. Sam gave her a smug look as she took a drink of water from a water bottle she grabbed to help ease it down. Maya flipped him off as she walked by him, going over to the impala and going into the back with Puck.

Couple towns over…

Dean pulled into a strip mall parking lot and parked in front of a used weapons store. "Alright. One quick stop," Dean announced as he put the impala in park. "Outta the bus kids!"

"Why are we at a used weapons store?" Maya asked as she waited for Puck to jump out before closing the car door. "Dean did you break one your weapons?"

"Oi! Why do you think I broke one of our weapons? Why not Sammy?" Dean asked looking offended.

Maya shrugged. "Fine. Sam, did yooooou break one of the weapons?" she asked in an exaggerated voice, rolling her eyes.

Sam let out an amiable chuckle. "None of the weapons are broken Maya," he revealed as he followed Dean into the shop. "Not why we're here."

Maya paused in the doorway with a perplexed expression. "We're not? Then why're we—"

"'scuse me Miss. No pets allowed," the store clerk called behind a glass display case. Maya looked at Puck who wasn't wearing his usual medical aid vest.

"Sorry," Maya apologized walking back outside and discretely summoning a leash to her hand. "Sorry Buddy. Looks like you're going to have to wait outside," she gave Puck a comforting scratch behind the ears as he whined a little, but laid down and rested his head on his little paws.

Walking back inside she sees Sam and Dean at the display case with the clerk looking over some old machetes. Dean saw Maya walk in and called her over. She raised her eyebrow at him but went over to stand in the space between him and Sam.

"Alright Goldy," Dean began as he draped a casual arm across her shoulders. "Sam and I figured we could always use an extra machete whenever we have to do some bush whacking. We can't decide which one to get, so, which one do you like the best?" he asked nodding at the knives on the display case.
"Why the hell would you ask me? I wouldn't know a good quality machete from a piss poor one," Maya sent Dean the most perplexed look she could. *What the hell was going on?*

"Goldy," Dean looked at her seriously. "Just pick one you like."

Maya rolled her eyes and looked at the machetes on the display case. They were old, a little rusted, and from what she could tell pretty dull. The one that caught her eye was a 14" bolo machete with a leather bound handle and leather wrist loop. The leather was a dark brown with slight red hue and heavily worn. The blade itself was a little stained, had some dings and scratches but definitely had the most character out of all of them and would look awesome once it received some T.L.C.

"That one with the leather handle," Maya selected. Dean nodded to the clerk that that was the one they were going to get.

"Can we get a used scabbard for it too?" Dean asked digging out his wallet.

"Sure thing," the clerk said with a cheerful smile. "Got black or brown leather."

Dean looked at Maya expectantly. Maya rolled her eyes at him and said, "Black leather."

"Great choice," the clerk smiled as he began ringing up the purchases. "Good contrast with the handle." Dean dropped his arm from her shoulders and went to pay for the purchase.

"C'mon, we'll wait outside," Sam said to Maya with a secretive smile. "Bet Puck's getting nervous." Maya nodded and followed him outside.

"Sooo," Maya started shifting nervously as she untied Puck. "Are you going to talk to me about last night or…?"

"Do you remember what you said last night?" Sam asked. Maya nodded petting behind Puck's ears. "Remember what we told you?" Sam sent her a gentle smile.

Maya nodded again with big gold eyes. "That I'm not weak or pathetic," she said with a small voice, scuffing her shoes a little.

"That's right. You're *not*. But, has your Dad ever told you you were?" Sam asked a little pointedly. He doubted it, but even gods make mistakes.

Maya vehemently shook her head, "No. He never said that, or even implied it! It's…it's just my own fears and doubts from having Loki as a Dad."

"Is the way you've been acting the last couple of days normal when these thoughts rear their heads?" he noticed Dean hang back just a bit, pretending to look at other weapons in the store.

"No. They're never like this. Usually just a random thought here and there. You know like normal moments of doubt and fear," she shrugged. "Though, I can honestly say, I've never doubted that my Dad *loved* me before," Maya huffed a sardonic laugh. "That was a new one…and the most painful." Her eyes became a little glassy from tears being held back. "Guess it hasn't helped that I haven't been talking with him either, huh?"

Sam did the only thing he could think of to comfort her; he pulled her into a hug wrapping large
arms around her. Maya didn’t hesitate to return the hug, burying her face into his jacket as she held onto him tightly. "You're Dad may not be my favorite person in the world," massive understatement, "but like I said last night, I know he loves you."

"Not going to convince me to get in touch with him?" she asked thickly, her voice muffled by Sam’s jacket.

Sam quirked his lips a little, "No. I understand needing to get away. Just…don't wait too long to get back in touch with him."

That's when Dean decided to make an entrance. "Really Sam. Is this why you never get dates or get laid? The minute you start talking you bore the poor women to tears?" Dean teased like only a big brother could. Maya's shoulders started shaking from laughter.

Sam looked over Maya's head at Dean to send him a bitch-face, "Wait to ruin a moment, jerk."

"Bitch, I saved you from growing more lady parts. Your girly hair is bad enough," Dean quipped back with a smirk. "You okay Goldy?"

Maya leaned out from Sam's hug with a watery laugh from the brothers' antics. "Yeah, I'll be fine," she sent Dean a smile. It was small and a little sad, but it did reach her eyes, so he was a little more inclined to believe her. Still hiding the booze tonight.

"So does anyone wanna tell me why we're getting a machete that neither of you actually need? You have what, four stashed away in the trunk already?" Maya asked with questioning eyes.

Dean sent her a wide grin, "Nope. Not yet."

Maya frowned then whipped her head around to look at Sam for the answer.

Sam gave her a slightly mischievous smile as he shrugged unrepentant, "Sorry."

Her frown deepened, trying to figure out what the two were up to. Maya then looked at Puck questioningly, "Do you know?"

Puck barked affirmatively.

"Will you tell me?"

Puck gave her a blank stare then tugged on the leash as he back towards the car.

"You're my dog! You have to tell me!" Maya demanded as Puck tugged her back to the impala. Sam and Dean snickered behind her. "You two shut up!"
All she got from Puck was a dismissive huff.

Dean unlocked the car and chuckled, "So much for man's best friend, huh?"

Maya climbed into the back with Puck. "You're all conspiring against me. I can trust NO ONE!" she announced, swinging a pointed finger between all of them.

Sam, Dean, and even Puck laughed at her expense.

Maya crossed her arms and slouched in her seat as she pouted.

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**Peoria, Illinois, United States**

They made it to Peoria, Illinois around 12:30pm and found a cheap motel to hole up in. Sam and Dean quickly changed into their underpaid civil servants (FBI) suits to make stops at the police station and the morgue. From what they told Maya of the case a woman with brown hair, hazel eyes, aged about 22 was found with a rope around her neck and hung center stage from the rafters with a spot light trained on her, and blood seeping through her clothes on her stomach. That was how the other theatre actors found her when they were about to cross the stage to leave rehearsal for the night.

At least they didn't have to practice shocked and horrified screams. Dean had received double the bitch-faces for that insensitive comment.

It was odd because the woman had no prior history of depression or suicidal thoughts, but that wasn't uncommon either. What *was* uncommon was how she got strung up to be dangling ten feet in the air in under the five minutes she was alone, without anyone hearing a struggle. They should've too, given how acoustic the theatre was, and then there was how she had the words *no talent bitch* carved into her abdomen. Kind of a red flag there.

While the boys went to do the rounds Maya just hung out at the motel trying her hand at researching the Peoria Theatre and any weird occurrences on Sam's laptop. So far just what seemed like some tourist advertisement of a playful spirit named Norman. A theatre director that died at age 34 in the 60's who loved the theatre so much he didn't leave, but hung around to play harmless tricks on people. Maya found information on the spirit and his supposed past spiritual exploits but none of them were malevolent in the least.

Maya was about to look into the supposed second, more sinister spirit said to haunt the theatre when her cellphone started vibrating. Looking at the caller ID: *The Hunters' Brain* she answered, "Hey Bobby."

"Hey My," Bobby greeted with his gruff voice. "Wanted to see how ya were doin'."
Maya smiled fondly, "I'm good Bobby. Just hanging out in my room with Puck." At the sound of his name Puck gave a yip. "He says 'hi' by the way."

Bobby snorted, "Yeah. I heard. Any new tricks you want to warn me about?"

"Just been travelling around, seeing the sights. Doing the odd prank here and there. Nothing too big," Maya hummed. "How about you? Anything interesting pop-up?"

"Other than a weird death in Peoria, nothin' really."

"Oh, uh…what happened in Peoria?" 'Wait to not sound suspicious', Maya internally cursed. She could just imagine Bobby giving her a raised eyebrow look that screamed suspicion right now.

"Hmm…one of the actors was hung from the stage rafters with 'no talent bitch' carved into her stomach. Died from her neck breakin'. All in the five minutes she was away from the rest of the actors."

"That's, uh, fascinating," Maya grimaced at the way she responded. "So you got anyone looking into it?" she asked in an attempt to recover some composure. She could outmaneuver a detective with a smirk on her face, but someone she cared about? Ha ha, nope!

Bobby was silent for a couple of moments. "You stay away from Peoria, Illinois, you hear?" he told her with a no nonsense tone. A tone that told her he wasn't above hunting her down to smack some sense into her for being an 'idjit'.

"Yeah, yeah, no worries. No where near Illinois," Maya assured over the phone. She loved Bobby but it might be time to wrap up this conversation before she gave anything away. "So is that all? Just a check-in and catch-up session?" she queried tentatively.

"Nope," Bobby told her plainly. "There's something else." Of course there was.

"Okaaaaaay."

"Got a call from your Dad couple of days ago," he said with a serious tone to his gruff voice.

"Uhhh…it's not my fault!" Maya denied immediately with a yelp.

"Uh huh."

"He was going to go into total Papa bear mode! Ready to both tear apart anything that threatened me and lock me away in a metaphorical isolation bubble!" Maya said hastily. "I just got some real independence and he was going to take it away over something that wouldn't even happen anymore!"

"Uh huh."

"I-I get he just wanted to keep me safe, but he can't keep holding onto me forever! What if one day I wanna go it alone? Or-or decide to date someone? He can't just hover over me the rest of my life keeping me safe from everything! I mean that's-that's not living! I mean, I love him, I do. He's my Dad, but I don't want him to become like my jailer in a prison with no bars," Maya's voice was getting thick with emotion.

"Right."

"An-and…" Maya stumbled on her words, not sure what else to say. Well, she could mention the
incident with the Crocotta but that might just get her a yelled at lecture about being an 'idjit' from Bobby. Maya didn't feel up to one of those.

"You done babbling?"

Maya let out a defeated sigh, "Yeah. I'm done."

"Your Dad already told me all that happened. Includin' what happened with Sam and Dean down in Florida," he informed her gruffly. "I already chewed him out since this whole situation between you two was mostly his fault."

"I know! Right?!" Maya exclaimed with a smile, but that quickly disappeared and replaced with a guilty frown as Bobby continued.

"I ain't done you idjit!" Bobby snapped. "You ain't off the hook either My," he let out a sigh. "You should know by now that runnin' away won't solve your problems. Didn't the first time ya ran, and I doubt it will this time. It'll just hurt the both of ya like it did before."

"To be fair he kind of realized he went too far that time because I ran away sooo…" Maya pointed out as she shifted uneasily in her seat.

"That's not the point!" he barked over the receiver. "If you'd had both sat down and actually communicated and listened to each other, you runnin' wouldn't have been necessary! Now are ya done interruptin'?"

"Yeah," Maya answered meekly.

"Good," Bobby groused. "Like I said, your Dad finally got it threw his head to give me a call a couple a days ago to see if you were with me, or if I'd heard from ya recently. Told him I did about early March couple weeks ago when you told me about that psychic you met," Bobby paused a moment. "He was immensely relieved My. Damn near bit my head off over the phone when I took a dig at him 'cause he was so worried about ya."

Bobby let out a tired sigh when Maya remained silent, digesting his words. "He also wanted me to pass on a message to you for him. Wanted to let you know that he loves you and he's missin' you something fierce, and he's waitin' to hear back from you."

Maya didn't know what to say. Sam had told her that he doubted her Dad didn't love her, if his reaction to her 'death' in the time loop was anything to go by. It helped, but not as much as Bobby passing on the message from her Dad that he loved her.

"D-did he mean it?" she asked a little shakey, revealing the doubt and fear caused by the Crocotta's words.

Bobby, of course, had no idea about her close encounter of the four-legged kind. So he was a bit confused at her question. Why did she all of a sudden question her own Daddy's love for her? His Hunter/Parental instincts started pinging. Something was wrong and he was probably going to have to hunt it down and kill it.
"Of course that damn idjit loves you! My, why would you even question—" Bobby's voice was cut off when Dean loudly announced his entrance to the room.

"Hey Goldy! You up for an afternoon manatee then questioning actors?" Dean asked loudly from the doorframe, not noticing Maya's wide terrified eyes or the slicing throat gesture she was making.

Sam came in behind him with a roll of his eyes, "It's called a *matinee*, Dean. A manatee is an aquatic sea mammal often referred to as a *sea cow.*"

Dean shot Sam an unimpressed look that said to Sam he was a 'bitch'. "Oh wow. Look at that Stanford educa—Goldy what's with the face? Who you talking to?" Dean had finally noticed Maya's freaked out face, the phone held to her ear, and the slicing throat gesture. Sam looked over at her and a feeling of dread curled in his stomach.

The occupants of the motel room were deathly quiet. Sam and Dean heard a muffled male voice come from the phone Maya was holding and saw the wince she gave at whatever was said.

She held out the phone to the two Winchesters, "He wants to talk to you."

Dean raised an eyebrow and walked over to grab the phone and quipped, "*Winchester & Winchester Pest Control, what pest you need ganking?*" He smirked at Sam who looked exasperated, then at Maya whose eyes seemed to have gotten bigger. That's when he realized that being *quippy* might've not been a good idea; he definitely knew it was a bad idea when the voice on the other end spoke.

"Hello Dean," came Bobby's even toned voice. "Mind explainin' to me why you are in a certain half-Trickster's motel room?"

*Uh oh.*

"We-well uh—" Dean stuttered a little nervously.

"'Cause from what I overheard it *sounded* like she's joining you on a hunt. Even though I'm pretty sure both me, and her Daddy, made it clear to her we didn't want her huntin'," Bobby said pointedly. "Now, either she didn't *tell you, or you idjits knew* and *still* decided to take her huntin' anyways. Got anythin' *to tell me boy?*"

"Ummm…"

"How long has she been with you two knuckleheads?" Bobby asked rhetorically.

Dean didn't really want to answer that. He was getting future flashes of Bobby aiming a shotgun at
him for endangering the little Trickster. Or worse.

"Better question," Bobby started again before Dean could come up with answer. "Did you lie to me about My not bein' caught up in whole horde of demons and the Monument police station blown' up debacle? 'Cause I distinctly remember you tellin' me that she decided to stay out of it."

Oh if Dean thought they were in trouble before. Bobby might just send him to Hell early himself.

"Well, see Bobby, that's not exactly what I said…wha-what I said was um…” Dean chuckled nervously sending an anxious glance at Sam and Maya who weren't fairing much better. Sam had paled when he heard Dean say Bobby's name, and probably getting the same visions of Bobby with a shotgun as well.

"Really?" Bobby said sarcastically, not believing him. "What did you say then?"

"That…she got Bela's room number for us and stayed out of the rest of it," Dean finished with a strained smile that Bobby wouldn't see, but after knowing Dean Winchester for most of his life he could probably hear it.

"Oh, bullshit," Bobby barked. "Start tellin' me the truth idjit. Now," that was a tone that spoke volumes of Bobby's attitude at that moment. He was done being patient. He wanted to know what's been going on with his pseudo daughter and sons, and he wanted no more bullshit.

"To be fair," Dean started sheepishly. "We didn't know Bela set us up or that we'd be surrounded by demons while holed up in a police station. We all got outta there all right for the most part…” Dean's mind wandered to Maya going after a demon on her own. That was a terrifying moment to walk in on.

"What. Happened," Bobby's temper was flaring. So Dean did what any sibling might do when confronted with a father figure like Bobby.

He threw Maya under the bus.

"Maya went after the last demon by her self," Dean offered to hopefully take the heat off of him.

"Dean!" Maya hissed in betrayal. Dean gave her an uneasy and apologetic shrug.

"WHAT?!" Bobby roared so loudly that Dean had to pull the phone away from his ear. "You better start talkin' or I swear to God Dean I'll hunt you down and fill all your collective asses with so much rock salt you won't have to worry 'bout ice on the roads in winter time!"

Dean heaved a heavy sigh, "All right but I'm not explaining it alone." Dean sent a look over at Sam and Maya who looked back at him apprehensively. He pressed a button and put the phone on speaker. "Say hi guys," he put the phone in the middle of the table.

"H-hey Bobby," Sam said uneasily. "Didn't we just talk last night?"
"Sam," Bobby greeted with a clipped tone.

"So, I might've left some stuff out…" Maya added meekly.

"No shit you little tricky assed idjit," Bobby groused unhappily. "So, who wants to start tellin' me all that you three idjits have been keepin' from me?"

"Oldest first!" Maya exclaimed hurriedly.

"I second that!" Sam added immediately after her.

Dean glared at them. "Gee thanks," he sasssed sarcastically. Maya gave him a mock apologetic shrug, her face anything but sorry for throwing him into the line of fire.

"I'm waitin'," Bobby said impatiently.

"Okay, okay. So here's what happened in Monument…" Dean started explaining that debacle and how Maya got hurt being stupid.

Maya spoke up when Bobby asked why she went after a demon by herself. That she was worried about it getting reinforcements, or informing Lilith of where they were. She didn't want the people in the station to be in danger when they left. A lot of good it did.

Bobby reassured her she had the right idea, but also told her she was an idjit for going after that demon by her self.

Sam then added how they were worried about Maya going off on her own when she was injured, so they offered to let her travel with them till she was better.

Dean then fessed up—more like outed out by Sam, the bitch—that it was his idea to start teaching Maya to hunt so she didn't get it in her head to try it on her own, but Maya was the one to actually agree to it. So, it was technically her choice to get more hands on experience. Maya bitch-faced at him for that one.

Sam explained they thought salt n' burns would be a good way for her to start, so they've only been bringing her along on ghost hunts. Anything else was research or helping them come up with ideas.

Then Bobby asked them about the case in Milan, and if it was a ghost doing all the killings since Sam didn't mention it the previous night.

There was an awkward pause. Maya disrupted it with a cough, "You might want to update your files on Crocotta."

"Balls," Bobby cursed. "Tell me Sam and Dean handled it and you were no where near that thing?"

"Um, funny thing…" Maya chuckled nervously as Bobby groaned. "There were two and apparently they can interact with electricity to listen to voicemails and read texts and emails to better lure their prey. Did you know they also have this weird dog-hyena hybrid form? Talk about one fugly—"

"And how would you know that?" Bobby interrupted.
Another awkward silence.

"It got my phone number and used my Dad's voice to lure me to the woods, because, apparently, half-pagans of the Trickster variety are a delicious delicacy?"

Bobby cursed unintelligibly over the phone. Maya shifted anxiously and sent an uneasy look to Sam and Dean who weren't doing much better. They were so screwed if Bobby got a hold of them.

They remained silent till Bobby calmed down and let out a strained sigh over the line. "You hurt?" he asked in concern.

"Physically? Some scrapes and bruises. Emotionally? Still trying to get my bearings..." Maya admitted softly with a grimace. "Not fun hearing the Crocotta use your Dad's voice to tear into you." Sam who was beside her rubbed upper back in comfort and Dean sent her a brief sympathetic look. She hadn't been the only one fooled and almost killed by a Crocotta mimicking a loved one's voice. "On the plus side I totally severed that bitch's spinal cord," she said trying to sound positive, but it came off as a little strained. Then her eyes brightened a little. Maybe a comment would lessen Bobby's fury with them. "It's a good thing Dean taught me how to wield a machete or I might've been toast."

Bobby hmph-ed at that, "If you weren't going along with them on hunts it wouldn't have been necessary."

"Technically Bobby she wasn't hunting that time. She was doing research and was the only one of us to realize that it might not have been a haunting," Sam pointed out.

"Not the point, Sam!" Bobby snapped before grumbling out, "I hope you know that you're all idjits. All three of you." They were met with an abrupt dial tone.

There was a confused silence between the three as they looked at each other uncertainly. That was a weird way to end the conversation, especially since it sounded like Bobby wasn't done chewing them out yet.

"Please tell me I'm not the only one with a sense of foreboding here?" Maya said, sending the query out there.

"Nope," Dean answered her as she picked up her phone and closed it. Sam nodded with a pensive look. "Right. I vote we wrap this case up quickly and get the hell outta dodge before Bobby decides to chew us out some more, in person."

Sam and Maya voiced their agreements with that.
"I didn't get it," Dean shook his head as they exited the theatre into the lounge and continued complaining. "$15 a head? Not worth it!"

"Course not Dean. You'd have to have some appreciation for the arts," Dean opened his mouth to protest, but Sam continued, "that doesn't include scantily clad women. Though it'd be better if the vic's understudy wasn't so terrible."

"Hey!" Dean protested. "You haven't seen those women in action! I mean, talk about talent in the…" he turned to look at Sam with a smug and self-indulgent grin when he also saw Maya standing there as well with a raised eyebrow, anything else he was about to say died in his throat. Dean's grin quickly fell as he coughed awkwardly.

"Well go on Dean," Maya grinned impishly at him. "'Talent in the' what, exactly?"

Sam tried to hide a laugh behind a cough, but Dean just sent him a glare before turning narrowed eyes back on the little Trickster.

"…not talking about this with you," Dean about faced and started walking a little faster, away from them.

Maya sent Sam a grin and went to pursue the fleeing Winchester. "Aww c'mon Dean! I'm seventeen now! I'm a big girl! I can handle it!"

"No!" Dean snapped at her in annoyance. "I'm not talking about that stuff with you!"

"What? Women talented in the carnal arts?"

Dean sent her the stink eye. "You enjoy making me feel uncomfortable, don't you?" Maya grinned widely at him. "Of course you do. Sam!" Dean called looking back for his sasquatch of a brother.

Sam had caught up with them easily enough in the thinning crowds of the theatre lobby. "Alright. You two done goofing around?" Sam quipped.

"I don't know," Dean said dryly as he looked at Maya. "Are we?"

Maya had been pretending to look distracted till Dean addressed her and she looked at him with big innocent gold eyes, "Hmm? Yeah. Of course. Just waiting for you Dean."
Dean sent her a deadpanned stare to show her the lack of amusement he was feeling from her little act.

"Twerp," Dean started walking, leading the way back into the theatre and towards a door leading to the back stage. "C'mon let's go play reporters. Goldy you're the intern."

Maya snorted, "Got it." Then she smirked slyly, "At least I get to meet some cute theatre guys." She actually walked into Dean's back when he abruptly stopped.

Maya didn't see Dean's face that promised murder, but Sam got a glimpse and decided to offer a suggestion that would keep Dean from actually committing homicide. Not that he wasn't far behind him self either.

"Hey Maya, want to check around the stage while me and Dean talk with the stage personnel and actors?" Sam suggested.

She gave him an exasperated groan, "Is this because I said I'd find a hook-up to celebrate my birthday when I was drunk?" Oh yeah. That was one of the memories that had cleared up and if the brothers' stiffening frames were anything to go by she hit the nail on the head. "Thanks for protecting my honor and all, but you can't really stop me."

Oh the stubborn protective glares sent her way.

"The hell we can't," Dean growled lowly. "You're still a kid you shouldn't even be thinking about sex yet."

"Last I checked, I'm seventeen," Maya sent him a smirk. "Not a kid."

Sam pinched the bridge of his nose. He could tell an argument was brewing, even if he sided with Dean on this one. Maya was too young to be thinking about having sex, but they didn't need to have this argument here and now.

"Can we shelf this argument for later? We need to be focused on the case and not Maya's sex life," Sam stated.

"You mean her sex life that will remain non-existent?" Dean asked giving Maya a pointed glare. "Then yeah, you're right."

Maya rolled her eyes and crossed her arms over her chest. "You guys can go question the theatre nerds. I'll look around at the stage and maybe talk to some of the other personnel," Maya decided.
to just take Sam's suggestion than try to argue her way into being with them when they talked to the actors. Honestly Maya didn't really care.

During the car ride to Peoria she started feeling nervous and anxious over actually finding a random hook-up for her birthday and losing her virginity. She even started feeling a little scared, actually. That was probably a good sign that she was *not ready for that*. Didn't mean she can't use it as a way to get under Sam and Dean's skin over it. Well, mainly Dean's. He had better reactions to the topic of her having sex than Sam did.

She took her cell out and waved it at them as she went to poke around, "Shoot me a text when you're done."

"*No boys!*" Dean barked a little too loudly causing his voice to reverberate off the acoustic walls of the theatre very clearly. Seriously, someone could hear a pin drop in such an audial room. Probably. Maybe. All the more reason why someone should have heard the poor woman being strung up and carved.

Maya turned around and walked backwards to show Dean her mouthing exaggeratedly 'Wow' before giving him a shit-eating grin. She turned around and walked normally, following the stage to the other end of the theatre, hearing the muffled conversations of the Winchesters. Mainly Dean cursing her name.

Maya found a custodian and talked to them about the building's history, their resident playful ghost named Norman, and their more malevolent resident. They had been working there helping with the upkeep for years and had only ever really gotten a glimpse of Norman. They told her how the other spirit only came around when certain plays were being produced, but this was the first time someone actually died. Most of the time it just tried to scare people, maybe make them feel sick or paranoid. If it was feeling really aggressive some of the actors would find bruises on them in the shape of hand prints or a message written in red lipstick telling them to quit or face the consequences. When it got to that point those who were threatened packed it in and left.

"Um, did the actress that was killed," Maya began, "did she experience these things as well?"

"Hmm from what I heard," they paused to think, "they did but they just thought it was some of the other old hats of the theatre playing cruel pranks or she didn't remember being bruised. She refused to believe it was the malevolent entity that haunts the theatre."

"Okay," Maya nodded in interest. "You said it only ever showed up when certain plays were produced? Do you remember the titles?"

They shrugged. "I'm not paid to memorize lines. All I know is they never make it to opening night with the same female lead, and never do as well as they should have because of it. I'd speak to Gladys if you're really interested. She's been here for decades and has been keeping records of
every play or skit played and their revenue. Financial reasons."

"Great! Thanks for talking to me," Maya said with a kind smile that was returned.

"You're welcome miss. Glad to see a reporter, even an intern, broaden who they talk to. Most reporters that've stopped by mostly want to talk to management or the actors that were there that night," they grumped a little at the end.

"No promises though that the editor will include any of this. Doubt they'd run an article saying: 'Ghost kills actress'" Maya apologized.

"It's alright. Have a good evening miss," they said as they went to continue their custodial duties.

Maya sent them another smile and started walking away, flipping her phone open to check if Dean or Sam sent her a message, nothing. They were probably still talking with the others.

She took a moment longer to stare at her phones screensaver. It was her Dad and her making silly faces at the camera. Maya was winking while sticking her tongue out and her Dad had his eyes crossed and sucking in his cheeks and puckering his lips like a fish. A sad, but fond smile adorned her face.

Flipping through her contacts and settings she figured out how to unblock numbers and unblocked her Dad's. She wasn't ready to go back, but she was ready to at least get in contact with him. Her eyes widened at the amount of voicemails and text messages her Dad left her.

_Holy crap._

Looking around Maya ducked into a door with stairs leading up onto the stage. She stayed at the bottom and began playing the voicemails. Bringing the phone to her ear she listened.

"Hey Sugarplum, it's Dad. Duh. I haven't heard anything from you the last few days...so give me a call okay? Or, you know what, just shoot me a text. Okay. I love you sweetheart. Okay. Bye."

She heard his worry, his fear, his anguish, his anger and his disappointment the more she heard as the messages blurred from one to the next. Granted she did skip over the ones that were just reiterations of previous ones, but mostly because she didn't want to hear more of her Dad's pain.

Pain that she caused him.

Didn't stop her from laughing a little from one of the last messages on her voicemail. Maya thought she'd never hear her Dad drunk. Oh she could tell it wasn't 'I'm-so-livid-with-you-right-now' kind of anger. No it sounded like it was more like he was trying to be angry while he was also a little bit
confused. It was pouty.

"...Fine! –hic- Do-don't respond! Sheee wha I care!...STOP MOCKING MECEILING! ...stupid judgey roof…-hic-…"

Then there was the following message to apologize for his drunken message.

"Please ignore that last message. I do care. A lot! I love you and nothing will ever change that. You're my everything and...I'm worried which just feeds my anger and...I'm just a hot mess. Which was why I ended up in my private stash of Asgardian mead...I was drunk...sorry...call me."

Maya may not be drunk but she hiccupped a little through her tears as she heard her Dad tell her he loved her and that she was his everything. Even after what she was putting him through. Poison from the Crocotta's words and her own fears and doubts slowly ebbed. Some of it wouldn't leave completely, but the fear and doubt about her Dad's love for her? That poison was slowly being washed clean.

She went to skim over the text messages he left her when her phone vibrated with a new message.

From her Dad.

D: Happy Birthday my Morning Glory.

D: I love you.

D: Always.

Taking a few minutes to calm her self from the fresh wave of relieved tears so she wasn't about to sob when she spoke. For the first time in weeks Maya dialled her Dad's number.

"Did you mean it?" Maya asked when her Dad answered, her voice thick with emotion and trying to keep it together. "Th-that y-you loved me?" She silently cursed the sniffles that escaped without permission.

Any doubt of her Dad's loved disappeared as she heard her Dad tell her, "That's something I would never joke about Maya. You're everything to me." A couple of more tears escaped. That was
definitely her Dad's voice, not the slightly off impression of the Crocotta's.

Maya smiled as she wiped away more tears, "Thanks Dad." She paused for a beat and said, "I love you too."

Chapter End Notes

Shout out to my awesome reviewers datajana, Trenchcoat_Castiel, and MLSummers17!! Love the reviews guys!!
Stubbornness: A Family Trait

Chapter Notes

AN: DOOOOOOOOOOONE! Sorry for such a late update! I've got a part time job now and they like me on closing shifts, which is when I usually like to write. However my chapters seemed to be getting longer on average as well so I like to think that makes up for it. It's like two chapters worth instead of one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

March 20 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Afternoon…

Bobby glared at the cell phone in his hand after hanging up on his newest and latest headaches.

Maya, a little half-Trickster was travelling and learning to hunt monsters from Sam and Dean Winchester. And had already gone on a couple of hunts. One of which she almost had her soul eaten.

He wanted to reach through the phone and smack her in the head for breaking her promise about not taking up hunting. Then throttle Sam and Dean for taking her hunting when they probably knew damn well she wasn't supposed to be.

Bobby had had an inkling that one day she'd no longer take no for an answer when it came to going after supernatural monsters. He'd hoped she'd be older and more practiced in her Trickster abilities and magic, and then if she was still serious about it he'd consider taking her on some salt n' burns.

Maybe. Well, probably not. Point was she was too young to be doing Hunter crap like this.

He was also worried about that inner light she had about her. It wasn't long after meeting her that he noticed something. Bobby didn't understand what it was, but when she was around it was like the world didn't seem so dark. That breath of fresh air after being stuck in a dark stagnant crypt and the door finally opened.

That first ray of light over the horizon, before the sun, that would chase away what seemed like an eternal night.

The Hunting life was rough; it was painful and filled with blood, loss, and copious amounts of alcohol. It darkened people. Even twisted some. Bobby didn't want whatever light, or innocence, Maya had to be snuffed out from her trying to be a Hunter. Either from all the times she would fail to save someone, or from getting herself killed by a monster...or from a close-minded Hunter that found out what she was. Bobby doubted that most of the Hunting community would be all that supportive of a half-Trickster Hunter.

Of course what he wanted didn't amount to much when dealing with a baby Trickster with a strong sense of morals and with a stubborn streak strong enough to rival an ornery mule's.

Then there was Sam and Dean who thought—actually thought—that taking her on hunts was a
good idea. Damned fools were what they were. Even if their teaching's saved her life when they ran into a pair of Crocotta. He was still half a mind that she wouldn't have had to learn it if she didn't hang around the idjit duo that actively hunted things.

Even if he was slightly grateful for his boys for taking his girl under their wing and looking out for her. Notwithstanding the massive headache it was causing him.

Yet despite all his misgivings over this development, and from what he could garner from the phone call, it seemed all three of them got along all right. Hell, it almost seemed like they started to, or already had on some level...huh.

Bobby heaved a heavy sigh as he stuffed the cellphone into the back pocket of his jeans as he headed back outside. The only reason he wasn't rushing over to Peoria right away was because he had a couple of cars to finish repairing. So he'd deal with that notion later. He wasn't opposed to the idea in the slightest. If anything Maya would be good for the boys. It was just the boys dragging her along into their little escapades that worried him.

Oh, who was he kidding? Maya probably happily skipped along side them into whatever shit they had lined up. No dragging required.

Bobby ducked under the hood of a Chevy he was working on earlier before his unexpectedly stressful break. Before concentrating his entire energy on fixing up the car, he had one final thought on Sam, Dean, and Maya.

'God I love those three idjits like they were my own, but sometimes I just want to—'

"Shit!" Bobby cursed when some of his skin on his hand got caught when twisting something into place. "That's what I get for gettin' distracted," he grumped as he flexed his hand a little. "Damn that smarted."

Bobby decided to deal with his Three Stooges later. Good thing he knew where they were going to be for the next couple of days.

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**Peoria, Illinois, United States**

**Evening**

Maya sucked in a relieved breath through her tight throat as a tension in her shoulders lessened. She hadn't realized how much she missed her Dad till she finally called him, or how reassuring it was when he assured her that he loved her. Few more sniffles escaped her.

"You okay honey nut?" her Dad asked.

"I am now," her voice was still a little thick when she answered with a small smile. Maya was better but she was kind of missing her Dad's hugs at the moment.

"You sure?" Gabriel asked concerned. Maya asking him if he meant what he texted about loving her was sending up red flags for him. "Can you tell me why you didn't think I loved you?"

The smile slipped from her face and turned into an uneasy grimace.

"I may have run into some trouble," Maya admitted, but quickly added, "I'm fine though!"
"Right. You're fine?" Maya could hear the sarcasm dripping in his voice. "Soooo fine that whatever trouble you stumbled into made you question how much I loved you? I thought you were a troublemaker, not a trouble magnet?"

Maya gave a dry chuckle, "I'm multi-talented."

She heard her Dad give a small laugh on the other end.

"That you are Jersey Milk," she could just picture him giving her an amused smile before giving way to his concerned face with tight lips and pinched brows. "Want to tell me the kind of trouble you ran into?"

"Um…not really because you'd freak out and demand to know where I am?" Yeah. Maya knew all too well of her Dad's overprotective tendencies.

"Are you planning on telling me where you are at all?" his voice sounded less amused and more disappointed. Maya slightly bit her bottom lip in hesitation.

"I…no," she finally admitted. "M'not ready to come back yet."

There was a pregnant pause, as her Dad remained silent on the other end, obviously ruminating over what she just told him.

"Fine," he grumbled out. Sounded like it hurt to say it. Oh yeah, he was not happy with her. "But I hope you know that the minute I find you your ass is grounded."

Maya sucked in a breath through her teeth as she grimaced, "Yeeaaah I kind of figured."

"Good," Gabriel said curtly. "Now, want to tell what happened that you actually thought I didn't love you? I need to know who to kill."

Maya let her mouth quirk upward a little bit. It probably said something about her that she found her Dad's dark response a little amusing, even if she knew he was dead serious. Snicker.

"You're probably a little late. It was a few days ago…" Maya paused as an icy chill ran through her and her breath fogged. "Actually something's just come up. I'll tell you later."

"No! Maya! Don't you dare—"

"Sorry Dad! Gotta go! Love you! Byyyyyyyeee!" Maya interrupted in a rush and hung up her phone. Oooh boy, was she in trouble when he catches up to her.

She quickly got up and turned around to stare up at the stop of the stage stairs to find a young man, early thirties, standing there and looking down at her curiously. His hair was styled to one-side slicked flat, he wore a white dress shirt rolled up to his elbows with a thin charcoal sweater vest over top, and a loose dark grey plaid tie around his neck. He also wore grey suit pants that had a crease running down the middle of each leg, flaring a little at the bottom. Snappy black dress shoes completed the look.

He'd look pretty rumpled, but that wasn't what stuck out the most. No. Despite his 60's casual Friday's look the man was also a little gaunt and a bit sickly looking. Maya had read about him in her research.

This was Norman Endean, the resident playful spirit of the theatre who died of cancer, and was possibly the one who killed the actress.
"Hello miss," Norman greeted with a kind smile. "You doing okay?"

Maya stared at the man a little dumbfounded. This guy definitely didn't seem like a vengeful spirit.

"Are you Norman Endean?" she asked a little nervous as she carefully reached into her jacket for the iron crowbar she had hidden.

Norman gave her a wry grin, "It seems my notoriety precedes me. Honestly I just wanted to watch the plays. I definitely don't need any publicity for being a ghost."

"Well maybe being a bit more discreet would help, 'cause I doubt killing that actress did you any favors," Maya responded with a bit of sarcasm, her jaw clenching as she wrapped a hand around the crowbar in her jacket.

Norman looked at her with such surprised eyes his eyebrows almost jumped off his face from the accusation. His surprise quickly morphed into indignation.

"I didn't kill anyone!" he stressed. He threw his hands up in exasperation, and then revealed, "I normally don't interact directly with the living. I just sit back and watch everyone work to put on a marvelous show!" Norman crossed his arms sulkily then flickered out of sight.

Maya brought the crowbar fully out of her jacket and was tense as she looked around the small space she had accidentally cornered herself in. Taking a breath she walked up the stairs carefully, peaking through the railing spokes as she moved up to stage level.

She jumped the last two steps when Norman's voice appeared behind her at the bottom of the stairs.

"Granted," Maya whipped around to face him, crowbar raised. "I do like having a little fun with them. Making sounds and moving things when they're not looking," Norman had a small mischievous smirk on his face. "Have to keep them on their toes somehow."

"Yeah, nothing like murder and mutilation to keep them guessing," Maya couldn't help saying sarcastically. Dean was probably rubbing off on her a little too much.

"I told you! It wasn't me!" he yelled angrily as he once again flickered out of sight, but this time appeared right beside her. His face contorted in rage. "It was someone—"

Maya didn't wait for him to finish before swinging the crowbar through him, making him dissipate. She swiveled her head around the deserted stage as she started to walk across it to the other side, iron crowbar gripped firmly in her hands. Maya barely started when she heard Sam and Dean burst onto the stage from the other end. Dean carrying the sawed-off he had hidden in his own jacket at the ready.

"Maya! We heard yelling!" Sam called as him and Dean jogged up to her. "You okay?"

She held up and waved the iron crowbar at them, "Yeah. Just met Norman Endean."

"So, it's this Norman guy we're after?" Dean asked as he kept an eye on their surroundings, sawed-off at the ready.

Maya sighed and looked at them with a pensive face filled with uncertainty, "I don't know."

"What do you mean?" Sam asked with a confused frown.
"Yeah, what's there to know?" Dean snorted, sparing a glance at her. "He's a vengeful spirit and there's a dead body in the morgue to prove it."

"That's the thing Dean. He wasn't vengeful," she told him. "Pissed that I accused him of murder and got a little too close, scaring me, but other than that he didn't really do anything."

Before Sam and Dean could say anything else the air got cold again.

"Exactly," came the exasperated voice of Norman who appeared stage right a few feet away from them. "I'm not out to hurt anyone. I'm just another victim!"

Maya whirled around to face the apparition with her crowbar raised in a batting position. Dean already had his sawed off raised and ready to fire.

Sam was tense, but he looked at the spirit contemplatively. "Another victim?" he asked curiously.

Norman nodded his head tiredly, accentuating his pallor complexion and slightly sunken face. "Yes. How do you think I died?"

"Cancer," Dean grunted, itching to fire at the spirit. It unnerved him how it seemed to have no interest in attacking them. In Dean's experience they'd be swinging iron and firing salt rounds by now. Not chatting.

Maya bit her lip, "Presumably."

"What?" Dean demanded, eyes flickering to the back of Maya's head then back to the ghost.

"He presumably died of cancer. After his final performance in Kiss Me Kate. It was never confirmed," Maya answered then got the same contemplative look Sam had as she looked at Norman. "Did whatever that killed the actress kill you as well?"

"Yes! Exactly!" he said with a broad smile.

Maya and Sam started to relax a little, but Dean wasn't having it.

"You guys can't seriously believe this guy?" Dean stayed tense, his finger ready to fire off a salt round if the spirit so much as moved towards either of the two bleeding hearts in front of him.

"Well, maybe he's like Molly in Nevada? She'd been dead for 15yrs but never turned vengeful," Sam suggested with a shrug.

"And Corbett with the leap year ghost," Maya added helpfully, to Dean's chagrin.

"Exactly. None of them came back vengeful," Sam forced himself to relax a little, but he was still ready to move if necessary.

Maya followed his example and relaxed her stance, but never her grip on her weapon of ghostly destruction.

Dean narrowed his eyes at the two and scowled heavily before getting out of his ready to shoot stance. "Fine!" Dean bit out, frustrated. "But if this blows up in our faces I'm blaming the two of you!" he walked over to stand with them, glaring at the ghost the whole way. "Alright asshole, start talking, but one move outta line I'm blasting your ass. Capiche?" he glared at the spirit cocking his sawed-off threateningly.

"Of course," Norman said placatingly with raised hands in surrender. He then sighed tiredly and ran
a hand through his hair. "I'm assuming if you've heard of my haunting here then you must have come across information on another entity here?"

Maya cocked her head, "Yeah there was mention of a more malicious spirit that lurked around here, but I didn't find anymore information on any other deaths related to the theatre."

Norman gave a grim smile, "No you wouldn't have. His death wasn't reported in the papers or mentioned that he was ever part of the theatre troop."

Maya's face furrowed in confusion. Why wouldn't this other spirit be recognized as part of the theatre troop?

"Okay, so this guy was kept off the record. Why's this important?" Dean huffed irritably.

Something clicked in Maya's mind a little bit, "Do you know when he died?" Maya wasn't sure, but a lot of groups were facing a lot more open hostility, especially before the 60's. "Was he in a minority?"

Norman sent her a kind smile, "I like you. You're smart. And yes, he wa—" Norman cut him self off suddenly, his eyes widening fearfully and his pale skin somehow becoming even paler. "Oh no."

That utterance set all three of them off, tensing and raising weapons.

"Wha'd'ya mean oh no?!" Dean demanded hotly with his raised sawed-off shotgun pointing at Norman.

If the air was cold before when Norman showed up, then it just turned down right icy.

Before any of them could react Maya found herself yanked backwards and flying part way across the stage with a surprised yelp, then sliding the rest of the way and going back first into one of the stage supports. She groaned as pained erupted throughout her back. Oh she was going to be sore for the foreseeable future that's for sure.

"MAYA!/GOLDY!" Sam and Dean shouted in shock, and then fury as another spirit appeared between them and the downed baby Trickster.

"You like this dumb skank, Norman?!" the horrible spirit snarled at the other ghost, completely ignoring the Hunters.

"Rupert, please," Norman begged pleadingly, his eyes flickering towards Maya as she struggled to her feet.

Rupert looked nothing like Norman. Instead of looking sickly, but relatively unharmed, he was the opposite. Blood leaked from his head, his ears, his broken nose, and his jaw looked broken and awkwardly askew as blood dribbled from his mouth. One eye seemed permanently swollen shut with a horrible black and purple bruise. He had a loose and ripped white long sleeved button up shirt covered in blood and dirt. Only one suspender held up his grey and blood and dirt stained trousers, the other having fallen off his shoulder, and an angry red ligature mark encircled his neck.

His one remaining open eye was pale blue but blazed with pure jealous rage. His hair appeared to
have been dirty blonde once, but was caked with blood, sweat, and dirt.

"NO! You can only like me!" Rupert pointed to himself with a broken hand. "I told you I was serious! It was me, or no one. Or did you not learn from what I did to that no talent bitch I—"

Dean fired his sawed-off and dissipated Rupert. Sam quickly ran forward and quickly checked over Maya.

Dean turned to look back at a guilty Norman, "So, want to enlighten us on what the hell that was about?"

"I was killed by a ghost from the 30's that fell in love with me—unrequited by the way—and has a serious problem with jealousy?" Norman answered piteously.

Sam gingerly helped Maya up the rest of the way to her feet. From what he could gather so far it looked like she just might get some bruising and sore muscles from the impact. Maya released a pained whimper. Okay maybe some seriously sore muscles and tender bruises. Sam was just grateful that it seemed no lasting damage was done. If the support had been a metal pole that wasn't as thick as the blocky wooden one...well, Maya's hunting days might be over before they really begun.

"Maybe start from the beginning Norman," Sam suggested.

Norman nodded guiltily.

"I was an actor and director here in the 60's. Apparently I caught Rupert's eye when I wouldn't hide the fact that I supported the gay rights movement. It never really bothered me who someone chose to love or have sex with and when I directed plays I made it a point that I wouldn't tolerate homophobia," Norman explained.

"Why the hell would he care about that?" Dean asked bluntly.

"Because being gay was the reason he was killed," Norman said sadly. "It...wasn't uncommon in the 30's for a homosexual to go missing or found brutally murdered. Rupert was beaten then killed from either the curb stomping or being hanged. Rupert was gravely injured and dying from the beating before he was strung up."

"So he latched onto you for your supportive views and why he would've no longer been recognized by the troop or reported in the papers or in the obit," Maya observed with a slight groan as she leaned on Sam for support. She was not looking forward to later when trying to relax her muscles enough to sleep. "I'm guessing you didn't sleep around or date all that much either?"

Norman nodded with a shrug, "I was too busy with acting or directing."

Dean pinched his face in confusion. Why would that matter?

Sam however picked up on her train of thought, "Huh. So if you weren't sleeping with a woman or dating; he must have just assumed you were attracted to men and just opted out."

"Opted out?" Dean asked.

"Being gay in the 60s wasn't exactly a cake walk either. Maybe not as dangerous as the 30s, but it wasn't by much. Especially with the AIDs paranoia running amok and homosexuals being pegged by everyone and their redneck uncle as being the main carriers and spreaders," Maya explained as she tried standing on her own as the pain lessened a little, Sam's hand hovering near her just in
"Thank you Professor Goldy for that bit of Paranoid American history," Dean commented dryly, smirking when Maya moodily told him to bite her. "Doesn't explain how noticing Woody Allen here becomes a full on homicidal jealous love obsession."

The tired and guilty expression appeared on Norman's face, "In life Rupert approached me and at first I was terrified, but as nothing happened I grew curious and became a sympathetic ear for him."

All three of them looked at the spirit with various degrees of 'are-you-that-stupid?'

Norman raised his hands in a placating gesture as he sighed, "I know, I know. I didn't think much of it until he started scaring off anyone I was fond of. Male, female, it didn't matter."

"Let me guess, you confronted him about it?" Dean asked wryly.

Norman nodded at him, "That's when he confessed his feelings for me…and when I told him I didn't return them."

Dean snorted, "Bet he wasn't too happy about that."

"So all this is, what? 'If I can't have you no one can', type of thing?" Sam asked as he stopped hovering around Maya once she didn't look like she was about keel over.

"Sounds like it," Maya muttered as she looked at Norman. "How'd Rupert kill you anyway? And why're you hanging around?"

"Water Hemlock," Norman muttered. "One of the actress' got a bouquet from a fan that picked some local flowers. They mistook it for Queen's Lace. Or they too were a jealous obsessive fan and were jilted by her."

"Oooooh," Maya groaned, sending Norman a sympathetic look. "Let me guess, some sap in a drink?"

"Ha!" Norman snorted. "No, instead of being on the actress' armoire Rupert moved it over to my office. All it took was for me to be curious enough to touch it while looking for a note. Within the next few minutes I'm seizing on the ground and being rushed to the hospital. Doctors did all they could to fight off the toxin but I still died a few days later. Next thing I know I'm in the place I loved most in life and Rupert's gloating and celebrating how we'll be together forever." Norman grimaced at the memory. "It didn't take long to figure out my ghost powers and I quickly disposed of the flowers. Unfortunately without the flowers, and my less than healthy complexion from not taking care of myself from over working, everyone thought I'd been sick for a while and assumed I died of cancer."

Dean sent him an incredulous smile, "You died, from touching flowers?"

"Dean," Sam warned slash complained. Of course that's what his brother would focus on. "Water Hemlock is one of the most toxic plants in North America. Poisonings happen all the time because they're mistaken for other plants. Death usually occurring after 15 minutes."

Dean winced, "Ouch."

"Yes," Norman sighed. "I'm still here mostly because of Rupert. I told him again I didn't want to be with him, but then he threatened that if I directly interacted with anyone he'd take care of them."
Maya sent him a smirk, "Thought you hung around to mess with people and watch free plays?"

Norman rolled his eyes, "A little bit yes, but you can only see renditions of Kiss Me Kate and Mamma Mia for so long." He was done. They could tell from his body language he was tired of hanging around.

"Then why haven't you just moved on?" Sam asked curiously. This was the longest conversation with an aware ghost they've ever had.

"I threatened that, but Rupert said if I left he'd reek havoc on everyone in the theatre. I love the theatre and everyone that walks through its doors. I can't just leave them at the mercy of a murderous lunatic," Norman seemed to slump into himself tiredly.

He looked directly at Maya with regret, "And now with my careless words I'm afraid Rupert will come after you now. To get rid of the competition."

Sam and Dean sent Maya worried looks; while she just looked at Rupert with a deep, but contemplative, frown.

"Son of a bitch," she cursed, wincing as she jarred her self too much from quickly putting her hands on her hips. Maya swung her head back and forth between Sam and Dean, "Looks like I'm going to have to be bait."

Sam and Dean were loud in their disapprovals.

March 21 2008, Peoria, Illinios, United States

Next day…

They'd shot at Rupert some more on their way out during their first encounter last night, and Sam and Dean were adamant about not using Maya as bait for a distraction. Puck also voiced his disapproval when they finally got back to the motel. He was not a happy dog.

Granted it was smart idea for keeping Rupert distracted while they salted and burned his remains, but the brothers still thought it was a bad idea. However there was a little hitch in that little plan.

They had no clue where Rupert's remains were.

They didn't even have a last name, as the homicidal ghost never told the other ghost that or where he was buried. Dean suggested salting and burning Norman's remains first before trying to find Rupert's. He pointed out it was only a matter of time before Norman turned vengeful. He was also a little ticked off at the spirit for painting a target—however accidental—on Maya for the more murderous spirit to focus on.

Maya and Sam argued that Norman wasn't the one inclined to kill people at the moment. Besides he seemed pretty helpful and might know something they didn't that could help later, and if he didn't move on when Rupert was gone then they could still salt and burn his bones too. He at least had a grave to disturb.

Dean acquiesced, but under great protest!
"Okay. So how do we find this shithead's corpse?" Dean asked exasperated.

"Death records from the 30's?" Sam suggested. "How many Rupert's could've died around here over a 10 year period?"

"Let me guess," Dean sighed. "Library?"

Sam nodded, "Maybe city hall, but library's a good place to start looking." He looked at his watch and grimaced; "If we want to deal with Rupert before he decides to take care of any more competition for Norman's affections then we better get looking."

Maya frowned and let out a slow breath through her nose in a silent sigh. Her back ached as she shifted stiffly. Maya didn't want to move from her spot on the couch, unless it was to go lay back down on one of the beds.

Of course even silent sighing or subtle shifting wouldn't go unnoticed by a couple of observant Hunters.

Dean's concerned gaze was on her in seconds, "How's the back Goldy?"

"Stiff and sore," she mumbled. "I'll be fine. Just need to avoid getting thrown around for a bit," Maya added with a lopsided smile.

Sam's face pinched a little before offering a kind and understanding smile, "If you want to stay back and rest for a bit longer we won't hold it against you."

It was tempting, but the aching wasn't something she couldn't tolerate. "Nah I'm good." She shook her head getting up with a little groan and grimaced as she tried to gingerly stretch her distressed back muscles. "Besides, we're just going to be sitting and reading. Doubt I'll need to worry about anything throwing me into a wall or something at the library."

Dean walked over to her with a proud grin, "That a girl Goldy! Wait to suck it up and work through the pain!" He then soundly clapped a hand on her shoulder jarring her.

She gritted her teeth as she visibly winced from her bruised muscles protesting the sudden jolt. "Son of a bitch, Dean! I can work through the aching and stiffness but not you exacerbating it!"

"Aw come on Goldy," Dean scoffed. "I didn't grab ya that hard," he paused a brief moment in pondering. "Did I?"

Sam and her rolled their eyes.

"No assface," Dean gave her a dead panned glare at her insulting moniker for him, "but right now anything with enough sudden pressure would." She tested rolling her shoulders, a frown on her face at a sharp sting.

"Good," Dean nodded. "Let's get this over with."

"Wow Dean, you sound so enthused to go to the library," Sam said sarcastically with a grin.

"Bite me Sammy."

Maya grinned at them in amusement.
They unfortunately couldn't find any Rupert who died in Peoria in the 1930's. It was frustrating.

Dean glared heatedly at the death records. If he glared any harder they might spontaneously combust.

"Well this was a fantastic waste of time," Dean grumped loudly, getting a few angry shushes and an angry glare from the librarian. He ducked his head a little from that. "We can't gank the son of a bitch if we don't know where his remains are," he whispered fiercely, eyes narrowed.

Sam had contemplative look on his face as he thought over the details that they did have. "Maya?" he asked getting her attention. "Wasn't disownment a big thing when someone was found out to be gay?"

"Yeah and being ostracized," Maya nodded.

"How can you know stuff like this but still can't understand basic car repairs?" Dean asked shaking his head.

The impala had had a strange rattle that morning and Dean roped the two of them into helping out and learning. Sam had some knowledge and Dean figured Bobby would've dragged Maya into some car repairs at his place. Dean however quickly learned that Maya struggled greatly with trying to figure out the problem and then trying to fix it. He'd asked about her lack of skills if she'd been going to Bobby's for years. She just shrugged at him and said she just wasn't mechanically inclined.

Maya sent him an unimpressed bitch-face at his question, "I read, and it's good to know things like this when dealing with assholes. Makes 'em look like uneducated rubes when I bring stuff like this up to use it against them." She looked back at Sam, "So what's that melon of yours thinking Sammy?"

Sam pulled a frown at the nickname, "It's Sam, and if Rupert's family found out he was gay they probably disowned him and wanted nothing to do with him. Even after he was murdered. They probably didn't claim the body when it was found." Sam grabbed the book with the death records looking for something and made a pleased noise when he found it near the back.

"Ah, here we go. In 1932, '35, and '39 there were a total of five unidentified bodies, three of them men and descriptions don't match our ghost. Then there was a total of three identified but unclaimed bodies, only one of which was male," Sam pointed at the text and read it out loud. "Rupert Willard, age 23, blonde hair and blue eyes, 5'-11". Found beaten and with a rope ligature mark around his neck in a dumpster behind the Peoria Players Theatre. Cause of death: hanging or beating. Family did not claim body having disowned him. Aaaaaannnnnd…" Sam paused in his reading and slumped in his seat in defeat before continuing, "He was cremated."

"Well that's just perfect!" Dean said a little too loudly as a chorus of shushes assaulted their ears. He stood up angrily when the disapproving librarian from before started to walk towards them. "Yeah, yeah we're leaving. Don't get your reading specs in a twist!" he motioned for Sam and Maya to follow before trudging towards the library exit. Sam and Maya sent apologetic looks to the stern looking librarian with their arms stiffly crossed.

They quickly fled after Dean, Puck who had been a good boy and quiet—unlike Dean—trotted after them.
They get to the impala and climb in, taking a moment to think of what the hell they were going to do. If Rupert was cremated he had to be tied to something, either an important object or something with his DNA in it.

Now they just had to figure out what.

"Anyone got any ideas?" Dean sighed as he decided to turn the car over. "'Cause right now I've got nothing."

Sam shook his head as he leaned against his hand that was propped up on the passenger shotgun window.

"Weeeell," Maya said hesitantly from the back of the car. "We could ask Norman if he has any idea of what's tying Rupert here," at Dean's narrowed eyes in the rearview mirror she added, "Just a thought."

Seeing Dean's less than pleased face at Maya's idea Sam offered up another suggestion, "Maybe we can ask the people at the theatre if they have anything that's old enough to be from the 1930's? I wouldn't be surprised if they had some memorabilia of the theatres history."

"See? That's a good idea!" Dean said pointedly.

Maya sent him an unimpressed glare. "Still wouldn't know which item he was tied to," she sassed back at him.

"That's why we have an EMF, Goldy," Dean snarked in retaliation. "If any of that shit is Rupert's we'll know."

"If it's not?"

"We'll figure it out when we get to it."

"…right," Maya wasn't so sure.

A pause.

"Ah, shut up Goldy," was Dean's petulant reply.

Peoria Players Theatre

"What do you mean I have to wait in the car?!" Maya whined aghast.

"Exactly as I said Goldy," Dean said resolutely, unaffected by her whining. He spent years looking after a whiny baby brother and that never got Sam anywhere, so Maya's whining wasn't going to get her anywhere either. "Do you not remember what happened last night? Or did you also get hit in the head? There's a murderous ghost in there that wants your head on a pike!" He stressed. "We can't go in there asking about," he waved his hand in the air looking for the word, "history crap only to have the ghost show up to try and to kibosh you! Putting everyone else there in danger in the process." Dean angrily gets out of the impala, closing the door harshly and stalked towards the
Maya had winced at Dean's harsh tone, watching him walk away with sad eyes. Sam shook his head and sighed at his brother's reaction. He'd known Dean since, well, forever and he knew his brother didn't mean to come off the way he did.

"Dean didn't mean to..." Maya turned her down cast gaze at him. Sam silently cursed his brother. "He's just scared for you? Okay? If you haven't noticed, Dean doesn't really do the whole touchy-feely emotional stuff," Sam gave her a small chuckle. "Remember? No chick-flick moments?"

Maya gave Sam a small smile at that.

"But what's so different now? The last time a ghost took an interest in me Dean didn't act like this..." she frowned remembering Daggett and the Morton house with the Idiot Brigade.

"To be fair, Dean and I didn't know about Daggett's interest until after he grabbed you," Sam pointed out. "Now, however, we know in advance that you're going to be targeted. If Dean can help it he's going to try and keep you out of the line of fire. You're still new to all of this and if we can limit the risks till you're ready we will," Sam gave her a comforting smile and reached over the front seat and patted her shoulder. "So, just humor us, okay?" he said with a small smile before also leaving.

Maya sat huffily in the back seat with her arms crossed as she watched Sam head into the building after Dean. Leaning her head back she let Puck crawl into her lap for head scritches and pets. With nothing to do and no urge to really leave the impala Maya found her self dozing off a little as she continued to absentmindedly pet her dog. Not that Puck was complaining.

She was jolted awake though when there was a knocking on the side of the window she had started leaning on. Maya looked to her left to see what knocked on the window to find something that had the blood draining from her face.

Bobby was leaning against the top of the car and glowering down at her.

Sam and Dean walked out of the theatre even more disgruntled, but at least now they had some kind of lead. All of the historical memorabilia the theatre had was generic of past shows and nothing really showed up on the EMF reader, but one of the witnesses did ask if they knew what happened to the noose. Apparently, there had been a time between the body being found and police arriving where it was alone. When the police arrived the body was on the stage with the noose missing. The police had been asking who was around who might have tampered with the crime scene. No one did.

They were both pretty sure by now that the noose had to have been what was binding Rupert. However, the fact that Rupert moved the rope and hid it somewhere in the theatre made finding it a lot harder. Sam pointed out that they might have to ask Norman if he knew where it was. Dean was not happy.

"We can't just rely on this ghost's testimony! How do we even know he died from the flowers, or whatever, and not cancer like Goldy's research and your fact checking suggested?" Dean argued. "For all we know this could be some kind of flirting game for them. You know, as a way to spice
up their boring sex afterlives."

Sam gave Dean a look that spoke to how strange and weird he thought his brother's idea was. "'Spice up their sex afterlives' with jealousy driven murder?" Sam asked doubtfully. "Are you serious?"

Dean shrugged, "Hey! Some people find jealousy hot. Who am I to judge?" Then Dean donned a roguish smirk, "Even if I am a living sex god myself."

Shaking his head Sam scoffed at Dean's absurdity, "Yeah. Right." What did he do in a past life to get Dean as an older brother? Probably something really good, or really bad. The jury was still out on which.

As they exited the theatre to head back to the car and Maya they were met with a sight that sent cold dread through their bodies.

Maya was leaning up against the side of the impala uneasily with Puck at her feet and had Bobby right beside her with a heavy right hand on her right shoulder. An obvious way of keeping Maya from running off if Bobby's glare was anything to go by.

They were all in deep shit now.

"Boys," Bobby greeted gruffly, his glare not lessening. "Think we need to head somewhere to continue our little chat from yesterday."

"Uh h-h-hey Bobby," Dean greeted as they walked carefully towards them, not that any civilian would notice their careful approach. "Long time no see. Wha-what brings you eight hours out of your way to Peoria?"

Bobby wasn't impressed and most of all he was tired and grumpy. Had to get up real early to drive all the way here in time to get to them before they decided to disappear back into the back roads wood work of America.

"I ain't in the mood for any of your horse shit," Bobby growled. "Now, I know you three are stayin' at some motel near by. My will come with me and we'll follow behind. Let's go kid." Maya sent them a sheepish smile as Bobby led her towards his rusty, dented, and unpainted 1971 Chevrolet Chevelle. A stark contrast to Dean's own Chevy impala that still looked brand new. Puck followed behind them with a huff.

"Well, this is going to be fun," Dean muttered sarcastically as he went and sat down behind the wheel of his beloved impala. Sam sighed a he sat shotgun.

"Dean, you and I both know Bobby sees Maya like she was his own. A lot of his anger's probably from being scared of what could have happened to her," Sam pointed out as Dean pulled away from the theatre to head to the motel and their impending doom. "Being a Hunter isn't exactly the safest career choice. And her being half-Trickster makes it even less safe. If any other Hunter were to find out about her..." Sam trailed off with a pensive frown.

Dean swallowed thickly as he adjusted his tightening grip on the steering wheel, not wanting to think about that. "Yeah. I know," he said gravely.
Despite the short amount of time he'd gotten to know the little Trickster, Dean would admit that he cared a lot about her. It wasn't a platitude when Sam told her that they considered her their friend. Hell, if anything it was like she was family the way they she just *fit* with them. From her familiar stubbornness, her quick and clever mind, her sense of humor, and the desire to help people Dean could've sworn she was their baby sister or something…*cue epiphany.*

Son of a bitch.

_Son of a fucking bitch._

Sam, noticing his brother's dawning epiphany, gave him a curious look. "What're you thinking that's making you look like you've just uncovered some great mystery?" Sam asked curiously. "And if you say it's some new porno-kink you didn't know you had I swear—"

Dean's face immediately morphed into one of absolute disgust. Did not need to be thinking about porn along side the personal discovery that he viewed Maya as his kid sister. It wasn't because he thought she was ugly, oh no. He understood how pretty she was just fine. But sexual attraction plus kid sister? That…*internal shudder*…ugh! No thanks! "No! God. No Sam…tha-that's sick! Why would you…?" Dean interrupted haltingly, remembering Sam didn't know what was going through his head.

"Okay, now you have to tell me," Sam chuckled a little as he wondered what thought he had that he wouldn't want the idea of porn anywhere near it. Seeing where they were he added, "And preferably before we get back to the motel for a thorough chewing out by Bobby."

"Alright, I was thinking about Maya," Dean answered. Sam raised an eyebrow at Dean's use of her real name. Over time since the *Dean vs Maya* prank war, Dean only ever used her name if he was mad at her, she was in trouble, or when he was trying to be serious with her.

"Ookay?"

Dean licked his lips before asking, "What do you think of Maya?"

"Uh," Sam droned a little confused. "I think she's pretty cool, I guess," he answered with a shrug. "She's funny…um really smart when you get her to be serious, caring, and…I don't know, good. Kind of makes me want to protect her from everything, you know? Especially when she get's all affectionate and playful," Sam smiled at the memory of her laughing face and bright impish eyes.

"Yeah, same here. But why though?" If Sam didn't have his own realization then Dean would fill him in. Dean was pretty sure his brother felt the same way about Maya as he did, and like him, just hasn't realized it yet.

Sam looked at his brother with bewilderment. Why did Dean care so much what Sam thought of Maya and why he wanted to protect her from everything? Was it so bad that he wanted to make sure nothing bad happens to her? If Dean starts ragging on him for being protective over the little Trickster he's going to point out that he's just as bad as him. It's not like he was the only one of the two that would go nuts if Maya was in serious trouble or if some guy looked at her wrong or for a little too long. They'd do that for any of their friends…well for all their *female* friends…hmmm, maybe not as *strongly* as for Maya but that was because he…*cue epiphany moment for the second*
"Son of a bitch," Sam muttered with widening eyes of realization.

Dean nodded as he made a turn onto the road with the Starshine motel on it. "Yep," Dean said.

"How? When? She's been with us for little over a month! How?!" Sam demanded in shock.

Dean just shrugged casually as he pulled into the parking lot, even if he was still a little surprised himself. "I don't know. All I know is that now I've got two little bitches to worry about," he commented casually as Sam bitch-faced him for it.

"Dean, this is serious! If any demons found out how we see her..." Sam trailed off a little. The 'Maya-will-be-in-serious-danger' was left unsaid, along with the knowledge that Maya wasn't skilled enough to protect herself against some of the nastier things out there. Maya was better than when she started, but nowhere near ready enough to tackle demons. Both of their minds went to Lilith.

Lilith had it in for Sam, and sure she probably knew Maya was his friend, but if she ever found out that Sam thought of her as his little sister? Sam took a deep breath to quell the burning rage churning within him at the thought of Lilith laying a single finger on Maya as a way to get to him.

Sam and Dean exited the impala, watching as an irritated Bobby and an apprehensive Maya exited the Chevelle, with Puck following behind her.

"Well?" Bobby said looking at them expectantly. "Let's go inside and finish our little chat from the other night," Bobby's tone spoke volumes of the shit storm they were in for from him.

They all entered the motel room silently, dreading Bobby tearing them all a new one.

"Couch," Bobby ordered, as he entered last, shutting and locking the door. The three of them walked over to the couch. Dean opened his mouth to protest but one look from Bobby had him shutting up and flopping down on one end of the couch in a huff. Bobby rolled his eyes at him, knowing full well the boy was just trying to hide his nervousness.

Sam sat on the other end to lean against the armrest, not making eye contact with Bobby and looking like he got caught doing something he wasn't supposed to do. Maya sat in the middle between them, looking smaller in comparison to the two older boys. She tried to play it casual with leaning back comfortably on the couch, but her head was still slightly downcast from guilt and she couldn't help nervously pick at her nails in her lap, or shift uneasily in her seat when she made eye contact with Bobby.

"Don't you three make a sorry picture," Bobby crossed his arms glaring at the three. He didn't say anything else but kept glaring at them, watching as the longer he stayed silent the more the three started to shift restlessly in anticipation of his scolding.

Dean was the first to break, "Are you going to chew us out or not?! 'Cause if you haven't noticed we've got a violent spirit with a deadly jealousy problem on our hands!"

Bobby's glare lessened a little when he gave a snort of amusement and a shrug. "Wanted to see you three squirm a little," his lips quirked up a little in the corner. He walked over to the table to grab a chair, bringing it over to sit near the couch on Dean's side.

"So, you Stooges want to tell me what's goin' on? 'Cause last I checked I told you three idjits I didn't want Maya huntin'. Period," Bobby waited for them expectantly with crossed arms then
looked at Maya directly. "Wanna tell me why you were waitin' in the car outside the very haunted theatre?"

"Ummm," Maya hesitated, her mind just blanking on any possible lie she could come up with. She was also pretty sure that Bobby already knew she was part of this hunt and wouldn't accept any bullshit. "I may, or may not—" Bobby narrowed his eyes dangerously so Maya corrected what she was going to say and admitted, "I might have a target on my back from a jealous, homicidal, gay ghost from the 1930's."

Bobby looked at her blankly for a moment before it quickly turned into one of outraged disbelief, "What?! How did that happen?" He looked between the three of them. Sam and Dean gave each other looks, neither wanting to tell Bobby anything. His threat from the night before entering their minds.

Maya shrugged helplessly, "I'm too darn likeable I guess. If you haven't noticed, I'm adorable."

She grinned cheekily at Bobby bringing the tops of her hands under her chin to look childishly adorable.

Bobby looked away shaking his head as he muttered, "Adorable? Well that's one word for it." That had Maya dropping the face and pouting a little that had all the men in the room looking at her with suppressed smiles. "Been hangin' around Dean too much," he mumbled, getting an offended 'hey!' from Dean.

"Jerks. All of you," Maya scowled, her face doing her signature angry fluffy kitten look.

"That's your adorable face. You look just like an angry kitten," Dean quipped with a fond smirk.

Maya turned her head to look at him with a face that siblings knew all too well. The Face of Retribution.

Maya didn't mince words as she launched from her seat to attack Dean, all but climbing on top of him trying to get his head in a headlock.

Bobby watched in surprise, and warm amusement, as Maya kept trying to tackle the larger grinning male beside her. Their hands getting locked at one point and it became a test of who was stronger, to which Maya quickly threw their hands to the side to try and shoulder check Dean. Knowing full well she wouldn't be able to overpower him.

Dean, to Bobby and Sam's trained eyes, was purposefully not putting up much of a fight if the wide grin on his face was anything to go by. Sam got involved when Maya was all but climbing on Dean and a stray foot almost conked him in the head.

Sam got up and grabbed Maya around the middle, trying to lift her away from Dean. Unfortunately Maya would just grab Dean's jacket, or arm, with a vice like grip and not let go. The shouting and Dean's loud jovial laughing was getting a bit much when Bobby finally decided to tell Sam and Dean a weakness they might not have known about Maya, yet.

Sam had just released Maya a third time, and was about to try again while trying to calm her down, when Bobby spoke up over the cacophony, "She's ticklish Sam."

Everything just kind of hit pause on the abused motel couch. Dean with thoughtful, considering and glinting eyes, Sam with a raised eyebrow, and Maya with a look of utter betrayal.

Dean looked up at the baby Trickster he was keeping partially aloft, and away, with a well-placed knee. "So, Goldy here's ticklish huh?" Dean said with a smile, one that all older siblings had when
confronted with useful information on their younger siblings. One that spoke trouble of for Maya. "Good to know," Dean hummed as he shared a conspiratorial look with Sam over Maya's shoulder.

Maya couldn't see Sam's face, but she'd bet that he had a very similar grin as the one Dean has at that moment. She was proven right when both brothers went for her sides. Maya let go of Dean laughing as she tried to get away, violently. She almost—accidentally—got Sam between the legs if he hadn't moved. Maya twisted and squirmed, shrieking in her laughter. Then Sam tried tickling her neck, she both locked up and jumped back, vaulting shoulder first over the back of the couch with a loud thud and groan.

Puck gave a bark in alarm and ran from his spot under the coffee table to behind the couch to whine at the downed, groaning Trickster. He couldn't help himself from beginning to lick her face in earnest. Maya gently pushed him away to stop his assault on her face.

"My, you okay?" Bobby asked as he hurriedly stood up from his chair to walk around the couch to check on her. He hadn't expected her to launch her self backwards over the couch.

Maya was already sitting up, if with a little grimace of pain on her face. That did not help her sore back problem.

"Yeah. Falling over the couch just isn't a good combination with a sore back," Maya said as Sam walked up beside her, offering her a hand up. She grabbed his hand and was pulled easily to her feet.

"Oh? And why would your back be sore?" Bobby asked dangerously, crossing his arms.

None of them could stop themselves quick enough from tensing. They looked at each other, not sure what to say to the man who was starting to look ready to bust their asses.

Maya made the mistake of making eye contact with Bobby. He gave her a look that demanded she tell him the truth. A truth that he already had an idea of what it was that caused her sore back.

"Um…shit happens?" Maya tried, rubbing the back of her head with a nervous smile. Both Sam and Dean gave her looks equivalent to forehead smacks.

"Mmhmm," Bobby intoned with narrowed eyes. "Mine as well just spill the beans idjits. I'm pretty damn sure you two," he pointed between Sam and Dean, who looked over at them from the couch, "took My here ghost huntin' last night, even after I chewed your asses out over her huntin', at all."

"Well if you know all that already then there's no point in explaining what happened," Maya shrugged a little in exasperation, fixing her tone when Bobby glared heatedly at her for being a smartass. "I mean, you probably guessed already I got tossed into a wall or something by the ghost."

"Let me guess," Bobby drawled a little, "the moment you realized you're now a vengeful spirit's next target?"

Maya sent him a nod.

"Right," Bobby grumbled, rubbing his face with a tired sigh. "This is not over," he pointed out, "but how's the case going?"

Dean spoke up from the couch, "We're still working on ideas on how to find the item Rupert's clinging to. We're pretty sure it was the rope used to hang him, and later the actress at the theatre. Damn thing's hidden somewhere in the theatre."
Maya perked up, "Ya know, if I went into the theatre I bet he'd bring it right to—"

Now she had three people shouting at her about using her self as bait.

Honestly, did they have any better ideas? It wasn't like she'd being going alone.

Later…

Grounded.

Bobby grounded her from going with them to look for and salt n' burn the hangman's rope. This grounding was reinforced by a couple of protective Winchesters. Maya had looked at them a little strangely for their vehemence against her joining them. A flash of doubt entered her mind about not being considered strong enough after the discovery of her parentage, but quashed it with what Sam said earlier about her still learning and them wanting to minimize risks to her safety.

Honestly Maya thought they were being worried over nothing. If she had to she could just stand in a salt circle, but noooooo. When she suggested that it was immediately shot down. Sam, Dean, and Bobby were all of the mind that the moment she entered the theatre the vengeful and jealous ghost would be all over her.

"Then I'll do a partial shapeshift so he doesn't recognize me!" she shouted in exasperation throwing her hands up dramatically as she flopped back down on the couch to stare/glare at the ceiling. After her little announcement she immediately noticed the heavy silence among the other occupants in the room over by the table. She looked over a little confused at their silence when she remembered she never told the boys that she could do that. Whoops. Bobby just kind of looked at her in annoyance.

"You can shapeshift?!!" Dean shouted incredulously. Part of him kind of wanted to reach for some silver, but that gut reaction was easily squashed by the brotherly feelings for her that sneaked up on him. Sam looked surprised but not as much as Dean was. He remembered her Dad changing forms in front of them from the time loop fiasco.

"Makes sense. Tricksters have to be able to change shape in order not to be recognized. Though they have their favorites like Coyote and Anansi," Sam speculated out loud, and then he remembered something with a grin, "Also, remember Dean? When Bobby first told us about Maya?"

Dean looked at him a little confused, while Maya rolled her eyes and Bobby snorted in amusement.

"Loki is technically her Mom," Sam reminded with a grin. Dean snickered at the thought of the pain in the ass Trickster god getting knocked up, going through pregnancy and then labor.

"And what's so funny about being a Mom?" Maya asked calmly, but the undertone and her face told the boys to tread carefully.

Dean coughed to stifle a laugh as he answered, "Nothing, nothing. Just funny that a being who I'm guessing identifies as male getting knocked up."

"Right 'cause waking up one morning and finding yourself pregnant is a laugh riot," Maya drawled, raising an accusing eyebrow.
"Hey! That's not what I meant!" Dean defended, but then noticed Maya's lips twitching upwards at the corner. "You suck. You know that?" he sassed glaring at her.

"Then stop making it soooo easy!" she said smirking at Dean's disgruntlement. Maya looked over at Sam when he began talking.

"What did you mean when you said partial shapeshifting? Can you not change all the way?" he asked curiously, his eyes bright with questions at the new tidbit of information.

"WEEEEell, it comes more for when I try looking like a dude. I can flatten the girls," she motioned to her chest to the boys' discomfort, "angle my face up a bit, broaden the shoulders, lower the voice, and basically look like a dude from the waist up," she finished with a shrug.

Sam looked at her in amazement, "Wow. You can do something that?"

"Seriously?" Dean asked doubtfully. "You can turn yourself into a guy?"

Maya sent a hand waiver of the 'eh' variety. "I can look and sound like a dude. That's why it's partial shapeshifting," Maya gave a lopsided grin, "I don't have all the necessary credentials below the belt. The good ole rod and tackle, a third leg, a joystick, a disco stick, a cock ro—"

"Okay, we get it!" Dean shouted with a reddening face. He didn't need to here someone who he considered as a baby sister listing the different euphemisms for dick. He looked over at Sam whose face was a little red from—what he assumed was—embarrassment, but it did look too much like his 'I'm-trying-so-hard-not-to-laugh-right-now' face.

Maya sent him an overly pleased grin that reminded Dean of the fact she was a half-Trickster and enjoyed funny jokes and embarrassing people. "Dean! I don' go' no Willy!" she said loudly in the best Scottish accent she could muster—which was actually pretty damn close—and a broad mischievous grin.

Dean briefly considered the concept of reincarnation as he slowly looked away from the giggling teenager on the couch and stared unimpressed at his brother who was bent over the table, face hidden, and shoulders silently shaking in laughter.

Bobby watched as Dean smacked Sam's closest shoulder in retaliation for laughing at him. It was one thing hearing a hint of something over the phone, but another to see the way all three of them acted around each other in person.

Neither Dean, nor Sam seemed to be brooding too much about what was coming up over the horizon. If Bobby's witness of the play fighting on the couch earlier and subsequent tickling of a certain baby Trickster was anything to go by, the boys seemed more inclined to take moments to relish in what little joy they could find in what little time Dean had left. Bobby was pretty damn sure the boys would be a bit more sullen and with more forced smiles. Pretty sure it had something to do with the bright spot that was Maya hanging around.

Bobby frowned at the thought. Maya was hanging around two Hunters and hunting monsters. As relieved as he was that it was his two boys and not some of the other Hunters out there, who'd more than likely throw her into a dangerous situation to fend for her self, this was not the kind of life he wanted for her. Bobby definitely knew it wasn't the life her Dad envisioned for her either.

"All right enough!" Bobby barked, getting all of their attention. "Maya you're stayin' right here and away from that theatre," he said pointing at her then at the motel floor to emphasize his point.

Maya opened her mouth to protest, but Bobby wouldn't let her have the chance, "I don't care if you
change yourself to look like a *young Elvis*, but your ass stays here. *Got it?*

She looked away pouting and mumbled, "Yes Bobby." Sam and Dean sent her sympathetic looks. No one liked being under the glare of a parental figure.

Maya watched as for an hour they bounced ideas back and forth trying to come up with an idea to find the rope. So far? Get Norman to say he liked one of the boys and use *them* as bait to get Rupert to bring out the rope, but that brought up the issue of getting it *from* him to burn it. Basically they just wanted to switch out the person who'd be bait and exclude the one person who could actually *nab* the noose from the ghost. She tried to make another suggestion but was told if it involved using her as bait again to shut it.

Maya made a show of glaring at them and huffily crossing her arms. She had a *really* good idea. If she got in a salt circle before Rupert could do anything when he showed up, presumably with the rope, then she when she saw the rope she could just teleport the noose to her hand and salt and burn it in the salt circle.

 Granted it was risky with the whole getting to safety before Rupert could do anything to her, but it was worth a shot. Maya looked over at the arguing trio trying to work out some of the details in the plan that she wasn't being allowed to be a part of.

"Well maybe we could get Norman to help us out with getting it from Rupert?" Sam suggested.

"You sure this Norman fellow would help us out?" Bobby queried. "'Cause, if I were you two, once I burned that noose I'd be goin' after him next."

"Exactly!" Dean stressed. "We don't know if he'll turn on us the minute we're done with the other guy!"

Getting up Maya went to her bag for some extra cash for her wallet, putting her plan in motion. Puck jumped up off the couch to follow her. He may not know what his Mistress was thinking, but her dismissal by the other males from the hunt would probably have her planning to do something less than safe.

Puck's job of watching over her was never done.

Dean was the first to notice her, "What you doin', Goldy?" His question to her drew in the others' attention.

"Going to grab some dinner from that diner a couple blocks away," she said with a roll of her eyes as she placed Puck's medical aid vest on. "Want me to get some pie Dean?" she offered, having learned early on the older Winchester's love of the dessert.

"Yes. The answer to any question involving pie is always yes," Dean answered with the utmost seriousness. "Can you grab two?"

"Slices?" Maya asked for clarification.

Dean shook his head, "No. *Pies.*"

Maya laughed, "Let me guess, one for you and one for the rest of us?"

"No! One for me tonight, and one for me *tomorrow,*" Dean lightly scoffed. The idea of sharing his pies, ridiculous.
She shook her head at his answer because it was such a *Dean* answer.

"I'll come with you," Sam offered. "Give you a lift in Bobby's car. No point walking there, and then walking all the way back with dinner and *all of Dean's pies*." They both knew Dean would bitch if they used his car when there was another perfectly functioning car they could use, ie: Bobby's.

"Bitch," Dean threw out at Sam.

Sam didn't even think when he responded, "Jerk."

"Assholes," Maya added with a snort.

Sam and Dean looked at her with matching grins, "Twerp."

"And you're *all idjits*," Bobby scoffed at their antics.

"And yet you tolerate us regardless," Maya quipped at Bobby who looked at her unimpressed.

Looking back at Sam she added, "Thanks Sam, but you'd better stay here and keep brainstorming. Who knows how long I'll be waiting at the diner for, for our order." With that she exited the motel room with Puck on her heels.

Once she was around the corner, out of sight she snapped her fingers. In her hands appeared an iron crow bar, a sawed-off shotgun, and some salt rounds. Maya carefully placed them underneath her jacket and in pockets before she kept walking. With the diner in sight and no impala or Chevelle in sight she let out a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding. Maya felt like shit. She didn't lie per say, she just omitted where she was going first before making her way to the diner for diner and pies. Honestly she couldn't believe it worked, because most times when she tried deceiving people she cares about it's…well it's pretty obvious.

Maya walked right past the diner, across the street to a convenience store to purchase lighter fluid, matches, and two large bags of salt. The cashier looked at her funny, but didn't say anything about her purchases. She'd passed the porno rack. What she purchased was tame, or at least neutral, in the odd spectrum of possible purchase combinations that included *Busty Asian Beauties*. As the cashier rang up her purchases she threw in some chocolate bars and pepperoni sticks. If only to lower some of the suspicion level glances she was getting.

Maya walked out of the store and caught a late bus that dropped her off near the theatre. As she walked towards the theatre Puck, having pieced together what's going on jumped in front of her and growled as he stood his ground.

She sighed, "C'mon Puck! I can so do this. Look." Maya took a quick glance around and changed her physical features into the preferred male form she liked using. It wasn't a direct gender-swap where she looked like a male version of her self, she looked too much like her sperm-donor and her eyes were a really dark brown. *Yuck.*

This one looked like the illusion she made when she did her first trick by herself and had interact with the Winchesters outside that diner (minus the green eyes since she didn't have the genes for them); and when she ran away from her Dad…again. Her hair was shorter but still had dark brown curls, the smattering of freckles across the bridge of her nose, and vibrant gold eyes. Maya's face was less feminine, her chest no longer had breasts, and her shoulders were a bit wider. Still scrawny though, with a build that was more suited to running than weight lifting.

"See," she said, her voice more masculine but still had that boyish light undertone. Maya was pretty
sure she'd reach those high tenor notes easily if she decided to sing like this. "Ghostie's looking for a chick. He won't be keeping an eye out for someone with a dick," she said with a lopsided smile that might have looked too much like Dean's own roguish smile.

Puck huffed at her unimpressed and unconvinced. This was a bad idea. He laid down in protest and let a low growl vibrate through his body as he looked up at his Master and charge.

Maya rolled her eyes and made to step around Puck, "Fine I'll go in by myself with no way of knowing when either ghost is about to show up."

Puck turned his head as he watched Maya walk away from him. He made grumbling sounds that would have anyone anthropomorphizing him and say that Puck sounded like he was cursing someone out. Getting up he made to follow her. As much as a pain she could be to watch over he had accepted the responsibility that her male parent had given him, in return for rescuing him and taking him home. It also helped that he loved her unconditionally, that was a biggie.

And come hell or high water Puck was going to do everything in his little tiny body's disposal to watch out for her and keep her safe. Although, when his Mistress' male parent finally catches up to them or they go to him, whichever comes first, he's asking for an upgrade. Understanding what human people say was great and all, but there was only so much he could do in such a small body with short legs, and an attitude 20x bigger than he was.

Maya glanced down at him as she continued her stride, the theatre coming into view. "Glad to see you decided not to leave me hanging," she said with a pleased grin that received a doggy huff of irritation, but the grin disappeared when she saw a large group of the actors in the theatre troop dressed in dark colors or black enter the building.

Weren't they supposed to be off tonight for the memorial service for the actress? It had been postponed for all the shows with the understudy in them. Show business sure seemed like a heartless business when people seemed to be told to keep working even after the death of a co-worker. Especially one that was killed on the stage they had to perform on, for how many nights?

Maya walked a little closer to the front doors and saw the sign:

**Petunia Montgomery Memorial Service**

Maya blinked, then blinked once more for good measure.

"Well this might be a problem," Maya grumbled. Puck snorted in agreement. She looked at the convenience store back that contained lighter fluid and matches, and her less than appropriate clothes for a memorial service.

Maya looked down at Puck, "Any ideas how not to be mistaken for a wannabe arsonist?"

Puck just gave her a look.

"Yeah. Me neither," Maya hummed as she walked away from the front entrance. "Let's see if someone left the back door open."

Puck loyally followed her but made his displeasure known from his grumbly growls.
Sam and Dean

Dean had finally relented on asking the ghost Norman for his assistance. They just hoped that the other ghost believed Norman when he said he liked Dean. Dean had made it clear that he was going to be the bait to draw out Rupert's wrath, and nothing was going to change his stubborn mind.

Speaking of stubborn, Dean looked at the time and realized how long Maya had been gone for. A bit too long.

"Hey, has Goldy texted either of you?" Dean asked worried. "She's been gone almost an hour."

Sam furrowed his eyebrows and looked at the room's alarm clock, "She's probably on her way back now."

Bobby did some mental calculations and cursed vehementently. He strode to the door, fury in each step. Dean and Sam jumped up from their spots and followed after him asking what was going on.

"I'll tell you what's goin' on! That tricky assed idjit decided to hunt the damned ghost her self!"

Bobby shouted as he angrily opened the driver's side door to his Chevelle.

"Bobby you can't know that for sure—" Sam tried to reason, but Bobby had known Maya a lot longer than the boys. He knew that girl.

"The hell I don't! It's no wonder she gets along so well with you two, she's got that same damned Winchester stubbornness!" Bobby barked. "Get a stupid idea in your heads and you don't let it go! Like a bunch of dogs with a bone!" slamming the door he quickly backed up and peeled out of the parking lot.

Sam and Dean stood stock still for a moment before hurrying over to the impala and all but jumping inside.

They had a baby Trickster/sister to save.

Chapter End Notes

AN: Don't worry I plan to keep going! End of season three is almost in sight! I didn't plan to go so in depth with this divergent canon hunt, but after the way the last chapter ended I well I couldn't resist a ghostie or two.

Also I hadn't planned on the boys realizing how they saw our little Trickster quite yet, but with how this hunt will proceed it's probably a good idea. Maya's still oblivious of
course. She's never had brothers before.

Shout out to datajana, MLSummers17, and Trenchcoat_Castiel!! I always look forward to reading your reviews!!
Badass or Dumbass?

March 21 2008, Peoria, Illinois, United States

Peoria Players Theatre

Maya and Puck walked around the side of the building down an alleyway looking for a back door, or even a side one. They were able to find an emergency exit off a stairwell that led up to the theatre balconies. When Maya went to try it, she found it was locked from the outside.

"Crap," she cursed, glaring at the door. Puck woofed quietly and went to leave, hoping she would follow him. He looked up at her when she whispered loudly "Hide!"

Puck followed her behind an alleyway dumpster, just as the door opened and a small group of people exited the side door, cigarette smoke began filling the air.

"Misha!" a feminine voice called out. "Make sure the door is propped! Or we'll be locked out."

"I got it," presumably this Misha said in a light amiable male voice. Maya curled her lips in her mouth to keep from laughing. Seriously, who named their male kid Misha? Oh that poor man. "You guys really shouldn't smoke."

A loud snort followed by another deeper male's voice "Says the guy who came with us and is inhaling all that delicious toxic second hand smoke."

"Well, who else was going to make sure you didn't lock yourselves out and try to shame you out of a bad habit?" Misha said in exasperation his voice no longer as loud but held a hint of fondness.

Carefully looking around the dumpster she was crouched behind, Maya watched as the group of three walked down towards the other end of the alley, their backs turned to them.

Maya looked back at the door that was propped open with an empty coffee cup and saw the no smoking zone sign. Smiling she straightened her self up and silently sneaked to the door, slipping in with a pensive Puck. If she accidentally knocked the empty coffee cup out of the way, well she wouldn't know as she had quickly set out to find a secluded spot to set up her trap.

Misha and company finished their smokes and went back to the side exit, only to find the door completely shut and they were locked out.

"I don't get it," Misha said after failing to open the door, scratching his head. "I distinctly remember using an empty coffee cup to keep the door open."
The female in the group sighed, "Guess we'll have to walk all the way to the front to get back in."

Misha yelped when the other male smacked him up the back of his head, "Way to go man."

Misha sent the man a petulant glare, "Maybe if you two quite smoking you wouldn't have to be a little less lazy when it comes to a short walk to the front."

"Hey. Maybe it was that ghost, Norman?" the male suggested with a joking grin.

Misha just rolled his eyes at him, "Maybe it's Norman telling you two to stop smoking near his theatre."

Maya climbed the stairwell up to one of the upper floors that led to the balcony seats and some spare rooms and washrooms. None of the memorial service goers seemed to be up there. Probably since most of the service was being held on the theatre stage and in the lobby.

Puck remained on alert as he followed behind his Mistress, keeping his senses open for anything unnatural. Like the homicidal ghost that wanted to kill her.

You know, things like that.

A brief flash of acknowledgement for his subtle mental use of sarcasm, who knew he had it in him? Puck's thoughts went back to guarding as Maya started checking possible spare rooms to use.

Opening up another room Maya scowled at its contents.

Theatre costumes that looked to mimic something from circa 1950, or was actually from the 50's. This had to be the fifth room full of costumes she's stumbled upon. Maya wasn't about to use a room full of costumes when anyone could be knocked down of the racks to disturb salt lines or —just as important—catch fire when she burned the noose. Last thing she needed was to burn the building down and get her self caught in the inferno.

She was closing the door when something caught her eye. She paused a moment, then cocked an eyebrow, and then slowly opened the door again to peak her head in to get a closer look.

It was a dusty fifties black leather jacket, with the whole large leather lapels. Maya thought she also caught a glimpse of a pink poodle skirt somewhere, hard pass on that one. Stepping into the room she shrugged off her own non-leather and non-fifties black jacket and placed her supplies on the ground before slipping into a black leather jacket that was about her size.

It was the smallest one there and was still a little loose on her. The weight and thick leather of the jacket felt good on her shoulders, but she did not envy the actors having to perform in them under those stage lights. Poor shmucks.

With a smile she turned around to look at Puck who sat in the doorway looking unimpressed at her
as only a little dog with a big attitude can.

"What?" she asked in her lowered male voice as she wiped off some of the dust she could reach. "You can't tell me I don't look good in a leather jacket," she popped the lapels, accompanied by a familiar eyebrow waggle. "I think I'd make a pretty damn good Danny Zuko," she said with a smirk reminiscent of her Dad's.

Puck immediately stood up on alert and started growling at her.

Maya had a bad sense of déjà vu as her breath came out in a foggy wisp and the air turned cold.

"You gotta be kidding me," she groaned, turning around to find an irate and homicidal spirit snarling at her.

"Why are you wearing my Norman's jacket!" Rupert snarled angrily.

Maya reached into the jacket to pull out the iron crowbar, finding nothing.

Oooooh, right. Wrong jacket. She was pretty sure her luck was never this bad. How else would it explain getting surprised by two (three if you count Norman) ghosts within about a month of each other, or cornered by that Crocotta?

Maya blamed Sam and Dean. Didn't know how, but she was pretty sure their luck rubbed off on her.

Before she could snap her fingers to transport it to her hand the ghost grabbed her shoulder roughly and threw her into one of the costume racks. Maya struggled to get to her feet while fighting the costumes that were in her way.

Apparently her struggles were in vain when an icy grip grabbed her ankle and dragged her out, back into the very little open space in the room. Maya flailed on her back throwing whatever hell spawned pink poodle skirt obscuring her vision off of her only to become face to face with Rupert and an old looking rope that ended in a blood stained noose.

"I'm tired of people wearing what was my Norman's," Rupert smiled in deranged obsessiveness. "So let's make an example out of you," the noose widened more and Maya instinctively tried to pull her leg away but his grip was like a steel cuff keeping her painfully in place. A rough steel cuff, as his hand seemed to chafe her skin like a rope burn.
Before Maya could think to summon the crowbar or the sawed-off shotgun, something jumped through Rupert, dissipating him. The rope he held fell into her lap with a dull thump.

Maya blinked and looked around quickly for what could have sent him away, when Puck marched up beside her with the iron crowbar in his mouth and a satisfied tail waggle. The little genius Jack Russell had ran to her discarded jacket, pulled out the iron crowbar, and jumped at the ghost with it.

Nothing was going to harm Puck's Mistress. Not if he could help it.

"Puck you are fantastic!" Maya breathed out as she tried sitting up more, only to wince as she moved the ankle the ghost had grabbed. "Shit," Maya cursed.

Puck walked up to her side, putting the crowbar down and nudged her arm in concern. She rubbed his little head reassuringly then cracked a smile as she petted him enthusiastically for the save. "Who's a good boy? Puck is that's who! Who's my brave little puppy? Puck is!" even though Maya knew she didn't have to talk to Puck like that she couldn't help cooing at him. Not that Puck minded as he soaked up her praise and attention.

"We better get going before any more surprises show up," Maya said looking around and groaned as she got to her feet. Her back letting her know that her ankle wasn't the only thing hurting after being thrown again by the spirit. She stood still as she carefully tested her ankle, shifting her weight this way and that. It stung with a slight burn and her Achilles tendon seemed a little strained from the tight squeeze, but she could still walk on it and the pain was fading pretty quickly.

Maya however did not look forward explaining where the forming hand shaped bruise, or rope burn came from to the guys…or Bobby.

She shrugged off the black leather jacket reluctantly and quickly put her own regular jacket back on before placing the crowbar back inside and grabbed her supplies. She stuck her arm through the noose and wrapped the remaining rope around her arm.

Probably a good idea not to lose it.

For a brief moment she looked around the partially trashed room and for half a second thought of just burning the rope right then and there, but immediately dismissed the thought. Again, too much flammable fabric.

So goodbye, sweet leather jacket.

"Think we can make it back outside?" Maya asked as they tensely walked the upper floor corridors.
Puck looked up at her questioningly. She blushed in embarrassment and coughed, "I might've gotten turned around a—"

Puck jerked his head from her and sent a growly bark to a spot in front of them. Maya wasted no time unfastening the sawed-off from inside her jacket and loading two salt shells in the barrel.

Maya was really grateful that you didn't need to be a great shot to shoot a sawed-off full of rock salt. She was still learning...slowly.

A moment later Rupert appeared, but before he could do anything Maya fired the shotgun. Rock salt went flying and sent him away for the moment. She gritted her teeth and grunted at the recoil in her shoulder. Yep, definitely need more practice...at least she hit him.

Of course the sound of a gun going off—to the general public—was never good sign. So less than a moment later a couple of panicked screams and fearful voices drifted up from the memorial goers down below.

"Huh," Maya said as she heard a shout to evacuate then shared a brief look of understanding with Puck.

*It was time to skedaddle.*

Puck led the way back to the stairwell they came up in, since he was the only one of the two who wasn't turned around. Hoorah for doggy sense of smell!

They ran up to the doors of the stairwell and were about to go through them when they opened suddenly knocking both Puck and Maya back onto their asses. Maya's back throbbed, the bruising on her ankle didn't appreciate being jarred, and she thinks the door clipped her forehead. Could feel a bruise forming already.

"Hands up where I can see 'em!" a familiar male voice ordered. Puck growled as he was the first to spring up, but seeing whom it was calmed down a bit. "Rat?"

"Dean, put the damn gun down! It's Maya," Bobby barked as he lowered his own sawed-oof shotgun and muscled past a shocked Sam and Dean to help Maya back on her feet. "So, how'd shiftin' to look like a guy work out for ya?" he asked sarcastically.

She snorted, "Perfectly...till I touched something that Norman had worn in some past play." A roguish smirk flickered onto her face, "At least I know I look good in a leather jacket."

Bobby gave an unimpressed glare at her then turned it on Dean, who looked back at him with a wide-eyed *what?-expression*, "Been hangin' around you too much. She's startin' to act like a *smaller version of you.*"

Dean rolled his eyes, "You haven't seen her spout out information like some goddamn
"Maya, is that?" Sam's question trailed off as Maya grinned a mischievous smile and held the roped arm up, showing the aged and bloodstained fibers.

"Sure is," she confirmed proudly.

Bobby's eyes narrowed, "And how did you pull that off?"

Maya's smile became strained and slightly sheepish, "Umm, I was a total badass?" Bobby was not convinced.

"Are you okay?" Sam asked concerned.

She shifted on her feet a little nervously, her jaw clench a little when her ankle sent a sharp sting up to her nerves. "Yeah, I'm fine. Just more bruises. And, um, we should really get out of here."

"First good idea you've had all night," Bobby groused. He took the sawed-off off of her and handed it to Sam. "You're missin' gun. Give'em the salt rounds girl," Bobby ordered. Maya didn't hesitate or offer up a protest. He then grabbed her upper arm, then motioned for an armed Sam to go down first taking point, and then began leading Maya down the stairway with a grunt, "Let's go My. The I'll-deal-with-you-later part of that sentence was implied heavily from his glare.

Ooooh Bobby was pissed at her.

Maya frowned as they all made their way down the stairwell, Sam on point and Dean taking the rear, with Bobby and her in the middle. She thought she did pretty well given the circumstances.

Puck was trailing behind her with Dean when he stopped to look behind him and let out a growly bark, hackles rising. Dean recognized the bark and stopped to see where Puck was facing before quickly bringing up his gun. Just as he finished raising his gun at the ready Rupert's disfigured and enraged face appeared and made a move to rush them. Most likely to send them tumbling down hard tiled stairs.

Dean's shot echoed loudly in the confined stairwell as he sent Rupert packing, for the moment. "Okay. I vote picking up the pace! We need to find a spot to burn that noose before it finds its way around Maya's neck!" Dean urged loudly as he ran down the stairs, Puck leading this time.

"Alley's as good a place as any!" Bobby shouted out. Sam was the first through the doors leading outside; Bobby pushed Maya in front of him to get her out first before following suite. Puck zipped out before Dean backed out after him, bringing up the rear. "We better hurry up. Police are
probably on their way from all the gun firin'," Bobby said grimly.

"Right," Maya acquiesced as she handed her little bag of supplies to Bobby, who promptly
rummaged through them for salt and an accelerant, before proceeding to unwrap the noose from
her arm.

Holding the noose by the large loop she went to drop it in front of Bobby, when Puck yipped in
surprise before turning the noise into a vicious snarl directed at Maya. A half moment later Maya
felt something grab behind the collar of her jacket and pulled, hard.

There was a scared shout, the feeling of being airborne, and a pain exploding in the back of her
head.

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**Next day…**

**Sam and Dean**

Dean heaved another heavy sigh as he sat on the couch hunched forward, rubbing his face as
though trying to change the image he was caught another glimpse of. On his bed lain a sleeping
—and normal looking—Maya with bandages wrapped around her head like a halo. As well as
bandages on her throat for the vicious rope burn-like ligature marks the ghost had left behind, and
on the surprise injury on her ankle.

Sam had stopped whatever he was typing or looking up to glance over at him. Following his gaze
he frowned deeply in concern and released his own sigh at the prone form of Maya and her dog
that lay in a tight little ball against her side. Puck hadn't moved an inch since they arrived back at
the motel, Maya seriously injured.

As blows to the back of the head tended to be.

Sam watched as Dean got up to check on the little Trickster that waltzed into their lives and slotted
herself into a spot neither brother had known was empty. Apparently a spot labeled, 'Troublesome
Baby Sister: Bringer of Premature Heart Attacks and Constant Headaches'. Dean checked her
pulse, her breathing, and even gingerly lifted her head to check the bandages for blood. Satisfied
Dean gently laid her head back down on the less than adequate motel pillow. Sam even saw his big
badass Hunter brother demonstrate a brief moment of gentle affection for their newly
acknowledged baby sister when he tenderly brushed a few locks of stray dark brown curls from her
face.

Dean's jaw cracked as he released a tired yawn. He had ended up staying awake the whole night to
keep an eye on her. They were pretty sure she had a concussion, a bad one too. Bobby tried to send
him to bed saying he would stay up, but Dean quickly pointed out he'd been up since early that
morning and drove eight hours straight to catch up with them. Bobby had rubbed his face from his
own tiredness and relented, and had told Dean in no uncertain terms that he'd better wake him up if
anything happened. Dean had given him a serious nod and Bobby camped out on the motel couch.

At the moment Bobby was out getting some more food, while Dean technically should've been catching up on some sleep while Sam took a turn watching over her. *Yeah, not likely.* He went back to the motel couch to continue brooding over what happened the night before.

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**Flashback**

Sam, Dean, and Bobby's eyes widened in horrified shock as Maya went flying backwards into the brick wall of the adjacent building, dropping the noose. The sickening thud of skull meeting brick quickly brought them back to their senses.

"Bobby!" Dean barked, "Salt circle!"

"Yeah, no *sh*t* idjit!" Bobby barked back as he grabbed a salt container from the back of supplies Maya had given him and ran over to a *very out of it* little Trickster. He grabbed her arm slinging it over his shoulders, dragging her away from the wall and started pouring a circle of salt around them. It was hard as she was unable to get her feet coordinated enough to stay underneath her.

With Maya semi-conscious and her brain trying to process everything—*but struggling*—it could no longer handle the part of her that kept most of her body male, so her Trickster magic receded and she changed back. Facial features softened, her hair grew out, and shoulders shrunk a little as her breasts returned under her shirt.

*Unfortunately,* Rupert especially *hated* her as, well, *a her.* So, before Bobby could finish the circle he sent Dean flying into a wall and then grabbed the barely conscious girl from Bobby's grasp, pulling her away from the others.

"*No!/Maya!"* Bobby and Sam yelled. Puck growled furiously as he looked around for something to use. That's when Puck saw the forgotten noose, and the supplies tucked into the nondescript plastic bag. He quickly scurried over and rounded the items up together.

Dean pushed himself up off the wall he had been thrown into to find Sam raising his shotgun just as Rupert pinned an instinctively struggling Maya to a brick wall…by her throat and started choking her. Angry red ligature marks and rope burn began appearing around her neck.

Sam fired off a round of rock salt, sending the ghost away for the moment and leaving Maya to slump down against the wall with a large inhale of air in her oxygen deprived lungs, and raspy coughing. As concerning as that was, that wasn't the biggest issue.

On the wall where her head had been was a large splotch of blood with a smeared thick line that followed her as she slumped against it. Dean was already moving before he even realized he was
moving towards her.

Putting his gun down beside him he crouched in front of her and took her head in his large hands. Her eyes were open, but the vacant look they had had a pit forming in Dean's stomach. It was *disconcerting* to see them so empty, no trace of that playful spark she always held in the gold orbs. He watched as her eyes started to struggle to stay open and focused on his face. Dean could tell she was about to slip under.

"No, no, no, Goldy," Dean said as he moved some hair out of her face. "I need you to stay awake for me, okay? Keep those big beautiful gold eyes open for me. Trust me, this is not the time or place to be taking nap Sis," he urged, but could tell it was a losing battle as her eyes drooped and her body went completely lax in unconsciousness.

Sam and Bobby arrived just as she fell unconscious. Bobby sent Dean a brief questioning look before focusing back on Maya. Sam was more worried about Maya than Dean's slip.

"Dean, she okay?" Bobby asked gruffly with a barely concealed worry, especially at the blood painting the brick wall. Sam looked just as worried as he kept scanning the alley for when Rupert would show up again. *Or the cops*. They really needed to get moving.

Dean answered thickly, "Her eyes were open but no ones home, trouble focusing, and her throats bruised. She's out for the count now. Probably has a bad concussion."

Bobby grunted, "Figured as much. That was a pretty loud *thud* her head made," He looked back at the sound of rummaging and growling to find Puck by the noose with the lighter fluid can in his maw. It was obvious the little dog was trying to break it open. "The rat's got the right idea. We need to burn this son of a bitch. Then we can get My outta here and get her patched up."

Dean nodded and easily picked Maya up, her head resting on his shoulder. Bobby grabbed Dean's gun and they made their way over to a very frustrated dog.

Puck stopped his attempt at opening the metal can when he sensed the spirit approach again, this time coming at him.

"You stupid *rat*!" Rupert seethed through clenched teeth as he went to grab the little dog that was trying to off him.

Puck looked at the spirit with interest before grabbing the open salt container, and while looking dead in Rupert's one good eye shook like only dogs could, sending salt flying everywhere. Rupert yelled in frustration as this little mongrel *dissipated him again!*
"Good dog," Bobby grunted as he took the can and opened it up. Sam stood guard over all of them, as the only one with a free hand to wield a gun. "You put salt on this thing?" Bobby found himself asking the little mutt who—of course—nodded affirmatively. "Right," he said with a niggling sense of disbelief that talking to a way too intelligent little dog was no longer weird as hell. He then proceeded to douse the noose and lit a match.

Puck let out a warning bark from around Sam's feet, Sam glanced down at him and swung in the direction he indicated. A second later Rupert appeared ready to lunge at Dean and a helpless Maya, when he went up in flames with a scream.

None of them even took a moment to breathe a breath of relief as they all hurried to where they parked the cars. Sirens could be heard in the distance coming closer.

Yep. Time to book!

"Sam, get in the back," Dean ordered his little brother when they reached the impala. "I'll hand Goldy to you. You keep her from moving too much."

"You two take care of her and I'll meet ya back at the motel," Bobby said reluctantly before heading over to his Chevelle. He didn't want to let Maya out of his sight for a moment when she was like this, but he trusted his boys enough to look after her. Till they got to the motel at least.

Dean nodded at him and waited for his brother to get in the back.

"Yeah," Sam agreed as he quickly put the weapons back in the trunk before sliding into the back and motioned for Dean to hand her over.

Maya scrunched her face and moaned a little, waking up a little from the jostling. As Sam cradled her upper body in his lap, Dean adjusted her legs on the rest of the back seat and Puck jumped in to sit on the vacant floor space, looking and whining worriedly at his Maya. She tried moving a hand down to pet him but her movements were sluggish and uncoordinated.

Sam used a hand to better adjust her head in a more comfortable position in the crick of his elbow when his hand felt something hot and wet. Maya let out a small pained whimper from the touch.

Dean closed the door as Sam moved his hand from the back of her head to find it covered in blood. Puck's whine got louder as he jumped up on her legs to lie on her abdomen and nose her arm that lay across her stomach. Maya tried once again to pet her distraught little friend, but her movements were staggered.

Sam carefully lifted her head to see the back of it, eliciting another whine of discomfort. "S-
"I know Maya. I know," he murmured gently, carefully prodding the blood soaked hair, moving it to get a better look at her scalp. He released a breath of relief. Didn't appear to be a skull fracture, just some cuts from the brick.

Dean pulled out of their parking spot and started heading to the motel. "She okay?" he asked concerned.

"Bleeding a lot from cuts from the back of her head from the brick, but that's normal for head wounds. Got some uncoordinated movements and slurred speech," Sam informed as he eased her back to a more horizontal position. "The red ligature marks and rope burns are a bit raw, but her breathing's good if a bit raspy. No sign of a skull fracture, thankfully. She took a hard hit from that wall."

"Yeah," Dean said gruffly with a clenching jaw, tense shoulders, and a white-knuckle grip on the steering wheel. He cast a glance in the rearview mirror catching a glimpse of their dazed and injured little Trickster of a sister. Her face was furrowed in pain and she just looked so vulnerable in Sam's arms.

"Yeah she did," Dean swallowed and turned to look back at the road and traffic, his eyes brooding and guilt ridden.

When they got back to the motel Bobby was waiting there anxiously for them. He still looked like a mean son of a gun with his gruff and scruffy appearance, but both the Winchesters knew his body language like they knew each other's. Bobby was tense and worried.

Maya was still barely conscious with dull and vacant gold eyes, nothing like the sharp and curious glinting ones they were used to.

They all rushed in, Sam carrying her in and Dean keeping an eye out for anyone looking their way. Three grown ass men and a young injured teenage girl at some seedy motel did not paint the greatest picture.

Bobby immediately took charge as he cracked open the first aid kit, barking orders at the brothers as he cleaned away some of the blood caking the back of her head and neck. Maya gave slurred whines and attempted protests, especially when Bobby told Sam to keep her still while he cleaned the wound.

Both Sam and Dean didn't like seeing Maya like this either. It just seemed wrong to see someone so lively like this.

Bobby patched up her wounds before letting her get some rest.

Present...

Sam and Dean

Maya had woken a couple of times during the night, as Dean had watched over her. He managed to get her to eat some leftover Chinese to keep her blood sugar from tanking and some Tylenol before
letting her get some more rest. She was a little more with it each time she woke up and more coordinated when she moved her limbs, so that was a good sign at least. Even answered a couple of questions, a little delayed and a tad confused, but she was answering.

When Sam and Bobby had woken up and he told them how she was they were relieved as he was, but Dean wondered.

Wondered if the scene of Maya being flung into the brick wall haunted their thoughts and the crack of skull against brick still rung in their ears. Dean had been confident in his and Sam's ability to protect Maya on hunts, or at least keeping injury to a minimum.

Yesterday had been a rude awakening, even if it was her own damn fault for going off on her own.

But if Bobby hadn't been the one to realize her little plan...Dean didn't want to even think about it. An image of Sam being impaled from behind assaulted his mind, along with the feeling of helplessness he had felt. His brain was drawing too many parallels.

"I can hear your brooding from here Dean," Sam called out, bringing Dean out of his thoughts and focusing on him. "She's going to be fine. If she's half as tenacious as her Dad she'll be cracking jokes, popping sweets, and being a nuisance again before you know it," Sam's voice and face filled with affection and optimism. Not an insult to be seen.

"She still got hurt Sam! Tell me that doesn't bother you?" Dean demanded tightly. "If Bobby hadn't been here and got our asses in gear she'd be the second victim! Her-death-would've-been-on-me was left unsaid, but it was clearly heard. Another little piece of light in this dark world snuffed out because, not only did he fail to protect her but he was the one to suggest bringing her on hunts to begin with.

Sam, the bitch, didn't rise to the bait and just gave Dean a considering look before answering calmly, "It does Dean. A lot. I was scared for her too."

Dean scoffed, looking away from his brother, "I wasn't scared. I was—and still am—pissed that she went off on her own!" He had been, and Sam knew it too. Damn little brothers, and now little sisters too.

Puck sent him a quiet indignant huff Dean's way.

"Ah, shut it rat!" Dean barked angrily. "You barely count! I thought you were supposed to keep her out of trouble? Great job so far. Some guard dog you are," he gave the little pooch some very sarcastic clapping. Puck glared at him with a growl—he tries his best dammit!—before laying his head back down on Maya's arm.

"Dean," Sam admonished, "leave Puck alone." He knew it wasn't the poor pooch's fault. "And have you met Maya? She pranked you by going after the impala, knowing full well what you might do to her and did it anyways," he pointed out with a snort. That was a funny morning. Maya had given
him her camera, showed him the video function, and told him under no circumstances was he to stop filming till she said so. There was seven minutes on the thing that contained Dean's hilarious reaction and the subsequent Chase-The-Trickster around the car.

"You're point?" Dean questioned gruffly, crossing his arms with a glare directed at his brother.

"Bobby was right," Sam shrugged. "She's got the Winchester brand of stubbornness to try and see a plan through, despite the odds. Or the consequences," he said with sad eyes. Dean looked away, knowing he referred to Dean's deal. "Sucks she seems to also have the Winchester brand of luck as well," he added with chagrin. Out of all the leather jackets she tried on the one that belonged to that deranged ghost's obsessive love interest. "Pretty sure she would've pulled it off if she hadn't touched the jacket."

Dean was about to retort angrily when they heard Puck whine happily, getting up and began nosing Maya's scrunched face as she began waking up with a groan. Both brothers stood up and were already striding over to the waking teen, Dean claiming the spot right beside her and Sam hovering behind his shoulder.

Maya felt like shit. She felt stiff, the back of her head hurt, her throat was sore, and her limbs felt heavy and off. So pretty sure she didn't mean to shoot out and bring her left hand down like that, hitting something soft-ish.

A familiar voice cursed in pain, "Son of a bitch!" while another more soft-spoken voice chortled in delighted surprise, "Oh my God."

Maya blearily opened her eyes and looked to the left to find a familiar figure bent over, head resting on the bed beside her and using the nightstand beside her for support with one hand between his legs somewhere. His upper body hid where he was clutching. 'Dean,' her mind groggily supplied.

Looking over at the owner of the other laughing voice she found another male with longer light brown hair and large shoulders and a frame that towered over her, but possessed a kind and mirthful smile. She might have felt intimidated by this giant of a man but he somehow made him self appear small and puppy-like. 'Sam,' she thought through the mind fog.

Then her mind finally registered the scene she was taking in and the soft thing she had hit.

Oops?

"Damn it, Goldy! Seriously?!" Dean said hoarsely as he straightened himself up, but still leaned a little heavily on the nightstand. "That's some freakin' below the belt shit right there."
She carefully took her right arm and did her best to pet and console a whining Puck that kept nosing and licking the side of her face.

"Sorry," Maya rasped suppressing a less than sorry smirk, but grimaced at the sound of her voice and ache in her throat.

Dean grunted as he worked on composing himself. It didn't help that his brother—Chuckles McGee—kept laughing at him. "Sure you are," he groaned sarcastically after catching her amusement.

"You're going to be a bit uncoordinated for a little bit," Sam said, getting his laughter under control. "You took a hard blow to the head yesterday."

Maya tried focusing on Sam and what he said. It was a little like wading through water. It took a few moments to register what he said, but she did. "I…I hit my…my head?" she asked a little haltingly with a raspy quality, but none of her words were slurred this time around. She pinched her brows in confusion. It would explain why her head hurt, but she couldn't quite recall how she got hurt to begin with.

Both brothers gave her reassuring looks when she started looking worried about not remembering the event. Dean put a weighted hand on her shoulder while Sam gently touched her knee. It helped to keep her from starting to panic.

"It's normal when receiving a traumatic injury to the head that you might not remember how you got it," Sam said with a gentle smile.

"What do you remember?" Dean asked with an arched eyebrow as he removed his hand from her shoulder.

"…I was a dumbass and went off with Puck to hunt the ghost on my own," she mumbled contritely as her head throbbed a little. "I also owe you some pie," Maya said lightly giving a grin that received an unimpressed glare from Dean.

"Forget the pie, Maya," he growled. "You went off on your own and didn't tell us where you were actually going or—or what you were doing! If Bobby hadn't realized what you were up to you'd be dead right now!" Dean was getting more worked up as Maya looked up at him with big gold eyes…looking more like a small kid than like someone who was almost an adult. "What the hell were you thinking?"

Maya frowned at Dean as her eyes narrowed as she made to sit up in the bed. Sam tried to get her to lie back down, but she wasn't having it. Honestly why was he freaking out so much? She didn't die. She was fine! Hurt, but fine!

"I was thinking I had the best and most-likely-to-work plan, but you overprotective morons just vetoed it for no good reason!" Maya growled irritated, the pressure throbbing in her head not doing
any favors for her attitude.

"The ghost would've been on you the moment you entered the theatre!" Dean barked back with crossed arms. "And look he—" he started to gesture at her bandages but Maya didn't let him finish.

"And he didn't! He didn't recognize me!" Maya said pointedly as she grit her teeth when an especially painful pressurized throb rocked her head. "And if I dropped my guise in a salt circle I would've been completely fine!" her chest panted in raspy breaths as her blazing gold eyes stared down Dean's own incensed green ones.

"And I'm just trying to watch out for you and make sure you don't get your ass killed!" Dean said angrily. How hard was it to understand? She was not only his friend, but also someone he saw as family. It's what friends and family do. Look out for one another.

No one spoke, Sam looked between them worriedly. Maya was still recovering and needed rest. Not trying to exert her self by getting into an argument with his brother. Before he could interject to try and diffuse the situation, Maya beat him in breaking the quiet.

"Yeah? Well, who asked you to?" she said with deceptively calm tone and a blank face. "'Cause I sure as hell didn't," the blank mask fell and she sent Dean a nasty snarl.

And successfully stomping on the friendship—to Maya's knowledge—that the brothers shared with her and the effort they put in to watching over her.

Dean's teeth clicked as he clenched his jaw and narrowed his eyes at her. Without a word he walked tersely away from the side of her bed, grabbed his leather jacket from the back of a chair, and went to the door of their room.

During the procession Dean didn't once glance in her direction, and with every step he took the heavy guilty pit in Maya's chest grew, what she had really said with that last dig breaking through the fog in her mind. However before she could call out to Dean to apologize he was already out the door and slamming it behind him.

Sam looked from the door back to Maya, the scowl gone and replaced with utterly guilt-ridden eyes. It lessened the sting that her comment had made, but it still hurt. He could understand where she was coming from, having a protective older brother and a Dad that had wanted to shield him from everything that went bump in the night. It could be frustrating when all they saw was the younger more vulnerable version of your self.

It didn't help that Maya would have moments around them where she acted like her age—or younger—with a certain carefree innocent light that had their big brother instincts roaring with the need to protect her.

So, even if Sam could objectively admit Maya did have the better plan, he hated the idea of using her as bait to draw the spirit in. He knew it was the same with Dean and Bobby.
"It's what friends and family do, Maya," Sam sighed looking at her slumped figure and watery eyes in disappointment. "We look out for each other. Goes without saying."

"I-I know," she mumbled morosely. She did. She cared about these stupid idiots. It's one of the reasons why she stayed with them. It was odd how emotionally invested she was with them. Maya normally didn't bother with people she'd meet, Bobby being the only exception until now. "M'sorry Sam."

"I know, but you scared him Maya. Hell, you scared all of us. We care about you and we just didn't want you getting hurt," he pointed out as he place a large hand on her shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze. If it was possible she looked even more miserable. "I thought we went over this yesterday, so why would you go behind our backs?"

She let out a frustrated sigh through her nose, "I know, but the risks were limited. I just had a bout of bad luck." She paused as she worked though the mental fog. "And how am I supposed to get better, if you don't let me try?"

Damn, she had him there. The whole reason him and Dean even agreed to let Maya learn to hunt with them was to give her practical hands-on experience to better defend her self. Having her sit out completely kind of defeats the purpose.

"C'mon," Sam sighed shaking his head, deciding to drop the subject for now. He didn't want to let know yet how Dean and him saw her as their little sister. Him and Dean were still getting used to the idea themselves. "I'm pretty sure we still got some leftovers from last night. You need to eat something."

"Not hungry," Maya mumbled as she went to lie back down and get some more rest, fatigue starting creeping up on her. "I'mma go back to sleep."

"Not before you eat something," Sam said scooping her up in his arms like it was nothing. Maya let out a raspy squeak in surprise at suddenly being held by strong arms up in the air. "We can't let your blood sugar get too low."

"I'm fine, Sam! Puck would've let me know if—" Puck interrupted her struggling protests with a huffed bark and pawing the bedspread three times. The signal that yes she did indeed need to eat something. 

"Of course…" she groaned out before releasing a long and beleaguered sigh, and going limp in Sam's arms as the Sasquatch chuckled humoredly at her theatrics. Maya tilted her head up to look at Sam as he started carrying her, "I can probably walk you know."

He set her down on the couch, Puck jumping up to sit beside her. "I don't know. You're about as coordinated as when you were drunk," Sam hummed as he walked away to grab some of the leftovers. He frowned when he opened the mini-fridge to find only half a container of chow mien. Eh, better than nothing. "You'd probably do another spectacular face plant," he said with a smirk as he handed her the container and a fork.

"Asshole," Maya mumbled as she took a curious sniff at the food he gave her.

Sam rolled his eyes and went back to his computer, "Twerp."
Despite what his exit looked like, Dean didn't really leave. He stood leaning against the impala with a frustrated frown and his arms crossed over his chest. Dean looked for all intents and purposes that he was pissed at some shop in the strip mall across the street with his glaring.

He was pissed, of course, but Maya's words had hurt. Not that he'd admit that, ever. Dean just needed some breathing room to get his shit together. His far away glaring became focused when a familiar rusted Chevelle pulled into the parking lot up beside the impala, Bobby looking at him questioningly through the windshield.

Dean nodded at Bobby in acknowledgement as he got out carrying some take-out containers.

"Ain't ya supposed to be sleepin'?" Bobby asked putting the food on the hood and leaning on his own car, mirroring Dean's own posture.

"Can't a guy get some air while leaning against his car?" Dean sassed, but didn't meet Bobby's stern don't-shit-with-me gaze.

"Not when someone you consider as your sister is in that room there unconscious with a bad concussion," Bobby said pointedly with a knowing look.

Dean's shoulders tensed as he wracked his brain for how Bobby could know when he remembered what he called her last night in the alley. "Yeah, well, it kind of snuck up on us," he said a little awkwardly rubbing the back of his neck. "She's awake now, by the way. Lucid too," he added with an annoyed huff.

Bobby nodded, happy to hear she was doing well, "That's good, but I gotta feelin' that's not what's eatin' ya."

Dean made the mistake at meeting Bobby's grizzled eyes and raised eyebrow, fully expecting him to spill what was going on. Dean stubbornly kept quiet.

'Winchesters,' Bobby thought sarcastically with an eye roll, though he could tell Dean still needed some time to cool down. "Fine," Bobby acquiesced, knowing that Dean was in no mood for sharing feelings. Granted he wasn't always the best with the touchy feely stuff either, but he was nowhere near the Winchester-standard of constant emotional constipation.

"By the way," Bobby began. "Never did get around to thankin' you and Sam for keepin' an eye on baby Trickster in there," he nodded his head towards the motel room.

"Eh," Dean shrugged nonchalantly; it hadn't been much of a problem. "Could've lived without seeing near every goddamn horny teenage boy giving her bedroom eyes," he added with a frown.

"...ya shoot at 'em?" Bobby asked seriously. He still had the occasional male Sioux Falls teenager come sniffing around his salvage and auto-repair yard. Used to be more since the whole Drake fiasco. Apparently it became a contest or game to see who could score at least a date, or otherwise,
with her. He had not been pleased when he went shopping and overheard it from some punks in the next aisle over in the grocery store.

Needless to say whenever one of them came snooping around to see if she was with him, he'd bring out his sawed-off with salt rounds. One even had the brains to bring his car in for a routine tune-up just to ask if he could wait in the house, for a possible chance to run into Maya. He told him the house was off limits, customer or not. He could wait in a chair in the garage, if he was so inclined. Then the idjit, after waiting till his car was done, had balls to ask outright if she was around. Needless to say, he set him straight with the help of his sawed-off.

Dean snorted at Bobby's question. There had been a few times that he desperately wanted to, but leading the lives they lived they couldn't afford to be that conspicuous.

"Nope. We're trying to stay off police radar, remember?" he answered wryly. "Me and Sam usually just have to act like two overprotective big brothers and they scamper away with tails between their legs. Even made one of them piss him self," he chuckled.

"Good," Bobby grunted in approval. "So, big brothers, huh?" Bobby asked in amusement as Dean adverted his eyes as mumbled something about a cover story. "Well, either way I'm glad she has more people lookin' out for her."

Dean snorted, "What's two Hunters when she's probably got friends all over the damn country to help her out?" He didn't meet his father figure's eyes.

Bobby gave him a are-you-serious-or-are-you-just-stupid? look. "Despite how friendly and approachable My can be she doesn't exactly go around makin' friends everywhere she goes. Friendly acquaintances sure, but friends? Not really," Bobby revealed. "Doesn't usually bother investing emotionally in people. Moved around too much. So, it's interestin' to see how relaxed and trustin' she is with you and Sam."

Dean gave him a perplexed stare, "What do you mean? She practically claims you as her family. Doesn't she act the same with you?"

"Oh she does. Now," Bobby added with a shake of his head. "She might've realized I wouldn't hurt her, but ya gotta understand somethin'. She's half-Trickster and was bein' raised as one, and compared to others of her kind she's pretty damn vulnerable," he tried to explain.

"Bobby, what are you getting at?" Dean sighed.

"I'm sayin' that what me and My have took years," Bobby said pointedly. "My was taught to be scared and fearful of Hunters, wary of 'em. It was only in the last three or so years that she no longer even tenses slightly when I enter a room, or touch or get close to her," Bobby sighed. "Yet the fact she'd willingly put her self in a vulnerable position with Hunters she hasn't known very long, let alone letting you two gang up on her?" he said with a shake of his head. The way Maya was completely relaxed sitting between the two large and imposing Hunters, and then launching an attack on the older Winchester when he poked fun at her angry face? She wasn't afraid in the slightest of them or wary, she somehow trusted them completely that they wouldn't hurt her.

"She doesn't do that with just anyone," Bobby pointed out. "Maya doesn't get that close to people unless she really likes 'em and trusts 'em enough to get emotionally attached. Knowin' you and Sam
has her back probably helps too. Only ever had her Dad before lookin' out for her, then me I guess."

"Yeah, trusted us so much that when we're just trying to look out for her—'cause she's our friend, hell family—she goes and throws it in our faces!" Dean scoffed the hurt from a cruel remark rearing its ugly head.

There it was. The thing that was pissing Dean off. Maya had said something that trampled something that the Winchesters held in high regard, friends and—most importantly—family.

"So that's why yer sulkin' out here," Bobby stated.

"I'm not sulking! I do not sulk!" Dean protested, even though he absolutely was.

"Sure Dean," Bobby agreed with a pacifying voice that didn't hide the fact that he didn't actually agree, at all. Dean's scowl at him showed him that he knew it too. "But I'd bet all the lore books I've collected that if My hasn't fallen back asleep then she's feelin' extremely guilty for what she said to ya. Usually does when she's hurt someone she cares about," he turned around and grabbed the still slightly warm food.

Bobby paused at the door of the motel then looked over his shoulder back at Dean, his expression serious. "However, when you two head out to Pennsylvania, My's stayin' with me," it wasn't a question, it was a statement stating the facts of what was going to happen.

Even though he was still annoyed with her that didn't stop his heart from lurching a little. He liked having her around, but if what happened the previous night was any indicator it…might be for the best. They barely protected her from a ghost, and Sam had been looking into some possible demon omens over in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania that morning. Bobby knew, and once they made sure Norman passed on or was salted and burned, him and Sam would haul ass over there.

And Dean didn't want her anywhere near one of those sons of bitches. Not after the one that almost killed her in Colorado.

"Yeah," Dean agreed roughly.

Bobby knew he didn't really want to agree, but no one could say that Dean Winchester didn't do what he had to to keep the people he cared about safe. Even if he looked like he'd rather be eating dirt.

Bobby nodded knowingly and opened the door to the motel, greeted by Sam's muffled voice.

Dean took a couple moments, before pushing off the impala and entering the motel room. Maya putting down a Chinese take-out container greeted him and blubbered out apologies for what she
said, how she didn’t mean a word of it, how grateful she was for their friendship, and working herself into a slight panic. His heart warmed at her overly emotional display, holding back a smirk as he walked over to her spot on the couch and ruffled her hair.

That stopped her dead in her tracks and had her looking up at him with big wet gold eyes. He said something snarky about her emotional babbling with an easy going smirk. All pretenses of apologizing left as Maya sent him a bitch-face that turned into a slight pout. Dean teased her about something about how adorable she was when she was angry.

Maya snapped her fingers and threw her shoe at him; the painful throb in her head was worth it when Dean fell over trying to avoid the flying footwear with some impossible Matrix move. Sam had his head in one hand as he laughed at their antics.

Bobby watched on in amusement, despite knowing the grief he was going to cause with separating them. He barked a ‘be careful’ when Dean went to put Maya in a gentle headlock, minding her injuries. Sam immediately stopped laughing and went into mother hen mode telling Dean to knock it off as he went to Maya’s rescue, removing Dean’s arm. Or so she probably thought only to have Sam sit on her other side and snake an arm around her waist pulling her against his side with an iron grip. She struggled against his arm, then had Dean taking the empty spot right beside her, putting an arm on the back of the couch behind her head and squishing her between them. Maya didn’t appreciate it. She cuddled on her own terms!

Maya struggled for a couple of minutes before going limp in defeat, head resting back on Dean’s outstretched arm on the couch and her tilted face sending narrowed glares between the two Winchesters.

"Assholes," she muttered, further relaxing into the Winchester sandwich.

"Twerp," Sam quipped with a grin, and silent chuckle that shook his chest.

"Aww, you know you love us Goldy," Dean said cheekily, Maya missed the fond look he sent her, only catching the teasing smirk that replaced it.

"Love's not the word I'd be using right now Assface," Maya growled, but neither brother nor Bobby missed her lips quirk slightly in a fond smile as she leaned more against Sam with a yawn, fatigue beginning to return.

At the yawn Bobby, reluctantly, broke them up telling them if they didn't get their asses in gear they were eating cold diner food. That had the boys moving but Maya muttered something about already eating and wanting to go back to sleep, but one look from Bobby had her getting up to go to the table with the boys.

Bobby grabbed his own food before sitting back in his seat and just watched the three of them banter between each other. The focus of their teasing shifting as they continued on, they even tried teasing him, but he just rolled his eyes at them in fond annoyance.

He hoped none of them took it too hard when he'd have to separate them. Not only was Maya still grounded as far as he was concerned, but also injured. She shouldn't be going on hunts period, let alone with a serious concussion. Or trying to help hunt the demon the boys were undoubtedly going to tackle, concussion or not. So, just like Dean, Bobby didn't want her anywhere near that
son of a bitch.

Bobby noted the lightness between all of them. His eyes drifted to his boys as they were obviously taking a moment to forget what loomed over their heads, mostly likely Maya's doing whether she knew it or not.

He knew Maya would be good for them.

Same day...

New Harmony, Indiana, United States

A little girl with long blonde hair and a pink dress sat at the dinner table of the Freemont family containing a bald father, a brown haired mother, and an aging grandfather. She was eating chocolate cake with a side of ice cream and sprinkled with candy from the various bowls of candy on the table.

She hummed happily eating her birthday treats as the rest of the family stiffly ate theirs, sending the little girl wary and fearful glances.

This was not the little girl they raised and loved. Not anymore.

The doorbell cut through the silence like a guillotine. The little girl perked up and said cheerfully, "I'll get it! Stay here, and keep eating." She sent them a warning glare as she scampered off the dining room chair and went to the front door.

"Hello," she greeted looking up at a tanned, short nervous teenage boy with black hair and red highlights. "What are you doing here?" the little innocent girl façade dropped. "I'm busy."

The demon possessing the boy gulped as he looked at the Queen of Hell who currently possessed the little girl.

"O-of course. We just thought you might want to know something interesting," seeing the curious head tilt he continued. "The girl that was with the Winchesters in Colorado was a half-Trickster, and from what Ruby gathered the daughter of a god level Trickster."

"Really?!" she said, adding the excitement only children could possess, but was twisted by the entity possessing the little girl. "God level? She sounds like tons of fun! Anything else?"

"And um, Ruby mentioned that after the fight in the police station she overheard the Winchesters asking her to travel with them and her accepting their offer," he informed.
Hmm and if those two boys still want to get Dean out of his deal they'll be coming right to me, a little Trickster half breed in tow," the grin that spread across the little girl's face was nightmare inducing. "One last thing," she said casually. The demon gulped nervously. "Why am I only hearing about her now? The fun time I had at the police station was a month ago," little eyes narrowed dangerously.

He took a step back fearfully trying to stutter out an answer.

"Doesn't really matter silly goose," her face lit up happily as the next-door neighbors Tom and Judy Webber came up beside him silently, eyes black. "He's a traitor. Hold him for me? Thank you!" she said cheerfully closing the door to make sure the family inside didn't hear the screaming demon as her eyes went white and she destroyed him.

After all, she was having so much fun! It also wouldn't do if word got out about Ruby actually being loyal to her.

After Tom and Judy took the body away she walked back into the dining room grinning happily and proceeded to finish her cake. The family eyed her tensely wondering what happened to the poor soul who knocked on their door.

"Who-who was at the door Jellybean?" the grandfather gulped nervously.

"No one you need to worry about anymore!~" she sing-songed around a mouthful of cake and ice cream. "All taken care of!" she added with a cheerful chirp.

The family tensed as they gave stiff and fearful smiles to the creature that possessed their daughter and granddaughter.

"Tha-that's good dear," the poor mother stammered.

Lilith gave a toothy smile.

Humans were so much fun to play with, and she bet having a half-Trickster on the end of a leash would be just as fun.

After all, do you know how hard it is to get leverage on a god level Trickster?
She giggled childishly. Lilith couldn't wait for the Winchesters to bring her her new toy.

Chapter End Notes

AN: Sorry, not sorry. At all. As I was writing I was trying to figure out a future chapter when I realized I needed to combine two ideas I had.

Also I always assumed Ruby was never on Sam and Dean's side from the get go and was working for Lilith the whole time. Not that any other demon knew about that.

And to answer another question you probably thought up, yes I am evil. I have discovered the perverse glee in hurting my character. Mwahahahahaha. HA!

Check out TD: Outtakes, I've left out a scene from this chapter.

And to my faithful reviewers from last chapter, datajana and MLSummers17 I always looked forward to hearing from you!
AN: If you got two updates but was still chapter 31, it was cause I realized I put the wrong destination for where Sam and Dean were going to investigate those demon omens. I fixed it…twice…I can make mistakes!

March-ish 2008, Peoria, Illinois, United States

Nighttime

Sam and Dean

"She's going to be pissed," Sam commented with a sigh as he loaded up the impala with their duffels outside the motel.

"Yep," came Dean's clipped voice as he headed to the driver's seat.

"Probably hurt that we pretty much abandoned her…" Sam added with some edge to his voice.

"…you wanna try convincing Bobby otherwise? Be my guest!" Dean snarked in annoyance as Sam plopped his giant mass in the passenger seat beside him.

Sam remained quiet knowing the answer was no, he didn't want to try. Not really. He knew it meant that Maya would be safe and they wouldn't have to worry about her getting even more hurt.

Also, Bobby. Sam liked to think he knew a losing battle when he saw one.

What rankled was how they were leaving her behind with Bobby. How many times when Sam was younger woke up to find his Dad and Dean already gone on some hunt, leaving him behind? Granted he was in his teens and the time gave him time to study hard, getting him into Stanford with a full ride, but that didn't mean it hadn't hurt.

Dean pulled out of the parking lot, shoulders tense and face pinched in a grimace, guilt glinting in his eyes. Some of Sam's guilt was eased, knowing he wasn't the only one who didn't want to do it this way either.

Leaving in the dead of night while their little sister slept, unaware that the Winchesters were leaving her behind. Oh they told her about going to burn Norman Endean's bones, but not that they wouldn't be coming back.

"…if we run into her again she's not going to be very happy with us," Sam pointed out with a defeated sigh, slumping back into his seat.
"Yeah. I know," Dean released a slow breath from his nose trying to release the unease he felt leaving Maya behind. She had put up a fuss about not going with them tonight, but Bobby had put his foot down and pointed out all her injuries, lack of coordination, and the big one: she was still grounded. Dean had chuckled beside her as she pouted and slumped into the couch with huffily crossed arms.

Dean was going to miss her theatrics and energy.

"So," Dean spoke out into the silence that had enveloped the interior of the impala. "Which one of us do you think she'll try to deck first next time we see her?" he said trying to make his tone light. Didn't work.

Sam huffed a laugh at his brother's attempt of lightening the mood, it didn't work, but he answered regardless, "Probably you."

"Why me?" Dean said indignantly. "I'm pretty sure I'm her favorite."

"I was going to say 'cause you're shorter and she'd be able to reach you," Sam snorted. "But if you're her favorite then she'll definitely be gunning for you." He was skeptical that Dean was her favorite, but that didn't stop his lips from quirking up slightly at the mental image of Maya trying to punch Dean in the face and Dean trying to calm her down.

Dean grumbled something about getting no respect from bitch-ass little siblings. Sam just rolled his eyes, his mind wandering to their current hunt up in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

A demon hunt. Yeah, he could see why Bobby and Dean didn't want Maya anywhere near one of those bastards.

Well, maybe it will be worth leaving Maya behind if they could get information on who held Dean's deal. He took a surreptitious glance at this brother. They were running out of time, and as it dwindled so did hope.

The further the Winchesters drove away from the motel the darker and more suffocating the world seemed to be.

Next day...

Morning

Maya
Maya woke up groggily as light filtered through the shabby motel curtains. Sleep still held her tired mind and sore body. She was about to say 'screw it' to the world and go back to sleep when the curtains were pulled apart suddenly, filling the room with a blinding morning light.

Now, she didn't care how she looked or how she sounded, so Maya produced a loud cat-like hiss as she turned her head away and buried her face back into her pillow. Determined to ignore the intrusive light.

"C'mon My. Up and at 'em," a gruff voice barked out. "Already let you sleep in and we've gotta get goin'." Her shoulder was shaken roughly, causing her to let out another groan of protest. Didn't Bobby know the preciousness that was sleep?

Ugh.

She pushed her self up and swung her legs over the bed, all without even opening her eyes and gave a large yawn. Then she just kind of sat there tiredly for a moment before letting herself fall back onto the bed ready to fall back asleep.

"Teenagers," Bobby grumbled as he turned to Puck who was perked up at the end of the bed Maya was dozing on. "Get her."

Puck didn't need the permission and immediately launched his attack of doggy kisses. Maya sputtered trying to defend her self, trying to move away from the cold nose being repeatedly pressed to her un-bandaged neck between a little wet doggy kisses covering her face.

"Gah! Why?!" she exclaimed with a groan. Now awake she sat back up and stared at the way too smug looking Jack Russell. "You're a little traitor you know that?" Puck gave her a little happy bark, his tongue lolling outside his mouth as he panted a little with innocent eyes staring up at her. "You're soooo lucky you're cute," she sighed as she lovingly petted his head and scratching behind his ears.

Rubbing some sleep from her eyes Maya let out another tired yawn then looked around the motel room for the boys, but didn't see them. Huh. She figured Dean would've still been sleeping from the wonky sleep schedule he got the last couple of days.

Bobby watched as Maya's face pinched in confusion as she looked around the motel room, obviously looking for Sam and Dean, before locking eyes with him.
"Bobby," she asked, tone uneasy, "where are Sam and Dean?" Maya's face filled with alarm, "Nothing bad happened to them last night at the cemetery did it?!"

"Boys are fine My," Bobby grunted calming her down. "C'mon and get ready," his jerking towards the bathroom. "Gotta leave the room by 11."

Maya looked at him puzzled and a little wary, trying to figure out what was going on but couldn't piece it together quite yet. "Yeah, okay," she agreed uncertainly. She gathered some clothes from a dresser drawer and her toiletries from her bag before then went to the bathroom to change and get ready.

Bobby was pleased to see her coordination improving. There were still some miscalculations with movements and minor stumbles here and there but it was much better. Of course it didn't mean the danger had passed yet. Concussions could be a nasty business if not treated right.

He waited patiently for the teen to emerge from the motel bathroom, and thankfully not too long either. He'd heard horror stories of teenage girls taking up to an hour each morning to get ready. Bobby had learned as Maya grew that she cared shit all about make-up or dressing up all pretty like most girls.

Bobby smirked remembering an incident where Maya had waited outside a hardware store for him, enjoying the sun when a guy started flirting with her. He was about to intervene when the guy mentioned something about her looking prettier in a dress than jeans and the open short sleeve flannel button-up she was wearing. She had scoffed saying she'd rather wear nothing than be caught in a dress. The guy had a lecherous smirk till she continued by adding on that if she were in a dress how would she be able to kick his ass effectively? Bobby choked back a laugh at the male's gob-smacked expression before making his presence known, the young male retreating at his approach, thoroughly rejected.

His smile turned reminiscent and sad when his mind wandered to his late wife, Karen. She wasn't as inclined to being as rough-and-tumble as Maya could be, but he had no doubts that Karen would've loved the little brazen Trickster. Loved her outgoing nature, her jokes, her kind heart, and take no-shit attitude. As much as he would've liked for them to have met chances were they never would've crossed paths if he hadn't killed his wife—not knowing she was actually possessed by a demon—and getting thrust head first into the hunting world. If he hadn't become a Hunter then he wouldn't have been in that warehouse to save Maya from those vampires, or keep Rufus—and whatever boneheaded Hunter he decided to drag along—from killing her.

Bobby sure as hell wouldn't have her now, or the boys for that matter. He hadn't wanted children yet somehow he ended up with three of them. Funny thing fate. Hearing the bathroom door handle turn he schooled his features. No point reminiscing of what could've, or couldn't have been if things were different.

Maya walked out of the bathroom, her eyes bright and hair slightly neater. Only so much you can do with bandages wrapped around your head and healing scrapes. She wore straight light blue jeans with dirt and grass stains on her knees and a black Kansas band t-shirt that hung loosely on her frame.

"Are we waiting for the guys or are we meeting up somewhere?" Maya asked slinging her bag over her shoulder. She looked at Bobby with concern when he hesitated with giving an answer.
"Bobby?"

Bobby sighed. So they were going to start off the day with this conversation then. *Great.*

"We're not meetin' up with the idjits. I'm takin' ya back to my place," Bobby informed bluntly, not beating around the bush.

"What?" she asked incredulous, eye narrowing in confusion before the stubborn fire ignited in them. "No! I'm *staying* with Sam and Dean."

"Boys are already gone My. Left right after burnin' Endean's bones." Maya looked away, shaking her head a little in disbelief. "You're hurt kid. Even if ya went with them you'd be sittin' out somewhere in a motel room bored outta your mind. And besides," Bobby grunted, "*you're still grounded.*"

"So the moment I'm out of commission they, just, what? Decide to cut their losses? Leave me behind? *Throw* me away?" she demanded angrily, hurt filling up her heart.

"No!" Bobby barked sternly. He expected this kind of outburst and was ready to shut that line of thought down. "I know for a *fact* that those boys didn't *want* to leave ya behind. *At all.*" He released a tired sigh, "Like me they want ya *safe*, and more importantly *healin*. Gettin' another knock to the head right now could be very bad, *brain damage bad.*"

As quickly as the hurt began it eased at Bobby's words. Maya's shoulders slumped as she looked at him with sad despondent eyes, "Then why didn't they tell me they were leaving me?"

Bobby sent her a knowing look, "And would ya have let them leave without you? Even if we explained our reasonin's?" Maya looked away guiltily.

No, she probably wouldn't have. She'd probably want to go with them just to prove them wrong.

Bobby walked up to her and placed a hand on her shoulder comfortingly, "Don't be too hard on them." He released her shoulder and gave her a *very* pointed look, "Even if they disagreed about me takin' ya, do you *honestly* think after findin' out you've been *hunthin'* and then gettin' put through the ringer that I'd *let* them take off with ya?"

Ah yes. Bobby was mad at her for taking up hunting, or starting to at least. The dawning realization that she was in a shit ton of trouble with the old grizzled Hunter sent dread through her body. When Sam and Dean were there she hadn't fully realized the pending doom that loomed in her future when Bobby showed up. She did a little but not to the full extent. Till now of course.

"Crap," Maya cursed in a strained grimace. Puck, at her feet, huffed a doggie laugh at her plight. She mumbled a 'turncoat' in his direction. Puck was bemused and unworried. Far as he was
concerned it was just desserts for his Mistress being so stubborn and making his job difficult.

Bobby huffed at her reaction, "Crap, is right girlie. Now grab yer stuff and yer rat—" Puck's token protest bark, "—and get yer Trickster ass in the car."

"Yeah, yeah," Maya said sarcastically, slipping on her black jacket before slinging her backpack over one shoulder.

Bobby rolled his eyes at her attitude as he grabbed his own duffel, "Try it with a little less sass there, girl."

"Bite me Singer!"

"Watch it!

Yeah, it was going to be a long drive back to Sioux Falls.

On the road again…

It had to have been half way into their trip back to Bobby's place when a ring tone went off in the relative silence of the rusted Chevelle.

~Who can take a sunrise?
Sprinkle it with dew?
Cover it with choc'late and a miracle or two?
The Candyman…~

Maya was laying down in the back seat getting a little more rest when her phone started going off in her back jean pocket. Digging her phone out she looked at the caller ID. "Aww crap," Maya mumbled drowsily.

"Heeeeeeeeeee Daaaaaaaad," she drawled out uneasily as she sat up in the back seat, meeting Bobby's raised eyebrow in the rearview mirror. Puck had been sitting quietly in the passenger bucket seat and poked his head around to curiously look back at her.

"So," her Dad began tersely, "wanna tell me now what happened to make you question your love for me? Or-or, how about what came up that was so urgent that you had to quickly hang up on your father who hadn't heard from you in over a month?"

"Umm," she hummed nervously her eyes going wide as she tried to come up with a response, but her Dad's rant wasn't done yet.
"No, better yet," he interrupted angrily, "explain to me why, since your birthday a couple of days ago, that you haven't been answering your phone? Do you have any idea how worried and scared sick I've been?" A slight hysteric edged his voice, turning Maya's gut guiltily. "I started thinking something got its claws into you and that's why you haven't been answering!"

Maya really didn't know what else to say. Before she could come up with an excuse Bobby grabbed her attention with a grunted, "Give it here My." She handed over her phone and watched as Bobby used his one hand to put it on speaker.

"Hello Loki," Bobby greeted in his usual gruff demeanor. "Didn't think I'd be hearin' your annoyin' voice so soon."

Her Dad was silent for a moment on the other end, no doubt processing the information that his daughter was with Bobby.

"Hunter," Gabriel greeted slowly. "How long has Pixie Stix been with you?" he questioned suspiciously. Bobby rolled his eyes at the Trickster's suspicion.

Bobby snorted, "Met up with her day after her birthday, so a couple a days now. So, no, she wasn't with me when ya called me, askin' if I knew where she was hidin'."

"Good to know," he drawled. "Now, do you know what's been going on with my kid?"

"Yep," Bobby answered curtly, his focus on the long stretch of empty backcountry road. He narrowed his eyes when some young hotshot drag-racer wannabe zoomed into the opposite lane to pass him blaring their horn obnoxiously. He was already going 20 over the speed limit. 'Dumbass with a death wish drivin' like that,' he thought sarcastically. His eyes flickered to the nervous and tense baby Trickster in his back seat, obviously wondering if he was going to tell her old man what she's been up to.

"You going to tell me?" the annoyance in the Trickster's voice was apparent.

Bobby wasn't planning to. Her Daddy'd most likely flip his lid if he found out how reckless and stupid she's been. Probably dole out more punishment over top whatever else he'd come up with over her runaway stunt. He'd give him an edited version.

Besides, Bobby already had plans for punishing Maya for trying to get into hunting.

"Idjit ran into a Crocotta 'bout a week ago. Sucker was hackin' into emails, voicemails, and texts then usin' an old as dirt number to call potential victims. Caught wind of My and used yer voice to lure her into a trap," Bobby could hear Gabriel suck in a breath of fear and disbelief. "Got her cornered and taunted her usin' yer voice, sayin' hurtful things with it. Luckily the kid's decided to start carryin' around a weapon. Was able to hack the critter's head off and make tracks outta there."

They heard him mumble something over the line, Bobby could've sworn it sounded like a terrified
"Oh my Dad", but he wasn't sure.

"She made it out of the encounter alright though, right? 'Cause those dicks love a good pagan half-
ling soul as an entrée, let alone a Trickster one. Please tell me she hasn't been runnin' around
wounded," Gabriel begged, his voice filled with weariness and worry for his daughter.

Bobby sighed, "Well, not from the Crocotta, no."

There was a tense silence as Gabriel took a couple of moments to digest that. His daughter didn't
get hurt from a Crocotta, so that was good. However, she was indeed actually hurt.

"Where are you right now?" he asked with a convincingly calm voice that spoke of the deadly
mood that was growing inside of him. "My baby girl is hurt and I need to know where she is."

Maya gulped nervously, worrying her bottom lip as she watched Bobby handle her Dad. She
wondered what else Bobby was going to tell him.

"Don't get yer panties in a twist Loki," Bobby scoffed, even if he understood his feelings perfectly.
Seeing Maya limp, bleeding, and unconscious against that brick wall damn near stopped his heart
dead in its tracks. Hell, seeing any of his kids—in the boys' case no matter how old—was nerve
wracking. "My's doin' alright now. Nothin' a little rest and relaxin' won't fix," Bobby completely
expected the indignant rage filled outburst that he received in response.

"WHAT THE HELL BOBBY?! MY BABY IS HURT AND YOU'RE BASICALLY TELLING
ME TO CALM MY TITS?!" Gabriel roared so loudly that had Bobby, Maya, and Puck winced at
the volume. Though Maya had to stifle a giggle at her Dad's choice of words. "You expect me to sit
back and do nothing while knowing my kid is out there on her own and injured?! What kind of
Dad do you take me for?!"

"The kind that's panickin' and actin' like a chicken with its head cut off over somethin' that's
already over and done with," Bobby barked back. He turned his signal on and pulled over to the
side of the road. Empty though the road may be, he'd rather not get distracted with a yelling match
over the phone and then find himself wrapping the car around a tree or diving head first into a
ditch. "And she's not alone ya idjit! I'd never leave her alone knowin' she was hurt! Hell, why do ya
think I've got her now? So, are ya gonna shut up and let me tell ya what happened? Yeah? Good."

He quickly put the car in park and started explaining what happened. How he caught up with the
girl on her birthday and begrudgingly went to a theatre production with her as a birthday present.
How he lost sight of her when she decided to explore the theatre a bit, running into a benign spirit,
then getting targeted by another spirit that had some obsessive jealous unrequited love thing for the
benign one, and getting thrown around a bit. Bobby found her and chased the malevolent one away
long enough to get her out, but not before it did some damage.
"That was the night I'm guessin' you two finally talked," Bobby guessed, before he straight up lied. "My's been out of it with a bad concussion for the last couple of nights. Trouble focusin', and just listenin' to music or watchin' TV has been a strain on her so I've had her restin' as much as possible. Waited till some huntin' buddies showed up to deal with the spirits before gettin' outta dodge with her."

Bobby could tell the father on the other end was doing his best to keep a calm head when it was obvious that all he wanted to do was find his daughter, heal her up, hold her tight and never let go.

"So, she's doing okay?" Gabriel queried with a sigh.

"Yeah she's fine," Bobby grumbled. "Though yer shoutin' over speakerphone probably didn't do her head any favors."

"Umm…my bad?" he said sheepishly. "Sorry pumpkin cake my *Dad-side* came out in full force there."

"It's okay Dad. I get it," she told him to assuage his feelings as she took the phone back from Bobby. "Still not telling you where I am though."

"Aw, *come on!*" her Dad's voice whined over the line before becoming a little more serious. "You do realize the longer you drag this out the worst your grounding's going to be, right?"

Maya caught Bobby's eyes again and the exasperation he was sending her way at her stubbornness of not going back to her Dad. Not that Bobby was ready to have her leave him anytime soon. He hadn't seen her since—*fuck*—end of last April. Sure he got phone calls every now and then, but it wasn't the same.

"Not helping your case here for getting me to come back," she pointed out, receiving grumbled mumbling in response in return. "You said I could have a year, so I'm taking my year."

"Maya," Gabriel said seriously, denoted by the use of her actual name and not a sugar based one. "Enough of this *teenage-angsty-trying-to-figure-yourself-out* crap. You already know who you are. You're a Trickster and, more importantly, *my daughter.*"

"So what? I'm just supposed to live in your shadow the rest of my life?" her eyes narrowed at the passing scenery. She knew she should've taken the phone off speaker, but there was really no point. Bobby would've been privy to the conversation anyways, what with being in the same car and all.

Gabriel gave an aggravated sigh, "That's not what I meant. I just want you close by so I can keep you safe. The world's a dangerous place, *especially* for you. I love you Maya and I don't know what I'd do if I lost you."
Maya's heart lurched in her chest remembering how shaken her Dad was after the time loop incident back in February with Sam. How he held onto her the moment she opened the door, like she was going to disappear.

She felt for her Dad, but he can't keep trying to keep her attached to his hip. The fear of returning and finding herself caged—*even metaphorically*—by her own father crept up. Free spirits never did well behind bars of any kind. Maya could only hoped that when she went back—*because dammit she did miss him!*—his need to act like an overbearing overprotective parent would be satiated and he'd relax again.

With how things sat at the moment? It'd be a while before that happened.

"I-I love you too Dad, but you can't keep me tied to you forever," she said softly, ending the call abruptly and putting her phone on silent.

Stuffing the flip phone in her pocket she turned to the front of the car and looked at Bobby. "Sorry you had to go through all that family drama," Maya said apologetically with a rueful chuckle.

Bobby's eyes flickered to the rearview window for a glance at his girl's repentant face and slumped shoulders before eyeing the stretch of road in front of him. He let out a tired sigh, "First, I hope you know yer as big an idjit as yer Daddy." Maya gave him an acquiescent nod. "Second, it's okay My. I've been privy to plenty of family drama before. Hell, I've been a part of some of them too, blood-related or otherwise. Ya should've been there when I tore into John, Sam and Dean's old man. I was so fed up with his sorry ass that I threatened him with a shotgun full of rock salt. Told him if he ever came back, I'd riddle him with buckshot."

Bobby let him self indulge in a small smirk catching a stifled laugh from Maya.

"Wow. Must've been some argument," insert a snicker here. "I can totally picture you doing that," she laughed as she reached forward and gave Puck a reassuring pat on the head and scratch behind the ears. "What'd he do to get you so mad at him?"

The smirk fell from Bobby's face and his eyes narrowed darkly. Much like he did for Loki, Bobby only tolerated John for the boys' sake. If he'd had his way he'd have had the boys stay with him instead of uprooting every couple weeks once a hunt was over or stay in crappy motel rooms all their lives. John could visit when he didn't have his head so far up his ass.

"Ah, don't worry about it," Bobby deflected. As much as Bobby wasn't fond of the man, he'd admit he was a damn good Hunter and he loved his sons more than anything. Though he did wonder if he loved them *too much*. So much that he didn't realize what he was doing to them, raising them like soldiers, making Dean look after his once small baby brother when he needed looking after himself.
Maya looked at the old Hunter in the front seat curiously. She could practically feel the mood shift in the rusted car.

"Didn't like him much huh?" Bobby's silence was answer enough. "Okay then. I've got another question then. Unrelated."

"Shoot."

"Why didn't you tell my Dad about me trying to take up hunting?"

Bobby gave a chuckle that sent trepidation through Maya's being. This chuckling wasn't an evil-Bond-villain kind of chuckling. This was more of an I'm-going-to-do-something-that-you're-not-going-like-at-all-evil kind of chuckling.

"What do you have planned old man?" she demanded cautiously. Maya narrowed her eyes when Puck huffed a laugh at her.

"Well since you've got so much free time and energy to spare to put into huntin', figured you wouldn't mind helpin' me out with some chores around the house and salvage yard," Maya could practically here the smug grin in his voice. " Been puttin' the less important stuff off for a while now. Like cleanin' the gutters, or sortin' through that storage shed."

Maya was silent as she stared wide-eyed at the back of Bobby's ball-capped head. She knew exactly which storage shed he was talking about, filled to the brim with odds and ends, and whatever creepy crawlies decided to make their home in the currently seldom-used outbuilding.

"Is it too late to call my Dad back and have him come and get me?"

"Ya do that and I'll tell him about ya huntin'. Then you can deal with whatever punishment yer old man has come up with, plus whatever else he'll add on top of it for yer little stunt."

A pregnant pause as Bobby's threat sank in and Maya weighed her options. Her Dad would be worse.

"You're secretly one evil son of a bitch, aren't you?" she asked suspiciously and with resignation. Bobby's labor camp it was.

Bobby just chuckled at her in amusement.
"Don't worry. Won't put ya to work right away," he assured her with hints of smugness in his voice. "Ya still got some restin' and healin' up to do."

"…gee thanks."

Gloversville, New York, United States

Gabriel

"I-I love you too Dad, but you can't keep me tied to you forever," came his daughter's voice softly through the speaker, before being met with the dial tone.

Gabriel practiced taking calming breaths, if only to stay calm enough not to crush the phone in his hand. How did Maya not understand that all he wanted to do was to keep her safe? It was infuriating. He thought she was smarter than this.

He released another slow breath through his nose and ran his free hand through his golden hair.

'So what? I'm just supposed to live in your shadow the rest of my life?'

Those words rang loudly in his head amongst his anger over Maya's behavior. He understood that sentiment all too well. How many of the younger angels were nervous and scared of him because they all thought he was like his older brothers? Stern, strict, unbending, absolute judgment backed up by absolute and terrifying power.

It sucked being stuck in his older brothers' shadows. Not a leader or a blindly-rule abiding soldier like Mikey (too free spirited). Not favored or rebellious like Lucy (he rebelled by bending the rules, not outright breaking them), and not as compassionate or clinical like Raphy (too emotional and humorous and given the state of heaven Raph might not be as compassionate as he used to be). Father, he couldn't even just join the other lower angels! Especially not now since his last visit to heaven ~17 years ago. Too powerful and revered to be seen as another soldier, well if he didn't squash his personality. Yeah, not happening.

Gabriel sighed melancholically. When Lucy was cast into the pit and then the Cage by Mikey heaven was never the same, especially when Dad went out for smokes not long after and never came back. After the fighting and casting out all who had stood with Lucy, he was the first to realize Dad had stepped out.

So, he decided to follow suite. Gabriel figured he needed a vacation after cutting down a lot of the angels he had once known and watched grow from fledglings. He figured he'd go back when Dad
did, but he never did, so neither did he, and he just kept hiding. When it became apparent God was never returning Gabriel checked out heaven and when he saw where the change was heading.

Lot's of *noping* was involved. He wouldn't do well in a completely militaristic environment. Cue running away, witness protection, and becoming Loki 2.0!

And *finally* out from under his brothers' shadows.

Now his baby wanted to do the same. Wanted to be seen for who *she* was, and not be seen as *just* the daughter of *Loki*. So, yeah, Gabriel could understand that sentiment all too well.

If she’d come around a century or two earlier he might've backed off a little more. Maybe be even a little less protective…okay maybe not. *However*, he doubted he'd be as worried and afraid for her as he was now.

The jaws of a hellhound will soon drag the Righteous Man to Hell to break the first seal of 66 and kick-start the Apocalypse. Well, unless his big bros grab him out of the pit before that happens. Which they should. Who the hell, other than demons, actually wants the Apocalypse to happen?

Until then, if keeping her under his shadow (angel or pagan) kept her safe and alive...he'll never let her go off on her own again. Gabriel pretty much lost all his family up in heaven when he ran away and the pagans weren't much of a substitute. Well, possibly excluding Thor, but *eh*.

So, he refused to let anything take away the last bit of family he had left.

Nothing will take his Morning's Glory away from him.

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**Early April-ish 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States**

It hadn't taken long for Maya to be given a clean bill of health. Now normally that would be cause for celebration, it wasn't. Not in the least, because Bobby made good on his punishment.

Next day Maya found her self in some old clothes Bobby had in a box in the cellar that she suspected belonged to either Sam or Dean when they were younger and less...*bulky*. Bobby did a double check for her coordination and concentration, before handing her some gloves, a ladder, a trowel, and a smug *good luck*.

The gutters were *horrendous*. Like, *haven't-been-given-a-good Cleaning-in-years* kind of horrendous. How the eaves troughs hadn't torn away yet from the unkempt house, given how
completely full they were, she'll never know. Maya had made the quick assessment that it wouldn't be too bad. Shovel the shit out and pack it up once it was all out on the ground.

She was wrong. Horribly, horribly wrong.

"Oh god! That's awful! Wha-what the literal hell?!” was what Maya had exclaimed loudly as she got past the first layer of leaf litter and broken sticks and as the overwhelming scent of moist decay hit her senses. This wasn't like the gentle natural scent of decomposing leaves you'd smell in the spring when the cold receded and the snow melted. No this was condensed and it wafted like a solid wall of stink.  

There was no way it was just leaf litter from the overhanging tree. Maya suspected bird and squirrel crap was mixed in as well. There was no other reason for it to smell as bad as it did.

The whole experience was made worse when she'd be digging the stuff out some would hit the clothes she was wearing or touch some exposed skin on her forearms. Wiping it off was no good, especially with the gooey layer at the bottom where it was mostly decomposed sludge at that point.

Bleck!

Once that was done and yard wasted the fallen debris from the gutters, she rinsed the sides of the house where some of the stuff hit the walls. The poor house already looked shabby, no point adding to it.

Bobby had her change into some more old clothes, and something to eat before sending her outside, again. This time it was to start cleaning out the storage shed and organizing the crap in it. It took a week. A week of moving stuff out of the large building, figuring out whether it was junk or an antique, trying to throw the garbage (Bobby it's a broken toaster! Let it go!), and...well you get it. There wouldn't be a day she didn't come back to the house covered in dust, dirt, cobwebs, and rust stains.

If Bobby weren't so secretive—granted with good reason—she'd call up the antique shop in Sioux Falls to see if there was anybody who wanted to pick through some of the stuff.

Walking back to the house when she finally finished going through the shed was met with a list the length of her forearm.

"Since yer so keen on huntin', see if ya can hunt up some of these parts in the scrapyard," Bobby told her, handing her the list as she tiredly walked past him and ventured forth into the maze of totaled cars that spanned acres. "Where's all that huntin' energy?“ he called out to her after she sluggishly rounded a stack of car frames.

"Shut up Singer!" she tiredly yelled back at him from the auto-void that was his scrap yard.

Bobby smirked in smug satisfaction. Teach that idjit for going on hunts behind his back.

Bobby went back into the yard later that day to find her stuck headfirst in a glassless and partially
compacted car window, her legs scrabbling on the side of the car while she cursed up a storm. It was obvious she was able to squeeze her shoulders in, she just couldn't squeeze them out. Puck sat there watching her plight in amusement. Bobby didn't laugh right away, he first went back to the house grabbed a camera and took a picture. *Then* he guffawed. Reminded him of when she was younger and always trying to squeeze into little spaces on his property for one reason or another. Usually in pursuit of a small animal she wanted to be friends with.

Hearing his laughter Maya struggled more and started spouting out more colourful and creative curses.

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**Same time-ish, Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, United States**

**Old Abandoned Cabin**

**Sam and Dean**

The fire in the river stone fireplace blazed calmly in the old dust-coated abandoned cabin, warming its occupants and bringing light into the darkness. It might have been a good cozy nighttime scene if it wasn't for a black man tied down to an old wooden chair. A clear liquid was thrown in his face. It sizzled and smoked on contact causing him to yell out in pain. Only the secluded cabin's occupants were witness to his screams.

"*Stop!*" he yelled pleadingly, shaking his head to try and get rid of some of the burning liquid.

"Ready to talk?" Dean Winchester yelled at the bound *demon* sitting in the center of a devil's trap, gripping the bottle of holy water tightly in his hand. Sam stood impassively with arms crossed, eyes trained on their target. Firelight lit up their features in the dark.

"Aah! I don't know! I don't know anything," the demon panted piteously trying to drum up some pity, play on human emotions. Sadly for the demon, Sam and Dean were *Hunters*, but more importantly they were *Winchesters*.

Dean gave the demon a fake disbelieving look and smirked as he turned his head slightly to his brother, "Oh you hear that, Sam? He doesn't know anything."

Sam's lips quirked in amusement that the demon thought they'd actually believe him, "Yeah, I heard."

"I'm telling you the truth," the demon gasped out looking towards Dean, his main tormentor at the moment.

"Oh you are?" Dean said in false surprise. "My God, then I owe you an apology," the false
sincerity evident in his voice. "Allow me to make it up to you." Dean walked up to the demon, grabbing his jaw and tilting the head back before pouring the holy water in his mouth.

The demon gave a gargled scream, "Aah!" Shaking his head and spitting out what water he could. "Aah!" he kept his head bowed as he panted.

Dean, with his don't-fuck-with-me face on, demanded loudly, "I'm gonna ask you one last time—\textit{who holds my contract?}\"

The demon's panting stopped as he slowly raised his head to look up at Dean with a smirk and pitch-black eyes, "Your mother." Smirk in place, seeing Sam and Dean's stone-faced reactions, "Yeah, she uh, showed it me right before I bent her over." He smiled wide, chuckling, as the black faded from his eyes.

Dean stepped into the demon's personal space grabbing his shirt collar threateningly and growled, "I want a name or else—"

"Or what, hmm?" the demon interrupted. "You're gonna squirt your holy water in both ends? \textit{Please}," he scoffed. "Brother, that's a flea bite compared to what's coming to me if I tell you jack." Grim faced Dean straightened up as he stared the demon down. "Do what you want. The only thing I'm scared of is the demon \textit{holding your ticket}," the demon gave a cruel smile. "By the way, where's your little \textit{half-breed friend}? Hear the demon's got a capture alive APB out on her."

Sam and Dean tensed imperceptively.

\textit{Maya.}

"We've got no clue what you're talking about sulfur breath," Dean lied with a growl.

The demon raised an eyebrow not believing him. "Don't you though?" he chuckled. "Heard she could be quite the looker with her dark brown curls and impossibly bright gold eyes. Mmm, young too," he hummed licking his lips a little. "Bet she's also a screamer. Wouldn't mind bending her over and—"

The demon's head snapped to the side from the force of Dean's blow, rage written clearly in both of the Winchester's faces.

"What does the demon want with her?" Sam demanded with a scowl.

"Isn't it obvious?" the demon scoffed, spitting blood from his mouth. "Who wouldn't want to have a powerful Trickster attack dog on the end of a leash? Just gotta make sure you have the \textit{right one}."

Dean hid his confusion well. Maya wasn't that powerful, so what was this punk ass demon talking about? Him and Sam shared a look; a slight shake of Sam's head telling him Maya wouldn't be the
Realization bloomed in Dean's eyes. Her Dad; *Loki*. Maya would be the leash to bind the damned Trickster to whatever demon had her. An incentive to do as they said or else Maya would pay the price.

*Son of a bitch!*

"Is she here?" the demon asked grinning maniacally. "Come out little half-breed! I won't bite," he looked between the tense Hunters. "*Unless you want me to,*" he purred deep in his chest.

Disgusted anger bloomed on both brothers' faces. Sam and Dean shared another look; it was time to end this.

"*Exorcizamus te, omnis immundus spiritus,*" Sam started to chant as Dean walked around the devil's trap filled with writhing demon.

"How does that feel you sick bastard?" Dean spat venomously. "*Does that feel good?*

"Aah!" the demon cried out then cracked his neck. "Go ahead. Send me back to Hell…'cause when you get there, I'll be waiting for you…with a few pals who are dying for a nice little meet and greet with *Dean Winchester,*" he chuckled menacingly as he stared at Dean.

Sam doesn't glance back at his older brother as he keeps his eyes on the demon, "Should I?"

"Stick him someplace he can't hurt anybody else, or get anywhere near *Goldy,*" Dean ground out before looking away for a moment as Sam continued and finished the exorcism. Dean watched as the demon screamed as it was expelled from the body and seeped through the floorboards in a black smoky mass back to Hell.

Where he would be waiting for him.

Dean threw his compact shovel back into the trunk of the impala before firmly closing the lid. He just finished burying the body of the high-jacked African man. Dead the moment the demon smoked out and went back to Hell. He walked up the rickety porch and opened the aged door, his heart running a marathon from the impromptu midnight workout.

Dean wanted to know how Sam keeps winning at rock-paper-scissors. Every single damn time!

Entering the dilapidated cabin he could hear his brother's voice echo through the empty space.

"—chalk it up to lab error." Sam gave a convincing fake chuckle, "Don't I know it."
Dean closed the door and walked into the front room where the fireplace still crackled peacefully. "Thanks. Yeah, I'll tell the Lieutenant." Sam looked up as Dean went straight for the bottle of beer on the table. "Bury the body?" he queried.

Dean sighed tiredly, "Yeah, poor schmuck." He grabbed the lukewarm beer, twisting the cap off. "Looks like these demons ride 'em hard just for kicks," he walked past Sam taking a swig as he sat down in an old style—once cream coloured—love seat that was a old and beat up as the cabin, but with some extra and unsettling stains.

Finally taking a load off his feet, Dean looked up at his brother curiously. When he left Sam had mentioned checking out a possible lead for another case. So to satiate his curiosity Dean asked, "What was the phone call about?"

Sam had this pleased face, the one that only came from looking into something on a hunch and finding out he was right. "Remember that thing in the paper yesterday?"

Dean tries to recall what his brother was on about but could only remember one thing worthwhile, "Stripper suffocates dude with thighs?"

"The other thing," Sam said.

Other thing? What other—Oh! Dean nodded as he remembered the other odd story in the paper, "Right, the guy that walks into the E.R. and keels over dead. His stomach's ripped out."

"His liver actually. Anyways, I just found out something pretty damn interesting," Sam corrected, his expression demonstrating his peaked interest.

"What?" Dean took another sip of his beer. If Sammy had that look it must be interesting.

"The dead body, covered in bloody fingers prints—not the victims," Sam answered.

Dean's face puckered a little as he swallowed his beer. How was that unusual? Most victims of violent and bloody murder usually had fingerprints of the psycho that killed them. "Okay, great. My man Dave Caruso will be stoked to hear it," he ribbed.

Sam smiled and sighed at his brother's antics and continued to better explain, "Those fingerprints match a guy who died in 1981."

Huh, now Dean was also really interested. He looked at Sam, "Really?" He leaned forward in his seat, resting his arms on his knees. "So, what are we talking? Uh, walking dead? Walking killing dead?"

"Maybe," Sam shrugged.

"Zombies do like the other other white meat. Hmm," Dean took another swig of his beer and looked back at Sam. His eyes narrowed slightly in suspicion, "Mm. Speaking of, what do you care about zombies?"

"What do you mean?" Sam asked in confusion.

"Well, you've been on soul saving detail for months now. And we're three weeks out, and all of a sudden you're interested in some hot zombie action?" Dean wasn't completely buying what Sam was selling.

"Hey, man, you're the one who's been all gung ho to hunt," Sam pointed out. "I just thought I'd be
Dean stood up shaking his head, "Hey, no, no, no, no, no. I didn't say I didn't want to do it, okay. I mean, obviously, I want to hunt some zombies." Suspicious of Sam or not, Dean wasn't about to say no to zombies. Not going to let that opportunity pass him by.

"Okay, fine, whatever," Sam told him amiably.

Dean nodded as he eyed Sam before going to the other side of the room to make sure he had everything. Putting his beer on the table he started checking his duffel when he remembered something important. Or, well, someone.

"Shit," Dean cursed as he dug into his back pocket for his phone.

"What?" Sam asked, wondering what was bothering his brother now.

"You didn't call Bobby did you?" Dean questioned as he looked over his shoulder back at Sam.

Sam shook his head looking confused. "Mm-no. Why?" Why would they need to call Bobby?

Dean opened his phone, dialed Bobby's number and sent Sam a look he was all too familiar look. The look that told him Dean was in big brother mode and was going to do what it took to look after his kid brother.

However, Sam was all right, so that left…oh. Shit. How could Sam forget what the demon had revealed?

Dean didn't get to answer when it became obvious that Bobby had picked up on the other line.

"Yeah, I know it's late Bobby," Dean sighed through his nose. "No. Couldn't get the demon to squeal anything we didn't already know. Other than the demon that holds my contract is some badass motherfucker that other demons don't want to be on bad side of, but that's not why I'm calling."

Dean's face hardened, briefly meeting Sam's gaze before staring off into the dancing flames in the hearth, "It's Maya, Bobby. It knows about her. The demon that's got my contract wants her. Alive."

In their world when something wanted you alive, it could be considered as something worse than death. At least with death you could escape from whatever was being done to you. Sam and Dean —Bobby too—both knew that if a demon wanted you alive, it didn't necessarily mean it wanted you in one piece, physically or mentally.
Dean shot the phone away from his ear as Bobby shouted, or more like *roared* on the other end, "*WHAT?!* What the hell would they want her for?"

"To put a leash on her Dad," Dean intoned rubbing his face.

"Balls," Bobby groaned, dread filling him.

"Yeah," Dean huffed, agreeing with his sentiment. "Just keep a close eye on her, maybe find some demon warding or *something.*"

Bobby sighed tiredly over the phone, "Yeah I'll get right on that. Probably take her to get an anti-possession tattoo like the one you two have."

Dean pinched his eyes in confusion, "She's a Trickster, can they even get possessed? I know we've given her charms just in case, but we were never sure." He looked at Sam to see if he knew, he just got a shoulder shrug.

"*Full* Tricksters, probably not, but she's only *half.* And the other half? *Human,* and we can get possessed *pretty damn easily,*" Bobby stated. "Better safe than one day loadin' up the shotgun and shootin' her up full of rock salt."

"Right, right. Good point," Dean conceded. They said their good-byes and Dean snapped his phone closed. He turned to look at Sam. "Now that Bobby has a heads up for keeping a closer eye on Goldy…so, zombies?"

Sam nodded, "Zombies."

Dean sent him his signature smirk, "Great! Let's get us some hot zombie action!"

Sam shook his head chuckling at his brother as he felt some of the vestiges of hope of saving him reignited. If what, or who, he thought was in Erie, Pennsylvania a couple hours away they might be able to find a way to save Dean.

After all, you had to die before hellhounds drag you down to Hell.

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**Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States**

**Next Morning**

"So, let me get this straight. You're *encouraging* me to get a tattoo?" Maya questioned a very tired and aggravated Bobby as she leaned against the counter top in the dated kitchen.

"An anti-possession symbol. Yeah," Bobby groused from his seat at the table. He had spent the
majority of the rest of that night looking up anything and everything he could think of to ward his house better against demons. Wasn't much else he could do, though he did come up with an idea for a panic room in the basement. That had some merits in case all the other stuff he had set up failed. He just needed a free weekend.

"Like the ones the assholes have?" Maya asked referring to Sam and Dean. Yeah she was still a little miffed at them for leaving her behind.

Retribution shall be swift and unexpected!

Bobby rubbed his face tiredly with one hand while the other gripped a coffee mug. The one time she could've acted like any other teenager her age and jump at the opportunity for getting a tattoo, and she goes and questions it.

He wasn't sure which emotion was winning, his pride in his pseudo daughter or his annoyance. Wait, nope, it was annoyance. The pride for her not following blindly was still there but his need to make sure no demon takes her meat suit out for a joyride was a bit stronger.

"Look, you've been hangin' around dumb and dumber for the last little bit and knowin' you, yer probably gonna try huntin' again at some point," Bobby growled and narrowed his eyes at the suddenly sheepish teen. "Don't think I won't tan yer ass neither if ya try again, but I'd rather make sure I don't one day find ya sportin' nothin' but black eyes."

Maya grimaced at the horrific notion of possibly being possessed, but could she even be possessed? She asked Bobby that.

"Not 100% sure," Bobby admitted with a shrug. "No Hunter's ever needed to know before, but I'd rather not have to aim a shotgun at ya. So, yer gettin' a tattoo."

"...okay, but does it have to be exact? Can I embellish as long as the symbol's the same?" she queried with a curious head tilt.

Bobby snorted before taking a sip of his coffee; glad she was on board and didn't try to pry further into his reasons for getting inked. He didn't want her panicking and jumping at every small thing, it'd draw too much attention to her out in public. Probably bring those bastards right to his doorstep.

"Yeah you can. As long as the lines ain't broken up you can hide it in another image, but that'll mean more time under the needle," he warned.

Maya waved at him flippantly, "Yeah, yeah. I'm mean, how bad can it be?" With the looked Bobby
gave her she got the distinct impression of *famous last words.*

"Well yer gonna find out," Bobby huffed trying and failing to suppress a knowing chuckle. "Squeezed ya in this afternoon so I'd get crackin' on that design if ya don't want the standard." He finished the last bit of the now lukewarm black liquid before standing up brought stretching tiredly, his back making cracking noises. "Well, I've got some more books to go through. I'll let ya know if I need any help," Bobby turned to head into the den/library but paused a moment.

He looked into curious bright gold eyes and told her with the utmost seriousness, "Don't leave the property, and if yer headin' outside tell me." Then he walked out of the kitchen.

Maya knew from his tone that he would not budge on this, so just nodded her head and watched her second father figure leave the room. She might've told the boys she saw him as an uncle, but he was much more than that to her. At one point she wondered if Bobby might've been the Hunter that sired her, but he had told her of his only run-in with a Trickster prior to meeting her. Besides, he might've remembered sleeping with a blonde female Trickster up in Toronto ~17 years ago.

There was also the fact that if she shape-shifted to what she'd look like if she were born male looked *nothing* like Bobby. Hell, other than her eye-shape and eye colour she didn't look much like her Dad either, just a mini-me of the sperm donating Hunter.

It was a bit disappointing to figure out that Bobby wasn't a candidate for being her other biological parent, but he was like her second Dad in every other way that mattered. From the moment he met her he cared about her, protected and defended her, taught her, encouraged her, worried for her, scolded her when she did something stupid, and picked her up in his own gruff but caring way when she stumbled. Just like her own blood related Dad, except grumpier and with more bluntness.

She did wonder, however, if the guy that got her Dad knocked up with her would want anything to do with her. Part of her had always wanted to meet the man, but she also didn't want to. Maya’s Dad had told her how dangerous and close-minded or even *deranged* some Hunters could get over the years. Apparently, Bobby was one of the few exceptions and even *he* told her to steer clear, just in case. That was, if the sperm-donor survived 17 more years after his run-in with her Dad.

Thinking of Bobby, Maya remembered a slip up not long after turning 15 where he had said something really funny that had her in stitches from laughter, and she had blurted out that she loved him. She remembered her laughter dying on her lips as she started to fumble over her words, saying that she meant in a *familial way,* then fumbling some more when she worried she might've made the older man feel awkward. Instead Bobby had chuckled and pulled her into his side for a one-armed hug, silencing her.

*"I love ya too, ya idjit. Family don't end in blood."*

Maya smiled at the memory and from the echoes of happiness and joy she felt when he said that to her. Then her mind being that of a hormonal teenager went straight into the gutter and pictured her Dad and Dad number 2, aka Bobby, *getting together.*
"Gah! Goddammit brain! Why?!" Maya cursed as she did her best to think happy innocent thoughts to try and purge that image from her mind.

"My, you okay?" Bobby shouted from the den.

Maya scrunched her face in disgust. "I'm fine! My brain dove head first into part of the gutter I never wanted to imagine!" she called back before going to the fridge for some breakfast.

Faint chuckling came from the den. Maya looked in the direction of the chuckling and just gave an unimpressed stare at an empty archway leading to the den. She shook her head, her lips strained in a tight line.

_How did she end up with parents that found amusement in her pain?_

Maya pondered that question as she grabbed the remaining figuring cereal would be good choice. She perked up when she realized she was no longer thinking about…

"Goddammit!" she cursed as her mind supplied the cringe worthy mental image once more.

Bobby barked one loud laugh from the den.

Maya grumbled as she tried to focus on puppies, kittens, flowers, and _every other innocent and pure thing she could think of!_

"Why can't brain bleach be a thing?" she muttered to herself.

Chapter End Notes

AN: Le gasp! Two updates in a month? I'm on a roll! This chapter would've been longer to include all of "Time Is On Our Side" but I just felt it ended to nicely with this. So yeah, but I did write up a really rough outline for next chapter, mostly cause flashbacks and ideas for how demon assholes changed the deal they made with Bela.

I feel like I should warn you lovely people that next chapter I'm going straight for the feels. There will be fluff, and then I'll devastate you. Even put down at end of rough outline (readers kill author).
Early April-ish 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Afternoon...

"Hey Jackson!" Bobby called out as he exited the house upon hearing the rumble of the flat bed pulling in. Maya and Puck followed behind him, watching as the flat bed came to a stop outside his workshop across the yard.

"Singer!" the middle aged male driver returned in greeting. "What ya got for me today?" he hopped out of the cabin and met Bobby in the middle.

"Bunch a useless junkers takin' up space in my yard," Bobby said nodding off in some direction.

"Well I'm gonna need a bigger truck if you want to get rid of all your junkers," he said chuckling.

Bobby snorted good-naturedly. "Oi! I just need you to get rid of the crushed stuff. Everything else is still salvageable, so paws off!" he groused, no real heat in his voice. Jackson just chuckled in amusement, used to Bobby's brand of threatening humor and pack rat tendencies.

Jackson's eyes moved from the old mechanic to the teenage girl and her dog beside him. His brows furrowed in confusion at the sense of familiarity he felt. The girl smirked at him smugly.

"Hey Jackson. Did the boys get a kick out of your…choice in perfume fragrance?" Maya's smirk deepened as she rubbed a spot a couple inches below her collarbone. The man's eyes widened in recognition.

"Maya! As I live and breathe! You grew up. You still prankin'?" he laughed. "'Cause it took weeks for that flowery shit you dumped in my cab to clear out! I still get called Hippy or Princess at least twice a week!"
"Yeah, well, you ate my candy," Maya shrugged smiling as she crouched a little to pet Puck behind his ears, much to the little dog's enjoyment.

Jackson raised his hands in non-offense, "Now, to be fair…I thought it was Bobby's."

Bobby grimaced and whacked the man up side the head with his hat, "So if it's mine it's okay then? Idjit!" Bobby re-adjusted his hat as Jackson took a couple steps away from him, not at all offended by Bobby's 'attack'. "Now if you two are done gossipin' like a couple of old biddies I suggest we get to work," Bobby watched Jackson head to one of his forklifts before looking over at Maya and her rubbing the one spot above her left breast under her collar bone. "Quite rubbin'. You'll aggravate it," Bobby scolded batting her hand away.

Maya pouted as she was forced to stop. It hadn't been 24hrs yet since getting the tattoo. It still ached a little as the skin stretched when moving her left arm, but it wasn't bad. It was just odd feeling something off there. Getting it had also been a little more painful than expected.

Bobby, the saint, let her squeeze his hand during the whole ordeal and didn't comment on her pained whimpers. It helped that they went out for some soft-served ice cream after.

They all spent the better part of an hour or so loading up crushed cars. Maya, being the most inexperienced, played spotter when it came time to start moving and stacking the junk heaps onto the flatbed. Puck puttered around out of the way, keeping an eye on her and keeping a lax lookout.

Maya was helping Jackson with some of the straps when Bobby's phone buzzed in his pocket. She didn't hear much of what Bobby said as she was focused on Jackson's instructions and orders. Her and Jackson had just finished up tying everything down when Bobby came over, having finished his call.

"Sorry 'bout that. Important phone call. We all good here Jackson?" Bobby grunted to the other man.

"Yep," Jackson nodded as he pulled out an envelope and handed it over to Bobby. "Here's the cash for the scrap metal. I'mma do another once over before headin' out," Jackson thumbed over his shoulder. "Nice seein' you again kid," he said with a nod and a smile to Maya, before turning around to check over his payload.

Maya walked beside Bobby for a couple of steps as they headed towards the house. "Sooooo, was that all I had to do today or…?" Maya prodded tentatively. It's been about two weeks or more since he had her doing work around the place, day in and day out.

Bobby snorted at her subtle hinting. "Yeah, yeah. Ya can go goof off the rest of the day, but!" Bobby quickly added seeing her excitement grow at the prospect of free time. "Yer either in the house or outside where I can see you. Got it?" he gave her the stern Dad glare that spoke of unfathomable future punishments/torture that would not be worth suffering for disobeying.

So Maya conceded and booked for the house happily, yelling, "FREEEEEEDOOOOOOM!" Even if it was only from continued manual labor, she'd take it. Puck barked excitedly around her feet, feeding off her energetic outburst the way that only dogs can. He may or may not have made feints at tripping her up. Puck would do his equivalent of a doggy-snicker as Maya started cussing him out and half-heartedly chase him around.

Bobby shook his head at the duo and pulled out his phone. He needed to make a call to Dean. He'd be curious to know that Bela finally turned up on his radar.
Bobby just wondered if Dean'll get Rufus to help him, or hell even just to talk with him. 'Better suggest he bring a peace offerin',' he thought, listening to the dial tone as he kept sharp eyes on the little Trickster playfully chasing her dog around in front of him. His lips quirked upwards as Maya tried to stay up right when Puck charged her feet again to try to actually trip her up this time, he succeeded.

Dean's voice sounded in his ear, "Bobby."

"Hey. I think I finally got a bead on Bela," he said as he admired the boundless energy of youth as Maya pursued her dog more fervently for the trip-up.

"I'm listening."

"Rufus Turner," Bobby informed, rolling his eyes at Dean's smart-aleck response to the Hunter's name.

'Ole yeah. Rufus was going to just love Dean,' he thought sarcastically.

Early April-ish 2008, Caanan, Vermont, Untied States

Rufus Turner's House

Next Morning…

It was a little rough getting in the door to talk to Rufus. Dean's charming personality didn't work that well. If Bobby hadn't suggested that Jonny Walker Blue scotch he doubted he'd be sitting at Rufus' table right now and would probably be making another long trek back to Sam in Pennsylvania.

So far, he's learned a couple things. One, Rufus knew shit he shouldn't have business knowing. Two, Rufus was a goddamn pessimist and a downer. 'I'm what you got to look forward to if you survive, but you won't,' who says that to a dead man walking? Granted, Dean did appreciate not being treated delicately about the subject. Three, Rufus was resourceful, and ear prints were apparently a thing, in England.

Most importantly, where Bela was, as well as some disturbing shit that Bela was involved in involving her parents' death.

"Thanks for the info Rufus. It was…enlightening," Dean said with a strained smile. "Enjoy the scotch," he nodded to the half-empty bottle.

Rufus gave him a grin, "Plan to." He took another sip from his glass. "By the way," Rufus got up from his seat to escort Dean out of his house. "That…girl still hangin' around Bobby?"

Dean stood a little straighter as he looked at the older Hunter, "Maya?"

"That's her. You know what she is, right?" Rufus asked, tension rising in the air.

"A right pain my ass if that's what you mean," Dean answered tersely as they shared a meaningful look.

They both knew what she was, and knew that the other knew as well.
"Why?" Dean questioned with narrowed eyes. He wanted to know if Bobby was going to have to keep an eye for other Hunters as well as demons to keep his little sis safe.

Rufus shrugged as he took another sip of scotch, nonplussed by Dean's change in demeanor. He hadn't been sure, but Dean's protective reaction and attempt at intimidation told Rufus all he needed to know. That little half- Trickster wormed her way under the doomed Hunter's armor. Probably did the same with the brother too, just as she did with Bobby all those years ago.

He wondered though how much any of them actually knew about Tricksters? Specifically the ones with human origins.

"Curiosity mostly. Bobby made me swear to leave her be. And as long as she doesn't go on a deadly prankin' spree I will," Rufus saw Dean's jaw clenched, having heard his unvoiced threat towards the girl.

"Yeah, I can see why you and Bobby haven't seen each other for almost a decade," Dean commented dryly as they reached the front door. "She's harmless."

Rufus snorted, "Yeah, for now maybe." He finished off his glass before looking back at Dean. "I told Bobby keepin' her around was a bad idea, and when it bites him in the ass I'mma dance a jig on his ashes. Did some research into Tricksters, specifically on ones with more human origins. Like your little…friend."

"So?" Dean said curtly, much like Rufus had been earlier before he brought out the scotch. He got a glare for his efforts.

"Ask Bobby about therite for young half-Ticksters," Rufus grunted in annoyance. "He'd already stumbled on it when he was researchin' Tricksters more in-depth by the time I confronted him about it. Said same thing as you; that she's harmless," he scoffed. "So are baby tigers but you don't see people keepin' 'em around as pets nowadays. Well smart people anyways, 'cause when they grow up," Rufus leaned a little into Dean's space and looked him dead in the eye. "Grow into their own…"

Dean leaned back a little. Personal space, man.

"They turn deadly," Rufus finished ominously before straightening out. "Not so cute and harmless then, now are they?"

"Yeah, well, thanks for the info and the…uh warning," Dean grumbled with narrowed eyes. "But you're wrong. She's different."

Rufus sniffed unimpressed and not intimidated in the least. "We'll see. Now get your ass outta my house!" he was done trying to reason with fools.

Dean rolled his eyes and walked away, trying to forget what Rufus implied about Maya. That she might one day become a deadly inhuman monster.

The kind that Sam and him hunted.

He swallowed the lump that formed in his throat as he entered the impala and put it into gear. Dean decided he'd worry about her doing some rite that'll make her less human later.

Right now he had a Colt stealing thief to confront, and if things go well get a chance to put a bullet through her damned skull!
Bela watched her hole-y door close as Dean Winchester left her room, no doubt going back to where ever Sam and him had been holing up in.

The encounter with Dean had been a close call. Even though she had confidently told him that he wasn't a cold-blooded killer, Bela had had her doubts in that moment. She tried to assure her self that Dean's ungodly high morals would keep him from putting a bullet in her head, but the look in his eyes was not reassuring. Thankfully his moral compass won out, him leaving as angry as he came.

Too angry in fact to likely notice Bela slipping her hand in his pocket and nicking a piece of crumpled up paper. She unfolded the paper to find it was a receipt for a motel in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Looks like her luck was turning around.

She dialed the number the demon Lilith had given her. "It worked," Bela informed as the receiver was picked up. "He found me.

"Of course it did, silly," a very young female voice answered. "You had the one thing that could possibly save him. So of course he'd jump at the chance to go after you. Was Sam with him?"

Bela shook her head as she glanced back at the paper in her hand, "No, Sam wasn't with him. But I know where they are."

"Excellent!" the possessed little girl chirped. "I'd hurry though. Midnight's coming up fast. So is the deadline of our deal. I'd be careful and not act foolishly. Or do, I don't really care. Either way someone dies tonight."

Bela gulped, "I know."

She did too.

Erie, Pennsylvania, United States

Abandoned Hunting Cabin

Late at night…

On his way back from talking to Bela and finding out she no longer had the Colt, Dean had called Sam and they started to discuss Doctor Benton's formula for immortality. Surprise surprise it wasn't black magic or any other kind of magic at all, just science. Really weird freakin' science, but science nonetheless.

Sam had been about to go into detail about what he didn't understand when his voice became
muffled over the line and Dean could hear a struggle from the other end. Dean knew it had to have been Benton, seeing how Sam didn't gank the son of a bitch when he ran into him earlier that evening.

Dean had put pedal to the metal and raced to the hunting grounds Sam suspected was Benton's hideout. He found the Benton's cabin and could hear muffled voices from below the floorboards in the cold cellar. As he headed down he noticed a bottle of chloroform and grabbed it. Bullets obviously weren't going to have an affect on this asshole, but chloroform will take him down for a couple of minutes. Enough time to free Sam and tie the bastard up.

Dean grabbed it and as he descended the stairs dipped his knife in it a few times. Just needed a clear shot to his heart. Get the chloroform pumping quickly throughout his system.

He made it just in time to keep Benton from scooping out his baby brother's eyeball with what looked like a fucking spoon. Once Benton was out he released his brother from the table and put Benton in his place just as he was coming to.

Dean suggested cutting him into itty little bits and pieces. See if Benton could come back from that! Then Benton offered to read the immortality formula, and—of course—him and Sam needed to discuss what they did next.

Sam pleaded for Dean just to think about it, to give them more time to find a better way, but Dean refused.

"Dean, don't you want to live?" Sam accused in confusion.

"What he is, it isn't living. Look, this is simple."

"Simple?" Sam looked at him in disbelief.

"To me it is, okay?" Dean said passionately. "Black or white—human, not human," he vaguely motioned past the bloody curtain to Benton's archaic operation table with the Doc himself strapped down on it.

"And Maya?" Sam asked looking desperately at his brother. "Where does she fall in this simple little black and white world?"

"Don't," Dean shook his head once, giving Sam a hard warning glare.

"Dean," Sam persisted, ignoring the warning. "She's half-Trickster and half-human! She literally falls right in the middle! What then, huh? Because Benton's technically more human than she is. You gonna go put a bullet through her hea—"

"Shut up, Sammy!" Dean hissed furiously with narrowed forest eyes. "There's a huge fucking difference! For one, she doesn't go around slicing people open for parts!" 'For now,' his mind supplied as it briefly drifted to what Rufus alluded to earlier.

"I know, Dean! And in my book that puts her leagues above all the monsters we've ever come across. But we can't just have a black and white view about these things anymore, Dean," Sam looked at him with pleading eyes, hoping his brother would change his mind.

Dean looked at his not so little brother, his resolve of who Maya was strengthening. 'Maya was not, and will never be a killer. Rufus can take his warning and shove it!' he thought angrily as he looked Sam in the eyes. "Far as I'm concerned she falls in with the 'human' category, with a side of Trickster thrown in," he said firmly before walking through the blood stained surgical flaps to look
down on the Frankenstein of a man.

"Now Benton here, he may be made up of all human parts, but he's a freakin' monster that threw away everything that made him human once. Goldy may be a half-Trickster and raised by Loki himself, but she has more humanity in her damn pinky toe than this son of a bitch ever had before he even started hacking people to bits!" he pointed angrily at Benton, mismatched eyes staring at him terrified. "So, I can't do it Sam," Dean picked up a rag and poured some of the chloroform onto it. "I'd rather go to Hell."

"You don't understand," Benton said shaking his head. "I can help you!" he sent Dean an angry and scared look as the rag was placed over his mouth and nose.

Sam peered through the bloodied flaps, watching in consternation as Benton struggled under Dean's hand.

Dean looked over at Sam, "Now, I'm gonna to take care of him. You can help me or not. It's up to you."

They buried Doctor Benton and his book of weird science alive in a chained up old 50's refrigerator.

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**Early April-ish 2008, Erie, Pennsylvania, United States**

**11:05pm...The Erie Motel**

**Sam and Dean**

"So Bela made a deal?" Sam asked as he and Dean quickly began packing up their stuff. "To have her parents killed?"

"Yeah. No other reason to have Devil's shoestring above her door if she didn't have a reason to think hellhounds would be after her soon," Dean grunted as he hefted up his duffle bag onto the table. He rummaged through a last minute purchase and pulled out two boxes. "With a hit out on your head from that Lilith bitch I don't want to take any chances, and when I confronted Bela I felt her hand grab that motel receipt in my pocket. I doubt she plans to make any last minute social calls. So we're going to play a little prank on her. A little last minute vengeance before her deal's up," Dean held up the two boxes that contained two blow-up sex dolls. A label proudly claiming they came with fake hair attached.

"You really think she'd try to kill us?" Sam asked, uncertain. Dean sent him a hard glare.

"Midnight tonight is when her deal comes due. And people tend to do crazy shit when they're desperate enough. I doubt killing us would make her top 10 of all the horrible shit she's ever pulled," Dean ripped open one box pulling out the plastic blow-up sex toy, and then threw the other box at Sam.

"Now shut up and help me blow," a pause as he realized what he just said and a moment for Sam's amused smirk as he opened his own box.

"...Shut up, bitch," Dean grumbled around the plastic nozzle on the blow up doll and pretended he didn't hear his little brother try to stifle a snicker. He doubted Maya would be so...nope, scratch that.
She'd be way worse. She wouldn't bother holding back her laughter and would be making teasing remarks for days.

11:56pm…The Erie Motel

Bela

Bela was horrified to find that the bodies under the cheap motel blankets that she'd just shot weren't Sam and Dean. After turning on the lamp she uncovered the human shaped lumps to find a blonde and brunette sex dolls. She looked around confused and scared, finding only an empty motel room void of any other humans or personal belongings.

The motel phone rang. Bela quickly answered it hoping it might be one of their Hunting buddies and she can maybe find out where they're headed. Maybe it will buy her some more time with Lilith.

"Hiya, Bela," came Dean's familiar deep voice over the receiver. "Here's a fun fact you may not know—I felt your hand in my pocket when you swiped that motel receipt."

Bela shook her head. "You don't understand." Fear and desperation gripped at her insides like icy claws coated with acid.

"Oh, I'm pretty sure I understand perfectly," Dean said evenly. "You see, I noticed something interesting in your hotel room, something tucked above the door. An herb—Devil's shoestring."

Bela slumped dejectedly on one of the beds as Dean continued. "Well there's only one use for that—holding hellhounds at bay. So you know what I did? I went back and took another look at your folks' obit, and turns out they died 10 years ago today," tears started springing into Bela's eyes. "You didn't kill 'em," Dean stated matter of factly. "A demon did your dirty work. You made a deal, didn't you, Bela? And it's come due."

Bela's mind flashed back all those years ago where a strange little girl with crimson eyes promised her a way out from the cruelty and depravity of her parents, mostly her father. The demon promised 10 years before collecting payment. At the time 10 years seemed so long, and what was a soul anyway? It wasn't till she started delving into the lucrative business of selling supernatural wares did she realize how real a soul was.

"Is that why you stole the Colt, huh?" Dean asked with annoyance. "Try to wiggle out of your deal? Our gun for your soul?"

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Bela Flashback

Late January 2008, Unknown location, United States

Between Bitchcraft and Mystery Spot

Night time...

Bela stepped away from the summoning circle and waited in the faint light cast by the moon
through broken warehouse windows. She did not have to wait long.

"Ah, Bela," a gravelly and British male voice greeted a nervously shifting Bela. "Lovely to see you again, love. I hope you didn't summon me to try and force me to give you back your soul?" the smartly dressed dark haired man looked around for any signs of Devil's traps as he walked out from the long shadows of the abandoned warehouse. "No traps I see," he commented blandly as he turned a curious eye to the thief.

Bela swallowed a nervous lump; she had still expected to see the small girl harmless looking girl from a decade ago. Not this diminutive yet intimidating man, "Of course not. I've come to offer my services in exchange for my soul back. A fair deal without having to worry about being hunted down by your dogs."

"Sweetheart, I can get down and dirty with anyone I please, consent not required. A marathon of trysts wouldn't be enough for a down payment on getting your soul back," the demon's eyes flashed completely red for a moment. "So, I do hope you have something better to offer and are not wasting my time." He made a show of examining his fingernails in a nonchalant manner that told Bela he was not afraid of her in the least. In this meeting he had all the power, and they both knew it.

Bela kept her features schooled though her insides were twisting, "Course not. That wasn't what I had in mind. There's an item that I think you'd want very much to get your hands on."

"Really?" he raised his eyebrow, his interest piqued. "What little trinket could possibly be so valuable as to warrant the return of your little black soul?"

"The Colt," Bela said with confidence although her pounded fiercely in her chest.

"The Colt? The Colt? You have it?" the demon asked incredulously with a dark eyebrow raised in skepticism. "Pull the other leg. It jingles," he said dryly.

"No," Bela admitted. "But I know who does and have recently acquired their whereabouts. I tell you where, and you give me back my soul."

The short dark-haired demon looked at her with consideration in his dark eyes.

"No," the demon shook his head. "Tell me who has it first then we'll talk," he countered.

"What does it matter?" Bela asked baffled, she thought this demon would be chomping at the bit, ready to torture the information out of her, rather than try to negotiate a deal. She wanted this encounter to be over with already, the smarmy bastard made her extremely nervous.

"Because I've heard of who had the Colt last, and if they are, who I think they are? We need to negotiate terms," he answered.

"...the Winchesters," Bela revealed. "It took some digging to verify the rumors but they were the last to posses the Colt."

The demon looked at her like she was stupid and scoffed, "So, you don't even know for certain if they have it?"

"They wouldn't let something like that slip through their fingers that easily. I'd bet my life on it that they have the Colt!" Bela spat indignantly.

"Well, that's all you can really bet on now, isn't it?" the demon smirked. "Seeing as your soul
currently belongs to Hell," he made a show of lifting his black suit jacket sleeve to look at the gold Rolex on his wrist. "And the due date is just around the corner too."

He turned a hard stare on the desperate thief, "Now if you're done wasting my time with uncertainties, I'll take my leave." He pivoted smoothly on his heel and made to walk away, smirking as his fingers secretly counted down from 3. 2. 1.

"Wait!" Bela called frantically with an outstretched hand, desperation clawing at her insides.

There it was. The smirk was replaced with feigned annoyance as he looked over his shoulder. "What do you bloody want now?" he asked disdainfully.

"If we make a deal I'll get you the Colt my self! I'll give it straight to you," Bela waited as the demon pondered the offer, before smiling.

"Now that is an offer I can't refuse," the demon purred. "I'll be generous and give you a month to get the Colt, and the bullets. Let's not forget those. When the month ends I'll come to collect, and I'll promise you that when your time comes due my dogs won't drag you down to Hell," he offered with a satisfied smirk. "Deal?"

Relief washed through Bela and she nodded, "Deal."

"Excellent," the demon strode over to her, invading her space. "You should know the drill. Pucker up, sweetheart."

They sealed the deal with a kiss.

Crowley watched as Bela left the abandoned warehouse to go get the Colt for him. He was completely pleased with himself. The Colt would undoubtedly be a priceless bargaining chip later down the road. Put him in some good standing possibly with one of the higher up demons. Or at the very least get rid of some of the competition.

Perhaps he should have told Bela that he no longer held her soul. After all, he was just a sales representative. Good thing it wasn't her soul they made a deal on.

Late February 2008, Unknown Location, United States

Not long after the Monument Police Station incident…

One month later…

"Lovely. Absolutely lovely," Crowley commented as he turned the gun in his hand, admiring the craftsmanship. "Definitely the real McCoy. The bullets?" he asked looking over at a slightly anxious Bela as he pocketed the Colt into a pocket inside his suit jacket. She handed the box containing the remaining bullets over without a word. Crowley opened the wooden box and inspected one of the silver engraved bullets critically, "Such excellent and functional artistry."

Tucking the box to his side Crowley looked over at Bela, "Well, I'd say that this concludes our business, love." At her relaxing shoulders he gave her a wicked smirk that had her tensing up again,
"As per our agreement, my dogs won’t be the ones coming to collect your soul."

Bela's eyes grew wide at the realization from that one stressed syllable, "No! We-we had a deal! The Colt for my soul!"

"Yes, well," Crowley shrugged uncaringly. "Desperation in humans tends to make them act stupidly. How do you think we crossroad demons always make such a nice high quota, hmm? By calming the blithering pisspots down enough to think rationally?" he chuckled mockingly at Bela's horrorstruck face. "Maybe if you were as smart as you thought you were you wouldn't be standing there empty handed now would you? And besides," he shrugged. "I'm just the sales rep. I've been making the deals for someone else since they've recently become active once more."

"Who?" Bela asked with a shaky voice. "If not you, then who holds my deal?"

Crowley smirked, "Now there's the question you should've asked from the start. Little late now though isn't it? But, sadly I value my demonic after-life much more, and more importantly I'm not moronic enough to piss them off. All I can say is that she holds all of Hell's contracts. Every. Last. One." With that ominous tone and plotting smile Crowley disappeared with the Colt.

Leaving Bela wondering what she could do now to get out of her deal. She just stupidly sold the Colt, her only leverage for nothing! She had to face the facts; she was going to be ripped apart by hellhounds and dragged down to Hell to be tortured for eternity.

For the first time in almost a decade she cried big fat ugly tears that splotched her face and made her make-up run in hideous polluted rivers.

Present

11:57pm...The Erie Motel

Bela

"Yes," Bela answered tearfully.

"But stealing the Colt wasn't quite enough, I'm guessing," Dean's voice sounding smug and knowing.

"No," Bela's voice choked on her tears. "They changed the deal. They wanted me to kill Sam and if I could bring some half-breed friend of yours to them," she couldn't admit, even in her last moments that she was tricked. That she attempted to make another deal with a demon for her soul.

A deal with the powerful demon that actually held her contract.

Bela Flashback

Late March-ish 2008, Unknown Location, United States

Bela had spent the last month rummaged through all her resources and contacts to figure out who held her deal. She managed to run across a demon and told it she wanted to make a deal with the
one who held her contract. It laughed uproariously in her face, but it did oblige. Albeit with a sick and twisted grin.

"You do this for me Bela and I'll give you your soul back," a little blonde girl in a pink dress said as she smiled cheerfully up at Bela. "Kill Sam Winchester and your soul is yours again," the little girl's eyes rolled in the back of her head flashing white for a moment. "If you can bring me their little half-breed friend of theirs I'll owe you one. Free of charge!"

"I have till my contract ends?" Bela asked fearfully as she eyed the little girl who was possessed by a demon called Lilith. "That's not a lot of—"

"Hey!" Lilith shouted, her little eyes narrowing dangerously. "Either kill Sam or enjoy your reserved place on the racks. I know your Daddy's been waiting to see you again," Lilith grinned like some demented toddler as Bela's face paled at the mention of her father. "I could always shorten it for you if you like~" she sing-songed.

Bela choked out, "No! I-it's fine! Plenty of time. And Dean?"

"Kill him, don't kill him, doesn't matter. I've already got my mark on his little righteous soul. Just like I do yours. He made a deal, one year for Sam's life. I'll have him soon enough." Lilith grinned broadly at her, "So don't worry so much! I want Sam dead more than I want your worthless little soul. I've even got a plan to help you find them. Just do what I say and it'll all work out, for the both of us."

Bela nodded and licked her lips nervously, "If I fail?"

Lilith grinned wickedly, "I wouldn't if I were you. My hounds are excited to meet you." Growls and snarls emitted from unseen entities all around them. "Very excited."

Bela's face paled and she nodded her understanding. She was running out of options to keep as far away from those invisible jaws that wanted to tear her to shreds as soon as possible.

Present

11:57pm...The Erie Motel

Bela

"Really? Wow," Dean said with fake shock. "Demons, untrustworthy—shocker" he chuckled sarcastically. "Well our friend is long gone and somewhere safe. And that's, uh kind of a tight deadline, too. What time is it?" he pointedly asked.

Bela's eyes glanced at the alarm clock on the nightstand beside the phone as the numbers flipped from 11:57 to 11:58pm. Two minutes left.

"Oh, look at that. Almost midnight."

Bela could no longer hold back the tears. "Dean, listen, I-I nee-eed help," she sobbed.

"Sweetheart we are weeks past help," Dean's voice nothing but serious and unsympathetic. She shook her head, "I don't deserve it."
"You know what? You're right. You don't. But you know what the bitch of the punch is? If you would have just come to us sooner and asked for help, we probably could've taken the Colt and saved you," he ground out angrily.

"I know, and saved yourself," Bela sobbed and sniffled. "I know about your deal Dean."

"And who told you that?" he demanded.

"The demon that holds it. She holds mine too. Both our souls stamped with her mark," Bela revealed through a snivel as a feeling of vindictiveness welled up inside her. "She says she holds every deal," well, Crowley told her, but semantics.

"She?" Dean asked for clarification, his voice hard. Undoubtedly making connections in his mind.

"Her name's Lilith," Bela answered strongly.

"Lilith? Why should I believe you?" he asked skeptically.

"You shouldn't, but it's the truth," Bela swallowed thickly, hoping he would believe her.

"This can't help you Bela. Not now. Why are you telling me this?" he demanded.

"Because just maybe you can kill the bitch."

Dean remained silent for a few moments before saying; "I'll see you in Hell."

The dial tone met her ear afterwards. Dean had hung up and she was now alone, dogs barking in the distance. Seeing the clock strike midnight she stood to face the open window of the motel room, as the growling and howling grew ever closer. Dark horrifying shapes moved in the shadows with blood red eyes, mouths filled with bloody daggers, and serrated knives attached to their paws.

One leapt through the window with a vicious snarl.

April-ish 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Untied States

Couple days later…

The beautiful black impala pulled into the salvage yard, parking in front of the old worn down house. Bobby stepped out to greet them, having heard the familiar rumbling engine pull up.

"Hey boys," Bobby greeted them, patting their shoulders firmly. "How was the drive?" he asked as they walked up the front porch and entered the house.

Dean scoffed with a duffel bag slung over his shoulder, "Long. Made even longer when I had to pull over to aerate Baby, because the Atomic Fart Machine over here snuck Mexican food when I wasn't looking." He thumbed over his shoulder at Sam who followed slightly behind him, carrying his own bag.

"Dean!" Sam protested, looking affronted and embarrassed all at once.

"Hey man! I told you! No Mexican food while we're doing long haul trips!" Dean shot back annoyed, but the smirk belied his true feelings. He was enjoying ribbing his little brother and just acting like a normal pain in the ass big brother. "Now, I probably need to get Baby fumigated, or
Bobby chuckled as he opened the door and walked into the dated and cluttered house. The boys passed him and put their bags down in the den/library area off the kitchen, not hesitating or second-guessing their welcome in his home. Bobby was glad his constant reminder that the boys were always welcome in his home was able to sink in over the years. Took a while, even when they were young kids, probably from inheriting that signature Winchester thick skull.

Bobby was about to tell them an update on the whole tracking down Lilith debacle when a loud alarmed muffled shout came from upstairs. It made all the Hunters in the house freeze in surprise and dread.

"OH GOOD GOD! WHAT THE HELL?! PUCK! GET IT!" was the muffled cry of one—very distressed—little Trickster. There were muffled thuds and a muffled yipped bark of surprise. "SON OF A BITCH! IT'S CHARGING! ABORT! ABORT!"

There was more muffled thundering of footsteps and what sounded like banging into walls.

"AIEEEEE!" squealed Maya as the bang of a door quickly followed. "FUCKING FACE-HUGGER! THIS AIN'T OVER DEVIL SPAWN!"

Sam and Dean shared perplexed looks before they looked over at Bobby who was trying to hide an amused grin. They turned their attention to the hallway that had the stairs leading up to the second floor as thundering footsteps and clacking nails rushed down the old worn steps.

Maya and Puck all but slid into the room in a panic. Maya was swimming in an old boy's T-shirt and a pair of stained and torn jeans that had seen better days, and covered nearly head to toe in dust. Maya didn't notice the Winchesters standing next to Bobby and had only focused on him in her panic. "Bobby! I need a broom and the biggest fucking boot you got! There's a giant ass spider hiding up in your attic!"

Puck woofed to draw attention to his bared and clacking teeth. Maya nodded at him in understanding. "Yeah, yeah, and it had these huge fangs!" Maya bared her own teeth in a grimace and brought her own hands to her face to illustrate how the spider's huge fangs moved. Sam and Dean were both sucking in their lips to keep from bursting out into laughter, and drawing her attention. Bobby wasn't much better on the laughter front either.

"And-and the whole thing was like the size of my face!" her eyes were comically wide as her arms moved around exaggeratedly. "When Puck went to get it, it charged back at us with its fangs drawn and on its hind legs like-like this!" Maya tried imitating the ferocious squatting stance with her arms waving wide in the air. "And then, when we tried going for the hatch…it chased us and tried to eat my face as I was going down!" she said seriously with her kitten-like frown as she straightened up.

Dean couldn't do it; he couldn't hold back the laughter anymore. "You got owned by a fucking spider?!" he howled in laughter. This just set Sam and Bobby off with more sedated, but still hearty chuckling.

Maya turned to look at Sam and Dean with a sour expression, still a little miffed over them leaving her behind. Crossing her arms she huffed, "Like I said, it was the size of my face, and I didn't have anything to hit it with! So, excuse me for calling for a strategic retreat against the grand-daddy of all spiders!" she purposefully shoved past the chuckling brothers, going to the kitchen pantry for the broom before going to the foyer to grab one of Bobby's heavy duty work boots.
"Alright Xena," Bobby said with a chuckle, sticking his arm out to stop her from walking by him with his boot. "Who said ya could use one of my boots? Why not use one of yer shoes?" the raised eyebrow and amused grin told Maya he wasn't all that annoyed. Nor did he seem to care. He was just enjoying her plight.

Maya sniffed and held up the boot, "A big ass spider, needs a big ass boot." She then, once again, purposefully and angrily shoved past the Winchesters. "Now if you'll excuse me. Puck and I need to go do battle against the King of Arachnids. C'mon Puck!" she called, only to have Puck whine and lie down on the ground with his head under his paws beside Bobby.

She turned back and looked at her dog with incredulous surprise, "What do you mean you're not coming?! I can't go up there against that...thing by my self!"

Puck got up and fled the room. Well then. Maya now knew where her little dog drew the line. Demons? *Bring it on.* Ghosts? *Puh-shaw!* Crocotta? *Bitch, please.* Above average in size, non-supernatural spiders with large fangs and a bad attitude? *Nope!*

"Seeing as my second in command has ABANDONED ME!" she said, raising her voice pointedly looking in the direction her dog has fled, receiving a bark in return that clearly translated to how *not* sorry the little dog was. "Bobby can you back me up?" she asked the older Hunter, ignoring the overly amused Sam and Dean.

Bobby snorted and shook his head, "Sorry kid. Still workin' on findin' somethin' to track down Lilith. Ask one of these two idjits." He thumbed at the boys as he made his way over to his desk to begin pouring over his notes once more.

"I'm guessing you're still being punished, huh?" Dean said with a grin. "Sorry can't help ya sweetheart. Hunting spiders in attics don't exactly fall under the Hunter job description," he grabbed his duffel and headed up the stairs to place it in one of the few guest rooms Bobby had. Maya looked at Sam with pleading eyes.

One thought flew through Sam's mind when he looked into those big round *pleading* golden orbs, *'This must be how Dean felt every time I used puppy-eyes on him. Shit.'*

"Alright. I'll help you with your spider problem," Sam sighed in defeat, shaking his head. Maya beamed happily at him as he handed him the boot.

They passed Dean in the upstairs hall, who grinned at a defeated Sam. He just knew Maya pulled the golden-eyed version of puppy-dog eyes on Sam. Dean's smile grew wider when Sam bitch-faced him and flipped him off.

Maya also flipped him off, though; there was a suspicious twinkle in her eye. Dean shrugged. He'd accepted the fact Maya would probably still be pissed at him for leaving her behind, and, now, not helping her with the apparently *very large* attic spider. She was probably just exaggerating.

Dean started descending the stairs when Maya and Sam had made it to the hatch leading to the attic.

"You first Sammy," Maya ordered.

Dean could hear Sam groan an annoyed, "Fine. And it's Sam."

Dean reached the bottom of the stairs when he heard a loud door bang behind him. He turned around to look up the stairs confusedly, then smirked.
"Maya! What the hell?!", came Sam's muffled and angry shout, followed by some shifting wood.

"This is for leaving me behind, asshole! Get Aragog for me and we're even!" she called through the now closed attic hatch. Dean climbed the stair again, just peaking over the top to see Maya on the descended wooden stairs using her weight to keep the hatch shut, a big shit-eating grin on her face.

Dean shook his head with a smile not hearing Sam's reply, but didn't doubt it must have been sarcastic, and went downstairs to talk to Bobby.

"Hey Bobby," Dean called as he re-entered the den, approaching the man behind the desk. "Can I talk to you about something?"

Bobby looked up from under his ball cap, "Sure Dean. What about?"

Dean moved a stack of books on the desk enough so he could perch on the corner. "Rufus mentioned something when I went to see him. Something about demi-god Tricksters with a human parent…and some rite?" he trailed off seeing Bobby's tired expression appear on his face.

Bobby groaned in annoyance, taking off his cap and rubbing his face before looking back over at Dean. "Rufus is a paranoid jackass who only researched enough to find what he was lookin' for and seein' only what he wanted to see," he grumped. "The rite he's referrin' to is more of a ritual of last resort. In most lore demi-gods are like My, half-human and tend to have ridiculous strong moral compass. It's why ya get heroes like Hercules and Perseus. Probably part of why she feels inclined to start huntin' in the first place," he mumbled that last part resentfully. "They want to use their inhuman powers to help people for the most part."

"For the most part?" Dean inquired. "And I thought Loki was a demi-god?" Bobby just shrugged.

"Most, far as I reckin', try to stay under the radar. Hunters sometimes mistake some of 'em for witches, like Rufus did when we first stumbled upon Maya. Of course, you'll get the odd evil son of a bitch too that needs gankin', but that's about it," he answered then continued on.

"As for Loki he's better classified as a pagan Trickster god. 'Demi-' comes into play when a human gets turned into a god like Maui in Hawaii for example, or are born half god, like My. The terms get mixed up when us humans try classifyin' them. These half-humans, if given a chance and trainin', can be just as powerful as their pagan parents.'"

"So, is that what Rufus meant when he said she'd grow up to be deadly?" Dean asked confused. "Like a tiger that was someone's pet…or something."

Bobby raised an eyebrow at Dean; he just shrugged at his lame attempt at relaying the analogy Rufus gave him. "Yes and no, but I'd like to point out that anything can be deadly when pushed enough. Hell, you, Sam and me are plenty deadly in our own rights, and we're just human. No, what Rufus was referrin' to was when demi-gods like My decide to throw away what makes 'em human. Go dark side so to speak," Bobby grimaced grimly.

"What makes them do that? You just said most of them have strong moral standards—"

"For the most part, yeah," Bobby interrupted. "They usually under go it when they have real need for that extra boost, usually driven by the same morals hardwired into them. It really comes down to how they're raised, not just their nature. So I'd try to stay away from any bastards sired by the more violent pagan gods like Ares. Now, 'cause My's Dad is Loki, a Trickster, she has a strong sense of justice and getting it against jerks, assholes, and the like. It's her human side that tells her
killin' her victims in her tricks is wrong," Bobby pointed out as he put his cap back on. "What the ritual does is it takes the god magic in a demi-god, or Trickster magic in this case, and encourages it to spread."

"Spread?" Dean asked concerned. That sounded a bit ominous.

"Yeah, like a virus," Bobby's tone darkened at the thought of Maya one day thinking she felt she needed to undergo such a ritual. "It'd eat away and mutate her human half, her soul, till all that'll be left is another deadly demi-Trickster. Won't go after innocents, but won't hold back anymore neither. It's a short cut to getting a needed power boost. Have 'em hit their full potential right away instead of workin' for it."

"Does she know about this?" Dean asked, his mind whirling as one fact he knew about his little sister screamed in his mind.

She was self-conscious about her power level, about how strong she was, about how little she could actually do.

Bobby shook his head, "Nope. Asked her once and she had no clue what I was talkin' about. I then tried talkin' to Loki about it, but with him being the god of mischief and lies it's a toss up."

"What'd he say?" Dean asked with a grimace and pinched face.

"Planned to have her cultivate her powers slowly, grow into them more naturally so she can keep her humanity. Apparently despite the frustration and worry her reluctance to kill someone causes him, he'd rather have her just the way she was now," Bobby informed with a long-suffering sigh. Getting information out of that asshole was like pulling teeth out of a vampire. Even then he was never completely sure if the information he'd given on Tricksters and demi-gods in general was accurate.

Dean looked at him with a mix of emotions on his face, "I don't know whether to feel relieved or concerned that you're on regular speaking terms with that asshole." He shifted on his desk corner perch. "And I thought he'd want her to be just like him?"

Bobby was about to reply when Sam's muffled shout echoed through the house.

"HOLY SHIT!" Sam's muffled yelp came, echoing through the old house. It was soon followed by a loud thud of something heavy being thrown.

"I TOLD YOU!" Maya's voice followed not long after.

"I THOUGHT YOU WERE EXAGGERATING! NOT UNDER REPORTING! THIS THING IS BIGGER THAN YOUR FACE!" Sam shouted back angrily, followed by the heavy thumps of footsteps and more banging. "GET BACK!"

Bobby and Dean shared a look, an agreement to bench the conversation for later, and then they got up to see what all the commotion was about upstairs. It was just a spider. It couldn't be the cause for this much alarm.

There were more muffled bumps, followed by Sam's victorious shout of "HA!"

The victory…it…it didn't last.

There was a quiet stifled, "What the—?" from Sam on the other side of the hatch, just as Bobby and Dean reached the top of the stairs. "OH CRAP! Wolf spider!" Sam yelped, followed by some
very deliberate stomps. "Maya, open the door!"

Dean and Bobby watched Maya push open the hatch only to have it yanked from her hands on the other side. She quickly jumped down from the top of the wooden stairs as Sam all but fell through the opening and quickly slamming the attic door behind him. Sam and Maya looked up at the closed hatch for a minute before both slumping against the wooden pull down stairs. Sam looked as dusty and ruffled as Maya was.

"What happened Sammy?" Dean asked with a shit-eating grin. "Couldn't handle won wittle spider?" he added in a condescending baby-voice.

"Shut up jerk!" Sam bit back with a growl. "That was no normal spider! I got it with my silver knife, but then it—it exploded," he finished haltingly.

"Exploded?" Bobby scoffed though it was obvious he was highly amused at the situation. "How the hell did it explode?"

"Yeah. Enlighten us you twerpy bitches," Dean was enjoying this too much. The double bitch-face he received from Maya and Sam did not affect him in the least. It just added to his amusement.

"It was a female wolf spider," Sam bitched, as Maya's eyes went wide in horrified comprehension.

"No," she said appalled to Sam, her eyes wide and round as dinner plates.

Sam gave her a side-glance and nodded with a breathless laugh, "Yeah. I skewered it with the silver knife I always have on hand, and all the little baby wolf spiders fled off its back." He looked back over to Dean meeting his eyes, "I had flashbacks to that native land curse with all the bugs. Most of the baby spiders came towards me, Dean. Towards me."

Dean gave a commiserating grimace. That hadn't been a fun hunt. Trapped in the attic with the only family in a newly developed subdivision being swarmed by bugs out to kill them. Their only hope was to wait till sun-up. It was kind of a close call for all involved.

"I stomped a bunch of them, before yelling at Maya to open the door," Sam finished.

Maya shifted to lean against Sam and sighed tiredly, "I still can't believe you thought I made the thing when it landed on you."

"Hey!" Sam protested, sitting up straighter and disturbing Maya. "In my defense it was totally something you would do to get back at me!"

Maya scoffed as she sat up as well facing the tall Sasquatch of a man, "Well, yeah, but my illusions are just that; illusions, images. There's no weight to them! You wouldn't have felt anything when it touched you. Idiot."

A beat of silence before Sam quickly moved, wrapping a massive jacket clad arm around Maya's head in a headlock, her face stuffed into his side muffling her cursing as she flailed.

"Oh, I'm sorry. What was that? Didn't quite catch that," Sam's voice completely unrepentant as he proceeded to noogie her head.

Maya reached up with one of her hands to the back of his head and grabbed his long hair making him yelp in surprise. She didn't pull but the threat was clear.

By this point Bobby finally stepped in. Last thing they needed was a playful sibling squabble to
devolve into an all out brawl.

"Alright you two. Break it up!" Bobby snapped as he muscled his way between the two. "Now I doubt it was as bad as you two said—"

"We're not exaggerating! It was that bad!" the both blurted out, interrupting the old Hunter.

"Well," he said pointed over their voices and giving them the stink eye to silence them, "either way one of ya needs to go back up there and at least get my boot back."

Maya and Sam shared a look over Bobby's shoulders.

Yeeeeeeaaah, no.

"I'm sorry Bobby but the spiders have claimed your attic, your boot, and Sam's knife for their kingdom," Maya informed him solemnly with some dramatic flare, because, why not? "We go up there and the spawn of the fallen spider queen will undoubtedly attack, seeking vengeance."

"What she said," Sam nodded at Maya. One bug-y curse flashback was enough, thanks.

Bobby gave them both deadpanned looks, but Dean was the one to speak up first.

"C'mon, you guys are ridiculous. I'll go get Bobby's boot and the knife, since you're both too chicken shit to try," Dean scoffed with an eye roll and walked up to the bottom of the wooden attic stairs. Maya tried to hand him the forgotten broom, but he just scoffed and shook his head.

Maya, Sam, and Bobby watched as Dean disappeared into the dark hole in the ceiling that was the attic access of the house.

"Boot!" Dean called back in warning as he tossed the work boot down through the opening, causing Maya and Sam to move to the side to avoid the flying footwear. There was some shuffling from the attic void, and then Dean cursed with a surprised shout, "WHAT THE HELL?!"

Dean had found the silver knife and the subsequent giant spider corpse. Realizing that there was a bunch of baby spiders of that thing scurrying around he made a quick exit.

The knife and a dangling spider corpse in hand.

Bobby upon seeing the dead spider was unexpectedly surprised, "Well, I'll be damned. That thing's been crawlin' around my attic?" Sam and Maya sent him validated looks. See they weren't exaggerating! Bobby rolled his eyes and decided to head back downstairs to continue researching. As he descended the stairs the three idjits behind him started discussing whether it was an actual normal spider or it was some kind of supernatural hybrid thing and what they should do about the undoubtedly hundreds of babies now living in the attic. Bobby would deal with those later.

Bobby made it to the bottom of the stairs when Maya screamed shrilly and came thundering down the steps behind him.

"Dean! Stop it!" she yelled as she rushed past Bobby in a hurry. Dean had been running behind her arm stretched out in front of him dangling the giant dead spider corpse smiling like the asshole big brother he was when he had something to torment his younger siblings with.

"C'mon, Dean! Quite being an ass!" Sam was right behind him trying to catch up to his brother to try and rescue their pseudo sister from Dean's asshole antics.
"No horsin' around in my house! Take it outside!" Bobby yelled in bemusement as they disappeared into the house, the front door slamming shut not a moment later. Maya yelling at Dean to stop chasing her with the dead spider.

Bobby shook his head and went back to his desk, letting the three idjits have their moment of fun. His mind wandered back to the conversation him and Dean had been having.

Unless Maya was backed into a corner where she needed all that power right away he didn't see her resorting to the *Iactura Mortales de Potenia* ritual, even if she *did* know about it. He also thought about what might've happened if she was able to call her Dad to her rescue all those years ago or contacted him before getting nabbed by vamps. Would her moral resolve have withheld against her father's resolve for her to be like him for her safety? Deadly pranks and all? Would her kind heart have remained in tact?

A loud feminine squeal and a boisterous laugh from outside brought him out of his musings. Bobby shook his head and went back to the book he was looking through.

They needed a way to track Lilith down, and hopefully get Dean's deal cancelled.

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**Count Down: ~3 weeks to go**

Maya was incensed. After the whole spider debacle and Dean being an ass she was even more determined to get back at him not just for that, but also for leaving her behind in Peoria.

Justice *needed* to be *served*.

Best way she could think of tormenting Dean was with pie. Coercing Sam into telling her what Dean's favorite pie had been easy. He humored her need for payback, since her tricks were more harmless and decidedly less deadly than her Dad's.

So the next day when Bobby sent the boys out to go pick up some more old books he didn't have, she made a pie. Not just any pie. *Cherry pie.*

Maya was sitting at an unused corner of Bobby's desk working on some translations from one of the old dusty tomes. It was a pain since she couldn't find an English translation and had to first translate the obscure language into some language she *did* know first, and *then* translate that into English without losing context. It kept her mind *pretty* busy. Even if for some reason or another she had a knack for stuff like this.

Bobby should've had her just do this instead of all the manual labor the past couple of weeks. She had told him as such and he just chuckled evilly.

"Then I wouldn't have all those *lovely* pictures of you tryin' to squeeze into someplace you couldn't fit, and gettin' stuck," was his reply.

Yep. Bobby was an evil, *evil old man.*

Maya was so engrossed in a translation that she almost didn't notice the boys walk through the front door. Sam attracted her attention as he brought in a bag full of old books from one of Bobby's contacts.
"What's that smell?" Dean asked sniffing the air with peaked interest, his mouth starting to water.

"Pie," Maya answered, pretending to be distracted but actually paid close attention to Dean as he briskly walked into the kitchen.

Sam watched his brother in exasperation before looking at Maya who was now looking at the kitchen door way mischievously.

"What did you do to the pie?" Sam asked warily.

"Absolutely nothing," Maya chirped happily, just as Dean discovered the kind of pie she made.

"Hell yeah! Cherry pie! C'mere beautiful," Dean crooned loudly from the kitchen.

"No sex food noises!" Sam shouted out towards the kitchen.

"No promises Sammy! You haven't seen this pie! It's a thing of beauty," they could all imagine Dean giving the pie some serious eye-sex looks.

Sam shook his head and turned to look back at Maya who had gotten up from her seat and was looking at the doorway to the kitchen expectantly. With a snap of her fingers the pie tin was in her hands, another snap and she had a fork.

"Son of a bitch!" Dean shouted from the kitchen. He rounded the corner to find Maya casually leaning against Bobby's desk eating forkful after forkful of cherry pie, right out of the tin. "You," Dean growled dangerously with narrowed green eyes.

Maya swallowed her last very large forkful of pie and smiled beatifically at him, "Me!"

"Hand it over twerp and I'll go easy on you," Dean threatened. This was the second time Maya seemed intent on messing with pie as a way to get to him. A smug look that reminded Dean too much of her Dad crossed her face.

Maya's grin widened as she took another big bite of the pie and baited, "Mm mm. 'as ta be one of the better pies I've made."

Dean's mind blanked a little. Homemade cherry pie…fuck it. He'll risk it, because pie.

Maya and Dean stood stock still for a moment, her hand on the bottom of the pie tin and Dean's face buried in the dessert.

The moment Dean was close enough, Maya struck.

Maya brought his hand to the tin plate bending over as Maya took a step back to lessen the amount of pie filling and crust meeting Bobby's old rug beneath them. That didn't stop globs from landing
on his shirt as they fell from his cherry pie covered face.

Maya and Sam burst out laughing as Dean used one hand to wipe pie from his eyes, all the while licking at the filling around his mouth.

"Alright. You got back at me twerp," Dean grunted. Looking at the giggling Maya and sniggering Sam. "I'mma go to the kitchen to wash my face off and finish off what's left of this awesome and second best tasting cherry pie," Dean informed before a dangerously mischievous look passed over his face. "But first," he put the destroyed pie on an empty spot on the desk before turning back to Maya, "how 'bout a hug Goldy?"

Maya stopped laughing and quickly made to flee, but Dean was too quick and had her wrapped up in his strong arms and hoisted up in the air, her feet kicking uselessly. He then proceeded to nuzzle his pie-laden face in the crook of her neck and the side of her face spreading the cherry goodness around.

Sam rolled his eyes at the two, enjoying the lively and happy light that returned for a brief moment in his older brother's eyes.

When Bobby returned from the bathroom he came back to find Dean sitting smugly on the couch, his face and the fringe of his hair now holding a slightly red tinge, and eating the remnants of a thoroughly destroyed pie. Maya sat beside him with her own fork, casually taking some bites here and there. The one side of her face smeared lightly with the red pie filling.

Sam was at Maya's previous spot with furrowed brows as he went over her translations, studiously ignoring the two on the couch as they made pigs out of themselves.

"Three minutes. Gone for three minutes and you two look like a couple of horror film rejects," Bobby grumbled as he went back to his own notes and reading, ignoring the cheeky grins sent his way.

"Least you missed the sex food noises from Dean," Sam muttered, not looking up from the research.

Dean scoffed indignantly, "You're just jealous! I've just got the second best cherry pie ever!"

"Yeah," Sam sent him a bitch-face, "you just had to get pied in the face by it first, jerk."

"Shut up bitch!" Dean grouched as Maya shook beside him laughing. "You too twerp."

"Idjits. Every last one of ya," Bobby sniffed as he continued reading, ignoring the sounds of annoyed protests from said idjits.

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**Count down: ~2 ½ weeks to go**

Maya felt like her brain was frying and her eyes were going to go permanently cross-eyed. Reading through book after dusty old book, sometimes reading a passage three times because *oops* did a translation in that first old language wrong which meant that all the *subsequent* translations to get it to understandable English was *wrong* and... *it was mentally exhausting.*

So Maya tended to be a firm believer in *breaks.* Taking a moment to relax, calm down, and focus on something else. Today she decided to take a moment to lie down on the couch and listen to
some music to drown out the relative silence.

With her eyes closed, and primed—maybe—for an impromptu nap. Naps were a blessed thing.

What she didn't account for was that with the house so quiet and having the volume in her music really high, would mean that other people would be able to hear the faint songs from her headphones too.

Maya had also forgotten about Dean's high standards when it came to music, i.e. per Sam's description—80's mullet rock.

"What'cha listening to Goldy?" Dean asked as he turned from his ancient looking tome to glance over at Maya, who had an arm thrown over her eyes.

"Nothin'," Maya mumbled a bit delayed, her mind trying to go back to English. She just wanted her mind to clear for a few minutes of all the translations running rampant in her head. Pretty sure her thoughts were in some old Germanic language at the moment.

Dean's eyes narrowed as he ears strained to listen to the faint music coming from the teen's headphones. Curiosity and procrastination won out, so he stood up and went over to her. A faint twang of a guitar and southern accent was picked up.

In one quick movement the headphones were unceremoniously whipped off Mayas ears and brought to Dean's. He immediately held them at arms length once he got a good earful of the music she was listening to.

~Splashin' through the sandbar,

Talkin' by the campfire,

It's the simple things in life, like—

"The hell is this? Country?" Dean scoffed as he looked at Maya with disgust. "You listen to country?!

"It's Kid Rock, and its still technically rock. Albeit country rock," Maya retorted a little quicker now with a sniff. So what if she didn't listen to 80's rock all the time?

Dean pressed the next button on her iPod to play the next song.

~I was ridin' shotgun with my hair undone,

In the front seat of his car,

He's gotta one hand feel on the steerin' wheel,

The other on my—

"Taylor Swift, doesn't exactly sound like country rock to me," Dean grouched after taking a look at the artist on the screen with a raised eyebrow as he hit pause on the device. "More like country pop!"

Maya groaned as she gave him a tired 'are-you-serious' bitch-face, "Dean, I'm allowed to have my own musical tastes outside of classic rock. Including guilty pleasure music. And right now I'm too mentally drained to deal with your snobbishly exacting standards on good music."
Dean shook his head vehemently and tossed the iPod and headphones back to Maya. 

"That's it! We're no longer friends," he said, not noticing Sam as he entered the den. "You're dead to us now."

"Why is Maya dead to us?" Sam queried looking between the tired teen and his indignant brother.

"She's listening to country music, Sam. Taylor Swift country!" Dean hissed; throwing up his arms and storming off…like a diva.

Maya and Sam watched Dean leave. She then shifted her gaze to Sam.

"You had to grow up with that?" she asked jokingly.

"Yeah," Sam snorted as he proceeded to due his brotherly due diligence by sitting on Maya's legs, keeping her pinned on the couch.

"…my condolences," Maya sassed as she shifted her legs to try and dislodge them. Sam just shifted to sit more on her knees. "Do you have to sit on me?"

"Do you really need to ask why, twerp?" he chuckled.

"…I take it back. You're both assholes and deserve each other as brothers."

Sam gave her a knowing smile, which made her raise a slightly creeped out eyebrow at him.

"Whatever creeper…" she groaned adjusting her headphones and throwing an arm over her eyes. Maya was too tired to deal with whatever was going through Sam's head. He knew something and had been looking too smug for her liking.

Like some obvious secret she hadn't been privy too.

Ugh, too much thinking. Not enough napping.

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**Count down: ~2 weeks to go**

Bobby walked up the dilapidated porch steps of his old home arms filled with groceries. He'd caught a glimpse of Dean doing something in his garage with the grinder. Probably sharpening up some of their blades. Nothing like bringing a dull knife or machete to a monster hunt.

He juggled his bags as he opened the door and almost decided to walk back out when he heard the tell tale signs of siblings squabbling.

'Kids,' Bobby mentally sighed as he prepared to see what conflict Maya and Sam had going on between them.

Maya was staunchingly guarding a bowl of extra butter popcorn Bobby had hidden to try and avoid this exact situation.

You'd think Maya being half-Trickster her favorite food would be something sweet. It wasn't. It was the sodium chloride and churned infantile bovine lactate secretion covered popped endosperm.

"At least share a little Maya! I was the one who popped it to begin with!" Sam argued as he tried to
reach around the hunched teenager.

"Sammy, bring your hand *any closer* and I *will* bite it off!" Maya growled protectively before taking another mouthful of popcorn, glaring at an exasperated Sam.

"This is why I hid the popcorn, Sam," Bobby scoffed as he dropped the bags on the table. "Ya mine as well make yerself yer own bag, Sam. She's not about to share her favorite snack food next to apples."

Maya whipped her head to look at Bobby aghast when she heard his voice, "You said you *didn't have any!*"

"'Cause ya shouldn't be eatin' popcorn for breakfast, lunch, and dinner," he deadpanned with a parental glare sent her way. "I've seen ya do *exactly* that for three days straight till I ran out."

Sam sent her a look of amused disbelief.

Maya shrugged, "I regret nothing."

Bobby scoffed at that, "Keep tellin' yerself that when you discover that big bag of apples I got in the truck and you end up givin' yerself a belly ache tryin' to eat all of 'em. *In one sittin'.*

"That was *one*—"

"You've done it at least *five times* here in the past. Who knows how many times ya gorged yerself on apples when you're with yer Dad."

Sam snickered before quickly grabbing a handful of popcorn while Maya was distracted with Bobby's smug knowing look and fled the kitchen as fast as his large bulk could manage.

"*HEY!*" Maya shouted angrily after the fleeing mountain of a man. She glared, deciding it wasn't worth chasing him when there was still a good amount of popcorn left in the bowl.

"God help the poor damned soul that gets between you and popcorn," Bobby sighed as he left to get more groceries from his truck.

She shrugged at him and kept munching away, content with her salty buttery treat.

Later same day…

It was a dinner consisting of frozen TV dinners and more reading, and in Maya's case also included an absurdly large pile of apples and the predicted bellyache that followed.

"Ugh," Maya groaned piteously on the couch. "*Never again.*"

Sam and Dean rolled their eyes at her dramatics, though both were slightly astounded by the sheer amount of apples she was able to scarf down.

"Said that last time, idjit," Bobby scoffed from his desk, furrowing his brows as he concentrated on the old book in front of him.

"It's not my fault they're sweet, juicy, hand have a nice *crunch* to them," she defended weakly with a groan, much to Sam and Dean's amusement.
Count down: ~1 ½ weeks to go

Sam gawked at the translations Maya had done for him on one of the texts he found online about hellhounds and demon deals. It had been in some obscure ancient Germanic dialect and had frustrated the hell out of Sam for hours.

Maya looked at it for a couple of hours and had it translated into English...after some translations through other more, less obscure languages since there wasn't a direct [insert ancient Germanic dialect here] to English. Not to mention trying not to lose context.

It was impressive, like, really impressive. He thought he remembered Bobby mentioning that she had a knack for languages and translations, but nothing like this.

Sam knew Maya was smart and clever...made stupid decisions like any other teenager, but still. He figured it had to come with being half-Trickster. Tricksters were ridiculously clever, as shown by Loki, and Maya to a less deadly extent. Sam was kind of glad they were also mostly juvenile otherwise they might've all worked together to concoct some scheme to take over the world by now.

"How're you able to do this so quickly?" Sam had asked shifting the papers of Maya's notes. "I think you'd put some of the most seasoned translator's to shame."

Maya shrugged as she stretched her back and flexed her hand from the couple of hours it took to translate the passage Sam needed. "Always figured it had to do with being the demi-god child of Loki. Who's also known as the Lie Smith. Need a good grasp of language to create convincing lies," she said with a smirk.

"I've seen you try to lie to me, Dean, and Bobby. It's so obvious it's painful," Sam teased causing Maya to roll her eyes at him.

"...I know. The moment I see someone as a friend or family it's like the lie generator in my brain shuts down. Give me a stranger and I can lie through my teeth like any other Trickster."

"Couldn't lie very well when we first met. Just blabbed out that you'd been watching us the moment we entered that pizza place," Sam pointed out with a smile.

"...shut up, Sammy. I was caught off guard, okay?!

"It's Sam, Maya," he said rolling his eyes.

That was also the moment Dean decided to walk into the room, and after hearing Sam's retort loudly proclaimed, "No it isn't. It's bitch."

Sam let his head fall into his free hand in a very 'oh-my-God-why-do-I-know-you-two?' gesture.

Next Day...

Sam was putting back one of Maya's language notebooks; because, of course she'd made comprehensive notes on any languages she knew so Bobby could reference them when she wasn't
Curious, Sam took the odd book off the top shelf to examine it only to find it was a hollowed out and refurbished book. Looked like some old dime a dozen Bible that'd been hollowed out and made to look like it was just another old tome that Bobby had collected. Looking it over the fake leather binding was blank and manually aged, not that any novice of old books would be able to tell, and had a metal clasp to keep it closed.

Opening it he found a smaller notebook inside and some pictures. The pictures caused a huge smile to split his face.

One was of what looked like a prepubescent Maya drawing away at Bobby's table with a small smile on her freckled face. Sam didn't think she could get any smaller, but she seemed so damn puny in the picture. She was scraggly that's for sure, obviously having just gone through a growth spurt and had yet to really fill out.

What really had him smiling was the stuffed polka-dotted elephant that was tucked under her left arm protectively.

Another one was a young Maya with a petulant pout with her bottom lip stuck out. The reason? She was sitting on the stairs and had obviously thought she could stick her head through the banister rails. She did, but it was apparent that she couldn't get unstuck and was pouting that Bobby was taking a picture of her plight.

The next one was Maya a little older and wearing disheveled and dirt covered clothes, her own face and arms just as dirty and her hair a mess. She was giving the camera a look Dean always classified as his bitch-face, an unimpressed glare. Bobby's old dog Rumsfeld sat beside her with a satisfied doggy grin. He turned the picture over to find Bobby's handwriting:

_Idiot tried making friends with a fox by following it into its burrow._

_Got stuck headfirst. Had to pull her out by her feet. Good thing Rumsfeld has taken a liking to her and likes to follow her on her little escapades._

Sam picked up the notebook and was about to open it when Bobby entered the room asking him what he had in his hand.

"You should see the picture I got of her a couple a weeks or so ago. Got stuck in the window of a junker tryin' to get to a part for me," Bobby snorted. "Just a pair of legs danglin' outta partly crushed car window and a whole bunch of cursin'!"

Sam laughed at the mental image Bobby painted then turned to the notebook in his hand, "So, what's this? And why did you have it with pictures of Maya hidden away?"

"I hid it 'cause it's a notebook I started on My when I first met her, and last thing we all need is some Hunter passin' through and stumbling on it," he nodded grimly to the book. "It was a way to keep track of new information on Tricksters, like how they're pagan gods or lesser gods, not actual demi-gods like My. Became more about My the longer I knew her."

"Really?" Sam looked at him surprised. "I'm pretty sure you said when we first ran into them that they were demi-gods."

Bobby shrugged, "Terms get mixed up and misused. I'm guilty of it every now and then. But I was serious about gettin' a pissed off Trickster if you both had decided to hunt My too that night. Tricksters value family above all else." He pointed to the book, "Wrote it down in there too. It's the
kind of thing that sets 'em apart from other pagan gods."

"Seriously?" Sam scoffed, but his mind brought the Mystery Spot incident and the final time loop. Loki's anguished and devastated face holding a dead Maya. He quickly sobered. "Uh, never mind."

Bobby sighed and took the book from Sam's hand and the hollowed out false book. "I get it. The guy doesn't come off as the touchy feely parental type all the time, but he is. I get glimpses of it here and there, especially when My pulls these stunts of runnin' off on him. Sends his parental Trickster instincts into a frenzy." He put the notebook back into the false book and putting it back in its spot on the shelf in a forgotten corner.

"Other gods usually won't give two shits about any offspring they sire on some unsuspecting woman, but Tricksters are very different. If they ain't birthin' the kid they're stealin' 'em away to raise and protect 'em themselves. They'd do just about damn anythin' to protect their kids," Bobby rubbed his face then turned to look back at Sam. "It's why Lilith is after Maya, and wants her alive. Get My and she'll have Loki by his balls."

Sam's face went grim at the reminder.

"Shouldn't we tell her that a demon is after her?" he asked Bobby. Wouldn't be better that she was aware so she could be more cautious?

"Peoria, Sam. Peoria," Bobby deadpanned referring to the homicidal ghost that had it out for her. "Tell her and I'd bet you she'd offer to use herself as bait so you and Dean can get a chance at that demon."

"Ah. Right," Sam frowned. That hadn't been a good night. He considered asking Maya if she'd be bait for the demon, but if only for a moment. He knew Dean would never go for it, even if it would give them a shot of saving him.

It was also risky. Lilith could get Maya and Dean would still go to Hell and...he'd have lost both siblings.

"You're right, Bobby," Sam sighed with a sag. "You're right."

May 1st 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Count down: ~30hrs to go

Late at night...

Sam and Dean

Sam had finished telling Dean that Bobby finally found a way to track down Lilith. Dean of course was himself about some last final hurray with senoritas, margaritas, cervezas and a donkey show.

Sam chuckled at him telling that if they do save him, let's never do that. Dean shrugged, still groggy from his nightmare with the hellhound.

"Hey, hey, Dean..." Sam cajoled as he sat down beside his bedraggled and scruffy brother. "Look, we're cutting it close, I know. But we're gonna get this done. I don't care what it takes, Dean. You're not gonna go to Hell," Sam licked his lips. "I'm not going to let you. I swear. And neither
will Bobby or Maya." Dean looked at him as he gave a reassuring smile.

As Dean looked at Sam he saw his brother's face contorting and shifting hideously through a hazy veil.

*Well, that's disconcerting.*

"Yeah, okay," his voice strained as he tried to keep from freaking out.

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**Maya**

Maya had fallen asleep on the couch an old open book in her lap and her head tilted at an odd angle. Puck lay curled up against her thigh. For the last couple days they'd all been going hard at the lore and spells to either help Dean or track down this demon bitch called Lilith. She'd even asked Bobby if she found anything on Lilith's symbol the boys sent when she wrote it down after peaking at Dean's soul.

She had discretely taken another look at his soul not long ago. The mark had darkened to a pitch-black stain on the righteous soul filled with love, pain, loyalty, and the drive to protect the innocent.

All Bobby said was that it was old. Like, almost before recorded history or pre-Bible *old*. So Maya looked up ancient demons called Lilith. She dredged up the first ever demon.

The mostly forgotten first wife of Adam who refused to subjugate herself to her husband. Most only remember Eve in Sunday school, not Lilith who had listened to Lucifer and supposedly became the first demon, and his justification that humans had the potential to be wicked and evil creatures.

Maya hated the Bible, mainly the angels. Where the hell were they with all the shit going on in the world? Yeah they're warriors, not guardians, but why stay so silent?

It wasn't because she was scared of them. Nope. Not a bit...*okay she was terrified*. Extremely powerful beings that could kill her with a touch all because she would be considered an abomination of *God's* human creation? Yeah, who *wouldn't* be?

They were also apparently a bunch of flying, pretentious, speci-est dicks who liked to play with the lives of others, according to her Dad.

She was nudged awake when Dean shook her shoulder, "Hey Goldy. Wake up. Bobby needs your help for double checking something."

"If it's in Latin you can do it, Assface," Maya mumbled sleepily, eyes still closed and missing the soft look he sent her.

He fully pushed her over, and disturbing the Jack Russell beside her from his own slumber. "You know that's not much of an insult right?"

"Do you feel insulted?" she retorted back. When Dean didn't answer right away she smiled a smug sleepy smile, "Thought so."

"Yeah, yeah," Dean sighed rubbing his face. "Just come on. Bobby found a way to track Lilith."

That got Maya up as she stretched and stood up. Puck followed suit with his own stretching and
hopping off the couch to stand loyally at his Mistress' feet.

"Right," Maya clapped her hands then rubbed them together. "Let's find this Hell-bitch."

Dean proceeded to ruffle her hair, much to her annoyance and his amusement.

_God he hoped he didn't bite in ~29hrs._

They joined up with Bobby and Sam around his cleared kitchen table, except for the road map and wooden tripod with a pendulum, wooden ring full of symbols, and the crystal ball of destiny on top.

"Alright we got Lilith's name and even her personal signature," Bobby said once Maya and Dean arrived, holding up a copy of the symbol Maya saw on Dean's soul all those months ago. "That's pretty much the whole kit an' caboodle. Right name, right ritual, ain't nothin' you can't suss out. With the signature mark this makes this a helluva lot more accurate."

"That's great. We should be able to figure out what town Lilith's in, right?" Sam asked, looking at Bobby as he leaned against his palms on the table.

"Kid, when I get done, we'll know the street," Bobby informed confidently before turning his gaze to Maya. "Can you do a double check on the signature mark?"

She nodded and focused thin purple in gold ringed pupils on an anxiously shifting Dean, then flickered them between him and the paper. The purple light faded, "Yeah, we're good."

Dean shifted his shoulders as he grimaced uncomfortably, "Still feels like you're looking at me naked when you do that."

Maya chuckled. "Only when you know I'm doing it. Checked a couple of days ago. It's been getting darker, _more black_," she finished somberly with a grimace.

Nothing else was said in response to that, so Bobby went ahead and toggled the top of the tripod while gripping the paper with Lilith's signature as he recited the Latin ritual.

The pendulum moved and once the last words left Bobby's lips it zeroed in on one town.

"New Harmony, Indiana," Bobby read as he looked up at the boys and Maya. "And we have a winner."

"Alright. Let's go," Sam said urgently, but Dean was quick to protest.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hold on. Just holster up there Tex," Dean gave a calm down gesture to Sam.

"What's the problem?" Maya asked, wondering what was going through Dean's head. They had Lilith's location. They could save him. "Shouldn't we be trying to get there as soon as possible to get the jump on her?"

"What's the problem?" Dean parroted her. "Come on Goldy, where do I begin?" he looked between everyone gathered around the table. "First of all we don't even know if Lilith _actually_ holds my deal. We're going off of Bela's Intel?" he asked doubtfully.

"She had the same mark on her soul as you Dean," Maya pointed out, making a vague motion to Dean's torso.

"And how do you know that it's _actually_ Lilith's mark? When that bitch breathed the air came out
crooked. Telling us it was Lilith could be one last shot to screw us over," Dean countered.

"The ritual used the mark on the paper Dean more than the demon's actual name," Bobby said, getting Dean's focused. "Lilith or not, the demon that's got your deal is in New Harmony, Indiana."

"Fine," Dean grumbled, "but even if we could get to this son of a bitch, we have no way to gank them. And lastly, every demon in the country wants to hand Sam over to Lilith, who, oh yeah, wants his giant head on a pike! Should I continue?"

"Well ain't you just bringing down the room?" Bobby sassed back at him.

"So, then, what're we supposed to do Dean?" Sam asked exasperated in a helpless shrug.

Dean gave a terse shake of his head as he stared intently at Sam, "Just 'cause I have to die doesn't mean you have to, okay? Either we go in smart or we don't go in at all."

Sam gave a shrug in agreement with an answer already lined up, "Fine. If that's the case I have the answer."

"You do?" Dean asked doubtfully.

"Yeah. A surefire way to confirm it's Lilith and a way to get a bona fide demon-killing ginsu."

"Damn it, Sam, no," Dean said resolutely as he turned and walked away from his brother a few steps, because really?

"Yaaaaaaay," Maya sighed with unenthused sarcasm and twirling a finger in the air. "Demon bitch," Sam sent her a tired look begging her not to get into this with him right now.

"We are so past arguing, guys. I am summoning Ruby."

"The hell you are!" Dean exploded as he turned around to face Sam angrily. "We got enough problems as it is."

"Exactly," Sam walked around the table and up to Dean desperately. "We've got no time and no other choice, either."

"He's got a point Dean," Maya sighed, looking like she tasted something awful. Sam sent her a look of grateful surprise and Maya sent him one that spoke of how much she hated the words that came out of her mouth concerning Ruby. "Get the knife and use the time we saved for figuring out a way to get to the demon holding your ticket."

As the last words that left Maya's lips registered in the Winchesters' minds they both flinched a little, remembering what the demon up at the abandoned cabin had said.

…where's you're little half-breed friend? Hear the demon's got a capture alive APB out on her…

Maya's eyebrows went to her hairline at the visible flinch, "Okay what? What'd I say that's got you two so jumpy?" She didn't see Bobby's eyes narrowed at her in concern.

Bobby knew that when Maya said 'we' when referring to going after the demon it wasn't the royal 'we'. She included her self in that as well. He knew Maya saw the idjit duo as her friends, but he wondered if she even fully realized how she actually treated them. As her two big dumbass brothers who liked playfully picking on her, but still let her get away with such casual intrusions into their personal space, with only a token grumble of annoyance in Dean's case.
"Nothing," Dean denied with a shake of his head. A shared look with Bobby and both agreed on one thing.

They had to keep her from joining them on this hunt. God knows her stubbornness and sense of loyalty wouldn't let her sit it out.

"Other than the fact that you guys think summoning Ruby is a good idea," Dean continued, propelling the conversation forward. "C'mon! She's Miss Universe of Lying Skanks, okay?" he glanced back at Sam. "She told you she could save me, huh? Lie! She seems to know everything about Lilith, so why didn't she ever tell us that, hey, she's supposedly the demon that owns my freakin' soul?!"

Sam jaw looked about ready to break with how hard he was clenching it before he spoke fervently, "Okay! She's a liar, but she's still got that knife."

"For all we know, she works for Lilith!" Dean yelled.

"Would explain how Lilith knew where we were at the police station when we got all the demons," Maya added meekly, feeling more and more uncomfortable as the arguing and rising tension between Sam and Dean continued. God she hated when they fought like this. Always made her want to leave the room, or something to just get away.

"Not helping!" Sam shouted at her before turning back to Dean who looked as pissed as he felt.

Bobby narrowed his eyes at Sam for that, but held back his own retort. Last thing they needed was all three of them arguing or biting each other's heads off.

And although he didn't like it one bit, Sam was right.

"Don't yell at her!" Dean hissed protectively.

"Dean," Bobby called tiredly only to be ignored by everyone but Maya who tilted her head at him curiously.

"Sorry if I'm a bit pissed at my hell bound brother who thinks we have more than the one option for saving him!" Sam shot back. "Give me another option, Dean, if you've got one. I mean, tell me, what else am I supposed to do?"

"Sam's right," Bobby asserted as Sam finished talking.

"No! Damn it!" Dean cursed loudly, silencing them and giving him a moment to catch his breath as he stared between Sam, Bobby, and Maya. "Just no," he said assertively but at a calmer volume. "We are not going to make the same mistakes all over again."

The three of them looked at him confused. What was he talking about?

Maya opened her mouth to ask what he meant when Dean continued talking after a pause, "You guys want to save me, find something else."

With that Dean left the kitchen to return to a book he was reading on Hellhounds, Sam watching as he sat back down at the extra table they brought into the den/library.

Bobby shook his head as he put his coat vest on, Maya glancing at him briefly at the rustling of the garment.
"Where you going Bobby?" Sam asked, not looking behind him as Bobby grabbed Maya's elbow and made to head for the front door.

He looked at the back of Sam's head and said tiredly, "Takin' My to a storage unit in town, to… find somethin' else. I guess."

Maya didn't protest as Bobby led her away, grabbing her thin black jacket and slipping into her shoes, Puck at her heel. Though she did ask haltingly motioning vaguely towards the brothers, "Shouldn't I…?"

"Two pairs of eyes are better than one," Bobby stated. Puck gave an indignant huff at the old Hunter's implication. "Better for readin' through mountains of obscure texts, rat. Unless you know how to read or translate obscure Russian accurately?" he sass ed back at the dog as they all left the house.

"…my Russian's not that—" Maya began, only for Bobby to interrupt.

"Better than mine."

"…point."

"Humbleness still alludes you doesn't it?" he said sarcastically as he started up the old rusted Chevelle.

"What's there to be humble about? I'm fantastic!"

Bobby shook his head at Maya's attempt at levity. It worked, if only a little, to lift off some of the dread of Dean's upcoming due date.

It didn't last more than a couple of seconds.

Because, in less than ~28hrs, Bobby will find out if his idjit band of three wayward musketeers would be down by a member…or more.

As he pulled out of the front gate of his yard with Maya he sent a prayer for the first time since Karen.

'God, don't know if yer listenin' or if ya give acrap at all, but please, please watch out for my kids. Don't even know if ya watch over demi-gods, but if ya don't, please make an exception for My. She's a good, kind-hearted kid but damn it if her stubbornness and need to something to save people won't land her in a heap of trouble one day. And, I know they may not be mine by blood, but damn it all if they ain't mine all the same.

So…please.'

God heard, and did nothing but watch as events further unfolded.


Now May 2nd 2008

Countdown: ~14hrs to go

Bobby and Maya
It'd taken quite a bit of burning the midnight oil and the wee hours of the morning, even with the inventory log they made one weekend, but sadly nothing in the books or the odd scroll had anything they didn't already know or anything useful. Maya may have slowed things with nodding off occasionally…

They pulled up to Bobby's old house to find the impala missing.

"Damn those self-sacrificin' idjits!" Bobby cursed harshly before turning to Maya. "You and the rat get out and stay here. Dean probably got his head outta his ass and they've gone somewhere to summon that demon."

Maya didn't move an inch and glared at the man defiantly. "No way Bobby. We're coming with you. You're not the only one who cares about them!" she argued crossing her arms over the seatbelt.

Bobby glared right back, "Like hell you are Maya! I will drag your ass out of this car and tie you down if I have to!"

"Then I'll snap every car key you got to my hands before you can get one foot out the front door!" she snapped back. "Let alone getting something in my hands to help me escape and hotwiring one of your cars," the lopsided smirk that appeared reminded Bobby too much of Loki right then.

Bobby leaned threatening in his seat towards her to get in her face. To Maya's credit she didn't back down or lean away, just maintained her stubborn glare.

"Maya, I love ya like yer my own flesh an' blood, but God help me if it means keepin' you outta the line of demon fire I will knock yer lights out myself!" he threatened.

"Don't think I haven't realized you've become extra protective and cautious over the last month or so," Maya pointed out with a raised confident eyebrow. "Even when I'm at your house you're worried about something coming over for a less than friendly visit," she paused, seeing the minute shift that told her she hit the nail on the head. "So, are you willing to leave me alone, knocked out and defenseless while you chase down those two, and then go after whatever demon's got Dean's deal? Me, who doesn't know how to drive, still hotwiring a car and following when I come to?"

Bobby glared at her in worried anger, but dammit if she didn't have a valid point. He might be certain that there were no demons in Sioux Falls, let alone any that knew where he lived, or that Lilith's new item on her Christmas wish list was staying with him.

And the last thing he needed to worry about while kicking Winchester ass and fighting demons was her trying to drive stick with no experience or instruction whatsoever. Probably just get in an accident…

Crap.

"Fine," he bit out angrily. "But you stay with me! No runnin' off on yer own! No nothin'! Got it?!!"

Maya nodded seriously. Bobby grumbled about troublesome half-Tricksters as he put the Chevelle back into gear and back onto the old road. He doubted the idjit Winchester duo went too far. There were a couple of abandoned farmhouses around where they could do a summoning.

It still stung that the two boys he had known all these years, the closest things he's had to children before Maya was added, would up and go summon a demon and then most likely go have some big ass demonic last stand showdown—without him.
He'd seen their smarts on numerous occasions, but dammit all if they weren't a couple of the stupidest sons of bitches he knew.

"I'm gonna tear those two idjits a new one that's fer sure," Bobby mumbled under his breath, getting Maya to smile a little in amusement.

He stole a quick glance at her as Puck jumped in her lap and she started petting him.

Despite what he said, he had to find a way to keep her away from New Harmony.

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**May 2nd 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States**

**Abandoned Farmhouse**

**Early Morning...**

**Countdown: ~13hrs to go**

**Sam and Dean**

Earlier Dean had caught Sam trying to sneak out of Bobby's house, undoubtedly to go summon Ruby for either her help or if worse came to worse her demon knife. Dean absolutely loathed the idea of summoning, as Maya put it, *the demon-bitch*.

But dammit if that knife wouldn't come in handy when they go confront Lilith. Yeah, *Lilith*. Ruby confirmed it when Dean made his appearance after she tried to seduce Sam with some dark demonic psychic power that could help Sam save him. Of course she only *revealed something* when they were pretty much out of time and Sam was running on desperation to save him. Idiot was *actually considering* Ruby's words, *that* was how desperate he was to save his brother.

By believing that the Miss Universe of Lying *Manipulative* Skanks could help him cultivate whatever demonic psychic crap Sam had lying dormant inside him.

Dean got the knife, granted after a few shots to the head from the bitch, but he got it. Him and Sam marched up the cellar stairs and started going through their arsenal, making sure they had iron, salt rounds, holy water, and that every gun they had was fully functional and wouldn't jam on them tonight. They needed every weapon they had if they were going up against Lilith and whatever demon army she had in the wings.

Sam tried talking to Dean about what Ruby had proposed, but Dean nixed it immediately.

Dean finally explained what he had said back at Bobby's house, about not making the same mistakes. He had been referring to the demon deals made for each other, about doing whatever it took to save the other.

How they were each other's weak spot, and how every Hell-spawned demon knew it too. Using the lengths they'd go for each other against them, so they had to stop spreading it for those demons.

Stop being martyrs and go after those sons of bitches like the Hunters they were taught to be.

"So, what'd'ya think?" Dean asked with a small smile that he had reserved only for Sam until Maya came along. He figured he'd allow a chick-flick moment since he was on borrowed time.
Sam had to go be a bitch-ass little brother and ruin it with some well placed teasing, "I think you should have totally been jamming 'Eye of The Tiger' right there."

Dean grimaced as he stood up and began packing the arsenal away. "Oh, bite me. I totally rehearsed that speech too," he grumbled jokingly, getting a soft laugh from Sam.

"So Indiana, huh?" Sam asked with a light sigh.

Dean nodded, "Where Lilith's on shore leave."

"Yeah, I guess," Sam shrugged.

Dean's face frowned in confusion, so he asked, "Tell me something—what the hell does a demon do for fun?"

"We probably don't want to know," Sam answered with his own thoughtful frown.

With that they finished packing and quickly walked out of the dilapidated old farmhouse, throwing weapons into the trunk of the impala and climbing in.

They needed to haul ass to New Harmony, Indiana before Dean's deal came due or were cutting it even closer to the wire than they already were.

Dean tried to start the car but the engine sputtered and struggled as it tried to turn over. Dean frowned, confused as he tried a couple of times listening to the noise and trying to figure out what was wrong.

They jumped at the knock on the roof of the car and turned to Dean's open window to find Bobby bending over and holding the distributor cap to Dean's precious impala.

"Where do ya think you're going?" Bobby said knowingly.

Sam and Dean shared an annoyed but also slightly guilty look as they climb out of the impala to confront Bobby, and apparently Maya who leaned against the impala's tail end with arms crossed.

"If I develop abandonment issues I'm sending my therapy bills to you two," she deadpanned blandly at them.

Sam and Dean looked at her, shocked that she was there with Bobby. They figured the old Hunter would've left her behind.

"Bobby, what the hell is Maya doing here?" Dean demanded, dropping her nickname.

Bobby quirked an eyebrow, "You try figurin' out a way to keep her at home without strandin' yerself there too. Or knockin' her out and start worryin' about when she'll come to and try to drive with no drivin' experience. Probably landin' her ass in a roadside ditch."

"Maya…" Sam rubbed his face in annoyance at Bobby's words.

"This ain't your fight kid," Dean growled out, staring heatedly down at the little Trickster who stared back just as stubbornly. "We can't be going up against a shit load of demons while worrying about your scrawny ass the whole time," Dean's eyes pinched as the hazy veil returned, distorting and contorting Maya's face.

It wasn't as bad as the one he saw the other night on Sam's face, but it wasn't pretty to look at all the same. Except for this strange light purple-y glow that seemed to radiate faintly from under
blistered and inflamed skin.

As quickly as it came it was gone, just like the first time.

"And you two going up against a shit load of demons by yourself is a good idea?" Maya scoffed with a glare. "You two doofuses need all the help you can get! And there isn't a snowball's chance in hell that I'm just going to sit on my ass at Bobby's house while people I care about are out risking their lives, when I'm able to do something!" her emotions were raw as she stared at pleadingly at Dean. She meant every word she said. She didn't have a lot of people in her life, like hell she was about to lose one, or more, without fighting tooth and nail.

Dean felt a little touched by Maya's words but there were two big problems that sent his protective instincts into overdrive, and overshadowed it. The one being that Maya was just about as green as it got when it came to tangling with even low level supernatural monsters face-to-face, let alone one demon. They, however, were about to walk into an army of them.

The next one? Lilith wanted her. If demons weren't guarding Lilith they'd be trying to nab Maya. Dean didn't want to be the reason his little Trickster of a sister was practically handed over to Lilith on a silver platter.

He couldn't let that happen, but she'd also refuse and hold them up if they tried to leave her behind.

"We got the knife," Dean said gruffly, a weak attempt to show her she wasn't needed on this one.

"And you two intended to use it without me? My, I get, but me?" Bobby scoffed, redirecting Dean's focus to himself. "Do I look like a ditchable prom date to you?"

"No, Bobby, of course not," Sam tried to placate the older man, but his mind was on a similar wave length as Dean's, how to get Maya from tagging along?

"This is about me, and Sam, okay?" Dean held Bobby's gaze. "This isn't yours—or Maya's—fight."

Bobby took a quick step right into Dean's space, barely a foot between them, to get into the eldest Winchester's face and growled, "The hell it isn't! Family don't end with blood, boy."

Sam and Dean sent him emotional eyes, well, as emotional as any Winchester could actually pull off. So, lots of intense staring.

Bobby shifted on his feet seeing he was getting through their—mainly Dean's—thick stubborn skulls.

"Besides, you need me," he said a little smug as he took a step back out of Dean's space.

"Bobby—" Dean tried to protest but Bobby didn't let him continue.

"You're playin' wounded," he stated. "Tell me, how many hallucinations have you had so far?"

Sam and Maya's heads swiveled between the two with similar looks of confusion. Dean looked at them and gave a conceding nod, asking wryly, "How'd you know?"

"Because that's what happens when you've got hellhounds on yer ass, and because I'm smart," he handed Dean the distributor cap, exuding smugness. "My and I will follow," he nudged Maya's shoulder to get her moving towards the Chevelle. Her eyes darted back with a hint of longing, wanting to ride with Sam and Dean, but a look from Bobby had her complying begrudgingly.
"Still don't want her tagging along Bobby!" Dean snapped at the retreating figure of the grizzled Hunter.

"If ya can find a way to keep her from stealin' keys let me know!" Bobby grunted back.

"I'm right here, ya know!" Maya piped indignantly.

"*We know!*" all three men seemed to say at once derisively, making it clear they still didn't want her coming with them on this hunt.

Dean popped the hood of the impala, putting the distributor cap back in its rightful spot, before climbing into his Baby with Sam and starting her up, the engine purring with a low rumble.


Countdown: ~11hrs to go

Sam and Dean

"Son of a bitch," Dean cursed as he started digging for his phone.

"What?" Sam asked curious as Dean flipped open the retrieved device.

"I think I know how to keep Maya out of this hunt," he stated as he dialed Bobby's number. "Been wracking my brain for the last couple hours over it. We can't let her go to Indiana; no matter what."

"Well, yeah, but how?"

"We call the only son of a bitch we know that could trump her powers and keep her safe and from following us," Dean replied as he listened to the dial tone.

Sam furrowed his eyebrows wondering who Dean had in mind, "Who—"

"Bobby don't say my name," Dean ordered into the phone before continuing, "I know how to keep Maya from following. How quick do you think Loki can get to get to Kansas City, Missouri?"

"They're pretty quick buggers," Bobby replied vaguely, knowing where Dean was going with this and not letting Maya hear. "Can pop up anywhere really. *He'll be there.*"

"Good. We're gonna stop off in Omaha for a fill-up and bathroom break," Dean instructed. "When she's in the bathroom I'll call him off your phone and tell him to meet up with us in Kansas City."

"Be careful," Bobby warned. "Especially if they got young. They get real nasty if they think their young are in danger." *You're a Hunter who has his kid. He's not going to be friendly.*

"Right. Thanks Bobby," Dean snapped the phone closed, catching Sam's look. "Got something to say?"

"Other than the Trickster would kill us the moment he saw us with Maya? No, not really," Sam scoffed. "He told me the last time we ran into him that—"

"That'd he'd kill us slowly making us wish we were dead if we used Goldy's life as a bargaining chip," Dean interrupted. "But that's not what this is. *This,* is us dropping her off with her Dad to keep her from getting herself killed and kept out of the hands of Lilith!"
Sam looked at his brother doing what he did best. Do whatever it took to look after the people he cared about.

"Yeah," Sam swallowed thickly, nervous for the meet-up with such a powerful and temperamental being.

Omaha, Nebraska, United States

Countdown: ~10hrs to go

Random Gas Station

Maya, predictably, snapped all their car keys to her hands before going to the gas station bathroom. Dean raised an eyebrow at her mischievous smile as she dangled Baby's keys from her hand as she left to the bathroom.

She might've been right about being the reason she'd develop abandonment issues…

"Bobby!" Dean called over his car to the older Hunter, "Phone!" Bobby rolled his eyes, but dug his own cellphone out and tossed to Dean who caught it in one hand. "What's his contact?" Dean asked as he scrolled through the various contacts on the flip phone.

"Godson," Bobby grunted. "Old last name alias he used when My was real little, and before they had to disappear."

Finding it Dean hit the dial button.

Gloversville, New York, United States

Gabriel

Gabriel was bored and brooding, over his recurring little runaway daughter, again. Since talking to her almost a month ago they've had some stilted text message conversations, but nothing really substantial. Mostly her telling him she was fine and still at Hunter's…Bobby's.

When did a Hunter practically get co-custody of his kid?

The only thing keeping him from looking up where a one Bobby Singer resided and just popping in to grab Maya—kicking and screaming if needed—was that she saw the Hunter's place as a 'safe place' to run to if needed. A spot she didn't have to worry about him all of a sudden showing up to drag her back to whatever temporary home they had and not have to worry about running into any other less than friendly supernatural creature.

But more to visit Bobby, because for one reason or another she loved that old coot, and was always excited to go visit him.

Gabriel wasn't sure when he somehow ended up with a Hunter as a co-parent…

No, as much as Gabriel could easily find Singer's place he felt better knowing she was somewhere safe, and not about to jump ship trying to avoid him…and the epic grounding and punishment coming her way when he got his hands on her!
Gabriel sighed in boredom as he wondered what he should do today… *other than take over the world!* No, not really, he’d leave that to Pinky and The Brain. Just all the management for running the world would be anyone’s worst nightmare!

He briefly considered looking over the town to see how the ole residents were doing after almost two decades since his last visit. See if some of the men were still inclined to be *promiscuous* behind their wives’ backs.

His phoned rang from his front breast pocket in his green bomber jacket. Seeing 'Hunter' run across the caller ID he flipped it open.

"Hunter!" he greeted with a grin. "Long time no pester. How's my little Tootsie Pop?"

He'd expected to hear the old Hunter's gruff voice on the other line asking him some obscure supernatural question, like that tracking spell for some demon the other day. Probably for those Winchester morons to track down that Lilith bitch. Dad, was she annoying.

It wasn't Bobby's voice that came through the receiver.

"Hey Loki, Dean Winchester, remember me?" came the low smug voice.

"Dean-o!" Gabriel greeted with faux cheer as his grace twisted nervously and his heart picked up pace. "To what do I owe *this* displeasure?"

"Need you to do something for me," Dean answered bluntly.

'*Of course he does,' Gabriel's mind sneered mentally as righteous archangel anger began building in him. 'If this ass thinks of using Maya… grrr.'*

"Let me guess. You need me to save your ass, or more specifically your soul? Your deal's due tonight ain't it?" Gabriel sneered. "And since this is *Bobert's* number you're probably trying to use my kid's life as a bargaining chip, huh? How'd you swing that with Hunter?"

Gabriel was ready to fly himself wherever this asshole and his brother were hiding to go grab Maya, and then play a nasty trick on Hunter later for letting those assholes near his baby girl, but Dean's response had him stop short.

"Nope," Dean answered simply and throwing Gabriel through a loop.

He… honestly didn't expect that, or what followed after.

"I need you take Goldy home."

"What?" Gabriel asked in disbelief after a pause. *What was Dean playing at?*

"You deaf? I said—"

"No! I *know* what you said! I'm trying to find some catch!" Gabriel growled. "Your life *and your soul* is on the line and you want to, what? Just hand over my daughter no questions asked? No demanding I help you in exchange?"

"Listen," Dean sighed in annoyance. "Maya's got it in her head that she can help us go after this powerful demon called Lilith tonight, and help fight whatever demon army she's got guarding her."

Gabriel felt like all the air got knocked out of him at that news and the blood in his vessel's veins turned to ice as dread filled his stomach.
"What?!" he demanded fearfully. "She's no way equipped to do anything like that!"

"Exactly. Listen Loki," Dean said intoned over the line, "We're going to stop at a Gas N' Sip outside Kansas City in a couple of hours. You're the only one we know who'll keep her safe and keep her from keeping us from leaving her behind. So, see ya then."

The dial tone rang loudly in Gabriel's ear as he tried to process what he learned.

Maya was trying go into a den of demons to save someone fated by divine prophecy to go to Hell.

She was also seemed to be friends with the brothers Winchester if they didn't seem to have any other ulterior motive than getting her out of the line of fire.

Gabriel rubbed his face tiredly as he wondered how that could've come about. Nothing but pain could come from that friendship.

"Oh Caramel," Gabriel sighed. "What've you gotten yourself into?"

He flew himself and a randomly conjured up innocuous Nissan sedan to Kansas City to putter around while he waited to pick up his troublesome kid.

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Outside Kansas City, Missouri, United States

Countdown: ~7.5hrs to go

"Gas station pie, Dean?" Maya asked with a raised and doubtful eyebrow. "That can't be all that good," she braced her arms on the trunk of the impala as she leaned further back against the sleek black car in the Gas N' Sip parking lot behind the building. Away from curious eyes.

Dean—leaning against the trunk as well—sent a side-eyed glance at her before rolling his eyes and taking another bite of possibly the last piece of pie, or closest thing to pie he'd probably be getting.

"Better than no pie Goldy," he smirked around a mouthful of the sad looking apple pie slice.

Maya just kept looking at him dubiously and shook her head not buying it.

She looked over beside them where Bobby had parked his rusty patchwork of a Chevelle, a stark contrast to the well kept and shiny black of the impala. Bobby and Sam were going over the map, discussing which back roads to take as they made their way closer to New Harmony.

"Why not take the highway straight in then take the back way to where Lilith is?" Maya asked curiously.

Dean swallowed and crumpled the packaging of his slice of questionable gas station pie, "We don't know where Lilith might've stashed some of her lackeys. The impala, although a beautiful piece of machinery, isn't exactly inconspicuous." Dean thumbed over his shoulder at his precious car, "If we take the high traffic ways we'd be spotted pretty easily. Too many civilians around too, which would mean more possible demons in meat-suits that could send out the alarm." Dean gave a definitive shake of his head, "No, back roads are our best bet. It'll probably take longer to get there but we'd have a better chance of getting the drop on the bitch."

Maya nodded in acceptance of Dean's explanation. Made sense enough to her.
"Okay, I think we got a good route down," Bobby announced, drawing Maya and Dean over to look at the map. "It's gonna add on an hour or two, but we're less likely to run into anyone, or anythin' we can't handle. But we'll be cuttin' it pretty damn close."

Bobby traced the route, spouting out names of side roads and back roads that crisscrossed the farmlands of Indiana. Dean's eyes followed Bobby's finger and his words with laser focus born from years of needing to memorize some crucial spell or exorcism or finding the most minuscule and essential detail at a crime scene.

Afterwards Dean sent Bobby and Sam a meaningful look, while Maya looked dumbfounded at all the squiggly lines on the large map, missing it. How could Dean remember all this and not get lost?

Dean turned to her and nudged her shoulder, "Hey, Sammy and I have something for ya." Maya looked up at him with wide surprised golden orbs, before they turned suspicious.

"I swear Assface if it's just you being an ass and it's that giant fucking spider corpse…" Maya growled threateningly, her eyes narrowed and sharp. Dean hadn't gotten rid of the thing after he first chased her around with it and instead used it to scare the crap out of her.

He said she had literally jumped 4 feet in the air with a scream when he had attached fishing line to it and made it look like it had been scurrying towards her.

Bobby had cuffed him upside the head and had supposedly disposed of the thing.

Dean would get her, and Sam if he was in the room with her, a couple of more times despite that.

Dean gave a deep chest chuckle and placed a hand on her shoulder to steer her back to the impala, Sam following behind also chuckling. Puck the little traitor was giving his own wide smiley dog grin.

Bobby stayed with his car and grimly flipped open his phone, scrolling through his contacts. He brought the cell to his ear and gave a quiet muttered, "Come get her," as the call was answered before immediately hanging up after.

Dean unlocked the trunk and lifted the false bottom, revealing all their hunting gear and supplies. He moved stuff around as he looked for something.

"Don't worry Maya," Sam said with a smile as he stood on her other side. "I know what it is and it isn't that."

Maya looked up at him, tilting her head to the side a little curious, "Then, what is it?"

Dean finds what he was looking for, straightening up and putting the object roughly in Maya's hands, "A late birthday present."

She fumbled at suddenly being handed something, and quickly gets a grip on the newspaper wrapped object Dean gave her. Maya looked at the long thin shape, then what Dean said reaches her brain.

Her eyes grew wide as she looked between the two towering men on either side of her, "Guys, you didn't have to…I wasn't expecting—"

"We know we didn't have to," Dean interrupted with a shrug. "Thought you'd like the surprise though." Dean gazed down at her with a smirk.
"Just open it Maya," Sam encouraged with a calm smile of his own.

Without further prompting, Maya tore at the newspaper to reveal a black leather scabbard and red tinged brown leather handle and wrist loop sticking out from it. She pulled the handle to reveal the familiar 14” stained bolo machete blade, shined up and sharpened expertly.

Maya cocked her head slightly as she finally registered what she was seeing and gave a breathy laugh, "Is this the machete you had me pick out?"

"Yep," Dean said with a smirk. "Been working on it off and on since we got to Bobby's. Would've gotten it to you a little sooner, but…we were a bit preoccupied," he finished with a frown. He shook his head as Sam sent him those sympathetic eyes in a brief glance, forcing another smile on his face. "Turn it over," Dean suggested as he watched Maya do just that.

Revealing the signature flaming pentagram lightly engraved in the cold steel near the handle.

She looked at both of them with a raised eyebrow and a smile, "Really?"

They both just shrugged at her.

"Closest thing to a family crest we've got," Sam voiced. "Thought it would be a good way for you to remember us each time you look at it."

The smile fell from her face. This sounded more like a good-bye…

Maya sheathed the blade and took a couple steps back from them and the car to glare at both of them without getting whiplash. "I'm not staying behind," she said resolutely, crossing her arms, a grip still on the machete handle.

"Maya…" Dean sighed as he walked up to her.

She took a step back away from him, "No, Dean! I'm not letting you guys leave me behind when I can do something, an-anything to help save you!"

Maya ignored the sound of a car pulling in around the building and stopping behind her a few feet away. Sam, Dean, and Bobby didn't as their eyes flickered to the familiar driver.

Dean heaved another heavy sigh as his eyes returned to the desperate gold eyes looking at him pleadingly to understand. Oh he understood just fine.

The desperation to save those they cared about. The same kind that drove him to make the deal in the first place that's landed them all here.

"I know. That's why I got someone to keep you from following or stealing our keys," Dean told her thickly.

Maya looked at him confused, but quickly turned her head around at the sound of a car door opening and closing behind her. Her eyes widened, that in any other circumstance would be comical, but not this time.

There walking leisurely towards her was her Dad, in all his golden haired, whiskey-eyed, and green bomber jacket glory.

"Hey Coffee Crisp," Gabriel greeted with a smirk. "Heard ya were trying to do something stupid, like follow these morons into a demon hoard," he sighed, his face showing his disappointment.
"I'm taking you home before you get yourself killed."

"What?! No—!" Maya hadn't realized that Dean had taken her moment of surprise from seeing her Dad to walk up behind her. So when she went to run and stay out of her Dad's reach she turned right into Dean's arms that wrapped around her securely.

"Dammit, Assface! Let me go!" she cried desperately, her voice becoming thick and her sight blurry with tears as she struggled. "I just wanted to help! I-I don't want you to die," she choked out meekly.

Gabriel stopped two feet from them and watched them curiously. He could practically hear his daughter's heart begin to break in her helplessness. *When did her and the Winchesters get so close?*

Dean's arms shifted into a tight hug as he held her close to him, he could feel her tears begin seeping through his shirt as he bent his head so his mouth was right by her ear.

"You did, Goldy. *So much,*" he murmured thickly. "My last month could've been nothing but frantic research, dread, and alcohol. But you being you was one of the bright spots that broke that up. You helped Sam and Bobby keep me going. A break from all the doom and gloom," he chuckled sadly, as he lifted shining forest eyes to the Trickster and gave him a nod. "You did everything you could Maya, but now you gotta let us go do our job."

Gabriel nodded back at him and closed the distance.

Dean gave a final whisper in her ear, *"Thanks Sis."*

"*Dee,*" she whined desperately into his chest with a wet sob as his last words he said registered in her mind, and her heart lurched. She tried to grip him tighter but Dean had pushed her into her Father's arms. "*Noooo!*" Maya struggled in her Dad's vice-like arms, her eyes meeting Dean's sorry ones with a look of betrayal and desperation that pierced his heart.

Maya went to snap her fingers, but a gentle touch to the side of her forehead had her slipping into unconsciousness.

Losing sight of her two big brothers.

Gabriel adjusted his grip on her and picked her up bridal style, her weight nothing in his arms. By now Puck had decided to make his way over to stand at his feet and whine worriedly up at his Mistress.

He caught the worried glances the Hunters were sending and he rolled his eyes, "She's fine guys. Just knocked her out." Gabriel turned and went to the back of the car, using his magic to open the door for him before placing her in the back seat.

His eyes flickered to the scabbarded machete still firmly gripped in her one hand. Gabriel decided to leave it be as he straightened up to look at the gathered Hunters in the back lot of a Gas N' Sip.

"Whelp, thanks for handing Trouble back over to me," Gabriel said as he closed the back door after Puck jumped in. "If this is all, good-bye, and good luck. You're probably going to need it," he snorted as he opened the driver's side door.

"Loki, wait," Dean called as he took a step towards him.

"You know, if you *wanted* something in return it's *usually* best to make demands before handing over your leverage," Gabriel scoffed as he leaned on the open door, staring unimpressed at Dean.
"Still don't want anything dumbass," Dean deadpanned with a frown. "Thought you should know that Lilith, the demon bitch we're going after tonight, wants Maya."

All of them noticed the way Gabriel's body seized and his eyes widened for a brief moment before being replaced by angry and narrowed ones.

"What the hell would some demon bitch want with my kid?" Gabriel seethed, his anger becoming hard to reign in. His archangel fury churning in his grace wanting nothing more than to hunt the bitch down and smite her.

"To get to you, ya idjit," Bobby scoffed. "Demons found out she's your kid. Get My, and they'll have ya at the end of a leash. Tell me I'm wrong, Loki," he challenged crossing his arms.

Gabriel took deep breathes through his nose to keep his fury in check, his nails digging into tightly clenched fists.

"Didn't know I was so...popular," Gabriel spoke, voice strained as he mentally chanted, 'don't get smite happy, don't get smite happy...'

It...wouldn't be good to go all Wrath of God on the demon skank and getting Heavenly radar put on his ass...and Maya's by extension.

"By the way Hunter," Gabriel began giving Bobby a pointed look, "Words later."

Bobby grunted an acknowledgement, knowing the most the Trickster was going to do was probably give him a verbal chewing out over the phone for bringing Maya along. Not that he had much of a choice.

"Just...watch her ass okay?" Dean sighed tiredly rubbing his face then checked his watch for the time. "We gotta go. C'mon Sam!" Dean turned his back on Gabriel, heading back towards Baby. Sam closed the impala's trunk sending a lingering glance at the sedan that held the closest person to a little sister they had.

"Like you really need to ask," Gabriel snorted, but something was really niggling at the back of his brain. "Yo! Dean-o! Can I ask ya something?" he called as Dean opened the driver side door.

"If Lilith's after mini-me," Gabriel began, licking his lips, "Why did you give her to me instead of just handing her over to the Hell-bitch for more time? Any other Hunter would've done it without a second thought."

Dean turned to look at him like he was stupid, and Sam looked at him perturbed. Bobby rolled his eyes and sat down in his Chevelle already knowing the answer.

"Guess we're not like other Hunters," Sam answered first with a shrug.

"Damn straight!" Dean grunted before turning a disapproving and disgusted face towards Gabriel. "Sure as hell wasn't about to sacrifice someone we see as our kid sister for extra time on my deal."

Everything about both brothers belied how they felt about such a thought, the absurdity and revulsion they felt. They never even considered it as a possibility.

Gabriel didn't let his absolute surprise show as he watched the two enter the hallowed impala and drive off, a beat-up Chevelle following close behind. He turned back to look at his sleeping daughter, her face lax with sleep and chest slowly rising and falling peacefully. Puck laid on her legs, his big doe eyes keeping watch over her.
The Winchesters...saw her as their little sister...

*What the, actual, fuck?!!*

---

New Harmony, Indiana, United States

**Countdown: ~2 minutes**

The plan was all falling apart.

They hauled ass and staked out the address, using Dean's new Damned ability to see a demon's true face to take out all the sentries they could see around the house. Ruby made an appearance not long after, somehow getting out of the devil's trap at the abandoned farm.

That's when it became clear that all the neighbors were meat suits for demons. Thankfully Bobby had great timing getting the holy water sprinklers working as Sam worked the lock to get into the house, keeping Lilith's army at bay.

Sam had been about to stab the sleeping little girl that Lilith was possessing with the demon killing knife but Dean grabbed his arm and stopped him as the girl woke up and screamed in terror.

Lilith was no longer in the girl.

They had quickly ushered the mom and the girl into the basement with the unconscious father, lining the door with a thick line of salt to keep them safe.

In the living room Sam confronted Ruby demanding what he needed to do to save Dean, despite Dean's protests.

"You had your chance. You can't just flip a switch. We needed time," Ruby stressed.

"Well, there's gotta be something. There's gotta be some way," Sam asked with a tremble in his voice, desperation clawing at his insides. "Whatever it is—I'll do it!"

Dean heard enough and grabbed him to turn him around to face him.

"Don't—Dean! I-I'm not gonna let you go to Hell, Dean!" Sam yelled, struggling against his brother as he was made to face him.

"Yes, you are!" Dean shouted back. "Yes, you are," Dean told him firmly looking in his littler brother's eyes, both their chests rising and falling quickly.

"I'm sorry. I mean, this is all my fault," he self-flagellated. "I know that. But what you're doing, it's not gonna save me. It's only gonna to kill you."

Sam breathed heavily through his nose looking helplessly at his brother, "Then what am I supposed to do?"

Dean looked at him with sorry eyes, swallowing thickly, "Keep fighting. And take care of my wheels."

That got the smallest smile out of Sam.
Dean's voice filled with emotion as he continued after a brief moment, "Sam, remember what Dad taught you, okay? And remember what I taught you." Both their lips were quivering, trying to keep it together as the clock began to chime.

12:00am

"And if you ever run into Goldy look after her, yeah? Same way I did for you," Dean chuckled hollowly. "God knows she needs someone watching her ass."

"Y-yeah," Sam choked out with a nod.

They turned to look at the clock. Time was up. Sam looked at him with tear filled eyes; Dean gave him one last forced smile.

"I'm sorry, Dean," Ruby said sounding genuinely apologetic. "I wouldn't wish this upon my worst enemy."

That's when the hellhound made its appearance with its growling and snarling. Dean turned and saw the grotesque hound.

"Hellhound," Dean stated quietly.

"Where?" Sam asked looking to where Dean was looking not seeing anything.

"There," Dean answered never taking his eyes off it as it took a threatening step through the archway.

The moment it made to lunge Dean started running, Sam and Ruby right behind him. They ran to the kitchen and barricaded the room with goofer dust. Dean went to the windows after securing the door, as Ruby approached Sam demanding the knife.

"Give me the knife. Maybe I can fight it off."

"What?" Sam looked at her confused.

"Come on!" she shouted impatiently. "That dust won't last forever." Dean had turned back towards them and was now looking at the demon's true face once more.

"Wait!" Dean called, stopping Sam from handing over the knife.

Ruby looked over Sam's shoulder, "Do you want to die?"

"Sam, that's not Ruby! That's not Ruby!" Dean warned.

'Ruby' sent Sam into the wall pinning him and forcing him to drop the knife, Dean was pinned down on the kitchen table.

Dean groaned as he lifted his head to look at Lilith, "How long you been in her?"

"Not long…but I like it," she said lightly as she looked down her new meat suit. When she looked back up again her eyes rolled back completely white, "It's all grown-up and pretty.

"And where's Ruby?" Sam asked as he struggled against his invisible binds.

Eyes rolled down back to normal, "She was a very bad girl, so I sent her far, far away." Her neck cracking horrible as she tilted her head to one side.
"You know, I should've seen it before. But you all look alike to me," Dean said with a pained smirk.

She rolled her eyes and turned to focus on Sam, "Hello Sam. I've wanted to meet you for a very long time." Lilith forcefully grabbed his face and kissed him. "Your lips are soft," she said breathily as Sam pointedly looked away from her, probably to keep from losing his lunch.

"All right so you have me," Sam moved his head out of her hand. "Let my brother go," he demanded.

"You want to bargain, you have to have something I want. Like that little half-breed Trickster friend of yours," her smile widened. "Daughter of Loki, god-level Trickster and one of the most powerful of all the Tricksters," she pressed her body against Sam's her mouth coming up to just under his ear. Sam turned his head away from her best he could.

"Oh all the fun I could have with her, while getting her Daddy to jump through any and every hoop I can imagine. Just to keep me from killing her," she chuckled dementedly as she stepped away from a very uncomfortable Sam.

Sam tried to keep his rising protective anger in check, his nostrils flaring as he tried to breath through it, knowing she was trying to get him riled up.

Dean had no such compulsions.

"You stay the fuck away from Goldy you demonic Hell-bitch!" Dean snarled viciously from the table, drawing Lilith's eyes to him.

Lilith sauntered over to the pinned Dean, walking her fingers up his chest leisurely. "You know, if you tell me where you stashed her I'd be more than willing to give you more time. You'll be down in Hell soon enough, but I can wait. But what I really want, is that baby Trickster."

Dean snorted as he kept straining against his own invisible and unmoving binds "Go to Hell, bitch."

"You first, puppy chow," Lilith said with a sickening smile as she walked back to the goofered door.

"Sic him boy," she broke the line and opened the door.

The hellhound rushed in snarling and pulled Dean to the floor.

Sam was forced to watch as his brother was torn apart by invisible claws.

"NOOOOOOO!"

May 3rd 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Morning...

Sunlight filtered through pale cream curtains, the beams shining in the face of a sleeping little Trickster, glinting off two gunmetal wristbands with intricate burnt gold patterns fastened around her wrists.
Maya shifted with a sigh that turned into the groan as the pesky light began rousing her from her deep slumber. Heavy eyes opened blearily, but quickly shut again as she turned her head away from the intrusive light and tried to burrow back under her blankets.

Puck, however, had other ideas. The little dog had sprung up from his spot near her feet at her familiar morning groan and immediately stuck a worried nose in her face.

"Puuuuuck noooooooo," Maya groaned as she tried to bring the blanket over her head to hide from a very determined dog. He didn't give up and managed to get under the blanket and attacked her face with relieved licks.

"Gah, stop! Okay! Okay! You win! I'm up!" she sputtered, sitting up and rubbing sleep from her eyes as Puck crawled in her lap nudging her free hand for pets. Maya sleepily complied and petted Puck's head and back, calming the little Jack Russell.

Maya gave a chuckle at the small dog, eyes still closed tiredly, "What's gotten into you Puck? You act like I wasn't going to wake up?" Puck looked at her and whined, butting his head in her hand for more pets.

Her mind felt foggy still as she finally opened her eyes and looked around the unfamiliar room and bed she'd found herself in. Before her addled mind could tell her to start worrying her Dad walked in. He was wearing deep red pyjama pants with black hearts all over them and a loose white tank that said 'I'll start tomorrow' and a line-art chocolate bar with a bite out of it.

"Morning Mint Chip," he greeted with a happy smile, a breakfast tray of assorted muffins in his hands. Gabriel used a foot to close the bedroom door before walking towards the king size bed and placing the muffin tray on the nightstand beside it. "How you feeling?" he asked cupping the sides of her face with his hands gently before squishing her cheeks forcing her to make a puckered fish-y face.

"Daaaaaaaad," Maya laughed as she extricated her face from his hands only to try and dodge one that went for her bedhead hair to try and mess it up even more. "I'm fine, just tired and…and a little confused. Where are we?"

"Gloversville, New York," Gabriel answered smiling as he perched at the edge of the bed. "This is the house I gave birth to you in," his smile turning reminiscent at the memory of her being this tiny beautiful little baby looking up at him with these big round gold eyes filled already with so much love and trust for him. Gabriel slung an arm around her shoulders to hug her to his side and give her temple an affectionate kiss.

"Really?" she said with a big yawn, something at the back of her mind started niggling. There was something important she wasn't remembering.

"Yeah. Gave birth to you in this very room. In fact…" Gabriel's smile turned mischievous, "this is the very bed I popped you out in."

It took a moment for the words to sink in, but, when they did, all the sleepy confusion was shoved aside by the overwhelming feeling of disgust that pushed its way to the forefront of her mind, waking her right up.

"WHAT?!" Maya shouted aghast jumping in her spot and disturbing poor Puck in her lap, who quickly vacated as she made to scramble out of the bed. "That's gross Dad! I slept in it!"

Gabriel laughed breathlessly as he grabbed his squirming daughter around her middle and dragged
her back with him as he flopped backwards further into the bed. Puck stayed a couple feet away, not wanting to get crushed by the two larger bodies.

"Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew," Maya protested as she tried to escape her Father's grip, even though she knew how futile it was. He was always way stronger than her.

"Oh relax," he chuckled curling around his daughter's back and cuddling her, happy to have her in his arms again. "I've long since magicked it clean. And this isn't even the same mattress anymore. You know I replace stuff if it's been a while."

Maya stopped her struggles and twisted in his grip to face him with an unimpressed glare, "You couldn't have told me that first?"

Gabriel chuckled in amusement as he lovingly stroked some stray curls out of her face. "Now what fun would that be? Now, c'mon. Breakfast muffins!" he patted her shoulder and sat up, grabbing the tray and bringing it on the bed. Who cared about crumbs in bed when with a snap of fingers they'll just disappear?

Puck took that as his cue to mosey on over to mooch off his less than conventional family.

"Here's some more dog friendly muffins boy," Gabriel put a plate that had some smaller more lumpy and meaty smelling muffins on them. "Peanut butter, liverwurst, and bacon muffins," Gabriel and Maya laughed as Puck all but launched himself at his breakfast treat.

*Best family ever!*

Puck was a very happy doggo.

When Maya reached for a double chocolate muffin that's when she noticed the gunmetal and burnt gold metal wristbands on her arms. Her eyebrows furrowed in confusion. *When did she get these?*

"Dad…what—?" she asked haltingly as her Dad took a bite out of a blueberry muffin.

"Mmm!" her Dad held up a finger asking for a moment while he swallowed. "Breakfast first. We'll get to those later," they were having a nice morning so far and…Gabriel didn't want it to end yet. He could tell her memory of the previous day's events hadn't exactly caught up with her yet. Probably from the lack of solid food from being knocked out for a good 10-12hrs. He'd made sure she didn't have an episode of hypoglycemic shock, but it was better for her to get real nutrients.

Or, well, sugar at least.

Maya nodded and chomped down on her own muffin, the expression on her face one of immense enjoyment.

Maya enjoyed the quiet morning, snorting and almost choking as her Dad would say or do something that had her laughing, or Puck would try to snitch bits of their muffins having finished his own.

But that nagging feeling returned at the back of her mind, that she was ignoring something important; something devastatingly and *horribly important*. Something she might not want to touch yet. As her blood sugar levels evened out the slight fog of confusion was lifting from her mind.

*Wasn't she supposed to be in trouble with her Dad?*

*Wasn't she trying to help someone?*
A feeling of dread settled in her chest, a feeling of... *being too late.*

*What? Too late for what?*

Everyone turned their head when a cellphone buzzed twice on the wooden nightstand on the other side of the bed.

It was Maya's.

Maya snapped her fingers and her phone was in her hand telling her she had a new text message. Gabriel watched with an apprehensive frown, having an idea of who the messages were from and what they were about.

*2 new messages from The Hunters' Brain (Bobby)*

**THB:** *Figured you're awake by now.*

**THB:** *Dean's gone.*

Memories of the previous day and all the emotions accompanying them hit her like a freight train straight to the chest.

She just stared at the phone screen intently not realizing that it was shaking in her hands, or that silent tears started falling down her cheeks. Only when her Dad brought her into his chest, wrapping his arms around her heaving shoulders did she make a muffled sound into his chest.

A sound Gabriel never wanted to hear come out of his daughter's mouth.

A muffled wail filled with so much pain, grief, and heartbreak, that Gabriel felt the raw emotions brush against his grace like a cheese grater.

Gabriel frowned as he felt his own eyes becoming moist as he tightly held his sobbing baby. He didn't shed a tear as his grace kept the emotions Maya was somehow projecting to him from feeling them completely, or being overwhelmed by them.

*'Well that's new,'* Gabriel thought. The projected emotions weren't... *strong?* No, Maya definitely felt strongly over the loss of the older Winchester, it was the projecting that wasn't strong enough to affect him too much. The fact she was able to get his eyes moist was... *impressive.* It spoke of all the hidden power she had locked away under her skin, hidden within her soul.

Still felt like sandpaper chaffing against his grace though, begging to be heard, to be felt, *to be understood.*

Gabriel ignored the chaffing as he tried to soothe his distraught child, kissing the top of her head, and humming low in his throat a lullaby he used to sing to her when she was small.

Maya clung desperately to her Dad as her sobbing became intermittent, his loving and strong warmth slowly calming her. The pain in her chest, the feeling of loss didn't ease but it didn't feel like she was *barely catching her breath* before she was letting out another sob anymore.

The pain would throb every time Dean's last words echoed loudly in her mind.

*'Thanks Sis.*'

Maya keened over the loss of her recently recognized big brother.
And the guilt of realizing it a little bit too late.
Gabriel walked around the small suburban town's downtown center watching people go on about their business like the world wasn't on a damn timer for the end of the world.

With Dean in Hell it wasn't a matter of if he broke, but when. For when a Righteous Man goes to Hell and sheds blood the first seal will be broken. The first of 66 needed to pop big bro Luci out of the Cage and bring about the Apocalypse.

And Dean-o? He was that prophesized Righteous Man.

Gabriel sighed heavily as he snapped his fingers and a guy who was coming on a little too strongly to some poor uninterested girl suddenly found that his pants just wouldn't stay up. The guy's reaction should've gotten a little snort of amusement from him at the very least, but Gabriel just wasn't feeling it.

His mind kept drifting back to his daughter who had barely left the house since he brought her back. Finding out about Dean's death all but squashed the light in her eyes.

Now she just kind of moped around looking lost with Puck following at her heels with worried eyes. Still better than when she refused to do anything but lay in bed most of the day with intermittent episodes of crying for the first couple of weeks.

Don't get Gabriel wrong. He loved his daughter, more than anything. He just needed a minute from the depressive mood she was extruding. It was hard watching her go through this.

Besides, he needed to finalize some things around town.

Walking into the local park he zeroed in on a specific tree. It wasn't grand or anything, and no special feature to it that made it particularly stand out from all the other trees in the park. It was completely innocuous.

That's why it was perfect as one of the markers for a special warding spell he worked on after he
knew Maya wasn't going to disappear on him right away and was squirrelled away safely in their heavily warded house. Her grief sucked out any and all energy she had at being rebellious, and any inclination of trying to pull a Houdini. Didn't even protest her punishment with the power suppression wristbands, which sent his worry up a notch.

She'd never been one to just roll over and accept something, and even when she did it was usually from extenuating circumstances. Even then, she'd let everyone and everything know that she didn't like it.

Now? Just a weary sigh and noncommittal shrug.

Walking around the tree out of view he moved some bush branches to look at some symbols neatly cut and burned into the bark near its base. Gabriel uttered an old spell, the symbols lighting up briefly before disappearing.

With a snap of his fingers Gabriel was at another marker on the outskirts of Gloversville. He easily used his powers to move the dumpster against the restaurant just enough to see the same symbols again, whisper the spell, cue glowing, then moving the dumpster back.

Gabriel would pop up at eight other points, either on the outskirts or closer to the middle. If it was all plotted on a map and the dots all connected you'd find a giant star. A marker for every point and intersecting line.

There's a reason the pentagram was a big thing in religions concerning demons around the world after all.

Gabriel sighed as the last marker lit up and dimmed again. He felt the warding covering the town, completely solidify. No more power-ups needed to keep it standing.

As long as no demon found its way past the warding, this was now a demon-free and demon-proofed town. The only way a demon was finding its way in, and any where near his daughter, was if some bored misguided spouse or rebellious teen decided to be stupid enough to summon one.

Or a witch, but he already sent out his feelers and got a negative on that front. No pings on black magic radar to be found.

This should keep Maya safe from Lilith's clutches. Now to figure out how to get her out of this funk.

Back at the house…

Maya
Maya watched unseeingly at the TV in the living room. She wasn't even sure what she was watching exactly, it was just moving shapes and white noise at the moment. She tried paying attention, but her mind drifted back to the older brother figure she lost.

She knew she could've helped. Could've done something to tip the scales enough to give Sam and Dean a better opening at getting that knife into Lilith's chest.

But Dean made sure she couldn't. And of course he gets her right in the heart as he told her how he saw her. As his sister, as family.

*Thanks, Sis.*

Tears pricked at her eyes. Maya shut them tight and tried to take calming breaths, she was tired of crying. Tired of grieving. Grieving for someone that she didn't realize, till the end, how she actually saw them as.

Dean being her big womanizing, pie loving, 80's rock snob of an older brother, and Sam as her nerdy, gigantic, puppy-in-a-man-suit second older brother, who was every bit the middle child with his fed up exasperation between Maya and Dean's antics.

That's why it hurt when Sam wouldn't reply to any of her voicemails or texts.

Instead of one brother, she seemed to have lost two that night.

Maya knew Sam had to be hurting something fierce. She'd only really gotten to know Dean over a couple of months, where as Sam spent most of his life by his brother's side. If she felt this awful Sam must be in his own league of pain and grief.

She had hoped that maybe they could help each other through this, but Sam seemed pretty set on not talking to her.

Maya's lips trembled as more tears welled up in her eyes, beginning to fall without her consent.

*Did Sam blame her for Dean's death? Did she not work hard enough at the research? At the translations?*

Misplaced guilt churned in her chest like a poison, her throat choking back a sob.

*Did he hold it against her that she wasn't strong enough to be of more help? That they had to waste precious time to stop so her Dad could come get her?*
Puck whined pitifully beside her, nudging her hand to start petting him, to be a distraction. She did, and she began to focus on the warm little body pressed against her thigh. Taking comfort in the rhythmic petting and soft sleek fur.

As her tears dried up, leaving red-rimmed eyes and irritated splotches on her face, and her breathing evened out she asked Puck, "Do you think Sam blames me for not being able to save Dean and that's why he's not talking to me?"

Puck perked his head up looking up at his Mistress with a look that told her of how stupid he thought the question was, and then gave a definitive shake of his head. Sam may not be his favorite human in the world, but the little dog could appreciate the large male's actions in trying to watch out for his trouble prone Mistress. It helped that said male agreed with his deceased littermate when he proclaimed that they saw Maya as Pack, as another littermate. Even if she didn't see it at the time.

Puck stood up on his hind legs and proceeded to attack the side of her face with his tongue, licking away at all her sadness. And if he happened to get to taste the yumminess of salt stained skin, bonus.

For the first time in what seemed like forever, Maya gave a small chuckle and an even smaller smile. She wrapped her arms around the small dog, dragging him into her lap and hugging him to her chest and bringing one hand up to scratch behind his ears.

"Thanks Puck. You're the best," she nuzzled the little terrier's neck fur with a slightly bigger smile as she felt and heard him sigh distinctively in knowing smugness.

Puck knew he was, and he was glad to offer his Mistress some balm for her hurts. Soothe some of her emotional pain that'd been rolling off her for weeks now. Puck remained on her lap, lying down as he was released from her hug. He enjoyed the feel of a gentle hand running down his back, scratching behind his ears or under his jaw periodically.

He especially enjoyed the calm serene scent she was now exuding; the sadness was still there but was less pungent now.

What he didn't like? Her picking up her phone and hitting the dial button. Puck picked up his head to give her a disapproving look. If Sam was going to be a jerk his Mistress should stop wasting her time trying to get in touch with him.

Maya caught the look her dog was sending her and gave him a sheepish smile, "I know, I know. But...this is the last message. I'll leave it to Sam to get in touch with me. If he doesn't I—I guess that's that." Her smile turned sad as she held the device to the side of her head.
Weary sadness hit her like a wall as it kept ringing before it went straight to voice mail.

"Hey Sam. It's Maya…again. Listen…"

Puck heaved a sigh as he listened to his Mistress give one final heartfelt message to the older brother figure, one that seemed to have decided she wasn't worth talking to anymore.

Puck decided if he ever saw the large male again he'd bite him hard enough to draw blood…or pee on him.

Sam was on his Shit List again the moment more tears fell from Maya's eyes as she finished the message.

June-ish 2008, Middle of NoWhere, Random State, United States

Abandoned Gas Station at Dirt Crossroads

Late at night…

Sam

Sam was hurting. Hurting bad. He was also really really pissed off…and pretty damn drunk if his nth liquor bottle was anything to go by. Not only was he grieving over the loss of his brother, and suffering survivor's guilt from being alive, and having Dean's soul currently residing in Hell…but he also felt guilty about Maya as well.

He'd promised Dean that he'd watch out for her. She was their friend, their honorary little sister, and…he couldn't bring himself to contact her, answer her calls and messages.

Couldn't step up and be the big brother she needed. The one Dean asked of him to be in one of his final moments.

Sam had missed her first call a week after Dean's death, so he had listened to the voicemail. He had found tears falling down his cheeks as he placed a hand over his mouth to contain the sad laughter trying to escape him.

Maya had attempted to make a joke, obviously as a way to try and cheer the both of them up for a moment.

And, God, did she sound like Dean, in that moment.

Pain and loss had lanced through his heart like a surgeon's knife, and he couldn't bring himself to call her back. As days dragged into weeks he had read and listened to every text and voicemail she had left for him.
His guilt growing with every passing message he didn't answer as his mind and heart focused on the fact that Maya was so much like his brother it was painful, because she wasn't him. Sam knew he couldn't handle talking to her without feeling like he'd break down at any given moment. It never occurred to Sam that she might be able to help him up afterwards.

Now he might never realize it. Not only did he lose his brother, but now he was pushing everyone he cared about away. First Bobby, now Maya if her last voicemail was anything to go by.

The heavy guilt that tore through him didn't help whatever resistance he might've had to getting plastered this night. Didn't help that even inebriated it kept playing through his mind.

"Hey Sam. It's Maya…again. Listen…I-I don't know what I did to make you not want to talk to me anymore, but…but I'm sorry. I'm-I'm so sorry I wasn't strong enough to help save Dean. An-and I don't blame you for being mad at me for it. M-maybe…maybe if I did fewer pranks and worked on my abilities more I…I could've done more.

"What…whatever the reason you're not answering my messages or texts you don't have to worry about me spamming you with more. This…this is the last one. I…I can't keep waiting for you to call back so we can help each other through this.

"I'm…I'm sorry I can't do more Sam. I really am. Didn't realize it till after but…(sigh) Sam, if you ever want to talk I'm here. Just remember that you're not the only one who lost a big brother that night.

"And for fuck's sake don't do anything stupid. I'm already feeling like I lost two brothers instead of one. Please don't make the second loss a permanent one, yeah? I...(choked sigh) good-bye Sammy."

By the time the voicemail was done playing Sam's heart was twisting and turning in guilt, and anger at him self. God, he was shit at being a big brother. Instead of immediately calling Maya back, he saw one of the whiskey bottles he'd bought earlier and started drinking.

And now here he was. A dirt crossroads in a no name county in the middle of nowhere, dead of night, in a state he couldn't even remember anymore, digging a hole with his bare hands.

He needed his brother back. Hell, just out of Hell, a straight trade. Sam for Dean. And he was ready to deal for him. Why not? Lilith wanted him dead anyways.

Sam shoved the box into the hole and started filling it back in, mostly. He staggered to his feet, a tight grasp on the whiskey bottle he'd gotten on the way over, and kicked more dirt into the hole with his shoes.

And waited for a demon to show up.

When it didn't show right away he started shouting angrily for the demon to show up. After angrily throwing the mostly empty liquor bottle in anger he sees a smartly dressed man under the lone antique streetlight at the side of the old fuel stop.

 Needless to say, the demon wasn't going to deal. Something about having Dean right where they wanted him.
Furious, Sam stabbed the bastard with the demon-killing knife then stumbled back to the impala dejected.

When he got back to his motel room he wasn't expecting the welcoming committee that was Ruby and some other no-name demon. Or Ruby saving him by driving the knife into the other demon.

They fled the no-name motel in the impala, but when Ruby couldn't offer the one thing he wanted most, and that she hijacked some poor secretary, he ditched her. He made sure the possessed woman got to the cops so she could go home once Ruby left her body.

June-ish 2008, Small Town, Random State, United States

Old Abandoned House

Couple days later…

Sam

Sam had thought he made it clear he was done with the she-demon.

Not clear enough, apparently.

Ruby had found him again after grabbing a coma patient, and was offering something else that he didn't know that he wanted.

Revenge on Lilith.

"You want me to use my psychic whatever," Sam stated plainly to Ruby's claim of getting revenge on Lilith.

Ruby sighed and started, "Look, I know that it spooks you—"

Sam barely needed to think about it. Lilith was the reason Dean was dead. She was still a threat, not just to him, but to Maya as well.

"Skip the speech. I'm ready," Sam interrupted. If he can't get Dean back then he as sure as hell was going to make sure that bitch didn't get to keep walking the earth. Prowling for his head, and looking to add his little sister to her deadly schemes.

"Let's go," he said with a smirk at the surprised demon.

"And for fuck's sake, don't do anything stupid," Maya's voice rang in his head as his conviction solidified.
'Sorry Maya,' Sam thought as he listened to Ruby's demands of patience and sobriety if she was going to teach him anything. 'Once Lilith's gone I'll make it up to you. Promise.'

---

**Early July-ish 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States**

Gabriel and Maya decided to have a movie day. A Disney movie day with a plethora of snacks, pizza and the all-important popcorn that Maya would hog protectively. Surprisingly it was Maya's idea. Over the last couple of weeks she'd been slowly coming out of her melancholy. She'd get a sad look to her every now and then, even devolve into sniffing tears sometimes, but it was a far cry from the body shaking sobs she used to do.

Gabriel was just happy she was moving on and smiling more. He sighed contentedly as they curled up on the couch in the living room watching the *nth* movie of the day, and one of their favorites.

*Tarzan*

It was an awesome movie and the soundtrack totally made it.

Though Gabriel could do without the jaguar getting the baby gorilla when it wandered off while its parents had been sleeping.

It…it was a situation he never wanted to experience himself. To look away for one second too long to find Maya missing and some supernatural, or human, nasty getting her. Permanently taking her away from him.

He was also pretty sure that jaguar was a demon in disguise. Although he may be projecting a bit given *Lilith wants his baby*.

The movie gets to the part where Kerchak rejects baby Tarzan as his son, but lets him stay for Kala. Then his favorite song in the movie started playing. Gabriel turned his head to look at his daughter with a wide grin.

Maya caught his look and rolled her eyes at him, "Dad, no."

Gabriel's grin grew wider, "Dad, yes."

"Dad, just let the movie—" Maya started but her Dad had already paused it. "We can never watch this movie without you singing it first, huh?" she finished wryly, but her small fond smile betrayed how she truly felt. She always enjoyed hearing him sing, doesn't mean she won't protest when it interrupts a movie though.

"Nope!" he chirped. "It only plays the whole song at the end!"

"Then wait till the end," Maya countered.
"Can't wait that long and besides it's practically our father/daughter song! I can't *not* sing it!"

Maya just shook her head leaning on her side of the couch's armrest, eyes not looking in his direction. Gabriel just took that as his cue to go ahead.

Besides, he knew how much she loved his singing.

~Come stop your crying

It will be all right

Just take my hand

And hold it tight

I will protect you

From all around you

I will be here

Don't you cry~

.".

"Not crying," Maya interjected, a soft smile pulling at the corner of her lips, but still not looking at him. It just spurred the Dad in him on.

.".

~For one so small~

.".

"Practically the same height," Maya huffed, Gabriel didn't even pause as he continued as though she hadn't said a word. Smiling at her lovingly, still waiting for her to turn her head. He knew the urge to join in was building.

.".

~You seem so strong

My arms will hold you,

Keep you safe and warm

This bond between us

Can't be broken

I will be here

Don't you cry~
"Still not crying," another smile was pulling at her lips, her head tilting in his direction slightly.

~'Cause you'll be in my heart
Yes you'll be in my heart
From this day on~

"Thought I was the minute you were preggers with me," she sassed cheekily not looking at him still, earning a playful swat against her shoulder from Gabriel with a mock frown.

~Now and forever more
You'll be in my heart
No matter what they say
You'll be in my heart
Always~

Gabriel put all his unconditional love in that last word, finally getting Maya to look at him. He reached across the couch to pull her to his side, meeting little resistance as she sighed and leaned into him. His arm draped around her shoulders, his hand fiddling with her dark curls.

~Why can't they understand the way we feel
They just don't trust what they can't explain
I know we're different, but deep inside us
We're not that different at all~

Gabriel paused in his singing a moment, "C'mon soft serve. You know you want too~" He felt Maya snort into his shoulder, slinging an arm over his chest in a loose hug.

~And you'll be in my heart
Yes you'll be in my heart
From this day on
Now and forever more
Don't listen to them
'Cause what do they know?
We need each other, to have, to hold
They'll see in time, I know
When destiny calls you, you must be strong
I may not be with you
But you got to hold on
They'll see in time, I know
We'll show them together~
.
Gabriel placed a kiss to her temple, his lips moving as he continued to sing.
.
~'Cause you'll be in my heart
Believe me you'll be in my heart~
.
Maya finally gave in and continued for him. He listened to her lighter voice, letting it wash over him. Definitely got his talent when it came to singing.
.
~I'll be there from this day on
Now and forever more
You'll be in my heart
No matter what they say
You'll be in my heart
Always~
.
Gabriel's voice mingled in harmony with her's (bolded) as they kept singing together.
.
~Always I'll be with you
Gabriel let out a content sigh as Maya stayed snuggled into his side, relaxed with her own content smile. Having enjoyed his singing, and singing with him.

After all, God's Messenger had to have an awesome singing voice right? Shame Heaven always thought it was Luci who was singing. Because, why wouldn't God's favorite and most radiant son not also have the best singing voice? Gabriel never regretted letting his brother lip sync his true voice whenever they were supposed to sing with the choirs all those epochs ago. He loved his brothers, despite their dick-ish qualities and stick up the ass personalities.

"How you feeling kiddo?" he asked, his thumb rubbing her shoulder comfortably.

"Not…as sad," Maya answered with a tired exhale through her nose. "Still hurts though."

"I know," Gabriel hummed. "Disney help?"

Maya gave him a breathless chuckle, "Yeah. Disney always helps."

"Should've started off with intense Disney therapy in the beginning then," Gabriel snorted as he took the remote and hit play, finally letting Tarzan continue.

They were quiet as the watched Tarzan's montage into young adulthood, becoming stronger, smarter, and faster.

"Dad?"

"Hmm?" Gabriel hummed.

"Am I still grounded?"

"Oh-ho yeah apple pie," Gabriel scoffed. "Grounded till I say otherwise."

Maya released an annoyed groan, but didn't say anything further or pull away as she became
entranced in watching the movie she'd had to have seen a hundred times over. Gabriel smiled at her mild protest, glad some of her spark was returning. Not looking forward to her complaining about the power suppressing wristbands, but it was better than her uncharacteristically accepting them with no protest.

July-ish 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Grocery Store

Gabriel finally needled Maya into leaving the house outside of taking Puck out to the back yard for games of fetch. Figured something easy like grocery shopping might work. You know, something 'normal' people do. Doubled that it helped them blend in a little bit more. He'd heard whispers around that people have been wondering about who moved into the 'spunky-little-pregnant-woman's' old house.

Oh yes. Gabriel had definitely made an impression all those years ago.

They walked in, Puck following in his little medical vest so he didn't have to wait outside. Gabriel grabbed a cart and they started walking the aisles, Maya giving the cart contemplative side glances.

Gabriel pretended not to notice as they casually looked around the first aisle. Didn't even make it all the way down it before Maya gave up whatever impulse she was trying to suppress.

"Screw it," Maya muttered under her breath, getting Gabriel to stop the pretty empty cart and hopped in, sitting cross-legged and smiling childishly back at him.

"Aren't you a bit old for cart rides?" he asked leaning on the cart handed, propping his head up with one hand and smiling indulgently down at her.

Maya's grin widened, that little spark of mischief returning for a moment in her eyes. "And not ride in style throughout the store? Please," she snorted. "Besides, I'm not the one who's over, what? However-many-millennia-old and is just jealous that they didn't think of the idea first? You and I both know you'd totally be in here instead if I hadn't gotten in first."

Gabriel laughed as he straightened up and continued pushing the cart down the aisle. He looked over at the little dog following along, "You wanna join her boy?"

Puck looked up and snorted at him. No thanks.

They all walked (Gabriel and Puck) around the store garnering odd looks from the other customers, and some derisive laughter from the handful of teens there, that were promptly ignored. Who cared what they thought? Maya didn't. Gabriel though might've been tempted to tie their laces together in gorgon knots. No punk ass teens were going to laugh at his kid! A pointed look from Maya kept
the urge at bay.

"'Cause, you know, trying to blend in. He did it anyways. No one can prove anything!

They paused in the canned food section looking around boredly. Gabriel turned to peer at the items surrounding his lazy child and frowned.

"Did we forget to get the sugar laced box of breakfast cocaine in a bowl?" he asked looking for one of the sugary cereals they normally get. Well, he liked getting. Maya was content with boring Rice Crispies and Honey-nut Cheerios.

Maya twisted in her seat looking around her at the other items in the cart with her, "Yeah. Think we did. You can always snap some up when we get home you know."

Her Dad scoffed at her, "Nah, it's the principle of the thing, I'll run over and grab it quick." He then booped her nose causing her to cross her eyes and scrunching her nose as she leaned her head away, "Don't go anywhere!"

With that her Dad disappeared into the grocery store ether. Maya sighed as she leaned against the crisscrossed metal of the cart, tilting her head back over the edge, eyes closed. Puck had clamored underneath the cart to lie across the lower metal shelf. She felt her magical sense dim as her Dad walked out of range and the accompanying twinge on her wrists from the, now, magically concealed wristbands.

"Aren't you a little old to be sitting in carts like this?" the young female voice inquired curiously. The sudden voice caused Maya to jump and sit up straight, turning around to stare wide-eyed at the blonde teenage girl smirking at her with her own shopping cart.

Maya's face heated up a little bit. She expected the odd starring, and the possibly giggles from teens who considered themselves a safe distance away, but she did not expect to be approached by one of them.

Let alone this pretty blonde with dark blue eyes.

"Um...I do what I want?" Maya's voice lilting up a little, making her statement more of a question. She coughed nervously, "Sorry. I, uh, I mean that I don't really care if I'm too old or not. It's fun and makes me happy, y'know?"

She chuckled, "Yeah. I guess you're right. Name's Tracy, what's yours?" Tracy looked at her with a charming smile. Maya was unfamiliar with the way her ears felt like they were burning a little.

"Um, Maya. The doggo below me is Puck," she pointed down.

Tracy pursed her brows and bent over to see the small Jack Russell that was Puck looking back at her intently. She smiled at him, "Aw, he's cute." Tracy went to reach her hand out to him, but Puck
gave an uncertain warning growl.

Maya tensed at the sound. Puck only did that to people he didn't like. He seemed to pick-up on something about Tracy that was sending warning alarms off in his little brain, although Maya could hear he wasn't certain as to what.

Tracy frowned, pulling her hand back and straightening up, "Guess he doesn't like me huh?"

"Don't take it personal. He's just like that, picky about who can pet him," Maya told her, trying to ignore the way Tracy smiled in understanding, making her seem even prettier. Her Dad might be a little too far for her to peer into the girl's heart and soul, but she kept Puck's uncertain warning in mind.

"I'll take your word for it," she hummed, her eyes trailing over Maya. Maya shifted a little uncomfortably, mentally scolding her body, as it seemed to forget her dog's warning and heat up from the other girl's stare. She was feeling kind of conflicted.

On the one hand: a pretty person checking her out. The other? Puck sensed something off about said person.

Tracy leaned over her cart, smiling a little demurely. "So, you here with your parents? I assumed since I don't think you can push the cart with you still in it like that," she finished with a chuckle.

"Yeah. My Dad," Maya answered, and then asked in return, "You?"

"Just me. I'm an emancipated teen. I support myself and live…on my own," she smiled, the implication hanging in the air. Maya could feel the heat creeping up her neck and burning her ears. "Maybe we can hang out sometime? Maybe at my place?" Tracy asked a tad flirtatiously, but Puck growled again with more volume and vigor.

He did not like that idea. Something about the teen was off. Puck wasn't completely sure what it was but he didn't want his Mistress 'hanging out' with this chick.

Maya was about to decline when her senses turned on and the itch in her wrists disappeared. She turned to see her Dad sauntering over with his arms laden with various cereal boxes. Of course he over did it.

Maya turned back to Tracy to tell her no when a piece of paper was shoved in her face. Surprised, she took it and looked dumbfounded at the numbers scrawled on it.

"Call me sometime. I'd love to get to know you better," Tracy said smiling, before turning away with her cart heading the other direction as her Dad approached. Maya watched her turn the aisle corner and out of view, uncertain of what she just experienced.
"Hey," her Dad greeted with a smile as he dropped the cereal boxes into her lap. "Who was that?" he inquired curiously.

"Um, either a girl wanting to be my friend or a girl wanting to get into my pants. She gave me her number," Maya answered dumbly as she held up the piece of paper.

Gabriel sputtered as he looked at his daughter in shock. He did not expect that to happen on a trip to the grocery store.

"I don't know whether to be happy you're making a potential friend, or worried you have unintentional game," he chuckled as he started pushing the cart again, Puck still on the small shelf underneath hitching a ride. "Well, what do you want her to be?"

"I don't know!" Maya said, her cheeks warming. "She's pretty but...I don't know!" Maya sputtered embarrassed. Unsure how to feel about the pretty blonde presumably flirting with her and knowing Puck sensed something off about her as well. Maybe she wasn't as nice as she seemed and that's what got Puck nervous about her?

Gabriel raised an amused eyebrow at her, "You know I don't care if you like the same gender, right? I'd be one hell of a hypocrite if I did."

"I know! I know! I just...I just don't know! I-I don't want to start anything without being able to see her. Ya know? Like I used to," she muttered sullenly. At least then she might've been able to understand Puck's hesitancy towards the seemingly friendly blonde teen.

Her Dad heaved a heavy sigh, "I know kiddo, but you brought that on yourself. Besides, think of it as an opportunity to get to know someone the old fashion way. Take the risk to feel them out." He stopped the cart and poked her forehead to get her to look up at him, "You and I both know that that ability only shows some things. Not everything."

"I know. Its just Puck isn't too sure about her and I'm not sure why so...?" she gave a pouty shrug.

There was a beat of silence between them as Gabriel digested the new bit of information that Puck, a very special dog wasn't sure about someone.

"Riiiiiiight," Gabriel drawled looking a little concerned. "Listen to Puck then," Puck gave a smug yip to that. "But reserve full judgment till you know her better. Puck might've not liked how strong she might've come on to you, and that's all that's setting him off," Puck barked once in disagreement.

Gabriel rolled his eyes at the little dog and told him, "I'm not saying don't be cautious, just that she shouldn't write someone off until she's sure."

Puck grumbled lowly, unconvinced.
Maya scratched the back of her head, "I guess. Not all that different when looking for deserve dicks to do our tricks on."

"Exactly," Gabriel nodded smiling at her, ending conversation as he pushed the cart. He waited a couple of minutes before his gaze fell mischievously on his little Trickster.

"So she's pretty is she? Does this mean you're a lesbian? Bi-curious? Straight, but with exceptions? Other?" he asked, grinning widely as Maya's cheeks flushed and she groaned in annoyance.

"Wha?! I don't know!" Maya blurted out, her face flaming red once more in embarrassment. "I-I just said she's pretty looking. Doesn't mean I want to go out with her!"

"Huh uh," Gabriel hummed not believing that completely, but enjoying the flustered face she was making too much. "All right, all right, I was just asking since your face was going pretty red there. And besides, I should be hip to what my mini-me's going through," he teased, nothing but understanding and kindness in his tone.

Maya raised a disbelieving eyebrow at him, "Hip? Damn you're old." She sent the playful quip to hide the twinge in her heart at being called his mini-me. Sam and Dean used to joke about whether or not she was either Sam or Dean's mini-me. Maya couldn't remember if they ever settled on her being a mini-female-Dean or not.

"Odin's old. I'm young," Gabriel clarified, even if—technically speaking—the opposite was true.

"Noooo," Maya denied with a shake of her head. "You're old, and he's ancient."

Gabriel huffed good-naturedly as they continued shopping. Both sending quips and playful barbs at each other.

Only when the shopping cart was filling up did Maya finally leave the cart. She was careful not to crush some of the more crushable items. She also took over pushing the cart so she could give it a shove and hitch a ride down the aisle for a few feet every now and then.

They finally made it to the check out, unloading the cart on the conveyor belt, and Gabriel giving friendly smiles to the young man at the cashier as they talked. It wasn't lost on either Maya or Gabriel that the housewives behind them were listening intently to the conversation. Trying to garner some insight into their new neighbors.

A mysterious man who seemed to spend all his time at home with no indication of a job moves into town, and then a few months later a young girl was all of a sudden living with him. It was very suspicious.

"So, I've seen you around town but uh," the young man started as he looked from Gabriel to Maya, "I don't think I've seen you before."

Maya regarded him with a shrug as she continued reloading the shopping cart with their bagged purchases. "Been staying at my Pa's place working through some stuff," Maya answered blandly. "Dad here dragged me back."
Gabriel rolled his eyes at her, "'Cause you were getting into trouble, despite his best efforts to keep you out of it." It wasn't untrue.

He'd called a grief stricken Bobby for an explanation and through the drunken slur he'd pieced together that Maya had pushed her way into being taken along for the ride. Poor Bobby just wasn't equipped to handle a young headstrong Trickster. And that it was his fear of Maya getting into more trouble trying to follow that had him taking her with him to begin with.

Of course, some of the women behind them however couldn't keep from blurting out things like, "You have two fathers?!/You're gay? But you have a child!/Do you not have a mother?/He's your Dad?"

Gabriel rolled his eyes at that last one. *Of course he was!*

"I know, I know. I'm too young and good looking to be a Dad, but I am," he said with a lopsided grin. "The other guy's a family friend that strudel here sees as another parental figure. No mother or mother figure in the picture, and to answer the question about my sexuality?" Gabriel turned to waggle his eyebrows suggestively at the young male cashier, purring, "*I bend all kinds of ways.*"

The poor guy's face turned a deep red colour that travelled down his neck as he stammered out, "I- I'm sorry b-but I'm straight, sir." The other patrons that overheard looked scandalized.

Before her Dad could make another possibly flirtatious comment Maya stepped over and wacked him on the arm, "Dad, put it away. I don't need to see you get your… flirt on with anything that has two legs and moves."

"Fine! Fine! I'll behave," Gabriel said placating with an eye roll before looking back at the nervous cashier. "Lighten up man. Just having a little fun, but sorry anyways for making you uncomfortable. Not what I was going for," he gave the cashier the cash and him, Maya, and Puck left the store and loaded up the car.

They didn't comment on how the noise level in the store seemed to increase the moment the sliding doors shut behind them.

Neither noticed Tracy eyeing them either as they made their way to their parked car. Smiling gleefully as she imperceptibly caught some grocery bags disappear into thin air. Tracy toned down her smile into a pleasant grin as the Trickster and his spawn entered the car and drove away.

Good to know the *detect-me-not* hex bags were working perfectly, even on such a powerful being.

. .

Gabriel had pulled out of the parking lot, heading back to their house, when he looked over at Maya and said, "I think that first public appearance together went pretty well."
Maya huffed, but it quickly devolved into full-blown laughter.

"I can't believe...you said that to that poor guy!" she howled as she turned to face her Dad. "Did you see his face? He looked like you were gonna eat him!"

Gabriel chuckled, happy to hear his daughter laughing again. "Mm mm," he shook his head negatively. "If I was going to eat him it'd definitely be for dessert. With whip cream, cherries, and plenty of syrup slathered all over his—"

"Ew! Dad! I don't need mental visualizations of your sexcapades!" Maya interrupted with a groan, a smile still on her lips as she dearly wished for brain bleach to be an actual thing.

**Brain bleach...**her mind went to the reason why she came up with such a term to begin with.

_Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew!_

Her face scrunched up in disgusted horror. Maya scrubbed her face with her hands, as if it would erase the mental image.

Gabriel smiled at her with a raised eyebrow as they pulled into the driveway. "What are you thinking of that's making you pull that face?"

"Something I imagined while at Bobby's that I wish I hadn't," Maya groaned as she got out and then opened the door for Puck to hop out.

"Hmm," Gabriel hummed contemplatively. "It wouldn't have anything to do with you seeing Bobby as another Dad and my...sexual appetites?" his grin widened as Maya pulled another disgusted face at him.

"Oh man, please don't go there," Maya pleaded as she made to escape up the front porch steps into their house.

She could hear her Dad chuckle as he snapped his fingers, all the groceries undoubtedly in the fridge and kitchen cupboards now.

"I'll admit Hunter's a smart and handsome man. In a rugged and angry backwoods kind of way," he said loudly so Maya could hear him through the partially closed front door she had fled through.

Her Dad grinned at her as she turned around and opened it the rest of the way to point at him with a stern face, "Don't go there. Don't go there, Dad. I don't need the knowledge that an-an errant
thought might actually—"

Gabriel was absolutely brimming with mischief as he interrupted her with, "I'd tap that."

Maya's face went lax, some color draining from her face.

"Oh God," Maya muttered in quiet horror. She didn't need the confirmation! She didn't want to hear more of this. Maya turned around to flee further into the house.

"Wrong religion!" Gabriel laughed as he entered the house as his daughter fled from him in mortification. "Or I'd let him tap me! I'm not picky!" he said loudly, chuckling as Maya shouted back for him to shut up.

Gabriel looked down at the little Jack Russell that sat at his feet beside him and joked, "Was it something I said?"

Puck rolled his eyes and went off somewhere else in the house.

"Yeesh. Tough crowd," Gabriel snorted, happy things were slowly getting back to normal.

Well, their normal anyways.

Chapter End Notes

I know I know, not as long as I've been doing but it just ends so well here and I couldn't resist the chapter title. Also, the next sentence after this break, I think, is a good start off for next chapter. Ties them in a bit.

Also, warning, I've finally figured out how to reveal Maya's sperm donor after reading, you guessed it, Supernatural fanfiction and finding a lovely little section of time where our boys are being dicked around by the God squad. It's a beautiful idea sure to cause a lot of pain. Will be a while yet but so much better than making it another seal being broken.

Love all my loyal reviewers for last chapter (datajana & MLSummer17) and my newer ones (tolkienite23)! Thanks for all your support and reactions to my chapters! Always love knowing I make an impact in the feels department!
End of July-ish 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Two weeks later…

Of course their normal wouldn't last.

Gabriel could honestly say he did not expect the person that had showed up knocking on their front door one afternoon. He thought it might've been one of the house mom's on the street. Maya had made quite the impression on a lot of the stay at home moms when they decided to visit the nearby park last week. Playing with all the little kids, keeping them entertained and tiring them out.

He liked the way she'd smile at them with big joy filled smiles and getting lost in their nonsensical games. Kids were always a soft spot for her. The moms must've picked up on it like sharks and wounded prey, because Maya had been invited/kind-of-begged to come to the park again twice already to give them a break for an hour from running around after their little ones. It helped that the kids seemed to absolutely adore Maya and Puck.

So Gabriel fully expected Susan, or maybe Carroll (with the pretentious double R & L) to be on the other side of the door to see if Maya didn't mind coming to the park.

It was neither.

"Brother!" a loud jovial voice boomed once Gabriel was fully in view. The tall blonde man with bulging muscles smiled radiantly down at him as he held up Mjolnir. "I have found Mjolnir!" he said triumphantly, absolutely pleased with himself.

Gabriel looked at him in surprise then rolled his eyes in annoyance at the lumbering puppy of a Norse god, before promptly shutting the door in his face to contemplate how the hell Thor knew where he was.

Did he reveal the locations of some of his little hidey-holes in the US? He knew Thor knew about the one in Norway. Gabriel let him use it all the time, hence the ever-present Asgardian mead stashed away there.
Wait a minute; Thor had challenged him to a drinking game before he left Norway. He might've let something slip…

"Loki iiiii," Thor's muffled whine drifted through the door.

Gabriel leaned against the door pinching the bridge of his nose as he sighed heavily before opening the door to be assaulted by the big lug's puppy eyes.

"Really man? With the face?" Gabriel groaned exaggeratedly as he pretended to try and look away, squinting one eye closed but one still partially open.

"It is good to see you as well Loki," the puppy eyes faded, becoming jovial again. "You seem to be doing better. Has your little one returned home?" he inquired with open curiosity.

Gabriel's gold eyes flashed completely open as he looked penetratingly into the pagan's deep blue ones. Papa Bear Gabriel rearing its head.

Thor's eyes softened at Gabriel's look, knowing his 'brother' was debating whether to tell him more of the girl who was his 'niece'.

"I have told you brother," Thor said surprisingly gentle. "I mean my little niece no harm."

"I know Fabio, I know. And right now you're like the only one amongst our family and other godly friends I'd even consider letting anywhere near her," he sighed, still blocking the doorway into the house.

Not that Thor or any other supernatural being could get in without him tampering with the wards woven into the home.

Thor pursed his eyebrows in confusion, "So, why hide her from me? I do not understand."

"I told you, her pagan side isn't exactly—" Gabriel was cut off as Maya walked down the stairs and right into Thor's line of sight.
"Hey Dad, who's at the…door?" Maya asked hesitantly, seeing the large burly blonde man standing on the other side of her Dad, looking at her with a beaming smile and a very large hammer gripped casually in his hand.

"Hello, little one! I am your Uncle!" Thor greeted exuberantly with a booming voice.

Maya's eyes widened at the hulking god, "My…what?"

Gabriel starred, fed-up, at the sky with an exaggerated sigh, silently asking why this was happening. He knew he wouldn't get an answer, but hoped slightly that he would. Oh well.

Could be worse. Could be introducing her to her actual Uncles. So, was it sad that the Norse god of thunder had more potential for being a good Uncle than his actual archangel brothers?

"Sour Patch this is Thor. Your Uncle," Gabriel introduced motioning to the lumbering god as he moved aside so Maya could see him better. "Thor, this is my baby girl Maya—"

"Not a baby!" Maya indignantly corrected, but her Dad just continued like he didn't hear her, though the affectionate eye roll and smirking grin said otherwise.

"—your niece," he finished as his hand touched the wall beside the door, altering the wards slightly, allowing Thor to enter.

Puck, who had followed Maya down huffed at her feet, little eyes flicking to Gabriel then back onto Thor. He wasn't completely sold on the large blonde god, but nothing about him screamed threat, yet. Although a sky blue ring shone briefly around his pupils at the muscle bound god in clear warning, unbeknownst to his Mistress.

"And who is this tiny guardian at Little One's feet?" Thor asked as he tilted his head in acknowledgement at the tiny hound's warning as he tentatively stepped past the threshold, sensing the warding keeping him out dissipate. It was obvious that his brother had done something to the canine to better defend his vulnerable offspring. Although, if the dog's glare at being referred to as tiny was anything to go by it might be wise not to comment on the dog's stature in the future. Who knew what his brother did to the diminutive dog.

Maya frowned at being referred to as Little One, much like Puck she didn't like being called small. She was pretty much fully grown and definitely not little. She was average height, thank you very much! It just made her sound vulnerable, and weak.
Gabriel watched the interaction with careful but amused eyes, ready to intervene should Thor make a threatening move. He doubted it since the taller blonde's body language was completely relaxed and face held nothing but innocent curiosity. Unlike the real Loki, or Loki's other brother Baldur, Thor was never one for subtlety or deception.

The god tended to be unwittingly blunt, with no mouth filter for his thoughts, and was honest in his intentions...even when he shouldn't be.

"His name's Puck," Maya answered, as said canine huffed in agreement, and gave a signature angry-kitten-glare to the burly god. "And I'm not little."

Thor stared at her angry face and grinned wider before looking back at Gabriel, "That is the most adorable glare I have ever seen, Brother! Like a baby feline trying to look fearsome." He looked back at the offended and reddening teen, "It is even better coming from one so small...Little One."

The god had the gall to bend his knees so he was eye level with the irate Trickster-ling and made annoying height measuring motions with his free hand between them.

Maya's anger appeared to drain completely, leaving a blank face of deceptive calm behind. Puck turned his unamused and questioning eyes behind him to meet Maya's silently simmering gold ones.

The large teasing grin on Thor's face was the final straw. The comparison to an angry kitten brought on a slew of memories of Dean and Sam poking fun at her 'angry face', and how adorable it was. Having this unknown stranger doing it, with the ache of losing her brothers still present in her heart?

Oh hell no!

She gives Puck a small affirmative nod.

Gabriel was able to get a hold of himself to stop chuckling enough to catch the tail end of the silent exchange between Maya and Puck.

But not soon enough to stop Maya from giving the God of Thunder a right hook to his stupid unassuming and smiling face, or Puck from trying to go for the wrist holding Mjolnir.

30 minutes and one loud scuffle later...

What could've been a very bad situation was resolved pretty quickly. Gabriel had grabbed Maya and Puck—Matrix style—to keep them from landing anymore hits on the still very dangerous pagan god.

He honestly wondered sometimes where she got her sporadic temper flare-ups. Gabriel blamed her
human father. If he remembered correctly, dude seemed to perpetually stuck on grumpy/constipated when not turning on the charm to get his way with authorities and victims. Or, hell, maybe she did get it from your truly. An archangel's wrath was nothing to sneeze at after all, but this sudden burst was definitely not archangel fury.

It would've been more explosive and less easily dissuaded.

Probably.

Maya had struggled in his hold for a few seconds, but went limp pretty quickly and started sniffling.

So, nope, not archangel wrath, or pure human rage. Just anger that mixed with the quick onset of grief that overcame her.

Gabriel had turned to apologize to Thor only to find the Thunderer giving a loud boisterous laugh and complimenting on Maya's punch, her and Puck's teamwork, and their fighting spirit. The stupid smile still on his face. Though it tempered seeing the sadness in Maya's eyes, after seeing the still tender grief there.

Which brings them to, now.

Gabriel sat in the armchair and watched his daughter and his Norse brother share embarrassing stories about him/Loki. Mostly him since most of the memorable legendary shit that Thor and Loki got into had occurred after he started posing as the Norse Trickster.

Thor had decided to share their more hilarious shenanigans to cheer his niece up. It had worked like a treat, that's for sure.

Maya now had tears of laughter as she tried to breathe through her painfully trembling diaphragm.

"You-you both—wheeze—actually dress-dressed up in drag?!" Maya laughed, bent over in her seat beside Thor. "I thought it was just a 'what-if' scenario thing that the Vikings made up!"

"Ha! Nay!" Thor bellowed with a loud laugh. "Granted it was not so funny at the time trying to be a fair bride-to-be in order to retrieve my hammer from King Thrymskvidal."

"Or playing escort and trying to explain why the goddess of fertility could eat an entire oxen and could drink mead by the barrel full," Gabriel snorted with a grin. "Or trying to keep this hot head from blowing up and ruining the whole thing."

Maya snickered as Thor gave Gabriel a chagrined smile; "It was quite trying to bite my tongue whilst all those giants ogled at me like a piece of prized oxen meat."

"The same one you ate when you tried to pass for a delicate woman?" Maya smirked mischievously before her looked turned curious. "Why didn't you just get Dad to cast illusions or
change your forms?"

Thor pinched his brows as he thought over the little question then cast a glance over at his smugly
smirking Brother.

"*Brother!*" Thor sent a scandalized look at Gabriel causing said Trickster to bark out a loud laugh.
Thor sported an epic pout, "The other gods harped on me for *centuries* over dressing up like a
woman!"

Gabriel brought his hands up in mock surrender, "Hey man, you said you could pull it off. Who am
I to doubt the God of Thunder? And I have *no shame* dressing up like a woman. I make a fantastic
woman, shape-shifting involved or not."

"You came up with the plan to begin with!" Thor accused dramatically pointing at his snickering
brother, enjoying the sight of his small niece shaking in silent laughter. "You could have brought it
up when you presented your idea to the rest of us! It is one thing to dress in women's clothing but
another to change shape into one!"

Gabriel threaded his fingers together and gave a wide Trickster grin, "True, but where's the fun in
that?" He then gave a shrug, "Besides, you didn't have to spend a week dressed like a woman
following Freya around to get into character. Those giants didn't suspect a damn thing! Talk about
a race of oblivious *numbskulls*."

Thor dropped his theatrics with a smile reminiscent of his battle-thirsty warrior side. "At least I got
vengeance on them when I had Mjolnir back in my hand. Many giant skulls caved that day," he
rumbled darkly. No one stole his beloved hammer and got away with it.

"Well that turned dark," Maya mumbled, being reminded that this muscled man was still very
dangerous despite his disarming personality. Her head perked up when the doorbell went off
before anyone else could speak, "I'll get it!"

Maya answered the door to find a tired Susan with her fraternal twins Mike and Lucas. She turned
back to her Dad and Uncle, "Hey Dad, can I-

Gabriel interrupted her before she could finish, "Phone?"
"Yeah!" Maya retrieved the flip phone from her pocket to flash it at him.

"Doggo?"

"Bark!" Puck barked as he walked over to stand at Maya's feet.

"2 hours. Good luck shorty!" Gabriel waved off with a smirk at the unimpressed bitch-face he was getting from her before stuffing her phone in her shorts pocket and closing the door behind her.

Thor looked back at his brother. "She is a demi-god," he stated.

"Yep," Gabriel said popping his lips, waiting for Thor to voice the thoughts he'd been keeping quiet till it was just the two of them. He was impressed he didn't blurt it out sooner.

The pagan god's eyes filled with grim understanding, "Her pagan blood is not very strong either. I can see why you keep her hidden away from the other gods. If I did not look for the Trickster in her I would not have known she was a demi-god."

"Yeah," Gabriel huffed humorlessly. "We had a problem one Christmas season when she bought a meadowsweet wreath not knowing it put her on the grocery list of a winter solstice god."

"Did you kill them?" Thor rumbled like thunder, his eyes turned dark and stormy at the thought of some lower god thinking his small niece would make an acceptable sacrifice.

Gabriel sighed with old annoyance and grumbled out, " Sadly, no. I was too worried about 3 Musketeers to get in on the guy. But I have it on good authority that we don't have to worry about them anymore."

"Good," Thor grunted in satisfaction before bringing up something he had noticed lacking in the family pictures around the house. " I do not see your sons in any of the photos. Do they not know of her existence either?"

"Noooo not really," Gabriel shrugged. "You know they're not really Trickster demi-gods. I doubt they'd appreciate me having another kid that wasn't born of Angroboda, but instead sired by a
"Yes," Thor hummed thoughtfully. "If they acted anything like us in our youth they would not have been kind to their little sister and her lack of power. I can easily tell she is…soft hearted."

Gabriel tensed indignantly and smoothly said, "There's nothing wrong with being soft hearted."

"Peace Brother," Thor said, placatingly. "I meant no insult to your fiery Little Valkyrie. I agree. Your sons remind me of when you were much younger and much more…sadistic in your tricks. You have to admit though Brother your tricks on the mortals were more often than not fatal, even for the slightest of injustices," Thor pointed out.

Gabriel shrugged a shoulder and gave a nod, though the time Thor was referring to was with the actual Loki and not himself. When he took over in his personal witness protection program he toned down the severity of most of Loki's tricks.

The punishment would fit the crime, according to his books at least. Like instead of setting up a cheating spouse to get killed by their lover, he gives them an STI and has all their dirty laundry mysteriously aired for all to see.

Or a sadistic pledge master getting it up the rear from aliens, repeatedly, and being forced to slow dance with them. Snicker.

"Yeah, well, Maya's even more lenient," Gabriel, sighed. "She refuses to kill any of her targets, even if they deserve it. She'd rather expose them and get them sent to jail or force them to thoroughly learn a lesson so they can change. Pretty sure it's her human heart at work there."

"Then she definitely would not feel at home amongst the other gods."

"Yeah," Gabriel scoffed sarcastically. "Trying not to get eaten or raped would do that."

"Indeed," Thor's voice rumbled unpleasantly. It brought Gabriel some comfort that Thor seemed so taken with Maya, knowing that should he ask the god would undoubtedly do his best to protect her.

(A.N: I know demi-gods are children of gods and another species but for the sake of my sanity I'm limiting them to children of gods and humans. As outlined in Ch.33)
"I am relieved I had followed your suggestion so many centuries ago when our religion was beginning to wane."

Gabriel snorted, "Tell me about it. Either change how we get our power, or start snacking on humans. Big reason why I hated going to those god-only parties Odin throws. The menu's always Soylent Green themed, and there's always a lack of any human-free desserts." He curled his lip in disgust as past memories brought forth images of human body parts on silver platters and dishes arranged like a gourmet feast.

"Aye," Thor nodded in agreement, before his face turned a little sheepish as be caught his brother's eye. "That…however brings the other reason for my visit today."

Gabriel arched an elegant eyebrow speculatively at the god, "Oh?"

"Your last attendance to one of the Norse pantheon celebrations was 263 years ago…" Thor sighed wearily knowing his brother wasn't going to like what he had to say.

"If I remember correctly Odin kicked me off the invite list when I decided to let those poor saps out of the slaughter shed and left pigs wearing corsages and frocks instead," Gabriel said with fake befuddlement. It didn't take much to see what Thor was getting at. "Very Animal Farm-esque, come to think of it when it was finally published. Wonder where the author got the idea."

Thor chuckled, "Yes, father was quite cross. As well were the other Norse gods." Thor rubbed a large hand over his face, "I know you detest these gatherings and celebrations, your need for justice for the humans captured is understandable. I myself dislike it greatly, but sadly the others did not heed your advice as I and most other Tricksters have, but father demands you attend the All Hallows Eve Celebrations this year."

"No," Gabriel answered resolutely if a bit petulantly, even going as far as to cross his arms with a huff. "If you haven't noticed, I have a vulnerable and magically bound kid to look after, and those things always last at least a week." His face scrunches up in an angry glower as Thor was about to obviously suggest something probably stupid, so he cut him off, " I am not taking Maya anywhere near those assholes. I'll be the only Trickster there and you and me can't keep a watchful eye on her the whole time! And who knows what Odin will do when he finds out I've got another kid—"

"Loki!" Thor interrupted exasperatedly. "I agree with you! It would not be safe for Little Valkyrie to come with us," here Thor sighed heavily through his nostrils. "She is too weak for father to acknowledge her as a threat as he does your sons. No, he no doubt would try to use her to negotiate an alliance with another god from one of the other pantheons," he grimaced at the thought knowing
Odin wouldn't necessarily make it a marriage contract either. Despite his niece's low power level, she was still a Trickster demi-godling of Loki's line on the cusp of adulthood. Undoubtedly making a desirous bride, or a rare delicacy.

Gabriel gripped the armrests in a death grip, hands tearing through the fragile furniture, as a growl ripped through his throat, "Like HELL he will!"

"All the more reason for you to attend," Thor pointed out, face absolutely serious. "If you don't go Odin will scour Midgard for you for disobeying."

Gabriel's anger simmered till it was only boiling underneath a façade of obviously forced calm. He wasn't worried about Odin finding him and Maya, and even if he did he was much more powerful than the old god.

The snag was the real Loki. He couldn't exactly smite Odin for trying to take Maya away from him. Part of the deal with Loki was by taking his place he kept all the Heaven/Archangel business away from his family. Despite everything that Odin put Loki and his sons through he cared about his family, jerk of a father included. He didn't want Gabriel going archangel on their asses or have Gabriel's family coming down and smiting them all on principle for them being false gods, since none of them were the Big G himself.

So the problem was Odin finding either him or Loki if he went searching, and Gabriel didn't want to get found out by anyone or end up smiting Odin and getting on Loki's bad side.

He knew the best course of action was to suck it up and just go to the damn celebration they were having and just cause some mayhem to get thrown off the invite list, again. Maybe this time he'll make it permanent.

This, however, meant leaving his baby girl alone and powerless. He could take the wristbands off, but she'd more inclined to wander off again and outside the demon warding he placed around the town. Not to mention she'll start getting antsy and bored soon with only Puck to talk to.

The little dog's power boost was the only thing that had him considering that leaving her home alone might be a good idea. Anything that tried going after Maya was going to be in for a nasty surprise from the little canine.

Gabriel's ears picked up the muted sound of kids laughing as they walked past the house, probably school friends. 'Hmmmm,' Gabriel thought as an idea started forming in his mind. 'It would keep her busy and in one place...' he pondered thoughtfully.

Gabriel let out a long sigh as he met Thor's patient eyes, "Fine. I'll go. But I'm not gonna behave myself!"

Thor gave him a large grin, "I would be disappointed if you did."
Early September-ish 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Gloversville High School

First Day…

Teenagers bustled about as they exited cars and buses on their way to their lockers before the starting class bell rang. Some greeted friends they hadn't seen jubilantly, others looked like they were walking to their first day of a life-long prison sentence. Then there were those that might be mistaken for zoo animals with how they were acting.

Maya just looked around from the front seat of her Dad's car looking apprehensive, a little curious, but mostly unimpressed. Puck was just unimpressed—utterly and completely—as he peered through the back window in his medical aid vest.

She turned to look back at her Dad who watched her with amusement, "Ha ha, very funny Dad. You got me. Now let's go home."

"Sorry Klondike, but I wasn't joking," he shrugged with a smug smile. "You had to have known that when I had you take those placement tests, and choose your courses, and when we were getting school supplies…" he listed, obnoxiously counting off his fingers.

"I figured you were drawing out the prank," Maya muttered as she looked out back at the madness in front of the bland brick building. "You know, do all the stuff so I start getting nervous thinking you were actually serious before saying 'Psyche! Just kidding! Your face was priceless!' Cue laughter at my expense and my utter relief that it was all a joke."

"Nope," Gabriel chirped all too cheerful sounding. "Now get going! You still need to find your locker and homeroom." He received two sets of puppy dog eyes begging him not to let them go.

Gabriel smirked as he handed Maya her schedule and shoved her shoulder to get her moving.

Maya dropped the pitiful eyes and just gave him a pout with an accompanying eye roll and beleaguered sigh.

Before she was completely out of reach Gabriel had grabbed her jacket sleeve to give her a more reassuring smile. "Hey, I know you're nervous but I know you can do this, Cherry Bomb."
Maya gave him a soft smile, "Thanks, Dad. And how could I not? You're my Dad." She got her jacket free so she could use the hand to squeeze his reassuringly, because apparently this was just as tough for him as it was for her. "Love ya," with that she opened the door and her and Puck waded out into the throng of moving bodies.

Gabriel watched her disappear, his eyes misting as he was drawn back a little over a decade into the past when he was dropping off Maya for her first day of Kindergarten.

A horn blared behind him to get his ass in gear since there were still more kids needing to be dropped off.

Gabriel rolled his eyes in annoyance as he tried to stifle some of the more persistent sniffles, and try to swallow around the emotional lump in his throat.

"Fuck you too, assholes. I was having a moment!" he choked quietly to himself as he started the car.

Maybe putting Maya through the whole high school experience might be a little much… for him.

He had paused too long at a stop sign and getting another round of blaring horns behind him.

He flipped them off before continuing on.

No one could prove that he was pouting. NO ONE!

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**September 18 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States**

Gabriel paced the empty house in restless energy, rubbing his face or running a hand through his dark gold hair as he tried to piece the implications of what just happened.

*Dean Winchester is saved!*

Had been blared over angel radio at a un-Dad-ly loud volume.

But it had already been too late. Gabriel had felt the tremor of the first seal breaking nearly a month ago, not long after Thor left and he signed Maya up for high school. It had been around the three-month marker for how long Dean had endured Hell's racks.

He'd held his surprise and rising dread, forgetting it for a while as he basked in the mundane problems of angsty adolescence as Maya grumbled about her school days. Not so much the schoolwork, that was fine. Just the people in the school.

For someone who had grown up seeing some of the worst humanity had to offer and the real
struggles some people faced it was no real surprise that Maya found the weight some people put into high school drama ridiculous.

'Why should I care that some guy was seen hanging out with some girl that wasn't his girlfriend in the library? I know there's a group project for biology coming up. Or why shouldn't ask out some Justin guy because this Jenny girl liked him? Or why shouldn't I talk to this Eli (Ee-lie) kid? Why? Why is that important?' Maya ranted one day completely baffled by her peers. Gabriel decided to be absolutely unhelpful and told her that that's just high school.

She grumbled, then compared the place to a hellhole being run by the director of Mean Girls, but with extra angst.

Gabriel's lips twitched in amusement at that, but it quickly fell as he thought over what it meant that his brothers, Michael and Raphael, had waited so long to storm Hell to retrieve Dean. He assumed Michael would've gone down with a garrison to retrieve the asshole before he broke the first seal. With an archangel leading the charge it shouldn't have taken all that long.

Let alone four months.

Unless…neither of them went at all. That was the only explanation why it would've taken so long to drag Dean's ass up from the pit. Seraphs weren't nearly as strong and even a whole garrison of them would have difficulty dragging a regular soul from Hell. Forget about one that was as VIP like old Dean-o's soul.

Sure the apocalypse was prophesized to happen, but Gabriel thought Heaven would've been working their asses off to head it off or at least try to. He knew it was coming, he'd just hoped Heaven would put more effort into stopping it.

Gabriel stopped pacing and collapsed in defeat on the couch his head falling into his hands as his mind came to the logical conclusion.

Michael and Raphael wanted this. They didn't even want to try and stop it from happening.

What happened after he left that his big brothers had fallen so far as to actually want to kill their brother in an all-out battle royal, and destroy half the world in the process?

That this was all it was going to come down to? A prophesized destiny?

That two brothers had to fight? Have one kill the other?

What happened to his family?
'Dammit Dad! Why?!' he thought in silent anguish. 'Why put us all through this? Why...why give me a daughter I could lose?'

God heard his youngest archangel son and sighed heavily.

'Why indeed,' God mused to himself as he continued typing the first book after Dean was sent to Hell.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Couple hours later...

A currently resurrected Dean and Bobby were having a tussle at Bobby's house, since you know. Bobby didn't believe it was actually him that came back and was trying to stab him with a shining silver dagger.

"I am not a shapeshifter!" Dean shouted as he twisted Bobby's knife wielding arm behind his back.

"Then you're a revenant!" Bobby grunted as Dean wrestled the silver dagger from his twisted arm before pushing him away to get distance between them.

Bobby quickly whirled around as Dean held the knife between them and pulled up a sleeve, "All right, if I was either would I be able to do this with a silver knife?" Dean

brought the dagger to his left bicep, taking a second to psyche himself up before drawing blood with it with a pained grunt.

No sizzling skin or bubbling blood.

Dean's green eyes lifted to look at Bobby's directly.

"Dean?" Bobby breathed a little breathless in disbelief.

Dean took a couple steps towards his surrogate father figure with a breathless sigh, "That's what I've been trying to tell you."
Bobby's breathing turned heavy as he wrapped his arms around the son he thought he lost for good months ago. Both of them held onto each other in relief and manly comfort for a couple of seconds before pulling apart.

"It's—it's good to see you, boy," Bobby told Dean emotionally.

"Yeah, you too," Dean said with a watery smile grabbing the older man's shoulder reassuringly. It was a toss up if it was to reassure Bobby or himself.

"How did you bust out?" Bobby's Hunter instincts were flaring up again, like they did when he first saw Dean on his front porch. He had one more test.

"I don't know," Dean answered with a helplessly confused look on his face. He turned away as he tried to recall the events of his resurrection. Not even touching his memories of Hell with a 99 ½ foot pole. "Just woke up in a pine bo-" a splash of holy water erupted in his face when he turned back to look at Bobby. He blinked a couple of times before spitting the water that got in his mouth over his shoulder.

Dean pinned Bobby with a look, "I'm not a demon either, ya know."

Bobby shrugged a little sheepish, the flask that held the holy water still held up in his hand. "Sorry. Can't be too careful," he snorted, smiling for a brief moment. He was glad the body in front of him wasn't some demon wearing a restored Dean's meat suit.

It'd be like killing Karen all over again.

Dean sighed at the old gruff Hunter before grabbing a hand towel of the stove handle in the kitchen where their scuffle ended.

They walked into Bobby's den off the kitchen, Dean telling him how he woke up in a pine box and clawed his way out from inside the shallow grave. Neither of them could think of anything that could pull Dean out of Hell and back into his body. And it had to be something. As Bobby pointed out when they buried him his chest was in ribbons and his insides were slop, and he had been buried for four months.

He should, as Dean put it, look like a 'Thriller' video reject.

Then Bobby asked what he remembered.
"Not much," Dean lied all too easily. "I remember I was a hellhound's chew toy...and then lights out. Then I come to six feet under. That was it," Dean shrugged, omitting certain truths.

Bobby sat down behind his bottle littered desk, his mind racing trying to think of anything that could bring a person back from the dead with a fully restored body. The only thing he could think of was a demon deal and the only idjit who would try would be Sam, but...Sam wouldn't. Would he?

He better not if he doesn't want to get his ass sent through the meat grinder when Bobby got a hold of him the next time he saw him.

"Sam's number's not working. He's not...he's not uh—" Dean tried asking, concerned whether or not the baby brother he sacrificed everything for was still breathing.

Bobby looked up at Dean, "Oh, he's alive, as far as I know."

Dean nodded with a small relieved smile at hearing he was alive, "Good." Then the rest of Bobby's words registered in his brain. "Wait, what do you mean—as far as you know?"

Bobby shrugged, "I haven't talked to him for months."

"You're kidding? You just let him go off by him self?" Dean asked in disbelief. "What about Goldy? You heard from her?"

"Yeah, I've heard from her after gettin' chewed out by an irate Daddy Loki over the phone," Bobby sighed rubbing his face tiredly as he got up from his desk to stand in front of Dean. "And Sam was pretty dead set on goin' off on his own."

"Would she know where he is?" Dean asked, knowing he'd asked Sam to look out for her. Being one of his dying wishes and all.

Bobby's mouth tightened into a hard line, letting out a long sigh from his nose, "Doubt it. My asked if I'd heard from him around the end of June. Last time she'd spoken to Sam, far as I know, was when we were all headin' to New Harmony. Guess he's not talkin' to her either."

"Damn it, Sam," Dean cursed as he added slapping Sam up side the head to his mental list of things
to do to his brother. He was supposed to be there for her, *be a big brother*. Not avoid Maya completely! "Bobby, I thought you would've been looking after him?" Dean accused rubbing his face.

"I tried," Bobby told him defensively. "These last months haven't been exactly easy, ya know, for him, My or me." Dean bowed his head, his eyes catching all the whiskey bottles littering Bobby's desk. "We had to *bury you*," Bobby finished.

Dean's face pinched in confused thought, "Why *did* you bury me, anyway?"

"I wanted you salted and burned—the usual drill," Dean nodded in agreement to Bobby's words, "—but Sam wouldn't have it."

Dean sighed and shook his head, "Well, I'm glad he won that one."

Bobby gave Dean a look; "He said you'd need a body when he got you back home somehow. That's about all he said."

"Wha'd'ya mean?" Dean asked, intensely, even though he had a good idea of the answer.

"He was quiet…" Bobby looked away and leaned against the front of his desk. "…*real quiet*. Then he just took off. Wouldn't return my calls, or My's." Bobby gave a helpless shrug, "I tried to find him, but he don't want to be found."

"Oh, damn it, Sammy," Dean groaned turning away from Bobby and rubbed his face before looking back at the older Hunter when he queried what Dean was thinking. "Oh he got me home, okay. But whatever he did, was *bad* mojo."

"What makes you so sure?"

"You should've seen the grave site. It was like a nuke went off. Then there was this—this force, this presence—that I don't know," Dean paused trying to think of how to explain what happened at the fill-up joint he found before hotwiring a car to get to Bobby's. "But it-it-it blew past me at a fill-up joint. And then this," Dean shrugged off his short sleeve jacket and lifted the left T-shirt sleeve to reveal a red and raised handprint on his upper bicep.
Bobby's eyes nearly popped out of his head as he got up from his seat, approaching Dean to get a better look at it with a whispered, "What in the hell?"

"Yeah, it's like a demon just yanked me out, or rode me out," Dean finished with a deadpanned stare.

"But why?" Dread was pooling in Bobby's gut. This, this did not bode well.

"To hold up their end of the bargain," Dean knew, just knew it had to be a demon deal. He had one good guess as to who made it.

"You think Sam made a deal?" Bobby whispered having an idea of where this conversation was going as he voiced Dean's own thoughts.

Dean stared into Bobby's eyes with the utmost seriousness, "It's what I would've done."

A look of consternation quickly crossed the grizzled Hunter's face as he thought of another possible candidate for making the deal. However unlikely they'd be able to pull it off.

Dean caught it, "What Bobby? You don't think he did?"

Bobby shook his head, he didn't want to believe it but Sam was the most likely candidate. "Just thought of one other person who might've tried makin' a deal for you. Even if the chance of them pullin' it off is next to nothin'..." Bobby grumbled, though his heart beat a little faster.

But then again, Maya had always been a resourceful little bugger...

"Who? You?" Dean looked at him in confusion. Who else would trade their soul for his? He highly doubted Bobby would knowing he'd kick his ass, old man or not, for doing it.

Bobby sent him his patented 'you're-an-idjit' glare, "Maya, ya idjit."
"Goldy?" Dean snorted skeptically. "I mean we got kinda close but I doubt she'd pawn her soul..." Dean paused as another price for his release came to mind. "She doesn't know Lilith's after her, does she? Ya know, exchange her freedom for mine?"

Bobby shook his head, "Nah. I doubt it. Besides I know for a fact she's been glued to her Daddy's hip for the last four months and...and—" Bobby cut himself off, not sure if he wanted to tell Dean how Maya handled his death.

Dean's green eyes looked at him imploringly, both wanting to know that his little sister was alright and that she didn't do anything stupid.

"Damn it, Dean she was heartbroken! She cares about you, and Sam, like family," Bobby sighed as Dean looked away. "But grief doesn't really fuel her, so I doubt she had any energy to even come up with ways of gettin' you topside, let alone doin' anythin'. Not that Loki wouldn't be on her ass if she tried.

When Maya grieves...really heartfelt, down to her very soul grievin'...the life just drains outta her," he finished with a sad sigh. It had been disturbing to hear from Loki in those early days how...lifeless Maya had become, so consumed in her grief. Even over the phone he could hear it in her voice.

Made him want to reach through the damn thing to gather her up in his arms, and just hold her.

"All the more reason Sam should've been talking to her. To help her," Dean growled, running a hand through his short hair in irritation as he tried to hide some of his worry. The idea that Maya, this bouncy, affectionate, lively little Trickster was so grief stricken over his death that all of it drained out of her was unsettling to say the least. "So, how's she doing now?"

"Better," Bobby grunted. "Loki's been helpin' her through most of it, and I've been callin' her at least once a week or so. So there's that, but she's...she's more herself now than she was in the beginnin'.'"

Dean gave a relieved sigh, "That's—that's good. That's good."

There shared a moment of silence.

"Although," Bobby began as an afterthought occurred to him, "she's a little more short tempered if the right buttons are pushed."
Dean snorted, "C'mon. It can't be that bad."

"She punched Thor—ya know the Norse god of Thunder, Thor?—in the face landin' him on his ass for a certain teasin' comment about her angry face," Bobby deadpanned as Dean's eye widened comically in surprise and slight pride. "Thankfully he was more impressed than insulted."

"Damn," Dean huffed, smirking slightly, as he imagined this small and slight girl with an angry kitten face just throwing a punch at a hulking burly warrior god with enough force to knock him on his ass.

"Yep," Bobby scoffed. "Just what ya got to look forward to when she finds out yer alive."

"Bobby," Dean's tone no longer light, but serious. "We can't tell her I'm back. At least, not till we know what's going on!" Dean rushed loudly as Bobby opened his mouth to protest.

"Fine," he grumbled as he crossed his arms. "But I'm throwin' ya under the bus when she finds out we waited to let her know!"

"Just feeling the love here, Bobby. Feeling the love," Dean commented dryly before heading over to the kitchen and its wall of phones. "Now let's find my pain in the ass little brother and find out what the hell he was thinking!"

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**September 18 2008, Pontiac, Illinois, United States**

**Nighttime**

**Astoria Hotel**

After finding out Sam was in Pontiac, Illinois—right near where Dean was buried—it wasn't looking good that Sam wasn't the one to make a deal to bring him back. Too much of a coincidence.

When Sam saw Dean in the hotel doorway, he greeted him much like Bobby did when Dean showed up on his doorstep.

Immediately thought he was a shape shifting monster and lunged at him with a concealed silver dagger.
Bobby quickly intervened; restraining Sam long enough to tell him he'd already done the tests and it was *really Dean*, there was a long brotherly hug, followed by the awkward dismissal of the girl Kathy…*Christie* in Sam's motel room.

Then they both confronted Sam about the obvious demon deal he had to have made to get Dean out.

Only…Sam *didn't* make a deal. He tried and tried, even tried opening the Devil's gate, and anything else he could even *think* of. But he failed, every time, wishing more and more that he could save his brother.

But he didn't. Wished he did, but it wasn't him.

Dean and Bobby believed him, but that brought up a sticky question neither of them knew the answer to.

If Sam didn't pull him out, then who or what dragged Dean's ass out of Hell?

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**On the road…**

After the brief moment of enormous disapproval over Sam's douching iPod jack attached to Baby as well as his choice in music, Dean was happy to get behind the wheel of his beloved impala once more. He enjoyed the feel of the black leather steering wheel beneath his hands and the familiar gas, gunpowder, and lingering greasy fast food combination of smells that over time had equated to a sense of home.

As they followed behind Bobby's old rust bucket Dean broached a topic that had been bothering him, about the night he took a *trip down stairs*. He wondered how Sam escaped Lilith when she was all ready to roast him.

Thus learning of Sam's odd immunity to Lilith's burning light thingy.

"Immune?" Dean asked in clarification and general perturbed-ness.

"Yeah," Sam gave a short breathless chuckle. "I don't know who's more surprised—her or me. She left pretty fast after that," he finished with a heavy sigh.

"Huh," Dean looked over at Sam briefly. "What about Ruby? Where is she?"

Sam shrugged and answered blandly, "Dead or in Hell."
Dean's eyes looked out over the darkened road, only Bobby's tale lights and the moon providing any light, as he licked his lips worriedly.

"So, you've been using your, uh, freaky E.S.P. stuff?" Dean asked a little on edge. He really hoped Sam hadn't tapping into those demon blood powers while he'd been getting tortured by said demons.

Nothing good ever came from demons.

And if Sam used it like he did before he wondered what else he might've gotten into that he shouldn't have.

Sam looked over at Dean. "No," he said firmly.

"Sure about that?" Dean gave him a side-glance that said 'I know you, bitch.' "Ah, well, I mean now that you got immunity—whatever the hell that is—just wondering what other weirdo crap you got going on."

"Nothing, Dean," Sam sighed. "Look you didn't want me to go down that road, so I didn't go down that road. It was practically your dying wish."

"Yeah, well, let's keep it that way," Dean focused his gaze back on the road, unsure if he believed Sam's words.

Sam for his part looked out his window with a guilty conscience, knowing he lied to his brother. It was for a good reason he tried to tell him self. He was using something bad to do something good, to save people from the demons possessing them.

Wasn't that the whole point of being a Hunter? Hunting things, saving people?

So caught up in his thoughts Sam only caught the tail end of whatever Dean was asking him.

"—after Goldy?"

Sam shifted in his seat as he turned his head back to his brother, "Hm? Sorry, what about Maya?"
Dean rolled his eyes, "I said, speaking of dying wishes, I'm pretty freakin' sure I asked you to look after Goldy. Instead I find out you just drop communication with her completely. Big brothers don't do that, Sam!"

"I know that, Dean!" Sam snapped a little looking away, then added a little quieter, "I know that."

Dean released a sigh to reign in his temper, "She reached out to you, Sam. She needed you. So, why the hell did you just ignore her, huh?"

"Because she's a lot like you," Sam looked at his brother sadly with a sad smile. Dean looked at him, staying quiet as he waited for him to continue. "She left voice messages that…they were so sad but then she'd say something and…she'd sound exactly like you. But she wasn't you," Sam looked away as he swallowed thickly, guilt swirling around sluggishly in his chest.

"It was like you were still here, but you weren't, Dean. It was like every time she left a message it was just a reminder that…that you were gone. I couldn't—I just…I'm sorry," Sam stressed with apologetic guilt.

Dean looked away and rubbed one hand over his face while the other kept the steering wheel steady.

"I'm not the one you need to apologize to, Sam," he sighed, turning the wheel gently as the road curved.

"I know. I know and I'm going to make it up to her…somehow."

Dean shifted uneasily in his seat a little with a slightly guilty grimace of his own. "Well, you might not be the only one. Me and Bobby haven't told her I'm alive yet. Wanted to sort out my resurrection first."

There was a long silence.

"She's going to try and kick both our asses isn't she?"
Dean scoffed, "Does a bear shit in the woods?"

Sam sent him his patented bitch-face before shaking his head at his brother's crude mannerisms. It was good having him back.

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September 19, 2008, Random town, Illinois, United States
Pamela Barnes' House
Morning

The sun had risen as they finally arrived at Pamela Barnes' house and were greeted by a young tanned brunette woman, enthusiastically. After introductions, and giving Bobby a playful look to let him know how attractive she thought the boys were she invited the trio of Hunters in.

"So, you hear anythin'?" Bobby asked looking back as Pamela closed the door after Sam.

Pamela sighed, unenthused, "Well I ouija-ed my way through a dozen spirits, and all I got was them mentioning that some hot-shot demon has her cronies sniffing around the whole country looking for something."

Bobby frowned, "Do you know what?"

"Some baby demi-god named Maya," Pamela hummed, watching as all three men tense in worry but didn't seem all too surprise. "But you knew that already, huh?" she asked rhetorically with a raised eyebrow.

"A demon named Lilith wants her to hold her over her Dad, Loki," Sam told Pamela with a frown.

"Loki? The Trickster King him self?" Pamela shot them a look of disbelief before giving a low whistle and a shake of her head. "Bitch has got some balls on her, don't she?"
"Wha'd'ya mean, King? Thought Odin was head honcho in Norse mythology or something?" Dean asked with a confused and worried frown. That did not sound good. He knew Loki was powerful, but to suggest he was the Trickster King was something else.

Sam also looked at Pamela in concern, his eyes flickering over to Bobby's unsurprised ones, "You knew about his Bobby?"

"Got it written down somewhere, yeah. Loki's power is god god power, and not lesser god power. Puts him at the top of Trickster leadership. He also alluded to once about saving Tricksters from needing to eat people, so most are in his debt," Bobby said with a shrug. "My's fine though. Like I told Dean, she's safe with her Dad."

Pamela chuckled, "You know some interesting people Bobby. A man raised from Hell, and the Trickster King and his little baby demi-god." She shook her head and led them into her front parlor, "C'mon boys. The only way we're going to find out what dragged up handsome here is through a séance."

"Ya ain't going to summon the thing here are you?" Bobby asked in concern as Dean smiled smugly to himself at Pamela calling him handsome. Sam just rolled his eyes at him with a scoff, knowing exactly what Dean was thinking.

Pamela shook her head with a smile, "Nah. Just want to get a sneak peak at it. Like a crystal ball, but without the crystal."

Bobby looked at the boys and Dean just shrugged, "I'm game." Sam just followed Dean's lead, earning a weary sigh from Bobby.

She cleared off the regular table clothe from the medium round table, replacing it with a black one covered in white ritualistic symbols. Once done she turned to Dean and asked, "Got anything our mystery monster touched?"

Dean shifted on his feet before removing his plaid over shirt and rolling up an army green T-shirt sleeve, showing off the raised red welts that formed a handprint. Sam eye's nearly popped out of his head, having never seen anything like it before.

Pamela's face pinched in concentration as she reached out and touched the raised skin. "Damn. What kind of..." her voice trailed off as her head canted slightly, appearing to listen to something
that wasn't there, before looking over at Bobby.

"Huh. Now that's interesting," Pamela hummed as she removed her hand from Dean's bicep.

"What is?" Dean asked, releasing the sleeve.

"Other than amazing muscle retention on your part," Pamela smirked flirtatiously squeezing the muscle, "there seems to be something in Bobby's car that can tell us what the mystery monster might be, or point us in the right direction at least." She began briskly walking towards the front door, the three men stumbling behind her after her surprising revelation.

"Wha'd'ya mean, in my car? I think I'd know if I had anything that could explain this stashed somewhere in my car," Bobby grouchily demanded, following Pamela out the front door and to his rusted Chevelle.

By the time they all caught up, all they saw was Pamela's ass sticking out the open car door as she rummaged around in the backseat.

Dean was the first to notice a tattoo peaking over the waistline of her jeans, elbowing Sam and nodding at it, "So who's Jesse?"

"Haha," Pamela chuckled from the inside of the car as she moved to look under the driver's seat. "Well, it wasn't forever."

"His loss," Dean clicked, the flirty smile evident in his voice.

"Might be your gain," Pamela called back, with an added butt wiggle.

Dean turned to Sam who was trying to keep his laughter in, "Dude, I'm so in."

"Yeah, she's going to eat you alive," Sam scoffed with amusement.

"Hey, I just got outta jail. Bring it!" Dean said confidently, smirking.
Bobby pretended not to know either of them.

"Pam, get outta my car," Bobby grunted. "Ain't nothin' in there that can tell us what—"

"Found it!" Pamela cheered as she backed out of the car holding a ring bound matte black book with white designs that looked to be done in white-out that had long since become dirty grey.

"That's one of My's old sketchbooks. You think she knows who dragged Dean outta Hell?" Bobby asked taking the book from Pamela.

She smiled at the three men, "Not who. What. I'm a psychic. I can tune into the different energies of the world, but I'm quite gifted with speaking to the dead. Now what do you think I'm tapping into when I communicate with the dearly departed?"

Dean and Bobby looked at each other, not really having a clue of what Pamela was getting at. Sam had a thoughtful look on his face.

"Emotions," Sam stated.

Pamela grinned and pointed at him briefly, "Right. I tap into emotions, and the dead and the living are chock full of them. Now whatever thing gave Dean here this fashionable mark is the same kind of thing that strikes absolute terror in your little demi-god friend. Absolute terror that was translated onto some of the pages of this sketchbook."

"Kind of like a beginning point to an object becoming so important to a person that it keeps them tethered to earth instead of moving on. Even if their remains were cremated," Sam concluded.

"Right on the nose Sam," Pamela tapped the side of her nose with a wink as she motioned for Bobby to give her the book. With book in hand Pamela began flipping through pages.

"So, what? If Goldy was to get killed her soul would latch onto this book?" Dean asked curiously, sending a peevish glare at his brother's smug look.
Pamela shook her head as she studied a particularly ominous drawing that sprawled two pages, an emotionally terrifying nightmare brushing against her awareness.

"No, most of the emotions poured into it has faded over time. She's no longer invested in this sketchbook. She was at one time, but not anymore," Pamela mumbled as she focused on the dark lines and blacked out spaces of the drawing, fear and terror permanently etched in every pencil line. She turned to Bobby, "Bobby do you know what this is?"

With a frown Bobby looked over Pamela's shoulder at the drawn figure reaching out to the viewer with a threatening open hand. He couldn't decipher if the figure was supposed to be female or male, just a white faceless silhouette torso drawn with jagged terrifying lines and menacing shading.

Imposing black and jaggedly drawn feathered wings sprouted from its back in a threatening display. The entity had a thin veil of light surrounding the body and wings, separating it from the dark shadows around it.

The memory of waking up to the sound of floorboards creaking in the dead of night at his home as light footsteps made its way to the open doorway of his bedroom. He didn't move, recognizing the footsteps that belonged to an 11 and a half-year-old Maya who had come to visit him.

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**Flashback**

**2002-ish, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States**

**Bobby's House**

**Middle of the night…**

Bobby had heard the light footsteps Maya made stop in his doorway. He waited for Maya to make a move, wondering what had the little Trickster up so late.

He heard her feet shuffle in place. Uncertain of whether she should wake him up.

So Bobby made the decision for her.

"Hey kid," Bobby grumbled with fake tiredness as he rolled over and sat up to look at her anxiety ridden posture and red-rimmed eyes. "What's wrong?"

"I, uh. I had a nightmare," Maya mumbled, sad and scared gold eyes looking away from him, cheeks flaming a little in embarrassment. "I did what my Dad told me to do, but I uh…" Maya shifted uneasily on her feet as she stared at them, all the while clutching a stuffed blue elephant
"What did yer Dad tell ya to do?" Bobby asked as he motioned Maya to come over as he swung his legs over the edge of his bed. Maya took a hesitant step forward, looking up at Bobby's reassuring face. Bobby patted the spot beside him and waited patiently for her to come to him.

Tension seemed to ease in her shoulders as she all but ran to his bed, hopping on, and snuggle into his side. She flinched only slightly when he wrapped a comforting arm around her shoulders.

"So, what did yer Dad tell ya to do when you have a nightmare?" Bobby asked again, pushing away his tiredness, parental instincts engaged.

"That whenever I have a bad nightmare, one that makes me too scared to go back to sleep, I should write it out or draw it out. Banish and trap it in a piece of paper," Maya sniffled. "And, if it's a really bad one and I couldn't get it all out, he said that I can sleep in his bed with him and he'll keep me safe."

"Right," Bobby rubbed her shoulder comfortably. "Wanna sleep here tonight?" he asked quietly. "Promise ain't nothin's gonna getcha while I'm around."

Maya was quiet as she thought over Bobby's words, although it was obvious to him what she wanted.

"But you're just a human," Maya stated tiredly, rubbing her face into Bobby's side.

Bobby snorted in good humor, "'Scuse you. I'm not just a human. I'm also a Hunter. I save folks from their nightmares all the damn time. Keepin' yers at bay will be nothin'."

Maya looked up at him with heavy and drowsy eyes, "Even—"

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Present

"It's an angel," Bobby stated as he pushed the memory away. "My's terrified of 'em."
Pamela nodded thoughtfully, "I figured that's what the drawing was. It—"

"Are freakin' kidding me?!" Dean interrupted loudly with disbelief. "Angels? Seriously?! They don't exist!"

Pamela rolled her eyes, "It's not concrete yet Dean, but it gives us an avenue to follow. It might be some other humanoid monster with wings, but don't discredit a child's nightmare, her fear as unreal."

"Well, it shouldn't be an issue because they aren't real," Dean stressed, the memory of his mother telling him how angels were watching over him, protecting him.

As if.

"Dean," Sam started hesitantly, "We deal with things that most people don't believe exist either. How do we know it wasn't an angel that dragged you out of Hell?"

"How do we know it wasn't something else!" Dean shot back. "Like Pamela said, it could be some other thing with wings, or Hell, it could be in Christian mythology for all we know!"

Pamela handed the book back to Bobby and whacked the two brothers upside the head, "We'll know more for sure with the séance. So enough of this dick measuring contest, unless I'm the judge of course, and let's go find out what dragged you out of the fire Dean."

She turned on her heel and walked purposefully back into her house, followed by an amused Bobby, and left the two gaping boys in her wake.

Dean turned to Sam with the utmost seriousness, "If she does measure dicks, you are not invited!"

"Gah! Dean!"
Old barn...

Middle of the night...

The séance had gone south. Way south.

Pamela got the thing's name, Castiel, but when she tried to look at it, it burned her fucking eyes out.

Whatever this Castiel was it even had demons scared. If the ones that cornered him and Sam in that diner was anything to go by.

Then, while Sam apparently went out for burgers—in his car—this Castiel decided to try and pay a visit at his motel room nearly deafening him with that high pitched ringing sound and almost getting him killed from all the breaking glass and falling mirrors from the ceiling.

Luckily Bobby got there in time, spooking whatever was making all the noise.

They left in Bobby's Chevelle and made their way to this old barn, after telling Sam they were out to get a beer. Bobby thought it was all a bad idea and could use Sam's help. Dean disagreed. Sam would just try and stop them.

Besides with all the talismans and traps from every religion on the planet painted on every blank surface of the inside of the barn, and an arsenal to kill everything they've ever faced, they were set.

Bobby let Dean know it was a bad idea…at least ten times during the whole set-up.

Bobby did the ritual to summon this Castiel, and they waited.

And waited.

As Dean questioned Bobby's summoning skills the steel sheets on the roof began to shake barely clinging to the wooden framework as the wind all of a sudden started to howl. The barn doors shuttered at the beam, the large wooden beam keeping them shut, bowed and splintered from an unimaginable force.

Light bulbs shattered; sending sparks everywhere, forcing Bobby and Dean to hunch over. As this happened the barn doors swung open and a dark brown haired man with impossibly blue eyes wearing a suit with a navy blue tie and beige trench calmly walked in.

By passing every trap and painted talisman, not even flinching as Bobby and Dean shot him with rock salt rounds. Dean backed up to one of the tables, grabbing the demon-killing knife behind his back as the man walked up to him, staring at him intensely.

"Who are you?" Dean demanded, keeping the man's oddly focused attention on his as Bobby
round the other table and grabbed an iron crowbar.

"I'm the one who gripped you tight and raised you from perdition," the man answered in a gravely voice.

"Yeah," Dean strained. "Thanks for that."

Dean lunged forward and stabbed him in the heart with the knife, and nothing.

He looked at the knife then back at Dean, before calmly removing the knife and letting it drop to the floor. Dean looked to Bobby in surprise, before Bobby went to take a swing.

The bastard didn't even turn to look at Bobby but was able to grab the iron on the down swing, turning around to face him. He placed two fingers to his head and Bobby was on the ground.

He turned back to Dean, "Dean. We need to talk. Alone."

He moved away from Bobby to give Dean room to check on him, while he casually perused a notebook left on a table. He then turned to the one odd item out on the table.

A child's sketchbook. His blue eyes narrowed as he flipped through the pages, stopping on two that held the vague image of a terrifying figure with wings reaching out to the viewer.

"Your friend is alive," he intoned to Dean as he carefully traced the terror induced drawing gently, unsure of what child would feel such fear towards an angel.

"Who are you?" Dean demanded with a growl, hunched over Bobby's prone form.

"Castiel," he answered, not looking at Dean, but could feel the man's glare on him as he turned the page of the sketchbook once more. He only found more childish and happy drawings, nothing more of interest.

"Yeah, I figured that much. I mean what are you," Dean growled angrily at this jackass who not only stole Pamela's eyes but also knocked out Bobby.

"If you looked in the sketchbook you already know," Castiel held the book open to the picture,
showing Dean the picture.

Dean shook his head, "Nope. I'm not buying it. Try again, bastard." Dean stood up, watching as Castiel closed Maya's old sketchbook and placed it on the table.

"I am an angel of the Lord, Dean."

"Get the hell out of here. There's no such thing."

Castiel moved to fully face Dean, "This is your problem Dean. You have no faith." Lightening and thunder rumbled, illuminating the darkened interior of the barn showcasing the shadows of a pair of large wings stretching out.

It eerily reflected the drawing Maya made too much.

This Castiel might be an angel, but he'd sure as hell trust Maya more than this mook.

Dean stowed any feelings of being impressed by the displayed and called out on the trench coat clad angel on burning out Pamela's eyes. Castiel seemed to look regretful over that but he had warned her not to view his true form, as it could be overwhelming to humans, and so could his real voice like Dean should know.

The ear splitting ringing at the gas station and the motel now made some sense. It was this angel trying to talk to him, having assumed he was special.

Then Dean learned Castiel was possessing some poor bastard, like a demon. To hell if the guy prayed for it or not! At least he referred to it as a vessel instead of a meat suit, not that it made much of a difference.

"Look, pal, I'm not buying what your selling," Dean stated with a slight shake of his head. "So, who are you really?"

Castiel squinted his eyes, tilting his head slightly in confusion, obviously wondering why Dean didn't believe him.

"You know who I am."
"Right," Dean scoffed. "And why would an angel rescue me from Hell?"

Castiel took a couple of steps forward, his eyes never wavering from Dean's. "Good things do happen, Dean."

"Not in my experience," he gritted out from a clenched jaw.

"What's the matter?" Castiel tilted his head as blue eyes stared piercingly at Dean. "You don't think you deserved to be saved," he stated.

Dean didn't like how this Castiel seemed to guess at what he was thinking.

"Why'd you do it?" Dean said, asking the million-dollar question.

Castiel straightened his head and looked at Dean with complete seriousness.

"Because God commanded it. Because we have work for you."
September 19 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Afternoon

Maya was walking home with Puck by her side and her new friend, Eli Pepperjack, the stereotypical nerdy outcast of Gloversville High School. He had neatly combed short black hair and wore large blocky glasses held by some tape in the middle that framed large brown eyes. He wasn't very tall or muscular and always seemed to be falling over his own feet and thin air.

But that was probably because he was like two years younger than her, having just turned fifteen and was still a little baby-faced.

The poor kid was trying to talk to her but every time he opened his mouth he just couldn't get the words out.

Maya didn't need her powers to tell that the kid was painfully shy and anxious over saying the wrong thing to her, after she stood up for him and firmly locked her social status as a high school social pariah with him.

She had tried hanging out with Tracy and her friends. But honestly they were getting on her last nerves with all the gossiping and snide comments they would make about some students, especially poor Eli. Jenny had some redeeming qualities, but she wanted to fit in so badly and so full of angst over some pothead guy she liked that didn't speak up when the others got nasty.

Tracy was also creeping her out, too. She liked to try and sit close beside Maya. Like, really close to the point she was almost always leaning against her. It always made Maya feel so flustered and confused. She was pretty, like, really pretty.

But she was also kind of a bitch.

Tracy liked making snide comments behind Jenny's back—someone who was supposed to be her friend—about how hopeless she was trying to pluck up the courage to ask out pothead Jeremy. Maya would also see her trip up other students in the halls, or get in their way so they'd bump into
her and she'd get up in their faces and loudly ridicule them. Getting everyone else in the hall to laugh at them.

Maya had asked Tracy and her friends to cool it. Even anonymously got the teachers, but the victimized students didn't really speak up. Although Eli's stammering was very telling. Unfortunately, the others thought so as well.

So, as Maya was getting her things from her locker and went to head home she heard a commotion down the next hallway. Her and Puck stumbled on the scene of Tracy and her friends stuffing Eli in one of the half lockers. He was tiny enough to fit, that was for sure.

Maya stormed over to them and chewed them out, not that they were willing to listen to her. Tracy even tried flirting with her a little to distract her from her anger, but Maya grappled with her body's reactions and shoved Tracy away from her.

"Get the fuck away from me you fugly blonde bitch!" Maya had sneered, even if she didn't mean the fugly comment. More swears and insults were traded between all of them. It might've come down to blows but the other teens were wary of the snarling little dog with raised hackles between them.

A dark look had come over Tracy's features as she huffed and told the others Maya wasn't worth the trouble of getting a detention over.

Once they started leaving, Maya turned to the locked locker that held the small teenage boy. Thankfully it was the kid's own locker and he gave her the combination to get him out.

"Th-thanks," he had squeaked out when Maya opened the door. She gave him a kind smile and pulled him out. "I would've-been fine. You didn't have to stop them. I'm…used to it," he had sighed sadly.

Maya had rolled her eyes at that, "Yeah I did. I've wanted to yell at those shallow assholes for weeks."

"But Tracy seemed to really like you a-and now…" Eli had pointed out shuffling his feet knowing whatever chance she had at being popular was up in smoke. He looked away from Maya as she stared at him blankly.

"I don't do bullies," she had smirked a little at the double entendre. "Now where do you live? I'll walk you home, incase they're lurking around outside," Maya told him, throwing a thumb over her shoulder.

As it turned out they didn't live too far from each other so they walked home together, in boring silence.

"You like music?" Maya asked casually trying to kill the silence as they walked.


Maya nodded with a smile, "I don't know. Weird mole people probably. I like a lot of 80's rock myself with some newer stuff thrown in. You like AC/DC?"

Eli's brown eyes lit up in excitement, "Oh yeah! AC/DC is awesome! D-do you like Led Zeppelin?"

Maya chuckled as the memory of 'Dean's School of 80's Mullet Rock' filtered briefly through her
mind, even if it was accompanied by a pained ache in her chest.

"Some songs, yeah. On a Green Day kick at the moment though," Maya shrugged with an easy smile. "Love me some American Idiot, Holiday, and Boulevard of Broken Dreams."

Eli nodded with a small smile, finally starting to relax around her. "Y-yeah they got some good stuff too," he squeaked a little. "U-um do you like to play video games?"

Maya shrugged, having noticed Eli getting a little more nervous, "Mostly at the arcade."

"Um, uh, would you wanna hang out and-and play sometime?" he stammered, uncertain at what her answer would be.

"Sounds like fun," Maya smiled reassuringly as he looked at her with big surprised eyes.

"Really?!" he asked animatedly looking like a small excitable puppy.

She smiled. This friendship felt right. Not the one she tried to cultivate with Tracy and her cohorts.

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September 22 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Pepperjack Residence

Evening

"No! No! No! No! No! Damn it! Nooooo!" Maya cursed as she leaned heavily to the right, into Eli, as if physically moving would keep her virtual go-kart from going over the edge of the virtual track on the screen.

Eli was hunched over snickering as he took 1st place in the Mario Kart game they were playing. "You know moving the controller doesn't do anything right?"

Maya glared playfully at him, "Again. I'll whoop your smug little—"

There was a knock on the wall behind them, stopping Maya mid curse.

They turned around to see one of Eli's Dads, Lucas, there with a smile, "Sorry kids. No more games tonight." Cue the duo's disappointed 'awwwwww'. Puck just rolled his eyes at them. "Your Dad called Maya. He's on his way over to pick you up. Should be here in a couple of minutes."

"Okaaaaaaay," Maya sighed dramatically putting the controller down on Eli's bed. "I'll beat your smug little—" She turned back to Eli with a cough, "I'll beat your butt next time." Both her and Puck clambered off his bed, stretching sore leg muscles.

A doorbell rang through the house, signaling her Dad's arrival. Eli's other Dad, Marc, was answering the door and greeting the goof that was Gabriel.
"Hi, you must be Maya's Dad," Marc greeted with a gentle smile.

Gabriel gave a friendly smile in return, "You know it!" His gold eyes trailed lazily over the taller, lean, dark haired man with grey-green eyes. "Name's Loki. But I could be Mister Tonight if you like," Gabriel purred, waggling his eyebrows suggestively.

Marc gave him a snort. "Marc. And, sorry, I like my men a little taller and, you know, my husband," he chuckled in good humor.

"Even better! Three-way," Gabriel purred brightly with a wide smile and another eyebrow waggle.

Maya was the first down the stairs when she caught her Dad's expression towards Marc Pepperjack. "Dad! Don't even think about it!" she pointed at him angrily, before rushing over to him and Marc, Lucas and Eli just coming down the stairs behind her with confused faces.

"Mr. Pepperjack, I'm soooo sorry!" she apologized as Lucas and Eli looked between them, still confused. Puck just huffed quietly, used to the family's antics. "He doesn't always know when to just keep it in his pants," she deadpanned looking at her Dad disapprovingly, because really? Hitting on one of her new friend's Dads?

Eli's face went beet red, while Lucas guffawed.

"You amenable to a three-way?" Lucas laughed, brown eyes filled with mirth, much to Eli and Maya's horror. Marc just rolled his eyes at his husband's antics.

"A man after my own heart!" Gabriel chortled grabbing his own chest dramatically. His gold eyes landed back on his daughter who looked like she wanted the floor to just swallow her up right then and there given how mortified she looked. "So Mini-Eggs, how do you feel about Chinese take-out tonight?"

Maya sent him a bitch-face that asked 'why-are-you-like-this?/why-you-do-this-to-me?' before sighing, "Wanton soup?"

"Naturally," Gabriel answered with a mirth filled tone. The perk of being a parent was relentlessly embarrassing your children.

"Good," Maya nodded, pleased, but still a little perturbed over her Dad's antics. She turned to look over at Eli and grabbed the skinny teen in a tight hug, earning a squeak. "Thanks for having me over Eli. I had fun," she released the younger teen who rubbed the back of his neck embarrassed. "Sorry you had to meet my Dad like this."

"I-it's alright, Maya. If you haven't noticed my Pop's the s-same way. Thanks for c-coming over," he squeaked out with a happy smile that had both his Dads absolutely beaming.

Maya gave her own friendly smirk back at him then looked at his two Dads, "Thanks for having me over Mr. & Mr. Pepperjack."

"It was nice having you over too, Maya," Marc said with a wide smile.

Lucas nodded his agreement as he looped an arm around Marc's shoulder, "Yeah, you and Puck are welcome anytime." He then looked over at Gabriel mischievously, "So about that—"

He was cut off when Marc elbowed him pointedly, "Stop embarrassing the children, Lucas!"

Gabriel snorted, "You say that now. Just wait till she starts getting used to you, then the pranks
come out. And—"

Maya looked back at her Dad with her face in exaggerated shock, and a hand to her chest in fake hurt. "I would never," she said with fake affront, while her Dad kept talking.

"—embarrassing our kiddos is a parental prerogative. An inalienable right," Gabriel finished with a teasing smirk as the teens shared an eye roll and the other parents chuckled. "Now, to the car with you, you troublemaker!" he dramatically pointed to the car, like he was some over the top King in a comedy special.

She rolled her eyes and grinned at him before looking back at Eli, "Bye Eli! See ya Monday!" She gave him a wave and jogged down the front porch steps to the car, Puck at her heels. "I'll kick your butt later!"

Gabriel turned back to look at the Pepperjacks who didn't look worried at Maya's parting words. "Games?"

Lucas nodded with a smile, "Mario Kart." Eli had already left the doorway, after waving back at Maya, clambering up the stairs back to his room.

"Ah yes, video games," Gabriel chuckled. "She gets pretty competitive with those. Anyways, nice meeting you guys, and give me a call about that three-way, yeah?" he smirked as the two husbands rolled their eyes at his teasing and waved good-bye before closing the front door.

'Nice couple,' Gabriel thought as he walked back to the car to see Maya rummaging through the take-out bags, while trying to keep Puck from sticking his head in them.

Gabriel smiled at them as he opened the car door and took them home.

September 23 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Evening…

Maya was outside playing fetch with Puck and just general rough housing with the little dog after slogging through some homework.

"You want the rope? You want the rope?" Maya cooed playfully on her knees as her and Puck played tug-of-war with a thick and knotted piece of rope. Puck had his jaws clamped tightly on the other end as he tried to shake and tug the rope from Maya's hand. All the while, while Maya moved the rope left-to-right and back again, pulling it in the air to force Puck onto his hind legs then moving it to the side to knock him off balance.

He never once lost his grip and would growl and wag his tail playfully.

Maya got to her feet and went to tug the rope up again to see if he'd still hang on when his hind legs left the ground, when Puck all of a sudden let go. This caused Maya to lose her balance and fall backwards on her ass with a loud surprised, "Whoa!"

Maya chuckled and went to playfully nudge Puck when she noticed his alert and tense stance. His body was completely still as little ears perked vigilantly in the air and little brown eyes slowly surveyed the yard.
Puck felt something coming. Something malicious. He turned to his nervous Mistress and gave a whiny and urgent bark. She nodded, her face serious, and quickly scrambled to her feet. Both of them made a beeline for the back door, just as the crisp fall air turned freezing and their breathes came out visible.

Puck snarled at what was behind them, but Maya didn't take the chance to look back. She didn't want to waste time, so she flung the door open and ran inside. Once beyond the threshold of the heavily warded home did she look back through the open door. Puck waddled backwards through the door, keeping his teeth bared and growling lowly at the entity that had appeared behind them.

It was Corbett.

Maya's breath caught in her throat and her heart squeezed painfully. The dead member of the Idiot Brigade, dressed in his suit and gear, looked at her with such sadness and accusation that she found it hard to breathe.

He flickered.

"You were supposed to protect me," he accused, the hole in his neck just as bloody as the day he died. "I was innocent. I didn't know any better. You were supposed to save me!" his voice grew in its intensity. "Does this look saved to you!?" he screamed at her.

"Corbett, I-I'm sorry. I tried! I really did!" Maya felt tears begin to streak down her face as guilt tore at her conscience.

"I just had to breathe right? Just keep calm and everything would turn out alright, right?" Corbett mocked cruelly. "Some savior of the clueless you are. You prance around talking about getting just desserts and saving people, but what about my justice, huh? Where was mine?"

Maya stepped a little closer to the threshold, not noticing the sound of the front door opening, "We got rid of Daggett, remember? You-you actually saved us. You got the bastard that did this—"

"BUT I'M STILL DEAD!" Corbett roared his face contorted in anger, appearing right at the edge of the threshold. "AND IT'S YOUR FAULT! YOU DIDN'T SAVE ME!"

Maya was so distracted by the whirling and guilty emotions on her chest she hadn't realized she made to reach past the threshold with her hand, as though to touch Corbett, to offer some form of comfort.

Puck was about to give a warning bark when Gabriel appeared behind Maya and pulled her away, just as Corbett tried to grab her hand.

Gabriel held his daughter around her waist and quickly shut the back door, muffling Corbett's angry voice slightly.

But then another angry voice popped up around the building.

In a window stood a young brown haired woman in a pale pink sweater vest with a white short-sleeved button up underneath, and a prominently displayed silver cross on a necklace. She was covered in blood, from having her skin flayed in places.

"You said you got the last demon, Maya! You told us we would be fine! That no one else was coming!" Nancy yelled, her muffled voice filtering through the windowpane. "Lilith came! She flayed me alive! I screamed and screamed for help, but where were you?!!"
"I-I-I—" Maya stuttered, choking on her tears. "I did get them! I-I didn't know she was still coming!"

"Look away Maya," Gabriel turned her around, holding her head to his chest as his fierce gold eyes scanned the pissed off ghosts hovering around the windows looking in. Looking and yelling at his distressed and crying daughter. Their words tearing at her guilt.

Guilt he hadn't been completely aware of. He'd figured she'd been hopping from town to town doing her thing before meeting up with Bobby, then the Winchesters after she disappeared on him in February.

*Guess not.*

Maya whimpered burying her head in her Dad's chest. She felt her Dad hold her tight whispering reassurances in her hair.

"It's okay baby girl. You're okay. I've got you," he murmured. "Don't listen to them. I'm sure you did everything you could to help them." That's when Gabriel's sharp eyes picked up a brand on their hands when one banged on a window.

"I-I tried to save them. *I tried*," Maya sobbed as Corbett and Nancy shouted more hurtful and accusatory words at her.

"And right now they need some saving again," Gabriel told her, getting her to look up at him with a tear stained face. "There's a mark on their hands. I know what it is. Someone's forced these guys to come back and they're in a lot of pain right now. It's not their fault."

"Who did this?" she sniffled. "Is there a witch in town?"

Gabriel shook his head, "No, I made sure there were no practitioners of *bitchcraft* here." He gently stroked her soft curls and lied, "I don't know who did this." He released Maya and looked at her, "But we're going to put them back to rest okay?"

Maya's gold eyes hardened in determination and gave a quick nod in return.

"Great," Gabriel smiled. "I'm pretty sure Hunter will have the info on the ritual we need to send them back. Hopefully he's still alive."

"WHAT?!" Maya yelped fearfully. "What do you mean, *hopefully*?!" her eyes were wide with fear and worry for her other Dad.

"Take it easy, Jawbreaker. I doubt that grumpy old codger kicked the bucket from this spell yet," Gabriel reassured as he took out his cellphone. "This spell forces people who died *unnaturally* to come back, and since none of my victims have shown up I'm guessing it's the people Hunters failed to save," he pointedly looked at Maya, "or the ones little demi-Tricksters failed to save while *playing* at being a Hunter."

Maya did not meet his gaze, *busted*. She flinched as another nasty insult was thrown at her from the ghosts outside.
It had already been a few hours since Bobby, Sam, and Dean had all ran down the old basement steps and barricaded themselves in Bobby's salt-coated iron clad panic room. The only ghost proof room in the house, equipped with air vent that cast a devil's trap shadow in the middle of the floor, a gun, axe, and bow rack, desk and tables, and wall bunk.

Also an old swimsuit pin-up model.

Sam and Dean were busy making as many salt rounds as they could. Bobby, on the other hand poured over every book he managed to grab on the way down that could relate to the onslaught of all these damn ghosts that had no business being in his house!

Bobby's cell buzzed in his plaid over shirt. Fishing it out he scoffed at the caller ID.

"Bobby, you get reception down here?" Dean asked in disbelief.

Bobby ignored him and answered the call anyways, "Wha'd'ya want Trickster? I'm busy with a damn ghost home invasion here." At hearing 'Trickster', Sam and Dean stopped packing salt rounds so they could listen in.

"Yeah, and I've got one too. Thankfully my house is warded out the whazoo or peanut butter cup, here, might not be doing too good," Loki bit back.

"Is My okay?" Bobby's parental instincts engaging as his brows furrowed in worry. If the boys weren't paying attention before, they were now. They silently moved from the other end of the panic room to Bobby's side to better listen in. Bobby sent them a disgruntled look at their invasion of his personal space.

"Little shook up, but yeah she's fine. So, listen, if you got the same problem you're probably already researching what's going on, right?"

"Yeah," Bobby answered. "Haven't found anythin' yet."

"That's fine. I myself, in my infinite wisdom, know what's going on. It's called The Rising of the Witnesses. Some witch-bitch out there cast a powerful spell and forced these ghosties to rise."

"Alright, but why exactly are they called Witnesses?" Bobby asked, side-eyeing the Winchesters hovering around him. He brought a finger to his lips telling them to stay quiet.

"They died—" Bobby put his phone on speakerphone, Loki's voice filtered through "—unnatural deaths. They were killed by supernatural causes."

"So you've got all your victims poppin' outside your house wantin' to tear your heart out?" Bobby snarked.

"Nope. I've got two so far that are focused on ripping Toffee's heart out," Loki growled back. "So if you have any info on the spell to nullify this one, it would be greatly appreciated. Maybe, check the Bible. This reeks of Judeo-Christianity."

"Why would a Norse god know anythin' about the Bible?" Bobby scoffed.

"You don't become top Trickster by sitting on your ass and not bothering to get into inter-pantheon politics," Loki drawled. "I'd look for it myself but I don't want to leave baby cakes by herself in a house surrounded by ghosts that take great pleasure in playing on her guilt in order to get their
hands on her."

"So, I get it, and you, what? Do the spell?" Bobby asked.

"Uh, yeah? That's the whole point of this call? Unless you want to try and do it, but I'm guessing your whole house ain't ghost-proof?"

"Fine," Bobby groused. "Tell My to keep safe and to not be an idjit."

"Absolutely love your concern over my own welfare Hunter."

Bobby didn't reply and just hung up on him, turning to look at the boys. "Well, now we've got a lead."

"Did Loki just tell you to check the Bible?" Dean asked in disbelief.

"Yep," Bobby answered and pulled out his old copy of the book. "And I doubt he meant the tourist version." Dean went to open his mouth, but Bobby cut him off, "And before ya get to bitchin' and moanin' about me trustin' him, remember, My's got some spectral assholes gunnin' for her too. And Loki doesn't shit around when it comes to her."

Dean held his hands up in surrender and went back to the workbench to continue packing salt rounds.

Just in case.

Little time later…

Dean had finished bellyaching about not being able to get behind God. He could accept bad things happening to good people, with no rhyme or reason. Just random, horrible, evil. That he could handle.

What he couldn't handle was the thought that if God existed why would he let all that crap happen? Where was he while all these decent people were getting torn to shreds?

Why doesn't he help?

Sam and Bobby had shared a look.

"I ain't touchin' this one with a 10ft pole," Bobby chuckled. "Anyways, I found it."

"What?" Sam asked, as he and Dean turned in their chairs to look over at Bobby.

"The symbol you saw. It's called the Mark of the Witness. It's a brand that occurs when someone uses a powerful spell that forces ghosts to rise. In agony. They're like rabid dogs, can't help themselves," Bobby shrugged. "And like Loki said it's part of somethin' called the Risin' of the Witnesses, and it figures into an ancient prophecy in the Bible."

"Seriously?" Dean asked incredulously. "And which one's that?"

"Revelations," Bobby revealed, looking up at the boys grimly. "This is a sign, boys."

Sam and Dean shared a look before asking at the same time, "A sign of what?"
Bobby leaned back in his seat, glanced at his notes once more before looking back at Sam and Dean with a sigh, "The Apocalypse."

"Apocalypse?" Dean couldn't believe it.

"Yep," Bobby shrugged.

Dean furrowed his eyebrows and gestured his disbelief, "As in *Apocalypse* Apocalypse? The Four Horsemen, Pestilence, $5-a-gallon-gas Apocalypse?"

"That's the one," Bobby exhaled with a nod. "The Risin' of The Witnesses is a mile marker."

"Okay, so what do we do now?" Sam asked uncrossing his arms.

Dean scoffed. "Road trip. Grand Canyon, Star Trek experience," he listed as he went to take a seat at the workbench on the other side of the panic room. He clapped his hands and pointed back at them, "*Bunny Ranch.*"

"First things first. How about we survive our friends out there?" Bobby suggested.

"Wait, I thought we were going to give Loki the spell to do it over on his end?" Sam asked in confusion.

Bobby hit his note pad with the end of his pencil, "The spell Loki wanted has a drawin' component that the ingredients need to be mixed over in order to work. And I doubt we can communicate enough to walk him through how to draw it correctly."

"Can your phone send a picture?" Sam asked. "You can send him the picture then tell him everything else he needs."

Bobby, disgruntled, looked back at Sam over his shoulder, "I barely get by textin' on the damn thing." He dug out his cellphone and tossed it to Sam, "You do it."

Sam easily caught the old piece of technology, which did in fact have a camera feature, and took a picture of the needed markings for the spell. He was able to send the picture to—

"It was Godson, right?" Sam looked to Bobby for confirmation. Bobby nodded and Sam pressed send.

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**Gloversville, New York, United States**

During the time they spent waiting for Bobby's reply, Gabriel had silenced the spirits' voices and drawn the blinds. He also threw up an illusion over the entire lot to hide the lurking apparitions from the neighbors.

*Trying to blend in here people!*

Gabriel was also able to get out of Maya that she had met up with the Winchesters instead of Bobby. He also learned of her hunting exploits with the Winchesters as well.

First, being surrounded by demons in a police station with *Lilith* on the way. Slightly explained why Lilith now knew about her. *Oh joy.*
Second, almost being a Crocotta's late night snack. Gabriel knew all too well their preference for demi-gods, especially little Trickster ones. Although, if it had succeeded Maya's soul might've been it's last meal. 'Cause, y'know, archangel grace stuffed inside a human soul, with a light layer of Trickster magic on the outside.

He stowed the random amused thought that he somehow turned his baby into some kind of supernatural turducken.

Finally, her two ghost hunts where the ghosts decided to hone in on her specifically. The second one where she went behind three seasoned Hunters' backs to try and do it self.

Gabriel was silent as he stared down his guilt ridden child as she shuffled on her feet nervously, contemplating how to discipline her behavior.

There wasn't much else he could think up that could match the severity of what she had gotten into in her absence. He'd already suppressed most of her power.

Maya looked up at his contemplative eyes and said with a weak smile, "Uh, does it help that Bobby already put me through the ringer for taking up hunting?"

"No," he deadpanned. "You're grounded."

"I'm already grounded, sooo...?" she pointed out questioningly, losing some of her sheepishness.

"Well, you're-you're even more grounded!" Gabriel sputtered huffily.

"Oooookaaaay," Maya drawled looking at him with a raised eyebrow. "What's my punishment then? You've already bound my powers when I'm too far from away from you. What else you gonna do?"

There was a pregnant pause.

"Shut up," Gabriel muttered with a pout. "I'll think of something."

"Mhmm," Maya hummed.

Gabriel's phone buzzed with a text from Bobby.

"This ain't over," Gabriel shot over at Maya with a stern look. Maya looked away with a pout.

Gabriel ignored the mental image of a pouting kitten Maya's look conjured up. Hard to stay mad at the little Troublemaker when she pulls faces like that.

He was looking at an image Bobby sent when the cellphone rang.

'Bobert The Hunter' appeared on the caller ID.

Bobby gave him the list of ingredients and the spell he needed to do over an open fire. With a snap of his fingers the fireplace was lit.

"I'll let you know how it goes. Maybe," Gabriel grinned after committing the spell to memory. Didn't take much. Perks of being an archangel. He hung up then got a mischievous look on his face.

'Thanks a bunch! Hugs and kisses! ;) 33' Gabriel texted wishing he could see Hunter's reaction to the text.
So he did the next best thing, he showed Maya what he did.

Ooooh the scandalized glare sent his way, with a hint of a horrified 'WHY?!' thrown in.

Gabriel cackled then began gathering the ingredients for the spell. It was time to send these poor souls back to rest.

And preferably, without them tearing out his daughter's heart.

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Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Bobby had just finished informing Loki of the spell to put the Witnesses back to rest when he got a text from the damned idjit.

'Thanks a bunch! Hugs and kisses! ;) 33'

Bobby scowled at the text and cursed with a growl, "Damn idjit."

"What'd he do?" Dean asked looking over at Bobby curiously at his curse. Sam turned to look at him, curious as well.

He shook his head and scoffed, "Nothin'. Just Loki bein' an ass." Bobby tossed the phone to Dean so he could have a look at the text.

Sam peered over Dean's shoulder to look as well. Both their faces blanched in confused disgust.

"Is Loki…flirting with you?" Sam asked a little pale. He didn't need the mental image of the Trickster, Maya's Dad, acting all…flirtatious to the only other father figure he and Dean had left. He diligently kept his mind from going farther than that.

"What the hell, Bobby?!" Dean exclaimed, also looking perturbed and appalled. "Is he freaking serious?"

Just…NO!

Bobby just rolled his eyes at the two idjits. Honestly. They acted like a couple of teenagers instead of two fully grown men!

"Oh quite bein' a couple of overgrown babies. He doesn't mean a lick of it. If anythin' he's just doin' it to get a rise outta My," he snorted. "Lord knows she'd act just as disgusted as you two are actin' right now."

A beat of silence as the Winchesters got the shivers of revulsion down their spines under control.

Dean broke it with an empathetic, "Oh thank fuck. There is a God."

Sam choked back a laugh, even if he held the same sentiment.

Bobby shook his head with a deep sigh. Why'd he get stuck with all the idjits? Even if their reactions were damn entertaining.

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**Warning infanticide**

Lilith pouted childishly in a small brunette child's body as her spell went up in blue fire. Sadly, only twenty Hunters were killed.

She'd hoped for a lot more. Oh well. Plenty more seals to choose from. Plenty more fun to be had!

A demon nervously knocked on the doorframe of what once was a quaint living room. Blood drenched the carpeted floor, especially where the body parts of the meat suit's parents laid abandoned.

"Yes?" Lilith walked over to a basinet tucked away into the corner beside the fireplace and failed spell. She reached in to retrieve the child meat suit's little sibling, who was not even old enough to crawl yet. The child whimpered and began to cry.

"We've, uh, discovered something interesting over in New York State," the demonic minion informed as it watched Lilith move to a coffee table with a large metal bowl and blood-crusted dagger.

"Really? What kind of interesting?" Lilith tilted her head as she grasped the dagger tightly, internally smirking as the little girl she inhabited screamed *so prettily* for her little sibling's life, begging Lilith to leave them alone.

"A small town, completely warded against demons. None of us can get in," the demon tensed as Lilith locked delighted chocolate brown eyes on them. "We're pretty sure it's where the counter-spell came from as well."

"That *is* interesting!" she chirped with a wide grin and darkly glinting eyes. "I wonder who's inside, and what they're trying to hide."

An infant's crying was suddenly cut short, replaced by faint gurgling and the sound of thick liquid flowing into a metal bowl. The little girl inside her wailed heartbrokenly as she brought the bowl to her lips.

"Have someone nearby…" Lilith lowered the bowl. "What's the town?"

"Gloversville," the demon immediately answered.

A red stained shark like grin spread across her childish features, "Have someone waiting around there. The warding will fall. We'll have someone arriving on the inside, *soon.*"

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**September 24 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States**

**Couple hours past midnight…**

Dean had been sleeping on the couch in the library/study off of the kitchen when a faint flutter of wings had woken him up. He had decided to bunk there that night after the Witnesses were finally laid to rest once more for two reasons.

First reason was that he was still amped up from being forced to see people he hadn't been able to
save. His protective Hunter instincts were still high strung and demanded that he lightly slept somewhere in case something else tried to come into the house to attack Sam and Bobby.

The second reason was that he was too tired to attempt walking up all those stairs. His energy levels finally crashed enough to sleep, but albeit not deeply. It had nothing to do with wanting Sam to have no choice but to take one of the spare beds upstairs. Sam tried to push sleeping on the floor so Dean wasn't alone, but Dean was in big brother mode and all but shoved Sam up the stairs. Telling Sam he was useless without a good nights sleep.

Sitting up he carefully walked over to the wide doorway leading to the kitchen. Relaxing a smidge at the sight of the trench coat clad angel leaning back against the sink, hands braced against the counter top beside him.

Castiel didn't even say hi when Dean approached. He just got straight to the point, "Excellent job with the Witnesses. Even if you had to use…outside help from a pagan." The angel's eyes pinched and his lips turned down fractionally in a minute scowl.

"How'd you know?" Dean queried with harsh eyes.

"The counter spell reeked of pagan magic. I…wasn't aware that you were...friends with a pagan god."

Dean snorted derisively, "More like an understanding. Besides, he only helped 'cause Goldy was in trouble." Dean's eyes narrowed in scrutiny at the angel in front of him.

"Who is this…Goldy?" Castiel asked with a slightly tilted head and a confused look.

"Family." Dean grunted as he glared at the angel, almost daring him to comment further. "But that's not what I want to know. What I want to know is where were you when all this crap was going down? You sound like you were pretty hip to all this, so where was the angelic assistance, huh?"

"It's clear you didn't need it," Castiel responded calmly with his gravelly voice. A stark contrast to Dean's rising anger. This damn angel could've helped sooner, saved a lot more Hunter lives. Hunters that could help them with whatever the hell was going on. Dean wasn't buying the whole Apocalypse spiel yet.

"Yeah? What about all the other Hunters that died because of this, huh?" Dean demanded. "I thought angels were supposed to be guardians. Fluffly wings, halos—you know, Michael Landon. Not dicks."

Castiel's intense blue eyes never wavered from Dean's. "Read the Bible. Angels are warriors of God. I'm a soldier," Castiel explained.

"Yeah? Then why didn't you fight?" Dean challenged with a tight jaw.

"I'm not here to perch on your shoulder. We had larger concerns," the angel revealed enigmatically.

Dean didn't see what could be so important that saving lives was put on the back burner.

"Concerns?" Dean looked at the dark haired angel in disbelief. "People were getting torn to shreds down here!"

Castiel looked away with a silent sigh. The kind only reserved for those who needed a moment to gather a bit more patience when dealing with difficult people. He looked back calmly as Dean
"And, by the way, while all this is going on, where the hell is your boss, huh? If there is a God?"

"There's a God," Castiel answered seriously.

"You know, I'm not so convinced. 'Cause if there is a God, what the hell is he waiting for, huh? Genocide? Monsters roaming the earth? The freaking Apocalypse? At what point does he lift a damn finger and help the poor bastards that are stuck down here?" he demanded.

Castiel shook his head, "The Lord works in—"

"If you say 'mysterious ways', so help me, I will kick your ass," Dean interrupted with a glare.

Castiel did a little surrender gesture with his hands, looking away from Dean as he conceded not to say mysterious ways, before looking back at him.

Taking a breath to calm down enough to ask more questions, Dean walked closer to the angel till he was a couple feet to his left. Neither of them took their eyes off each other.

"So Bobby was right, about the Witnesses?" Dean queried. "This is some kind of a…sign of the Apocalypse." The enormity of what him and his brother had found themselves in was beginning to sink in.

"That's why we're here. Big things a foot," Castiel told plainly.

Dean gave him a worried stare, "Do I want to know what kind of things?"

Castiel tilted his head negatively, "I sincerely doubt it, but you need to know." He looked away as he explained, "The Rising of the Witnesses is one of the sixty-six seals."

"Okay. I'm guessing that's not a show at Sea World," Dean quipped.

"Those seals are being broken," Castiel turned his head back to Dean. "By Lilith."

Understanding flitted through green eyes, "She did the spell. She rose the Witnesses."

Castiel nodded his head slightly, "Mm-hmm. And not just here. Twenty other Hunters are dead."

"Of course. She picked victims that the other Hunters and Goldy couldn't save so that they would barrel right after us," Dean concluded.

Castiel gave Dean a slightly curious look after he mentioned this Goldy character again. Dean claimed they were family, but he was unaware of any other relatives related to Dean that had the name Goldy.

Who ever they were, they had a strong connection with the pagan god that performed the spell to send the Witnesses to rest in order to protect them. He briefly wondered which false god would willingly perform this spell in order to save Hunters that would sooner kill them than work with them, even if it was mostly for this…person they were so close with.

The pagans had never been overly…altruistic.

"Lilith has a certain sense of humor," Castiel commented, stowing his curious thoughts for now.

"Well, the asshole put those spirits back to rest. Course he decided to wait two hours before telling
us. The damn bastard," Dean grouched. Remembering Bobby answering his cellphone and Maya's exasperated voice filtering through the speakers apologizing for her Dad's behavior.

Along with the faint voice of Loki yelling in the background about how could Bobby not tell him that his baby took up hunting.

Bobby had rolled his eyes and told Maya it was nice knowing her. Maya had snarked back how she was just 'feeling the love'. Bobby had then given the boys a look, and looked between them and the phone.

Sam and Dean shook their heads. They had told Bobby once he'd hung up that it would be better for Maya not to know. The last thing they needed to worry about was Lilith getting her grubby little hands on her, and, sadly, she was safer with her Dad than with them. That had been an acknowledged blow to their Hunter pride, but it was for her own good.

If she knew Dean was alive they didn't doubt her showing up on Bobby's doorstep one day looking for him so she could give him a piece of her mind.

And probably her fists, before trying to join them to help.

Bobby told them they were idjits and reminded them that he was going to throw them under the bus when Maya demanded to know why Bobby didn't tell her about Dean's resurrection.

"It doesn't matter," Castiel told him with a shake of his head, brining Dean back from his thoughts. "The seal was still broken."

"Why break the seal anyway?"

Castiel sighed, "You can think of the seals as locks on a door."

"Okay. Last one opens and…" Dean probed, needing a little more to go on.

Castiel pushed himself from the counter and turned to face Dean completely, till there was a foot between them.

"Lucifer walks free."

"Lucifer?" Dean didn't quite believe the angel. "But I thought Lucifer was just a story they told at demon Sunday school. There's no such thing."

"Three days ago you thought there was no such thing as me," Castiel pointed out.

Dean grimaced. He had a point.

"Why do you think we're here walking among you now for the first time in 2,000 years?"

"To stop Lucifer," Dean answered, a little in shock. So the Devil's real. Good to know.

Castiel nodded, "It's why we arrived."

Dean gave a small huff, "Well…bang up job so far. Stellar work with the Witnesses." Dean moved to lean against the counter top now. "Needed a pagan god to stop that one. Even then just to clean up the mess you couldn't stop. Must really rub you the wrong way, being a Holy Roller and all," he commented sarcastically.

Castiel's eyes narrowed as he moved to crowd into Dean's space. "We tried. There are other seals,
other battles. Some we'll win, some we'll lose. This one we lost. Don't assume that our numbers are unlimited," the angel's voice becoming more gravelly.

"Six of my brothers died in the field this week. You think the armies of Heaven should just follow you around? There's a bigger picture here," Dean kept glancing away from the intense blue-eyed stare of the angel. "You should show me some respect. I dragged you out of Hell. I can throw you back in."

Dean glanced back to find Castiel had already vanished.

Leaving that threat hanging in the air like a heavy fog.

Dean let out a shaky breath as memories of Hell tried to assault his conscious mind.

He really needed to learn when to keep his mouth shut.

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**Early October-ish 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States**

**Gloversville High School**

**Morning**

"Maya, I-I don't think this is such a good idea," Eli muttered as he kept look out from the janitor's closet along with Puck while Maya fiddled with the sink. "I don't want to get in trouble."

"And yet, here you are," Maya hummed all too pleasantly as she shot a blast of food coloring into an empty water balloon before filling it up haphazardly in the sink. "Don't worry. If anyone's getting in trouble with Gheddys it's me. I'm literally going to get caught red handed. And yellow, and green, and blue handed," she chuckled, showing Eli her stained fingers and hands.

Eli sighed through his nose as he surveyed the sparsely filled halls. "All this trouble isn't worth it for a comment…" Eli mumbled with a frown.

"You're right," Eli looked back at her in surprise. "It's worth a hell of a lot more! Do you think I have enough time to fill up some of these bad boys with paint?" she gave him a dazzling grin as she held up a leaky balloon.

Eli face palmed. They may have become friends a couple of weeks ago, but Eli had quickly learned something about Maya.

She was stubborn, especially when it concerned jerks and assholes.

So, Maya wasn't about to let the football team get away from slandering Eli and his Dads.

"You're Dad's gonna be m-mad, Maya," Eli tried to dissuaded her. "Didn't you say you're already like, double-grounded or something?"

Maya tied off another balloon, "Well, yeah, but that was for things completely unrelated to pranking justice. I'll bet you $20 bucks that after dealing with the principal he'll tell me I did good."

Eli and Puck stared at her silently as she chuckled to herself like an evil 80's cartoon villain. Puck huffed in amusement, earning a weirded out glance from Eli.
The kid had been wondering about his new friend and her dog. Something was a little weird about her, her Dad, and her dog, but he didn't find himself minding all too much. It was a good kind of weird.

Eli sighed in resignation, "I-I'll help you get them to the roof, b-but you're on your own a-after that."

Maya waved him off with a smile, "Yeah, yeah. Baby steps into the realm of higher prankster-ing, Eli. Baby steps. I'll get you pranking and pulling tricks in no time!"

Later that morning…

Principal Gheddys' Office

Maya sat in one of the chairs in front of Principal Gheddys not looking the least bit repentant. Gabriel sat beside her looking curiously at the white, stout, balding, all-American principal.

He had just finished explaining to Gabriel what his daughter had done.

"Ooookay," Gabriel drawled crossing his legs as he leaned back in his chair. "So nougat here," he gestured to Maya who still looked overly pleased with herself, "Filled water balloons with water and food dye and water ballooned the football team coming in from practice, from on top of the school roof. Now, I know my girl loves a good prank, but she doesn't usually do something like this without a reason.

"So, Principal Gheddys, did she tell you why she did it?"

Murky brown's hidden behind wire rimmed glasses looked away briefly before returning to stare sternly at Gabriel's amused gold ones.

"Something about an inappropriate comment about Pepperjack's parents," the man dismissed with a wave. "That still doesn't excuse her—"

"What'd they say?" Gabriel probed, with a raised eyebrow.

Gheddys looked a little blustered at the question and tried to turn the conversation back around, "It doesn't matter, ! Your daughter still assaulted—"

"Assaulted by water balloons with food dye? When did water balloons fall under assault weapons?" Gabriel scoffed, looking over at Maya. "What'd they say about Eli's Dads that they needed to be assaulted by water balloons?"

"Whatever they said holds no merit for her—" Gheddys tried to interrupt with a harsh glare, but Maya just plowed right through with a large cheshire grin.

"They said they were disgusting faggots who deserved to be stomped before they made Eli anymore fairy-like than he already was," Maya parroted. "Which is stupid, because I'm pretty sure Eli's Dads have no say in his sexual preferences. Which is pretty damn straight. Like flag pole straight."

", language," Principal Gheddys admonished with a stern look, before looking back at Gabriel.
"Now that is some disgustingly bigoted attitudes right there, Principal Gheddys," Gabriel turned to look expectantly back at the man. "What're you going to do about this attitude your football team has towards gay people?"

By the shocking red color and rising fury in Gheddys face it became obvious that the middle-aged man had reached his limit.

"ENOUGH!" the stout man shouted as he slammed his hands on his desk, standing up behind it. "YOUR DAUGHTER IS THE ONE IN TROUBLE!"

Gabriel and Maya just looked calmly at the panting red-faced principal as he tried to regain some composure.

"Yeah, no shit she is," Gabriel snorted, causing Gheddys to sport a dumbfounded look on his face. Maya just rolled her eyes. "I'm not trying to get her out of getting detentions Principal Gheddys. I'm just trying to figure out what's going on, and making sure that all parties are held responsible."

"Well, huh," the principal spluttered as he tried to regain his composure, "she has detention after school for the next week, after a two day suspension."

Gabriel gave a small shrug and a nod, agreeing to the punishment, then turned hard and expectant gold eyes on the other man, "And the football team who think being bigoted asswipes is okay?"

" , please! Language!" Gheddys admonished, his eyes flickering to Maya who still looked all too pleased with her self. He'd had some complaints from her teachers about her use of inappropriate language during class. Now he could see where she seemed to have learned it from.

Gabriel rolled his eyes with a derisive snort, "Fine. Bigoted, moronic Neanderthal-ish butt-wipes." He then gave the principal the same unrepentant grin that his daughter sported, as she chuckled at his description.

"As I said, it still does not warrant an excuse for behaving—"

Gabriel narrowed his eyes threateningly, "What is. The team's. Punishment?"

"Don't worry ," the stout man gave a placating gesture, as he begun to sweat nervously. "The boys have been thoroughly warned that their behavior was unacceptable and would be dealt with should they be caught—"

"Warned?" Gabriel queried with an accusing eyebrow. His voice may have sounded light, innocently curious and questioning, but the underlying tone belied the threat underneath it.

"Y-ye—" Gheddys coughed to lower the high pitch his voice had taken. "Yes," he said more firmly, even as his heart threatened to beat out of his chest. He could hardly understand his reaction to this unassuming man. From what he knew of Loki Godson, he was a relatively short, single father who lived a rather carefree, fun-loving, and unstructured lifestyle. Something he had obviously passed on to his child.

But something about the parent sitting across from him made his heart race, almost like a predator was watching him for any miss-step. Something frightening that lurked under the cheery and jovial air the man wrapped around him self like a cloak. And like a cloak it shifted, showcasing glimpses of something that stalked patiently beneath it.

"So, if the boys can get away with a warning then surely my kid can as well? Three days of detention should be enough, since she did get caught. And three days for the team with
some…sensitivity training," Gabriel stated, his even tone leaving no room for argument. Maya eyed her Dad, and then looked at Gheddys with a smirk. Waiting for him to try to argue against it.

He did. Try, that was.

"I'm sorry but that's not—" Gheddys tried to argue shaking his head, but Gabriel didn't let him finish.

"No, I'm sorry you feel that way. You obviously place your star football team over the safety and sense of security for your students," Gabriel's eyes were cold and hard as he sat up in his chair and leaned forward. "I can't imagine how many students who are already going through a tough time with all their own angst-y shit, but to also know they aren't safe here? Since you don't seem inclined to do anything to the assholes that make threatening comments like that. Other than be accommodating to your sports teams," he growled lowly.

He wanted to prank this guy into oblivion. It's dumbasses like these that encourage kids to be jerks and assholes in the first place. One of the many reasons why Tricksters tend to exist in the first place, and why they always have a plethora of targets to choose from.

"You set a dangerous precedent, Gheddys. One I think a lot of parents would love to know about," Gabriel brought out the shark grin, as Gheddys seemed to lose a bit of color.

"I-I'm sure th-that's not necess—" Gheddys tried to assuage with a nervous laugh as more sweat dripped down his neck.

"Mmmm-no I think it is," Gabriel hummed as he leaned back in his seat once more. The 'gotcha-now' smirk set firmly in place. "So wanna run by that punishment for those ignoramus' you call your football team?"

Principal Gheddys looked between the smugly smiling duo, nervously licking his lips as he decided what he was going to do.

Maya made an attempt to look contrite as they left the principal's office, but the smirk never left her face as they walked by some colorfully stained football players who had been called back to the office. Puck, having waited outside the office, followed behind them leisurely.

They sent glares her way, including the one player that was part of Tracy's circle of friends. Maya sent him a wide smile. The fact he was one of her victims was just a bonus.

They walked to the front of the school where Gabriel was parked out front, and where there were fewer students.

"Soooo," Gabriel began. "When you asked for water balloons and food dye this morning I wasn't really expecting a call from Principal Douchebag in there. You're usually better than this about getting caught."

Maya gave a noncommittal shrug, "Guess I wasn't so lucky this time."

"Riiiiight," Gabriel snorted quirking an eyebrow at her. "So you also didn't cackle like a bad 80's cartoon villain while you threw the balloons at them? I thought I've told you to reserve the cackling for later?"
"C'moon. How could I not laugh? They needed to show some…pride," she scoffed with a sideways grin. "I just gave them a helping hand. Annnnd maybe keep them from thinking Eli might've been the one to do it, since his Dads were the ones they were bashing," she revealed with a shrug.

Gabriel slung an arm around her shoulders, "You're a good friend kiddo. You did good, but you know you've now got the whole football team gunning for your ass, right?"

"Yeah, but I can handle myself more than Eli can. Powers or not they ain't gonna get me that easily," she smirked confidently.

Gabriel didn't look too sure. Could you blame him? A whole team of male football players will now want a piece of her.

He retracted his arm, "Give me a minute. I need to talk to Principal Douchebag again."

Maya gave him a confused look, "What? Why?"

"Just making sure your detention is separate from the team's!" Gabriel called back as he swiftly walked back through the school doors. Maya rolled her eyes, deciding to not to follow.

Her Dad was in papa-bear mode. No point trying to assure him she would be fine.

She then looked down at Puck with a smirk as she remembered something, "Pepperjack owes me $20."

The little dog gave her a deadpanned stare before rolling his little eyes at her. Looked like his workload had just increased.

Joy.

A week later…

Maya was suspicious. Tracy was acting all friendly again towards her. Just a couple days ago she had been glaring at her, especially when she was standing next to that asshole football-playing friend of hers. Apparently sensitivity training didn't stick all that much.

Eli was chattering excitedly beside Maya at her locker about some Sci-fi show he saw last night when Tracy sauntered up to her. She leaned against the locker beside Maya's. Eli's voice fell silent, his eyes bugging out nervously as they bounced between Tracy and Maya's faces. Puck gave a quiet growl at the blonde, but she wasn't deterred.

Maya sent her sideways glance before continuing to rummage through her locker. "What do you want Tracy?" Maya sniffed coldly.

Tracy pouted prettily at her as she chewed some gum. Maya could feel the heat climbing up the back of her neck. "Aww don't be like that Maya. So we've had a few…disagreements and spats. Doesn't mean we can't try to be friends again," she trailed a hand down Maya's arm, smirking as her face reddened in a blush, her jaw clenching. Puck's eyes narrowed at the blonde girl, still untrusting of the other teen as when he'd first met her.

"Right, because you and your cronies taking pleasure in belittling and humiliating others is such a
"little ignorable thing," Maya sneered as she finally had enough sense of mind to jerk her arm out of her grasp. Sadly the touch lingered, keeping the tips of her ears burning.

Tracy tsked with a lazy eye roll, "Not my fault they don't have a backbone shared between all of them."

Maya loudly closed her locker as she finally turned to look at the bitchy blonde with a sarcastic sneer, "Wow. And you wonder why I don't want to be friends with you?"

Tracy's eyes darted to the side sarcastically as she removed her piece of gum before sending her a coy look. "Well, we don't have to be friends friends," she smirked as she caught Maya off guard by pressing up against her and putting her arms over her shoulders. Maya instinctively put hands on Tracy's hips to support the other girl and to keep from being pushed over.

Maya's eye went wide, pupils blown, as she froze in surprise from having the hot blonde press against her, and her face only a few inches from her face. Her face felt like it was on fire, as all her senses seemed to zero in on Tracy. Her pretty blonde hair, those bright intense eyes, her hands still on the other girl's hips, and her scent.

At that her nose twitched at the fragrant vanilla and cinnamon smell wafting from Tracy. Maya clenched her jaw from making an embarrassing noise.

"We could have all sorts of fun together," Tracy brought her face closer to Maya's, their lips only two inches a part. Her brain was completely over run with rampant teenage hormones that told her that 'Yes!-That-was-a-fantastic-idea!'...until Tracy kept talking. "Just ditch the dweeb aaand…"

Tracy brought her lips closer to Maya's, but Maya pulled away with a deep frown.

"What's wrong?" Tracy asked with slightly lidded eyes, licking her plump lips.

Maya gulped when her eyes flickered to her lips then back up to Tracy's eyes.

'Quit it!' mentally scolded her traitorous body. She gave Tracy a strained smile as she removed her hands from her hips and took her arms off from around her shoulders. "Sorry Tracy, but uh, you know," Maya looked at her with less than sincere remorse. "Bros before hoes."

Tracy wretched her arms from Maya's gentle grip as her face contorted in rage. Maya expected her to storm off, or an angry insult, but the bitch slap she received instead should've been less surprising.

There was a collective 'oooooooh' from all the students that had been watching the spectacle. Some flinched in sympathetic pain, while others snickered.

"Maya! You o-okay?" Eli squeaked behind her while Puck growled lowly at their feet. Maya turned her head to answer him, a hand rubbing on her slapped cheek when she felt something put in her hair.

She whipped her head around to look at a smug looking Tracy and heard Eli suck in a breath behind her.

"Bitch, what the hell did you just do?" Maya demanded as she felt what Tracy had put in her brown curls. Her fingers coming into contact with something moist and sticky.

_Fucking chewing gum!_

Tracy shrugged an arm, "What I'd planned to do before I got a little..._distracted_. Later losers."
sauntered off with a swish of her hips that had Maya once again cursing her body for automatically following the motion with her eyes.

Maya was ready to give the blonde seductress a piece of her mind when the morning bell rang, signaling that students better hustle to their first period classes.

"Aaagh," Maya groaned despondently. There was no time to try and remedy the gum-in-hair situation. "Fuck my life."

Eli patted her shoulder in comfort, "Could be worse, right?"

Maya and Puck looked at Eli with a deadpanned stare, "The Universe has heard your mocking, and will now unleash its fury upon me. Thanks Eli. Thank you, so much."

Eli rolled his eyes as they started heading towards their math class (Maya didn't do well on her math placement), "You're exaggerating."

Afternoon…

Maya hadn't been exaggerating. Eli had jinxed her with the whole 'could-always-be-worse' crap.

For the rest of the day Tracy and her friends made it a point to throw chewed gum at her head or wrestle it into her hair. All stealthily behind teachers' backs.

They especially got her good during their lunch break. She had just managed to cut some of the more noticeable pieces out of her hair in the bathroom and cut her hair till it was only down to her jaw with some spotty layering in the back, when they launched their final assault.

Puck barked and growled, nipping at their feet while Maya did her best to keep them from sticking more gum in her hair. Eli ran to get a teacher, but the damage was already done and no one else in the lunch was ready to corroborate her story of what happened.

Maya grimaced as she surveyed all the disgusting pieces of gum in her already shortened hair. Taking the scissors from her bag she began chopping off her hair, again. She managed to keep the hair near a few inches, but along the sides she maybe got an inch or two. The length was still a little spotty in places along the layers in the back. The sides and the back of her head was where most of the gum seemed to land. Oh well, her curls after a shower will spring up and hide most of it.

She looked over her reflection and the spotty boy cut she was now sporting. At least now she wouldn't be walking around with used chewing gum in her hair. Narrowing her eyes Maya frowned as she realized she probably looked more like her sperm donor than she did before with her longer hair.

Maya looked away and stared at the clumps of hair in the bathroom sink contemplatively.

Well, there was no way she was going to let them get to her, or even think that they got to her. Besides, the really short haircut wasn't really such a bad look on her. Taking the paper towel from the dispenser she gathered up some clean pieces and made a makeshift pouch to carry the hair in.

When she left the bathroom Eli was waiting for her and made reassurances that her new haircut was a good look on her. She had rolled her eyes and gave the guy a side hug telling him with a
confident smirk that she knew, but thanks anyways.

Maya went about the rest of her day, ignoring sniggers and backhanded stage whispering. Puck was a grump, glaring and growling at everyone. He knew better than to attack anyone outright, but that didn't mean he didn't want to seriously bite some people.

It was the end of the day and Maya was at her locker getting ready to meet up with Eli before going home, when Tracy materialized. Much to her and Puck's annoyance.

"Love what you've done with your hair," she mocked, voice heavy on the sarcasm. "Do it yourself?"

Maya grinned at the other girl as she went for one of her bag's outer pockets, "I did actually and for a first try I didn't do half bad. No bald patches!"

Before Tracy could make another smart comment Maya finally fished out the paper towel pouch and turned mischievously towards her. "Since you were obviously jealous of my glorious dark curls...have some on me," Maya had untwisted the paper towel and threw the hair in Tracy's face while her mouth was open, "Or rather, on you."

With that Maya sauntered away with her head held high while Tracy sputtered and spat out some of the curly brown hair that found its way into her mouth. Puck even huffed at the blonde smugly then turned his nose up at her and scraped his feet back at her before prancing after his Mistress.

At the house...

Gabriel perked his head up when he heard the front door unlock and the sound of clicking canine nails on wood floors. He turned the corner from the kitchen to greet his daughter and immediately noticed her new look.

"What the hell did you do to your hair?!" he yelped as he rushed her and carded his fingers through the shortened lengths.

Maya chuckled and batted his worried hands away from her head, "Power move, Dad. Power move."

Gabriel gave her a befuddled look, "That...explains, nothing. Absolutely nothing."

"Clean it up and I'll tell you aaaaaaaaall about it," Maya offered with a shrug as she walked by him and threw her bag on the couch.

"Done," Gabriel snapped his fingers then materialized a mirror and handed it to Maya.

Maya looked in the mirror and tilted her head side to side taking in the cleaned up haircut. The hair around the top and crown of her head remained a decent length, her bangs parted to the left. As her hair went further from the top of her head the shorter it got till the hair at the nape of her neck was just an inch long.
"So care to explain further what happened today?"

Maya rolled her eyes and launched into the tale of seduction, sneak attacks, and payback.

Hair cut for Maya

Chapter End Notes

AN: Two chapters in one month? Gasp! I was thinking of adding more, or really stopping short after the Cas and Dean scene and starting a new chapter, but whatever.

Poor Maya is a confused little teenage duckling with traitorous hormones. At least she made a friend right? Hope nothing happens to him. :D
Also I looked at the total number of reviews for this story and om-chuck there's like 110 of them! That's totally awesome! You guys are awesome.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

End of September 2008, Carthage, Missouri, United States

Sam and Dean

It'd seemed like more time had passed since the Rising of the Witnesses occurred, for both Sam and Dean, than what had actually passed.

Not two days later did Dean have the trench coat clad angel telling him, "You have to stop it", after he woke up in the middle of the night from a Hell-ish nightmare.

A poke to the forehead and he woke up in Lawrence, Kansas…freaking 1973. Learning his mom was a Hunter, from a long line of Hunters in fact. Got to meet a young baby faced John Winchester and his Hunter grandparents, the Campbell's. Got to see his grandparents possessed then killed by ole yellow-eyes himself.

And stared helplessly as he failed at keeping his mom from making the deal to let Azazel into Sam's nursery in exchange for bringing his Dad back.

Castiel brought him back to the present and told him destiny couldn't be changed. That what was meant to happen will find a way to happen. No matter the road you took.

Then informed him of his brother's…activities.

That was a revelation he didn't need, but he got two revelations instead of just the one that night.

His brother, Sam, was using his demon ESP shit to exorcise demons with his mind and cavorting around with that demon skank, Ruby.

Dean hadn't returned to the Willow Hotel till morning. He hadn't been able to look at his brother till he had time to cool down enough to get his things.

Apparently he wasn't as okay with dealing with Sam as he thought, when he ended up punching him in the face. Twice, and that son of a bitch let him.

Sam tried to defend his actions, point out how many people he was saving, but Dean shook his head and told him point blank, "If I didn't know you…I would want to hunt you. And so would other Hunters."

Sam told him that he was gone and he had to try and keep fighting on his own, and it works.

So Dean told him what Castiel had told him. That if Dean didn't stop him, then the angels would.

They would've probably got more into it if Travis hadn't called with a case coming up over in Carthage, Missouri.

Apparently something called a Rougarou was a thing. A guy born with something evil in him that would have to fight against it to keep from turning into a monster.

Sam tried pointing out that if they told Jack what was happening he could fight it. Keep him self...
from completely turning.

It'd be a day before Dean confronted Sam on the way to Jack Montgomery's about his conflicting emotions regarding the case.

You know, both being nice guys with something evil inside them. *Something in their blood.*

That tipped Sam over the edge and demanded Dean to pull over.

The impala barely reached a stop when Sam was already opening the door and ready to confront his brother over the crap he'd been putting Sam through the last couple days.

"You want to know why I've been lying to you, Dean? Because of crap like this," Sam told him as they walked to the front of the car.

"Like what?" Dean demanded, feeding off of Sam's own anger.

"The way you talk to me, the way you look at me like I'm a freak!" Sam yelled as he strode past him angrily.

"I do not," Dean denied, causing Sam to turn on a dime.

"You know, or even worse, like I'm an idiot!" he said pointing to him self. "Like I don't know the difference between right and wrong!" he threw his arms out, before turning around again and taking some steps away from his brother. He let out a sigh before looking back at him. "How come you've never looked at Maya like that, huh?"

Dean's face became stony, "Don't bring Goldy into this. This is about you. And whether you know the difference between right and wrong. 'Cause right now? I'm not too sure!" He shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

Sam scoffed, "I bet if she was right here, right now, you wouldn't even think of asking her that. She's half-Trickster, Dean. She's pretty much in the same boat as me and Jack, yet when she uses her abilities you're *pattin' her on the back.*" Sam shook his head and said mockingly, "You know, nice girl, but has something *evil* inside her. *Maybe in her blood.*"

"Shut up, Sam," Dean warned, his jaw clenching. "Leave her out of this."

"No, Dean. I won't," Sam stared back challengingly. "I need you to explain to me why Maya can get away with using her supernatural powers, but I—*your own brother*—can't."

"Because you weren't born with it," Dean told him flatly. "Maya's had her whole life to reign them in. She grew up with them, and her *powers* aren't anything *demonic.* Yeah, Tricksters kill people and I'll gank any other son of a bitch we come across but they still got a sense of morals, right? Only going after assholes and douchebags. Demons?" he scoffed. "They got *no such thing* as a moral compass. Nothing ever *good* comes from demons, Sam! You and I, *both* know this! Our *entire family* knew this!"

"Exactly, Dean!" Sam shouted back. "But I've got demon blood in me! This-this *disease* pumping through my veins, and I can't ever rip it out or scrub it clean! I'm a *whole new level of freak!*"

And I'm just…trying to take this curse…and make something good out of it." Sam sighed, his anger going from a boil to a simmer. "Maya does. She's *never* taken her tricks too far and she still
wants to use her abilities in hunting, to save people. Even though she knows that every Hunter out there who doesn't know her will want to hunt her. Just like you were ready to do when we first ran across her," Sam felt some satisfaction when Dean looked away, his jaw clenching at the reminder.

Anger spent Sam looked insecure, guilty, and slightly defeated, "I just… I have to try and do some good with it like she does. I have to." Sam looked down with a worried grimace.

Dean looked at Sam and saw the little brother that was always trying to help, to do the right thing. He believed that Sam had good intentions, but he hadn't been lying about the demon blood being bad news. The kind of bad news that left a bad taste in your mouth and rubbed you the wrong way like the coarsest sandpaper.

But still, this was Sam.

With a restless churning in his gut, Dean gave a sigh, "Let's just go talk to this guy." Sam scoffed at his impersonal reference to the pre-rougarou. "I mean Jack. Okay?"

Sam nodded and they both climbed back into the car to go confront the man of the hour, Jack Montgomery.

By the end of that night, Travis was completely devoured by Jack, the wife had fled, and Sam being unable to convince Jack to fight against his newfound instincts and hunger.

Both of them were unusually quiet on the ride back to the motel after burning Jack alive, extra crispy.

Dean had apologized for being so hard on Sam and tried to cajole Sam into explaining his psychic powers more so he could understand. Maybe be a little less terrified of them.

Oddly enough Sam didn't want to talk about it. Not that he could find a way to explain them to Dean in anyway to get him to understand.

"It's just something I gotta deal with," Sam sighed, looking out at the blackened nightscape.

"Not alone," Dean told him in response wanting his brother to know he didn't have to go it solo. The demonic psychic powers might scare the crap out of him, but like hell he was going to let his little brother go through this shit alone. Or let the God squad try and smite him.

Sam gave a heavy sigh, "Anyway it doesn't matter. These powers—it's playing with fire. I'm done with them. I'm done with everything." In other words, done with talking and working with the demon bitch, Ruby.

Dean looked at him from the side of his eyes a little surprised as he gauged his brother's seriousness, "Really?" Dean turned his eyes back on the darkened roadway when he saw the slight nod of Sam's head. "Well that's a relief," Dean let out a relieved sigh. He didn't like the path Sam was headed down or the angels threatening him. Dean wasn't sure what he'd have been able to do against angels if they made good on their promise.
Doesn't mean he wouldn't die again trying.

"Thank you."

Sam looked over at his brother then out ahead, "Don't thank me. I'm not doing it for you, or for the angels or for anybody. This is my choice."

"Amen to that," Dean nodded. After 10 minutes of silence and a stab of hunger pang, Dean looked over at his still serious-faced little brother.

"Well I don't know about you, but I could go for a burger right about now."

Sam scoffed as his face lost its tense edge and he looked at Dean with surprise, "Seriously? We just flambéd a rougarou alive, and you want some charred ground beef?"

"What can I say? I gotta feed the tank," Dean shrugged with a smirk.

Sam couldn't stop the small smile that tugged at his lips, "Says the man that was almost a man burger him self."

Dean scoffed and sent an unimpressed glare at his brother, "Whatever, bitch."

"Dean burger," Sam sniffed looking away so Dean didn't catch his amused smile. He couldn't stop the amused huff though that escaped his lips when Dean tried to reach over and smack him upside the head.

October 26 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

"Alright. Let's go over everything one more time," Gabriel turned to his daughter lounging in the couch, holding up a finger and looking at her expectantly.

Maya heaved an eye roll, "Really, Dad? You've been drilling my 'Home Alone' rules for a week now. I doubt I'm going to forget."

Gabriel remained still and raised an eyebrow at her, one finger still pointed up in the air.

"Fine," she grumbled. "No staying out after dark. I need to be in the house before sundown."

Gabriel nodded and flicked out a second finger, "Two?"

"I can't have Eli over without adult supervision or spend the night over at his house," another eye roll. "It's not like we're going to do anything."

"Don't care. Three?" Don't get Gabriel wrong. He liked the kid. Eli was a funny and quirky kid, but he was still a guy. A teenage boy. Papa bear instincts demanded he kept them separate when he's not around.

"Never go anywhere without Puck. He'll watch my back since I'm still grounded and my powers are still on lockdown," Maya huffed, crossing her arms. Puck yipped his affirmative and nosed at her arm. She gave the little dog a fond smile and started petting him and scratching behind his ears.

"Four?" fours fingers wriggled in her direction.
Maya's smile gave way to an epic pout, not saying anything.

"Four?" Gabriel stressed, with narrowed eyes.

Her bottom lip stuck out even more in the pout she was sending him, and mumbled incoherently.

"What was that?" Gabriel exaggeratedly brought a hand to his ear feigning to try and hear her better. "Didn't catch that."

Maya bitch-faced him, "No pulling pranks, tricks, and don't cause any kind of trouble."

Yeah, that last rule hadn't gone over very well. "You're still allowed to stick up for yourself and Eli. You just can't go looking for it… or cause it."

She pointedly looked away, focusing her attention on lavishing Puck with pets and attention. Not that the little dog was complaining if his happy dog grin with lolling tongue and wagging tail were anything to go by.

Gabriel sighed fondly at her as he walked over to the couch and stood beside her, crouching down till he was eye level with her. "Number five," he started.

She whipped her head around to look at him aghast, "Another one?!"

Gabriel chuckled and reached his hand behind her head and brought their foreheads together, "Number five, I love you and I just want to keep you safe." He kissed the side of her temple before releasing her and straightening up.

Tension left her shoulders as she looked up at him and sighed, "I love you too, Dad." She stood up, dislodging Puck from her lap to give her Dad a hug, "But I'm going to be fine. The house is warded out the whazoo and I've got Puck looking out for me. And, powers or not, I can still handle myself pretty well."

Gabriel sighed as he kept one arm wrapped around her shoulder and he rubbed his face with his free hand. "I know, I know. But it doesn't stop me from worrying. A couple of days is one thing, but more than a week?" he grimaced, scrunching his face in worry. There may or may not have been a pout hidden in there that spoke about how much he really didn't want to go to Odin's All Hallow's Eve shindig.

He wrapped his baby up once more in a hug, holding her tight. Gabriel was about to leave his baby girl alone. He wanted all the hugs.

Maya sighed and reciprocated the embrace; "If you're that worried I can always stay over at Bobby's for a week or so. I doubt he'd—"

Gabriel scrunched his nose in distaste and hummed, "Hmmm. Warded house? Or non-warded house with a bunch of supernatural artifacts that could kill you?"

Maya rolled her eyes and pushed away to look at him, "C'mon Dad. You say you're worried about me being alone with only Puck here, but when I offer up a solution…?"

Gabriel let out a slow sigh from his nose, "I know, I know. I'm still a little ticked that he didn't tell me himself what you'd been up to." He looked at her with a worried and loving gaze, "An-and you're my baby, Creamsicle. I'm always going to worry about you."

Maya smiled at him reassuringly, "Yeah, I guess." Her smile turned into a confident smirk, "But, I
mean, c'mon. I've had two pretty awesome Dads raising me. I think I'll be able to keep my nose clean for a week or so."

Gabriel gave his daughter a frown that looked more like a pout as he masked the feeling of pride that swelled up inside him. His little Trickster was smart, funny, kind, compassionate, hopeful, and just so full of life. How could he not be proud of her? Though he could do without her stubborn streak...


Maya chuckled and patted the side of his face condescendingly, "Whatever helps you sleep at night."

Gabriel sent her an unimpressed glare and mentally took back the list of things he was proud of her for. She was a sassy sass brat.

And dammit he was proud of that too!

He relented on the glare pretty quickly and rolled his eyes with a snort, "Fine. But between the two of us I'm obviously the Dad."

Maya gave him a mischievous grin, "I don't know. You're more of a mother hen than Bobby is."

She laughed as her Dad sent her a 'seriously?'-face.

She was pretty confident that nothing bad was going to happen while he was gone.

"Whatever," Gabriel muttered under his breath. "Just shoot me a prayer if anything happens, okay?"

"Yeah," Maya smiled, trying to keep from laughing. "Okay."

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**October 28 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States**

Maya and Puck were headed over to the Pepperjack's to have dinner and hangout with Eli for a bit. Marc and Lucas had been a little concerned about her staying home alone in an empty house for more than a week. So they planned to invite her over a few times while her father was away doing 'business'.

They were both walking by the park when someone shouted out her name. Maya and Puck looked around for the caller but didn't see anyone.

Another shout came near the wooded area further in the park.

"I don't know about you Puck, but I don't feel like getting murdered in the woods tonight. Do you?" she said casually looking down at the little dog.

The little dog huffed a nod and went to trot away, but when he didn't hear Maya following him he turned around to find her already half way through the park and headed straight into the woods.

Puck gave an alarmed bark and ran after her, dodging legs and playground equipment. When he
caught up to her he circled her barking, trying to get her attention, but her clouded gaze never waivered from the wooded area.

He whined as he bit into her pant leg and tried to physically stop her, but it did little good. He knew of a way to stop her but there were still too many families around and certain kinds of news would travel fast, attracting Hunters.

So Puck decided on a different course of action and hoped his Mistress would forgive him. He released her pant leg as they breached the tree line and went to lunge at her ankle.

Hopefully a painful bite will wake her up out of this trance.

Before he could sink his teeth in, an invisible force grabbed him and flung him away into a tree. Puck gave a short whine as he forced himself to stand up and look around for what threw him.

His dark brown eyes landed on a smirking and familiar blonde bitch. A ring of light blue shone from his irises as he snarled monstrously at the other teen with his hackles raised. Puck felt his body begin to shift into something more powerful until thick tree roots sprung from the decaying earth to wrap around his body tightly.

Through all of this Maya didn't even turn to look at her distressed little companion, her face blank, and clouded gold eyes starring in Tracy's direction. Not focused on Tracy, but beyond her. Like she had no idea what was happening.

Puck could feel the energy inside him twist and turn, trying to change him, but every time the roots glowed with old symbols, the energy was siphoned off.

Tracy chuckled as she watched the little guard dog stop struggling and glared heatedly at her with loud growls and snarls.

"Well, well, well," Tracy hummed as she approached the tied up pooch, gently stroking his little head.

If there wasn't a root wrapped around his muzzle he'd have bitten her fingers off instead of giving a rather loud and impressive growl from his chest.

"Little doggy's all tied up. Unable to move, and unable to summon whatever power that Trickster gave you to guard his little half-breed," she smiled widely as Puck's eyes widened a little in surprise. "Oh yeah. I know exactly what she is. And I'll need her help for a little ritual I'm planning. You know, something to throw off any Hunters that come sniffing around and help me complete it. And," she stood up and walked back over to the still half-Trickster, "as much as I'd love to keep her like this it'd be a bit obvious that she's not exactly her self at the moment."

Tracy pulled out a hex bag from her pocket and opened it, breaking the spell Maya was under.

Maya shook her head as her consciousness returned to find her self under fall coloured trees and the sound of Puck snarling. She whipped her head around to find Tracy smirking at her as she removed and replaced ingredients in a hex bag, and her dog tied up with his eyes alight with a blue ring in his irises.
"What the hell did you-?!" Maya snarled and made to attack the smirking blonde, but found her self thrown by an invisible force and pinned to a tree unable to move. "You bitch!"

"Aww come on Maya. Don't be like that," Tracy purred as she tied the hex bag up again.

"I can be anyway I damn well like! You demon whore!" she snarled, as she struggled against the force that held her to the tree. "How the hell did you hide—"

"Hide from Daddy Trickster?" Tracy chuckled as she sauntered up to Maya, pressing her body against her. "I've been around a loooong time. I know a few tricks of my own," Maya scowled in disgust as she turned her face away from Tracy's that was too close. Tracy grabbed her jaw tightly, forcing Maya to look into her cold blue eyes while she whispered, "And you're going to help me with my latest one to paint this town…blood red."

Puck whined and growled, struggling in his binds as he watched the witch close in on Maya. He gets a damn power boost and he was still not enough to protect his Mistress!

"And why would I want to do that?" Maya growled lowly as her heart hammered in her chest and her ears burned. She didn't like where this was going, and simultaneously hated how her body was reacting.

Stupid hormones!

Tracy smirked and held up the hex bag for Maya to see, "Because what I want, is what you're going to want too."

Maya's gold eyes widened as she cursed, "Shit!" She began to think of a prayer to her Dad, but the moment Tracy placed the bag in her back jean pocket as she activated it, her mind became muddled and…open.

What was she supposed to be doing?

Tracy leaned up and began to whisper in her ear as the force that pinned her to the tree released her.

With a final whisper, and placing another hex bag in Maya's hand, Tracy backed away from the dazed half- Trickster as she shook her head in confusion.

Puck whined anxiously, but Maya didn't seem to hear him.

Maya stumbled out of the wooded area into the park and began frantically calling Puck's name. Her voice becoming more and more distressed, and distant as she looked further and further away.

Tracy smiled toothily as she turned back to the pathetic creature she had bound. "Don't worry little puppy," she cooed, earning a defiant snarl from the canine. "I won't kill you. Yet. I want to see if there's a way to control you like the little baby Trickster out there.
"I bet if I find the right spell I could send you on quite the bloody rampage. Or at least maul any Hunters that come sniffing around," she chuckled to her self with a satisfied grin.

"We're going to have so much fun over the next few days," with a wave of her hand the roots broke off from the earth but kept themselves chained around Puck's little struggling body.

"I guarantee it."

October 30 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Moonlight Motel

Sam and Dean

Sam and Dean had arrived in Gloversville, New York to investigate the strange death of one, Luke Wallace. The man had died by eating candy that had razor blades in them.

Note the plural on blades.

Instead of stopping after the first one he seemed to have eaten and swallowed multiple razor blades that led to his death. A suspicious death like this was right up the Winchesters' alley.

While talking to the grieving widow who had found her husband Dean had found a hex bag stuffed behind the refrigerator. They returned to the motel where Sam began researching the contents of the hex bag and Dean went out to dig up something on Luke Wallace, looking for any potential enemies practicing the wicked art of bitchcraft.

Sam looked up from his computer and books when the motel door opened and Dean walked through eating a piece of candy while divesting himself of his jacket. "Really?" Sam chuckled in disbelief. "After that guy choked down all those razor blades?"

Dean just shrugged, "It's Halloween, man."

"Yeah," Sam rolled his eyes as Dean sat on the couch's armrest. "For us, everyday is Halloween.

"Don't be a downer," Dean chewed around the candy in his mouth. "Anything interesting?" he nodded at Sam's research strewn about on the coffee table.

"Well, we're on a witch hunt, that's for sure," Sam sighed as he looked over the hex bag contents. "But this isn't your typical hex bag."

"Mm. No?"

Sam picked up the herb, "Gold thread—a herb that's been extinct for 200 years." He put the dried plant down and picked up the coin, "And this is Celtic, and I don't mean some new age knock-off."

Dean, being curious, picked up the third item in the disassembled hex bag and started turning it
around. He even sniffed it.

Sam didn't notice as he kept talking, "Looks like the real deal—like 600-years-old real. And, uh." He put the coin down as he looked for the last item and saw Dean holding it. "That is the charred metacarpal bone of a newborn baby."

Dean made a disgusted face as he dropped the blackened bone on the table, "Oh gross."

"Relax man," Sam told Dean as he picked up the bone him self. "It's, like, a 100 years old."

"Oh, right, like that makes it better?" he discretely wiped his hand on his pant leg. "Witches, man. They're so freaking **skeevy,**" he shuddered as he moved to sit in the armchair.

"Yeah, well, it takes a pretty powerful one to put a bag like this together," Sam placed the bone back on the table. "More juice than we've ever dealt with before, that's for sure. What about you—find anything on the victim?"

Dean gave a small shake of his head. "Luke Wallace—he was so vanilla that he made vanilla seem spicy," he grinned sarcastically.

Sam huffed at his lame joke.

"I can't find any reason why somebody would want this guy dead," Dean admitted trying to think of something he missed. "Kind a wish Goldy was here, y'know?" he sighed with a reminiscent smile. "Her and that damn rat of her's could probably sniff out this bitch in no time."

Sam let out a groan as he stretched his back from his hunched position, "Mmm-maybe. But this isn't some newly inaugurated suburban housewife. His back gave a satisfying crack before he pulled his laptop into his lap to keep working. "I miss her too, Dean. But she's safer where ever she is with her Dad," Sam sighed as he hit the nail on the head of his brother's feelings.

Dean scratched his neck with a sigh, "Yeah, I know."

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**Pothead Jason's House**

**Evening**

It was honestly a G-rated snooze fest at this guy Jason's Halloween party in the basement. Maya was invited *last minute* by Jason and, for whatever reason, felt compelled to accept. Maybe the sting of Puck running away would lessen from the distraction. But she said she had to be allowed to bring her friend Eli.

Jason in all his gelled spike haired glory scrunched his face, and then gave Maya a once over.

Whatever pleasantness Maya had plastered on her face fell at the *why* Jason wanted her to come over made itself clear. He just wanted to invite her because he thought she was pretty looking.
A scathing comment was on the tip of her tongue, but it quickly got lost in the fog that seeped into her mind.

What was she mad about again?

Jason gave her the okay and she gave a grateful smile in return. Before he left he reminded her that it was a costume party.

Eli and she had shown up, dressed to the nines in their Marvel themed costumes. Eli had dressed up like Ironman and Maya?

She came as Deadpool, but instead of two fake katana on her back she had strapped the sheathed machete Sam and Dean had given her.

Maya had her Dad snap up the costume for her for when she handed out candy on Halloween. It was either Deadpool or Spiderman and her Dad didn't want to deal with the worry over whatever trouble she might get into with real web shooters.

Because, y'know, realism matters in a costume.

The basement was well lit with rock music playing in the background and decorated with tacky Halloween decorations. There were snacks and cake, and Halloween kids' games. Including a plastic tub filled with water and floating apples.

Maybe younger kids would be having a blast, but not so much teenagers.

It then went from G-rated ass-fest to a potentially T-rated cluster-fuck when Tracy and Jenny showed up, as a sexy cheerleader and sexy nurse respectively.

Did this Jason kid really want a catfight to break out in his basement?

Maya pondered that thought and realized, that yes, yes he probably did.

She nudged Eli and nodded over towards Tracy and her follower, "Let's get out of here. I don't feel like getting bitch-slapped tonight. Or, y'know, having the cops called in for a murder."

Eli tilted his Ironman mask up and rolled his be speckled eyes at her, "C'mon Maya. Relax. I doubt she even knows you were inv—"

"Well, well," came the haughty voice behind them. "Look what the black cat dragged in."

Maya lifted her own mask up to show Eli her exasperation before turning to face Tracy with a condescending laugh, "Ha ha. I get it. Black cat, 'cause it's Halloween. That's really clever. How long did it take you to come up with? A week? A year? Have you been saving it since last Halloween?"

"Ha. That's funny coming from the bumpkin who couldn't place higher than grade 10 math," Tracy drawled as she walked away with Jenny on her heels before Maya could make a comeback.
"Bitch," Maya muttered with a pout before turning to look at Eli. "I get enough of her at school. I'm going to head home before it gets too dark. You want to bail too?"

Eli scrunched up his face in thought and shook his head, "Nah. I th-think I might want to st-stick around a little longer."

Maya gave a deep sigh through her nose, "All right, but if any of these dicks mess with you, let me know. Okay?" She gave her friend a mischievous grin, "Halloween's always been one of the best times to get some pranking done. Just under April Fools."

Eli laughed light-heartedly and gave Maya a nod with a warm smile filled with joy and happiness.

He was happy to have a friend like her watching his back.

Though he was a bit puzzled when Maya smiled back at him and it didn't reach her eyes like it normally did. Her eyes seemed a little unfocused and the veins in her eyes a little too red and prominent.

Maya waived off his concern as she slid her Deadpool mask back on, telling him she'd see him when she saw him.

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Spell/hex bag

*Maya's will*

____________________

Every step further from the pothead's house, a pressure in Maya's mind increased. Her brain felt like it was beating against her skull with every throb of her heart. She knew something was terribly wrong.

Like when she left the Wallace's after being called in as an emergency babysitter.

Maya could feel the throbbing increase some more behind the bridge of her nose and her tear ducts.

*She needed to go back. She needed to.* But then why did she keep moving further and further away?

*There's...there's something wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!*

Maya gripped her head as a painful pulse rocked her brain.

*What was wrong again? There was nothing wrong. There was! There was danger! Back at the pothead's house!*

*She didn't care. Maya did! Eli! Her friend! Her friend was there! He was in danger!*
Maya stopped walking and partially turned to go back, but another painful headache wracked her brain and she stumbled.

She didn't want to go back. She wanted to be somewhere else. No! No! No! Her friend! Her friend needed her!

Maya felt her body pick itself up and keep walking further and further away towards the part of town with apartment complexes.

Where the hell was she going?! There was somewhere else she wanted to be. She wanted to go. She didn't want to turn back.

No! No! No! Eli! Eli needed her! He was in danger!

Maya rounded a street that looked vaguely familiar as another painful throb forced its way through her mind. She stumbled on her feet again but remained standing as she walked up the stairs of a cheap apartment complex.

How'd she get here? This was where she wanted to be. No! No! No!

She stood in front of a non-descript door and pulled out a key from her costume pocket, unlocking the door and walking inside the dark apartment. Maya locked the door behind her and strode towards the one bedroom like she'd been in that apartment a thousand times.

Maya sat down on the wooden chair in the corner and didn't move.

Even when she felt something wet seep down her cheeks and from her nose under the mask, creating that slick and wet sensation you get where you just need to wipe it away.

She wanted to go back to that party! She needed to save her friend! Maya wanted to stay put and wait.

Her mind reeled as she fought against the fog that tried to keep her complacent, to want to be somewhere she didn't want to be.

Maya's hand twitched. Her mind cried in pain.
She turned her head slightly and licked her lips tasting copper on her tongue. She \textit{wanted} to stop moving, to stop fighting. \textit{What she wanted was to control her own damn mind and body!}

Maya struggled to get herself standing as her mind pounded in pain, barely noticing the acrid smell of burning hair. \textit{She couldn't sit there while her friend, and whoever else, was in trouble!} She could. She \textit{wanted} to.

\textit{No! She really fucking didn't!}

With a pained shout she jumped up from the chair and ripped the mask off her face to breathe easier. She wiped as the thick fluid that had accumulated and was unsurprised to see her black costume gloves glisten with a red hue.

Her eyes and nose dripped thick blood as she had fought against the fog that had muddled her mind for the last few days.

Maya wanted to break down and cry, but she needed to get back before it was too…she then saw the time on the bedroom's alarm clock.

She'd lost \textit{three hours.}

Maya gritted her teeth as her mind ached and her heart raced as she made her way through the apartment to the front door. She didn't make it as she soon found herself airborne and slammed into a wall. The back of her head hitting the drywall, causing her brain to throb painfully, still tender from fighting off the strong compulsion spell she'd been under.

A figure she hadn't noticed in her hazed mind when she had entered the apartment rounded the corner of the tiny kitchen. "My sister really should take better care of her toys," the male voice tsk'd as he approached her.

Maya recognized the middle aged white man with grey-green eyes and shoulder length stringy mouse brown hair. It was one of the high school's visual arts teachers that tried acting cool by having everyone, students included; call him by his first name.

\textit{Don. Don Harding.}

He smirked at her as he walked over and patted down her costume that didn't leave too much to the imagination. His hands lingered uncomfortably in certain places.

The front door opened revealing Tracy. Tracy scowled at her brother, "Dammit, Don! I told you she's mine! Paws off!"

Don rolled his eyes, but took his hands off the pinned Trickster and backed up in mock surrender. "Just looking for the hex bag you put on her. It's obviously failed if I caught her trying to leave," he sneered derisively at Tracy.

Tracy frowned as she closed the door and strode over to a pinned Maya whose gold eyes smoldered
with hate and promises of vengeance. She reached into one of the pouches of her costume's belt and pulled out the bag.

The pungent smell of burnt hair wafted more noticeably as Tracy untied the hex bag, showing ancient ingredients, and the now mostly burned away tiny lock of dark brown curly hair.

"Well aren't we full of surprises," Tracy murmured as she removed the burnt hair and replaced it with a fresh one. "Guess you're a little stronger than you look. And here I thought you were more human. Nothing but a runt of a half-Trickster."

Maya's eyes narrowed as her heart pounded fearfully in her chest and she defaulted on a show of bravado, "Get dumbass over here to let me down and I'll show you how s—"

"Audi vocem meam parere," Tracy spoke, interrupting the trapped little Trickster and placed the renewed hex bag back on her person.

The fury fled from Maya's eyes, the golden orbs becoming blank and her bloody face relaxed as she waited. Don released her and she slumped to the floor.

Tracy turned her gaze to Don, "How's the mutt? Figure out why we can't control it?"

Don shook his head with a scowl, "No, I haven't. We shouldn't be playing around with this demi-godling and her mutant dog! We should be focusing on raising our Master! We've waited—"

"I know!" Tracy snapped with an irritated snarl. "I've had to spend the last 600 years listening to your bitching, so I'm not about to screw it up! You're more likely to than I am. I'm the one that taught your mediocre ass everything you know."

Don scoffed and left the apartment in an angry huff.

Tracy glared as the man slammed the door behind him. She turned back and looked down at the slumped and vacant eyed form of Maya.

Tracy smirked as she crouched down and stroked the side of her face whispering, "Do as you always do. React as you always react. As the sun sets tomorrow...you will want to visit our art teacher, Don Harding, at his house. For now? You just want to go home and forget your little detour here." She smiled as the vacantness partially left Maya's eyes as Tracy's commands weaved their way through her muddled subconscious once more.

"See you tomorrow," she placed a light kiss on Maya's unresponsive and blood coated lips. Tracy backed up as Maya picked her self up, put the discarded internally bloodied mask back on, and left the apartment.

Tracy smirked as she licked her lips, tasting the slightly sweet coppery taste of Maya's blood.

She belatedly thought of how it was kind of a shame that when her Master was summoned…

Maya would lose her beautiful gold coloured eyes.
Moonlight Motel

Sam and Dean

Dean roughly opened their motel room door and tossed his suit jacket over one of the kitchenette/dining room chairs.

"Dean," Sam sighed as he followed his angry brother inside. "It could be—"

Dean rounded on Sam sharply with a pointed finger, "No! There is no way Goldy could be the one behind all this!"

Sam shut the door behind him, his face holding some resignation, "But it still could be. That Tracy girl told you how this Maya-chick-with-a-small-Jack-Russell-following-her-everywhere was not a big fan of her and Jenny. And she had left not long before the incident happened. It was dumb luck that that Eli kid didn't get stuck with the same fate as Jenny."

"But why use bitchcraft then, huh?!" Dean demanded as he loosened the annoying tie around his neck. "She can't stand the stuff!"

"People, and apparently demi-gods, can chan—" Sam answered but Dean didn't let him finish.

"And how do we know this is even our Maya? Could be just some other chick with the same name and type of dog," Dean added angrily as he rummaged through his duffel bag for some civilian clothes. He wanted out of this monkey suit.

Sam raised an eyebrow at that and gave him a really?-bitch face, "And is also known to pull pranks?"

Dean straightened up, clothes in his hands, and firmly told him, "She's not the one doing this. You and I both know that when she does her tricks on people it's all about reputation destruction, public humiliation, or getting them arrested. Not killing them."

Sam frowned as Dean entered the bathroom to get changed. He wanted to be like Dean in this moment, completely sure in his conviction that their honorary little sister wasn't the one behind all the death that was happening.

Even though Maya was half-human and tended to act like a more playful young teen than anything else…but she was still half-Trickster.

And six months was a long time. Enough time maybe to say screw it with human morals and go full Trickster. Sam didn't want to be right, and hopefully with more investigation he'll be proven wrong.

Sam tried to ignore the satisfaction and relief at the thought that maybe he wasn't the only one struggling with the temptation of their powers.

And the slight jealousy he felt when Dean didn't even entertain the idea that Maya was using her powers would lead her astray like this. That Dean had trust in her to keep on the straight and narrow.
As Dean walked out again Sam started talking again, "I don't want it to be her either, Dean."

Dean narrowed his eyes, clenching his eyes as he threw his FBI clothes on his bed and crossed his arms, waiting for Sam to continue.

"But we still need to do more research. We'll know for sure or not if it's a witch or…" Sam didn't finish, but the implication of Maya being the other option hung tensely in the air.

"Fine," Dean gave a reluctant sigh. "I'll do some background checking on the vics. And when I come up with nothing I'm shoving it in your face!"

Couple hours later…

"Okay, I've got nothing," Dean announced as he finished looking through Luke Wallace's online file again and Jenny's. "Both these vics are squeaky-clean, aside from Jenny being part of a group of bullies. Looked like she was mostly a by-stander. No reason for wicked-bitch payback. Or Trickster justice," Dean said smugly looking over at Sam's bed where his brother was going through old books.

Sam sat up looking intently at the tome in his hand, "You're right."

"Damn straight I am!...About what again?"

Sam rolled his eyes, "About this not being about payback."

"Wow. Insightful," Dean sassed. "Takes Goldy off the chopping block though, right? None of this is her style."

"Definitely," Sam nodded with a relieved sigh. "But the witch that's doing this isn't doing this over a grudge. I think instead they're working a spell."

"That…doesn't sound good. Like at all."

"You think?" Sam scoffed. "Check this out, Three blood sacrifices over three days—the last before midnight on the final day of the final harvest," Sam finished with a victorious chuckle as he handed the book over to Dean to look at. "Celtic calendar? The final day of the final harvest is October 31st."

"Halloween?" Dean asked as he placed the open book on the table in front of him and looked at the illustrations of things rising from their graves.

"Exactly."

"So what exactly are the, uh, blood sacrifices for?" Dean queried cautiously, just knowing he wasn't going to like the answer.

"Uh, if I'm right this witch is summoning a demon. And not just any demon," Sam twitched his head tensely. "Samhain."

"Am I supposed to be impressed?" Dean asked, not having any idea who Samhain was. He received the I'm-really-going-to-have-to-spell-it-out-for-you-aren't-I?-bitch face from Sam.
"Dean, Samhain is the damn origin of Halloween," Sam told him impatiently as he went into lecture-mode. "The Celts believed October 31st was the one night of the year when the veil between the living and the dead was thinnest."

Dean looked back at the book and turned the page to an illustration of a demonic visage with horns holding up a decapitated head as it stood with a broad sword on a pile of dead bodies and ghoulish figures.

"And it was Samhain's night. I mean, masks were put on to hide from him, sweets left on doorsteps to appease him, faces carved in pumpkins to worship him. He was exorcised centuries ago," Sam finished in his patent pending Professor Sam Winchester lecturing voice.

"So, even though Samhain took a trip downstairs the tradition stuck."

"Exactly. Only now, instead of demons and blood orgies, Halloween is all about kids, candies, costumes, and pranks. Tricksters like Loki may be about deadly justice seeking pranks, but they sure as hell don't do mass carnage like what raising Samhain would bring."

"Okay, so some witch wants to raise Samhain, and what? Take back the night?" Dean asked, his level of serious being misinterpreted by Sam.

"Dean, this is serious," cue another Sam patented bitch face.

"I am serious. It's pretty damn likely that Maya is in this town somewhere with some demon summoning witch on the loose. And I want to know why the hell Loki hasn't done anything about it!" Dean pointed out.

"Maybe because Loki doesn't know that the witch is here," Sam pondered thoughtfully. "I mean, this is some heavyweight witchcraft—"

"Bitchcraft," Dean corrected, but Sam kept going with a roll of his eyes.

"This ritual can only be performed every 600 years. It's possible that this witch is powerful enough to hide from Loki. But you're right. It's odd we haven't run into him yet," Sam looked at Dean worriedly. "Something's not right."

"Yeah. You're telling me," Dean said sarcastically. "And if the old Winchester luck holds true then I'm guessing that 600 year marker rolls around tomorrow night, doesn't it?" He rubbed his face with his hand in stress.

"Yep."

"Naturally," Dean smiled cynically. Winchester luck, true to fucking form right there. "Think the witch knows about the resident Trickster and his kid?"

"There hasn't been any evidence of either Maya or her Dad at any of the crime scenes to suggest their involvement. Even the victims aren't fitting their MO's," Sam shook his head negatively. "And there hasn't been anything in the past year to suggest the Trickster brand poetic justice either. It looks like Loki's been trying to keep a low profile, so I doubt the witch has caught on to them yet."

"Low profile? That guy?" Dean chuckled mockingly with a shake of his head. "I'd love to figure
out where that asshole is while all of this is going down in his own backyard."

"You and me both, but we've got bigger problems to worry about," Sam said grimly. "You see, once Samhain is raised, he does some raising of his own."

"Raising what, exactly?" Dean asked tightly as he looked at the illustrated death and carnage depicted in the book.

"Dark evil crap and lots of it. They follow him around like the friggin' pied piper, spreading mass chaos and carnage," Sam informed his brother.

"So we're talking ghosts?"

"Yeah."

"Zombies?"

"Mm-hmm."

"Leprechauns?"

"Dean," Sam deadpanned, giving his third (or was it fourth?) unimpressed bitch-face of the evening to his brother.

"Those little dudes are scary. Small hands," Dean brought up his free hand and scrunched it for emphasis.

"Look," Sam leaned forward over the table. "It just starts with ghosts and ghouls. This sucker keeps on going, by night's end we are talking about every awful thing we ever seen, everything we fight, all in one place."

"It's going to be a slaughterhouse," the elder brother stated grimly.

The brothers sat in tense foreboding silence as they contemplated what to do next.

Dean warred in his mind over what to do. On the one hand he needed to hunt down this witch and gank them before tomorrow night. On the other hand, his little sister might be in trouble with said witch running around.

"Fuck it," Dean growled as he dug into his jacket pocket for his flip phone.

"Dean," Sam asked cautiously as he watched his brother angrily open his phone. "What're you doing?"

"Calling that son of a bitch, Loki," he grunted as he pressed the dial button. "If he is around I want to know why the hell he hasn't done anything about this shit since it started. And maybe, if we're lucky, he'll flambé the witch himself. We both know how scary that mother can be when something's threatening Goldy."

"He could also charbroil our asses if he realizes we're anywhere near Maya as well," Sam pointed out, nervously shifting in his seat.
"But the ass also knows we see her like family, so we're not much of a—" Dean cut himself off as the dial tone ended but found himself going straight to an obnoxious voicemail.

'Pray for mercy from...Loki...The Trickster...so leave a message...if you dare...ow! Damn it! If I want to sound like Puss in Boots I—beep!' 

"Damn it Loki! If you and Maya are holed up in Gloversville, New York you better have a damn good reason for not knowing a witch was in your own backyard working a ritual to raise a demon! Not just any one, but Samhain! Either help us stop it, or get Maya the hell out of here! Last blood sacrifice is tomorrow night and if me and Sam fail, I don't want her anywhere near the shit that this asshole is going to bring up topside with him!" Dean snapped his phone closed breathing a little heavily through his nose.

"I don't think if Loki was in town he'd have let this go as far as it has," Sam pointed as he watched his brother run a hand through his short dirt blonde hair. "He might not be here at all."

"Then that means if Goldy's really here then she's here alone, with a powerful psycho witch on the loose," Dean groaned as he worried about the little Trickster. "Because of course she would be. That's just awesome. Just freakin' awesome."

Friggin' Winchester luck!

October 31st 2008, Gloversville, New York, United States

Dean

Late Morning

Dean had spent the last couple hours staking out the Wallace's house after talking with Mrs. Wallace again to see if she had thought of anyone who'd want Luke dead. Got another steaming pile of nothing, again.

He'd just finished the last of the Halloween candy stash, his stomach groaning in protest from the overload of candy and chocolates when the rock ringtone on his phone goes off. Dean digs the flip phone from his jacket and checked the caller ID before answering around that last piece of chocolate in his mouth, "Hey."

"How's it going?" Sam enquired from the other end.

"Awesome," Dean replied in his usual sarcastic tone. "Yeah, I talked to Mrs. Razorblade again. I've been sitting outside her house for hours, and I've got a big steamy pile of nothing."

Sam sighed at his whining, "Look, Dean, someone planted those hex bags, someone with access to both houses. There's got to be some connection."

"Yeah, well, I hope we find something soon, 'cause I'm starting to cramp like a—" Dean looked over at the Wallace's to see someone he really didn't want to see walking up those steps.

Her hair was cropped shorter than he'd ever seen it, but he'd got a good look at the brunette teen's face. Familiar gold eyes that rested on top a bridge of light freckles across her nose, and dark brown
curly hair that had just gotten curlier with the shorter length.

It was Maya.

And she was now placed at both houses.

"Son of a bitch," Dean cursed.

"Quite whining," Sam's voiced conveyed his eye roll very effectively.

"No, Sam, I mean 'son of a bitch,'" Dean watched as Mrs. Wallace greeted her with the baby and invited her inside. "I'll call you back."

"Dean! What's going—" Dean snapped the cellphone shut, ending the call abruptly as his mind raced.

There was no way Maya was a part of this. She couldn't be. He was still worried about Sam giving in and using his demon blood powers he didn't want to have to worry about Maya abusing hers now too.

And…Dean paused as he stepped out of the impala, realizing something important that he'd glossed over at his shock of seeing his honorary baby sister. That damn dog of hers wasn't with her, i.e. the mutt that was supposed to watch her back and keep her safe.

Puck wasn't with her.

Dean stowed the feeling of dread churning in his stomach as he walked across the street and up the Wallace's front steps and knocked on the door.

Mrs. Wallace answered, her smile falling as she saw who it was. She adjusted the strap of her purse over her shoulder as she closed the front door behind, obviously ready to leave.

"What do you want agent?" she asked unkindly.

"Sorry Mrs. Wallace, but my partner wanted to know of anyone else having access to the house outside your family," Dean looked over her shoulder at the front door. "Looked like I came at a good time. Who was that?"

"The babysitter," she answered in annoyance, her patience with Dean and possibly Sam running thin. "Her name's Maya. Moved in with her Dad over the summer and would give the neighborhood moms a break at the park. Her and her little dog."

"Does she babysit for you often?" Dean enquired. He could see Maya being good with kids given her fun loving nature, but babysitting an infant might be pushing it for the teen.

Mrs. Wallace sighed, "No. Not really. I officially met her recently since my regular babysitter has been busy the last few days. She gave me Maya's number to call. She's really doing this as a favor to me, honestly. I think she's only ever babysat at my house."
Dean furrowed his eyebrows, "Really? That's interesting. Oh, and, uh, out of curiosity, who's your regular babysitter?"

"Tracy Davis. Why? Do you think one of them had something to do with Luke's death? Neither of them were in the house when it...when it happened," Mrs. Wallace asked tearing up.

Dean plastered on a fake smile, "I don't think so, but we've got to look at everything and everyone just to be sure."

Her tense shoulders relaxed and she nodded in acceptance.

They said their goodbyes and Dean flopped down in the driver's seat of the parked impala as some things started clicking together. He pulled out his phone and called Sam.

"Dean, what's going on?" Sam demanded over the line.

"We've got a problem," Dean turned the engine over and began pulling away from the curb. "It's Maya, our Maya, but the dog's missing and she can now be placed at the Wallace's."

"Wait, Puck's not with her? That doesn't make any sense. He follows her everywhere," Sam stated in confusion. "Why would she be at the Wallace's?"

"Emergency babysitter, but get this," Dean grunted with gritted teeth. "She has also only babysat for the Wallace's, even though she doesn't know Mrs. Wallace as one of the moms from the park. Where, during the summer, she'd watch over the ankle bitters for a couple of hours to give the moms a break. Not infants like the Wallace's kid."

"That...is a little odd, but couldn't one of the other parents have recommended her if the Wallace's were in a tight bind?"

"Nope. It was the Wallace's regular babysitter. A girl named Tracy Davis. And I'm betting the same Tracy Davis from that kid's Halloween party that told us Goldy had it out for her and Jenny," Dean emphasized.

Sam was silent on the other line as the pieces fell together in his own mind, "Tracy's the witch and is using Maya as a scape goat. Get any Hunter that comes into town hunting Maya, while Tracy finishes up the ritual."

"Yeah," Dean scoffed. "Good thing we're not just any Hunters."

"Okay, but Dean Does this mean she's actually helping her? Or is there something else going on?" Sam asked seriously.

"I'd go with something else," Dean growled. "I don't see Goldy being okay with this and the rat's missing. My guess is that Tracy's got something on her, either the dog or something else. I doubt she'd do something like this for shits and giggles."

"You're right, but that means Tracy most likely knows what she is. We're going to have to be careful and subtle if we're going to try and stop her from raising Samhain and get Maya out from under her thumb," Sam sighed, as things seemed to have gotten more complicated.
"I can do subtle," Dean scoffed as he turned another corner towards the motel.

"Sure you can," Sam told him, teasing slightly.

"Bitch."

"Jerk," with that Sam hung up, no doubt starting a background check on Tracy Davis.

Moonlight Motel

Sam and Dean

Dean walked into the motel, tossing the keys on the table, the sound causing Sam to look up from his laptop.

"So? Our apple bobbing cheerleader is also the Wallace's usual babysitter?" Sam asked from his reclined position on his motel bed.

"Yep," Dean shrugged off his jacket. "And she'd told me she'd never even heard of Luke Wallace."

"Huh," Sam turned to look back at the school files he pulled up on his computer. "Interesting look for a centuries-old witch," he commented.

Dean tossed his jacket on the table and went to sit on the other bed across from Sam, "Yeah, well, if you were a 600-year-old-hag and you could pick any costume to come back in, wouldn't you go for a hot cheerleader?"

Sam looked back at the file to read some more when Dean added in a slightly dreamy voice, "I would. Mmm."

Sam looked back at his brother knowing he was obviously imagining some hot teenage cheerleader given the look on his face.

Okay, the perving of minors needed to end. Or at least whatever fantasy of cheerleaders his brain had concocted.

"Again, Dean. Jail bait," Sam coughed pointedly.

"Hey! First, again, I would never. And second, she's technically 600 years old," Dean pointed out with a what-can-you-do shrug and smug grin. "So, leave my fantasies alone."

"Yeah, well your fantasy is creepy and if you don't stop I'll permanently ruin it," Sam retorted, and he was not bluffing. He had a pretty good dick shriveling and ball curdling way to destroy Dean's little cheerleader fantasy.

Dean snorted at that, "You can't ruin—"

"Says here she'd currently in the body of a 17 year, so according to her records…she's Maya's age," Sam pointed out with his own smug smile.
Dean opened his mouth to say something, closed it, and opened it again looking to give an even angrier retort before closing it again as the look of horror and hatred flashed over his face. Also, lots of disgust was present as well.

Sam watched Dean's facial journey in complete self-righteousness. Served the jerk right.

"I hate you. So freakin' much right now," Dean growled. It'd be a long while before he'd be able to look at cheerleaders like that again without his dick withering and his anger rising at the thought of other guys eyeing up his sister like that. "Can't believe you ruined…gah!" Dean muttered under breath while he tried to regain some composure.

Dean looked up and glared at his arrogantly smiling little brother and bit out, "So what you got on this Tracy chick?"

"Definitely not as wholesome as she's pretending to be. I did some digging and apparently she got into a violent altercation with one of her teachers," Sam reported as he handed the computer over to Dean. "Got suspended from school."

"Wanna bet we'll find more evidence of Tracy being our witch if we talk to the teacher? Says here it was the art teacher she attacked. Don't high school art classes still do those sketchbook hand-ins or something?" Dean handed the laptop back to Sam.

Sam nodded, "Yeah. Who knows, maybe to vent some frustration she got creative."

"Great. And here I thought I was done with school," Dean sighed as he rose from his seat on his bed to get changed into his FBI get up.

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Gloversville High School

Sam and Dean

Afternoon

Talking with Don Harding had been enlightening. Apparently Tracy had been drawing some pretty horrific stuff in her sketchbook, with her right in the middle participating. When they had shown Don the coin to see if he recognized the symbol they got a pretty positive reaction that Tracy might've included it in her drawings.

She was also an emancipated teen living on her own with her own apartment, and should've been there due to her suspension.

The brothers had also asked about Maya, and Don had just shrugged. Said she was also another talented student, nothing worrying or off-putting about any of her work. But she was a practical jokester and butted heads a lot with Tracy and her group of friends. As far as he knew she only had the one friend, a younger student named Eli.

"So what do we want to do?" Sam asked Dean as they exited the art room.
"You check her apartment, and anywhere else she could be. I'll go talk with her friends and this Eli kid," Dean told him.

"Maya's friend?" Sam gave his brother a considering look. "He could know more about what's going on with her. But what if you run into Maya? If Tracy does have her claws in her I don't think she'll be all that friendly seeing us."

Dean ran a stressed hand through his hair, "I'll figure it out. Worse comes to worse I'll knock her out and we'll deal with her later."

Sam gave his brother an unimpressed bitch-face.

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Maya

Maya walked briskly through the empty halls of Gloversville High School as she made her way over to her locker. She'd skipped half the day to look after the Wallace's baby for a couple hours while the poor widowed mother did some quick errands.

She couldn't quite remember why she said yes in the first place. She didn't know the Wallace's but she'd gotten a phone call from them one day and she just felt that she had to say yes. That she wanted to.

So it wasn't hard to do them a solid.

Maya was almost to her locker to meet up with Eli, like they normally did once the next period bell rang to head to (shiver) math class, when she felt herself all of a sudden yanked into the empty classroom she was passing.

Maya tripped over her feet as she was pulled around the corner. Instinctively she fought back, elbowing the person who grabbed her in the stomach. They let go and as Maya made to run, screaming bloody murder to get some attention to her situation she found herself flung, front first into the rooms chalk board.

Chalk dust from the metal railing that held the chalk pieces and brushes for the board rose in the air as the metal dug into her pelvis bones.

"It seems your services for the ritual are no longer needed," a male voice intoned behind her. "My Master wants you alive, but your physical condition is optional. So you're going to run an errand for me little Trickster," a hand reached into the back pocket of her jeans and pulled something out she didn't even realize was there.

For a moment the complacent fog lifted and suppressed memories returned, along with her indignant and frightened anger.

"Like hell I will you son of a—"

"Audi vocem meam parere," the atrociously pronounced spell was cast and Maya's snarl died on her lips. The force that held her to the chalkboard released her and she fell lifeless to the ground in
a slump. Only her slowly blinking eyes and moving chest gave evidence that she was still alive.

Her eyes remained blank and unfocused.

Don crouched down and whispered new instructions in her ear.

But they weren't desires or wants that she was compelled to feel. These were orders, and they didn't meld almost seamlessly into her subconscious like Tracy's compulsions did.

They were stark, they were hard, and they were something she could fight more easily against. Tracy's had been like a fog, hard to see and hard to grasp. Don's? Like a shoddily placed stonewall. It'd take time but she could feel the cracks and chips already forming as she mentally fought against it.

Maya just hoped, as she felt her body pick it self up and seem to walk too stiffly, her face too blank and unfocused, it would be in time to keep her from fulfilling what Don wanted.

'Kill the Hunters staying at the Moonlight Motel.'

And Maya? She didn't want to kill anyone, even a couple of unknown Hunters trying to stop these witches.

Chapter End Notes

AN: Look! Another chapter! Uh oh! Witches and mind control and demon raising! Oh my!
Where's Gabriel while all of this goes down?! (The readers cry)
All in good time! (author responds)

I also realized while writing this chapter that Dean never seemed too put off by Maya's powers as a half-Trickster but in the show he is by Sam's which to be fair is demonic in origin. I had to explore a little of the jealousy angle between siblings.

This would've been shorter by a couple thousand words but I'm like, I have one more day off, mind as well add a bit more.

Translation- Audi vocem meam parere: Hear my voice to comply (google translation)
Basically wanted 'hear my voice and comply'.
Dean scrubbed his face in frustration after talking to the last of Tracy's friends, getting absolutely nothing of value from any of them. The bell rang again, another period ending, releasing students from their classrooms.

He walked the halls rigidly as he headed to a one Eli Pepperjack's next class to talk with the kid he vaguely remembered from the Halloween party. Dean might've been a bit too distracted by the blonde cheerleader witch. Disgust curled in his gut as the cheerleading fantasy was ruined again with his brother's words echoing in his ears.

He was soooo putting Nair in Sam's shampoo again.

Dean was almost to the kid's math class when he saw a couple of what looked like football players or the stereotypical jocks pick up this scrawny nerdy bespectacled boy and practically fold him into an open locker.

"G-guys! C'mon! I n-need t-to g-get to cl-class!" the kid stuttered pitifully as he was shoved into the top half-locker.

"Well, guess you're gonna have to miss it then, huh Penis Jacker?" one of them sneered.

"And that dyke bitch ain't here to fight for ya!" the other chuckled cruelly.

Dean rolled his eyes. High school never really changed did it? Unfortunately, he didn't have time for—

"I-It's Pepperjack, y-you ass-ahholes!" the kid squeaked valiantly, albeit stupidly, in protest.

Okay, maybe he did.

"Hey!" Dean boomed over the throngs of hormonal adolescents, authority laced in his tone and body language. "What's going on here?!" he demanded loudly as he marched over purposefully, students scrambling to get out of his way.

The bullies eyed Dean up curiously with hints of defiance and tension in their shoulders.

"Wh-what'd'you care? You ain't a teacher!" the other jock tried to sound confident, but the slight waiver and stutter in his voice bellied the nervousness he was feeling.
Dean glared at the young men, making them shift nervously on their feet, well the one anyway. The other was trying and failing to intimidate him. He internally smirked at that, knowing what he would do next would almost have them pissing their pants as they gave the always comical 'oh shit' faces.

"FBI, boys," Dean flipped his badge at them like the professional con man he was. "I think I trump your high school teachers by, like, a lot. Now is there a reason you're stuffing Urkel here inside a locker?" Cue expectantly quirked eyebrow.

The 'oh shit' faces were firmly in place on the two boys' faces and Dean could hear some students milling around them whispering as they watched the spectacle from afar.

"They th-think I'm gay 'cause I have t-two Dads," Eli piped up with a smirk, his nervous stutter abating a little seeing the two bullies in a tight bind with the 'government official'.

Dean looked from Eli to the boys as they seemed even more nervous, knowing full well the shit they were in.

"Ah, so this is a hate crime, is it?" Dean stated, more than asked, casually. "Me and my partner have been thinking that the two deaths in town might've been 'hate crime' related. Maybe you both should come down to the precinct—"

They both started stuttering and shaking their heads fearfully, denying any part in what happened to Luke Wallace or their year mate Jenny.

"Then I suggest you apologize to the kid and help him out of this locker then, hm?" Dean crossed his arms, standing straighter, looking down his nose at them, adding to the intimidation factor. He looked around at their little audience and barked, "Don't you have classes to get to?!"

Students scattered as the two bullies helped Eli out of the locker and mumbled apologies, and then turned to look back at Dean.

"Beat it!" Dean growled and they did so, hastily.

"Th-thanks," Eli muttered, adjusting his glasses, looking at the taller imposing man as his shoulders and stance relaxed.

"No problem, but, uh, I actually needed to talk to you," Dean admitted, watching as the last of the stragglers entered classrooms or turned the corner.

Eli immediately started fidgeting nervously, realizing he was alone in an empty hallway with a large fit man that could probably break him like a twig.

"A-am I in-in tr-trouble?" his stutter coming back with a vengeance.

"Relax, kid. You're not in trouble," Dean said with a shake his head. "I wanted to ask about your friend, Maya Godson."

Eli furrowed his eyebrows and tilted his head curiously, "W-what about her?"

Dean shrugged, "Just if she's been acting weird lately. Acting a little dodgy maybe? Like she was up to something?"

Eli gave him an unsure look; "My-Maya is al-always up-up t-to something—" an alarmed panicked look came over his face and he added quickly with a bad stutter, "—b-b-but like in a p-p-plotting p-
"Tone it down kid," Dean gestured. "We think someone might be using her as a scape goat for the deaths in town, forcing her to show up at the Wallace's and the party you were at. So if you can tell me anything. Anything at all, no matter how weird, we can use it to find out who's killing people and get her away from them."

Eli openly scrutinized Dean with a confidence he rarely felt. He wasn't sure if this FBI agent was telling him the truth or trying to find a way to pin the deaths on his friend. Eli couldn't see how Maya could've made Jenny be the one to get stuck in the water and boiled alive, and not him. He had playfully challenged Jenny when she was still reluctant to try after Tracy did. She hadn't wanted to be showed up by the school reject, especially in front of her crush that everyone but said crush knew about.

Dean felt some respect for the scrawny pipsqueak staring/glaring at him. This kid was probably a true friend to his little sister if he was willing to practically challenge him with the scrutinizing stare he had going on.

Dean seemed to pass whatever test Eli was looking for when the scrutiny ended and he sported a ponderous, but worried face.

"I g-guess sh-she s-started acting w-weird w-when her d-dog, P-Puck, ran-ran away a f-few days ago," Eli started slowly. "Sh-she seemed r-really upset, b-but didn't put m-much effort into lo-" looking for him. An-and she l-loves that dog."

Red flags pinged Dean's brain.

"Anything else?" Dean probed.

A look of uncertainty crossed Eli's face, it was a look Dean knew enough to know that the person was thinking of a crucial clue but wasn't entirely sure of its relevance or validity.

Or they didn't want to say because it sounded insane. A bit of a toss up between the two really.

Good thing that's what Dean looked for during a case.

"I d-don't know, really," Eli said slowly, unsure. "It's-it's some-something random I n-noticed at Jason's before sh-sh-she left…"

"Yeah? What was that?" Dean prodded starring intently at the kid making him a little more nervous.

"W-well-she did the us-usual, 'if-people-were-mean-to-me-let-her-know' f-for some pra-prankster payback b-but wh-when she smiled…it-it was big li-like it usually w-was when she st-stars plotting pra-pranks, but it d-didn't reach her eyes," Eli bit his lip, still unsure of how important it was what he was describing. "Th-they we-were unfocused, like-like almost like sh-she w-was st-starring off into space an-and not at me. An-and her-her eyes w-were m-more b-bloodshot th-than when-when we got there…” he trailed off in thought.

Dean frowned. It wasn't much but it was something. He knew exactly what Eli was talking about when saying how her smile usually reached her eyes, but that wasn't much, same for the bloodshot eyes comment. There were many reasons for eyes all of a sudden becoming red, most of them not being supernaturally related. Her being unfocused was a little concerning but could easily have been her mind was on something else.
"I d-don't e-even kn-know why we-we w-were even th-there," Eli said after trailing off.

Dean brought himself out of his musings at that, "Why do you say that?"

Eli actually rolled his eyes then froze a little at his brazenness, before answering, "Wh-when I-I a-asked her w-why we were g-going in-instead o-of doing a monst-ster movie m-marathon sh-she said she d-didn't re-remember. J-just that sh-she ha-had to go. M-Maya s-said I d-didn't h-have to c-come if I-I didn't want t-to."

"She had to?" Dean questioned curiously, wondering what he meant. From what he gathered about Maya's social life here was that it pretty much just included only Eli. No one else. No reason to go to a party with people she didn't know, or get along with in Tracy and Jenny's case. Dean would've thought she'd tell the guy who threw the party she wasn't interested.

The inability to remember why was also concerning. Something must've forced her to go to that party. Dean's jaw clenched and started walking away after curtly thanking Eli. He made a few steps before he paused and looked back at the kid.

"Hey, why'd you go if it was just her that had to?" Dean queried.

Eli shrugged and answered with minimal stuttering, "She's m-my best friend. S-someone had t-to watch her b-back."

Dean nodded a strained smile and headed out to the impala. He sat down and started the engine; he patted his FBI jacket and realized his phone was not in his pocket. He looked around and saw it lying forgotten on the passenger seat beside him.

The small screen telling him he had one new voicemail.

Tracy's Apartment

Sam

Sam had found Tracy's apartment, but no one was home. Looking around he crouched and began picking at the lock on the door. After so many years of practice it wasn't long before he was pushing the door open and began nosing around the unlit dwelling.

It was small and sparse, nothing that someone would expect from a teenager living by themselves. There was nothing really personal in the main room or her bedroom that showed the type of person Tracy was.

He searched every nook and cranny he could think of but couldn't find anything that screamed Sabrina-the-600-year-old-teenage-witch lived here.

Sam harshly shut the drawer to Tracy's desk in her bedroom as he sighed in aggravation, but when the drawer slammed it made an odd sound. He frowned and emptied the drawer of papers and writing utensils, feeling around the inside, knocking on the bottom and the sides. He knocked the back of the drawer wall and heard a slightly hallowed sound, then wood scrapping on wood.
He nudge the back a little harder till the wooden panel gave way allowing him to reach in and pull out a small plastic bag. Bringing it into the dim light from the window Sam saw a large lock of dark curly brown hair.

A pit formed in his stomach as he pocketed the bag in his tan jacket. The brown hair, the presence of a witch, and Maya being placed at the two crime scenes made his stomach twist into knots.

Maya was most likely under a spell.

Sam pulled out his phone and began dialing his brother's number, cursing when it went straight to voicemail.

"Dean we need to meet up and come up with a plan. I've found something," Sam swallowed thickly as he walked out of the apartment, closing the door behind him. "Listen, if you see Maya you need to…as much as I hate to say this…I need to knock her lights out…Dean, it's not good. I'm gonna head back to the motel. Meet me there."

Sam was about to turn into the motel parking lot when he saw a familiar figure with shortened hair like his brother described walking on the sidewalk, about to turn around the corner of the motel to head into the same parking lot. He quickly pulled up beside her, parking the rental car and called her name in surprise as he got out, forgetting momentarily that she was probably not her self at the moment.

Sam ran around the car, happy to see she wasn't hurt but that quickly changed as she stopped walking and turned to look at him. Gold eyes eerily blank, stiff and robotic movements, and, the most concerning thing, the blood dripping down her face from her red-rimmed eyes stopped Sam cold a few feet away.

Maya's head tilted to the side in a small sharp movement in some form of demented curiosity. Her eyes lit up in some form of recognition and she reached into her jacket and unhooked a familiar bolo machete.

Sam took a step back, cursing himself. "Maya?" he called cautiously, eyeing the machete that him and Dean had gotten her for her birthday.

Her breath seemed to stutter almost like she tried to keep her self from vomiting as blood began to trickle down from one nostril. Maya's eyes began coming into focus, reminiscent of the amber eyes Sam was familiar with, but more scared and in pain.

"S-S-S-Sam…" she choked out through clenched teeth her eyes starting to become blank once more, "…run."

Maya surged forward, swinging the machete.

Sam had heeded the warning Maya struggled to get out and was prepared for the clumsy attack. She swung in broad clumsy arcs, stumbling over her feet slightly from over balancing. The next time she tried to slash the blade across Sam's chest, sending it wide he rushed in close to her and grabbed her wrist. Her free hand instinctively grabbing the front of his jacket to keep balanced.

He held her arm above her head and grunted, "Maya! Stop! Drop the machete!" Sam caught her eyes again and saw the war waging inside as her eyes and nose dripped more blood down her face. Droplets of the crimson liquid flew when she huffed harshly as she strained against Sam's strength.

"B-b-bag…" Maya stuttered out before her eyes blanked once more and she kicked out one of his knees, and pushed getting Sam's larger frame off balance and sending them both to the cracked
concrete. Maya quickly climbed on top of him and tried to cleave his head off.

Sam's grip on her wrist hadn't waiver as he held it up and away from coming down on his head, but it felt like he was gripping a metal pipe instead of soft flesh. Maya used both hands to try and push the blade closer, but despite the better leverage Sam still had the muscle on her and more importantly, experience.

He threw her wrist to the side and bucked, sending her off of him and causing her to lose her grip on the machete. Both of them quickly scrambled to their feet.

Maya hesitated once she was upright as she raged against the spell trying to get her to kill her pseudo big brother. Her conflicted gold eyes met his worried brown ones.

"Where's the hex bag, Maya?" Sam demanded hurriedly, knowing the spell could pull her under any second and they'd be having round two.

"Ba-back po-" her strained voice cut off as her eyes became glazed over and she turned to dive for the machete.

"Shit!" Sam cursed as he made to restrain her again, but had to quickly back up when she swung the reacquired weapon back at him. "Damn it!" he shouted as they began the dance again.

At that moment he regretted the present Dean and him had gotten her.

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Moonlight Motel Parking Lot

Dean

Dean was about to turn into the motel parking lot when a haphazardly parked car, shouting and movement caught his attention. He pulled up beside the rental car to see what was going on and quickly threw the impala in park.

Maya was trying to chop Sam's head off with a bolo machete.

Good thing he changed back into his civilian clothes so he wouldn't have to worry about messing up his FBI suit. It looked like things were about to get a little dicey.

He rushed out of the car and ran around the front of both and yelled, "Maya! Stop!"

She had been about to try and stab Sam when she heard Dean shout at her. Maya sharply turned her head and her blank red-rimmed gold eyes cleared momentarily as she looked at Dean.

"D-D-Dee?" she whined, her voice pitching high as she forced it through her clenched teeth. Accumulated blood from her face dripped from her chin onto the dull concrete below. Gold eyes looked at him in surprise, rage, and pain.

Dean's eyes narrowed at his little sister's bloodied face and the bloodshot eyes that were leaking the stuff.
"Yeah, it's me Goldy," Dean said calmly as he approached her their eyes locked.

"Dean," Sam called as he eyed the frozen little Trickster and the blade pointed towards him.

"Yeah Sammy?" he answered back as he stilled when Maya turned the bolo towards him with shaky hands.

"She's under a spell. There's a hex bag in one of her back pockets," Sam informed him as he tried to inch closer to her while her attention was focused on his brother.

"Then why the hell is she still pointing that machete at us?!" Dean barked sarcastically. Seriously, could his brother not handle a slight 5'-7" teenage girl?

"I haven't gotten it yet! She's fighting it though, Dean. Look how she's shaking and the blood running down her face, she's fighting it," Maya swung back at him when she heard how close he was, losing a foothold briefly on the mental battle waging inside her skull. Sam skittered backwards, sucking in his gut to avoid the swing. "Her eyes focus more when she's mostly in control and talking. When they go blank is when you need to—"

Dean had tried his luck inching his way past Maya to get behind her while Sam distracted her with his jabbering, but she saw him. Her eyes zoned out and she lunged at him.

"Son of a bitch!" Dean cursed as he dodged clumsy swing after clumsy swing, along with the odd punctuated lunge at his mid-section.

Sam saw his opportunity and rushed up behind her, bringing his arms under her armpits and locking his hands behind her head. He had to duck his head a little when Maya tried twisting her twist to get him with the 14" blade still in her hand.

Dean was quick to rip the weapon from her hand and toss it under the rental car. He figured they'd get it later. Even weaponless Maya was still a handful and fighting back against the two of them.

Sam grunted and groaned with every foot stomp and stray hand trying to reach back and pull his hair out. Dean wasn't doing much better as he tried to get close to her in order to grab the hex bag without getting kicked/kneed in the gut or kicked/kneed in the Winchester family jewels.

"Hurry it up, Dean!" Sam grunted as Maya stomped his left foot for the nth time, making sure to dig in her heel.

"I'm trying!" he bit back as he took a step back to figure out a way to approach the struggling teen.

Maya had other plans and let her legs fall out from under her, slipping out of Sam's hold for the most part. Sam was able to grab her wrists but now, she could move. She quickly twisted her arms over her head till hers and Sam's were crisscrossed and she was facing him.

Then she kicked him in the balls, hard. Successfully bringing the towering man to his knees.

Sam let go of her and doubled over in pain, clutching at his crotch as he fell to his knees. He looked up in time to see Dean rush her from behind only to have Maya drop to her knees in the last second causing his brother to tumble over her with an undignified and surprised yelp. The kind that Dean will later vehemently deny when Sam tried to tease him about it. His brother, in retaliation, will point out how he got sacked by their little sister who was like half his size.

Sam shouted at his brother when he saw Maya retrieve another weapon from beneath her black jacket. This time an ornate silver dagger.
Struggling through the pain coursing through his nether regions, Sam watched as Maya made to stab at Dean, but was stopped by Dean grabbing her severely shaking wrist. He watched as Maya's eyes cleared once more and as her entire body quaked.

By now it seemed everything below her eyes was covered in a thin film of her own blood and as Dean kept the dagger from entering his chest, more began trickling out of her ears. Inside Maya raged against the stonewall that told her to kill the Hunters, to kill her brothers. She didn't back down to rest for a moment here and there like she had been doing before.

This time she pushed and she mentally shoved the crumbling mind wall and forced her self to remain still, and let go of the silver dagger.

Sam had recovered enough to grab the dagger and toss it a ways away from them before grabbing Maya and hauling her off of Dean.

Maya didn't relent against the mental blockade; unfortunately her body wasn't as appreciative. She could feel her airway close and she started choking and coughing.

Sam cursed as he watched his sister begin to shake even more and even started to choke, "Dean! Get the bag!"

Dean didn't say anything back as he reached behind Maya and dug into her back pockets, his hand closing around the cloth pouch.

The minute it was removed from her person, Maya stopped shaking and took a giant gasp of air before going limp in Sam's arms with a heaving chest and a pounding headache.

Both brothers gave a sigh of relief, but scrunched their noses as the scent of burnt hair permeated the air. Dean was the first to notice it was coming from the hex bag in his hand, opening it he found ingredients for whatever spell Maya had been under.

And a lock of burnt hair that was still smoldering.

Bleary and tired honey eyes opened and looked up at the person holding her up on her unsteady feet. "Hey asshole," she croaked with a tired smile.

Sam gave her a relieved and affectionate smile, "Hey twerp." He then pointedly looked over at Dean.

Her eyes followed Sam's gaze to the familiar man standing in front of them wearing his trademark smirk.

"Just couldn't keep outta trouble, could ya Goldy?" Dean joked as he held up the dismantled hex bag.

Her smile dropped as she stared wide-eyed at the supposed dead man in front of her. Maya then looked back up at Sam, "Do you have a silver knife on you?"

Sam looked at her confused, "Uh, um, n—why do you need one?"

" 'Cause this fucking shifter has the fucking nerve to—" her anger was beginning to peak.

Dean rolled his eyes and gave an annoyed groan, "I'm not a shifter!"

Hard gold eyes blazed with righteous fury, "Then you're a revenant! Or a demon! Exorcizamus"
"Not a demon!" Dean shouted as he crossed his arms angrily. "Did you and Bobby meet up and plan out your reactions or something?"

Maya was about to spit and hiss at him in her fury when Sam cut in, "It's him, Maya. It's really him. Bobby did all the tests. It's really Dean."

Maya looked between the two gobs smacked as she tried to process this new bit of information.

Dean wasn't dead. He wasn't in Hell anymore. Her big brother was alive!

Tears started falling from her eyes, creating clear paths through her blood covered face, "Deeeeeeee!

She struggled out of Sam's arms that hovered as she got her footing on wobbly legs, and stumbled over to Dean who walked over to meet her…

That was, meet her fist to his face!

"YOU FUCKING ASSHOLE! YOU GO AND INSINUATE I'M LIKE YOUR SISTER BUT THEN YOU HAVE THE CAHONAS TO LEAVE ME BEHIND!!" Maya shouted in rage while tears streamed down her face.

"Son of a bitch!" Dean cursed as he grabbed the now tender cheek that had a personal encounter of the fist-kind. "It's because you're like our sister that we couldn't bring you—" his rant was cut short when he all of a sudden had an arm full of clingy and bloodied baby sister crying into his chest, smearing blood, tears, and possibly snot all over his shirt.

"Aww, Goldy. C'mon. Do you know how hard it is to get blood out of clothes?" Dean complained, but hugged the quivering girl back tightly.

"JUST SHUT UP AND ACCEPT MY AFFECTION, WINCHESTER!" his chest muffled Maya's tearful shout as she breathed in his familiar warmth and scent.

The last time Maya was made to let go of her big brother...he'd left her with her Dad and went and died on her.

So distracted by their little scuffle and reunion that none of them noticed a certain art teacher sneak past them and out of the motel parking lot.

Maya did her best to wipe most of the blood off her face with a towel Dean threw at her head from the impala, while the boys properly parked their cars. She leaned against the lime brick wall as she tried to wrack her brain over on who the witch was that had hexed her. The inner battle against the hex bag had taken a lot out of her mentally and she just couldn't access the memories she needed.

She'd gotten flashes of her time being cursed, but most was just following or fighting against an order she was given...or was it a compulsion? Maya grimaced in pain as her head throbbed unhelpfully. Her heart also ached for Puck. She had no clue where her little guardian was or what had happened to him, no doubt the witch's doing.

The rumble of the impala stirred her from her thoughts as Dean pulled the impala up into the
parking spot in front of her, Sam not far behind.

"How you doing Goldy? Remember anything?" Dean asked as he closed the door and walked over to her.

Maya winced and shook her head grimly, "Sorry, but no. Not really. I think this last mental tango has botched my memory of what happened while I was under the influence of bitchcraft I get flashes of the Wallace's and Jason's house…and I think I even broke it once…I got thrown into a wall…I cursed…and then everything goes out of focus again."

Sam gave her a reassuring smile and pat on the shoulder, "It's fine. We think we know who the witch is anyway."

"Tracy Davis," Dean nodded.

Maya groaned, "That bipolar twat?"

Sam furrowed his eyebrows, "Bipolar?"

Dean raised an amused eyebrow as he watched Maya's face turn red and refused to look them in the eyes.

"She's been either trying rip my face off or get in my pants," she muttered as she crossed her arms.

"Talk about literal embodiment of you're hot then you're cold."

Sam's eyebrows shot into his hairline. Dean sent her a disapproving and incredulous face, "Did you just quote that Katy Perry chick?"

"…it's all over the damn radio! And it fit! Okay?!" Maya said defensively with tense shoulders.

"Where did I go wrong with you?" Dean sighed sadly, shaking his head and trying to hide his teasing smirk.

"Anyway, how, uh, strongly did she…come on to you?" Sam asked awkwardly. It might explain how Tracy collected so much of Maya's hair if her haircut was anything to go by.

Maya shifted uncomfortably, not looking at them, "She uh…liked to press up against me or uh stroke my arm…and, um, try and tempt me away from my friend or to go over to her apartment."

"Damn," Dean snorted. "If it was me when I was your age I'd've tapped that after the first sexy wink sent my way."

He received double disgusted bitch faces for that.

"Yeah, well, obviously my standards are a bit higher than yours," Maya scoffed with an eye roll.

"And like I told her last time she pulled that stunt, bros before hoes."

Both brothers sent her surprised and in Dean's case, also amused looks.

"You said that…to a 600-year-old witch?" Dean chuckled. Sam couldn't hold back his own smile, even if it was tempered with worry.

If Maya had been having some on and off conflict with Tracy it could explain why Tracy decided to use her. Tracy might not have known she was a half-Trickster at all and Maya's luck was just as bad as theirs.
Maya's eyes bugged-out at Tracy's true age, "She's 600? Damn. She's aged really well, if she's still that hot."

"Wait a minute," Dean said motioning his hand in the universal slow down gesture. "You think she's hot? You're attracted to a witch?" he tried suppressing the smile as he watched his little sister get all flustered and embarrassed.

He failed.

Sam rolled his eyes at his brother, but had his own impish glint in his eyes, "Stop being a jerk, Dean. It's not Maya's fault that her raging teenage hormones got the better of her sense for detecting black magic. She's just at that angst ridden age." Sam patted her shoulder in pretend sympathy.

Maya glared at him, "Hey! They did not get the better of—"

Dean caught on to the game and donned his own mocking smirk as he interrupted with, "You're right, bitch. It's okay Goldy. It's completely natural, and don't worry. Sammy and I don't care if you're attracted to women. Just no being attracted to demon whores. Who knows what kind of demonic STD's and STI's you could—"

Maya threw her hands up in the air and pushed past Dean to stalk down the motel boardwalk.

Dean didn't even bother turning around, "Room's other way Goldy." Both his and Sam's grin grew as Maya stomped back and harshly brushed past Dean…and right past their room.

"Walked right by it that time," Dean called after her, grinning as he and Sam followed behind. She huffily turned on her heel and walked back towards them and stopped at the right door this time.

The guys were stopped when a small if slightly chubby kid in a homemade astronaut costume went up to them and said, "Trick or treat."

"This is a motel," Dean pointed at the building.

"So?" the kid's voice echoed slightly in his clear helmet.

"So, we don't have any candy," Dean explained. Maya leaned against the wall and watched with a fist to her mouth to hide her smile. She knew who exactly this kid was.

When she went to the park to give Puck some room to really run around in she didn't always watch just the toddlers. Puck and her playful energy made her popular with some of the 1st-3rd grade demographic.

Maya may or may not have taught them some harmless pranks. Parents foolishly smiled when she'd greet them as her minions, thinking she was just kidding around. When teaching the art of pranking one does not simply kid around.

Well, not completely anyways.

"No, we have ton in the, uh—" Sam tried to say, pointing over at the impala, but Dean interrupted him.

"We did, but it's gone," Dean said turning to meet Sam's gaze that quickly morphed into the all popular 'seriously?'-bitch face when he realized what Dean did.
Astronaut raised his eyebrows in disbelief, while Dean shrugged his shoulders, "Sorry, kid, we can't help you."

"I want candy," the kid complained making himself sound sad as he looked up at the towering adults.

Dean leaned down enough and said, "Well, I think you've had enough." Sam rolled his eyes at his brother and walked over to stand beside Maya, not seeing the kid give Dean the stink eye or harshly bump into Dean with his shoulder.

Maya bit her lip then called the kid's nickname she had for him, "Minion Alex!"

The mini astronaut turned around at the sound of his name and his eyes lit up and jogged over to her with a bright smile, "Maya!"

Maya cracked a smirk as she ignored Sam and Dean's curious eyes, "Hey Major Tom. How about I give you the chocolate bar in my pocket and you give me that carton of eggs you're hiding in your pail." She dug in her jacket pocket pulling out a full sized Aero bar.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Alex said a little too innocently to actually be innocent.

"Kid, I enlightened you on the little Halloween exchange clause. You get a treat, and you don't egg Steve McQueen's car," Maya thumbed at Dean who had a look of dawning horror while Sam was sucking his lips into his mouth to stop from laughing at his brother's expression.

Alex the astronaut regarded Maya then shrugged, "Okay." He dug the half filled egg carton out from under his collection of assorted Halloween candy and exchanged it for the candy bar before going on his merry way.

Maya smiled fondly after him then turned to look back at her two brothers who stared at her expectantly, "What?"

"You taught him to egg people's cars if he didn't get candy?!" Dean demanded.

"Noooo, I pointed out the choice everyone is presented with at Halloween. Give the person candy or get tricked," Maya shrugged. "Besides, I thought you'd be happy I saved your car from being egged," she raised an eyebrow at him.

Sam licked his lips a little nervously, "Maya…have you been teaching little kids how to prank people?"

"Uh, yeah," Maya scoffed with a smile. "Silly parents smile when I greet them as my minions. Why'd you think I greeted him as Minion Alex?"

The brothers were silent as they digested the implications.

"You…have a-a mini-prankster child army?" Dean asked incredulous and a little nervously.

"I prefer mini-Trickster army, but yeah. Pretty much," she shrugged with a brilliant and slightly terrifying smile. "Don't worry. I only teach them age appropriate pranks."

"Oh my god," Sam laughed a little breathlessly as he ran a hand through his hair, while Dean looked at her with trepidation.

"Maya…you're kind of terrifying. You know that?" Dean told her disquietly.
She just beamed at them with a large toothy smile, "Thank youuuuu." That didn't help at all and she chuckled at Dean's unimpressed glare.

Sam shook his head with a smile and opened the door to their motel room asking, "Anyway, Maya, do you know how Tracy might've gotten some of your hair for the spell?"

Maya followed after Sam, "Her and her friends were putting gum in my hair after my epic rebuff of her advances for most of the day, so I chopped it off and threw it in her face."

"Looks like the witch-bitch got the last laugh huh?" Dean said sarcastically behind her as they filed into the darkened room. "By the way, where the hell is Loki when all this shit was going down?"

Sam sighed, ears primed to hear the answer to that question when he stared into the room and saw two strange men in their room; one looking out the window and one sitting on the far bed with his back to them. He quickly went on alert, raising his gun and sticking his arm out to keep Maya behind him, "Maya, stay behind me! Who are you?!"

"Sam, Sam, wait!" Dean shouted as he saw the trench coat cladded angel beyond his younger siblings. He rushed by Maya to stand beside Sam, putting a hand on the gun to lower it, "It's Castiel...the angel."

Neither brother noticed Maya freeze up behind them, her eyes wide and her face paling in terror. Dean looked into the room and saw the smartly dressed black man staring out the window through the curtains, "Him, I don't know."

During the exchange Castiel had stood up and walked over to them, "Hello Sam."

Sam had a look of wonder and excitement on his face as he put his gun away. Which would account the normally more articulate brother to fall all over himself, "Oh my god. Er, uh, I didn't mean to—sorry. It's an honor. Really, I-I've heard a lot about you." Sam took a step closer to the blue-eyed angel and held out his hand, leaving Maya behind him feeling exposed to the ultimate monsters from her nightmares.

She wanted to bolt out of the room, but her brothers were there and she just got them back. So she did what little kids tended to do when they're scared of someone new. She side stepped behind Dean and tucked her self behind his back and grabbed the back of his jacket with her free hand, while fearfully eyeing the angel only feet away from her.

Dean looked over his shoulder at her in concern and saw her pallor complexion and big round fearful eyes. He could feel her begin to shake and heard her take in shuddering breaths, no doubt trying to calm her racing heart.

It then clicked in his mind—the old sketchbook.

Maya was terrified of angels.

Dean turned around, letting her try and hide behind his bulk as he walked over to the still open door. Once there he murmured down to the shaking little Trickster trying to bury herself into his chest, "If you want to leave it's okay. I know you're scared of our...angels... So, if you want to go, now's your chance."

Maya looked up at him with big scared eyes, looking between him the open door and around him at the angels in the room. She closed the door and thumped against his chest, the stupid half-filled egg carton clutched between them and shook her head silently. Maya had just been reunited with
them…she wasn't ready to leave them. Despite the dicks with wings in the room.

"And I, you," they heard Castiel's gravelly voice say to Sam. Dean looked his head over at the exchange. "Sam Winchester—the boy with the demon blood. Glad to hear you've ceased your…extracurricular activities."

Dean turned back to Maya and put a reassuring hand on her shoulder, "Stay behind me and Sam. We're not going to let these guys do anything to you, okay?"

She looked up at him scared and nervous, but nodded silently. Wasn't exactly sold on their ability to protect her, but again, not ready to leave them either.

Even if every instinct told her to run.

When Dean started walking away she latched onto the back of his jacket again, following instep behind him.

Castiel released Sam's hand and flicked his eyes over to Dean as he walked up beside Sam. He narrowed them slightly at seeing another person peaking with fearful gold eyes from behind Dean.

Dean noticed the angel's stare and turned his body to hide her, glaring as intense blue eyes met his own green ones.

His glare was diverted when the other angel in the room spoke up in a deep voice, "Let's keep it that way."

"Yeah, okay, chuckles," Dean eyed the strange angel, not liking the way he said that. He looked back at Castiel, "Who's your friend?"

Castiel didn't answer and asked, "The raising of Samhain—have you stopped it?"

"Why?" Dean asked as he felt Maya tense behind him at the mention of the demon being summoned.

She knew all too well the actual origin of All Hallows Eve. Samhain was one bad mother.

"Dean, have you located the witch?" Castiel asked.

"Yes, we've located the witch," Dean answered with slight annoyance.

"And is the witch dead?" Castiel probed.

"No but—" Sam started but Dean beat him to it.

"We know who it is."

"Apparently the witch knows who you are, too," Castiel walked to the nightstand between the beds and grabbed a leather pouch off of it, holding it up for the Winchesters to see. "This was found in the wall of your room. If we hadn't found it, surely one or…all of you would be dead," Castiel said a little pointedly, once more eyeing the small figure huddled behind Dean's back. "Do you know where the witch is now?"

Dean looked back at Sam who shrugged at him, "We're working on it."

Sam was about to point out Maya's ability to sense black magic but had finally noticed how squished up she was against Dean's back. He frowned and nudged her, making her jump as she
whipped her head around to look at him terrified. He sent her a worried look and rubbed her shoulder comfortingly.

He then saw her nervously eyeing the angels in the room. Ah.

Sam adjusted his position so if the other angel turned around he wouldn't see her, while Dean kept her from being seen completely by Castiel.

"That's…unfortunate," Castiel sighed as he turned to look at the other angel in the room.

"What do you care?" Dean questioned belligerently.

Castiel looked back at Dean, "The raising of Samhain is one of the 66 seals needed to break the cage."

"So this is about your buddy Lucifer," Dean intoned, as he felt Maya tense behind him. He felt her turn to Sam, no doubt silently asking him what was going on.

"Lucifer is no friend of ours," the dark angel by the window informed them.

Sam and Dean eyed the other angel.

"It was just an expression," Dean told him sarcastically.

"Lucifer cannot rise," Castiel walked to stand in front of Dean, both brothers adjusting their positions again to keep Maya from the angels' direct line of sight. Castiel frowned momentarily at the movement but continued, "The breaking of the seal must be prevented at all costs."

"Okay, great. Well, now that you're here, why don't you tell us where the witch is?" Dean asked expectantly. "We'll gank her, and everybody goes home."

Castiel shook his head, "We are not omniscient. This witch is very powerful. She's cloaked, even to our methods."

Dean sent a look to Sam at that. That'd explain why Loki didn't realize he had a witch in his backyard. If their witch could hide from Heaven she'd probably be more than powerful enough to hide from the Trickster god.

"Okay, well, we already know who she is. So if we work together with Maya—"

"Sam!" Maya hissed fearfully and panicky behind Dean's back, interrupting Sam.

"Maya you could—" Sam tried to argue, but Maya didn't let him finish.

"If my Dad can't then I sure as hell can't, even if I wasn't—" she whispered harshly through tightly clenched teeth, but the other angel at the far end of the room interrupted her.

"Enough of this," the dark angel intoned blandly as he turned around calmly.

"Who are you and why should I care?!!" Dean demanded angrily from feeling Maya shake against his back when Sam had acknowledged her in front of the angels.

"This…is Uriel," Castiel introduced with a sigh. "He's what you might call…a specialist," he turned his head and watched as his fellow angel approached, his sensitive hearing picking up a whimper from the girl hiding behind the brothers.
Castiel knew there was something odd about the girl, but he couldn't quite place it yet. Who ever she was the Winchesters knew her and were protective of her.

"What kind of a specialist?" Dean questioned uneasily as the two angels shared a meaningful stare. Dean glanced at Sam who had his unsettled face on as well, and he could guess Maya did too as he felt her shift to peak out from behind him. "What are you gonna do?"

"You—all of you, you need to leave this town immediately," Castiel told them as he looked back at them, his blue eyes briefly flickering to Maya's own gold ones, causing her to duck back behind Dean once more.

"Why?" Dean asked, dreading the answer.

"Because we're about to destroy it," Castiel answered honestly, showing no signs of remorse or regret that either brother could pick-up from his blank facial expression.

Maya sucked in a terrified breath and in a moment of courage she stepped out from behind Dean into the full view of both the angels, "You can't do that! There are innocent people here! Kids!"

Castiel's eyes widened fractionally at the young girl as he finally saw what made her strange, she was a demi-god of the Trickster variety, a pagan half-breed. The, albeit minimal, Trickster taint swirled like oil along her bright human soul obscuring it slightly.

It was an abomination.

"A little baby Trickster abomination," Uriel droned with a hint of amusement then looked Dean and Sam in the eyes. "And you haven't killed it yet?"

Realizing how exposed she was, Maya meeped and darted behind Sam. She shook as she pressed her self against Sam's large back and tried to keep from hyperventilating from her stupid outburst.

Talk about living out one of your own personal nightmares.

"Why do you have that…thing with you?" Castiel questioned as he tore narrowed eyes from where Maya had huddled behind Sam, and looked into Dean's furious ones.

"Goldy's our friend asshat, and if either you or chuckles here tries anything I won't hesitate with putting a bullet through your freakin' heads!" Dean growled as he moved to stand more in front of Sam and glare down at the blue-eyed angel.

The man didn't intimidate Castiel, but his eyes squinted at what Dean had called the appalling half-breed, Goldy. His perfect recall remembered their conversation after the witnesses were laid to rest, how Dean had claimed this…Goldy as his family.

Blue eyes flickered to Sam's hard brown ones as he held him self tensely, ready to fight either of them should they try and go for the thing huddled behind his back. It would seem that the familial sentiment for the atrocity was shared between both brothers.

This could prove to be…problematic.

Uriel chuckled sarcastically, disregarding the humans' aggressive posturing, "Please. Like mortal weapons can harm an angel of the Lord."

Furious emerald eyes shifted from Castiel to Uriel, "Try me bitch. You want my help with the seals after this one? Then you leave her the hell alone. She's a good kid and doesn't deserve to get smote
by some self-righteous pricks."

"Watch your tone with us you disgusting mud monkey!" Uriel snapped then opened his mouth to say more but Castiel interrupted him.

"Enough!" Castiel sent a reproving and impatient look to Uriel, they had other concerns more pressing than some random Trickster half-breed. "The abomination is not important right now. We're out of time, the witch has to die, and the seal must be saved."

Sam and Dean glared at the angel's choice of words in addressing their little sister, who, if Sam guessed right from how she moved against his back might be crying.

"There are a thousand people here," Sam pointed out as he briefly looked over his shoulder at the down turned heaving mop of short curly brown hair pressed against his back. He looked back at the angels in front of him with a frown and felt Maya clutch at the back of his jacket trying to ground her self.

"1,214…1,213, plus one abomination," Uriel droned, glaring in Sam's direction pointedly.

Sam glared right back as he straightened his shoulders, "And you're willing to kill them all?"

Uriel shook his head and told them unemotionally, "This isn't the first time I've…purified a city."

From behind Sam's back Maya grimaced at the angel's bland disregard for human life, as her heart calmed down as much as it could. It still beat rapidly in the presence of the winged racist dicks.

"Look, I understand this is regrettable," Castiel turned to look back at Dean.

"Regrettable?" Dean scoffed.

"We have to hold the line. Too many seals have broken already," Castiel's voice firm and clinical.

Dean shook his head, "So you screw the pooch on some seals and now this town has to pay the price?"

"It's the lives of 1,000 against the lives of 6 billion. There's a bigger picture here."

Maya couldn't help but think grimly, 'But where will you draw the line? 100,000? A million? Half the population on Earth?' She doesn't voice her thought, terrified of being the center of the two angels' focus once more.

"Right…'cause, uh, you're bigger picture kind of guys," Dean demeaned with a nod.

Castiel seemed to have had enough of Dean's shit and stepped into his personal space and told him severely, "Lucifer cannot rise. He does and Hell rises with him."

Maya peeked her head out nervously, again, as she watched the angel get into her brother's personal space. And the raising of Lucifer didn't sound too good either.

"Is that something you're willing to risk?" he asked Dean, never breaking eye contact.

Maya looked at Dean as he shifted uncomfortably at the mention of Hell. She knew he had died and gone to Hell, but neither of them had told her how he got out, or if he remembered anything.

"We'll stop this witch before she summons anyone," Sam told Castiel with certainty, looking at Castiel and Dean having some kind of starring contest. It was kind of awkward. "Your seal won't
be broken and no one has to die."

"We're wasting time with these mud monkeys and their pet abomination," Uriel's lips curled in distaste when he mentioned Maya.

Castiel turned and stepped away from Dean, actually looking somewhat regretful, even if it was only minuscule, "I'm sorry, but we have our orders."

"No, you can't do this. You—you're angels," Sam protested, slightly pleadingly as his faith, his belief was slowly becoming undone by the angels in front of him. "I mean, aren't you supposed to—you're supposed to show mercy."

Uriel chuckled like Sam had told him some funny joke and smiled, "Says who? Although, I suppose I could show mercy on that half-breed abomination cowering behind your back. The pagan taint hasn't seeped into its soul too much, yet. I'm sure if I...purify it now it'll most likely still be able to enter Heaven."

Both brothers glared at the dark skinned angel.

Castiel sent Uriel another warning look. "We have no choice," he told them flatly, referring to the town smiting.

"Of course you have a choice. I mean, come on, what, you've never—never questioned a crap order, huh? What are you both, just a couple of hammers?" Dean drilled at Castiel, tarring his eyes away from the other angel that so casually mentioned offing one of his younger siblings.

"Look, even if you can't understand it, have faith," the blue eyed angel turned back around to look back at Dean. "The plan is just."

"How can you even say that?" Sam questioned wanting to know how angels thought that smiting a town was a just plan.

Castiel turned his steely gaze on Sam, "Because it comes from Heaven. That makes it just."

Maya had to bite her lip to keep the retort, 'So says every mindless obedient soldier throughout history. Every sociopathic religious zealot who started a war in God's name, killed in His name.'

Dean jeered, "It must be so nice to be so sure of yourselves."

"Tell me something, Dean," Castiel queried, "When your father gave you an order, didn't you obey?"

That struck a nerve, but instead of backing down, Dean got annoyed, which then morphed into the trademark Winchester stubbornness.

"Sorry, boys, it looks like plans have changed," Dean told the trench coat angel. Castiel tilted his head a little curiously as he stared at him.

"You think you can stop us?" Uriel asked amused. The same way the arrogant were amused by those they considered beneath them.

"No," Dean started walking over to Uriel. "But if you're going to smite this whole town... then you're gonna have to smite us with it because we're not leaving." Dean looked over his shoulder at Castiel, addressing him, "See you went to the trouble of busting me out of Hell. I figure I'm worth something to the man upstairs." He looked back at Uriel, starring confidently at the smug bastard's
Maya's eyebrows shot to her hairline in surprise. The angels dragged Dean out? She wasn't sure whether to feel grateful or worried.

She leaned more to being worried. If they saved Dean then they had plans for him, and with Heaven involved that didn't bode well for them.

"I will drag you out of here myself," Uriel growled lowly with a shake of his head.

"Yeah, but you'll have to kill me. Then we're back to the same problem. I mean, come on. You're gonna wipe out a whole town for one little witch? Sounds to me like you're compensating for something," Dean sassed and turned around and walked back to Castiel.

"We can do this," Dean told Castiel with certainty. "We will find that witch. And we will stop the summoning."

Castiel held Dean's gaze, starring intently into his face, gauging his resolve.

"Castiel, I will not let these—" Uriel started angrily pointing at them, only to be stopped when Castiel held out a silencing hand to him and interrupted his rant.

"Enough," Castiel ordered, his stare-off with Dean never wavering. "I suggest you move quickly."

Dean gave the angel a curt nod and turned towards Sam and Maya, "Let's go guys."

Castiel and Uriel watched as Dean gave a reassuring smile to the female abomination, draping a comforting arm around its shoulders and leading it out the door. It eyed the egg carton in its grasp, its eyes shifting to Castiel and Uriel contemplatively, albeit nervously. Dean noticed and lightly wacked it upside the head, making it flinch and scowl childishly up at him.

"Don't throw eggs at the smite-happy angels!" Dean hissed quietly in the golden-eyed half-Trickster's ear. "Even if they deserve it."

Sam followed closely behind, keeping his body between the angels and the half-breed. Sam would give the angels a final uncertain and saddened disillusioned glance before shutting the door behind them.

In the quiet Uriel spoke up first, "We should've smote that disgusting perversion of our Father's creation."

Castiel sighed heavily through his vessel's nose, "It would've caused more friction between the Righteous Man and Heaven. We need him to cooperate in saving the seals. We can let it live for now."

Uriel rumbled in his displeasure.

"...angels?!" Maya squeaked nervously as they closed the door behind them, her heart still pounding. "Seals? Lucifer? What...guys, what's going on?" she looked up into Dean's green eyes beseechingly and scared. "And...and, and angels?!"

"You said that one already, Goldy," Dean smirked at the small glare Maya gave him.
"What the hell is going on?!" she demanded loudly as they walked to the impala.

Dean sighed as he released her and went to the driver's side of the impala. "The seals to Lucifer's Cage are being broken. They all break and Lucifer walks free."

Maya was silent as she stared at the two brothers and said very empathetically, "Fuck."

Dean snorted, "Exactly." He plopped down in the driver's seat and Sam and Maya followed suit.

Sam pulled out the hex bag they'd found at the Halloween party, thinking about the angels he finally got to meet.

Dean saw his troubled look and asked, "What?"

Sam shook his head, "Nothing." Then he chuckled sadly, "I thought they'd be different."

"Who, the angels?" Dean asked.

"I didn't," Maya grumbled from the back seat as she tried to figure out what to do with the half filled egg carton now.

"Yeah," Sam sighed, fiddling with the hex bag.

"Well, I tried to tell you," Dean shrugged. He had tried to get Sam to see that they weren't what everyone pictured them as.

"I just…I mean, I thought they'd be righteous."

Maya snorted, "That's kind of the problem, Sam. They are."

Dean nodded his head at Maya, "She's right. There's nothing more dangerous than some asshole that thinks he's on a Holy mission. I mean they took one look at Maya declared her an-an-an abomination and were ready to kill her."

Sam nodded in concession to that point then asked, "But I mean, this is God and Heaven? This is what I've been praying to?"

Maya sent Sam a sad and sympathetic look. She could only imagine what this was doing to him. To have something he believed in and have it turned on its head. To find out the reality was not what he believed it to be.

It had to suck big time. (Author looks at the readers with an evil and plotting smile)

"Look, man, I know you're into the whole God thing and Jesus on a tortilla and stuff like that," Dean looked at Sam supportively. "But just because there's a couple of bad apples doesn't mean the whole barrels rotten. I mean, for all we know God hates these jerks." He looked away and gripped his keys, "Babe Ruth was a dick, but baseball's still a beautiful game."

Sam gave him a wane smile.

Maya disagreed, "Mmm-no I'm pretty sure all angels are a bunch of flying dicks."

Both brothers turned to look at her, brows raised.

"What?" she asked at their stare.
"Wha'd'ya do to get into such a beef with the angels, huh?" Dean asked with a raised eyebrow. It was odd how the angels were ready to kill her on sight. So what did Maya do to get on Heaven's bad side?

"I was born," Maya sighed blandly, looking between the two of them. "When my powers first came in my Dad taught me to be afraid of Hunters, although Bobby, and now you two, kind of put a stop to that for the most part," she chuckled earning a small smile from the guys. "Then my Dad taught me to be afraid of angels, that if they ever came down from their heavenly pedestals I should run as fast and as far away from them as I can. I mean, you saw them in there, right? One look at me and they were ready to end me then and there."

"So, what? I shouldn't have faith in Heaven, in-in Christianity, in what it teaches?" Sam asked with kicked puppy eyes trained on Maya.

Maya tightened her lips and stopped the answer that wanted to blurt out that yes he shouldn't. She knew however that the religion wasn't at fault, just how it was executed or represented by dicks. People always tried to use religion as a reason or explanation for their actions, benign, positive, and malicious alike. That's never changed.

So, as far as Maya was concerned, angels were like religious zealots that took it way too far.

"Just angels, Sam. They're only part of Christian lore, not the main part," Maya said carefully. "Christianity isn't run by angels, it comes from people like you who believe in kindness to others, tolerance, charity and all those good things. Hell, even I can get behind that stuff and I'm half-pagan. It's the angels and their self-righteous methods I can't get behind," she rolled her eyes and put the egg carton under Dean's seat missing the thankful smile Sam sent her. "I personally have faith in people to change, to get past whatever darkness they have in them and try to do better."

"After a well taught lesson courtesy of our resident mini-Trickster?" Sam queried with a grin, that Maya returned, cheeky and prideful.

Maya became more serious as she turned her eyes from Sam and looked into Dean's green ones, "Just, don't trust the angels on blind faith, okay? I mean, who knows how far is too far for them. They're ready to smite a town of 1,200 to save a seal. When does the number they're willing to sacrifice become too high for them?"

Dean had picked up Maya's reference to blind faith to a talk they had all those months ago during the Crocotta case.

"We'll be careful, Goldy," Dean nodded at her in reassurance. He was already suspicious of the angels, but at least now he didn't feel unnecessarily paranoid about. He wasn't the only one!

"So, Maya," Sam garnered her attention again to ask something he noticed during the intense conversation in the motel room; "Are you sure you won't be able to sense where the witch is hiding? Or has any memory of Tracy cursing you jog loose yet?"

Maya sighed heavily, "Nope, nothing. I know I was cursed a few days ago, maybe a couple before Luke Wallace bit it, but every time the hex bag was in full swing everything was like it was just out of focus. And, like I said, if my Dad didn't suss her out when he first got here then I wouldn't be able to either, even if I wasn't grounded."

Sam and Dean pinched their eyebrows at that. What did being grounded have to do with her abilities?
"What does your grounding have to do with anything?" Dean asked in confusion, he was completely lost now.

Maya shifted uncomfortably then leaned forward stuck a 'naked' wrist out between them, "Feel my wrist."

Sam and Dean did that whole wordless conversation again that Maya was able to see had strong overtones of confusion. A shrug from Sam, and Sam touched her wrist, his eyebrows pinching then shooting to his hairline as he gripped it more firmly.

Or, more specifically, the metal manacle spelled to remain hidden from view.

"Maya, what the hell is that? It feels like a metal wrist guard," Sam asked in concern and alarm.

"What?!” Dean exclaimed before pulling the proffered appendage and felt the hard metal; feeling where it ended and normal skin began, and the etches in the band.

"Power suppressing wristbands," Maya informed them with a shrug. "Haven't been this powerless or close to full human since I was like 7."

"Great," Dean grunted as he released her. "We've got a 600-year-old witch cheerleader and a powerless half-Trickster that said witch has issues with. Now mind telling us where the hell Loki is during all this crap?! Why would he leave you alone like this with a witch on the loose?!" he demanded getting more and more pissed.

"To be fair, he didn't know about the witch either and I have…had Puck…” Maya added that last part sadly. She didn't have a clue where her little friend and guardian was or if he was still alive.

"Maya," Sam asked cautiously, reaching over to put a hand on her shoulder, as he eyed Dean's tight grip on the impala's steering wheel, his brother's knuckles turning white. "Where's your Dad?"

"Um…at a week long gathering of the Norse pantheon to celebrate All Hallow's Eve?"

There was tense silence in the black classic car.

Then Dean exploded with a shout, "HE'S FREAKIN' WHERE?!!"

Maya groaned as Dean went into an over protective tirade and ranted what he wanted to do to Loki, mainly kill him.

"It's not like he could've taken me along!" Maya interrupted exasperatedly. "It was either stay here or go and risk getting raped, eaten, or raped and then eaten. Demi-god or not, daughter of Loki or not, there are some gods out there that wouldn't mind taking a bite outta me."

"Like he'd let anything happen to you—" Dean snarled with gritted teeth as he plotted how he was going to gut the asshole and then relocate Maya over to Bobby's.

"He wouldn't have been able to watch me 24/7, even with Uncle Thor helping, and most of the Norse pantheon aren't exactly a big fan of my Dad's. I'm like a neon sign saying 'Loki's Kryptonite! Come and Get It!'" Maya pointed out impatiently as she rubbed a hand down her face. "And, do we seriously have time for this? I was under the impression that we're under a time crunch."

"Fine," Dean bit out with a scowl. "But you're not leaving our sight till all this shit is sorted out!" he said, turning in his seat to point at her aggressively.
"Believe me. I have no intentions of leaving your guys' side," Maya sighed once more and looked over at Sam who was looking intently at something in his hand out of her line of sight.

Dean followed Maya's gaze and watched Sam turn over the charred baby bone in his hand. "Well, are you gonna figure out a way to find this witch, or are you just going to sit there fingering your bone?" he asked as he turned over the impala's engine.

Maya snorted from the back seat at the subtle innuendo.

"You know how much heat it would take to char a bone like this, Dean?" Sam asked rhetorically, not really expecting Dean to know.

"No."

"A lot. I mean, more than a fire or some kitchen oven," Sam informed them.

Maya leaned forward to look over the bench seat at the tiny black shiny bone in Sam's hand. She hadn't a clue of what could do that either.

"A furnace, maybe?" Maya suggested with a shrug as she sat back down.

Sam shook his head, "No. Too cumbersome and they could risk something going wrong if they messed with the one in their house."

"Okay, Betty Crocker, what does that mean?" Dean asked.

"It means we make a stop," Sam said with a self-assured smile. "We're going back to high school."

Cue twin groans of agony.

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**Early Evening**

**Gloversville High School**

**Art Room**

They entered the now empty school and had made their way to the art room, filled with sculptures, some carved pumpkins, masks, painting and drawings.

Maya stuck to Dean's side as he walked over to the kilns to inspect them. If Dean noticed Maya being a little clingy or trying to act like his shadow, he didn't say anything. Although he did send Sam the occasional glare when Sam would smirk at them knowingly.

Sam went to Don Harding's desk and began inspecting it, looking for anything suspicious.

"So, Tracy used a kiln to char the bone?" Dean asked as he walked over to Sam, Maya following with a distracted frown. "What's the big deal?"
Maya could feel something coming back but it was just out of reach.

"Dean, that hex bag and Maya turned up at our motel, not after we talked to Tracy…" Sam trailed off as he saw a bottom drawer with a serious pad lock on it.

"But after we talked to the teacher," Dean finished and looked over at Maya's frowning face. "How you doing, Goldy? Anything coming back?"

"Something's trying to," Maya mumbled and shook her head. "But it's…it's just not…"

Dean patted her back comfortingly, "It's alright. We got it figured out now. All this crap will be over with soon."

Sam looked around for something to break it open and saw the hammer on the shelf behind him. He grabbed it and began hitting the lock till the wood splintered and he could open the drawer.

Sam stood up as all three of them looked into the drawer in mixed degrees of disgust and horror at the small bones in a bowl.

"Oh my god. Those are all from children," Sam stated breathlessly.

"I'm guessing he's not saving them for the dog," Dean quipped, but then caught Maya's saddened flinch. He grimaced at the reminder of the little rat that was nowhere to be seen.

Him and Sam might not have said it out loud but both knew that the chance Puck was still alive was slim. Why would Don keep the dog alive when he had had what he wanted?

"If it's Don," Maya pondered, moving past the ache in her heart for her little friend. "Then why did Tracy have all my hair?"

Sam shrugged, but then went tense with a bit of a realization. "Maybe Don had her under the same spell he had you under and used her to plant the hex bag on you and frame her as the town witch."

Dean tightened his lips doubtfully and started motioning with his hands, "I don't know, man. You think? I mean it's kind of complicated for your regular witch-bitch. Making an obvious scapegoat, then have a less obvious one possibly responsible for the first one, all to hide his actions?"

Maya nodded at Dean with a tight smile that agreed with Dean's assessment. Something was off. She just knew it, but it just wouldn't come to her.

"Guys," Sam sighed in exasperation. "He's over 600 years old. I think he's had enough time to plan this all out."

All Sam got from Maya and Dean were almost identical looks of skepticism. Maya's shortened hair and mirror expression of Dean's made her look more like his brother's mini-me than ever before.

It was a little odd how similar they looked and he could see why people would buy the ruse of Maya being their little sister so easily. She actually possessed some similar features between them.

But the comparisons would have to wait; they were running out of time.

"Let's—let's just go, okay?" Sam shook his head and led the way to the impala, his brother and sister trailing after him. "Chances are we didn't find Tracy because Don has her still under his spell. She's probably going to be the final sacrifice, so we've gotta move."

"Yeah, alright," Dean chimed in behind him. Sam didn't need to look to know Dean was giving
Maya a reprimanding look as he said, "That means we don't have time to slow the impala down so can throw eggs at people like you did at…who? Oh, right, that Tracy chick's friends on the way here."

Sam could just picture Maya's put out pout as she responded with, "...fine. Ruin all my Halloween fun why don't you. Not like a good decade was shaved off my life from being in the same room as a couple of flying winged dicks earlier."

Sam mentally rolled his eyes when he heard Dean snort at Maya's chosen name when referring to angels. It was hardly respectful for such powerful and heavenly beings trying to stop the Apocalypse and Lucifer's rise from happening.

Even if it was completely accurate.

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**Gloversville Park**

**Castiel**

Castiel turned to Uriel as he suggested they just drag Dean Winchester out of Gloversville and destroy the town regardless of the Hunter's desire to remain. He'd always known of Uriel's...distaste for their Father's creation, only ever seeing their flaws and not their potential.

He had faith Dean would succeed in preventing the seal from being broken.

Castiel stared deeply into his Brother's eyes, "You know our true orders. Are you prepared to disobey?"

Uriel tightened his lips, his shoulders tensing before relaxing in acceptance of the situation.

Castiel turned away and looked out on the park of frolicking human children. He observed the luminous souls that shown bright and pure, most shining with innocence and happiness. They were quite beautiful that way, even the ones that held wounds that oozed hidden pain and ones scared from tragedy and betrayal.

As his bright eyes looked out onto the field he picked up on something curious. Castiel stretched his grace out in a radius around him and Uriel.

Uriel glanced at Castiel curiously, having felt the brush of the other angel's grace against his own, "Castiel, what are you doing?"

He didn't respond right away as his head swiveled behind them and looked at something unseen in the wooded area. Castiel stood up quickly as he used his grace to hone in on a piece of old magic emanating from the woods.

Castiel walked around the bench and past the tree line intently, "I'm sensing old magic. It could be another of the witch's spells. I intend to investigate." He didn't need to turn around to know Uriel had heard him and had been following closely behind. Castiel felt as Uriel extended his own grace and found the same bit of magic he did.
"This is curious," Uriel pondered as they both came upon a random smattering of trees, nothing that stood out to the naked eye. "It doesn't feel like the witch's magic though. There's a distinct lack of a demonic stench. Whatever it is, it's not black magic."

Castiel nodded as they approached an unremarkable tree. He narrowed his eyes as he stared at it before walking towards the bush that grew beside it and pushed away the branches.

Old symbols were carved and burnt into the base of the tree, a steady stream of powerful magic flowing from it and going into different directions.

Uriel was the first to finally recognize the magic and scowled in disgust, "Ugh. Pagan magic. No doubt that abomination's doing. Shall I destroy it?"

"Let's see where it's branching off to first," Castiel suggested with narrowed eyes. "Destroying this may trigger something...unpleasant."

Uriel hummed in acceptance and disappeared, Castiel did the same.

In the next instant Castiel was back. It would be another few minutes before Uriel reappeared, adjusting his suit and brushing off some invisible specks of dirt.

"It's demon warding. It's keeping demons from entering the town," Castiel said in observation as he regarded Uriel.

"I concur. I just smote one of the Hell spawn I stumbled across near one of the outer points," Uriel reported.

Castiel's eyes snapped to Uriel, "Demons are circling? Do you suppose they await the rise of Samhain?"

"Perhaps. But before I destroyed it, it did mention that it was looking for something being protected within the warding's confines," Uriel revealed.

Castiel tilted his head speculatively, "The same thing that Lilith's demons have been searching for all over the country?"

Uriel shrugged, "Maybe. Or they were curious. Didn't that spike in magic that sent the Witnesses back to rest come from around here?"

Castiel nodded, "It did. Dean had confirmed that it was a male pagan god. It is close to the abomination the Winchester's are fond of, most likely its progenitor. It is likely this...Trickster erected the warding to conceal and protect its spawn. Tricksters are notorious when it comes to protecting their young."

"Yes, yes, and very unlike the rest of those paganistic heathens that call themselves gods." Uriel rolled his eyes sarcastically, not that Castiel could pick up on the hidden emotional undertone. "But it does raise the question of why a Trickster would need to protect its offspring from demons, specifically."

Castiel pondered this new piece of information and said carefully, "It's possible...that what Lilith is searching all over the country for is the Trickster's half-breed atrocity. But as you said, it is weak and is of little value." Castiel let out a slow sigh, "We'll report our findings, but otherwise stay the course."

"Very well. Although we could save ourselves the headache and just kill the thing now," Uriel
pointed out, another attempt to get permission to smite the Trickster-ling. But an expressionless look from Castiel forced a sigh from his lips. "Fine. I'll report this to our superiors."

Castiel nodded and watched as Uriel left.

All he could do now was wait and pray that Dean will stop the raising of Samhain. Castiel eyed the innocuous tree once more before departing with a final thought.

Where was the Trickster when the witch had made her presence known?

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Nighttime

Near Don Harding's House

"Why not?" Maya demanded with a glare at Sam and Dean. "If Don is as powerful as you two think then you'll need all the help you can get!" she argued when the brothers had told her in no uncertain terms that she was going to wait for them in the impala. Obviously, Maya did not agree.

Dean parked the impala a block away and leaned over the bench seat to send her a glare of his own. "Gee, I wonder why," he said sarcastically. "Let me list the reasons, one: you're inexperienced and can't shoot a gun. I'd like to not accidentally get shot in the ass, thanks. Two: you can't do any of your normal tricks to protect yourself, three…three…” Dean trailed off trying to find a third reason as Maya looked at him expectantly, "THREE: because I freakin' said so!"

"Then I won't follow you into the fight! I'll stay up front and be look out!" Maya shot back a little desperately. "I don't think gun shots being fired on Halloween in a crowded neighborhood with kids all over the place would go down all too well with the police."

Dean narrowed his eyes and was about to argue again, not wanting Maya anywhere near the house when Sam interrupted him, "Dean."

Dean looked over at Sam who had been watching them and had picked up something from Maya he hadn't. Sam's eyes glanced in Maya's direction, Dean's following in a discreet side-glance.

Maya was looking at him with kicked abandoned puppy eyes that were scared, but not of the battle they were walking into…but of being left behind. They begged not to be left behind again.

Dean winced internally.

Crap. They gave the kid abandonment issues.

Dean pointed at the big eyed baby Trickster in his back seat and told her sternly, "You stay by the entrance. Window, backdoor, whatever. You stay there. Police come you shout then haul ass, got it? No matter what you hear, you don't follow."

Maya nodded quickly like a bobble head.

They gathered their stuff and made their way to Don's house, sneaking into the backyard and through an unlocked window. None of them said a word. Dean looked at Maya and gave her a
pointed look as he pointed at the floor.

*Stay here.*

Maya rolled her eyes and nodded, watching as they disappeared into the house and followed the faint chanting that floated in the air like the smell of hot garbage.

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**Puck**

He'd been down in this dingy basement for days, still bound by roots with those old symbols on them. Puck's muscles ached; he was hungry, thirsty, dirty, and in pain. The second witch, the male had been trying to put him under a spell to control him, but nothing had worked.

All the attempts instead had burned in his veins as the old power Gabriel had awoken him burned the demonic black magic forced on him. He remembered Gabriel telling him that all dogs had this power hidden deep inside them and just needed a little help bringing it out. The power had been lost to the canines millennia ago as punishment, for choosing humans over the angels.

Amusement suffused Puck's weary mind when Gabriel had told him how he so called his angelic ancestors fucking off to stay with the humans. Who wouldn't want a loving family over being treated like some tool? Even then the angels had been becoming less and less of what they were supposed to be. Emotional contradictory humans or emotionless breathing statues?

Puck kept the whine that wanted to escape his entrapped muzzle as he thought of his Mistress, his friend, his family. He missed Maya and was worried for her.

When Don had dragged an unconscious Tracy into his basement lair Puck had been relieved it wasn't Maya. That he wouldn't have to see her killed and be completely helpless to stop it.

But being handed over to said demon might as well be a death sentence.

Don had cut him and used his blood to contact the old demon to update his and his sister's progress. Informing him of the little Trickster they had snared for the final sacrifice and the demon’s new meat suit.

Puck didn't understand the gurgling from the bowl of blood, but knew it wasn't good.

With the call over Don had looked at him and kicked his bound body in annoyance, forcing a muffled yelp. Don had muttered about finding a last minute replacement and taking over control of the half-breed from his sister so he could present her to Samhain.

Puck didn't know for sure why Samhain wanted her alive, but had feeling it was about handing Maya over to Lilith. If not the demon might just want to relish in killed Maya himself.

Puck watched as Don began chanting for the final sacrifice, using his own bitch-witch of a sister.

*Talk about justice.*

Don chanted and approached with a knife as Tracy struggled against her gag and the ropes suspending her wrists from the ceiling.
Puck's ears, however, perked up as he heard the faintest of footsteps coming from upstairs. He turned his head the best he could and looked at the stairwell to see Sam…and Dean? Wasn't he supposed to be in Hell?

Don had his back turned to them and had raised the knife above his head to kill Tracy, but a couple of loud bangs later and he fell over as blood seeped through the front of his shirt.

Puck watched and waited for the Winchesters to fire on Tracy, but they didn't and instead made to let her down.

Puck struggled against his bindings with what remained of his depleted strength and whined as loudly as he could.

Sam had turned at his whining, his eyes widening at the little dog bound by ropes of roots in the corner. "Dean, look! It's Puck!" he walked over to the frantically whining and growling dog that stared intently over at Tracy as Dean began cutting her down. "Easy, boy. Stay still so I can cut these off of you. Maya's going to be so happy to see you," Sam said soothingly as he produced a pocketknife. "Maya! Puck's down here!" Sam shouted over his shoulder, smiling at the excited shout Maya gave from upstairs and her frantic footsteps.

Puck struggled even more and hoped Sam hurried up in freeing him.

There was still one more witch to take care of, and Dean just released her.

---

Maya

Maya's face was beaming with excitement as she ran from her post to the basement steps and thundered down them.

"I mean, did you see what he was doing? Did you hear him..." Tracy's voice muffled Maya's happiness a little bit. Victim or not, Maya was still pretty sure she was a bitch.

She had reached the bottom of the steps and looked over at Dean, who had probably just untied the blonde teenager.

Maya and Tracy's eyes connected for a split moment and memories came rushing back to her head, making her eyes go wide. "Dean-!" she tried to shout out in warning but soon found herself flying to the side with a quick spell and swipe of Tracy's hand.

Maya wasn't the only one affected as she looked around to see Sam and Dean on the floor with her.

"How sloppy his incantation was? My brother was always a little dim," Tracy finished in a smug tone, casting another spell on them before they could get up or draw their guns, in Sam and Dean's case.

Maya gasped and groaned as agonizing pain ripped through her body, forcing her face to scrunch and her hands to grasp at her abdomen. She could hear Sam and Dean beside her grunting and cringing in pain too, obviously suffering the same fate as her.

A familiar whine caught her attention. Maya turned her head, teethed grinding in agony to see Puck
only a couple feet away, bound in roots with symbols etched into them. She sent him a relieved, albeit pained smile.

"He was going to make me the final sacrifice," Tracy said lightly. "His idea. We had planned to use little Maya here, but our Master wanted her alive. So now, that honor goes to him." Tracy gave Maya a little wave when she turned her head back to glare at the blonde witch.

"Our Master's return. This spellwork's a two-man job, you understand? So for 600 years I had to deal with that pompous son of a bitch," Tracy said with a scowl as she walked over and kneeled by her dead brother, picking up the dropped knife and ornate silver chalice. "Planning, preparing—unbearable," she pressed the knife against one of the bullet wounds, drawing more blood. "The whole time I wanted to rip his face off. And…" she chuckles as she looked over at them, "…you get him with a gun. Oh, I love that."

She stood up and kept up the monolog as she went to the alter on the far end of the basement, "You know, back in the day this was the one night you kept your children inside. Well, tonight, you'll all see what Halloween really is."

Tracy began chanting in Latin.

A whine from Puck had her looking back at her dog. She watched as the symbols glowed on the roots as he strained against them, cracking slight from where Sam had begun cutting them. They shared a look of understanding.

Maybe if Maya could make her way over to Puck and release him then whatever stuff her Dad did to him in a fit of justly protective paranoid parental instincts might just give them a chance.

She inched her way agonizingly towards Puck, ignoring Sam's whispered yell to cover her face in blood.

Okay, maybe not ignore completely because she paused a moment as her mind stalled then restarted as she remembered the lore about Samhain and masks.

Unfortunately Maya wasn't near any convenient wet puddles of blood, being the furthest away from Don's body. So back to her plan of releasing Puck, and now ignoring the loud harsh whisperings of her brothers demanding to know what she was doing.

Her progress was too slow and Tracy was getting to the end of her chant, so Maya did the only thing she could think of.

Insult the very in control of the situation 600 year old witch.

"Back in your day? Man you really are a fucking old hag, ain't ya?" Maya rasped and everything fell silent. Maya rolled on her side to smirk painfully at the glaring blonde.

Although she was pretty sure Sam and Dean were glaring at her too for drawing attention to herself like this.

Tracy glanced at her watch then smirked cruelly at Maya, sauntering over with a sway in her hips. The smile widening as Maya used her legs and one elbow to move away from the approaching witch.

Neither of them paid any mind to Sam and Dean as they shouted at Tracy to leave Maya alone, they were incapacitated and couldn't do anything.
"You know, when you left mine and my brother's control I thought your Daddy would've shown up by now," Tracy purred before thrusting a hand out with a muttered spell, sending Maya skidding across the concrete floor and pinned sitting against the retaining wall, beside Puck who was growling fiercely.

"Maybe he just realized how *pathetic* you are," Tracy crouched so she was eye level with Maya, relishing in the pain that flickered through her honey gold eyes.

"Says the witch who needed help from her doofus brother for some measly little spell. Having some *performance* issues?" Maya drawled with a strained voice.

Tracy scowled and drove the aged dagger into the wall beside Maya's head making her flinch, then smiled as she straddled the young Trickster's hips.

"My Master wants you alive, for whatever reason," Tracy shrugged indifferently, "But he never specified your condition. I can only imagine what he has planned for you. I wanted you to be his new body. Would've loved playing with him in it," she removed the dagger from the concrete and pressed herself against Maya. Tracy turned her head to whisper seductively in her ear, "Maybe he'll let me play with you first...before he does himself."

Maya's face was stony as she withstood the uncomfortable assault, briefly seeing Sam and Dean's what-the-hell expressions morph into ones of protective rage. Puck snarled angrily to her right, straining against his bindings some more.

"Sorry, not into cradle robbing cougars," Maya snarked back with a pained grunt as Tracy angrily shoved herself off Maya and back onto her feet.

Tracy shook her head, and then snorted thinking she figured out what Maya was up to, "Nice try. Trying to distract me from the summoning. Always with the tricks. Sorry half-breed, not this time." Tracy turned around and went back to the alter, releasing Maya from the force pinning her to the wall, but still left her very much in crippling pain.

"*Maya, what-/Goldy, what the hell?!*" were among the pained words from Sam and Dean as they sent her disbelieving looks.

Maya reached into her coat and grabbed the small silver dagger she had tried to stab Dean with earlier that day and turned to Puck and the root bindings, continuing where Sam left off.

She ignored further comments of disbelief from the Winchester peanut gallery.

Maya was almost there as gritted her teeth and grunted in pain the sawing movement sent through her already agonized body, but unfortunately...

She wasn't quick enough.

Tracy had finished her chanting and the earth shook as the concrete foundation cracked ominously. Maya heard Sam shout to cover her face and play possum, but she kept cutting at the roots jaggedly.

*So close.*

Black smoke rose from the cracks and slithered into Don's empty body, the once blue eyes clouded over in near blindness. Samhain and Tracy greeted each other with a disgusting kiss because, hello! Brother sister! No!
Then Samhain twisted her head around a full 180 degrees and called her a whore.

Maya breathed a silent sigh of relief as the pain stopped and redoubled her efforts. She just knew Puck would be able to take the demon that had looked over her possum playing, blood covered faces of her brothers and was making his way over towards her.

No pressure, right?Fuck!

"You must be the half-Trickster I've heard about," Samhain drawled as he stalked slowly towards her. Maya glanced fearfully at him but kept cutting the tough root, she was almost through.

"I will be rewarded greatly when I hand you over to—" Samhain was interrupted as his body jarred slightly from being shot from behind. He turned around to stare unimpressed at the Winchesters standing behind him with their pitiful guns raised.

"Dean," Sam said as he stared down the ancient demon in front of them. "I don't think our usual weapons are gonna work on this guy."

Dean glanced at Sam, "Sam, no. I've got the knife, it'll be enough."

Samhain smiled creepily at them with those milky eyes.

"Dean, I can—"

"No! Hell, the angels said no!"

"You and Maya said they're a bunch of fanatics and aren't right about much!"

"They're right about this though and even you said it was like playing with fire!" Dean countered back as he brought out the demon-killing knife.

Samhain eyed the knife with a scowl, knowing exactly what it was. Before Dean could do anything with it Samhain lunged at Dean. The brothers fought Samhain, punching, kicking, and trying to drive the knife into the demon, but at one point the knife got knocked from Dean's hand and away from both the brothers.

Samhain smirked at them and advanced.

Sam in his desperation raised his hand, ready to use his powers when a terrifying growl ripped through the air.

The demon spun around to find Puck glaring at him. But not the Puck that everyone knew and loved. No. This Puck was much larger and much more fierce.

The little dog was now 4' at shoulder height with long powerful legs and claws that clacked on the concrete. The hair on his back stood on ends, his hackles raised, as he snarled at the demon menacingly.

Sam and Dean stared at the once small dog in astonishment then looked at Maya who was still seated on the ground with her dagger and had her own look of surprise on her face.

"Holy shit..." Maya whispered. Puck turned his head to look back at her with a familiar doggy grin. "Um...sic 'em?"

Dangerous brown eyes rounded on the demon and gave a flash of his impressive teeth once more in a terrifying snarl.
"It's not possible! Your kind is—" Samhain spluttered but was cut off as Puck lunged at the
demon. The demon moved, but not quick enough to avoid large jaws clamping down on his leg
forcing the demon to shout in pain.

A glow entered the enlarged dog's eyes and Samhain immediately smoked out of the meat suit he
was summoned in. He could always find another. He just needed to ritual to break his bindings in
Hell.

"No!" Sam shouted as he watched the black smoke try to escape. He shot out a hand to try and send
the demon back to Hell, but Puck beat him to the punch line.

The blue glow in Puck's eyes didn't leave but his teeth and claws started to emanate a faint light as
he jumped in the air and actually latched on to the smoke, bringing back down to the ground.

Where he proceeded to absolutely destroy it.

Maya got up and walked over to Sam and Dean as they watched in dumbfounded as the large dog
essentially tore the demon to itty-bitty shreds. Chunks torn by claws dissipated, pieces caught in
the powerful jaw lit up with orange light, similar to a demon being stabbed by the demon-killing
knife. When Puck latched on to the final big chunk that they all guessed what the center of the
black mass it gave a final death throe as it lit up and dispersed completely.

Puck gave a satisfied snort at a job well done and trotted over to Maya to nuzzle her and whine
pitifully.

Maya petted his large head and Puck's tail began wagging in happiness the fierceness leaving his
body and left an overgrown puppy in its wake.

"Holy shit," Sam whispered as he eyed the enlarged dog and tentatively scratched behind an ear.
Puck turned to eye Sam and gave him a dispassionate huff, still ticked with the man, but not about
to deny ear scratches.

"Maya," Dean asked, his voice a little higher than normal. "What the hell?"

She gave Dean a breathless laugh, "I don't know."

"Seriously, what the hell?!" Dean asked, a little panic entering his voice. The size Puck was now
and the impressive row of teeth and claws were bringing up some unpleasant memories of
Hellhounds. The only thing keeping him from shooting or stabbing the mutt was that that's where
the similarities ended.

That and Maya would probably kill him if he tried.

Maya sent him a sympathetic glance, "I don't know, Dean. My Dad must've done something. Those
roots had symbols on them, probably to keep him from tearing Tracy a new one." She bent over
and gave the overgrown dog a hug around his head rubbing his sides affectionately.

She then sprung up with realization and excitement, "I have a demon-killing dog! I have the most
badass dog in history!" Then proceed to cue at Puck while rubbing his face. Puck, the suck,
absorbed the praise and adoration like a sponge, tongue lolling and tail wagging happily.

"Well, uh, can he shrink back down?" Dean asked as he scratched his head. "Don't think folks'll be
too happy seeing a dog his size, with teeth that big running around."

Puck huffed and pulled away from Maya's attentions and shrunk down to his normal little self.
Maya picked the little dog up not minding the licks he gave her and beamed at Sam and Dean, "He's fun-sized and super-sized!"

While Samhain was being destroyed the seal was still broken and the warding around the town that had kept the demons out fell. A couple entered the town in the meat suits they already wore and a couple others decided to possess a couple of the townsfolk.

One of these demons liked to target a certain demographic for possession.

Children with same-sex parents. It loved the way the child would scream inside while it verbally and physically tore the parents the child loved so much to pieces. Taunt the child saying it was just helping them do what they knew was right, cleansing the world of homosexuals. Saving them from being corrupted.

The child's self-doubt and guilt was always so delicious.

Chapter End Notes

AN: Dun-dun-duhhhhhhhhhh! Here is another! And phew! I didn't expect it to get this long and was going to stop earlier after angels discovered the warding, but I'm like, I want to finish most of this episode! So lucky you guys get extra long chapter!

And no complaining about why Gabriel hasn't shown up yet! I will explain! It will be explained! Either next chapter or the one after! I've also came up with a better idea of why he might not be showing up during the whole trying to save the seals fiasco.

Because why? Most angels are dicks with wings and Zachariah is the dick-iest.

Also I hope you enjoyed that little cliffhanger and foreshadowing at the end there.

Last thing, I realized that my last chapter was posted almost a year to the date when I first started this story! Holy crap guys! Thanks so much for all of your reviews and support! It gives me life and strength to keep going.
November 1st 2008, Gloversville, New York

After midnight…

Maya pouted as she rubbed the back of her head where Dean and Sam gave a reproving smack, *each*. Puck—*the jackass*—snickered quietly as he trotted beside her, his unsuppressed powers having healed him.

As if ordinary weapons could hurt him now.

"I can't believe you didn't listen to Sam, Maya!" Dean ranted angrily. "And *then* you go and insult the *very powerful* witch! *Do you have a death wish or something?!*

Sam and Dean had been taking turns as they left the basement reaming into her for her actions.

Sam nodded in agreement with Dean and spoke with a little more calm, "You had no idea that Puck could do any of that, yet you still—"

Maya shook her head, cutting Sam off, and looked back and gestured between them, "*Hey!* You two have your own non-verbal conversations that I don't always fully understand." She gestured between herself and Puck, "Me and Puck, *same fucking thing*. He let me know he had an ace and I trust him."

Sam sighed at Maya's less than repentant behavior, "I understand he's…a special dog but, Maya, what if you weren't *quick enough*?"

"Exactly!" Dean grunted with a nod as they exited the house out the back door. "That demon could've had your guts spilling out onto the floor before you could say 'oops'!"

As they came to the front of the property the conversation was paused as they surveyed the now empty street around them for any late night stragglers. Seeing that the coast was clear they walked down the sidewalk towards the impala a block away and continued the conversation.

Maya having been a little in front, spun on her heels and began walking backwards so she could look at them. "Then why the *hell* did Tracy say he wanted me alive? And-and what did Samhain *mean* when he said he was going to get *rewarded* for handing me over? *Hand me over to who?*" she asked them in confusion. "What's going on?" she had slowly stopped walking and looked at their faces beseechingly with big round amber coloured eyes.

Dean shook his head before walking up to her and grabbing her shoulder to turn her around. "Don't worry about it," Dean kept his arm draped across the back of her shoulders and nudged her to keep walking. "Sammy and me will hang around a little bit till Loki shows up."

"*Seriously?*" Sam and Maya asked in unison, eyeing the eldest Winchester doubtfully.

"I don't want to leave you unprotected—"

"I have a badass demon-killing guard dog," Maya pointed out but Dean rolled his eyes and kept talking.

"—*and* I'd feel better if your ass of a Dad was here while your powers are on lockdown," Dean
finished and took in the less than believing stares of his younger siblings. "What?" Their stares intensified, even the dog joined in on the intense staring. "Fuck, okay! Fine! I wanna stick around so I can ream his ass and maybe try a little light stabbing. I mean, who seriously leaves their de-powered kid alone for a party?!" Dean had removed his arm from Maya's shoulders to better exaggerate his next point, "You got freakin' mind-controlled by a witch!"

Maya huffed as she gave the older male an eye roll. "Yeeeeees, because she totally didn't hide her self so well that not even Heaven could sense her, let alone my Dad. It's not like I was supposed to be safer here than with a bunch of pagan gods—family or not—that wouldn't hesitate of getting a one up on my Dad by using me, or raping me, or fucking eating me!" she stressed, her voice becoming less and less sarcastic as she ranted.

"Still!" Dean protested.

"Dean, it's not like Dad didn't leave us alone when we were kids for days on end before. Hell, one time for, what? A whole month?" Sam pointed out, earning a hard glare from his brother.

"That was different, Sam! He was out there saving lives! Loki runs around taking them!" Dean growled at Sam, missing how Maya picked up her pace and speed walked away from them and to the impala now in sight.

This was something she did not want to get caught in the middle of.

Sam tightened his lips to keep from saying anything, but when Dean caught his eyes he knew his brother knew what Sam really thought.

John Winchester, although he seemed to try his best, just wasn't as good as a parent as the damned Trickster.

They had a non-verbal conversation of facial expressions—the same kind that Maya had exasperated about earlier—and decided to drop the old subject, and walked up to the impala, all of them climbing in.

"So, what now?" Maya asked from the back seat as Puck clambered into her lap for more attention. He was held prisoner for days. If he wanted to plaster him self to Maya's side he damn well was going to.

Tension still hung a little in the air but, like a sigh, slowly left as their minds shifted to more mundane things for the moment.

Like sleep. Sleep was good.

Dean snorted as he put the black muscle car into drive, "Preferably sleep. I swear this day was never going to end."

"Yeah, I'm about ready to crash too," Sam, groaned as he leaned back in his seat and stretched his legs as far as they could go.

"You guys can crash at my place if you want," Maya offered as she let out a big yawn, lazily petting Puck in her arms. "Nothing supernatural getting in that place."

"I don't know…" Sam trailed and looked over the seat at their little Trickster of a sister worriedly.

Maya gave Sam a reassuring smile, "My Dad warded that place top to bottom. Not even those flying dicks could fly in without his say so. The only one we'd have to worry about a surprise visit
from is my Uncle Thor, but he's with my Dad right now."

The worry didn't leave Sam's eyes and he looked at Dean in silent question.

Was it really a good idea to spend the night in the Trickster's house? Sure the guy knows they wouldn't harm a single hair on Maya's head but they didn't doubt that he wouldn't be too thrilled finding them in his house.

"I'm not so sure that's a good idea Goldy," Dean said as he scrunched his nose. "I really don't want to wake up in his house with him hovering over us. That has 'disaster' written all over it."

Maya rolled her eyes—not seeing the problem that Sam and Dean both saw—and answered back, "He won't be back for another couple days while the party winds down."

Sam gave her an apologetic smile, "Sorry Maya, but I really don't think Loki's an all too big a fan of ours."

Then Maya broke out the big guns—big sad watery gold eyes of doom—and looked at them uncertainly, "So, what? You just gonna drop me off and leave me behind again?" Puck whined and nuzzled under her chin and gave her an affectionate lick.

Sam physically flinched and looked away from her. Dean only flinched internally, but his resolve held strong.

"Hey, hey, hey! No!" Dean said loudly looking at Maya in the rearview mirror sternly. "We left you with your Dad so you'd be safe! You were way too green—and still are—to be hunting demons, let alone Lilith and her demon army! Hell, I'm a seasoned Hunter and I didn't even make it. God knows what would've happened to you!"

Sam clenched his jaw as those night's memories came rushing back—yelling, screaming, a giggling psychotic female voice, blood, growling…devastation.

Maya dropped her gaze from the mirror somberly and wrapped her arms around Puck for comfort.

There was a tense silence for a couple minutes before Dean spoke again with a sigh, "You're like a kid sister to us Maya. The little twerp we didn't ask for, but would fight tooth and nail to keep safe."

Gold and green met in the reflected surface of the mirror, each showing gratitude and resoluteness, respectively.

They pulled up to the house and the brothers felt like they entered some kind of Twilight Zone reality. They eyed the seemingly normal looking home, and even Sam's curiosity waned at the thought of entering Loki's Lair. Who knew what lurked in the small century home. Like maybe there was some trick or magical defense system that targeted any Hunters that tried to cross its threshold and to the little half-Trickster that lived inside.

Maya unbuckled her belt and leaned over the front bench seat worryingly, dislodging a grumbling Puck, "So this is not a ding-dong-ditch situation?" She shifted under the two Winchesters combined gaze.

Dean reached up and ruffled her extra short and curly hair, "Nah. We'll come in to wash this bitch blood off our faces and say good-bye…" Seeing Maya's sad puppy eyes looking at him he rolled his eyes, "Until we get some goddamn sleep then come back to go out for breakfast," Dean looked at the clock, "Or very late breakfast slash early lunch. I told you. We're sticking around till your Dad pops up. Granted when he does at a distance."
Maya gave a relieved smile and nodded, tension leaving her shoulders as she leaned back and clambered out of the car.

When she was out of earshot Sam looked at Dean as they climbed out of the Impala, "Are we really staying till he comes back? Sure we gave him Maya back last time, but I doubt he'll ever be over Mystery Spot."

Dean gave him a tight smile, "I really don't want to leave her alone after that whole demon summoning bitchcraft fiasco we just had." He then gave his brother a shrug, "Besides, I think Loki owes us at least a head start…or one cheap shot."

Sam gave his unimpressed bitch face.

Dean raised his hands in surrender, "Kidding! Kidding!...Mostly."

Maya, unaware of the brothers' conversation, bounded up the stone walkway, stopping at the small garden and recovering a hidden key in an old medicine bottle with a decorative stone glued on top. Better than leaving it under the friendly 'Welcome' mat or the innocuous potted plant that had wilted in the chilly fall weather.

Grasping the key she unlocked the front door and made her way in with Puck sprinting inside with a happy bark. She sighed in relieved at the sight of her backpack tossed haphazardly in the middle of the floor.

'Damn. I was really out of it near the end of all that mind-control crap,' Maya thought as she scooped her bag up off the floor and turned around to watch as Sam and Dean cautiously enter the house looking around.

"Dude, you sure this is the right house? I distinctly remember that apartment in Ohio being less…"

Dean waved his hand around the living room. "Mr. Mom and more raunchy-porno-waiting-to-happen."

Maya snorted and gave Dean a knowing smirk, "Oh, I know. During temporary stops I let him take over the decorating, but in the more permanent places like here I put my foot down. I refuse to live in a place for too long where I'd feel like I'd need to wash my hands every time I touched something."

Sam tore his eyes away from the bookshelf that had caught his interest with some curious looking old texts that had his fingers itching a little to look through them, whether he could read them or not.

"Permanent places?" Sam queried curiously.

Maya shrugged, "'Y'know, safe houses. Places my Dad owns. I know of only a couple of them. This one, another over in North Dakota, and I think one out in California." She let loose a yawn, "Now, I'm gonna get changed. Please don't leave till I get back." She quickly bounded up the stairs with her bag, not waiting for their response.

Puck ran up after her, his tags jingling a little as he went. He was never letting her out of his sight again.

Dean looked around the room some more, his eye catching on photos on shelves and the wall. Nothing was odd about them per se, just family photos that you'd find in any home. Photos of vacations, holidays, moments in everyday life.
It's the fact that they were in the Trickster's home that sent something inside him reeling. Most featured him and his daughter having fun, smiling, laughing, being goofballs.

Dean tried to remember if their Dad had ever taken pictures of him and Sam when they were younger. Yeah he kept some of the stuff they got, accomplishments over the years in some storage locker…but no family shots that he remembered much about, except for one or two.

One photo caught his eye and he had to suppress a smirk. It was Maya; she had to be five, maybe six years old given her size. She was sitting on a kitchen counter, cross-legged, cheeks chipmunk'd out, and her hand in a box of Oreo cookies. Her amber eyes wide in surprise as she gave the camera a crumb covered 'busted' look.

Another was her looking scared, nervous, and unsteady on a rainbow bike with white handles and multi-colored streamers as she tried to remain upright on only two wheels. This picture was beside what was decidedly the aftermath of when she couldn't stop or steer and apparently had veered right into a tree. That one was taken from behind her as she propped her self up on her grass stained elbows and looked back at the camera over her shoulder with a still developing bitch face under a clashing deep red and black helmet.

There were other pictures or a series, like 'Reactions to Watching Sports Games'. It was basically a collection of her reactions to the questions that were painted on each frame for each face she made. Baseball? So bored she fell asleep. Basketball? Holy shit they're tall! Football? What the hell is this? Hockey? Testosterone on skates.

Dean frowned as a twisted feeling crept up in his chest. His Dad had never taken him or Sam to a sports game. Too busy on the road hunting the next monster of the week, avoiding CPS like the plague, and trying not to get arrested by well meaning but uninformed uniformed officers.

"Dean, do you have any idea how old some of these books are?" Sam called out into the quiet. Unaware of his brother's inner turmoil, but providing a well enough distraction to shove it aside, or, more appropriately, buries it.

"Don't really care you big nerd, but I assume you're going to tell me anyways," Dean sniped back; relishing in the bitch face his baby brother sent him. One that seemed to translate loosely to 'you're-such-a-jerk-for-not-letting-me-nerd-out-over-this'. "Well, while you risk losing your hand fawning over Loki's stuff I'm gonna wash this bitch blood off my face," Dean told Sam as he thumbed over his shoulder at the ajar door to a half bathroom off the kitchen.

Sam eyed the bookshelf with a new sense of wariness as Dean walked away to wash his face off. Sam was conflicted. He really wanted to pick up some of the books to thumb through them. Who knew what was in them.

But then again…Loki.

Sam was about to fall into temptation when Maya padded down the stairs wearing a loose orangey-pink tank top and some red fuzzy plaid drawstring sleep pants.

Sam turned to look at her and informed her that Dean was washing his face off in the bathroom he found. Then he asked, "Hey Maya, do you know what all these books are?"

Maya padded barefoot up beside him, Puck right beside her, and looked at the spines on the old leather bound covers. "Well that one is a bunch of stories of different Norse gods that were lost over time. It's a lot more accurate than the mainstream mythos going around. Although, Marvel seemed to get some stuff right like Thor and my Dad actually being brothers to an extent," Maya
hummed as she scanned the old titles and frowned at one in disgust. "Ugh. I told Dad to keep his porn in his room!"

Both Sam and her had similar faces of disgust as Maya grabbed the aforementioned book between two fingers and held it away from her body like it was diseased.

"He seriously has an old Norse porno out in the open in his living room?" Sam asked eyeing the old leather bound book then looked back at the other books worriedly.

Maya scoffed as she handed the book to Puck who grabbed it gently with his teeth, "More like family trees of different gods and goddesses and any other demi-gods he knows about…with exactly how said demi-gods came into being in…with explicit detail that's completely TMI. Puck can you please take that back to his room?"

Puck huffed around the book in his mouth and shifted nervously on his feet.

Maya gave a sympathetic sigh, "I'm not leaving the house buddy. Nothing's going to get me while you're gone for a few minutes."

Puck gave a grumbly growl but nodded and quickly bolted away and up the stairs. He may or may not have tripped a little or body slammed into a wall in his rush to complete his task and get back to Maya as soon as possible.

Maya and Sam had watched the little dog go.

"I'm getting the feeling Puck isn't going to let you out of his sight anytime soon…" Sam told Maya out loud with a suppressed smile as she gave a groan.

"You have no idea," she sighed knowing that Puck was going to be super-clingy for a good, long, while. "He'll probably relax a bit…eventually. I think seeing me put under the bitch-fluence and unable to stop it really screwed with his guardian complex."

Sam huffed a laugh, "You and Dean ever going to stop inserting 'bitch' when referring to witches?"

Maya smirked and shrugged her shoulders, "Hey, if it fits, it fits."

Sam looked at how relaxed she was and frowned a little. She'd just been freed not long ago from mind control and barely escaped by the skin of her teeth from being taken by Samhain. Sam didn't think she should be so cavalier, but, then again, not much kept her down.

Still he had to ask, "Hey, you doing okay? A lot of stuff happened today for you."

"Yep," Maya said shortly not looking at him as she turned her head to the stairs to watch Puck run down them, then get ¾ of the way down and tumble the rest of the way.

Sam looked at her with a worried frown, "You sure? I know what it's like to not be in control of your own body. It's not fun."

Maya bent down to check over Puck as he leaned his tiny body against her legs, "Nope."

"You came face to face with a childhood fear."

Okay now Maya looked at him curiously, "How did you guys know…?"

"Bobby," Maya nodded and turned her focus back on Puck as she petted him. "You learned of the Apocalypse."
"There are lot's of prophesized 'End-of-the-World' ramblings, like Odin getting eaten by a large wolf in Ragnarok. He's a dick, so I'd count that as a win."

Sam frowned, "Isn't he your Grandfather?"

"Yeah and would kidnap me and sell me off to get an ally or two."

Sam stared at her a little stunned. "Seriously?"

"You have no idea how messed up most of the pagan gods are. Tricksters are like the only ones that give a shit when it comes to family or their kids. It's why Dad tries to keep me hidden away from all the others. Thor's just the recent exception," Maya straightened up and finally looked at Sam. "You done trying to sous my feelings?"

That's when Dean left the bathroom wiping a towel over his face, "Sammy, you trying for a chick flick moment at oh-God-o'clock at night?"

Sam threw his hands up in the air with a heavy eye roll, "Sorry for being concerned over her emotional and mental well being."

"Like you did when you dropped contact with her after I bit it?" Dean said without thinking.

Both brothers tensed up and turned as one to look at Maya who starred at them with an unreadable blank face. For the normally expressive being it was a little disturbing.

Then she starred calmly at Sam.

Puck looked up at his Mistress' face and made the best-strained face with wide eyes his little dogface could make. One that basically said 'shit-was-about-to-hit-the-fan-and-he-didn't-want-to-be-too-close'.

Puck side stepped his way over to Dean and sat at his feet, ignoring Dean's raised eyebrow at him.

"Sammy," Maya said a little too calmly, making Sam's shoulders tense up. "Come here."

Sam gave a nervous laugh and rubbed the back of his head as he took a step away from her, "Y'know what? I'm-I'm good over here." He mentally started calculating if he'd be able to make it to the front door, open it, get to the impala, jump inside, and lock it before she got him. "Don't feel like getting punched in the face."

"Punch you?" Maya shook her head. "No, no, no. I'm not going to punch ya. Just...just come here," she motioned for him to walk closer, Sam eyeing her critically.

Dean made sure he was out of the line of fire as he watched the tense showdown happening in front of him. Waiting to see what Maya had in store for Sam.

Sam shot Dean a pleading look that begged him to interfere. Dean put his hands up and took a step back in the universal gesture of you're-on-your-own.

Oh the bitch face Sam sent his way.

Sadly, it was the perfect distraction Maya needed to get the jump on the larger Winchester as she quickly closed the distance between them.

SLAP!
The slap was so powerful Sam momentarily thought he also got a bit of whiplash as his head turned to the side.

Dean's eyes went wide as his lips pursed and he brought a close fist to his mouth to complete the 'oooh' face he was sporting.

"But I'll sure as hell bitch slap you!" Maya roared as she flexed her stinging palm, having put her whole weight and fury into that slap.

"OW!" Sam whined as he grabbed his still witch-blood covered stinging cheek.

Maya glared balefully up at him, hands on her hips before pointing at him, "Do you have any idea how much you hurt me? You didn't return any of my calls, any of my texts! Just completely ignored me! You weren't the only one who'd lost Dean you know!"

The 'not-the-only-one-to-lose-a-brother', went unsaid.

Sam opened his mouth to argue his defense when he saw the furious gold eyes were shimmering with barely concealed tears. His teeth clicked as he quickly shut his mouth.

"Okay, I deserved that," Sam conceded with a sigh as he opened and closed his jaw to stretch his face, still feeling the sting.

"Hold up," Dean sent Maya an affronted look, "That's it? I don't tell you I'm back and get punched in the face, but Sam drops contact for months and only gets slapped?"

"Mind controlled or not, I still got Sam in the nuts earlier today," Maya sniffled as she sent him a challenging glare, "Unless you wanna get sacked to make it even?"

Dean winced, fighting the instinct to protect the family jewels, and held his hands up in surrender, "Nope. I'm, uh, I'm good."

"Fantastic," Maya said sarcastically as she turned watery eyes back on Sam making him stiffen up a little. "Now I demand hugs for emotional damages! So-so, come here and hug me!" she demanded teary-eyed with open arms, anger having bled away as quickly as it had surfaced. All that remained was the need for comfort and reassurance.

The tenseness left Sam as he let out a breath he hadn't realized he was holding and easily wrapped his arms around his sniffling twerp of a little sister. The height difference and his larger frame practically engulfed her.

He rested a cheek on top of her head as she shook into his chest and held onto him tightly. Guilt churned in his chest at the pain he had caused her by ignoring her when she had needed him.

"I'm so sorry, Maya," Sam murmured into her short curly brown hair. "I promise I'll make it up to you," he turned his head slightly to look over at Dean as he said this, letting his big brother know how serious he was.

Dean gave Sam a smirk of approval, even if he wondered how his kid brother was going to accomplish that after Loki returned.

Deciding the tender moment has gone on too long and any longer Sam would most likely evolve into a woman to match his hippie hair, Dean did what he did best. Being a big brother.

An asshole of a big brother anyways.
"All right, all right, enough of these chick-flick moment crap. Anymore and I think Sam's balls are gonna recede and become ovaries," Dean snarked vulgarly with a satisfied smirk as twin bitch faces glared at him. "What? It's a legitimate concern!"

"Dean," came Maya's muffled growl from behind Sam's arm, still held in a tender hug, "Fuck off." She then stuffed and nuzzled her face back into Sam's chest retightening her grip around his torso, feeling him shake as he chuckled and tighten his own arms around her.

Dean said something else but her eyes were drooping as she leaned against her brother's chest and yawned. It'd been a tiring day, and hell, a tiring week if she was being honest.

One of the last things she remembered before she drifted off was how weird it was she was dozing off while standing up and a pair of strong arms scooping her up and the scent of sweat and old books.

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**Sam and Dean**

Dean closed the front door to Loki's house, under the watchful eye of the little guard rat that was ready to do his damnedest to protect the sleeping girl inside. He shook his head as the image of the mutt growing larger than any dog had any business of being with sharp fangs and killer claws that rendered the smoked out version of a powerful demon to pieces entered his mind. The big brother part of Dean did want to stay the night in the Trickster domicile to keep an eye on Maya but, then again, Loki's house. Even Dean on occasion knew when not to tempt Fate too much, and besides, Maya now had—as she put it—a badass demon-killing dog. She'd be fine for the night without them. At least she was in a completely warded house.

He walked over to the impala and his brother—who'd had a chance to wash the bitch blood off his face—waiting for him.

Now it was time to get some freakin’ sleep.

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**Pepperjack Household**

A sadistic looking Eli dragged the knife slowly down the chest of a bound and spread eagle Marc Pepperjack while Lucas cried through his own gag as he was forced to watch his husband tortured by their own son in their bed.

"I mean it's only fair that this happens here. In your bed," demon possessed Eli casually said, relishing in the muffled screams and cries of the kid's parents. The kid he was possessing made some deliciously agonized pleas and screams inside his head.

"How many times have you disgusting faggots sinned in this very bed? A man and a man should never lay together, let alone be left raising impressionable youth," he pressed the blade deeper into
Marc's stomach forcing a gagged scream of pain that trailed off into a whimper. He stepped back leaving the knife sticking straight up.

A grin that didn't belong on gentle Eli's face spread across it. It was filled with unrestrained cruelty and disgust; "I bet you could barely restrain yourselves from including me in your bedroom games, huh? Isn't that why you wanted me? A scrawny sickly little seven year old boy who was passed over, and over again."

Marc weakly shook his head as he took painful shuddering breathes through his nose. Lucas had tears streaming down his face and shook his head more forcefully and tried to vocalize around the gag how wrong the demon was.

Marc became the focus of attention as he started choking behind his gag, earning a muffled cry of alarm from Lucas as he struggled against his binds. The demon rolled their son's eyes and removed the gag, getting a spray of blood on his face as Marc emptied the fluid from his throat.

"Having some trouble there, Dad?" the demon stressed with a cruel smile as inside Eli cried and, oh, wasn't that some impressive rage he had going on. He turned to Lucas who hadn't shut up with his muffled yells, "Shut up, Pop's!"

Hurt swam in both of the mens' eyes and it tore at the boy trapped in his demon-possessed body.

"We…wanted you…to be our…son, Elijah," Marc said weakly. "S-saw you and…and knew. Knew, that you…were going to…to be our son. We-we love you, Eli. Always."

The demon snorted at Marc's words while listening to the kid's pathetic whimpers inside their shared body.

And when Marc went still, his chest no longer moving, and his eyes glazing over? The demon cackled madly at the anguish of the teenage boy he was possessing and the muffled sobs of the remaining parent.

He relished in it.

"~One down, one to go~," the demon sing-songed turning to the remaining bound parent while mentally speaking to the teen he possessed, 'Why so sad? I did you a favor. I'm inside your head and I know what you've always thought about being the son of these two faggots. What you've always wanted to happen to them. I'm saving you from being corrupted and helping you cleanse the world of their taint.'

Eli resisted, mentally shaking his head and gritting his teeth, but the doubt was creeping in.

The demon roughly removed the knife from the still body, spraying some accumulated blood against the wall and turned to the simpering and sobbing Lucas.

'Please! No!' Eli mentally screamed at the demon that controlled his body.

'Mmm, I don't think so. So just sit back, relax, and enjoy the show kid,' the demon thought sadistically as he roughly grabbed the back of Lucas' head and dragged the bloodied knife slowly across the man's face. Enjoying the way he struggled against his grip and screamed against the gag. 'It's what things like him deserve.'

The demon especially enjoyed the young boy's pain at being forced to watch his body murder his parents.
'And to think I wouldn't have been here if it wasn't for your interesting little friend. You have no idea how many of us are looking for her,' the demon mentally laughed as he felt Eli's feeling of confusion. 'If she wasn't here, Loki wouldn't have set up that anti-demon ward around town and there wouldn't have been a handful of us waiting when it fell. Can't expect to ward a place and not have curious parties wanting to know what's inside.'

The demon laughed as anger burned in the boy's veins as betrayal suffused his thoughts.

It paid to be a sadistic demon after all.

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**Gloversville Park**

**Castiel**

**Not long after the raising of Samhain...**

At a park bench held off to the side of a park path a flutter of wings heralded the arrival of Castiel. The trench coat angel observed the dark and abandoned park with dispassionate eyes.

He, and the rest of Heaven, had felt the seal the Winchesters and their pet abomination were tasked to protect break. It was disappointing, but not as much as he had anticipated.

After all, the town still stood and all the lives there were given more time on Earth.

Castiel made his way once again through the trees where the sigils for the town warding was located and stared at the charred and cracked remains of the now barely recognizable symbols. With Samhain being summoned inside its field of protection the warding had fallen, and no doubt all the demons that lurked around the town's edges had oozed inside the town's borders.

Another flutter of wings sounded behind him. Castiel calmly turned to look at the recently arrived Uriel. "Uriel," he greeted curtly.

"Castiel," Uriel replied, returning the greeting and took in the state of the broken demon warding. "I take it they have failed?" Not like he hadn't felt the seal break the moment it did like the rest of the angels and Heaven.

"Yes."

"We should have just dragged Dean Winchester out of this—" Uriel started but Castiel interrupted him.

"That was not our orders. We did what we were supposed to do."

Uriel gave a discontented sound before saying, "Speaking of orders, I have some new, less than desirable ones." Uriel frowned as he recalled the orders Zachariah had given him. "We are to encourage the half-breed to remain with the Winchesters on their travels. To be protected from Lilith's reach."

Castiel narrowed his eyes slightly in confusion, but didn't voice the questions that flooded his mind.
"Understood," Castiel nodded in acceptance of the order as Uriel took wing and disappeared.

After all, Castiel was an angel, a Warrior of God, and he followed orders.

He was a good soldier that didn't question orders.

Well, at least not out loud anyways.

Because, why would Heaven want to protect such a creature?

Maya's House

Late that same morning…

Puck yawned a tired whine and stretched his legs with a groan, pushing his back into Maya's gently moving chest. He released a content sigh relishing in the weight of an arm thrown over him, the warmth of his Mistress' body and the sound of her calm heartbeat as she cuddled him, and the soft puffs of breath that washed over the top of his head dampening his fur slightly.

He was home and they were both safe. Puck could tell his girl was also feeling a lot better working out that last bit of anger and grief last night. He especially enjoyed the slap she gave Sam and was disappointed to have missed her kick the large male in his testicles.

Puck shook as he snickered silently. He calmed as Maya shifted and her heartbeat change pace, obviously on the verge of waking. It slowed some more as she released a sigh and began drifting back into a deeper sleep.

~I'm a Barbie girl!

In a Barbie wooooorrriiild!

Life in plastic, it's fantastic!

You can brush my hair, undress me every——

"Not the image I need when I wake up," Maya groaned grabbing her phone before flipping it open. "Assface," she greeted grumpily frowning at the disgusting fuzziness she feels on her teeth. Gross.

"Ye-yawn-aaah, okay. See you two idjits soon," Maya mumbled sleepily then gave a snort at Dean's reply. "Well I did spend a good chunk of my childhood with him. Bound to pick stuff up," she made an agreeing hum before saying good-bye and snapped the phone shut.

Maya laid flat on her back with her eyes closed and the intense desire not to move a muscle, let alone wake up and face the day for a few more minutes. No matter how close Sam and Dean were. She smiled as Puck nudged her arm so he could wedge himself between the appendage and her side, laying his head on her shoulder. Using said arm she lightly petted the Jack Russell's back.

Then her phone buzzed with a text message.

With a very teenager worthy groan she brought the phone still in her other hand's grasp and opened it, half expecting to see something from her Dad. She had sent a text to him on the way to their
house and then a prayer when she got there.

But nothing. It wasn't him and that made her uneasy. Her Dad should know by now what had happened last night, Maya having not spared the details. As much as she'd have liked to hide it from him—to keep him from becoming the overbearing parent she knew he was more than capable of becoming—she felt she needed the security that it brought. She was powerless after all and she had come face to face with angels, a powerful old demon, and mind-controlling witch.

In the prayer last night she had made sure to mention to him to leave Sam and Dean alone when he finally showed up. They all didn't need a repeat of the Mystery Spot incident.

Maya sighed and pushed the worry over her Dad. He was the most powerful Trickster on Earth and was one of the oldest, not much could catch him off guard. So he was probably fine and was hurrying as fast as he could to get to her so he could go into Papa bear/Mother hen mode.

Something was probably holding him up from just popping in. That's all.

Maya shook her head as the worries tried overwhelming her again and decided to focus on the text she got from Eli.

Eli: Hey Maya. I'm out back right now. Something happened and we need to talk. Please hurry!

Maya frowned at the worrisome text from her friend and replied back.

MG: I'll be right down. Bathroom first though. Lol.

Eli: Lol, okay.

After going to the bathroom Maya padded down the stairs bare foot still in her pajamas with Puck trailing beside her. She turned her head to the back door to see Eli there, waiting for her through the door window.

Maya tilted her head as she approached and looked at him confusedly. There was something off about him but she just couldn't place it. Her bedraggled mind didn't think to maybe not open the back door, or take one step outside it to greet her friend with a sleepy smile.

When the backdoor opened Puck was hit with a coppery smell and sulfur. His little eyes widened as he made to lunge at Maya's pant leg to keep her from going outside, but that single step was enough.

Puck's little jaw clamped around nothing as Maya was pulled outside with a startled yelp. He didn't waste time and transformed into his larger more deadly size and then ran outside.

For Maya the world had tilted as she was roughly manhandled by her surprisingly strong younger friend and roughly pinned against her house by one well placed, bloodied hand on her shoulder. His other hand held a blood soaked knife. Eli chuckled darkly as his eyes turned pitch black.

"No," Maya whispered in dread before her anger took over like a righteous hurricane. "GET OUT OF HIM YOU SON OF A—ack!" she roared only to have her voice cut off as the demon moved Eli's blood stained hand from her shoulder to her throat.

"Hey, now. No need to yell," demon-Eli chuckled as he eyed the now larger dog with faintly glowing teeth and claws. The sight made the demon shutter inside with fear. He didn't know why he was afraid of some oversized mongrel, but self-preservation instincts were screaming inside him. "Come any closer mutt and I'll snap her little neck!" the demon threatened, forcing the
advancing Puck to come to heel but that didn't keep the enlarged dog from issuing a loud menacing snarl.

Puck was furious, not only with the demon that had Maya in its grasp but also with himself for being too slow. Now she was at this filth's mercy.

Demon-Eli smirked a little shakily, "See that wasn't so hard. I honestly thought I was going to have to smoke you out a little. I may not be able to get in, but setting your house on fire would've definitely done the trick." The demon laughed more confidently now that he had the upper hand, "But you just walked right out!"

Maya wheezed as she struggled to suck in breath and fight against her friend's bloody hand wrapped tightly around her throat, but it was no use. Her skills were in illusions and trickery, not brute strength.

"HEY! ASSHOLE!" came an angry shout from behind Puck.

The demon turned its head and lost all glee it had and gave the owner of the voice and his partner a withering glare, "Are you fucking kidding me?! What are you two doing here?"

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**The front of Maya's house...**

**Sam and Dean**

"Dude, it's almost lunch. Let's just go to a regular diner," Sam argued as he shut the impala's door.

Dean stepped out shaking his head, "No. I'm feeling the all-you-can-eat-pancakes at IHOP."

Sam rolled his eyes in exasperation, "Didn't you get enough sugar yesterday when you ate all of the Halloween candy we had?"

Dean leveled a mild glare at Sam but shrugged good-naturedly, "We'll let Goldy decide."

"Dean that's not fair!" Sam complained as he began heading to the front door. "Maya's half-Trickster! Of course she's going to go with the sugar-iest option."

"You mean the syrup-iest," Dean said with a grin as he began to walk around Baby earning a classic Sam bitch-face denoting his lack of amusement in Dean's antics.

"GET OUT OF HIM YOU SON OF A—ack!" came an angry shout from a very familiar voice. Sam and Dean froze and looked at each other with impending dread.

A loud vicious snarl ripped through the air not long after, forcing the brothers into action. With guns drawn they ran to the side of the house and easily jumped the 6’ wooden fence to the backyard. Dean rounded the corner to find Eli pinning Maya by her throat to the side of the house and Puck—all 4’ of him—paced and growled at the scene, obviously trying to find an opening.

That's when Dean saw the kid's eyes change from pitch black to their normal colour.

"HEY! ASSHOLE!" Dean shouted as he unhooked Ruby's knife from the inside his jacket.
The demon turned to look at him with a glare as Sam caught up to stand beside Dean. "Are you fucking kidding me?! What are you two doing here?"

"Ah, y'know. Sightseeing, gorging on Halloween candy, ganking a witch or two to stop a demon summoning," Dean drawled as he adjusted his grip on the knife and slowly approached, sharp eyes looking for an opening.

Demon-Eli tsked in annoyance and yanked Maya away from the wall and positioned her between him and the Winchesters with a tight arm around her neck. "Don't even think about it!" the demon warned as it tightened its grip around Maya's neck making her choke a little more. Then pressed the bloodied blade lengthwise against her upper chest over her breast.

"Lilith might want her alive, but she never said in what condition this little half-breed needed to be in," the demon smiled toothily at the tense and angry Hunters glaring daggers at him. "I'm sure a few wounds wouldn't be off limits, or," the demon licked its lips, "other kinds of fun. She's quite the pretty little thing, isn't she? I'm sure me and a few of my buddies can have lots of fun with her before handing her over to Lilith."

Surprise mixed with terror ran through Maya at the demon's words.

What the hell would Lilith want with her?

Puck growled furiously and advanced on the demon a couple of feet before being forced to stop as the blade sliced through her shirt and skin, causing Maya to cry out in pain.

The demon chuckled as he began moving backwards, pulling a hard of breathing Maya with him, "By the way, you obviously failed at keeping those whores from summoning Samhain. This whole town was warded against demons from entering from the outside, but when Samhain was summoned..." the demon made a falling whistling sound, the kind you heard in cartoons when large objects or bombs were dropped, "...the wards fell and I waltzed right on in."

Dean and Puck watched helplessly as the demon dragged a struggling Maya further and further away from them.

Sam gritted his teeth, anger flushing through his veins, fuelling his hatred towards this demon. How dare he lay a hand on his little sister! He had come close the night before to tapping into his powers, but was stopped by Puck's timely intervention. Now though there was nothing Dean or the giant dog could do without Maya getting seriously hurt, especially once the demon had moved the knife to her stomach.

If they tried to charge the bastard he could end up gutting her accidentally.

There was really only one thing left to do. Maya would be safe and it'll hopefully save the boy the demon was possessing. That'd be a good bonus.

"Let her go, now," Sam demanded with a dark glower as he put away his gun and began concentrating. Pain bloomed in his head as he began focusing on a power he hadn't used in weeks.

Dean shot his brother a worried side glance, "What are you doing Sammy?"

Sam raised an open hand at the demon and grunted, "What I have to."

"Oh yeah? And what are you going to do Boy Wonder?" the demon sassed. "One move in my direction and this little knife slips just a little..." the edge of the blade pressed against Maya's stomach. She instinctively tried to shy away from the blade, the painful reminder from that first cut
still fresh, like the blood that stained her pajama shirt. "More blood to colour her clothes. I personally think she looks good in blood red, don't you?"

"Sam, you can't!" Dean protested loudly but inside he was conflicted. Either he stopped Sam and the demon took Maya and handed her over to Lilith—probably after making good on his threats—or he let Sam use his bad mojo and have him smote by angels.

"It's either this or letting Lilith get her hands on her," Sam shot back through gritted teeth. "Besides, aren't big brothers supposed to do stupid things to protect their younger siblings?" that shutdown the comeback right on Dean's lips.

Sam didn't wait for Dean to try and formulate another plan or keep him from saving Maya. He forced the power to the front of his mind and focused on latching onto the demon inhabiting the boy's body. As he honed in on it he latched onto it and began pulling.

The demon inside Eli was giddy. He just landed a big-ticket item on Lilith's Apocalypse wish list and was going to get out of an encounter with the freaking Winchesters without getting his ass sent back to Hell. Then everything kind of froze.

The demon felt its incorporeal black smoke form seize as something grabbed it in a vice grip.

"Wha-what—?" the demon stuttered as it felt himself being pulled up the boy's throat, some black smoke began leaking out. He shook his head and tried with all his strength to remain in the kid's body.

Sam's face was scrunched in pain and concentration, blood dribbling from his nose. It'd been too long and it was now a lot harder to do than the last time he'd done this with Ruby. But seeing Maya so helpless in that demon's grip brought back the same feelings he felt when Dean was torn apart by Lilith's hound.

Rage and hatred for Lilith burned in his veins and grabbing a hold of that invisible tether, he pulled.

Shock spread through Eli's possessed face as the demon released Maya and dropped the knife to grab at his throat as noxious black smoke spilled out of Eli's gurgling mouth.

Dean closed the distance between them and Maya as she scrambled away from her possessed friend. He grabbed her, helped her up and put space between them and the coughing and sputtering demon.

Once all the smoke escaped Eli's body the teenager collapsed in a daze, and that's when Puck—who'd been inching closer during the mind exorcism—lunged forward with glowing teeth and claws. As soon has Puck had sunk his fangs into the smoked out demon, Sam lowered his hand with a relieved sigh. The painful pressure in his head disappearing as he watched the giant dog rip into the black smoke.

With a final chomp on the center mass of smoke the demon was destroyed.

"Maya, you okay?" Dean asked as he began looking her over, grimacing at the bleeding cut on her upper chest. Sam walked over to them with Puck following beside him, his regular small size once more.

"Y-yeah, I…" Maya breathed as she eyed Sam with a slightly nervous gleam in her golden eyes. "Sam, what—what did you do?"
Sam frowned at her look. It wasn't the angry one Dean had gifted him with when he found out about him using these powers. If anything it…it almost felt worse than the helpless feeling he had felt then under his brother's gaze.

It was a wary look. One that told him Maya was no longer sure of him, that she was unsure if she could trust him like she did before.

Yeah it had sucked when he earned Dean's anger and disappointment, feeling ashamed about keeping it from him and making up excuses for why his powers were a good thing, but Maya's look?

It was like someone took her look, turned it into a javelin, and hurled it right into his chest, taking his breath away and making his heart cringe.

"What I had to," Sam answered with tight lips and pleading puppy dog eyes. His response earned a scoff from Dean.

Yep, there was going to be words later.

Maya tore her eyes away from Sam and looked over at her dazed friend on the ground. "Eli!" she called in alarm and rushed over—and away from Dean's fussing—to look over her blood stained friend to see if he was seriously hurt.

Demons were never known to be gentle with their meat suits.

Eli was kneeling on the ground, his head down cast as he stared at his crimson stained hands, his entire body shaking.

Maya approached him and took a knee beside him thinking he was shaking in fear at what had just happened, or maybe shock from some injury that caused him to be covered in blood.

"Eli?" Maya probed gently as she placed a comforting hand on a quivering shoulder.

No one expected her to get sucker punched across the face and go sprawling a couple feet away on the grass. Maya looked back in shock, cupping her already bruising cheek, as Eli quickly stood up and stormed towards her with fury and accusation in his eyes.

"Hey!/Whoa!" came the shouts from Sam and Dean as they sprung into action. Sam grabbed Eli to keep him from attacking Maya again while Dean helped Maya back to her feet again, noticing the wince of pain and fresh blood coming from her aggravated cut.

"IT'S YOUR FAULT THEY'RE DEAD!" Eli snarled at his former friend, straining against Sam's hold.

"Eli, I didn't—" Eli cut off her protest.

"If you weren't here then your Dad wouldn't have warded the town and attracted the attention of the demon that possessed me and use me to kill my parents in the first place!" tear streamed down Eli's cheeks. "He made me watch as he used my hands to torture and kill my Dads..." Eli sagged in Sam's grip as the rage bled mostly away, leaving behind faint whispers, along with despair and sadness.

"Ah, shit kid," Dean sighed from beside Maya and held a silent conversation with Sam over the two younger ones' heads. They were going to have to deal with Eli's parents' bodies and Eli. They couldn't just leave the kid to be picked up by the police for a crime he didn't actually commit.
It wasn't his fault a demon decided to possess him.

"Eli, I didn't know about the wards," Maya told her friend sorrowfully. "I definitely didn't know that I was on Lilith's wish list, let alone her radar till that demon said something. I…I'm so sorry, Eli."

Eli looked into her eyes and for a moment part of the darkness that shrouded his heart, that looked to latch onto someone to blame for the death of his family—especially with the demon now destroyed—receded enough in the presence of Maya's inner light for a part of him to recognize that it wasn't his best friend's fault.

She didn't ask to be targeted by demons, but she was still the reason the demon came in the first place.

Eli sat on the razor's edge of a choice: to let it go or be consumed. Embrace the light, or turn towards the shadows.

The boy's eyes darkened and he scoffed, "'Sorry' doesn't bring them back." The darkness caused by pain, grief, and anger curled around young Eli's heart. All of it directed at the demi-god in front of him that looked at him with such sadness and hurt in her eyes.

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**Pepperjack House**

**Sam and Eli**

Sam and Dean had decided to separate the two teens for a bit. Sam had taken Eli back to the kid's house to pack up some of his clothes and stuff, while Sam dragged the remains of Eli's fathers to a secluded section in the backyard and turn some of the wooden furniture into firewood. The last thing Eli needed was his folks coming back as vengeful spirits.

Eli had seen their bodies and broke down into a sobbing mess that had Sam floundering in what to do. The best he thing he could think of was helping the kid wash the blood of his hands and arms and leading him back to his bedroom to start packing.

The monotony of packing his clothes into a small backpack seemed to calm him down a bit, give him something else to focus on.

Sam rummaged through the kitchen for a container of salt, finally finding some hidden in the back of a pantry cupboard. As he turned around he was startled by the appearance of the always-smirking African angel from yesterday, Uriel.

"Tomorrow is November 2nd," Uriel began casually as he leaned back against the counter a few feet away from Sam. "That's an anniversary for you, right?"

"What are you doing here?" Sam asked warily. He'd used his powers against Heaven's discouragement. It didn't all surprise him that Uriel might be here to kill him.

"It's the day Azazel killed your mother, and, 22 years later, your girlfriend, too," Uriel pointed out. "It must be difficult to bear, yet you brazenly use the power he gave you, his profane blood pumping through your veins."
"Excuse me?" Sam scoffed as he shifted tensely on his feet, ready for any possible attack the angel might send his way.

"You were told *not* to use your abilities," Uriel stated sternly, still casually leaning against the counter.

"And what was I supposed to do? Let that demon *drag* Maya away?" Sam demanded angrily. "Hurt her? Do-do Go-...*who* knows what to her?"

"You were told not to," the angel stated patronizingly, like a parent scolding an errant child. "You've been warned, twice now."

"You know, my siblings were right about you. You *are* dicks," Sam, probably stupidly, sassed the angel.

In less than a blink of an eye the angel disappeared and reappeared in a whoosh right beside Sam and stared into his eyes, "The only reason you're still alive, Sam Winchester, is because you've been useful."

Sam eyed the angel and swallowed a hard lump in his throat.

"The moment that ceases to be true, the second you become more trouble than you're worth, one word—*one*—and I will turn you to dust," Uriel said calmly as an ominous feeling filled the air around them.

Sam gave a small and stiff nervous nod.

Uriel took a couple steps back out of Sam's personal space. "As for your brother, tell him maybe he should climb off that high horse of his. Ask Dean...what he remembers from Hell," Uriel straightened his vessel's suit, not the least bit interested in Sam's response to the implication that Dean actually remembered Hell and hadn't told him.

Looking back at Sam's uneasy expression Uriel continued, "And, as for your precious abominable half-bred runt, rejoice. Heaven seems to think it can be useful. Preferably while remaining out of Lilith's hands. I'd personally just turn it to dust and be done with it, but Upstairs seems to think otherwise. You and your brother are being tasked with its protection and will need to keep it with you on your travels."

"She's not an *it*," Sam sniped half-heartedly as shook his head in confusion and worry, still trying to wrap his mind around Dean not telling him that he remembered Hell. "No, no. Maya's safer here with Loki once he comes back."

"Its progenitor is Loki? That would explain Lilith's interest in the runt. And you could stay and wait for the false-god to return, but I doubt you can last that long," Uriel hummed as he casually examined his nails. "Did you truly believe that was the only demon waiting to be let in once the warding around the town fell?" Uriel intoned with a final look.

A rustle of wings and Uriel was gone.

Dread filled Sam's stomach at the angel's implications. They all needed to leave, now. "ELI! Pack it up! We need to leave, now!" Sam called out into the house and glanced at the forgotten salt in his hand, unsure whether to feel relieved that Heaven won't smite his sister behind his back or more worried that they seem to have found a *use* for her.
Sam released a sigh as he made his way out back to the funeral pyre for Eli’s parents, grabbing some gasoline along the way. One thought ran through his mind;

*Was the Winchester Luck contagious?*

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**Maya’s House…**

**Maya and Dean**

Maya sat on the couch in the living room, bent over, elbows propped on her knees and head in her hands. Her heart aching painfully at her friend's rejection, not that she could blame him. If her and her Dad weren't here, if she was completely pathetic after the loss of her brothers, her Dad wouldn't have felt the need to stay in one place or feel the need to erect demon warding around the town.

She mind as well have summoned the bastard herself.

A large hand gently rubbed her back as Puck pressed against her side and whined, nudging her arm around him and encouraging her to hug him. She did, bringing the little dog into her lap and holding on to him, petting his sleek fur.

"Stop that," Dean ordered, green eyes taking in the guilt that rolled off her in waves. "It's *not your fault*."

"Isn't it though?" Maya chuffed sarcastically that turned into a whine when the comforting hand smacked the back of her head. She straightened up to glare petulantly at Dean.

Dean pointed a finger in her face. "Not. Your. *Fault,*" he said stressing each word. "Want to blame someone? Blame that shredded demon! Blame-blame…blame Lilith for sending out an APB on you."

Maya shook her head in disbelief, "And, that's something I don't get. What the hell does Lilith want me for? I'm not powerful, I'm-I'm not…just, *why me?*" Gold eyes turned to lock onto Dean's emerald ones that flickered away for a moment, "But you know why, don't you. Same with Sam and-and my *Dad*. You *all* knew that she wanted me. Why the hell didn't anyone say anything?! Don't I deserve to know that, oh, 'Hey Maya, by the way, and don't freak out, but Lilith? You know, that crazy she-beast that dragged Dean down to Hell and is amassing a huge demon army to bring about the Apocalypse? That Lilith? Yeah, she not only wants Sam's head on a platter but yours too.'"

Dean rubbed the back of his neck and leaned into the back of the couch from his spot beside her. "And you'd probably do something stupid like use yourself as bait," Dean pointed out.

Maya gave him an affronted look, "I would never—"

"Peoria, Maya. *Pe-or-ia,*" Dean said stiltedly as he leveled her with a look that told her not to argue with him. "Besides, Lilith doesn't want you dead, she wants you *alive*. She wants to use you to have leverage over your Dad."

"Great. I'm sure whether to be insulted or relieved that the bitch doesn't want me dead and just wants to use me as a pawn against my Dad," Maya huffed.
"I'd go with scared," Dean snorted.

"Oh don't worry. I'm feeling plenty—" Maya was cut off by a sudden knock at the door.

Maya, Dean, and Puck all whipped their heads to look at the innocuous wooden door where the knock had emanated from.

"Loki?" Dean asked as he stood up and drew his gun out. "Heard from him lately?"

Maya negatively shook her head, "No, I haven't and if it was him he would've walked right in."

"Right," Dean said tensely as he stood up. He looked down at Maya, "Stay here." Once she nodded he made his way silently over towards the door.

Dean looked through the peek-hole and his shoulders slumped with a relieved and annoyed sigh, before holstering his gun and opening the door to reveal the perpetually confused looking Castiel.

"Let me guess, you're here for the 'I-told-you-so'?" Dean remarked as he leaned against the doorframe starring at the angel.

Maya for her part cautiously got up, dislodging Puck, and edged closer to the door. After all, her house was also warded against angels. This holy tax accountant wasn't getting in anytime soon.

"No," Castiel answered his gaze never wavering from Dean.

"Well, good, 'cause I'm really not that interested," Dean broke eye contact to look over his shoulder to check on Maya to see how she was doing, noticing how close she had edged towards him. He also noticed the way Puck focused steadfast on the angel in the doorway, his hackles raising and his lips twitching in a silent snarl.

With their gaze broken Castiel looked inside the Trickster's domicile to see its spawn freeze under his gaze with wide scared gold eyes. Then his eyes landed on the diminutive dog that stood defensively between him and the half-breed atrocity.

When the angel landed its cold eyes on him, Puck released a snarl, his eyes glowed a faint blue ring, and he transformed into his larger size. Teeth and claws carrying a slight glow to them.

Castiel's eyes widened at the sight, feeling slight awe with a hefty portion of wariness and confusion.

"Canem coeli," Castiel said, a little bit of awe coming out of his gravely voice.

Dean looked at the angel in confusion, "What?"

"It means 'Dog of Heaven'," Castiel informed him. "And they're supposed to be extinct. Either killed or lost due to interbreeding with the wolves. For the ones that had followed Adam and Eve from the Garden at least."

"Wait, hold-up," Dean said holding up a hand. "You saying that all dogs on earth are descended from some kind of 'angelic dogs' and the mutt over there is some kind of 'angel dog' now?"

"It's why dogs have bonded so well with humans. He's not an 'angel dog' either," Castiel stated.

"Oh that's good to know—"

"He's technically a Heavenly Hound," Castiel interrupted, earning silence from all living beings in
Dean's body was tense as memories of teeth, blood, and pain—so much pain—took hold of his
mind. "That sounds similar to 'Hellhound', man."

Castiel nodded affirmatively, "Yes. There was one that was loyal only to Lucifer and no
others. It had followed him when he was thrown into the cage. Hell's fire mutated it, along with
Lucifer's encouragement and became the first, the Alpha Hellhound that gave rise to all other
Hellhounds prowling in Hell."

"Dean…" Maya called out tentatively as she walked around her aggressive Heavenly Hound, much
to his protest. "You okay?"

Dean coughed and forced the memories back and answered in a strained voice, "I'm-I'm fine.
Totally not the same thing as a Hellhound."

Puck took his eyes off the angel and stopped growling to send Dean a deep sad whine. Dean
looked at the giant dog and calmed further, taking in the large differences between Puck and the
pack of Hellhounds that tore him apart.

Seeing this Puck gave Dean a big doggy grin with large tongue lolling out the side of his mouth
and walked up to his side, pushing Maya behind Dean, and gently nudged the Hunter's hand.

Dean scratched behind the behemoth dog's ear, earning a happy sigh and a tail wag before also
being pushed by Puck's heavier weight out of the doorframe. Puck's soft eyes hardened, his body
tensed, and he flashed impressive choppers at the angel that stood outside his Mistress' house.

"You better—you better tell us what—grunt—you're doing here Cas," Dean said as he tried to
squeezed past the monster of a dog taking up the doorway. Once he managed it, much to Puck's
grumbling. "I don't think "Killer" here likes you being so close to Goldy. Loki charged him with
protecting his kid and right now," Dean gestured at the lowly snarling dog, "I think he sees you as
a threat to her. Not that he's wrong if you and your buddy's reactions earlier were anything to go
by." Dean crossed his arms to make himself look more intimidating.

Castiel narrowed his eyes as he eyed the hound in wariness, more intimidated by the teeth that
could actually do him some damage than the man standing next to it.

Maya just watched silently as all this took place inside the heavily warded home.

"Our orders—" Castiel started but was interrupted by Dean.

Dean shook his head tersely, "Yeah, you know, I've had about enough of these orders of yours."

"Our orders…were not to stop the summoning of Samhain," Castiel told him. "They were to do
whatever you told us to do."

Dean looked at him in disbelief, "Your orders were to follow my orders?"

"It was a test…to see how you would perform under…battlefield conditions, you might say," the
angel revealed.

Dean shrugged, "It was a witch…not the TET offensive." That actually got the tense angel to give
him a tight chuckle.

"So, I, uh, failed your test, huh?" Dean asked rigidly. "I get it. But you know what? If you were to
waive that—that magic time traveling wand of yours and we had to do it all over again I'd make the
same call…” Dean looked over his shoulder at Maya, "…except maybe tie you to a freakin' tree or
something." That earned a Maya patenting bitch face, with sticking out tongue action.

Dean looked back and looked Castiel in the eye, "Now, I don't know what's gonna happen when
these seals are broken. Hell, I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. But what I do know is,
is that this here—these houses filled with people, with kids, with families, all of it—is still here
because of my siblings and me."

Castiel gave a small acquiescent nod, "You misunderstand me, Dean. I'm not like you think. I was
praying you would choose to save the town."

"Really?" Maya piped up as she leaned over Puck's body so she could see out the doorway better to
look at the angel.

Impossibly blue eyes drifted to hers that sent a chill down her spine. Castiel may have wanted
Dean to save the town, but Maya was not included. Puck sent the angel a warning growl.

Castiel took a small step back.

"You were?" Dean looked at Castiel doubtfully with a raised eyebrow.

"These people—they're all my Father's creations. They're works of art," Castiel turned to look out
at the quiet neighborhood as he said this. "And yet—even though you stopped Samhain, the seal
was broken, and we are one step closer to Hell on Earth for all creation. And that's not an
expression, Dean," Castiel looked back at Dean. "It's literal. You of all people should…appreciate
what that means."

Dean cast his eyes down.

Maya frowned at Castiel's words and looked worriedly over at Dean's back, wondering if what he
meant was…

'Oh Dean…' Maya thought forlornly, a part of her aching over his pain. She went to reach through
the doorway to put a hand on the back of Dean's shoulder but Puck saw and casually side stepped
and walked backwards, pushing her further back into the house.

"Ack! Puck! Why?!" Maya protested against the larger dog's rump.

"I'll tell you something if you promise not to tell another soul," Castiel's eyes drifted to the open
doorway and the no doubt eavesdropping demi-Trickster.

Dean looked at the doorway filled with giant dog and his little sister behind said dog being
blocked by him, "Back it up guys."

Puck looked up at Dean and grumbled as he walked backwards enough to turn around and push a
protesting Maya further into the house, and away from the door enough to let Dean close it.

Dean turned back to the angel, "Okay."

"I'm not, uh…” Castiel looked away, searching for the words he needed. "A hammer, as you say. I
have questions. I…I have doubts. I don't know what is right and what is wrong anymore…and
whether you've passed or failed here. But in the coming months you will have more decisions to
make. I don't envy the weight that's on your shoulders, Dean. I truly don't."
Dean leaned against the house siding and rubbed his face tiredly before giving the angel a solemn nod.

Castiel returned the nod in a barely perceptible movement. "Before I leave there is something else."

"Yeah? What's that?" Dean sighed.

"You and your brother need to leave and take the half-breed with you, immediately," Castiel told him gravely. "Heaven wants you to keep it out of Lilith's hands. Why Lilith would want it we are… uncertain."

"Okay, first off, I've had it up to here…” Dean raised a hand a few inches above his head to emphasis his point, "…with the name calling and put downs and referring to her as-as a 'thing' or- or an 'it'. Maybe she'd be less inclined to refer to you as dicks if you stopped acting like one. Now as for why Lilith wants Maya? Isn't it obvious?"

Castiel gave Dean a deadpanned stare, "No. She's too weak to be of any value to Lilith."

"But not her Dad, Loki," Dean informed Castiel. "He's top Trickster or some shit like that and one of the heavy weights, power wise. Lilith get's Maya, and she can make Loki do whatever the hell she wants."

A worried frown crosses Castiel's face, "Like aiding in the breaking of seals. That is likely what Heaven had surmised. It'd be best to keep Lilith from gaining anymore advantages to aid her in breaking the seals."

"Yep, it's why we planned to hang around till Loki gets back from whatever pagan shindig he's been at."

"That is…unwise."

Dean gave the angel a hard stare, "Why?"

"Demons are migrating into the town as we speak now that the wards have fallen. It won't take long for more to find this place," Castiel informed the Hunter.

Dean was about to yell at Castiel for not—you know—leading with that and have had the rest of the conversation later, when his phone rang in his pocket. "Can't you guys just smite them as they trickle in?" Dean demanded of the angel as he flipped his phone open. "Yeah, Sammy?"

"Dean, you need to get Maya packed and ready to bug out. I'm finished at the Pepperjack's and I'm almost done with the stuff at the hotel," Sam informed him. "Uriel—"

"Yeah, Cas just told me the same freakin' thing," Dean said to Sam as he gave Castiel a 'well?!'-look, waiting for the angel's answer.

Castiel gave a put upon sigh, "Lilith would just send more and more demons believing something valuable is being guarded by Heaven. We don't have the resources to waste if we also want to keep the rest of the seals from breaking."

With that Castiel—in Dean's opinion—rudely whooshed, disappearing.

Dean growled a bit in annoyance then turned his attention back to his phone conversation, "I'll get Maya and Scrappy-Doo ready to bail out. You get you, baby, and the kid over here ASAP." He didn't wait for a reply as he snapped the cellphone shut.
Shaking his head at the situation they've found themselves in he opened the front door and walked back into the house.

'It just had to be one of those days, didn't it?' Dean thought idly as he began explaining the situation to Maya.

Yep, one of those days.
October 30th 2008, Middle of Nowhere, Random State, United States

Evening

Gabriel

Gabriel was indulging in some Asgardian mead while listening to Thor recount one of their daring, dangerous, and overly stupidly planned exploits with great boisterous vigor and lots of exaggeration. It was honestly an interactive telling because you'd have to duck your head every now and then as Thor swung his muscled arms about dramatically, and you would have to side step to avoid getting mead spilled on you.

Gabriel greatly enjoyed the look on the various gods' faces when they were once again hit by a swinging appendage or doused in a light rain of mead. So fucking funny.

It was honestly chore to keep him self from doubling over in laughter, but his stifled snorts still garnered him some less than pleased glances his way.

He just smiled unabashedly at them.

"So, Baldur," Gabriel started with a mischievous smirk. "Last time I saw you, you were still recovering from that mistletoe stake to the chest."

The dark haired pagan god frowned disdainfully at Gabriel and spat at him with old anger, "And whose fault was that?"

"Well, at least it wasn't covered in one of your victims' blood then you'd have been really screwed," Gabriel laughed earning a snort from Thor.

"Aye, you were indeed lucky in that Brother," Thor boomed with a smile clapping the well-dressed god on the shoulder, earning his own frown of disdain from said god.

"C'mon, man. Lighten up!" Gabriel laughed. "It was what? 5? 10 centuries ago?"

"It was not funny Loki! You could've killed me!" Baldur raged at Gabriel, his shoulders tensing and getting ready to possibly strike at him.

Gabriel? Not too worried. He knew Thor had his back, especially since he knew it was Thor that started the game of throwing stuff at Baldur since their 'mother' had made everything in the universe swear not to harm Baldur, thus making him invincible to everything…sans mistletoe. Granted it'd have to be mistletoe coated in the blood of one of Baldur's victims to actually kill him.

Baldur had strutted around Valhalla all high and mighty like as everything from axes, swords, rocks, and what have you just bounced off him without so much as a flinch or a wince of pain.

The Trickster Loki could not abide—Gabriel was given the rundown when he took Loki's place — and poor blind Hodr was missing out on all the fun. It was a two for one kind of thing. Bring Baldur down a notch and let Holdr join in on the game.

Gabriel scoffed, "Please, it was a joke. Heloooooo? Trickster."
Baldur squeezed the cup holding his mead, his nostrils flaring in anger. However he only took a deep breath to calm his nerves enough to just walk away from his two younger brothers.

Gabriel turned to Thor with a look of fake confusion and faux innocence, "Was it something I said?"

Thor boomed a laughed and clapped Gabriel hard on the shoulder. "I see you are not holding back with trying to be uninvited to future events," he stated with a bemused smile.

Gabriel gave a shrug, not denying the god's comment.

He wasn't wrong.

"Loki," came a calm disproving feminine voice from behind them. "Causing trouble already dearest?"

Gabriel and Thor turned to the familiar voice of Frigg, wife of Odin and mother of Baldur, Thor and Loki, the goddess of motherhood and magic.

She wore a layered gold and cream dress that draped across her frame that was reminiscent of the Old Norse fashions. Her long golden hair done up in intricate braids and held up in a bun a top her head.

"Mother," Thor greeted respectively with a slight bow.

"Sup, Mom," Gabriel said much more casually earning an elbow to his side from Thor, which he quickly returned. This was all found greatly amusing to the Queen of Asgard.

"Honestly," she shook her head with a motherly smile. "Even after all this time you boys still squabble like children."

Thor had the decency to look a little abashed rubbing the back of his head as his face and neck reddened.

Gabriel just threw Thor under the bus by pointing at him and saying in the whiniest, most childish voice he could muster, "But Moooom! He started it!"

Frigg gave a un-lady like snort, "We all know that's not true dear. Honestly, do you truly abhor these get-togethers your father hosts every once in a while?"

"Well, it doesn't help that all the hors d'oeuvres is, once again, long pig," Gabriel commented dryly. "That and I'm not exactly over the whole Narfi and Vali incident." Well the real Loki anyways, not that Gabriel didn't blame the guy, especially after having his own rugrat.

Queue internal fearful shiver.

Frigg looked at Gabriel sadly in understanding, "At least you were able to save them."

Gabriel tapped into his Loki persona, for the first time nearly fully understanding what Loki had gone through, "Yeah, but Vali went so nuts with guilt for nearly killing his twin that he ended up staking him self. And Narfi? Well, he's never exactly been the same since his brush with death."

A sad silence fell upon the trio at the memory of the young god denied his godhood and the altered personality of his brother. Frigg and Thor showed remorse over the entire ordeal.

"My son…" Frigg started reaching out to put a hand on Gabriel's shoulders but stops, unsure if the
gesture would be welcomed.

Gabriel was about to let the god-mother comfort who she thought was her son when the man who caused the original Loki’s pain waltzed up, not picking up on the somber mood.

"Lady wife! My boys!" Odin grinned, earning strained smiles from said sons and a disapproving frown from Frigg.

"I have told you All-Father, I am no longer your wife," Frigg told the greying old man in a fur lined green jacket. "Have not been since you nearly killed one of my grandsons and sent the other into such depths of depression he ended his own life."

Odin didn't look the least bit contrite, "It is been centuries Frigg! Besides it was Loki's fault to begin with, taking such sensitive information and nearly causing the death of our most beloved son, Baldur."

Gabriel snorted derisively knowing despite the real Loki's mischievous nature, often tinged with malicious intent, he didn't truly want his older—most beloved—brother dead. It's, again, why the mistletoe stake wasn't covered in blood and only sent Baldur into a relatively short coma like state.

"That didn't mean Vali and Narfi had to suffer for something I did!" Gabriel argued, just as the real Loki would've. "Couldn't have only punished me and left them out of it? I mean, chained up in a dank cave with a snake dripping venom in my eyes for a couple centuries was pretty brutal for the decade long coma Baldur only had to go through. He didn't actually die and fire up Ragnorok."

"Enough boy!" Odin snapped at Gabriel.

Gabriel for his part wanted to smite the bastard on principle for what he put Loki’s children through. Sadly, Loki would have his head and they've kept up the charade this long. No point letting his newly acquired parental instincts get the better of him.

Gabriel turned to Frigg, "And you wonder why I stayed away?" And in Loki fashion, snapped up a lollipop and sauntered away, mentally patting his back on a well done performance.

He knew Thor followed behind him like an oversized golden haired duckling, or a young golden furred puppy that shouldn't be able to walk quite so gracefully with those oversized paws of his.

"How is Narfi, and my other nephews?" Thor asked with concerned blue eyes.

Gabriel snorted a laugh around his lollipop, "They're doing good. Narfi still doesn't talk much; Fen's big and burly and looks a little too long at the ass of bitches, and Sleipnir's as skittish and cowardly without his brothers or myself as ever."

Thor nodded his head then smiled, "And Little One, your Little Valkyrie, is as feisty as ever?"

Gabriel took the candy out of his mouth and laughed, "Don't I know it! Big personality in an itty-bitty package!"

"Funny, I thought she was almost the same height as you, Little Brother," Thor ribbed good-naturedly, chuckling when Gabriel gave an offended 'oi!' "So what do you have planned to be uninvited once more?"

"Well I have successfully risen tensions, pissed off Golden Boy, and put a kink in the festivities with Odin and Mom looking ready to get into it," Gabriel pondered as he glanced over the food table in the room of the abandoned farmhouse that was spruced up for their little gathering and
grimaced in disgust. "I'm definitely helping the humans in the basement get free. Maybe then we can persuade some of these assholes into ordering pizza, Chinese, or some Mexican."

Thor furrowed his brows, "Would they not just eat the deliverer of the take-out?"

"Fuuuuuuuuuck," Gabriel groaned, long and low. He then shrugged, "I'll just snap something up then."

Thor was about to comment when all of a sudden Gabriel's phone started ringing the default 'Hello Moto' ringtone. Frowning Gabriel dug into the back pocket of his jeans and looked at the unknown number on the mini view screen.

"Who is it Loki?" Thor asked with squinted eyes as he looked at the screen. "Is it Little Valkyrie?"

Gabriel shook his head, "No. It's an unknown number. Probably a telemarketer, or something. I swear I can magic up a cell phone and phone number, completely off the grid of any phone companies and I still get telemarketers."

"Are you going to answer it?" Thor questioned as the phone kept ringing annoyingly.

"Nah. I don't feel like talking to any of those pushy sales people," Gabriel glanced at his phone as the ringing stopped, then pocketed the phone. Not seeing the alert for one new voicemail on its screen.

Gabriel wouldn't look at his phone for the rest of the night, having already received a text earlier that day from Maya that everything was fine and that her and Puck were doing well.

So Gabriel mingled with the other Norse gods and plotted tricks and pranks to pull to get off the guest list once more.

The highlight was when Sif—Thor's ex—went to the basement to select another petrified human only to find pigs dressed up in human clothing.

Again.

Gabriel didn't bother denying the accusations thrown his way, since he did the same thing the last time he was invited to one of Odin's parties.

He shrugged off the angered glares of the Norse gods and gave a flippant, "What? It's a classic!"

Oh the glare Odin and his Golden Boy Baldur sent his way. At least Thor and Frigg seemed to find it hilarious, so win-win!

He was well on his way to the 'Do-Not-Invite-Ever-Again' list.

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October 31st 2008

Afternoon

Gabriel had seen the '1 New Voicemail' message and scoffed at it. Guess that telemarketer really wanted to talk to him. He was about to listen to it when the phone in his hand buzzed, signaling the arrival of a text message from his baby.
MG: Skipped half the day to watch the Wallaces' baby. Died and needed to run some errands. So if you get a call from the school that's why.

MG: Love you!

Gabriel quirked an eyebrow at the message. He didn't recall Maya knowing a Wallace family. He mentally shrugged and figured one of the other parents recommended her. Although he wasn't aware Maya could look after an infant. Toddlers and young kids, sure. But a baby? That was new.

D: Okay kiddo, that was nice of you.

D: Love you too! So much!

D: By the way, how did die?

MG: He choked on something.

D: Yikes. What a way to go.

D: I'll see you in a couple days or so.

D: Stay out of trouble!

MG: Always!

Gabriel smiled fondly at his phone then jumped a little as Thor soundly clapped him on his shoulder from behind.

"Gah! For fuck's sake, Thor!" Gabriel yelped in surprise. "Give a guy a heart attack why don't ya!"

Thor chuckled deep in his chest, "Apologies Brother."

Gabriel scoffed at that, "Please, you're not sorry."

"Mmm, you are right," Thor hummed with amusement. "I am not," he gave Gabriel an unashamed grin. "What are you looking at?"

Gabriel rolled his eyes, "Just texts from carrot cake."

"Little One?" Thor perked up and tried to reach over Gabriel's shoulder to grab at his phone. "Let me see!"

"No! Thor!" Gabriel stretched his arm out to keep said phone device out of the god of Thunder's grasp. "You'll fry it!"

"I will not!" Thor protested indignantly and was practically climbing all over Gabriel to try and get at the phone.

"Yes! You will, oh God of Thunder," Gabriel sassed as he stuffed the phone in his jacket pocket.

Thor pouted at him sullenly. He was curious to know what his little niece was up to. She was by far his favourite child of his brother's brood.

Thor was about to beg Gabriel to tell him what Maya had sent him when the other Norse gods filed in to the room and made their way outside to the back of the building—out of sight—to begin the
preparations for the all Hallows Eve ceremony when the barrier between the living and the dead, or the Veil was thinnest.

"I still don't get why I need to be here," Gabriel scoffed as Frigg and Freya carefully cast their magic into an old arbors arch, the woodwork displaying intricate Celtic knot work that lit up in old Norse runes as they waved their hands over a section.

"You have your gifts in magic as well Brother. You did after all study under Mother," Thor pointed out.

Gabriel was silent for a few moments as he watched the two goddesses work with flawless words and elegant gestures, "I'd prefer not to get yelled and, or cursed at for offering to help and be accused as seeing them as incompetent, which they aren't! You and I both know that either one of them would fillet my glorious ass if I as so much as uttered—"

"Loki," Frigg called out in a lull in their chanting forcing Gabriel to shut his mouth with an audible click. "If you and your brother have time to babble, surely you can gather some of the necessary herbal ingredients needed for tonight's ritual?"

"Of course Mother," Thor responded immediately and grabbed Gabriel's arm and dragged him away. "Let us go before they deign to assign a much less pleasant task."

Gabriel nodded when he remembered other aspects of said ritual with a wrinkled nose, "Yeah let's vamoose before they put us on grave digging duty."

That became Baldur's job.

Near Midnight…

Candles were lit around the garden arch, old runes glowed faintly in the candlelight as Frigg and Odin chanted to thin the Veil further that shimmered slightly within the arch. More specifically the part of the Veil that was part of Valhalla, where all Norse warriors and even slain warrior Gods go to await the Final Battle, Ragnarok.

Every few decades on All Hollow's Eve the Norse Pantheon would get together to converse with their fallen brethren to ask for insight, or to catch up and gossip. Mostly gossip.

As Odin called the first god spirit to walk forward to the thinned edge of the Veil portal as midnight struck, Gabriel's eyes flew wide with shock.

Not at the sight of Mimir once again holding his decapitated head in his hands from a hostage situation gone wrong between the Aesir and Vanir, but when he was alerted to a certain warding failing.

The one that kept demons from entering a little sleepy New York town called Gloversville.

That one.

"He has risen," the raspy voice of Mimir filtered through. "Samhain walks the mortal realm once more. He will soon call the dead to rise with him."
Gabriel started edged backwards away from the gathered gods. He needed to get back home to his baby, now.

Baldur—the brat—saw him making to leave and called him out on it, "Loki! Surely you aren't leaving so soon, are you?"

"Yeah, I kinda remembered I have this thing that I needed to attend to tonight, so...I'm gonna bounce," Gabriel shrugged as he stepped away from the gathered ring of gods that glowered and murmured disdainfully at him.

"Loki!" Odin thundered, turning away from the portal and Mimir. "You will stay and converse with those that wish to speak to you from the Veil!"

Rage burned in Gabriel's veins at the audacity of this god trying to keep him from running to his daughter, not that Odin knew about her of course. His rage however was fuelled by all consuming fear for his baby girl.

The fact that only a demon summoning could break the warding and Mimir revealing the raising of the demon Samhain couldn't be a coincidence.

Yep. Gabriel needed to leave, like, yesterday.

"Of course, someone on the other side has information you want, but won't tell you unless little ole me makes an appearance," Gabriel sneered as Odin's face turned red at his disrespectful attitude.

Gabriel lifted his fingers to dramatically snap himself away—

"Loki," a deep, more feminine voice called from the portal as the midday sky coloured Angrboda appeared, as tall and curvy as ever. The gathered Norse gods parted to make sure the deceased giantess had a clear view of him. Heimdallr—the ass—grabbed his shoulder and shoved him to the front.

Gabriel stumbled till he stood only a couple feet from the shimmering portal.

"Okay, who told Rowling about how the Veil looked when physically manifested?" Gabriel joked a little, while looking around at the gathered gods. "I mean, the description in The Order of the Phoenix is unca—"

"Loki," Angrboda interrupted, but the tone in her voice held something else. The look in her eyes didn't bode well for Gabriel either. "Your secret is safe, but not all secrets will remain secret forever," she stated cryptically looking into Gabriel's eyes with a knowing look, before turning towards the others gathered behind him. "Seals are falling, and the beginning of the End approaches swiftly on celestial wings and sulfuric smoke spiraling in tandem," Angrboda's dark eyes shifted back to a tight faced Gabriel, "The Morning Star grows brighter as the door is ever closer to opening, and the world will burn when brothers quarrel...and brothers sit idly by."

Gabriel's face filled with apprehension, the need to fly to his baby growing steadily stronger. He had the feeling Angrboda knew he wasn't Loki-Loki, and yet...she still warned him anyways. The dead—even dead gods—were funny that way.

Odin scoffed derisively as Angrboda disappeared and own-head-holding Mimir reappeared, "That Jotunn witch. Always speaking in riddles. Not even worth the trouble of having to force you here, Loki."

Gabriel turned his head with a sarcastic smile, "Ya don't say?" Gabriel gave a mock salute to Thor.
and Frigg who stood tensely behind Odin, eyeing them worriedly. Well, more worried for Gabriel if the death and heated glares they were sending at the back of Odin's head were anything to go by. "Gotta jet! See ya Bro! Later Mum! And drop dead, Dad!"

"Samhain has been slain," Mimir announced before Gabriel snapped his fingers and winged it to Gloversville, New York.

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November 1st 2008, Random Location, United States

Little past midnight…

Gabriel felt a pull and tug on the Trickster magic he had adopted from Loki on his transit back to his daughter.

He was completely caught off guard and roughly tugged off course.

So, needless to say, when he landed it was in an ungraceful and very undignified lump.

"Ow! Son of a—" Gabriel groaned as he rubbed the spot where his head hit the hard on…was that a pink carpet? "What the hell?"

"Not exactly," a voice spoke up suddenly.

Gabriel sat up and whipped his head around to stare up at older white man with a balding head and once dark hair turning an ashen grey in a black subtle pin-striped suit with a blaring white shirt and light silver tie looking down at him.

Gabriel knew this guy, and quickly hid whatever archangel grace he had deep inside his pagan magic. Even went as far as re-hashing the tight lid he kept on his wings when he was out and about.

Not many humans can gaze upon the glory of an angel's wings, let alone an Arch's. However, there were some creatures that could sense them or even see them in the multi-wavelength side dimension where most angels hid them.

Other angels included.

So keeping them stuffed and blanketed behind a wall of pagan mojo was generally a good rule of thumb.

"Oh great. One of Heaven's errand boys," Gabriel grunted as he stood up and looked around the nicely decorated room. It was real fancy with the chandelier, old paintings, and Victorian styled furniture and gold painted wall panel trimmings.

The business pleasant smile the angel held became more strained, "I am not an errand boy. I happen to work directly under Michael him self. I'm sure you've heard of him? The General of Heaven? God's eldest son? The Archangel Michael?" Smugness oozed out of the vessel the angel wore like any other work suit.

"I don't know, maybe," Gabriel shrugged nonchalantly as he flexed some pagan hidden grace at the apparently door-less room.
Yep. Wards and sigils and containment spells, oh my. If Gabriel were the actual Loki he'd probably never be able to bust his way out without some time and finessing. But he was him, and him was playing Loki. Fuuuuuuuuuuck.

"So which of Michael's whipping boys am I speaking with?" Gabriel asked with a Trickster smirk as an angry vein popped a little in angel douche's head. He already knew the answer, but he had to play stupid.

"I am Zachariah, and I've got a little business proposition for you," the self-importance in Zachariah's voice grated at Gabriel's nerves. He never liked this little ass-kissing dickwad.

"Yeah? And, what does a holier-than-thou cloudbhopper want with a pagan god?" Gabriel asked with an arched eyebrow. He just wanted to find out so he can vamoose and get to his daughter. He'd heard Mimir's words and hoped the demon bit it before any harm came to his baby.

"First of all you're a false god—" Zachariah snidely corrected.

Gabriel rolled his eyes, "Yeah, not helping your case here Zeke."

Zachariah didn't take the bait and just gave him a smile that told Gabriel he had something up his sleeve that would just blind-side—

"Would it help my case if your latest offspring's life was on the line?" Zachariah sent him a shark-toothed grin as he watched Gabriel tense briefly.

"I don't know what you're on Choir Boy but whatever it is, can you hook me up?" Gabriel tried playing it cool and unconcerned but it was obvious on the angel's face that he wasn't buying what bullshit Gabriel was selling.

"You see," Zachariah hummed with a smile, raising a finger in the air and pointing it at Gabriel, "I sent a couple of my guys to this sleepy little hovel in New York to investigate this witch and kill it before it summoned the demon Samhain. Real nasty piece of work let me tell you. Now, normally, Heaven wouldn't care too much, but seeing as it would have brought us ever closer to the Apocalypse…well gotta at least try, right?" he shrugged in a all too casual 'what-can-you-do' gesture.

Gabriel's jaw clenched as he internally chastised himself for not detecting the witch, like at all. He had unintentionally left his baby powerless in a town with a powerful Old World, demon-summoning witch.

"Imagine my surprise to find out about this little abhorrent abdominal half-breed running about," Zachariah said with a shark grin as Gabriel's dark glare darkened further. "This powerless little demi-god, or is it demi-Trickster?" he chuckled with a mocking smile, relishing just a little in the Trickster's deadly glare. "Now, when I set up this little...well, trap, I was suspecting any number of Tricksters to fall into it when they came running back to protect their little spawn. Probably an unknown demi-god that went 'full Trickster', but I honestly didn't think I'd end up with the so-called Trickster King Loki himself. Talk about Fate, huh?"

Gabriel scoffed, "Fate? Sure, sure. Now how about you cut out the bullshit and get straight to it, huh? Like you said, there was a witch and a demon running around where my kid is. So, sooooo sorry if I seem a bit anxious to get going."

"Right to the point then?" Zachariah clapped his hands once then spread them out with a smarmy grin. "You work for Heaven and we don't kill your disgusting half-breed. That sound like a plan?"
"What?" Gabriel growled lowly in his chest as his long buried righteous archangel fury began bubbling up. It took will power that Gabriel didn't even know he possessed to keep from smiting the angel bastard in front of him.

No one threatened his baby girl!

"Yoooooou," Zachariah spoke slowly like Gabriel was stupid and pointed both hands at him, "wooooooook. For us," he used both thumbs to point back at himself. Gabriel was giving the douche an annoyed deadpanned glare. Zachariah shrugged and spoke normally, "And we don't get smite happy."

"What the hell you need me for? I mean, I didn't even know there was a witch in my own backyard!" Gabriel demanded angrily. "And don't you got enough winged dicks up there to do your bidding?"

"To be fair even Heaven couldn't pinpoint the demon whore, and if we couldn't there's no way you could've," the angel scoffed dismissively. "And, yes maybe we could cover most of the seals to Lucifer's cage and keep them from breaking but why waste angel power when we could use something more…disposable?"

Oh man did he just want to—grrrrrrr!

Gabriel breathed a harsh breath through his flaring nostrils as his hands squeezed his crossed jacket clad arms and he gritted his teeth.

"I need to get back to my kid," Gabriel gritted out, telling his grace to cool it lest he gets discovered. "I need to know she's still alive after Samhain bit it."

"Ah, already heard about that did you? Shame those Hunters couldn't pull off adverting the whole demon summoning in the first place," Zachariah said with a careless shrug. "Had to show the older one a taste of difficult decisions yet to come. Almost thought he'd choose to let us smite the whole town, but that's the Righteous Man for you, I suppose."

Righteous Man?

Dean Winchester.

Gabriel's fear for Maya calmed ever so slightly. If those two knuckleheads were with her then she was more than likely all right. Doesn't stop the pathological need to get out of this damn room and run back to smother his daughter in the expected and overly paranoid and fearful frenzy of parental instincts.

"But I also can't let you go back," Zachariah informed him with a mockery of a remorseful smile and slight negative shake of his head.

Righteous fury swelled behind a thin wall of pagan magic, ready to lift the disguise and roast the balding asshole and show him who exactly he was dealing with.

Gabriel opened his mouth to yell but the douchebag held up his hand began talking again.

"Now, now! I can assure you it's perfectly fine. Apparently bonded with the Righteous Man and his brother," Zachariah gave a disgusted shiver. "It must be some carnal thing. Why the Righteous Man would want to bed down with such a creature is beyond me, or maybe it's the younger brother…either way both of them seem quite fond and protective of it. Even threatened angels, like they can do anything against them," Zachariah scoffed.
Okay, Gabriel would admit he wanted to laugh—*scratch that*—_guffaw_, in Zachariah's face. Gabriel was fully aware the kind of _relationship_ his daughter had with the two brothers and it _wasn't_ anything like Zachariah insinuated.

It was, to the unobservant outsider, all really innocent and platonic. The idiots saw Maya like a kid sister that had their own big brother instincts yelling at them to protect her, and she just looked up to them like any little sibling, with complete trust.

Did Gabriel particularly like it? _No_, but if it kept angels from zeroing in for a smiting on his baby he could live with it.

_Maybe_. Maya didn't seem all too concerned with following those two flannel clad Neanderthals into dangerous situations…

_No!_ Gabriel wanted his baby as far away from those two as possible! There was the beginning of the End brewing and those two were smack dab in the middle of that shit show.

But, again, smiting this bastard will draw unwanted attention to him and to Maya.

Gabriel was unfortunately stuck between a rock and a hard place.

"You've obviously done _something_ to it in order to hide it from the Heavenly Host and it just wouldn't be _good business sense_ to let you anywhere near it so you can just grab it and hide away," Zachariah grinned toothily, paying no mind to Gabriel's inner turmoil.

"So you want me to work for you in exchange for my daughter's continued existence, is that it?" Gabriel gritted out with clenched fists. "Can I at least tell her what's going on so she doesn't think I abandoned her?"

Zachariah gave him a funny smile, "Didn't you though? Abandon it? I mean, you left it powerless and alone…isn't that the definition of abandonment?"

Gabriel saw the manipulation and scoffed, "Shows what you know."

"Probably a lot more than you _pagan_," Zachariah said, disgust dripping off the last word like venom. "It can't know of our…_little arrangement_. It'd probably tell the Righteous Man and he'll be angry with us, and he'd be reluctant to work with us. It'd just be a whole…_thing_ that none of us have time for," Zachariah shook waved his hand dismissively and shook his head at the possible annoyance. "Besides, don't you want to keep the Apocalypse from happening? Ensure your spawn's survival?"

Gabriel wasn't completely buying the shit the balding angel was selling. He was pretty sure that Heaven wanted the Apocalypse to go forward; otherwise they would've rescued Dean _before_ he broke. Something was up.

"And if I _don't_ agree to this deal of yours, what then? You smiting my kid would just get you on the Righteous Man's shit list and mine," Gabriel pointed out angrily. "If memory serves right, an angel smiting is a pretty obvious cause of death."

Zachariah gave a cheerful laugh, like he'd heard some particularly funny joke, "Who said anything about smiting? Your half-breed is as mortal as any human from what we can tell. A little grace to _swerve_ a bullet, a little _yank_ on a steering wheel of a speeding car, maybe a harmless flu strain put on some angelic steroids, or a little _nudge_ of a blade so it hit something more…_vital_."

Gabriel could feel the blood in his vessel's face drain, because he knew the suit wasn't wrong.
And he was well and truly trapped.

The grin Zachariah gave him told Gabriel that the asshole knew it too.

"Don't be so dour, Loki," Zachariah chuckled. "At least we're willing to keep it from falling into Lilith's hands and having you work for her against us instead."

Gabriel wasn't fooled when Zachariah didn't say they were willing to protect her from Lilith. He said they'd keep her from falling into the demon's hands.

Gabriel's heart ached when he received a prayer from Maya telling him all about what happened; how Puck destroyed Samhain, the mind control from Tracy (Puck was right!), and how Sam and Dean saved her and not to go all Trickster on them when he got back. She mentioned how they planned to stay a while till he came back so she wasn't left alone unprotected. The vibration from his phone in his jacket pocket most likely a text from his baby as well.

He wanted desperately to go to her, but he couldn't as Douche-ariah told him the warding and confinement spells of the room that was supposed to trap Loki would be brought down in a few days, plenty of time for the Winchesters to decide something might be wrong and he wasn't coming back, and it was best to take Maya with them. After all, if Loki was able to do something to hide Maya from Heaven's sight, then she must also be well hidden from Loki's as well.

The involuntary grimace Gabriel gave at Zachariah's deduction had the other angel grinning triumphantly before flapping away.

No doubt leaving a guard behind.

Gabriel quickly slammed a fist down on the solid wood antique table in fury, breaking it in two, all the while not even breaking a drop of sweat or a single layer of skin on his hand.

Gabriel for the second time in a year sent a prayer to his Father, 'Please keep her from getting snatched by Lilith. So Lilith doesn't have her and angels don't kill her to keep Lilith from having her.'


Chuck

God winced with a strained grimace, pausing ever so slightly in His writing of 'It's the Great Pumpkin, Sam Winchester', the latest novel in the Supernatural book series. He wouldn't include the conversation between Zachariah and Gabriel (aka: written as Loki), or His son's prayer.

But He knew it at least possibly needed to be alluded to, to explain the Trickster's absence to the readers…

He wasn't too concerned. After all, the story was practically writing itself.


November 5 2008, Random Location, United States

He was going practically nuts with worry and heartache after each voicemail and text message his daughter sent him. Gabriel was relieved a little when he learned of Sam and Dean protecting his
baby from invading demons in the town, but felt immense guilt for the loss of Eli's parents. He should've known that kind of large scale warding would attract the wrong kind of attention.

On the day the warding sigils were to come down he tried to at least leave his baby a message so she doesn't get the wrong idea but Douche-ariah reared his balding head.

"C'mon! At least let me tell her I've got some shit to work out or-or something!" Gabriel demanded only to feel the other angel's grace brush his hand to yank the cellphone from it. "Hey!"

Douche-ariah smiled at him before crushing the phone in his hand like tin foil. "Sorry Loki," he shrugged.

Gabriel narrowed gold eyes at him, "No you're not."

"You're right. I'm not," the ass nodded in admittance. "But we can't have you tipping it off, now can we?"

"Couldn't let me tell her that some shit storm came up and we need to stay apart? Or at least that I love her and that my absence has nothing to do with something she did?!"

Zachariah for his part scoffed and rolled his eyes at his show of tedious emotions.

Gabriel flipped him the bird, "Fuck you too asshole!" He could feel his archangel rage trying to get the better of him, to smite this asshole, and become essentially a raging beast towards anything and everything that approached his baby. Archangel fury and parental instincts do not mix well.

Zachariah lifted an eyebrow. "You done with all that…" he made a vague gesture with his hands at Gabriel, his face disgusted, "…emotional…stuff?"

"Fine," Gabriel growled. "What now?"

"Now?" Zachariah arched an eyebrow. "Now you wait till we need you. I'd suggest scrubbing whatever 'notice-me-not' talisman or spell you're using. Need to be able to find you after all."

"And if you can't?" Gabriel said tightly.

The smile Douche-ariah gave him made it pretty obvious the kind of angel Gabriel was dealing with.

"There'd be one less demi-god in the world then. Win-win in our books," Zachariah chuckled gaily.

Once the warding fell Gabriel used his acquired pagan mojo to pop him self out of that room in an instant.

Zachariah rolled his eyes with a satisfied smile, "Pagans, so dramatic and emotional."

Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Bobby

"C'mon kid," Bobby patted Eli's hunched shoulder as he walked by him sitting on the couch in the den. "Let's get ya busy so ya ain't moping about. Get yer mind off things."
"Li-like my dead p-parents?" Eli spat at the older man.

Bobby had no compunctions with smacking Eli up side the head, "Don't sass me, boy. I'm sorry that happened to ya, but ya ain't the first and ya ain't gonna be the last." Bobby sighed as he rubbed the back of his head, letting some of his gruffness slide away. The boy was grieving after all. "Better ya try and do somethin' productive than stewin' in yer own juices. Maybe redirect some of than misplaced anger ya got aimed at My."

Eli looked up at him, anger in those thick rimmed glass covered eyes ready to retort but Bobby cut him off.

"It wasn't her fault ya idjit!" Bobby barked, his gruff exterior returning. "Demons are evil sons of bitches and if it was you then it'd be someone else! Some other kid who was made to watch their parents tortured and killed with their own hands."

Eli turned his gaze away a little intimidated and ashamed for the way he acted. Bobby was trying to look out for him in his own tough way.

"Mr. Singer I'm—"

"HUNTER!" Gabriel shouted as he popped into existence in the middle of the room, scaring the crap out of both Eli and Bobby.

Where Eli squeaked and tensed up, Bobby had grabbed a knife in his inner vest and whirled around and stabbed the obviously supernatural intruder.

Gabriel and Bobby kind of stared at each other, frozen in surprise with Bobby's hand still on the knife and said knife hilt deep in Gabriel's chest.

"Really Hunter?" Gabriel scoffed with a quirked eyebrow. "I thought we were past this."

Bobby shrugged and yanked the knife out, grabbing the towel that he'd partially stuffed in his back pocket to wipe it off, "We agreed on mutual destruction if we got in each other's crosshairs, Loki. Now mind telling me where the hell you've been? My's been worried sick about you and wondering if you just abandoned her!"

Gabriel's eyes narrowed at the capped Hunter as he snapped the blood now staining his shirt away and jacket, "I'd never abandon her! I was fucking detained by winged assholes and strong armed into—"

"Mr. Godson?" piped up Eli from behind Bobby. Gabriel tilted his body to look around Bobby at the scrawny figure that was Eli Pepperjack, his face softening.

"Eli, I heard about—"

"Is it true you're the Norse god Loki?" Eli demanded as he stood up, glaring daringly at Gabriel. "That it's also your fault the demons were even near my home?!"

Bobby put a hand back and glanced between Eli and Gabriel worriedly. "Eli—" Bobby tried to give a warning hiss. The Trickster might be amiable most of the time, but that didn't mean you go purposefully accusing and disrespecting a pagan god unless you got a bloody stake up your sleeve.

"Yes," Gabriel told Eli sorrowfully, surprising Bobby a bit…maybe a bit more than it should. "It shouldn't have happened but it did. A witch was there, I didn't sense them, and they summoned a demon inside the warding I put up around town causing it to fall. Letting whatever demons it
attracted in. I'm so sor—"

"I-I don't want you're ap- apologies!" Eli yelled before storming out of the room and out of the house into the scrap yard with two pairs of eyes following him.

"Ya ain't gonna do anythin' to the boy are ya?" Bobby asked his eyes looking out of the den's window to where Eli ran off to.

"Nope, but if he keeps blaming Maya and being an ass to her then I'll do something," Gabriel answered remembering some of the texts he read. His own gold eyes turned back to Bobby, meeting the old Hunter's gaze. "Nothing deadly…or too traumatizing."

Bobby gave an agreeing grunt, knowing it was the best he was going to get out of the Trickster. "So, wanna tell me how the hell you know where I live?"

Gabriel snorted and walked past Bobby to collapse on the man's couch, "I've always known. Like I'd give my kid to someone without knowing where they were taking her."

"And the most recent time she ran away and I said I had her here? Half expected you to pop-in like you just did and just grab her," Bobby stated and sat down on the couch a seat away from Gabriel.

Gabriel loll'd his head at Bobby to look at him, "I'd rather she run away here and be safe, than some random backwater town where I won't be able to find her."

"Was that a compliment?" Bobby scoffed, eyeing the Trickster on his couch.

Gabriel turned his wrist and flipped the bird at Bobby earning a snort.

"So, what detained you again?" Bobby asked cautiously, not liking the idea that something was able to trap such a powerful entity.

"Angels," Gabriel deadpanned as he ran a hand through his golden hair. "Like I was saying, they strong armed me into working for them."

"How the hell did they manage that?"

"Wrong end of the spectrum Bobert," Gabriel chuckled mirthlessly. "Same way the demons had planned to. Threaten my daughter's life, what else?"

"WHAT?!" Bobby exploded as he looked at Gabriel with wide-eyed shock.

Gabriel gave him a tired nod and breathless chuckle, "Yeah and I can't tell her, or she lets it slip to those lumbering flannel wearing bozos and drives a wedge between Heaven and Dean. They don't want to waste time trying to get him to cooperate when saving the seals, or some bullshit."

"I think the Apocalypse is something a mite bigger than some bullshit."

"I'm not saying it isn't, but that's what they told me. Can't see her, can't talk to her…" Gabriel leaned forward, propping his elbows on his knees and dropping his head into his hands. "I just…" he fell silent not knowing what else to say.

It was odd for Bobby to see Loki like this, completely distraught and not knowing what to do. It was very human-like. It just seemed wrong to see the ever confident Trickster so…broken looking. Bobby awkwardly reached over and patted the pagan god's back and offered, "Want a beer?"

Gabriel gave a breathless laugh, sitting up a little to give a small and slightly teary-eyed smile, "I
got something a little better."

A snap of fingers and a bottle of Crown Royale and two glasses appeared in Gabriel's hands. In less than a minute the bottle was opened and Gabriel poured them each a glass.

Bobby took the proffered drink cautiously, "I hope this isn't yer attempt to finally do away with me."

Gabriel snorted and rubbed his eyes, "Nah. If I wanted to get you with alcohol poisoning I'd use Asgardian mead. That can knock a god off their asses after a couple of pints. Let alone what'd it do to a human with, apparently, exceptional liver function."

"Good to know," Bobby took a chance and sipped the alcohol and waited for anything to happen. When nothing did he relaxed.

Gabriel had been leisurely sipping his own glass and had already poured himself another while he watched Bobby in amusement, "Now that just hurts. I thought we had a connection."

"We do," Bobby snorted. "Maya."

They sat in silence sipping on the alcohol when the door opened to show Eli running in to grab a coat, then running out again having gotten cold from the winter chill beginning to settle in. He obviously still didn't want to be anywhere near Loki in the old house.

It gave Bobby a slight idea and he suggested, "I could figure out where the boys are and ya could pop in and out with My and her rat before the angels even knew ya were there."

Gabriel shook his head, "Already thought of that, but then we'd have Heaven and Hell hunting us. They'd look for any sign of angelic and demonic warding. Probably end up with another cluster fuck that's twice as big as what happened in Gloversville, with a much higher body count."

Bobby cursed and Gabriel held his tongue. Part of him wanted to tell Bobby that Heaven's manhunt or baby Trickster hunt would become fatal if they ever thought he was more powerful than he was supposed to be. On a power scale pagan gods were pretty high, not many other creatures could disguise themselves successfully as one.

Gabriel liked Bobby, he was a decent enough human and a down right gentleman in comparison to other Hunters, but he and Maya couldn't afford for anyone to find out about them. So even though a part of him ached to share the long carried worries and fear on his shoulders, he couldn't.

"Want me to tell My I talked to ya? Let her know ya got yerself into some deep shit?" Bobby offered looking straight ahead and not at the big owl-eyed Trickster looking at him.

"You'd do that?"

"Course," Bobby grunted then took the final swig of his glass before refilling it. "Angels said she can't know and ya can't see or talk to her. Never said nothin' 'bout me deliverin' a message."

"I could kiss you right now!" Gabriel beamed as little bit of relief entered his worried mind. At least his baby won't think he abandoned her on purpose or at all.

Bobby sent him a deadpanned glare that told Gabriel not to even joke about that. "So the liquor was to get me to sleep with ya, wasn't it?" Bobby scoffed. "Don't think I don't know 'bout yer appetites."
Gabriel laughed, clapping a hand on Bobby's shoulder, "If that was my goal I'd have propositioned you before breaking out the booze. Consent's a big thing for me." He downed his glass before grabbing the fancy bottle between them and pouring himself another round. "I'd rather my partners have their mind completely clear when giving consent."

"So I'm guessing you also don't push when they're drunk and change their minds?"

"Nope," Gabriel smirked behind his glass. "But if you ever wanna hook-up let me know. I've got centuries worth of experience and can guarantee the best night of your life," he gave the unimpressed Hunter a lascivious eyebrow waggle.

Bobby looked at the Trickster blankly before he scoffed, grabbed the bottle of Crown Royale, stood up, and left the room.

"Aww, c'mon! We were bonding!" Gabriel called after the retreating Hunter who had reached his weird shit limit.

"You ruined it!" Bobby barked without turning around as he made his way to the staircase.

Gabriel got the last word in with a quickly shouted "Tease!"

Leaning back on the weathered couch he let himself relax as much as he could relax with the proverbial sword hanging over his daughter's head if he didn't comply with Heaven's desires. Gold eyes stared unseeingly into the golden liquid in his glass.

For someone who did his best to stay out of all of Heaven's affairs, he still finds himself getting pulled into the middle of it all.

With his daughter in the crosshairs with Sam and Dean Winchester.

Seriously, what was his life?!
AN: Here it is! Another chapter for you! I would've updated sooner by splitting this into two chapters but I was like, 'Screw it! I'll power through this episode!'!

So viola!

For my new followers I do updates about once a month or every other if I get two out in one month so it's about the same? Meh.

I'll try get next chapter out for beginning-ish of October but my friend's getting married and I'm a bridesmaid so…bachelorette then wedding and just busy busy, lol.

November 2 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Bobby

Bobby walked out of his garage wiping an oil stained cloth over his equally oil stained hands and headed towards his house for a coffee break. He paused at the dirt driveway between the two buildings as he heard the familiar rumble of a '67 Chevy impala pull up.

He hadn't expected to see Sam and Dean that day, but it wasn't too unusual for the boys to show up out of the blue, so he changed his course and walked up to the parked car as its occupants exited the vehicle, stuffing the oily rag in his back pocket.

What did surprise the old Hunter was seeing both rear car doors swing open and two teens plus one small dog climb out. He immediately recognized Maya despite her new hair cut that made her remind him of someone he couldn't place right at the moment. And he especially took notice of the nicely formed dark bruise marring her cheek that had his parental instincts roaring.

Alright, who punched his youngest idjit?!

Bobby kept a calm composure as he looked askance at the bedraggled Winchesters as they stretched their long limbs and gave him tired greetings. He highly doubted it was either of those two given their own protective streak for the young female of their little group.

"Well don't you two look like shit," Bobby commented with a nod towards them.

"Yeah, well, you try driving with two hormonal teenagers in the back," Dean bit back grumpily as he cracked his back. "I have a whole new appreciation for what Dad went through when me and Sam were teenagers now."

Sam sent his brother a tired look at his attitude then looked back at Bobby, "It's, uh, been… a trying 24hrs."

Bobby sent them another speculative look then walked over to greet Maya and the new teenager.
"Hey My. Good to see ya girlie, but it'd be better if ya didn't look to be on the recievin' end of a
good punch to the face," Bobby greeted the sad and slightly sheepish looking girl, drawing her into
a brief hug that she easily returned. Releasing her he turned to the bespeckled kid standing crossly a
few feet away by him self. "Who's yer friend?"

"We-we're NOT friends! Not-not any more!" Eli spat angrily in their direction, crossing his arms.

The tired sadness in Maya ebbed away briefly in the presence of her annoyance and her limited
patience over the argument the two had been having for the last 24hrs. "And I told you, it wasn't
my damn fault! Or my Dad's!" Maya growled back. "That witch-bitch was powerful! If he'd known
she was there he'd have killed her, the warding wouldn't have fallen and that demon wouldn't have
gotten in!"

"They wo-wouldn't h-have been circling the t-town i-if you we-weren't th-there in the f-first
place!" Eli glared hatefully back at Maya.

Bobby could easily see the pain in his girl's eyes behind the anger that was being fueled by said
pain…and something else. He could always read her like an open book.

Sam and Dean started complaining to Bobby that this was what they had gone through the last
24hrs and why they didn't bother stopping. It wasn't long after that that all four voices were
overlapping each other and progressively getting louder as they tried to talk over one another, each
one getting more and more annoyed with the others.

"ENOUGH!" Bobby shouted abruptly, cutting off whatever the two were going to say to each other
next. "The four of ya—" Puck barked, forcing Bobby to roll his eyes at the diminutive dog, "Fine,
and a half, in the house. Now! And not another word!" Bobby pointed to his house as he
punctuated every word and looked at the children scattered in his yard.

Because that's what they were, children. Sam and Dean included.

All their jaws snapped shut and they all did their own little angry, annoyed, tired, sad, and what
have you glances at each other before heading into Bobby's house with Bobby right behind them
closing the door.

"Sit down," Bobby ordered and watched as they all stiffly found a spot to sit. He observed Maya
pointedly keeping a distance away from Sam whenever he walked too close to her, and Sam
sending her his hurt puppy-dog look that she also pointedly ignored. Bobby puzzled over that
briefly, but decided to put it on the backburner for now.

Sam, Dean, and Maya arranged themselves on the couch in the den, while Eli sat in the desk chair
with a scowl.

"Now I know you're tired from yer long ass haul over here but we're goin' to have a calm
discussion about what the hell is goin' on," Bobby looked pointedly in each of the gathered idjits'
eyes. "Okay?"

There were mumbled noises of agreement and small head nods. Maya cast Eli a sad look briefly
before picking up Puck, depositing him in her lap, and wrapping her arms around him for comfort.
Her anger having died down for now, leaving pain, sadness, and...worry in it's wake.

Bobby will address that last one later as well, but he needed a run down of what happened, why
Maya was with his boys with a large bruise on her cheek, and what the new kid had to do with all
of it.
Bobby turned his attention back to the Three Idjits on the couch—*Dean sandwiched uncomfortably in the middle*—and looked at them expectantly.

"Well?"

The Sam and Dean shared a look and Maya pointedly turned her gaze to the fur ball in her lap, scratching at his pelt.

Sam sighed sadly, "Well, you see it all started…"

Sam began explaining the whole thing to Bobby, Dean taking over periodically and to give his two cents. Maya then explained how Tracy actually got control of her to do her bidding.

There was fighting, breaking of mind-control, angels and a seal, a second witch, Samhain rising, Maya being reckless and learning about Lilith wanting her for her Dad, and super-sized Puck destroying Samhain.

Bobby had sent a raised eyebrow at the little dog that was giving him a haughty doggy grin.

Bobby had done his best to keep silent, but the white-knuckled grip on his own chair spoke volumes. He released a slow breath through his nose as he fought to push back his anger and worry about what almost happened to his surrogate kids.

"Okay," Bobby finally said with a strained voice that the Three Idjits knew was him trying not to explode with pent up anger and disbelief. "Now, tell me how bean-pole over there fits into all this? Something about warding failing and circling demons?" he nodded over at Eli.

Maya bit her bottom lip a little, sending a glance at Eli who sent her back a glare. She sighed sadly, "Dad had put up demon warding around town. Made it next to impossible for any demon to cross it and get inside. As long as no demon found its way in it would hold." Maya noted the look of understanding cross Bobby's features, his keen mind filling in the blanks.

"So I'm guessin' that kind a thing, if stumbled upon, gets demons curious," Bobby stated. Maya nodded. "And summonin' that Samhain bastard was the pin that popped the anti-demon bubble. You and yer Dad didn't sense these witches? At all?" he questioned with a little disbelief in his voice.

Maya shook her head, "They were Old World witches, the kind that live for hundreds of years. They had time to figure out ways of hiding themselves…"

"Yeah, even Heaven couldn't sniff 'em out," Dean added in a tired huff.

"...aaaaaaaand I'm not...exactly...well the thing is my Dad was pissed over the whole running off thing...so...um," Maya hesitated as she fiddled with Puck's short fur. "I...have power... suppressing wrist bands? I can't really *do* or *sense* anything now?" she couldn't stop her voice from lilting upwards, turning her statements into questions as she nervously eyed Bobby's reaction.

"Uh huh," Bobby deadpanned as he rubbed his face tiredly then glanced at Eli. "So how exactly did you get dragged into this, kid?"

The glower on Eli's face darkened as he sent an impressive glare in Maya's direction, as well as a lot of pain and betrayal, making her grimace and look away.

"Be-because of-of *her* I-I got pos-possessed f-from a d-dem-m-mon th-that g-got i-i-in," Eli's stutter becoming worse as a torrent of emotions swirled inside him. "Be-be-ca-use of *her* th-the
Maya stiffened and retorted back at Eli angrily, receiving more hurtful words from her former friend that had the Winchesters arguing back at him in her defense. So the general volume of the room started escalating quickly as four voices tried to yell over each other and tired tensions began rising rapidly.

Bobby briefly contemplated how he was getting too old for this shit before yelling at the occupants in the room to shut up and to go find places to crash for a few hours or to cool off.

Sam and Dean took the room with two beds and Maya took the smallest room with only one bed. All the rooms of course were crammed with old texts and books that Bobby's den/library/living room couldn't hope to hold any more of.

Bobby shrugged at Eli and offered the kid the den's couch, getting a muttered 'Whatever' in return.

And here he thought he was done dealing with more than one teenager at a time when Sam and Dean grew out of it.

Bobby scoffed at that as he went back to his garage to continue working on the car he had in his shop.

Oh who was he kiddin', those two never grew out of it.

Couple hours later...

Maya was the first one up—unable to sleep well with all the doubts and worries plaguing her mind—in the suddenly full household and had made her way outside to see what Bobby was up to, Puck faithfully following beside her.

The bell rang as she entered through the garage entrance, signaling the arrival of someone.

"There in a minute!" Bobby shouted through the open door that led to the shop floor.

"Just me, Bobby!" Maya called back with a smile. Puck huffed at her feet pointedly, "And Puck!"

"Then ya can get in here and lend me a hand!"

Maya didn't bother responding and just walked into the garage where Bobby had a car jacked so he could slide in and out underneath on an old lay board he was currently using.

"What do you need Bobby?" she asked the part of Bobby not currently hidden by a car as Puck wondered around sniffing things but being mindful not to knock anything over.

"That flex-head socket wrench by your foot," Bobby answered, a hand appearing and pointing right at her left foot, where low and behold there was a wrench.

Maya crouched down and put the tool in Bobby's grease stained hand.

"Thanks," Bobby muttered, the grinding sound of metal against metal from the turning of a nut tightly into place. "That should do it," he grunted as he wheeled himself out from under the car. "C'mon, let's start 'er up, and ya can tell me what else is buggin' ya."
Maya took a breath to protest, held it for a few seconds as she thought it over, then released a defeated sigh, "Can't fool you, huh Bobby?"

"Nope," Bobby gave her smug grin as he wiped down his hands before entering his office to grab the car's keys. "Ya do remember how to bring it down, don't ya?"

Maya looked at the jack for a few minutes before giving Bobby a sheepish smile, "Maybe?"

Bobby sighed, unimpressed at her retention of automotive repairs, and talked her through it all again. He handed her the keys and told her start up the automatic car. The new-ish engine roared to life and purred as it idled. No other odd sounds coming forth.

"So far so good. Now get out of the driver's seat and we can give this hunk a cheap metal a test run," Bobby motioned with his head for Maya to get out, watching as she walked around the front of the vehicle to the other side of the car.

Once her and Puck were seated and buckled up Bobby put the car into drive and they pulled out of the garage and past the front gates to the property.

They drove a couple of minute in silence, Maya not wanting to begin the impending conversation Bobby wanted to have and Bobby keeping a keen ear out for any strange noises the car might be liable to make.

Didn't mean Bobby couldn't do both.

"So wanna tell me what's got ya'll worried?" Bobby proposed.

Maya made a disagreeing sound.

A moment of silence.

"Wanna try that again?" Bobby prodded meaningfully. He wasn't one usually for emotional stuff being a widower and a Hunter but if he ever needed to he could always put his discomfort aside. Besides, the last thing he wanted was the least emotionally constipated person in his life to take a page out of the Winchester manual of Emotional Constipation.

Maya released a sigh, "I tried getting in contact with my Dad. Texting and even a prayer but...nothing. And I don't—I don't know why—" She clenched her jaw as she cut her self off.

"I-I know that, but..." Maya trailed off as Puck climbed into her lap and whined sympathetically at her. "But what if it is? What if my running away before was the final straw and he couldn't forgive me and had just been waiting for an opportunity to just...leave me behind."

Bobby signaled and pulled over onto the side of the empty road, putting the car in park before turning his upper body to face her.

"That jackass loves ya, Maya. I know that for a damned fact," he told her sternly.

"But, I've probably been more trouble than I'm worth—"

"Then ya obviously don't see how worth it ya are to him; to the boys, to me," Bobby cut her off, looking into her shimmering gold eyes. "You didn't see how pissed he was when we told him about
Lilith wanting yer scrawny ass, didn't see the absolute fear he had that he had hidden behind all that anger. I don't doubt yer Dad would lay down his *life* for ya in heartbeat if it meant keepin' ya safe. Hell, I'd be right there beside him in that regard."

"*Bobby*…" Maya whimpered, as she looked at him teary-eyed.

Bobby put a comforting hand on her shoulder, "Now don't ya go questionin' how I feel neither. As far as you're concerned, you're like one of my own flesh and blood kids that'd I'd do anythin' for. That's why I can tell ya how yer Dad feels, because I feel the same way."

Maya gave him a grateful watery smile before launching her arms and awkwardly tried to give him a hug. It was a little tough with the seatbelt and forced space from the separated front seats.

Puck, dislodged from her lap leaned against her legs offering what comfort he could as well. He was grateful for the old, whiskey and oil scented man and his words that Puck himself couldn't speak.

Bobby held the keening teen the best he could as she cried her worries and secret fears, rubbing her back and giving her quiet reassurance.

As she quieted down to some loud and stuffy sniffles they pulled away and Bobby started up the car again and turned it around to head back. It was a silent ride back to his property, but Bobby didn't mind. Maya looked a little more at ease, less worried and sad. It was still there but his words had helped.

Bobby pulled the generic car into the garage, satisfied with his repair job and acquired parenting skills. He couldn't help the sad but silent chuckle that shook his chest a little.

Karen was right. He would've been a good Dad. Must've been Fate if he ended up with three kids regardless of not fathering any of them.

Maya released what had to have been her fifth yawn in so many minutes on the ride back. Her body tired from the rough car ride to Bobby's place and the outpouring of emotions she had just gone through.

"Go try and get some more sleep, My," Bobby told her as he watched her tiredly rub her slightly splotchy eyes as another yawn ripped its way out of her mouth. "Still got a couple hours before I order us somethin' for dinner."

Maya gave a tired smile, "Yeah. Good idea, Pa."

Bobby froze and turned to give Maya a wide-eyed look at what she had just called him, but she was already walking away with another loud yawn cracking her jaw. He shook his head and sent her retreating form a fond smile.

He reasoned she probably didn't realize she had said it, like the time she first told him she loved him like family.

Didn't stop the warm feeling he had surging up inside him though.

Yep. No question. If it ever came down to it he'd lay down his life for that girl, and the boys.

So, as far as Bobby was concerned the Three Idjits were like the sons and daughter he and Karen never got to have because of his own fears of being like his own abusive father. But, here they were all the same, *his idjits*. 
Damn anyone who tried to tell him otherwise.

He went to go back to the garage office to do some of the less than fun paperwork when he remembered something.

Bobby quickly exited the building and yelled after Maya, "Maya! Where the hell did that bruise on yer cheek come from?!

She had just reached the front door of the house and turned around to look tiredly back at him to give him a shrug.

"Bullshit!" Bobby shouted, sending her a scowl when she just shrugged at him again with a tired smirk.

Scratch that, Fate was a bitch and wanted to send him into an early grave from worrying over his three adopted idjits.

Next day…

Bobby

After dinner the previous day Bobby finally found out where Maya got the bruise on her cheek from, and how they came across a demon possessed Eli. He didn't expect the boney kid to pack enough of a punch to leave a nasty bruise on Maya's face, but there it was.

Bobby had glared at the fidgety glasses wearing boy when that tidbit of information came out, wanting to return the favor. Maya had grabbed his arm, making him look at her pleading bruised face asking him to just let it go.

Bobby had sighed loudly from his nose and grumbled loudly under his breath. He guessed he could let it go, the kid did suffer a…trauma to put it lightly.

Now today seemed to be a rest day for everybody to try and get their bearings, or to get space in the case of Maya and Eli.

Him and the boys had to separate them a couple of times already today. Mostly dragging Eli off of Maya since she was more reluctant in hurting him, where as the beanpole had no such compulsions anymore.

Other than that, they tended to stay away from each other.

Bobby decided they just needed some time and space, so he left that alone. Not much you can do when someone's lost someone important to them and have already made up their mind on hating you for something you didn't do.

Anger, grief, and hate do not a reasonable person make.

Instead Bobby turned his attention to the tension between Maya and Sam. There seemed to be some between Dean and Sam too, but they weren't visibly stiffening and taking large side steps from the later.

Bobby inferred to Maya that he finally made that panic room in the basement. Curiosity piqued
and Maya and the dog were clambering down the stairs to check it out.

He then turned to Sam who was helping wash that morning's dishes, "So wanna tell me why My isn't talkin' or wantin' to be anywhere near ya, Sam?"

Sam's shoulders stiffened and Dean who had walked into the room at that exact moment had answered with a scoff, "Told you yesterday, Boy Wonder over there used his demon blood powers to exorcise the demon from Eli that had Maya at knife point."

"She's, uh, having trouble trusting me at the moment because of them," Sam admitted slightly ashamed then defended, "I wasn't going to let that demon make off with her, or hurt her, or-or-or worse!"

"Yeah and Heaven wants to smite your ass for using them! You said you'd stop, but you didn't," Dean grunted with a scowl. "Don't think I didn't notice you gearing up to us your ESP crap on Samhain!"

Sam put down the dish he was holding in the sink and turned around to look at Dean with an exasperated sigh, "You didn't have any better ideas!"

"Hey! Cool it you two!" Bobby barked out, getting between them. "If ya haven't noticed, we've got a damn Apocalypse brewing! We can't be tearin' at each others' throats!"

The two backed off and looked away. Bobby could practically see them sweeping the problem they had under the rug to deal with later. Bobby rolled his eyes. No doubt when it comes to a head and they blow up at each other again.

'Lord save me from stupid stubborn Winchesters,' Bobby thought as Dean walked out of the room looking a little broody.

He turned back to Sam, "I'm not goin' to say what you did was wrong. Hell I doubt I wouldn't have done any different if I were in yer shoes."

Sam shoulders sagged a little in relief.

"Not sayin' you don't gotta be careful. Like Dean said, you've got angels on yer ass about yer…powers," Bobby pointed out. "Power like that—especially from demons—can change a man, Sam, and Maya knows that."

Sam leaned against the counter, feeling the water soak a little into his jeans and shirt and sent Bobby a helpless look, "What do I do Bobby? She looked at me like she didn't…didn't even know me."

Bobby gave him a weary sigh, "Not much ya can do. Guess ya gotta keep showin' her yer the same Sam she always knew. Unless ya feel like openin' up that can of worms right this second?"

Sam gave Bobby a pensive and uncertain look before shaking his head. "I don't think she's ready to listen to anything I have to say right now," he said as he finished the final dish, putting it in the drying rack.

"Then give her time," Bobby suggested.

Sam sent him a faint smile, "Thanks Bobby."

"Don't mention it."
Sam

Sam walked out of the kitchen after his talk with Bobby feeling the smallest measure of hope from his words regarding the little Trickster he saw as his little sister. He grimaced as his mind conjured the look on her face after she witnessed him extract the demon from Eli with his mind. Her own mind no doubt connecting the dots between the demon blood he'd told her about so long ago and his new found abilities.

The look she sent him had hurt.

Gold eyes that had looked at him with trust, mischief, and affection were replaced with uncertainty and worry, tinged with an underlying current of fear.

The silver flask in his jacket pocket singed to him, beckoned him to drink from it. To taste its dark liquids.

Sam clenched his jaws as he kept walking towards the stairs leading up to the bedrooms.

But it sung so sweetly.

In his battle of self-control Sam didn't notice Maya until he was almost bowling her over as she emerged from the basement stairs.

"Oh jeez!" Sam exclaimed as he came back to himself. "Sorry Maya I…" he trailed off as his hazel eyes met her guarded gold ones, becoming sadden.

A light feeling washed over Sam as he felt the dark song that sang seductively to him become quieter. Still ever present, but not as loud, nor as strong. The desire to pursue his vengeance against Lilith waned slightly.

He remembered Dean's reaction to his powers; Bobby's warning, and Maya's face…

His little sister should never have had to look at him like that.

Sam mentally flipped the bird at the dark song from the flask and felt his self-control strengthen.

"I'm…I'm still me sis," Sam got out as the light feeling receded when Maya turned to keep walking without saying a word to him.

She stopped in the middle of the hall at his words and turned to look back at him, again with uncertainty, but Sam also saw the desperate hope in her eyes that wanted to believe him.

Puck through the entire encounter was contemplating whether he should bite the large man or not. So far it was still a 50:50 chance in his little doggy mind.

She took a large breath and released it slowly before saying with the smallest hopeful smile Sam had probably ever seen, "We'll see." Maya and Puck left him alone in the hall.

The hurt in his chest uncurled and his own little fledgling of hope grew.

Including the decision to stop taking the demon blood. Sam wasn't sure if he could resist using his powers if it meant saving someone, especially those he cared about like his brother and little Trickster sister. But he'd do his best not to be tempted by the control and power boost the blood
gave him.

With that he climbed the stairs to grab his computer to continue his search for any signs of Lilith, his thoughts darkening.

The dark song returned a little stronger, singing brazenly in his mind, strengthening and harmonizing his hatred and desire for revenge on Lilith, creating a powerful and seductive melody.

He had to find a way to keep his siblings safe. Find a way to kill this demon bitch.

There's got to be other ways of killing her without defaulting to his *demon-blessed* powers.

Right?

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**Evening…**

**Sam and Dean**

Dean was working on Baby, making sure she was in tiptop condition with the same love and devotion he'd give to a lover. Especially one that was responsible for hauling their asses out of town before the authorities or whatever fugly they couldn't gank could sink their claws into them. Both metaphorically *and* literally.

What Dean could've done without was the second degree he was getting from Sam over what that angel dick Uriel told him.

"It just doesn't make any sense, Dean," Sam stated as he leaned against the black impala and looked down at his brother's hunched over form under the hood. "I mean, why would Uriel tell me you remembered Hell, if you didn't?" he asked earnestly trying to get Dean to confirm the angel's words."

"Maybe because he's a dick might have something to do with it," Dean grunted back as he inspected some of the connecting lines around the engine and battery.

"Maybe, but he's still an angel."

"Yeah, an angel who was ready to level an entire town. Look, I don't—" Dean cut him self off with a sigh as he straightened up and went through a quick mental checklist of what else he might need to check. "Honestly Sam I have no idea why Uriel told you what he did, okay?" he shrugged at Sam before bending over to pick up a bottle of beer he set aside.

Sam watched him down half the bottle before setting it down next to its emptied brethren in front of the car. "Right," Sam's tone completely unconvinced.

Dean looked back at him annoyed that Sam wasn't taking his word for it, "What?"

"Okay. Fine. Then look me in the eye and tell me you don't remember a thing from your time down," Sam challenged, holding his brother's gaze.

Dean glanced away briefly before looking back with annoyance, "I don't remember a thing from my time down under."
Sam looked away with a scoff; certain Dean was lying to him.

"I don't remember, Sam!" Dean told him adamantly.

Sam then brought out the big guns and looked at him with the soulful Puppy Eyes of Emotional Doom, "Look, Dean, I just want to help."

Dean waved his hand negatively at Sam, "You know everything I do. Okay? That's all there is." He went back to looking over the impala's engine, battery, and anything else he could think of that needed a quick check or tune up.

Sam thankfully took the 'discussion-is-now-over' hint and remained quiet as he watched Dean, worriedly.

All of Sam's starring was making Dean think it was possible for a stare to give someone hives. He was doing the best he could not to twitch or scratch an imaginary itch from his little brother's scrutiny.

Satisfied with their car's continued perfect condition Dean straightened up and closed the hood, "Like she just drove off the lot." Dean grinned at Sam as he picked up his half empty beer bottle, his grin widening at Sam's amused exasperation with his antics. "So where do we go from here? Haven't gotten a visit from the God Squad about another seal."

"Um, I'm not sure," Sam shrugged. "From what I could dig up it's been pretty quiet lately. No signs of demonic activity, no omens or portents I can see."

"That's good news for once," Dean took a sip from his beer.

Sam gave an agreeing nod, "Yeah. Just your typical smattering of crank UFO sightings, and one possible vengeful spirit. My notes are inside but over in Washington eye witness reports of a ghost haunting the showers of a women's health facility."

Dean had been taking another swig of beer and had choked a little on the dark amber liquid at Sam's words.

Sam raised his eyebrow at Dean and continued, "The victim had claimed that the ghost threw her down a flight of stairs." Dean quickly gathered his small contingent of empty beer bottles from the ground and started walking back towards Bobby's house.

Sam easily kept stride as he followed after him, "I can see you're very interested."

"Women. Showers." Dean looked over at Sam and said with the utmost seriousness, "We've got to save these people. Now grab Goldy and let's get moving."

Sam grinned at Dean's predictableness when concerning women. His grin widened when another thought entered his mind, "Yeah, I'll tell Maya to get ready and you can tell Bobby why we're taking her away with us...on a hunt."

Dean abruptly stopped and watched as Sam passed him with a smirk before stopping him self.

"Switch with me."

"Uh, no thanks," Sam hummed and started walking back to the house again.

"Oh, c'mon!" Dean complained. "She's not even talking to you!"
"Had a small break through!" Sam called back happily.

"Since when, bitch!?"

"Since earlier, jerk!" Sam sped up and bounded up the front stairs, grinning at the sound of Dean cursing behind him.

Let's just say when Dean told Bobby what was going on there was a complete moment of silence so profound, that you could possibly hear a pin drop. Not from across the room but from all the way down in the basement…in the fortified, iron plated and salt encrusted panic room.

Dean wasn't sure which was worse, the extremely tense silence or the thunderous yelling and cursing thrown at him when Bobby's calm façade finally broke. At least Bobby wasn't liable to swing a beer bottle at his head for getting him so riled up.

"Not like we got a choice here, Bobby," Dean said, raising his hands in surrender. "Those feathered dicks said we have to keep her with us to protect her."

Bobby's eyes narrowed as he angrily crossed his arms, "And takin' her on a hunt is protectin' her?"

Dean ran a hand through his short hair, "I know, I know. It's messed up, but apparently Heaven's decided she could be useful."

"That'd better be only Heaven talkin' boy, 'cause if that's what you actually think—" Bobby was starting to get worked up again into another anger fueled fit.

*Maya was more than just what her powers could provide, damn it!*

"It's not!" Dean interrupted curtly with a scowl. "I don't know what those guys are thinking, but it'd be safer to keep her moving if only to keep her off of Lilith's radar. The Hell-bitch is less likely to find her if she keeps moving around."

"Or you'll have demons gunnin' fer yer asses," Bobby pointed out crossly.

Dean raised an eyebrow, "And that's different from now...how?"

Bobby grumbled at Dean's valid point, but had another one him self, "If you're tryin' to protect her from Lilith then you'd all better stop lookin' fer her. Otherwise you numbskulls mind as well be hand deliverin' her!"

Dean clenched his jaw tightly and his lips pursed as he released a loud sigh from his nose, "You're right. I'll try and talk to Sam about it. Maybe having Maya in danger will knock some sense into his head about being so gun-ho about going after the bitch. At least with Goldy in tow."

Dean fidgeted under his last father figure's hard and scrutinizing glare.

"If you think for one second that you two have got Lilith's scent," Bobby pointed tersely in Dean's face. "Ya send Maya my way, or just in the general opposite direction of the bitch. I'll make sure she either gets here, or hole her up somewhere safe so I can catch up with you two and make sure ya don't do nothin' too stupid."

Dean snorted at that, "Have you *met* the girl, Bobby? I don't think she'd let ya."
"Yeah and it's takin' a lot right now not to frog march her down to the panic room and barricade her inside," Bobby grunted grumpily. "Powerless or not, I wouldn't be surprised if she found a way out on her own."

"Look, I don't like it anymore than you do, Bobby. Honest," Dean conceded with a nod. "Hell, I'd probably help ya, but who knows what the angels would do if we don't listen to them. They'd sooner smite her than be in the same room as her for God's sake!"

Bobby's face darkened as he glared into space past Dean.

Dean was pretty sure Bobby was imagining horrible ways in which he could try to kill any angel that tried to threaten Maya with so much as a small cut, let alone her life.

"I officially hate angels," Bobby grumbled grudgingly. "You boys keep her safe, Dean. Ya hear me?" Bobby released a tired and worry sigh, letting go of his fury that wasn't doing him any good.

Dean gave the older Hunter an affirmative nod, "Between me, Sam, and a size changing, demon killing dog, I'd like to think she's in good hands."

Bobby snorted at the mention of the little dog.

"Yer right. I should be grillin' the rat about this instead," Bobby huffed and patted Dean's shoulder as he walked past him.

Dean sent Bobby an affronted look, "HEY!"

Needless to say Maya was surprised when Bobby didn't put up too much of a fuss over her going off with Sam and Dean on a hunt. Not that she'd let him stop her.

It's only been a couple days since finding out Dean wasn't dead or in Hell anymore! She wasn't about to let herself be separated from him anytime soon.

Eli was content with staying with Bobby and being as far away from Maya as possible. Well, relatively content. Bobby's gruff and cantankerous demeanor tended to be an acquired taste after all.

November 5 2008, Concrete, Washington, United States

Holistic Health Center

Dean, Maya, and Puck walked out of the health center after doing a sweep of the small fitness facility by the docks with the EMF and Puck's awesome doggy senses. If there was a ghost it was long gone or more than likely the imaginative ramblings from a traumatic fall down the stairs.

Maya and Puck parked their butts on the front porch of the building, leaning against the wooden guardrails. Maya contentedly stroked Puck's head as he leaned his vest covered body against her crossed legs, releasing a happy groan.

Dean had grabbed a newspaper from inside on their way out and sat on one side of the steps as he perused the front page.

"Huh," Dean commented idly.
"What?" Maya hummed with a sigh.

"Some local schmuck won the lottery. $168 million from scratch tickets," Dean answered with a snort.

"Lucky guy," Maya shrugged unseen by Dean.

"Me and Sammy had 50 grand worth in scratch tickets once," Dean added with a groan. "Sam got cursed by a lucky rabbit's foot that gave you insane luck as long as you didn't lose it. Then it goes 180 then you're dead on the ground."

"Damn. That sounds like some nasty hoodoo," Maya snorted. "Guessin' since Sam's still here and your luck is still shit you guys found a way to break it?"

"Oh yeah, but not before that thief Bela—you remember her?—made off with all the scratch tickets," Dean grumbled petulantly. His frown deepened when he heard Maya chuckling behind him. "Not funny! It was a lot of cash!"

"Hey guys," Sam greeted as he walked up to them from the street, having finished the interview with the witness. "What were you guys talking about?"

"The cursed rabbit's foot and all the cash Bela ran off with," Dean grumbled as he folded up the newspaper. "Didn't find any EMF in the shower or anywhere house. The rat didn't get anything either this house is clean," Dean stood up, followed by Maya and Puck who stretched their legs a little.

"Yeah, I'm not surprised. I kind of got the feeling back there that crazy pushed Mrs. Armstrong down the stairs."

"It happens, right?" Maya asked as she sidled up to the other side of Dean, putting the eldest Winchester between her and Sam. "Get a lead on a hunt but find nothing going on?"

Sam was the one who answered her, "Yeah, it happens. I did say it was a possible haunting."

Maya made an agreeing noise, not talking to Sam further. Sam took the small win between them. At least she wasn't out right ignoring him. Still hurt though.

"I gotta tell you, I'm pretty disappointed," Dean declared with an exaggerated frown earn a loud pfft from Sam.

"You wanted to save naked women," Sam scoffed.

"Damn right I wanted to save some naked women," Dean agreed with a smirk earning a chuckle from Sam.

Maya chuckled, "Perv."

Dean turned his head to look at her and then realized what he just said and tried to back track, "'Cause women deserve to shower peacefully...naked without worrying about getting—" Dean frowned as Maya just laughed at him. "Oh, shut up!"

Sam chortled at both of them.

They all paused as they heard when they heard thunderous pounding of small feet rumble down the boardwalk to their right and the shouts of angry children.
"Come on, guys, get him! I got him! I got him!" shouted a small gaggle of preteen boys as they chased down a smaller, bruised boy down the boardwalk towards them. With the obvious intent of doing the smaller boy more harm.

Maya frowned angrily as a wicked gleam entered her eye. With a quick step forward, and a well-placed foot she tripped the lead boy of the little gang just as their victim past her. All the other boys that were right on his heels fell over his body.

Sam and Dean both stared at an all too smug Maya as she feigned being apologetic. She'd help them up only for her hands to slip while they were still unbalanced, forcing whoever she was helping to reunite with the ground.

And when one did find their footing Maya just always seemed to manage to get in their way and accidentally knocking them over again.

The small little boy had made it to the end of the sidewalk and to the perpendicular street and looked back at the spectacle with a happy smirk. Glad he wasn't going to get beat up today and thankful for the shorthaired woman who intervened.

Dean snorted at the comedy in front of him and looked down at the small kid who was just standing there.

"Run Forrest! Run!" Dean yelled out to him, which both made the small kid jump and start booking it having realized he should be running, and make the bullies realize their prey was still close by.

The boys finally got on their feet and quickly made a wide detour around Maya to continue their pursuit, yelling bitch back at her.

"Well that's rude," Maya sniffed. "And after I apologized and tried to be helpful."

Sam and Dean chuckled.

"Assholes," she responded with no heat what so ever. She was still entirely too pleased with herself.

"Twerp," Dean stated with a smirk as he casually wrapped an arm around her head, ignoring her protests.

Sam snorted, "Well other than some local bullying, guys, I don't think there's anything going on around here."

Dean walked forward pulling a struggling Trickster with him and looked down the boardwalk at a heated discussion between two men, one of which looked to be a local policeman. Releasing Maya, and receiving a playful punch to the arm, they all listened to the loud conversation.

"How the hell was I supposed to get a look at it?" The local resident then loudly declared, "It grabbed me from behind and threw me into a tree!"

"Our kind of something?" Maya queried as she ran a hand threw her messed up hair.

Dean nodded, "Sounds like it."

They silently began walking over to investigate.
"Yeah, okay, Gus. I understand you got shook up," the officer said calmly, further agitating the aforementioned Gus. "Anyone would be. But don't you think it—Don't you think it had to be a bear?"

"I know a damn bear track when I see one!" Gus said, frustrated. "This thing didn't leave bear tracks! It's feet were huge!"

"Now, Gus—" the officer tiredly started only for Gus to interrupt him.

Dean motioned for Maya to hang back and watch the masters of bullshit at work. She gave a good-natured eye roll but complied, watching as they walked up to the two locals.

"It was Bigfoot, Hal! The Bigfoot!"

"Gus you're not talking sense."

Gus shook his head and shouted, "There's a Bigfoot out there, damn it, and he's a son of a bitch!"

That was about the time Sam and Dean made it to the duo already pulling out their fake FBI badges and schooling their features into professional masks of…well, professionalism.

"Excuse, us," Sam said, gaining the twos attention, both him and Dean flashing their badges. "FBI."

"What?" the policeman said quietly in disbelief.

"Yes, sir. We're hear about the…that," Sam nodded at Gus who started to look all too pleased that someone was finally believing him, and the FBI at that!

"About Bigfoot?" the policeman looked incredulous at them.

"That's right," Sam looked at Gus. "Sir, can you tell me exactly where this happened?"

"Yes, I can."

Concrete Woodland Trails

The trio and a half walked along the woodland trails that cut through some forest reserve that separated a residential area from the commercial area of town. Maya enjoyed all the fall colours of the leaves hanging from the trees and the peaceful atmosphere.

Although she was still leery of a witch popping out and doing another mind whammy on her.

"What the hell is going on with this town? First there's a ghost that's not real, and now a Bigfoot sighting?" Dean questioned as they rounded a bend in the trail.

"Every Hunter worth their salt knows Bigfoot's a hoax," Sam shrugged.

"Big time," Maya nodded. "It's a large on going prank started up by the Tricksters Coyote and Raven. Anything involving the missing link kind of scenario is usually a continent's resident Trickster screwing with people."

Brothers stopped and looked at Maya as she continued a couple feet before turning around to raise
an eyebrow at them, "What?"

"Seriously?" Dean scoffed. "You guys started it?"

Maya grinned, "Best on going prank to date. The best part? People mostly keep imagining things and perpetuating the myth themselves."

"Mostly?" Sam questioned with a laugh.

Maya shrugged, "Other times it's a passing Trickster fanning the flames with some quote-unquote evidence." She actually did air quotes for that last bit.

"Think it's a Trickster doing all this?" Dean asked a little more serious.

Maya frowned and shook her head, "No. If it was they'd approached me by now and made off with me. Probably seriously hurting you two in the process."

"Uuuh, care to explain that?" Dean demanded, not knowing that little tidbit.

"As you two know, Tricksters care deeply about their kids, but they also have more of a community between all of them concerning said kids," Maya started to explain. "If one Trickster runs across a Trickster demi-god—like moi—with no Trickster parent in sight, their own parental instincts flare up. They'll try and find my Dad, and if they can't, essentially adopt me until they can."

"Let me guess," Sam started wearily. "Since we're Hunters they wouldn't look too kindly on me and Dean having you with us, huh?"

Maya gave him a sidelong glance and paused before nodding, "Oh yeah. Actually had to call Coyote off of Bobby's once when I went with him to one of the Native reserves near his house. So don't worry about any Tricksters, I've got your backs."

The boys stared at her cheerful expression. She wasn't exactly the one in danger if they ever ran across another Trickster.

Memories of dealing with her Dad and his powers left a pretty distinct impression on them.

"Okaaaaay, other than that wonderfully reassuring conversation," Dean stated sarcastically. "I'll say it again, what the hell is going on with this town? It's like someone's pumping LSD in the town's water supply." He brushed past Maya, further following the curve in the bend before stopping once more.

"Uh guys?" Dean called back as he looked pointedly at something on the ground. Maya, Sam, and Puck take the few steps to catch up with him and also stare at the ground in disbelief.

"Is that?" Maya asked, her voice trailing as Puck stepped closer to sniff it.

"So, what do you suppose made that?" Dean of course was referring to the very large, possibly two foot in length footprint.

"That, uh…" Sam looked at the startlingly large print perplexedly. "That…is a big foot."

"Are we…going to follow it, or?" Maya tilted her head as she bit her lip slightly, looking to Sam and Dean for direction.

They all looked and shrugged at each other. They didn't exactly have any other plan, and besides,
this was bordering on their level of weirdness.

Puck was the first one moving, nose to the ground as sniffed and followed the footprints. They oddly enough smelled of candy, fake fur, and stuffing.

With a heavy overlay of alcohol and severe depression.

Lang's Liquor Store

They'd followed the tracks across a narrow walkway bridge that spanned some railroad tracks leading straight to a stand alone building with a visible sign that advertised the booze being sold there. They silently share some looks before following the footprints right up to the back of the building, where some empty kegs sat along the wall and the back door busted wide open and covered with muddy paw prints.

"Okay," Dean shrugged at Maya and Sam, looking at the scene giving.

They all quietly walked in through the busted door finding torn open cheesy and marshmallow bags on the floor, and busted booze bottles by the trashed cashier counter.

"So what? Bigfoot breaks into a liquor store jonesing for some hooch?" Dean commented as he investigated some of the broken liquor bottles on the ground. "Amaretto and Irish cream," Dean looked up from his crouch at Sam. "He's a girl-drink drunk."

Maya frowned, "Drinks have genders?"

Dean's slightly amused face goes blank as he looked at Maya. "Not that you'll ever find out first hand. No alcohol for you!" he had stood up and actually pointed at her sternly, earning a scoff from her. "I mean it! I don't want to see you shit faced again!"

Sam stifled a laugh as he turned from them to look at a disheveled rack of magazines, missing the glare his brother sent his way.

"Now I just wanna try some, some mo—"

"Hey," Sam called to them, cutting Maya off. "Check this out," Sam motioned at the rack of magazines and a number of a certain type of magazines missing.

Maya and Dean walked over, Dean noticing exactly what was missing first and quickly wrapped an arm around Maya's head and covered her eyes.

"DEAN!" Maya protested, trying to pry Dean's hands from her eyes.

"He took the whole…porno…rack?" Dean asked, staging whispering porno, ignoring Maya's futile attempts and just continuously adjusting his hands whenever she got them to shift, much to her frustration.

Maya huffed, "It's not like I haven't come across my Dad's own collection of porn accidentally before or walked in—"

Dean's hand moved from her eyes to her mouth, "Don't need to hear it Gold—gah!"

He quickly let go when he felt wet tongue lick his hand covering Maya's mouth. "That's gross."
"You ta-th gross thoo!" Maya retorted with her tongue sticking out and frowning in disgust.

Sam rolled his eyes and looked at the rack to see something odd. With a perplexed frown he grabbed what looked to be—

"Is that fur?" Maya asked quizzically, getting her tongue back in her mouth.

Sam ran a thumb through the tuft of dark frown fur he pulled from the rack, "Yeah, I think so. Bit glossy though."

"Well, I'll say it again. What the hell is going on in this town?" Dean sighed eyeing the too shiny fur.

There was no way it could be Bigfoot's.

Right?

The three of them found themselves seated out front of the liquor store on the wooden bench as they contemplated the question of what was going on in this slowly but surely getting weirder by the minute town.

All three of them were hunched over, propping elbows on knees and looking out with identical look of incomprehension.

"I got nothing," Dean admitted first.

"It's got to be a joke, right?" Sam asked next. "Some big-ass mother in a gorilla suit?"

"Or it's a Bigfoot," Maya stated a little questioningly. She knew Bigfoot wasn't real, like, 100% totally fake; it was all Tricksters doing kind of... not real. But everything was starting to say otherwise.

"Yeah, and he's some kind of a alcoholo-porno addict. Kind of like a deep woods Duchovny." Dean turned to look at Maya, "Sure it's not your Dad or another Trickster?"

Maya bitch faced him, but before she could retort they all heard a bicycle bell. They turned to watch a little girl with long dark pig tails underneath a bright pink helmet ride by on her bicycle as a gust of wind blew by. The wind blew off one of the items a milk crate on the back of her bike onto the road.

They got up and looked at what had fallen out of her make shift basket.

A Busty Asian Beauties porno magazine.

"And you tried to shield my eyes," Maya laughed as she picked it up and stared after the direction the little girl went.

Dean snatched the mag from her hand and scowled, "Well, you're both a little young for Busty Asian Beauties."

"I'm 17, Dean. If anything, I'm a little late," Maya remarked, much to her brothers' discomfort. She smirked at them in amusement.

"Shut up," Dean did not want this conversation going any further. "Let's follow the kid. Maybe she'll give us a lead, or—or something."
They followed the little girl around the building at a distance and comically leaned around the edge to see her walk off with her bike and an empty yellow milk crate through the overpass from where they followed the footprints.

Maya looked down at her little dog, "Puck, can you keep a tail on her?"

Puck looked up, gave an irritated look and growly woof.

Maya rolled her eyes. "I'll be fine. Sam and Dean are with me."

Puck eyed the two Hunters, not overly convinced, giving another agitated grumble before running off to follow the little girl. Stealthily.

"Good thinking," Sam patted Maya's shoulder, making her flinch slightly. He sent her a sad look and swallowed thickly before removing his hand and continuing like it didn't happen, "She probably lives nearby. We'll just need to find Puck and he can lead us to her."

"Then let's grab Baby and go!" Dean stressed impatiently. "The sooner we can find out what the hell is going on with this place the better! I swear if I start hearing that X-Files song…"

Dean trailed off as he glared at Maya who loudly hummed the iconic song.

"I friggin' hate you so much right now."

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Elmer Household

It wasn't hard finding the little girl's house and Puck. Even if the little dog hadn't been sitting out front in front of the retaining wall, the little girl had parked her bike on the front lawn.

The Winchesters took lead and Maya hung back, giving Puck a pat on the head and telling him how awesome he was. The little suck puffed out his small chest a little and preened.

He was a good boy.

"What's this, like a Harry and The Hendersons deal?" Dean commented as they made their way up the stone pathway to the dark, double French doors.

Dean rapped his knuckles on the door and it wasn't long before the little girl answered the door with a tentative, "Hello?"

Sam smiled and greeted her a little awkwardly, "Hello! Um, could we…You know what? Are your parents home?"

The little girl shook her head and answered honestly, "Nope."

"No. Um, have you seen a really, really furry…" Dean started raising a hand to gesture vaguely a height of their would be Bigfoot.

The little girl interrupted worriedly, "Is he in trouble?!"

Maya's eyebrows went to her hairline, while Sam and Dean shared a quick look. Looks like they found something.
"No. No, no, no," Sam chuckled. "Not at all. We just—we wanted to make sure he was okay."

"Exactly," Dean agreed, giving the little girl a big grin.

"He's my teddy bear," she told them. Maya's eyes widened as she sucked in her lips to keep quiet. The little girl leaned forward a little and stage whispered, "I think he's sick."

Maya put on a friendly grin and stepped forward. "Wow. This is amazing, because you know what? These two," Maya turned to give the guys a pointed look as she motioned at them, "are teddy bear doctors."

"Really?" the girl said with relief when Sam and Dean flashed their fake health inspector badges. She then looked at Maya, "Are you a nurse?"

Maya grinned and shook her head. "Nah. More like doctor-in-training. These guys are teaching me how to be the best teddy bear doctor I can be," she answered without missing a beat or taking a moment to pause to think about what she was going to say.

"Wow," the little girl said with innocent wonder. "Do you think you can please take a look at him?"

"I don't know. Can we, Doctors?" Maya asked with a raised eyebrow and a grin at Sam and Dean, knowing the little girl was doing some major sad eyes at them. Not that they would've said no to begin with.

The smiles on Sam and Dean's faces were maybe a little too wide and friendly for adults or older children, but they did the job of keep the situation light and calm for the little girl.

"Sure. Sure, yeah."

"Lead the way…?" Maya trailed off, her voice questioning as she looked pointed at the little girl.

"Audrey," Audrey smiled, then turned to lead them into the house.

The overly friendly smiles falling off Sam and Dean's faces as they were replaced with worried looks to each other, not knowing what was waiting for them in the house.

As they got to the top of the stairs Audrey told them where this teddy bear was and his mood, "He's in my bedroom. He's pretty grumpy." They got to her bedroom door and she knocked, "Teddy? There's some nice doctors here to see you."

Audrey then proceeded to open the door.

None of them were prepared for what greeted them on the other side.

A large; dark brown teddy bear, with glassy ruby eyes, a red bow around its neck, rocking back and forth on Audrey's bed drinking from a liquor bottle, and watching the News. The feature? A catastrophe.

The bear turned to them and yelled, "Close the friggin' door!"

"No freakin' way," Maya commented as she stared at the stuffed bear. Puck growled faintly at her feet, ready to rip and tear if necessary. It wouldn't be.

Audrey closed the door and looked up at the shocked faces of the 'teddy bear doctors', "See what I mean? All I ever wanted was a teddy, which was big, real, and talked. But now he's sad all the time—not ouch sad, but ouch-in-the-head sad—says weird stuff and smells like the bus."
"Um, little girl…” Dean started but got sassed by Audrey.

"Audrey!"

Dean looked a little taken back, but corrected himself and continued, "Audrey. How exactly did your teddy become real?"

"I wished for it," she told them.

"You wished for it?" Sam asked a little incredulously.

Audrey nodded, "At the wishing well."

Dean frowned and opened the door to look at the depressed, alcoholic teddy bear again.

"Look at this!" the bear said, motioning his liquor bottle holding paw to the TV in front of him showcasing a disaster that claimed 1200 casualties. The bear chuckled despairingly, "Can you believe this crap?"

"Not really," Dean said, eyeing the bear and not the News.

"It is a terrible world," Teddy quickly turned his head to stare at Dean and the rest of the humans looking in from the door. "Why am I here?!"

Before any of the older humans—or demi-god—could answer, Audrey was the one to speak up first with uncomprehending exasperation with her now living teddy bear, "For tea parties!"

"Tea parties?" Teddy scoffed breathlessly, his voice becoming more and more strained as his newfound emotions started overwhelming him. "Is that all there is?"

Dean stiffly turned around, closing the bedroom door on the now quietly crying stuffed bear.

Sam pursed his lips as his brain tried to compute with what they all just saw and how they were possibly going to deal with it. He looked down at Audrey, "Audrey, give us a second, okay?"

When she nodded Sam, Dean, and Maya walked a few feet away to converse quietly. Puck stayed by Audrey and licked her hand, getting her attention. Audrey gasped excitedly at the little dog and kneeled down to bestow love and adoration on the small canine.

Puck, being the suck he was, soaked in the pats and strokes of the little girl happily.

Both brothers kept their backs turned to Audrey so she didn't see their unsettled looks of perplexity over what they were going to do with the giant living teddy bear. Maya wasn't overly fazed by it. She'd seen some crazy shit her Dad concocted for their tricks. A highly depressed giant; living teddy bear was actually pretty mild.

Now if it had fangs and a penchant for murder or serious maiming then they'd be getting closer.

"Are we…should we…" Sam started but trailed off as he tried to find the words. "Are we going to kill this teddy bear?" he asked Maya and Dean in a whisper.

"I'm guessing there's still stuffing inside him, so nothing to shoot that will actually…y'know," Maya shrugged, keeping her voice quiet as she looked over at a thoroughly distracted Audrey and happy Puck.

"So, do we burn it instead?" Dean whispered, as much for a loss as Maya and Sam.
Sam shook his head and shrugged his shoulders tensely, "I don't know. Maybe?"

"How do we know that's going to work?" Maya asked biting her bottom lip worriedly. How does one actually dispose of an overly emotional, sentient, teddy bear?

"Yeah, I don't want some giant, flaming, pissed-off teddy on our hands," Dean told them.

"Yeah," Sam agreed as he thought over everything. "Besides, I'm getting the feeling that bear isn't really, you know, the core problem here." His eyes pinched as he thought how odd it was that Audrey was home alone. She still seemed a little young to be left alone too long.

The corner of Maya's mouth quirked up at Dean's over exaggerated 'gee-yeah-think?' expression. Sam then turned to address Audrey.

"Audrey, where are your parents?" Sam asked concerned.

Audrey stood up from petting Puck and looked at Sam, "My Mom wished they were in Bali, so I think they're in Bali."

"Yeeeaah, safe bet," Maya commented idly, her face pinching when she briefly thought of her own Dad and where he could be.

Sam and Dean's faces were strained knowing they had to do something with the little girl to make sure she was taken care of.

Not the murder taken care of, but the looked-after-by-another-adult taken care of.

"Um, Audrey...I'm really sorry to have to break this to you, but...your bear is sick. Yeah, he's— he's got..." Sam started as he began floundering for a made up disease. Maya had turned to stand next to Audrey when he started so she could watch them try to think of something convincing up on the spot.

It promised to be entertaining.

They both looked at each other, struggling for a random possible disease name they could give the kid. Dean looked at Maya who gave him a raised eyebrow and smug entertained smile.

"I'm sure our doctor-in-training knows it," Dean deadpanned. "Trainee?"

Maya shifted her face into one of sympathetic concern and looked down at Audrey. "Lollipop disease," she told her easily.

"Yeah, that's right," Sam nodded, sending Maya a more thankful glance. "Lollipop disease."

Maya sucked her lips to keep her laughter from escaping at Dean's expression at her ease in improv.

"It's not uncommon for a bear his size," Dean continued with the charade. "But, but see it's really contagious." He sent Maya a stink eye, her smug smile grew fractionally.

"Yeah, so is there...is there someone, maybe a grown-up that you can stay with while we treat him?" Sam asked ignoring Maya and Dean's exchange of looks, because honestly guys, right now?

"Mrs. Hurley lives down the street," Audrey answered.

"Good, yeah, good./Perfect," the boys nodded glad they wouldn't have to worry about a parentless child in a house with a depressed talking teddy bear.
"We'd like you to stay there for a few days, okay?" Sam told her with a relieved smile that was quickly washed away when Audrey opened her mouth.

"But I don't know if she's home yet," Audrey added. "She only watches me after 6:00."

A quick glance at her phone showed it to be 4:30.

Maya put a hand on Audrey's shoulder, "Don't worry. You go pack and I will walk over with you. If she's not there, me and Puck here will hang out with you till she comes home. Okay?"

Audrey smiled happily up at Maya, "Okay!" She then went into her room to pack a bag, much to Teddy's sad annoyance.

Sam and Dean sent her worried looks.

"You gonna be okay Goldy?" Dean asked seriously.

Maya rolled her eyes, "I don't think that bear is up to do anything right now, and someone needs to check out that wishing well."

"You think this wishing well is legit?" Sam asked her.

Maya hesitated for a brief moment in answering Sam, but she did; "Yeah. The idea's been around for a while, and had to come from somewhere. In the old days, water was considered a source of life and often shrines or house like structures were put up over wells or springs to mark water sources and pay reverence to its importance. Wishing wells started from the belief that water held deities or was placed there as a gift from the gods given how scarce it could be at the time."

"So by tossing a coin, an offering whatever lurked at the bottom would grant a wish in exchange," Sam surmised. "So we might be dealing with a water deity?"

Maya shrugged uncertainly.


"Deities, Dean," Maya corrected. "No religion involved here. Unless you think we're dealing with some parallel of Mimir's Well. But I doubt it. That involves receiving wisdom, not a living teddy bear."

Sam had that face—the nerd face—that meant Maya had said something interesting and his nerd brain wanted to take over and start asking questions to satiate his curiosity.

Before he could Audrey exited and closed her bedroom, dragging a small carry-on suitcase behind her. Sam's questions would have to wait.

"Oh, Audrey? Where is this wishing well?" Dean asked once Audrey made her appearance.

"At Lucky Chin's," Audrey told him then looked to Maya.

Maya nodded, "Right. Let's go see Mrs. Hurley." She motioned for Audrey to take the lead then looked back at Sam and more pointedly Dean, "Probably not a benign water deity. So don't do anything stupid!"

They all left the house; Sam and Dean had watched Maya walk down the street with Audrey and Puck.
As they get into the impala Dean turned to look at Sam and said, "Why'd she look at me when she said that? I'm not going to do anything stupid!"

Sam had to turn his head to keep Dean from seeing him fight the smile trying to form on his face.

It was a testament to how well they knew each other, because Dean just knew what Sam was thinking from the way his shoulders tensed and his head faced away from him.

"Bitch," Dean grumbled as he turned the impala's engine over, the machine releasing a powerful purr.

Tall Totem Motel

Couple hours later...

Mrs. Hurley hadn't been home so Maya, Audrey, and Puck returned to Audrey's house to wait a little bit before deciding to actually call the woman first before heading over. Maya had assured Audrey that they'd be fine from contracting Lollipop disease as long as they let Teddy have the entire second floor to him self.

They had played tea party till Mrs. Hurley, a sweet elderly woman, showed up to take Audrey.

Sam had swung by to pick Maya and Puck up to head back to the motel, telling her about the wishing well and the magical coin.

And to inform her that the ghost at the women's health facility was a teenage boy that wished himself invisible to spy on naked women in the showers. Something that only worked if he was completely naked as well.

She had reluctantly laughed at that, gaining a soft smile from Sam.

They entered the motel room to the sound of retching coming from the bathroom.

"Dean?" Sam called out as he and Maya looked questioningly at the closed door of the bathroom.

They got coughing and a toilet flush in response.

"Dude, you okay?" Maya asked, eyeing the door.

"Wishes turn bad, guys," came Dean's strained voice from the other side of the closed door. "The wishes turn very bad," cue more gagging sounds, some coughing and the sound of the sink running.

"The sandwich, huh?" Sam asked as he turned to the open laptop on the far bed in the small room, walking over to it.

"What do you mean…the sandwich?" Maya's voice held a warning tone as she turned to the closed bathroom door. "Dean! You did something stupid, didn't you?"

There were some coughs and some more gagging before Dean answered hoarsely, "Had to see if it worked!" Another toilet flush sounded.

Maya gave an irritated snort before walking over to the bed Sam was at to look at what Dean had
dug up.

But both turned as the bathroom door opened to reveal a flushed Dean who leaned against the doorframe, "The coin was Babylonian. It's cursed." He pointed at the computer as he said, "I found some fragments of a legend."

Dean gagged and went back into the bathroom to spit in the sink then came back, "I'm good." Sam and Maya gave him amused smiles. Maya's was smugger in the 'that's-what-you-get-for-being-stupid-when-I-told-you-not-to' kind of way.

"The, uh…serpent is Tiamat which is the, uh, Babylonian god of primordial chaos," Dean explained as he went to the fifties style white fridge for a can of beer before walking over to them. "I guess their priests were working some serious black magic."

"They made the coin?" Sam questioned, looking for confirmation.

"Yeah, to sow the seeds of chaos. Whoever tosses a coin in the wishing well, makes a wish, turns on the well," Dean opened his can of beer and took a swig. "Then it starts granting wishes to all comers."

"But the wishes get twisted," Maya pointed out, turning the computer to better look at the web page as she wracked her brain on this god and its followers doings. She had nothing.

"You ask for a talking teddy…" Sam led.

"You get a bipolar nutjob," Dean finished.

Sam grinned, "And you get E. coli."

Dean's face deadpanned before glaring at Maya who let out a giggle and gave a frustrated groan at the teasing.

"This thing has turned more than one town upside down over the centuries. It's even wiped a few off the map. I mean, one person gets their wish, it's trouble," Dean shrugged. "But everybody…"

"It's chaos," Sam finished. "Maya, you know anything about this coin?"

"Nope," she answered reading some of said towns that possibly fell prey to the coins over the centuries.

"What? Don't know every god out there?" Dean cracked, taking another sip from his beer.

"Contrary to popular belief, no. I don't," Maya told Dean, sending a bitch-face over her shoulder. "There are literally hundreds of gods all over the world and I'm not even out of my first century."

The brothers paused their discussion.

"Your first century?" Dean blinked. "How long do demi-gods live?"

Maya shrugged, "Dunno. Depends on the demi-god, and so far I'm one of the few demi-gods that's more human than god. My Dad and I are a little iffy on my potential lifespan. Although with the apocalypse on the horizon…"

"Well," Dean coughed. "Learn something new everyday," he said, derailing any apocalypse talk for the moment. Needed to focus on one problem at a time.
"Right," Sam said taking the hint. "Anyway to stop it? The coin, I mean?"

"One way. We got to find the first wisher," Dean took another drink. "Whoever dropped the coin in and made the first wish, they're the only ones who can pull it back out and reverse the wishes."

Dean sent them a tired look, "So for now, we've got a couple of nutso dreams come true."

"But word gets out about the well things are going to get really crazy, huh?" Maya concluded with dread.

"Yep," Dean grunted.

"Balls," Maya cursed.

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**November 6 2008, Concrete, Washington, Untied States**

**Tall Totem Motel**

**Morning**

Sam had awoken early-ish that morning—finally beating Dean in that department since his return—and hit the books, trying to figure out a way to find the first wisher and look for possible signs of Lilith. His thirst for what sloshed in the silver flask in his inner jacket ever present in its dark and lewd song that flamed his desire for revenge.

The temptation for just one small sip had started to reach its zenith when he heard Maya release a moan in her sleep from the bed her and Dean shared. She still wasn't keen on being too close to him.

Sam turned his head and gave a small smile at the adorable scene on the other bed. His brother laid flat on his back, snoring away with an arm wrapped around Maya and with Maya herself half on his chest with her mouth open as she breathed a little heavily and cuddled Dean like a giant teddy bear. Complete with drool on his brother's chest.

Sam was tempted to wake them to see Dean's reaction to the little pool of drool Maya was leaving on him, but he resisted. He also forgot about the silver flask in his jacket.

The thirst for its liquids no longer leaving his mouth parched, and his slowly darkening thoughts that centered on what he'd do to Lilith when he caught up with her ebbed away.

Sam frowned and rubbed his head as though a dark shroud had been slightly lifted. With another shake of his head and a clearer mind Sam returned to the arduous task of trying to track down the first wisher.

Not long later Sam turned back around in his chair as Dean shifted and groaned fearfully in his sleep. Sam watched in concern as Dean's face pinched in pain and fear, his head tilting back and forth like he was trying to escape whatever hunted his dreams.

Sam opened his mouth to wake Dean from his nightmare when he saw Maya move the arm she had thrown over Dean's stomach and brought it up to give him a haphazard hug in her sleep. Her mouth closed and she rubbed the side of her face on his chest—moving her head when she felt the cold
puddle of drool—and gave a sleepy hum.

Sam watched as the arm that held Maya to Dean reflexively tightened, like Dean had unconsciously held on to her like a lifeline through his nightmare. Maya gave a sleepy huff, but otherwise didn't move or wake.

Then all of a sudden the panicked and frightened noises his brother was making slowly stopped. The tension that had been building in Dean through his nightmare was released with a final and long sigh. His grip on Maya relaxed as he returned to a more restful sleep.

Sam was floored. He wasn't sure if the nightmare had abruptly ended as quickly as it began, or if Maya had something to do with it. She had responded in a comforting manner towards Dean's distress, but was there something else at play?

Sam wracked his brains and remembered something Missouri had said off-hand when she saw Maya for the first time.

'Oh my. What a beautiful energy you emit.'

Missouri had told them not to worry about it, and they hadn't. Could this be what she had been referring to? Something that could somehow soothe nightmares?

Regardless, Sam was grateful for their little sister and her Trickster oddities.

The nightmare had also led to another sticky question and what Uriel had told him.

Had Dean just been lying to them about not remembering his time in Hell?

Sam clenched his jaw and turned away, wishing his brother would confide in him, so he could help him.

Later on, Maya had released a more awake groan. Didn't mean she extricated herself from Dean's grip or even try to sit up, just closed her mouth and frowned. Eyes still closed.

"Still tired twerp?" Sam smirked when Maya flipped him the bird and released a deep sigh, her head rising and falling with Dean's calm breathing. They didn't talk and Maya laid there for a good 10 minutes listening to her big brother's steady heartbeat and his calm breathing before finally getting up at Puck's insistent whining and pawing.

Dean gave his own groan of sleepy protest when Maya pushed his arm off of her and removed herself from his side.

Maya stretched and cracked stiff joints. Puck whined some more.

"Yeah, yeah," she yawned at her little dog. "Let me get some proper clothes on first, m'kay?"

Maya came out of the bathroom, teeth brushed and clothes changed into some jeans and a dark tank top.

"C'mon," Maya said quietly to a patient Puck, patting the side of her thigh. Puck jumped off the bed and trotted happily to her side.

Grabbing her black jacket she opened the door to leave the motel room but stopped halfway through the door to turn and look at Sam hunched over at his computer, books, and notes.

"Sam," Maya called, gaining his attention. She looked away, shifting on her feet awkwardly. "I'm
going to grab some breakfast in the dining room. Want me to get you a coffee, or...something?" she offered hesitantly.

Maya's offer had taken Sam by surprise, but he nodded with a happy smile. "Yeah, um, coffee would be great. Thanks Maya," he said gratefully.

Maya nodded at him with a tight smile, rubbing the back of her neck in a very Dean-like way before finally leaving the room, shutting the door behind her.

Sam's smile didn't fall as he went back to work. He was glad Maya had talked to him on her own accord, and not because he asked her a question directly or was dragged into a conversation with him.

Dean stirred in his sleep, coming to awareness slowly as he woke up. Sitting up with a groan his stretched his joints, feeling and hearing satisfying pops. He frowned at the feeling of a wet spot on his chest.

"Why the hell is there a wet spot on my chest?" Dean asked with a grimace as he pulled his shirt off and went to grab a new one.

Sam chuckled as he watched dean pull a new shirt from his bag, "Maya ended up sleeping with her head on your chest and kind of, uh, drooled on you a little bit."

"Gross," Dean grimaced, pulling the new shirt over his head. "So, where is Goldy anyway?"

"Went to walk Puck and grab some breakfast," Sam's face pinched as he regarded his well-rested brother curiously. "Sleep well?"

"Yeah," Dean bent over and looked at the whiskey bottle he had on the floor on his side of the bed. The need to take a swig to get past the echoes of his nightly Hellish memories was no longer there. Picking it up he put it on the bedside table beside him and smirked at Sam, "Tan, rested, and ready."

"Dean, c'mon man. I saw you having a pretty bad nightmare earlier," Sam sighed, psyching himself up for the confrontation his brother will no doubt try to derail. "You don't think I can't see it?"

"See what?" Dean didn't remember dreaming of Hell that night, but he sure as hell didn't want his brother prodding. It already sucked that he would sometimes catch Maya looking at him with sympathy every now and then when Castiel let it slip he remembered. Hence the annoyance in his voice.

"The nightmares, the drinking. I'm with you 24/7. I know something's going on," Sam told him.

"Sam, please," Dean's tone of voice letting Sam know he wasn't going to talk about it.

Not that Sam being the little brother he was ever listened of course, "Uriel wasn't lying, but you are." Sam watched as Dean walked over to stand in front of him, "You remember Hell, don't you? Last night being the one night you didn't have a nightmare about it since you got back."

"Yeah, well, what do you want from me, huh?" Dean asked, his good mood of not reliving his Hell memories disappearing quickly as he sat down at the end of the bed.

Maya opened the motel door just as Sam sighed, "The truth, Dean. I mean, I'm your brother. I just wish you'd talk to me."
The guys turned to look at Maya and Maya starred back at them with a very deer-caught-in-headlights look on her face, coffee in one hand and a paper plate of muffins in the other.

There was an awkward silence.

"Well then," Maya hummed. "I'm just gonna back out of this tense conversation…"

Dean snorted at her, "Get in here twerp. We're done with couples therapy, and Sam should be…" He looked at Sam with humor, "Careful for what he wishes for."

"Cute," Sam said, rolling his eyes. Maya walked in and put the crappy cup of motel coffee beside Sam on the desk. "Thanks."

"What? None for me?" Dean snipped teasingly, getting the second eye roll in so many seconds from Maya.

"You were sleeping," she shrugged. Good enough excuse as any.

"I see how it is," Dean sniffed as he twisted around to grab the newspaper. "Now that couple's therapy crap is stowed, let's get back to work, okay? Figure out anyway to find the first wisher Sam? Please?"

Sam sighed tiredly, picking up his notes to look them over, "We got a teddy bear, uh, lottery guy, invisible pervert guy…"

Maya snorted as she ate a muffin, offering the plate of muffins to Dean who starred down at the newspaper intently. Dean grabbed a random muffin a little blindly.

"They all must have wished sometime within the last two weeks. But who wished first, and how're we supposed to know who else wished for what when?" Sam sighed.

"Well it helps when they announce it in the paper," Dean showed the paper to Maya before walking over and putting on the desk in front of Sam, pointing at a very…unlikely couple. "Goes back a month."

Maya walked over to better read the engagement announcement, but she didn't need to as Sam read it out loud.

"Wesley Mondale and Ms. Hope Lynn Casey have announced their surprise engagement," Sam said the pieces falling in place.

"Ah, true love," Dean smirked.

"Best lead we got," Sam smiled at Dean and Maya.

Outside the Mondale residence…

The impala idled up the cracked and weed-ridden driveway of a small house, its engine rumbling to a stop as Dean put her into park. Sam and Dean climb out, shutting the doors behind them when Maya's phone buzzes in her jacket pocket. She paused, half in half out of the impala as she hastily fished the phone from her pocket and read the caller ID.

The Hunters' Brain.
It was Bobby. She was both happy and…sad that it was. Part of her had hoped it was her Dad calling.

"It's Bobby," Maya told Sam and Dean as they waited for her. "You guys go ahead, I'll wait here."

They shrugged and walked up the dilapidated concrete walkway to the front door.

Maya quickly flipped the phone open, "Hey Bobby, what's up? Shoot at any more randy teenagers?"

She heard the audible put upon sigh come through the line, making her grin.

"Wipe that grin off yer face, idjit," Bobby grumbled.

Maya smiled and huffed, "How'd you know I was grinning."

"I can hear it," that drew a short laugh from Maya. "How's the case goin'?"

"Good. It was a Babylonian wishing coin made by the priests of Tiamat. We're at the first wisher's house now and we're going to make him take the coin out of the fountain at the local Chinese joint and reverse all the crazy wishes being granted," Maya informed him.

Bobby paused, then spoke with a smattering of disbelief, "You idjits got yerselves an honest to God wishing well? Thought it was a vengeful spirit?"

"Invisible pervert," Maya told him.

"It was a teenage boy wasn't it?" Bobby grumbled.

Maya shrugged although Bobby couldn't see it, "Yeah, Sam handled him."

"Good," Bobby paused again before letting out a long sigh. "Listen there's a reason I'm callin' ya. Yer Dad came by yesterday—"

"Hold up," Maya said abruptly. "Dad knows where you live? If she wanted to stay with her brothers a bit longer she'd might have to rethink going back to Bobby's.

"Anyways," Bobby said pointedly, not answering the question. "I tore into him pretty good. Some light accidental stabbin' was involved."

Maya bit her lip but an amused snort still escaped her.

"He'd gotten yer texts and prayers My, but it wasn't his fault for not gettin' ya or callin' back," Bobby told her gently. "Him not comin' back for ya had nothin' to do with somethin' ya did."

Maya could feel her throat close a little with emotion as relief washed through her.

"Bobby, what's going on?" she asked a little choked.

"Yer Dad's got him self in a bit of a pickle," her second father sighed heavily. "Must've pissed some of the other pagans off a little too much and they are tryin' to hunt him down."

"…so he's…leading them on a merry chase so they don't find out about me," Maya concluded. "Pagan gods can be really…vicious when they want to be. Nothing's off limits for them."

"Pretty much," Bobby agreed. "Had to destroy his phone in case some of the smarter ones got…"
well, smart. He's goin' to keep radio silence till the whole thing blows over."

Sadness swept through Maya at that. Pagans rarely forgave, and they never forget. Add in some immortality and well…

"That's going to be a very long time," she said sadly.

"It'll be okay, My. Ya got the me and the boys. We're here fer ya," Bobby consoled softly.

"Yeah," Maya laughed a little breathless. "It's just a hell of a time to disappear… for whatever reason."

Bobby sighed, "I know My. I know."

The door to the house opened and two stern looking Winchesters and a very geeky and maybe slightly greasy man walked out.

"I gotta go Bobby."

"Yeah, okay. Be careful out there idjit," Bobby told her fondly.

Maya smiled, "I will. Bye." She shut her phone closed and regarded the trio as they approached the impala. "So this is lover boy?"

Dean snorted, "Yep. You wouldn't believe how uncomfortable the PDA was. Thought the girl was trying to eat his face off."

"Ick," Maya grimaced then realized something. "I'm going to have to sit beside him in the back, aren't I?"

Sam the tall jerk smirked, "Sorry Maya."

"No you're not asshole," she bitch faced as she slid back into the car, keeping Puck between her and the wishing man.

Road to town…

"I don't get it! So my wish came true, does it have to be a bad thing?" Wes complained from the back seat, his head tilted back.

"Because the wishes go south, Wes. Your town is going insane," Sam explained, annoyed.

"C'mon. Are you going to sit there and tell that your relationship with Hope is functional, that it's what you wished for?" Dean pointedly asked.

Wes leaned on the front bench seat, "I wished she'd love me more than anything."

"And, uh, how's that going? That seem healthy to you?" Sam demanded, turning to look at him.

Maya clenched her jaw to keep quiet and to keep from punching the man beside her. Or asking Puck to bite him. After what Dean had said about the level of PDA between Hope and Wes, well it wasn't too far of a leap to assume they've had sex.
But with Hope under the thralls of Wes' wish, Maya highly doubted it was consensual. The Trickster inside of her boiled and wanted nothing more than to deliver some just desserts for the woman against Wes.

"Well it's a hell of a lot better than when she didn't know I was alive," Wes answered.

"You're not supposed to get what you want, man, not like this," Dean grimaced as he steered the impala with one hand. Wes flopped back in his seat rolling his eyes as Dean continued, "Nobody is. That's what the coin does. It takes your heart's desires and twists it back on you. You hear the whole 'be careful what you wish for'?

All of a sudden there was a crash and the impala went up and down like it ran over something big, jostling everyone in the car.

Sam, Dean, and Maya looked around in confusion.

"Did we just hit something?" Maya asked, perplexed as she looked through the rear window at the road, seeing nothing.

"I didn't see anything," Dean told her, still looking around a little confused.

"Careful what you wish for," Wes said in a fake deep voice, mockingly. "You know who says that?" his voice returning to its normal pitch. "Good-looking jerks like you guys," he pointed at the Winchesters. "The ones who got it so easy because you happen to be handsome."

Maya grimaced deeply, now she really wanted to hurt him. How dare he say that to her brothers!

"Easy?" the boys say at the same time, and looked at each other with matching looks of disbelief.

"Yeah. Women—women look at you, right? They notice you?" the annoying nerd-man said.

"Believe us, we do not have it easy," Sam told him.

"We are miserable," Dean added. "We never get what we want. In fact, we have to fight tooth and nail just to keep whatever is we got."

"But you know what? Maybe that's the whole point, Wes," Sam said pointedly.

Dean nodded, agreeing with Sam, "Yeah, people are people 'cause they're miserable bastards, 'cause they never get what they really want."

Wes rolled his eyes, the look on his face not believing either Sam or Dean's preaching.

Maya could kind of feel that this was her brothers venting years of frustration of being denied things that most people take for granted. Or in this case, a man-baby being whiney and assuming the brothers had it easy because they were good looking.

"Right, yeah, you get what you want, you get crazy," Sam looked out the window with a frown.

Dean gave a couple of examples, "Take a look at Michael Jackson, hmm? Or Hasselhoff." Dean and Sam shared an agreeing look.

Maya wanted this ride to be over, for this hunt to be over so she could punch the asshole beside her to satisfy her need for justice.

"You know what? Hope loves me now—completely," Wes countered unconcerned. "And it's
awesome.

"It's awesome that whenever you kiss her, hold her close, or have sex with her you're practically assaulting and raping her?" Maya asked calmly, finally speaking up.

Wes whipped his head to look at her wide-eyed, while Sam and Dean's shoulders tensed. Sam turned to give her a perturbed and questioning look.

"What?!" Wes exclaimed. "I-I never—"

"I mean, you made that wish, Wes," Maya looked at him like she was seeing straight through him to his very soul, not that she could anymore. "Wished for her to love you completely. You had to use magic to force feelings onto Hope."

Wes shook his head, "N-no. No that's not…it's not—"

"Then explain to me how it isn't like taking advantage of someone whose drunk, or high? They're not in their right minds, so they can't consent…” Maya shrugged, her gold eyes darkening in her barely suppressed righteous anger. "Hope's under the influence of the magic from the coin. From your wish. Wouldn't notice or love you otherwise," Maya leaned a little into Wes’ space with a hard stare and smile that had his heartbeat rising and sweat to trickle down his neck.

"Maya," Sam said worriedly and a little warningly, not liking the look in her eyes. This wasn't her normal annoyed-angry look. No this look reminded him of the Trickster, her Dad, Loki.

A being that sought out just desserts against dicks.

Maya breathed slowly and a little heavily through her nose, "You know I'm right Wes. Otherwise you wouldn't be looking so guilty."

Wes tore his eyes from her and cast them down in his lap, the perfect picture of guilt and remorse. The only thing keeping the part of her that demanded justice at bay…well until she could land one good hit on him at least.

"Uh, Goldy, you o—" Dean started worriedly but was cut off as he stopped the car at a stop sign to watch the small little boy that was being chased around yesterday shake and then lift a large black SUV. With his tormentors screaming on the inside as the vehicle turned on its side.

"KNEEL BEFORE TODD! KNEEL BEFORE TODD!" the little kid shouted as he started shaking the upturned vehicle.

Maya tore her stare from Wes and peered around Dean's head in front of her to witness the spectacle, "You've got to be shitting me."

"Right," Dean opened the door and climbed out. "I'll handle Todd. You guys get Wes to Lucky Chen's. Go!" He quickly closed the door.

"I'm going too," Maya announced as she popped open her door, letting Puck jump out first. Before either of the guys could protest she cut them off, "I distracted the bullies in the car the other day. He might be more willing to talk to me than a random stranger that yelled at him 'Run, Forrest! Run!'"

Dean's face became angry and tried to grab her arm but she danced out of his reach and walked purposefully over towards Todd, Puck at her heel. She could feel Dean's glare at the back of her head.
Making a frustrated sound, he motioned angrily for Sam to just get going already!

Dean heard a faint, *'She's terrifying' from Wes that was over powered by Maya calling out to Todd, "Hey Todd!"

"Damn it, Maya!" he cursed under his breath as he followed her.

Todd turned around to glare at the person who had called his name. His scowl softening a little at seeing Maya, his head tilted in curiosity at the shorthaired girl.

"You're that lady from yesterday," Todd stated as he walked closer to her.

Maya smiled kindly, hearing Dean come up beside her, "Yeah, I am. Never was a big fan of bullies. But I couldn't exactly wail on them for being mean little jerks."

Todd's scowl returned with his anger, "Why not? They bully me everyday! *Everyday!* You don't know what it's like!"

After seeing him overturn a car it took every ounce of control she had not to step back, to show him she was afraid or wary of him. Puck took his cues from Maya, not that he wanted to attack the small boy if he made a threatening move to his Mistress. Kid was just a *pup*.

Dean smiled and crouched down to be at the kid's height, "Well, I don't, but my sis here had a bullying problem once."

Maya nodded as she crouched down too, "Yeah. I pranked the heck out of them instead of putting their faces into the concrete. Didn't get them to stop though."

"Well, maybe you should've," Todd glared.

"But then I could've really hurt them. I mean, I know how to fight and most of them didn't," Maya shrugged. "I'd be worse than they were."

"Or you're just weak," Todd looked down sadly. "Like I was. I couldn't stop them before, then Audrey Elmer told me the wishing well worked."

Maya grimaced at the insult a little hurt, "But you've got super strength now Todd. You're bigger —metaphorically—and stronger than they are.

"Yeah," Dean nodded. "They're not superhuman like you. See with great power comes great—" Dean didn't get to finish his surprising Marvel quote when Todd upper cut him and sent him flying into some garbage bags and trashcans.

Maya stood up hurriedly looking back at Dean, "Dean!"

Dean shifted and groaned from the garbage pile.

Maya turned to look back at Todd in anger, "You're just like those little *assholes* in that car."

Todd stopped and glared at her, "What did you say?"

"You heard me," Maya told him defiantly. "They were bigger, stronger, and there was more of them. So they picked on you because they could. Now it's reversed and *you're* the bully. Terrorizing a bunch of little snots because you *can*."

"THEY BULLIED ME!" Todd yelled at Maya, even though part of him recognized the words she
was saying. Hearing the truth in them, but he was just so angry and it was so much easier to just stay angry.

"So you're the bully now, huh?"

Todd stopped and frowned in pain as he gripped his head. That's not what he had wanted. He just wanted them to leave him alone, to stop picking on him.

Dean limped up to beside Maya grabbing his sore side. There was some hard stuff in those garbage bags.

Maya softened her face, seeing Todd in pain, "Hey. You can just walk away Todd. They know what you can do to them now. They won't trouble you anymore. Just…walk away."

She closed the few steps—before Dean could think to grab her—to put a comforting hand on Todd's shoulder, but the anger and the power the coin had given him was too much for his young mind to fight. He had been at the precipice but the memories of his bullies pushed him a different way.

The next thing Maya knew, her arm was grabbed and she was flipped over Todd's shoulder. Puck growled out a bark and ran to Maya's side, snarling at Todd in warning.

"Hey kid!" Dean growled. "I didn't want to have to do this," he walked up to Todd, pulled back a fist and punched him in the face.

Todd's head moved to the side and watched as Dean clutched his hand in pain, falling to his knees and feeling like he punched a brick wall.

Then Todd grabbed Dean's throat and began slowly squeezing.

Maya twisted her head around on the concrete to see what was happening and saw what Todd was doing to Dean. With a groan Maya turned over and got to her hands and knees, "Todd, stop!"

Puck stood between her and Todd as a barrier growling at the inhumanely strong boy.

"Puck, grab his jacket or something! Distract him," Maya commanded. "But don't hurt him!"

Puck snorted an affirmative and leapt into action, grabbing the end of Todd's jacket and began tugging to get his attention off of Dean.

Todd loosened his grip enough for Dean to breathe but not enough to let go as he tried to get the small dog to release his jacket, but then all of a sudden he felt his power wane.

Todd let go and Puck released him, almost sensing the change, but more importantly picking up on the small boy's guilt and fear at what he almost did and of the now stronger adults that flanked him.

Todd's lower lip quivered as he looked between Dean and Maya as they got to their feet.

Dean coughed and looked at the kid as Maya put a gentle hand on Todd's shoulder with a soft smile. No anger marring her face. Dean met her eyes and they both knew that Todd only went nuts because of the power he wished for.

A power he wanted to defend himself from his bullies.

"Okay," Dean said hoarsely, his throat sore from being almost choked to death by an 8 year old. "Follow my lead and you won't have a problem," Dean put a gentle hand on Todd's back and
motioned him towards the upturned car. "Come on."

Dean and Maya were fantastic actors. They backed up against a tan delivery van on the other side of the upturned car in fake fright.

Just as the trapped kids that Todd had been chasing pulled themselves out of the wrecked SUV's shattered sunroof.

"Okay, man, no more!" Dean said to Todd with his arms out.

Maya looked over at them, fear evident in her eyes, "I wouldn't mess around with this kid anymore if I were you guys."

Puck was the one who sold the whole thing though. Whining and huddling behind Maya's legs with his tail tucked between his legs.

Maya then pushed at Dean's shoulder hurriedly, "Go, go, go, go!"

They made their retreat around the tanned van, smirking once their faces were out of sight.

Maya's grin grew when she heard the frightened, "Stay back!" from one of the little snots. She turned around to see Todd grin happily as he went on his merry way. Maya sent him a discreet thumbs up when he looked their way.

They were walking up the sidewalk towards Lucky Chen's when they spotted Wes walking towards them looking forlornly.

When Wes spotted them he told them that he gave Sam the coin to dispose of. Not wanting the temptation. Dean told him they would've taken it off him anyways, by force if necessary.

Maya was a little tense during the whole exchange, her face holding a small smile that did not reach her dark gold eyes. Before Wes was to be on his way, Maya's smile widened a little more as she spoke sweetly, "Oh and Wes? One more thing…"

She sucker punched him in the gut, "A little justice for what you did to Hope."

Wes wheezed from the blow but nodded his understanding.

Justice served, Maya's eyes lightened and she walked confidently away from a surprised Dean.

Shaking his head Dean jogged to catch up with her, "What was that?"

Maya sighed through her nose, "Exactly what I said. Justice for Hope. What Wes did to her triggered my Trickster side, okay? He stole her choice, Dean. Took advantage of her when she couldn't say no."

Dean frowned, not liking it, but he could understand her reasoning. "Is this something we're going to have to worry about? You going Trickster when we're not looking?" there was an edge in his voice as the same worry he had about Sam and the demon blood was reflected on Maya with her inner Trickster.

Maya rolled her eyes. "I'm a Trickster demi-god, Dean. It's part of my nature to seek justice for those who've been wronged. Besides," Maya shrugged, "Helping you guys with the supernatural monsters satisfies that side of me just fine."

Maya could feel Dean's worried eyes on her, knowing that he was lumping her with Sam and his
demon-begotten powers. It wasn't the same though.

Her powers didn't influence her mind, or her emotions.

But the way Sam had pulled that demon from Eli...something had to have changed in him and not exactly for the better. Maya hasn't seen how yet, and so far Sam seemed to be like he had always been.

So maybe he could use these powers without letting the demon blood influence him. The hope was small, but it was there. But a larger part of herself knew there had to be something off. But Maya just hasn't seen it yet.

Anything demonic in origin always came with a price.

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November 7 2008, Concrete, Washington, United States

The Docks

Dean had woken that morning with Maya curled around him and his own arms holding her to his side. He hadn't dreamed of Hell again that night. Just like the previous two nights either. He felt well rested and the need to drink some booze was no longer prevalent. It was odd, but he wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth quite yet.

Later after breakfast they all head out, with their stuff packed into the impala. Sam suggested melting down the coin and tossing it into the Skagit River. Less likely for anyone to stumble across it in case it still contained some bit of magic.

Maya and Dean chilled out on the docks of the languid river, Dean looking over the newspaper of how a certain lottery winner had a fake ticket. They smiled and gave a little wave to Audrey as she walked down the docks with her very sunburned parents and her normal sized teddy bear that had a red bandage on the back of his head where stuffing leaked out of a hole.

Maya thinned her lips a little and was glad she got Audrey out of the house when she did. If the bear had failed to kill himself he might've turned the gun on Audrey in a fit of bipolar rage. Thank God for small mercies.

She sent a side-glance at Dean, wondering what was going through his head. Since he first confronted her about her Trickster side craving justice when the opportunity presented itself, he hasn't brought it up again.

Maya decided that Dean must've believed her when she said helping them satisfied her Trickster side, not that it was constantly at the forefront of her mind. Like she had told Dean, Wes and his wish had triggered it.

Sam walked up to them, "Well, uh, the coin's melted down and tossed into the river." Maya and Dean stood up, "It shouldn't cause any more problems."

Dean folded the newspaper, "Audrey's parents are back from Bali. Looks like all the wishes are done. And so are we."

Maya snorted, "Scared more crazy is waiting around the corner?"
Dean rolled his eyes, "Please, with our lives there's always more crazy waiting for us."

They walked down the dock, heading towards the impala.

Sam let out a sharp exhale and Dean stopped them.

"Hang on a second," Dean said.

Sam looked at Dean curiously, "What?"

Dean adverted his eyes as he briefly contemplated whether he was going to let the cat out of the bag. He pushed whatever was making him hesitate down and looked Sam in the eyes, "You were right."

"About what?" Sam pinched his eyebrows in confusion. Maya looked between them curiously.

"I shouldn't have lied to you," Dean admitted. "I do remember everything that happened to me in the pit. Everything."

Sam took a moment to process, and Maya kind of just shifted on her feet looking between the two. She kind of felt like she was intruding on a moment between the two brothers, but still wanted to be there for Dean…for the both of them.

"So tell us about it," Sam offered. Maya nodded at Sam, letting Dean know she agreed with him. If she could help, even just by listening she would.

"No," Dean told them resolutely. Sam opened his mouth, but Dean cut him off, "I won't lie anymore, but I'm not gonna talk about it."

"Dean..." Maya put a comforting hand on his arm, but Dean shook his head and shrugged it off.

"You can't just shoulder this thing alone. You got to let us help," Sam motioned between him and Maya who looked up at Dean sadly.

"How, guys?" Dean shrugged. "Do you think a little heart-to-heart, some sharing and caring is gonna change anything? Hmm? Somehow...heal me?"

"No," Maya finally said. Dean looked at her, "But it'll make it easier."

Dean scoffed at that, "I'm not talking about a bad day here, guys."

"We know that," Sam told him, eyes flicking to Maya's hurt face.

"The things that I saw..." Dean swallowed thickly, "...there aren't words. There's no forgetting. There's no making it better, making it easier to bare." Dean tapped the side of his head, "Because it is right here...forever." He paused, "Neither of you would understand, and I could never make you understand. So I am sorry."

Dean looked away, not meeting the sad gazes of two of the most important people left in his life. The combined power of the gold and hazel hurt puppy dog eyes of doom would not sway him. Not this time.

Dean walked away.

Puck whined at Maya as her shoulders sagged in sadness, rubbing his body against her leg in comfort. Sam wrapped her in a one armed hug, not saying anything, but he didn't need to.
Maya leaned into him and accepted his comfort. The very Sam-like comfort he gave her. So maybe he wasn't so different.

Maybe he wasn't the vengeful Hunter that he had become during Mystery Spot, so long ago.

Castiel

Castiel—on orders—followed the Winchesters and their half-breed for a few days since Gloversville. Just to make sure the half-breed didn't do anything untoward the Righteous Man.

During his time he discovered something interesting.

Something inside the half-breed affected the demon taint that stained and slowly spread through the younger Winchester's soul, but not in the way he expected.

Being in its presence the demon taint receded, not completely but enough that the influence it had on Sam Winchester's mind was lessened. Lessened enough for him to have a chance to make a choice without its siren song.

More often than not Sam Winchester had chosen not to listen to it. Perhaps this was what Heaven had meant when they said they might have use of the half-breed. To keep Sam from completely falling down the dark path he stumbled on.

Then came that first night in a motel room on the way to a case where the half-breed shared the bed of Dean Winchester. Sam Winchester not waking to see his brother's nightmares recede.

As Hell's memories began to surface in Dean's unconscious mind the same inner power of the half-breed that clung to the Righteous Man brushed against his mind and his tortured soul. It gently pushed the memories back and gave Dean the unconscious choice to either weather the memories or to sleep dreamlessly.

Every time so far he had unconsciously chosen the dreamless sleep, getting the rest he was deprived since Castiel pulled the man from perdition.

They had just left the motel to visit the man who made the first wish when he received new orders.

Castiel's opinion changed very little at the new discovery concerning the Trickster half-breed. It was still an abomination of his Father's creation, but at least it was useful.

Perhaps enough to help stop the Apocalypse.

Castiel however was doubtful.

Spreading his wings he left the Winchesters and their half-breed to complete his new assignment.
AN: Here it is! Another chapter! Got a lot done before and after bachelorette weekend and wedding, but you know needed to find a good spot to stop. Was hoping for Uriel to meet Puck, but I guess I'll have to wait a bit more.

November-ish, 2008, Random Town, Random State, United States

Sam was over by a pool table playing a game with some other patron of the dive bar, swaying and stumbling a little on his feet, his words slightly slurred. And losing all the money he was betting.

Or, so it seemed.

"See how Que Ball over there is smirking?" Dean said lowly as he leaned his head closer to Maya who sat with him at a small table with a clear view of the pool table. "He thinks Sam is piss ass drunk and is making some easy money, so Sam's going to let him win this last time. Before begging for one more game."

Maya sipped her pop, her keen eyes watching the game intently. "What if he doesn't want to play?" she asked, although the swagger the *winner* had was saying something different.

Dean snorted, "No way. See, right now he's feeling pretty good about his chances thinking he's seen all of Sam's drunken skill at pool." He took a small sip from his cheap beer, "Sure he may offer Sam one last out, but he's not gonna say *no* when Sam starts insisting. Especially when I walk up trying to call it off and reminding him how much he already won off him. And how much more he could possibly squeeze his drunk ass for."

"And here I thought you were winging the con man psychology," Maya nodded impressed, but was toned down by her smug teasing smirk.

"Just reading people Goldy," Dean rolled his eyes.

Sam as predicted lost and then begged, a little slurred, the man for one more chance, "Brian, come on, man, just one more. Just-just give me a chance to win it back."

"It's your cash," Brian warned unconvincingly, as Dean nudged Maya and mouthed 'Watch.'

"Excuse me," Dean interrupted. "My brother's a little too sauced to be making bets."

Brian shrugged and shot a glance at Sam, "Hey, he insisted."  

"Yeah, but you already taken, what two bills off him?" Dean pointed out as Sam played up being a little less than coherent. "I'm just saying."

"Hey! Shut up, Dean," Sam leaned over putting a drunken hand on his shoulder. "I'm fine."

"No, you're not fine! You're drunk!" Dean argued.
Brian began setting up again.

"Let's make it $500," Sam told Brian stubbornly.

"$500?!" Dean told him in fake disbelief.

Brian smirked thinking when he stole this sap's money he'd be in so much shit with his brother, better than he himself. "Sure."

Sam took out the money and slammed it on the railing of the table.

Brian took the triangle, twirling it in his fingers, "$500. Your break." As he put it on a rack on the side of the table Sam and Dean sent meaningful looks to each other.

Sam leaned over the table and broke the balls apart like a professional. The happy expression on Brian's face fell.

Maya hid her smile behind her drink at Brian's oh-shit face, finding it deeply amusing. Served the jerk right for trying to take advantage of someone whose supposed to be inebriated.

Then Puck, who sat under the table in his special vest and was leaning against her leg, vibrated with a growl. Maya put her drink down and looked under to see what was up. Puck snarled even more as he got to his feet and looked in a certain direction.

Maya frowned and followed her companion's gaze, all Maya saw was Sam walk up to some dark haired brunette at the bar followed by Dean. Maya looked back at the pool table to see Brian pocket the money Sam had put down and walked away a little shiftily. Obviously wondering if Sam and Dean would come back to take that money back.

Her and Puck left the table to join up with Sam and Dean in time to hear Dean sarcastically say, "Ooh, great. Demon whisperers—that's reliable."

"I feel like I missed a whole chunk of context here," Maya said with a raised eyebrow, drawing the attention of Sam, Dean, and mystery girl.

"Oh, uh…" Sam stumbled looking between Maya and Ruby, rubbing the back of his head. "Maya you remember—"

"Sup, half-breed. Long time no see," the dark haired woman smirked. Puck then upped his growling volume and openly snarled at her. "You really should keep better control of that mutt of yours if you don't want his guts spilling out."

It clicked in Maya's head who exactly this was. Her eyes narrowed and her mouth turned into a scowl. "Demon-whore," Maya growled. Puck bared his teeth threateningly, power shining in his little eyes.

"Okay, what's up with the dog?" Ruby asked, shifting in her seat uncomfortably.

Dean grinned like the shit he was; "He's got a killer bite with a taste for demons."

Ruby sent a questioning and slightly nervous glance at Sam.

Sam sent her an apologetic one before turning to Maya, "She's here to help Maya."

Maya snorted derisively, "Like before?"
"Hey!" Ruby said loudly. "I endured Hell! I endured Lilith's creativity all so I could get topside to help Sam. To help advert the Apocalypse! What have you been doing, half-breed? Playing petty tricks?"

"You fucking—" Maya growled and made to punch her when Sam stepped between them, cutting her off.

"Enough! Maya, she's on our side," Sam told her, his eyes begging her to stow her hostility.

Maya scowled at him but backed down and glared daggers at the smug she-demon. She never trusted this bitch and hated how Sam still seemed to think she was on the up and up. Her and Dean shared a brief look behind Sam's back. Dean didn't like this either.

"Thank you," Sam said to her but received a derisive scoff. He turned back to Ruby, "You were saying?"

"Thanks, Sam," Ruby smiled smugly. "Like I was saying, a girl named Anna Milton escaped from a locked ward yesterday. The demons seem pretty keen on finding her, even more than your little half-breed friend here," she nodded at Maya. "Like bringing out some big heavy hitters for the Easter egg hunt kind of keen."

"Why? Who is she?" Sam questioned, while Dean took a shot of whiskey so he could deal with this bullshit. Maya thought about grabbing her pop from the abandoned table, but decided that might not be the best idea given the slight seediness of the bar.

"No idea," Ruby shook her head. "But I'm thinking that she's important, 'cause the order is to capture her alive." Sam raised his eyebrows at that; the only one he knew of to have the same order over their head was his little sister who hovered behind him agitatedly. "I just figured whatever the deal is, you might want to find this girl before the demons do."

Sam turned to look at Dean, "Look, maybe we should check it out."

Dean leaned against the bar and put on his best bullshitting grin, "Actually, we're working on a case, but thanks." Maya nodded at Ruby to back him up.

"What case?" Ruby asked, clearly not believing them.

"Uh, we got leads, big leads," Dean said vaguely and Maya wondered briefly how he survived as a conman when he was hunting down the monster of the week with how week that excuse was.

"Sounds dangerous." Yep, Ruby didn't believe Dean's lackluster bullshit.

"At least it isn't taking us on a wild goose chase after some chick who might not even exist," Maya snarked. "Just because you say she's important."

Ruby glared at her, "Look, I'm just here to delivering the news. You can do whatever you want with it." She looked back at Dean, "Far as I'm concerned, I told you, I'm done." She stood up abruptly and went to leave but Sam stopped her.

"Wait, wait, wait. This hospital Anna escaped from—it got a name?" Sam queried, practically feeling Maya's glare burning into the back of his head along with Dean's own glare.

Sam just knew they were going to double team him with how much of a bad idea it was to listen to Ruby.
Late that night…

Rain battered the impala as it roamed down a dark and winding back road in the direction of their next case.

Given to them by the demon-bitch, Ruby. Maya and Dean were severely unimpressed.

"Can I get a copy of the missing persons report?" Sam asked the police department of the local mental hospital Anna had supposedly resided in. "Great. Okay, thanks," Sam closed the flip phone. "Well, Anna Milton's definitely real," Sam sighed.

"Whoopee," Maya said unenthusiastically. "Demon-bitch shared a nugget of truth. So it all must be true." She leaned against the side of the car getting comfortable and settling in for a long ass car ride. Puck snuggled into her side with a contented sigh.

"Goldy's right. Just 'cause the girl's real doesn't mean there's actually a case," Dean stated. "And this hospital is a three-day's drive."

"We've driven further for less, guys," Sam pointed out.

Dean silently shook his head with an expression Sam knew meant he was holding himself back from saying something.

"If you've got something to say, say it." Sam challenged.

"Oh, I'm saying it—this sucks," Dean answered bluntly.

"You're not pissed we're going after the girl, you're pissed Ruby threw us the tip," he stated, hitting the nail on the head.

"Ya don't say?" Maya grumped sarcastically from the back.

"Right. 'Cause as far as you're concerned, the Hell bitch is practically family," Dean frowned as he stared ahead at the empty road through the rain. "Yeah, boy, something major must've happened while I was downstairs, 'cause I come back and-and you're BFF's with a demon?" Dean questioned not able to understand what Sam was thinking.

Maya didn't comment or say anything as she looked out into the rain-drenched night sadly, and quietly urged Puck into her lap so she could hold him. The little dog obliged without complaint, but gave a soft concerned whine hidden by the patter of raindrops.

"I told you, Dean, she helped me go after Lilith," Sam told them—Dean for however many times and Maya for the first—as he too stared out the window.

Maya's sadness intensified as Sam all but confirmed something for her. For all the time Dean was in Hell, for the whole time she needed him, for the whole time she desperately wanted to help him…he'd been with Ruby pursuing Lilith.

Pursuing vengeance.

So despite the brotherly affection he gave her, for claiming her as his little sister, she just wasn't as
important to him as getting vengeance on Lilith.

"Well thanks for the thumb nail—real vivid," Dean sassed. "You want to fill in a little detail?"

Sam's jaw clenched, "Sure, Dean, let's trade stories. You first. How was Hell? Don't spare us the details."

That ended the conversation then and there, that low sucker punch, leaving a tension in the air that had Maya shifting uncomfortably in the back.

Thunder rolled ominously in the distance, no lightening to be seen in the darkness.

Dean looked in the rearview mirror to check on Maya who had all of a sudden turned really quiet. He frowned seeing the sad look on her face and how small she had curled herself up against the door of the impala.

"Hey, Goldy, you're pretty quiet back there," Dean said softly. "You okay?" he asked in concern.

Sam frowned and turned away from the window to look behind him where Maya sat curled up tightly with Puck in her lap.

Sam looked at her in concern, "Maya?"

Large gold eyes looked at him with open sadness, "...you stopped talking to me...to chase Lilith...with Ruby."

Sam felt like her words punched him in the chest as his heart squeezed regretfully.

Dean's eyes flicked back to the road as his hands tightened on the steering wheel. Maya was right in a way. Sam had dropped her to consort—it seemed—with a demon, but Sam had also told him why.

That it had hurt too much to talk to Maya. How she sounded too much like Dean.

Sam swallowed thickly then sighed, "Maya that wasn't—there was more to it and I didn't want to involve you. Lilith was—and still is—after you."

"Really?" Maya tried to raise a disbelieving eyebrow but her face came off more as worried. "Wanna explain a bit more, asshole? 'Cause it sounds to me like you put more value into getting revenge than the people who care about you."

Sam felt that blow, "Maya that's not—"

She didn't let him finish as she continued, "And that terrifies me, because I can't help but feel that you'll turn out like the Sam that killed me to get back at my Dad in that time loop!"

Dean could practically see the emotional blow Sam suffered from that comment as Sam visibly flinched at her words.

Both brothers knew how close the comparison was.

"Maya, I'd never do that to you," Sam said quietly with a frown. "And how is going after Lilith any different than you being a Trickster and giving just desserts to humans? I'm trying to get justice for what she did to Dean, and to protect you from her."

"Because justice isn't personal or an obsession, but revenge is," She answered back. "So, how far
are you willing to go, Sam? Huh? Because that's something I really don't want to find out."

For the rest of the night in the impala no one talked, Maya's words hanging in the air like an oppressive fog. Mostly centered on Sam.

Dean was filled with more worry over his not-so-little brother, while Sam sat slouched in his seat as Maya's words and his memories beat into his head.

He remembered his rage during that time loop. The terrified look in Maya's innocent gold eyes as he pushed that stake into her chest, and the way the life drained out of her. In his quest for revenge he'd done something terrible.

Sam tried to tell him self that this was different. That it had to be, but he could see where Maya was coming from.

His rage at Lilith was the same. His need to get back at her, to end her was the same. For Hell's sake, he drank demon blood to better control his powers. Was that the only line he was willing to cross?

In the time loop he crossed a much different, much darker line than that.

Maybe it was time to let his quest for revenge go and only pursue Lilith to stop the Apocalypse. He had Dean back and he had his sister, who Lilith also wanted, with him.

Dean had told him that he had to stop going after Lilith like a mad man since they now had Maya with them. He had reassured Dean he wasn't going to do anything to put her in danger of Lilith getting her demonic claws in her.

Sam grimaced at a memory of a moment of weakness with Ruby before Dean came back where he briefly contemplated contacting Maya and getting her to go along with a plan to end Lilith once and for all.

By using her as bait.

The guilt he felt then was nothing to what he felt now when Sam thought of it. Of what he thought of doing to her.

Sam glanced behind him to see Maya curled up at an angle that'll leave her with a kink in her neck when she woke up. Her face was lax and peaceful as she slept in the back seat of the impala, feeling safe with them.

The dark song from his flask filled his mind as he started to finally come to a decision that shouldn't have taken as long as it did to make. The song told him he needed the drive, the strength his need for revenge gave him.

'What about Dean? What about Maya?' the dark song sang. 'What will Lilith do to them if he stopped?'

It hummed louder in Sam's mind as he started to fall into its influence again. About to disregard Maya's words despite the pain and guilt he felt for doing so.

Maya and Dean's safety was more important.

But unseen to Sam and Dean, Maya frowned in her sleep. Puck opened one eye to look sideways up at his sleeping Mistress, feeling more the light chime of power than hearing it.
A light feeling washed through Sam's mind, dulling the dark blood's call for vengeance.

'So, how far are you willing to go, Sam?' Maya's voice rang in his mind, reminding him why he was thinking about stopping his obsessive pursuit of Lilith.

The dark song fought back reminding him who was breaking the seals, that they needed to end Lilith regardless.

Sam released a sigh as the pain in his head eased as he made a decision.

Whether it was the right one remained to be seen.

A different Random Town, Random State, United States

Mental Hospital

Three days later…

The three days it took to get to the hospital was tense, but like all emotional things with the Winchesters it got pushed to the background as they focused on the case. Maya distanced herself from Sam again; much to the latter's chagrin.

One step forward, and two steps back and all that.

Maya waited lazily outside the impala with Puck for Sam and Dean to return, still not old enough looking to pass for even an assistant agent and lacked the actual proper attire to pull it off.

Maya nodded at Sam and Dean as they walked out the front doors, "What's the word on crazy girl?"

"Definitely knows more than she should," Dean gave her some of Anna's sketches he pilfered from her sketchbook. "Like the Rising of the Witnesses and the Summoning of Samhain."

Maya flipped through the sketches with a frown at the terrified and frantic drawings. "What we thinking?"

Sam shook his head as he rounded the car to his side, "Don't know. We're going to the Milton's now to see if she might've paid them a visit, or might know where she might've gone."

Maya didn't answer him and climbed into the back with Puck while Sam sent her sad puppy eyes.

It was a quick and quiet trip to the Milton household.

The moment the impala stopped in front of the innocuous house Puck jumped up and stuck his head out the open window, growling at the house. All three of them tensed up.

Maya looked between Sam and Dean, "Might be a trap."

"Probably," Dean grunted as he glared at the house.

"Still gotta check it out," Sam pointed out with a frown.

"Sooooo, what's the plan?" Maya asked.
Sam and Dean gave her speculative and protective looks that made her glare at them challengingly. Just try and leave her behind she mentally dared.

Dean pointed at her seriously, "Look out. And don't move this time!

Maya rolled her eyes at him as she got out of the car, Puck following behind her warily.

The little dog could smell the faint scent of sulfur wafting from the house. He stayed at his Mistress' side while the two older males carefully went into the unlocked house. Puck got hit by the mild scent of death and the coppery tang of blood.

Dean called them in with an all clear.

"The demons beat us here," Sam said from his crouch, rubbing his hands on his suit to rid his fingers of the strong smelling orange powder by the bodies. "Whatever the deal is with this Anna girl—"

"Yeah, they want her. They're not screwing around," Dean interrupted grimly as he looked around. "All right, so, I'm 'Girl, Interrupted' and I know the score of the Apocalypse, just busted out of the nut-box…" Dean paused as he remembered what the counselor told them as he shuffled some of the mail he found on the fireplace mantle, "Possibly using super-powers, by the way. Where do I go?"

Sam had moved to the dining room where a shelf hung under a mirror filled with family pictures, one in particular drawing his attention.

"Hey, do one of you have those sketches from Anna's sketchbook?" Sam asked them.

Maya tore her eyes from looking at some family pictures on the wall of the living room to look at Sam and nodded. She reached into her jacket pocket and pulled out the carefully folded pages, handing them over to Sam.

"Check this out," Sam said as he flipped through the pages to a certain sketch of a round stain glass window and put it next to the picture that caught his attention.

"She was drawing the window of her church," Dean stated.

"Over and over," Sam confirmed. "If you were religious, scared, and had demons on your ass, where would you go to feel safe?"

The Church.

The Local Church

After a brief argument Maya found her self as look out, again, at the bottom of one of the church stairways, Puck loyally at her side. The argument was that they didn't know what they were walking into. A demon could've already gotten Anna by then and was waiting for them.

Because totally waiting by your self—alone—at the bottom of a flight of stairs was much better. Then they pointed out that she had a demon-killing dog. Where as they only had the one demon-killing knife between them.
Touché assholes. Touché.

Then the front doors opened. Puck took point and transformed at the stench of sulfur, growling ferociously. Ready to give Maya a head start to get the Winchesters for back up.

"What the fuck is that?!" exclaimed a very surprised Ruby as she took in Puck's fearsome glory.

Maya peaked around the corner in angry disbelief, "Ruby?! What are you doing here, bitch?!"

"We don't have time for a pissing match half-breed," Ruby said impatiently, still eyeing the now enormous dog with large slightly glowing claws and teeth. "Call the mutt off, we need to get Sam and Dean, and the girl and get the hell out of dodge!"

"And why should I believe a word you say?" Maya snorted, glaring at the demon.

"Because you dumb-dumbs led the demons right to their prize," Ruby deadpanned. "They're coming, right now with a big ass mother who'd rank pretty close with Lilith in power. We need to leave now, or do you and wonder dog here wanna test your luck?"

Maya clenched her jaw as Puck sent her a questioning glance.

"More than one demon?" Maya questioned stiffly.

"Yes! Do you want to see if your mutt is up to the task of going after a bunch of them while trying to guard your useless ass?" Ruby groaned in annoyance and impatience.

Maya hated having to take the demon for her word, but on the off chance she was right…

Maya glanced at Puck once more, silently asking him if he could take multiple demons. The uncertain look he sent her was enough. She nodded at Puck to stand down.

Puck shrunk down back to his adorable fun-sized self, but glared warningly at the she-demon.

"Thanks," Ruby said sarcastically as she made to walk by Maya.

"If you're lying," Maya said casually behind her as she followed her up the stairs. "I'll let Puck tear you to shreds till there's nothing left. Did it to Samhain. So I doubt you'd be too much trouble."

"Noted," Ruby scoffed, but her voice hinted slightly at her nervousness as they ran up the stairs. Maya was smiling smugly.

Ruby was first through the door, followed by Maya and Puck.

"You got the girl? Good, let's go!" Ruby said urgently.

The red head Anna's eyes widened in fear, as she looked at Ruby, backing up in terror, "Oh God, her face!"

"It's okay! She's here to help," Sam tried to reassure Anna.

"Yeah, don't be so sure," Dean said contrarily as he looked back at Ruby, then sent Maya a deadpanned stare, because really? Maya gave him her own unimpressed stare.

"We have to hurry," Ruby urged, nervous.

"Why?" Dean demanded.
"She said a big timer's coming, along with some friends," Maya sighed.

"Exactly. We can fight later, Dean," Ruby seemed to really want to get out of there. Maya was becoming more inclined to believe her if only for the fact demons tend to have large self-preservation instincts. Doesn't mean she wasn't suspicious of whatever game she was trying to play.

"Well that's pretty convenient—showing up here right as we find the girl with some bigwig on your tail?" Dean accused.

However Maya answered with a frown, "She said we led them here."

"He followed you here from the girl's house," Ruby added quickly. "We gotta go, now!"

Sam looked back at Anna, but noticed the marble Mother Mary statue, "Guys."

Maya and Dean looked where Sam was starring as Puck turned to the door and growled. The statue was crying blood from its eyes.

Ruby seeing it said fearfully, "It's too late. He's here."

Sam looked at Ruby then to Maya, "Maya, c'mon."

She hesitated but complied and walked to Sam as Dean approached the blood crying Mary statue.

"Come with me," Sam told Anna who had been starring at the statue in horror, pushing her in the direction of a closet in the far corner of the church attic.

Seeing it Maya frowned and talked directly to him for the first time that day, "Sam you can't—"

"Yeah, I am Maya," he told her resolutely. "Last thing we need is for any demon to get a hold of either of you, so you're gonna hide in here with Anna," he motioned to the scared red head. "Puck will keep you both safe, okay?" Sam told Anna who looked at him confused.

"Puck?" Anna questioned as she went into the closet followed by Maya and Puck.

"Just, stay in here and don't move," he told them and closed the door, sending them into darkness.

It was dark and tense in the closet with only their breaths and heartbeats making any noise. The voices of the others were muffled from the wooden door.

Except for the large bang.

_____

Outside the closet...

Sam tucked the flask with demon blood back into his jacket, feeling the eyes of Ruby and Dean on his back. He hated disappointing his brother but Ruby was right. If this guy was as bad as Ruby made him sound then he needed to use his power to pull this guy or they all were dead, or good as.

Ruby, Anna, Dean, and Maya.

Sam braced him self and focused on his need to protect the others, even if something inside told him he needed to use a different emotion. Preferably after a swig of demon blood.
The door burst off its hinges as a middle aged white man with combed over light blonde hair wearing a brown suit and beige slacks calmly walked in with a smug smile.

Sam raised his hand and tried to use his power on the demon.

The demon stopped, grabbing his throat, as his eyes rolled in the back of his head giving him white eyes, much like Lilith's. It lasted for all of three seconds before Sam's hold was broken and his eyes returned to normal as he coughed lightly. "That tickles," he chuckled. He shook his finger at Sam, "You don't have the juice to take me on, Sam."

The demon raised his hand and pulled Sam through the air, through the railing, and down the stairs of the church attic.

Dean pulled the demon knife and went to stab him, but the demon caught his wrist and grabbed his jacket, "Hello again, Dean." The bastard smiled smarmily before throwing Dean up against a wooden support pillar.

Ruby seeing how far south this fight was going made her way to the closet with Anna and Maya, while the demon focused on punching Dean's face over and over again.

Puck snarled at Ruby as she opened the door, Anna trying to squeeze her self into a far corner in the limited closet space as she screamed at Ruby's inner appearance.

"We need to leave now before he gets his hands on either one of you," Ruby told them bluntly, first reaching over a snapping Puck to drag a protesting Maya out before grabbing Anna. Maya went to protest further, but Ruby cut her off, "Listen, I don't really care if he gets you half-breed or not, but I think Sam and Dean would be distracted trying to look out for you and that's something they can't afford right now. Stay, or don't, but Anna needs to get out of here while the getting's good."

Maya shut her mouth pensively and hated how Ruby had a point, and followed her till they made to run past the demon with Dean pinned against a wooden pillar, beating him and taunting him how they knew each other...in Hell.

She grabbed her machete and went to at least distract the demon when Puck transformed and got between Maya and the demon with a low growl.

Dean's eyes widened as Alastair turned around at Puck's growl, "Well, well, what do we have here? A couple of little mice trying to flee the ship?" He looked down at the enlarged canine, "And a Heavenly Hound? I thought you mutts were extinct?"

Puck snarled and advanced on the singular demon, forcing him to let go of Dean and back up with his hands raised. But the smarmy smile never left his face.

Dean stumbled on his feet as he moved around the dog and started shoving Maya to the door, "Maya, go! Go with Anna and make sure Ruby doesn't do anything!"

"Dean-" she protested, but he wouldn't hear it.

"Go!" Dean barked as he turned to keep his eye on Alastair. "Now!" he ordered, giving her shove towards the door, finally getting her feet moving.

"So that is the lovely Maya you tried so hard to keep quiet about," Alastair hummed, eyes still flickering to the massive dog and his shiny teeth. "Pretty little Trickster-ling, isn't she?"

Sam finally came up behind Dean, grabbing the fallen demon-killing knife, "So, how're we doing
Dean noticed Puck looking from Alastair to the doorway where Maya disappeared through, "Quickly. Think you can take him, boy?"

Puck looked at Dean with a too wide grin before lunging at the demon with a snarl.

Alastair however was ready and dodged and weaved just out of the large canine's reach.

The demon laughed. "Not much of a Hound are you?" he taunted. "I've fought your kind before, some just freshly banished and you…" Alastair saw his opening and landed a hard punch to the side of Puck's head. "Are less than the dirt they used to tread upon in comparison."

Puck whined from the blow and backed up in front of the boys, his world spinning and his pride stinging.

"Just hold him, Puck," Sam encouraged as he brandished the knife in hand. Puck gave an affirmative huff while Dean circled looking for his own opening.

It was a tense moment as everyone seemed to wait for someone to make a move, then all of a sudden Puck lunged forward and it was a flurry of chaos.

Chaos that ended up with Sam missing Alastair's chest and getting his shoulder instead with the demon blade and losing his grip on it. Then Puck was torn off the demon's arm and forcefully flung through the church's stain glass window with a yelp.

Alastair took a moment to pry the knife from his shoulder, but by the time he turned around Sam and Dean had jumped from the same window Puck was thrown from.

No knife and no demon-killing dog kind of meant their asses were well and truly cooked if they had stayed around.

Alastair glared as he watched the boys run to their car, Sam holding Puck's small unconscious form in his arms.

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**Random Motel**

**Sam and Dean**

Sam grunted and breathed heavily as he forced a suture needle through the blood soaked on his arm where a nasty cut laid bleeding from a shard of stained glass he'd landed on. Dean was in the bathroom washing out the blood in his mouth while cradling a dislocated shoulder.

Puck had woken up frantic in the car, whining and barking for his Mistress, for his girl but she was nowhere he could see or smell. Sam had done his best to soothe the distraught little Jack Russell but he just whined pitifully. Now he laid on the bed opposite Sam, not a scratch on him the lucky dog, facing the motel door forlornly as he sighed a whine every now and then.

"You almost done?" Dean gasped through the pain coursing through his dislocated shoulder from the sink.

"I'm going as fast as I can," Sam grunted as he pulled the last stitch through his skin.
"Good, 'cause you know, I got a dislocated shoulder over here," Dean walked over to a dresser where a bottle of rum they picked up and took a swig to help ease the pain.

"Yeah," Sam grunted again as he felt the thread pull through the pieces of skin and closing the wound shut. "I'll pop it back once I'm finished," Sam put one piece of thread in his mouth and tied off his stitches before cutting the tail off. He looked over at Dean with the bottle, "Give me that."

Dean obliged and watched as Sam poured a little over the wound to disinfect it, hissing a little from the sting.

But being a big brother and feeling particularly asshole-ish Dean couldn't help but comment, "So, you lost the magic knife, huh?"

"Yeah, trying to save your ass," Sam was not up for dealing with this shit. "Who the hell was that demon?" he demanded.

"No one good," Dean answered vaguely, not ready to dive into that shit storm of a conversation. "We got to find Goldy and Anna."

"Ruby's got them. I'm sure they're okay," Sam told him as a way to assuage Dean's worries, which of course they didn't. "Alright," Sam grunted as he stood up and got behind Dean. "C'mon. On three. One..." Sam wretched Dean's shoulder back in place with a sickening crack.

"OHH!" Dean shouted as he walked back over to the sink with a groan. He looked at Sam who had sat back down and held a bloody towel to hit bleeding arm, "You sure about Ruby? 'Cause I think it's just as likely she used us to find radio girl and Goldy, and brought that demon in to kill us."

Dean turned around to look at Sam in the eyes.

"No she took Anna and Maya to keep them safe," Sam denied.

Puck gave a rumbly sound of disagreement in the background, not that the brothers paid him any mind.

"Yeah," Dean scoffed as he turned back around and grabbed an icepack for his aching shoulder. "Then why hasn't she called to tell us where she is? Or let Goldy tell us?"

"Because that demon is probably watching us right now, waiting to follow us right back to Maya and Anna again," Sam told Dean sternly with slightly narrowed eyes. "That's why he let us go."

Dean gave a sardonic chuckle, "You call this letting us go?"

"Yeah, I do," he let out breathlessly. "Look, killing us would've been no problem to that thing. I mean, it chucked a giant 250lb demon-killing dog out a window like he was nothing. That's why, for now, we just gotta lay low and wait for Ruby to contact us."

"How's she gonna do that?" Dean asked looking at Sam through the mirror seeing him shrug and hearing him sigh. He turned around to face Sam and give him an inquiring look, "Why do you trust her so much?"

Sam gave an exasperated sigh and eye roll, "I told you."

Dean gave him an assessing look before throwing down the ice pack and walking up to Sam, shaking his head, "You got to do better than that. Hey, and I'm not trying to pick a fight here. I mean, I really want to understand. But I need to know more. I mean, I deserve to know more."
Sam didn't meet his eyes as he thought over Dean's words with tight pensive lips, and he knew he was right. And that Dean wasn't going to let this go, especially with Maya thrown in the mix.

"Because…she saved my life," Sam told Dean thickly, memories of those months surfacing in his mind.

"Okay," Dean took a seat on the other bed beside Puck who barely lifted his head to acknowledge him, just eyed him with a sideways glance. "Want to elaborate some more?"

"Yeah, just thinking of where to begin…" Sam sighed before starting from the beginning of everything that happened six months ago.

Maya trying to reach out to him…his silence.

Trying to summon a crossroads demon.

Getting jumped by Ruby and another demon, being saved by Ruby from said other demon.

Ruby offering to help Sam get Lilith and teaching him how to use his powers. How apparently, Mr. Standford, was a crappy student.

How Ruby tried to be some kind of grief counselor, and his less than stellar attitude in response.

Then how they had sex. Probably in a little too much detail.

"Sam?" Dean interrupted.

"Yeah?"

"Too much information," Dean told him bluntly and a little disgusted. Puck had looked over his shoulder at Sam and made fake gagging sounds. "See? Rat agrees with me," Dean scratched the little dog's head as Puck turned to stare longingly at the door.

"Hey, I told you I was coming clean," Sam shrugged.

"Yeah, but now I feel dirty," Dean grabbed the rum and took a drink, placing the bottle back on the bedside table. "Brain stabbing imagery aside, so far all you've told me about is a manipulative bitch who, uh, screwed you, played mind games with you, and did everything in the book to get you to go bad," Dean pointed out.

"Yeah, well, there's more to the story."

Dean leaned forward a little bit. "Just…skip the nudity, please," Dean asked, he didn't need anymore nightmare fuel.

Sam sent him a small nod, "Pretty soon after…that, um…I put together some signs…omens."

"Saying what?"

"Lilith was in town," Sam caught Dean's 'oh-shit' look he sent him, already seeing where his story was heading. "And I wanted to strike her first."

"Of course you did," Dean sighed heavily and took a long drink from the bottle of rum.

Sam explained how Ruby tried to stop him, warn him, and how he like an idiot didn't listen. Ended up missing Lilith and getting his ass stabbed by the demons Lilith left behind to deal with him.
Well almost getting his ass killed. Ruby swept in and saved his suicidal ass.

And how he was finally able to exorcise a demon successfully for the first time saving her ass in return.

"Ruby came back for me," Sam reminisced. "Whatever you have to say, she saved me. More than that, she got through to me. What she said to me…it's what you would've said. If it wasn't for her I wouldn't be here."

There was a heavy silence between Sam and Dean as Dean absorbed what Sam had told him.

How he now had to be grateful to the damn demon bitch.

Then there was knocking at their door. "Housekeeping," came a woman's inopportune voice.

"Not now," Dean said loudly, but the woman was persistent.

"Sir, I've got clean towels."

Dean rolled his eyes and got up to answer the door to tell off the maid. Opening the door he stared down unimpressed at the short heavy set black woman with cornrows in her hair, but was shoved aside as towels were stuffed in his hands and she forced her way into the room.

Puck stood on the bed, his hackles rising as he growled at the woman threateningly as she moved to close the curtains in the room.

"Hey, boy, take it easy," Sam said calmly as he tried to stroke along the agitated dog's back but had to pull his hand away quickly when he snapped at him. "Whoa!"

"Really, mutt?" the woman cocked her hip as she stared down the small dog. "You gonna growl at the woman who knows where your damn half-breed Master is?"

That shut Puck up, but didn't stop him from showing off his little teeth that were now extra shiny.

"Ruby?" Sam asked cautiously, but instead of an answer was handed a piece of paper.

"I'm at this address," she pointed to the bathroom. "Go now. Go through the bathroom window, don't stop, don't take your car, don't pass go. There are demons in the hallway and in the parking lot."

"Ruby," Sam stated, letting the demon feel his disappointment at her possessing the poor maid.

The she demon made a 'what?' gesture with her arms, "Okay, yes, so I'm possessing this maid for a hot minute. Sue me."

"What about—" Sam started but Ruby cut him off.

"Coma girl?" she thumbed vaguely over her shoulder. "Slowly rotting on the floor back at the cabin with Anna and your pet half-breed. So I've gotta hurry back. See you when you get there. And by the way," she looked between Sam and Dean. "How much trouble would I be in if I killed your little Trickster? Nothing painful just a quick snap of the neck?" she changed direction after Dean looked ready to kill her him self. "Fine, can I at least break her arm? Better than a leg right?"

"Ruby," Sam said waringly. Ruby may have saved his life but that didn't give her pass to threaten their little sister.
"Fine! Fine!" Ruby threw her hands up. "I'll leave her in one piece, no matter how annoying and aggravating she is. Now go!" she walked briskly out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Dean looked back at Sam a little freaked that A: they were being surrounded by demons and that was just Ruby, and B: that Ruby might actually hurt Maya if they didn't leave right now.

They both knew how she could be, and she actually liked them. Who knows what Ruby went through and how long her patience will last.

Puck jumped off the bed and ran to the bathroom doorway, turning to look back at them and whine insistently.

*Let's gooooo! Was very evident in Puck's whining and body language.*

As they scrambled to pack what they'd need Dean told Sam very sternly, "I don't care if she saved your life. She hurts Goldy and all bets are off."

"Yeah," Sam conceded, "Okay." He might let Ruby get a head start from Dean's wrath, but he was in a similar boat with Dean.

No one hurt *their* Trickster.

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**Random Ass Cabin Out in the Middle of Buttfuck Nowhere**

**Nighttime...**

Maya stared at the dead girl that Ruby had been possessing. It was really creepy. She'd just seen the body breathing and moving and alive, but the moment Ruby vacated to tell the guys where they were...nadda.

"I dare you to poke it," Maya smirked at the red head beside her who was looking unnerved and a little pale. Her eyes became saucers as she whipped her head from the body to look at Maya in shock.

"What? No!" she denied, aghast at the thought.

Maya shrugged. "Well, if we ain't pokin' it then lets find a tarp or somethin'...or at least close the eye lids," some of Bobby's accent peaking through from her tiredness. It's been a *long* day.

Blank eyes stared unseeingly up at them.

There was a heavy silence.

"I'm not touching her," Anna told Maya firmly and walked back out into the main room of the drafty cabin.

A moment later Maya walked in and closed the door behind her.

"Figured the door was as good as anythin'," Maya inspected the decrepit cracked black leather couch, "You scared of spiders?"

Anna looked at her from the said two-seater. "Noooo," she frowned confused, trying to get a read on Maya, wondering if she was, as she appeared to be.
"Good, 'cause if I see a spider I'm goin' to need you to kill it for me. Otherwise, I'll take my chances outside," satisfied there were no spiders or possible webs near the couch she took a seat beside Anna.

Anna snorted at her, "But wouldn't it be better in here where we have light to see the spiders?"

Maya stiffened in her seat and looked at Anna wide-eyed, "Oh shit. You're right! I could walk right into one of those fuckers' webs and mnggh!" She gave a full body shiver, earning another chuckle from Anna.

"You are not what I expected," Anna commented lightly, her green eyes watching Maya curiously.

"Of course not. I'm entirely more awesome and sexy in person," Maya beamed at her with an eyebrow waggle. She rested her head back on the couch, her tiredness begging her to shut her eyes for a moment.

But with how unkempt the unfinished cabin was who knew where those little assholes were hiding, just waiting for her to let her guard down and no doubt fall from the ceiling to land on her face. Maya blinked tiredly and straightened her head at the possibly irrational thought of a spider deciding into free dive onto her face.

"What were ya expectin'?" Maya asked, sending a curious look at Anna, a wave of light dizziness then assaulted her.

"Oh, um…" Anna trailed off embarrassed, not meeting her gaze or seeing Maya grab her head for a moment. "I only had what the angels had said and um..."

"Not very flatterin'?" Maya said chagrined, her hand falling. "Somethin' along the line of 'abominable half-breed'? Oh! Oh! How about 'it'? You can just hear the mockin' italics, right?"

Anna shook her head apologetically, "Pretty much. But I did hear this little snippet that has me a little curious."

Maya blinked slowly eyelids heavy as a sudden bought of fatigue started creeping in. "Yeah? About what?" she asked, frowning as Anna seemed to blur around the edges.

"Oh, um…" Anna hesitated, her cheeks flushing in embarrassment. "Some speculation about why Sam and Dean kept you around, other than Heaven's orders."

Maya's took a little longer to process Anna's words and what she was insinuating before asking, "I'm not goin' to like it am I?"

Anna sent her an awkward smile and tensed her shoulders; "They think Sam and Dean keep you around because they like um…sleeping with you."

Maya blinked sleepily at her, her face frowning as she muddled through her sluggish thoughts. Her eyes went wide and her face grimaced in disgust, "EW! EW! EW! Gross! No! Definitely not! Augh! Just nooooo! They're like my brothers!"

Anna let out a sigh of relief she didn't know she was holding in. She hadn't been sure what to believe between what she had overheard the angels say, how young Maya seemed, and how both brothers were protective of her.

Maya raised a groggy eyebrow at Anna, "What was that sigh?"
Anna tensed and looked flustered, "Oh, nothing! Nothing at all!"

"Ya like one of them don't ya?" Maya smirked teasingly, feeling sweat start to dampen the nape of her neck.

"Well, Dean is pretty handsome," Anna admitted sheepishly. When she turned to Maya she noticed something was wrong. The girl that antagonized a demon leading them away from danger relentlessly with gusto was…quiet. "Maya, are you okay?"

"I—" Maya cut her self off as the symptoms she was experiencing finally clicked into her muddled brain. "Ah hell," she cursed as she rummaged in her coat pocket and pulled out an emergency candy bar. "Sorry, if I don't get enough sugar or carbs I get pretty out of it," she took a bite of the unwrapped bar.

Anna sent her a concerned look, but Maya waived her off. "I'll be fine. I always have snacks on me," she reassured Anna. "Such is the life of a demi-Trickster."

Anna sent her a confused look. "Tricksters like sugar, half-Tricksters absolutely need it to survive," Maya shrugged. "My metabolism is so aggressive that if I don't get enough I well…it's not good."

"Are you going to be okay with just that?" Anna motioned to the candy bar that Maya was about finished with.

Maya shrugged, "I'll have to be." She took the last bite and crumpled the wrapper. "So, Preacher's kid, what's that like? A lot of pressure to be the good girl?"

"Not much different than everyone else. Maybe a bit more eyes watching," Anna shrugged. "So, a half-Trickster, what's that like?" she countered with a smirk.

"Other than the hypoglycemia? Pretty awesome. I's gets to do magics," Maya grinned with a childish voice, Bobby's accent falling from her voice as the sugar made her more aware. Her smile fell however at the lightweight on her wrists reminding her that she in fact couldn't. "Well until I got grounded by my Dad anyway. I guess running away one to many times kind of does that."

"And why'd you do that?"

Maya sent her a joking and deflecting Dean-like grin, "Cause I'm a rebellious little shit."

Anna snorted a laugh, "Aren't most teens?"

"You saying you did something rebellious, Preacher's daughter?" Maya smiled teasingly. "Oooh, what did you do? Oh the possible scandal!" she said in over exaggerated comical surprise. "Was it skinny dipping in the lake? Please, tell me it was skinny dipping in…something."

Anna gave her another laugh, any remaining adrenaline and tension from their escape ebbing away. "Wouldn't you like to know," Anna teased. She was finding it hard to wary of the younger girl who smiled so easily at her. Anna knew she was a Trickster, the offspring of some pagan god and that alone should've put her on edge with all of her father's teachings but…something about her screamed sincerity and light. That their dark circumstances didn't seem so dark and inescapable.
"Yes, yes I would very much like to know," Maya gave the other girl a suggestive eyebrow waggle, but the grin on her face conveyed the joke. Anna's interest in her brother kind of cemented the idea that she wouldn't exactly be interested in her per se.

Oh well.

Anna chuckled but didn't say anymore and they settled into an easy silence.

Unfortunately with the silence came boredom.

"I'm bored," Maya whined childishly. "Do you have anything to pass the time?"

Anna shook her head, "No. Not really, but I don't think the point of hiding out in the middle of nowhere is supposed to be fun."

"Right, right," Maya nodded as she looked around the cabin they were in, lit by an old lamp and one overhanging light. It was a slight wonder there was any electricity in this dump to begin with.

Maya got up, no longer dizzy, and rummaged around the cabin to find something to occupy herself with.

She did find something and a grin worthy of her Trickster heritage donned on her face as she looked over at Anna with her find.

A permanent black marker.

"How pissed do you think demon-bitch would be if she came back to sleeping beauty with a...mooo-stache on her face?"

"Maya...no," Anna told her firmly, trying to keep the smile from creeping up on her face.

They owed the demon for saving them.

But the mischievous smile on Maya's face just grew wider as her eyes sparkled with barely contained glee, "Maya, yes."

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When Ruby's smoke finally returned to the cabin, and the beginning to rot vacant body, she was met with the frozen figures of Maya and Anna crouched over her.

An uncapped black permanent marker dangerously close to her meat suit's face.

Ruby glared at them (read: Maya) with Hellfire eyes and barely contained annoyance.

Anna looked nervous, wrapped around behind Maya with a firm grip on the arm wielding the marker. Obviously trying her best to keep Maya from writing or drawing on the demon's face.

Maya looked...utterly disappointed. Her prank and entertainment ruined.

"Get that thing. Out of my face. Or I'll shove it where the sun don't shine!" Ruby gritted out in a loud growl.

Maya, being the previously self-proclaimed little shit that she was, and unwilling to let the demon
know the slight fear sent down her spine, made a remark to set everyone off kilter.

"Is that a promise?"

Ruby and Anna balked at her, giving her enough time to escape Anna's hold and flee into the next room.

"One day…" Ruby mumbled the rest of the sentence, incoherent to Anna, but the grimace and look of murder on the demon's face did not bode well.

Anna watched as Ruby stood up and stormed past her to yell at Maya threateningly. Maya yelling back denials and insults.

The demon may have saved them, but Anna got the distinct impression that Ruby would've rather left Maya for dead. So maybe she isn't as different from other demons as she thought.

Maya blurted out a particularly vulgar insult.

Then again…apparently Maya could be just that annoying to people she obviously didn't like.

Anna concluded that Maya liked her well enough, so counted her blessings in that regard.

Anna ran into the next room when she heard the sounds of a struggle start.

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**Sam and Dean**

After another hour or so of double backing, multiple car jackings and ditching, and missing the hidden road twice, Sam and Dean finally made it to the address Ruby had given them.

Night had descended; creating shadows amongst the trees that surrounded the cabin like stalwart guards, or an invading enemy. Most normal people would be nervous, maybe even a little jumpy, going to a rundown old cabin in the middle of the woods that in their minds was no doubt the lair of an axe-wielding psychopath.

Sam and Dean didn't think that way. Instead they listened and observed carefully as they walked up to the door. Insects chirped, leaves rustled lightly in the midnight breeze, and the forest was alive with activity.

It's when the noises stop that you have to worry about a loud snapping of a twig or the really loud suspicious rustle of leaves. That something large lurked in the shadows.

Through the door window light softly shone illuminating the inside of the cabin where the figures of Ruby, Anna, and Maya were waiting.

Puck having picked up Maya scent whined and scratched impatiently at the door.

The three looked over to see Sam and Dean about ready to knock on the door; Sam sent them a sheepish wave. Ruby, who had been leaning against the dust-coated worktable pushed her self off the table and walked towards the door, opening it.

"Glad you could—Whoa!" Ruby was cut off by Puck muscling his way past the demon and made a beeline right towards Maya who sat on the other side of Anna on the couch. Ruby glared at the little dog as he whined and jumped up on the couch and onto Maya's lap, "Glad you could make
"Yeah, thanks," Sam sent her a soft smile as him and Dean entered the shabby cabin. He approached Anna and Maya. "You guys oka—Maya what's on your face?" Sam asked with a puzzled frown that became more and more strained as he tried to keep from laughing.

Dean shoved Sam a little to get a good look at Maya's glaring face as she tried to unsuccessfully keep Puck's happy tongue from her face.

Dean grinned, "You got a little something around your eye there, Goldy."

Anna brought a hand to her mouth to hide her smile and keep her laughter in.

Ruby was less than considerate. "She tried drawing on this body's face with a Sharpie before I came back. Better than breaking her wrist for being a pain in the ass."

"You're an ass, Dean," Maya grumped as she kept up reassuringly petted the anxious Puck.

Sam and Dean sent Ruby a slight glare, before focusing back on Maya and Anna.

"Well that answers whether or not Petey's okay," Dean gave a sideways smirk, referring to the large squiggly black marker ring around Maya's right eye. "That's not gonna fade for days."

"You're an ass, Dean," Maya grumped as she kept up reassuringly petted the anxious Puck.

"Well yours, mostly," Maya shrugged. "I just tagged along."

"Yeah. Just some cuts and bruises mostly," Sam assured her.

"Speak for yourself," Dean huffed. "I ended up with a dislocated shoulder. The rat's the only one who didn't walk away injured."

Puck sent Dean a smug look that shouldn't have been possible on his little doggy face, but there it was.

Dean glared at the little dog that had enough of looking at him and went back to snuggling into Maya's arms and nudging her hands for comforting pets. He went out of his little doggy mind with worry over her being in the care of the blasted demon, Ruby.

Sam turned to Ruby, "Thanks for looking after Maya. I know she isn't exactly your favorite person...or the easiest to deal with."

Maya sent Sam an angry pout, "Excuse you, but I am a joy to be around. Right Anna?"

"I guess so," Anna smiled a little teasingly. "But Ruby did get you out of there and saved you too," she pointed out, her smile turning a little sheepish.

"Yeah, I hear she's into the whole altruistic saving lives thing," Dean muttered and looked
awkwardly over at Ruby. "I guess I…” Dean cleared his throat, "…you know."

Ruby looked at him with crossed arms and squinted eyes, "What?"

Dean looked between Sam and Ruby, while Maya eyed the whole thing with a confusedly raised eyebrow wondering what was going on.

"I guess I owe you for…Sam and, I guess Maya now," everyone could feel the awkward levels rising in the room. "And I just want you to," he cleared his throat again, purposefully, "you know?"

"Don't strain yourself," Ruby told him flippantly.

"Okay, then. Is the moment over?" Dean was so ready to take the out presented for this conversation. Ruby rolled her eyes. "Good, 'cause that was awkward," Dean looked at Sam who gave him a grateful smile in return.

Maya looked between them absolutely confused and having no idea what the hell was going on. She was about to ask what the hell that was all about when Anna spoke up first. Maya figured she could always demand answers later.

And she will.

"Hey, Sam, you think it'd be safe to make a quick call, just to tell my parents I'm okay?" Anna looked up at Sam hopefully. "They must be completely freaked."

Maya tensed as Sam and Dean gave each other significant and tight looks.

Anna felt the tension, her hopeful look leaving her face as she realized something was wrong, "What?" She looked at Dean, who wouldn't meet her eyes.

"Um…Anna…your parents," Sam said softly as he kneeled in front of her.

"What about them?" she asked shakily dreading the answer Sam might give her.

"Anna, look, I'm sorry…"

"No, they're not…” Anna shook her head in denial. Maya put a hand on her back, rubbing soothingly.

"Anna, I'm sorry," Sam told her apologetically, his eyes showing his remorse and sympathy for her.

Anna breaks down in to a sob, letting Maya bring her into her side. Anna holds onto her like a lifeline.

"Why is this happening to me?" Anna sobbed into Maya's shoulder.

"I don't know," Maya held the weeping girl and continued to rub circles in her back. At least, until she gasped, pulling away and staring at a far corner of the cabin.

"They're coming," she gasped breathlessly, fear in her eyes.

Electricity crackled as the lights in the cabin flickered.

Without a moment's pause Dean barked out, "Back room!"

Maya walked Anna to the other room, closing the door before turning around and going to the
duffel of weapons the boys brought in with them.

"Nah ah, Goldy. Back room," Dean told her with a shake of his head. "Now," he told her tersely when she went to argue, staring her down seriously. With an annoyed huff and roll of the eyes her and Puck went to hide in the back room with Anna.

Who had sliced her arm and was writing something on the mirror.

"Um, Anna, what are you…?" Maya trailed off questioningly as she stared at the symbol she's never seen before.

But it was old, ancient, and powerful. It was like nothing she'd ever seen before but there was something about it that whispered familiarity.

"Demons aren't the ones coming Maya," Anna informed her without any further explanation as she continued drawing the sigil on the mirror.

"You lost the knife?!" came Ruby's muffled angry shout from the other side of the door.

Maya looked blandly at Puck who just shrugged at her. It wasn't his fault. He wasn't the one with opposable thumbs.

Maya groaned under her breath, "Of course they did."

Anna was pulled from her bloody finger painting as the wind outside picked up, battering against the cabin's wooden planks.

Until there was a loud muffled bang and the muted sound of rustling of feathers.

Puck shifted his form and took the spot in front of the door separating them from whatever just arrived. His form tense and teeth bared in a silent growl.

Anna, finished with her bloody sigil took in Puck's appearance and meeped a little, looking panicky at Maya for an explanation.

"What?" Maya whispered with a shrug. "I'm half-Trickster, of course my dog is going to be fantastically abnormal."

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Sam and Dean

The back door slammed open as a rush of wind entered the cabin creating a slight wind tunnel. There was the loud rustling of feathers outside the open doorway as they tensed and readied themselves, guns raised, for whatever walked through.

Dean felt a measure of relief when he saw Castiel stride in, in all his trench-coated glory.

Less so when he saw that angel dick, Uriel.

Ruby's eyes turned black briefly as she eyed the two angels apprehensively. Uriel especially who looked at her with barely hidden disgust.

"Please tell me you're here to help. We've been having demon issues all day," Dean sighed as he met Castiel's eyes.
"Well I can see that," Uriel droned unimpressed. "You want to explain why you have that *stain* in the room? I thought if you *had* to have one it'd be that half-bred abomination you were tasked with watching." Uriel casually looked around the room, not caring that Sam and Dean were openly glaring at him and tightening their grips on their guns. "Where is it anyways? Weren't you tasked with watching over it?"

"Uriel," Castiel sent the other angel an exasperated look before turning back to Dean. "We're here for Anna."

They way Castiel held Dean's gaze was not reassuring as a sinking feeling entered his gut, "Here for her like...here for her?"

"Stop talking," Uriel commanded harshly. "Give her to us."

"Are you going to help her?" Sam asked, feeling the same concern Dean was.

"No," Castiel answered. "She has to die," he told them bluntly.

"You want Anna?" Sam looked at the angels in shock. "Why?"

Uriel scoffed as he took a couple of steps further into the room, "Out of the way."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. Okay, I know she's wiretapping your angel chats or whatever, but it's no reason to gank her," Dean reasoned.

But of course, Uriel's a damn bastard and smiled, "Don't worry. I'll kill her gentle."

"You're some heartless son's of bitches, you know that?" Dean said, looking at Uriel especially in disgust.

"As a matter of fact we are," Castiel stated simply, not taking any offense from the insult. "And?"

"And Anna's an innocent girl," Sam pointed out with a frown.

"She is *far* from innocent," Castiel shook his head slightly.

Sam and Dean shared a significant look at the ominous undertone of Castiel's words before looking back at trench-coated and the least offensive angel in the room.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Sam questioned warily.

"It means she's worse than this abomination you've been screwing," Uriel glowered at Ruby before pointedly demanding, "Now give us the girl."

Dean looked at Sam with a familiar stubborn gleam in his eye. One that Sam was in complete agreement with, with a slight tilt of his head.

Dean looked back at the winged dicks. "Sorry. Get yourself another one. Try JDate," he smirked defiantly.

"Who's going to stop us? You two? Your pet half-breed?" Uriel scoffed, and even deigned a slight chuckle at such an absurd notion. He then walked up and grabbed Ruby, throwing her into the window behind him, "Or this demon whore?" He then proceeded to pin Ruby to the wall and raised his free hand to smite her.

Chaos ensued.
Dean attacked Uriel, freeing Ruby from his grip, but ended up being on the receiving end of his superior strength and ire.

"I've been waiting for this," Uriel grinned at he punched Dean's face.

Castiel calmly walked up to Sam who begged, "Wait—Castiel stop!"

Castiel tapped his forehead knocking Sam out before proceeding to the door leading to the back room.

But all of a sudden the air crackled and thunder boomed as white light with no source flickered in the room. Uriel and Castiel's backs arched in pain as they tried to resist what was happening, shadows of their wings loomed on the walls, spread open for flight.

They were pulled back as their wings caught the magic tidal wave and sent them careening far far away.

Dean collapsed further to the ground having only been held up by Uriel's unrelenting grip, panting and aching with a busted lip. He looked over at a panting Ruby and helped her up, "Come on."

They turned to Sam who was just regaining consciousness on the ground behind them, his face squinting as the unconscious rendering fog left his mind. Ruby went to help Sam while Dean went to the back room to check on its occupants.

"Maya? Anna?" Dean called as he opened the door to see Anna leaning on the aged mirrored dresser with blood covered hands.

Dean rushed over to Anna, digging out the spare bandanna he had for just such occasions.

"She'd already sliced her arm when I got here," Maya explained as Puck nudged her side for a head scratch.

"Are…are they gone?" Anna panted as she sat in the chair by the dresser while Dean wrapped her arm.

Dean looked at the blood sigil, "Did you kill them?"

Anna shook her head, "No."

"Wait, who showed up?" Maya asked with confused and pinched eyebrows. "Despite the thin walls I didn't hear much."

"The angels," Anna looked at Maya. "I sent them away. Far away."

Maya's eyes widened in understanding and unrestrained awe blossomed on her face as she looked at the red haired girl. "You what? Ejected angels?"

Anna nodded as Sam and Ruby entered the room. Dean went to question her further but Maya had one more thing to add.

"That's amazing! You're amazing!" Maya said in exuberant excitement and a wide grin. Even though she knew Anna wasn't interested she had to ask, "Marry me?"

Anna blushed, seeing the seriousness in Maya's eyes. She'd just evicted the creatures that Maya feared most. Like hell she wasn't proposing right there on the spot!
Dean sent her the customary 'are-you-serious-right-now' look while Sam just rolled his eyes good-naturedly.

Anna gave her a wane smile, "I'm flattered but um…"

"Straight?" Maya pouted, then gave an exaggerated sigh when Anna nodded with an apologetic smile. "Yeah, okay. I guess I'll just have to get over my heartbreak," her smile belied the lie of any true heartbreak actually occurring.

Dean snorted, "Good. You're too young for that anyways." He rolled his eyes as Maya glibly flipped him the bird. Dean smiled a little when Anna gave a light chuckle as he finished wrapping her arm, "So how did you send those winged dicks packing anyways?"

Anna glanced at the bloodied markings on the mirror, "That just popped in my head. I don't know how I did it. I just did."

The Sam, Dean, and Ruby shared looked between each other, permeating tenseness into the air.

Maya looked at them then at Anna, then the mirror, and sighed sarcastically, "Well that doesn't sound ominous as fuck."

AN: Here it is! Another chapter! Got a lot done before and after bachelorette weekend and wedding, but you know needed to find a good spot to stop. Was hoping for Uriel to meet Puck, but I guess I'll have to wait a bit more.
AN: Oh man guys, 18,500 words! And I started almost two weeks late! I'm a boss! Now I feel obligated to warn you that I might not update next month because I'm a crafty masochist and will try and crochet a throw blanket for my aunt for Christmas, soooo…yeah.

Hoped you like this chapter! So either see you next month or after New Year's!

November-ish 2008, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, United States

Bobby's House

One mad dash of a car ride and a couple seat rearrangements later…

So, a demon, a half-Trickster and her demon killing guard dog/rat, two Winchesters, and walking talking angel radio girl travelled to Sioux Falls in a loaded up and cramped in a black 67' Chevy impala…

Not only did it sound like a start up to a bad joke, but also in reality was just as bad—if not worse—seeing how this joke would last for hours and was nowhere near being funny.

Sam and Dean really should've seen it coming when they had piled the girls into the back of the retrieved impala and not checking who sat beside whom. Although both would share rapidly depleting amusement that Maya and Ruby sitting beside each other lasted a whole 13 minutes before shit hit the fan.

After a quickly pulled over car, some raised voices, Sam pulling off a feisty Trickster from their demon passenger, a worried Anna, and Dean looking ready to shoot the both of—okay, just ready to shoot Ruby mostly, they were finally on the road again heading to one of the safest places they knew.

That lasted a good couple hours before poor sweet Anna was no longer a good enough buffer in the back seat. Tensions were flaring and patience running thin as tiredness seeped into the occupants of the cramped car.

With a good deal of tired grumbling, some more loud berating, and a rock-paper-scissors game, Dean reluctantly and petulantly found himself taking Anna's spot in the back between Maya and Ruby, while Anna took the passenger seat and Sam drove them all.

So far, the only one who hadn't had to switch spots in the car was Puck, who sat up front on the bench seat between driver and passenger. Although for each rearrangement he was close to jumping over the seat into the back, ready to tear at the demon who still sat way too close to Maya for his liking.

One very large reason for another quick pull-over.
And Dean may or may not have been pleased at the shy and grateful smile Anna had sent him over her shoulder.

Thankfully a long day of running around and worn out adrenaline finally had Maya crashing not long after, too tired to rise to any subtle jibs Ruby sent her way—or vice versa.

By the time Sam pulled into Bobby's yard the sun was well into the sky and he wanted nothing more than to crash out on Bobby's couch, at least. If he still had enough energy he was stealing one of the beds in one of the guestrooms.

He tiredly rubbed his face as he turned the engine off turning around to look in the back seat to find Dean with his head tilted back at an uncomfortable angle, snoring lightly, an arm draped over Maya's shoulders as she cuddled into his side.

It was sweet. But Sam was tired and feeling a bit bitchy.

"Guys, wake up! We're here," Sam announced loudly, much to the disdain and tiredly grumbling of the other passengers of the car as he got out to stretch his legs, Ruby following not long after.

"All right Goldy, let go," Dean grunted as he patted her back.

Maya whined tiredly and curtly said, "No." An arm came up and curled around Dean's chest to emphasize her sleepy point.

Anna having woken up herself looked at the adorable scene with a smile as she stretched her arms and back a little bit. Dean exaggeratedly released a loud sigh before peeling Maya's arm off him and telling her to open the damn door. Maya gave him a childish and tired pout but complied.

Anna could definitely see the affection between the two was nothing more than platonic, if not familial in nature. The angels were so wrong it was almost funny. She started a little when Puck hopped into her lap and whined at her passenger side door. She tensed, remembering the previous night and how the little dog transformed into a large toothy death machine, and cautiously opened the door and watched as he huffed appreciatively and jumped out of the car to follow after Maya into the house.

"Not over the fact he turns into a giant mutt with even bigger teeth?" Dean said with a smirk as he stood and watched Anna get out of the impala.

Anna sent him a small strained smile, "A bit."

"Don't worry about it," Dean chuckled as he closed his door, Anna following suit. "Long as you don't go after Goldy you'll be fine." He was about to add something else when—

BARK!

"I'm not doing anything to her you dumb mutt!" Ruby's muffled voice came from inside the house.

"You're breathing!" came Maya's equally muffled and angry retort.

Sam's voice was too muffled to hear, but from the tone Dean could guess it was his calm mediator voice.

Anna bit her lower lip as Dean made a face and marched purposefully towards Bobby's house. Not wanting to be left alone Anna quickly followed and watched as Sam and Dean separated Maya and Ruby. Dean complained the whole time and told them to stow their shit with each other. They had
bigger concerns to deal with.

Maya and Puck sent eye daggers at Ruby, Ruby did the same but looking a whole lot more disinterested.

Dean tiredly turned to Anna, "Wanna see the panic room?"

Couple days later…

Sam finally harangued the mental hospital enough to send Anna's medical files and dug up all he could on Rich and Amy Milton, her parents. The hospital took the most work trying to work around warrants and not wanting to make the trip all the way back from where they just came from.

And Dean refused to deal with the obvious beef Maya and Ruby had with each other on his own. He had his car so no point sending Sam to grab first editions of the Anna's files when he could use his wounded puppy-voice over the phone to get them sent to Sioux Falls General for pick up.

Dean walked up the stairs after checking in on Anna in the salt encrusted demon proof panic room, leaving and telling Ruby to keep an eye on her.

Per the animosity reducing Demon-Trickster agreement, Maya stayed on the main floor of the house away from Ruby. They also agreed to at very least try to keep to opposite sides of a room should they both end up in the same room as each other.

Dean hung up the phone just as Sam walked through the front doors, "Hey. You get the reports?"

"Yeah. Right here," Sam held up the manila folder at Dean. Maya entered the room with Puck… casually eating a bag of popcorn. She had found the stash, again. "Did Bobby finally call back?"

"Yeah, he's in the Dominican of all places," Dean answered Sam as he took the folder and walked over to Bobby's desk.

"Also said if we break anything we buy it," Maya added as she leaned against a door jam, letting the brothers pass her as they entered the den. "And he sent Eli to stay with one of the neighbors he actually talks to. Didn't want him stumbling over something he shouldn't. And given what one of our house guests are, it was probably for the best." Maya frowned at the thought of the demon currently lurking around Bobby's home.

Sam frowned between them, "He working a job?"

"God I hope so, otherwise he's at hedonism in a banana hammock and a trucker's cap." Dean grimaced with slight disgust from the image that description conjured, opening the folder on the desk and lightly looking over the psych files.

"Dean," Maya choked as she tried not to gag on her buttery-salty snack. "I'm eating!"

Sam gave his own mentally pained grimace, "Now that's seared in my brain."

Dean didn't let them see the big brother smirk he was sporting, "So I'm guessing being the big nerd that you are you didn't wait to look at these. Wanna give us the run down?"
Sam rolled his eyes at his brother, while Maya pushed against the door jam and walked over, standing on the other side of Dean happily munching away on her buttery snack.

Dean turned to her and went to stick his hand in the bag but she quickly moved it away from him. "Sharing's caring, Goldy," he said mockingly.

Maya glared at him, "Not with popcorn it ain't."

"If you two are done," Sam said pointedly, getting the other two's attention back. "There's not much here. Her parents were Rich and Amy Milton—a church deacon and a housewife."

"That...could not have been anymore mundane," Maya drawled, taking a piece of popcorn and dropping it. Puck easily caught it and enjoyed the tasty treat. Dean pouted at her.

"Yeah, but there is something here in the report that turns out this latest psych episode isn't her first," Sam added, peaking Dean and Maya's curiosity.

"No?" Dean looked closer at the file, seeing what Sam was referring to.

"When she was two and a half, she'd get hysterical anytime her Dad got close. She was convinced that he wasn't her real Daddy," Sam continued.

"Okay, that's a bit more odd," Maya commented as she turned the opened report towards her to get a better look. She may or may not have left butter stains...

"So who was? The plumber, hmm?" Dean smirked a little at his own joke.

Maya couldn't hold in the snort, "A little...snaking the pipes?" She laughed at their expressions of shock at what she just said. Honestly, how old did they think she was? Five? "What? Oh c'mon, that was a good add on to the plumber bit."

"Yeah," Dean conceded a little, still slightly shell shocked. "But not from you! You're too young to know that!"

Maya popped a hip and cocked an eyebrow, "I'm 17, dumbass."

"Exactly! Too. Young! Do you even know what you just said?!" Dean was not prepared for such words to come out of someone he considered his little sister.

Maya rolled her eyes at Dean, because honestly, why did he assume she was some naïve innocent baby-eyed kid when it came to stuff like this? She knew what sex was. She knew what porn was. Not that living with her Dad didn't have the conversation crop up a bit sooner than probably necessary, but he never left her questions unanswered. No matter how uncomfortable it obviously made him.

Dean seemed to just want to bury his head in the sand.

Well, challenge accepted.

Maya put on her most condescending face and used her most patronizing voice she could muster as she decided to explain that she did in fact understand what she was saying. "Well the pipe is a metaphor to a vagina and snaking obviously refers to—"

"Gah! Enough!" Dean yelped as he put a hand over her mouth to keep her from finishing that sentence. He didn't need his wide-eyed little sister explaining sex metaphors to him.
Sam had long ago recovered from his shock and just shook his head at how completely off the rails the conversation had become.

"You guys are confusing reality with porn," Sam said with the umpteenth roll of the eyes.

"And before you start Dean, I've told you before, I know what porn is," Maya said blandly when Dean finally removed his hand.

"Shut up," Dean muttered a little petulantly before turning back to Sam. "So, who is her 'real' Dad?"

"Anna didn't say. She just kept repeating that this real father of hers was mad. Very mad—like wanted-to-kill-her mad," Sam took the opening to bring the conversation back on point.

"That's heavy for a two year old," Maya frowned. "I don't think kids that young fully grasp death, let alone killing or murder at that age."

"She saw a kid's shrink, got better, and grew up normal," Sam sighed with a shrug.

None of them heard or saw Anna come up from the basement and enter the hallway door of the den as Dean asked, "Until now. So, what's she hiding?"

"Why don't you just ask me to my face?" Anna demanded, causing the three of them to look at her like deer caught in headlights. Ruby leaned against the door jam behind her.

Maya's guilty eyes flickered to Ruby's nonchalant ones and hardened in a glare. One Ruby returned with a silent scoff. Puck's low growl could be heard faintly from around Maya's feet as the little dog peeked around the large desk. His own little eyes glaring at the demon-ness.

Dean looked around Sam to give Ruby an unimpressed glare, "Nice job watching her."

"I'm watching her," Ruby shrugged. Maya gave a contumacious scoff as the popcorn bag in her grip crinkled when she rolled the opening closed. Ruby sent her a dirty look.

"No, you're right Anna," Sam looked apologetically at Anna. "Is there anything you want to tell us?"

"About what?" Anna asked a little choked.

"The angels said you were guilty of something," he stated carefully.

"Wait, that's what this was all about?" Maya asked unbelievably, letting out a disbelieving scoff. 
"According to the Bible most people aren't exactly innocent according to Heaven's books. Doesn't The Book literally condemn like half of Dean's personality?"

"Hey!" Dean protested the verbal jab Maya sent him.

Sam strained to keep the smile off his face as he said, "I don't think that's what the angels were saying Maya." He turned back to a clearly stressing out Anna, "Do have an idea why they would say that?"

"I don't know! You tell me!" Anna said teary-eyed. "Tell me why my life has been leveled...why my parents are dead! I don't know. I swear," Sam and Dean cast their eyes momentarily away; not meeting the redhead's own watery eyes. "I would give anything to know."

"Okay. Then let's find out," Sam told her.
Maya eyed him and decided to just ask him directly, "And how do you plan to do that? More vengeance powered demonic hoo-doo?"

Maya didn't see the pain flare briefly across Sam's face, but did catch the barest of flinches and felt guilt punch her heart briefly. She cared for the large Winchester, she did. Even after effectively dropping contact with her she still cared. That's what made his running off to hunt with Ruby and go after Lilith all the more painful.

"Hey! That hoo-doo is keeping angels, demons and whatever else out there from finding us right now," Ruby glared at Maya. "If it wasn't for my hex bags we'd have those winged assholes on us like that!" she snapped her fingers.

Maya glared, breathing heavily through her nose, as sharp gold eyes seemed to coldly pierce the pretty exterior of the demon. Maya never truly hated anyone before.


She wasn't about to touch on angels.

But Maya was sure the rage and ugly feeling in her chest she felt towards Ruby could be nothing but hate with a heavy dose of suspicion.

"Right, and we're trusting your demon whore magic, why?" she asked with a strained voice and raised eyebrow.

Sam and Dean were eyeing the two warily; even Anna was as she inched further away from Ruby.

"Alright, how about we take a chill pill..." Dean moved to Maya, placing a calming hand on her shoulder. "And we just go to separate rooms and not start an all out brawl in Bobby's den with all the one of a kind and ancient lore books..." Dean steered Maya out of the room.

Maya and Ruby never lost eye contact till there was a solid wall between them. Puck growled at Ruby before following after Maya and Dean. They walked into the kitchen and around the corner to go outside.

Dean closed the door, but opened it when Puck barked to be let out too, then closed it with an eye roll.

"All right, what's going on?" Dean asked confronting her. "What's with you and Ruby?"

Maya scoffed, "Other than we're hanging around with a demon? Or-or how about trusting her? Huh?! You were-were leery of her too! What changed while me and Anna were in that cabin?"

Dean's lips tightened as he stared down at her. He rubbed his face and swallowed thickly, "Sam told me what happened while I was...you know. He practically went on a kamikaze run to get rid of Lilith when some omens pointed to her. If Ruby didn't show up...he'd be dead. I...we owe her Maya."

Maya went through a whole facial journey of disbelief, despair, incredulity, and then finally hard resoluteness.

"No," Maya shook her head. "I don't care what she did, or what she said, or-or how any of you think she's different than every other demon out there. She may have saved Sam, but I refuse to believe it was out of the goodness of her heart."
Dean gave her an appraising look, "You really don't trust her do you?"

"You don't become a demon, if one shred of humanity isn't burned away," Maya walked down the wooden steps.

The weight of the hex bag in Dean's jacket pocket seem to increase ten fold.

"Where you going, Goldy?" Dean called as Maya walked further into the scrap yard, Puck by her side.

She shook her head, "Just walking around, Dean. Need some air. Can't guarantee I won't step in there right now and not tell Puck to just waste her." Puck sent her a hopeful look and whine.

Dean watched with a sigh as Maya disappeared into the car stacks with the familiarity of someone's who walked them a hundred times before.

Sam tentatively opened the door and looked at his brother's back, "Hey, how's Maya?"

Dean looked over his shoulder tiredly, "Read to kill Ruby at the moment. She's taking some time to cool off."

"Oh, okay," Sam looked out into the scrapyard, probably to see if he could see a trace of her, but didn't. "Listen, I was thinking, we could bring Pamela in. Figure out what's going on with Anna and get some answers."

"Good idea," Dean nodded. "Who's getting her? She can't exactly drive her self."

The brothers stared at each other then broke out into an impromptu rock-paper-scissors.

Dean predictably chose scissors, again. Sam smirked as his fist crushed Dean's finger scissors.

"God damn it!"

Next day...

Maya was relaxing outside the house on the hood of one of the clunkers, enjoying the crisp autumn breeze that was offset by the warmth of the sun on such a clear day. Puck lounged on the roof of the rusted car and kept a watchful ear and eye out for anything dangerous.

A rumble came from the front gate of the salvage yard as the familiar impala rumbled its way up the dirt driveway, Dean at the wheel and someone new in the front seat.

She sat up and slid off the hood while Puck jumped agilely down from his post. "Hey Assface, how's the butt? Numb yet from an eight hour round trip?" she smirked playfully; glad he was back. From still trying not to talk to Sam to hating Ruby and being in a state of near constant hostility, there wasn't much room to relax and be playful. Maya tried with Anna but Ruby was usually close by so...yeah.

"Ha ha. You're hilarious," Dean mocked with an affectionate roll of the eyes. He turned to the woman who stepped out of the car. "Goldy, this is Pamela. She's the psychic that's gonna help us figure out what's going on with radio girl. Pamela, chuckles here is Goldy," he gestured to Maya.

Pamela had her head vaguely turned towards them but wasn't looking directly at them, not that
anyone could see her eyes with such harshly tinted sunglasses.

"Dean if you're gesturing..." Pamela said with a teasing lilt in her voice, her smile widening when she heard Dean splutter an apology before walking over to her and guiding her over to the half-Trickster she was sensing.

And the very interesting little dog.

"Name's actually Maya. Not that Dean uses it often," Maya greeted with a smile and took the offered hand from Pamela.

Pamela's eyebrows rose but her smile never waivered as she got a better reading on the young girl in front of her. Something seemed to roll quietly beneath the demi-god's skin. A power...no...a kind of light that she only now noticed seemed to brush against those around her.

It was subtle. Like when the morning light first breaks the dawn and pushes back against the dark of night. You barely notice the sky getting brighter, then all of a sudden the sun is up and shining.

'My Morning's Glory...' whispered a loving male's voice in her ear with unrestrained love and affection and parental awe. Pamela silently agreed with the whisper of a currently absent father, who was no doubt in her mind, Loki. The title definitely fit the young demi-god.

But, unlike the morning that continued to come and light the new day sky, it didn't seem to press more than necessary.

Pamela focused on a dark thought that brought sadness to her—the loss of her sight—just briefly, and felt the lightest of nudges pushing back the pain and heartache to where it was bearable then it just...stopped. Didn't banish it completely, just brought her to a precipice. A choice.

To let it go or submerge her self within it.

Pamela let it go and let the thankfulness of still being alive consume her...that and the potential of her visit to dick over some angels didn't hurt nothing either.

Pamela glanced a sightless look at Dean. No wonder the wounds left by Hell and his weariness seemed to have diminished.

"Pleasure to meet ya Maya," Pamela grinned charmingly back at the girl. "You've been keeping the boys out of trouble?"

Maya gave a very put-upon sigh, "I try, but they don't always listen."

"Yeah? Like when?" Dean snorted.

"How about that sandwich you wished for from that cursed wishing well a couple a weeks ago?" Maya pointed out loftily.

There was a silence and Pamela was about to ask for details of this story when all Dean said was, "Peoria."

Another poignant silence, no doubt filled with pointed looks and childish glares.

"Are you ever going to let that go?" Maya asked in annoyance.

"Never. And let's not forget Monument," Dean added on.
"I'm hearing locations but not a lot of details," Pamela said pointedly with a smile. It sounded like there were a couple of stories going on that sounded pretty interesting.

"Nothing. Just Maya being a dumbass greenhorn," Dean's smirk was evident in his voice, along with some protectiveness.

Pamela inwardly awed. Dean Winchester found himself another sibling to look after. Then she inwardly cackled and tried to keep the chuckling to a minimum.

And it was *a little sister*.

"I also hear a lot of big brother protectiveness going on here too," Pamela pointed out, feeling her mouth curve in a Cheshire grin.

Dean coughed a little awkwardly while Maya probably shrugged then remembered their guest was blind.

"You have no-*ho* idea," she groaned, but the affection was there.

Pamela held out her elbow to Maya, "Tell me on the way in, Cutie. I'd love to hear all about it. And anything else funny you can think of involving our two boys."

Pamela could easily sense the mischievous air all of a sudden manifest around Maya, while Dean's seemed to fill with abject horror and dread.

Oh this promised to be *good*.

Then Pamela finally drew her sightless gaze to the dog.

"The heck is up with your…dog?" Pamela questioned uncertainly.

"Heavenly Hound, apparently," Dean offered, hoping the change of subject would direct Pamela away from possible embarrassing stories Maya might have.

Pamela nodded, "Anti-thesis to Hellhounds. Guess they ain't all extinct after all." She turned back to Maya, "Now tell me all the embarrassing stories you have of Dean and Sam."

"Weeeeeeell we had this prank war early on and this one prank I did to his car…"

Dean groaned in metaphorical anguish.

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**Basement/Panic Room Entrance**

Dean had thundered down the steps of the basement before Maya and Pamela to warn Sam.

"Sammy!" Dean called out a little frantic.

Sam with concerned pinched eyebrows quickly ran up to him, "Dean? What's wrong? Where's Pamela?"

"It's bad Sam!" Dean said a little freaked, winding up his brother. "They're—they're *talking!*"

Sam gave him a confused look, "Wait, what?"
"Pamela's with Maya and they're talking! They're—they're—" Dean snapped his fingers trying to come up with the word he was looking for. Shaking his head he continued, "Never mind! Point is, they're working together!"

Sam was giving Dean a 'seriously'-bitch face of epic proportions. "Really, Dean?"

Dean threw his hands up in surrender, "Fine! But don't come complaining to me about it!"

Sam just gave him a disgruntled and confused narrow-eyed look, when Maya came down the wooden stairs with Pamela behind her, holding onto her shoulder.

"Hello, mole people!" Maya chirped, gaining the attention of everyone in the room.

Sam approached them and greeted Pamela, "Pamela. Hey."

"Sam," she said with a smile. Thankfully with the shades Sam couldn't exactly see the playful glint in her fake eyes.

"It's me. It's Sam," Sam put his hands on her shoulders as she reached out to him. "Yeah."

"Sam is that you?" she questioned, sounding like a clueless person perfectly.

"I'm right here," Sam grinned broadly as Pamela reached up and touched the side of his face lightly sighing just as light.

"Know how I can tell?" she asked him. Maya sucked her lips. Pamela had told her to watch her. Pamela then reached behind Sam and slapped his ass, making him release an audible gulp.

"That perky little ass of yours," Pamela grinned cheekily. Sam sent an accusatory glare at Dean, but he just motioned over to Maya who was giggling at him. "Bounce a nickel off that thing," Pamela chuckled as she turned to Anna and Ruby who had made their approach. "Of course I know it's you, Grumpy. Same way I know that's a demon and that poor girl's Anna," she turned back to Sam. "And that you've been eyeing my rack."

Dean was right and that smug bastard knew it.

Sam stuttered to try and deny it, but Pamela just chuckled at him, "Don't sweat it kiddo. I've still got more senses than most. Also how I know Maya's also been eyeing my ass."

Maya just laughed, "Guilty! Can't blame me for getting distracted by such a nice…ass-set."

Sam and Dean groaned at her, making Maya stick her tongue out at them.

Pamela threw a brilliant smile over her shoulder at the half-Trickster, "Promise not to be…punny again like that and ya can gimme a call when ya hit 18, Cutie."

Maya perked up, "You bet!"

Any amusement Sam and Dean had, had left as Big Brother Mode activated and both sternly said, "No!" Sending twin pointed looks towards Maya.

She just rolled her eyes at them.

Anna smiled at the display while Ruby looked confused at the three of them, not entirely understanding what was going on. Why did the brothers care about who the demi-god slept with?
Pamela turned towards Anna and Ruby, "Hey, Anna. How are ya? If ya haven't heard, I'm Pamela." She walked towards them and Anna went up to greet her, taking her hands.

"Hi," Anna said a little shyly.

"Dean's been telling me what's going on. I'm excited to help."

"Oh, that's nice of you," Anna said gratefully.

Pamela shrugged, "Oh, well, not really. Any chance I can dick over an angel, I'm taking it."

"Ooh, I like her," Maya commented from the peanut gallery. "Ow!" she softly yelped when Dean wacked her up side the head from behind. She glared at him as he sent her the very pointed look of 'not happening' between her and Pamela.

"Why?" Anna asked curiously, not noticing the gestured argument happening behind Pamela or Sam's beleaguered expression at Dean and Maya.

Pamela reached up to her sunglasses, "They stole something from me." She removed the sunglasses reveling completely white plastic eyes, much to Anna's consternation. "Demon-y, I know. But they're just plastic. Good for business. Makes me look extra psychic don't ya think?" Pamela laughed in good humor, getting Anna to smile.

"Now," Pamela put the glasses back on. "How about you tell me what your deal is? Hmm?" Pamela put an arm around Anna's shoulder and Anna reciprocated with one around Pamela's waist. Pamela patted her shoulder comfortably as they walked into the panic room, "Don't you worry."

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**Panic Room**

"I'm going to countdown from five. When we're at zero, you'll be in a deep state of hypnosis," Pamela said in a soothing even toned voice to Anna as she lay on the wall mounted bed with a lumpy mattress that had seen better days. "As I count down just go deeper and deeper, okay?"

Maya lounged in a rigid leather chair, Puck by her feet, while Dean sat on the desk by the bed like a heathen. Sam leaned against the oval metal doorway and Ruby, unable to enter looked on with her arms crossed while Pamela counted down, "5…4…3…2…1"

Pamela reached over and gently touched Anna's face to make sure she was under, "Deep sleep. Deep sleep. Every muscle calm and relaxed." She sat back and continued to calmly talk to her, "Can you hear me?"

"I can hear you," Anna responded.

"Now, Anna, tell me…how can you hear the angels? How did you work that spell?" Pamela asked the entranced girl.

"I don't know. I just did," Anna replied.

"You're father…what's his name?" Pamela tried.

Anna's eyelids fluttered, "Rich Milton."

"Alright, but I want you to look further back…when you were very young…just a couple of years
old," Pamela tried again, using what Dean had told her of Anna's first psych break.

"I don't wanna," Anna whimpered.

Pamela leaned forward and touched Anna's hand in comfort, "It'll be okay…Anna just one look—that's all we need."

Anna's head began shaking back and forth, "No."

"What's your Dad's name? Your real Dad. Why is he angry at you?" Pamela pressed, sensing they were getting somewhere.

Poor Anna started shaking more in distress, "No. No!" Then her back arched off the bed as she started screaming, "Nooo! He's gonna to kill me!" The lights flickered and you could hear the electricity crackle.

"Anna, calm down. You're safe," Pamela intoned soothingly to little effect.

Then the iron door slammed shut and locked itself.

"NOOOOOOOO!" Anna screamed harshly as the lights blew out and she sat straight up in bed.

"Holy shit!" Maya yelped as she cringed in her seat to escape falling sparks, only to find herself tackled by an enlarged Puck from her chair. Another yelp and Maya found herself on the floor with Puck standing over her, using his body as a shield.

"Calm down," Pamela told Anna in a calm voice. The only calm one in the room as Dean and Sam were flinching away from falling sparks as well.

"He's gonna kill me!" Anna kept screaming.

Dean was on his feet and heading towards Anna, "Anna?"

"Dean, don't," Pamela warned but Dean didn't listen when he touched Anna's shoulder and went flying back when she back handed him using super strength.

Pamela stood up and hovered over Anna as she tossed and turned frantically. "Wake in 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5," she commanded. Anna stilled as she gasped to catch her breath. "Anna. Anna…" Anna opened her eyes. "You alright?" Pamela asked in concern.

Sam helped Dean up and Puck finally let Maya up off the floor and they watched as Anna sat up and looked at Pamela, "Thank you, Pamela. That helped a lot. I remember now."

"Remember what?" Sam asked, eyeing the girl a little warily. That was an impressive show she'd been putting on just a minute ago.

"Who I am," Anna answered calmly…all be it with a total serenity that was putting everyone on edge.

"I'll bite. Who are you?" Dean asked a little freaked out.

"I'm an angel."

There was a heavy pause in the panic room.

Puck narrowed his eyes and growled lowly as he picked up Maya's increasing panic and fear.
Anna's eyes drifted over to Puck and Maya, softening. Maya stared at her with a paling complexion and wide frightened eyes. Her body tense and ready to make a run for it. The large dog—that she now recognized as a Heavenly Hound—was tense and ready for a fight. The glimmer of teeth behind pulled back lips glowing faintly.

"Maya, I'm not going to hurt you," Anna reassured but the reassurance wasn't all that effective.

"Sorry if I don't believe a monster from my nightmares," Maya whispered harshly, barely finding her voice to speak. Then quickly darted to the locked iron door and turned the handle, and slipping out while Puck stared down Anna.

"Maya!" Dean called after her but was blocked by Puck when the large dog made for the small opening to follow behind her.

"Best take this conversation upstairs," Pamela commented as she got to her feet. "I think we'd all feel less anxious if we weren't in a salt encrusted iron room with only one door in or out."

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### The Den

#### Sam and Dean

Sam and Dean called out to Maya when they got to the main floor, but got no answer in return. Before they could start to overly worry Maya had sent them a text telling them she was hiding out in the one bedroom with the tree and not to read the text out loud.

But Dean of course did and sent her an 'Oops. Sorry' text. There was a muffled curse from upstairs then silence.

Another text from Maya about hiding in the yard and to call Dean a 'stupid asshole'.

"Well Goldy's gone into hiding in the scrapyard with the mutt," Dean sighed and stuffed his cell back into his coat pocket as he sat on a footstool near Bobby's desk.

"I understand why she'd be scared of me, but she doesn't need to be," Anna looked over at Ruby who leaned against the door jam. "Either of you."

Ruby gave her a disgusted look, "I don't find that very reassuring."

"Neither do I," Pamela deadpanned, leaning back against the desk between Sam and Dean.

Anna had her hands looped in the back pockets of her jeans as she looked at Sam, Dean, and Pamela, "So Castiel and Uriel—they're the ones that came for me?"

"You know them?" Sam asked.

"We were kind of in the same foxhole," Anna answered.

"So what they were like your bosses or something?" Dean asked in clarification as he curiously eyed the newly revealed angel, looking for changes from the Anna they had come to know.

"Try the other way around," Anna smiled a little sheepishly.

"Look at you," Dean gave her an impressed smile.
"But now they want to kill you?" Pamela pointed out, addressing the big problem. Well one of them, at least.

"Orders are orders," she shrugged, crossing her arms. "I'm sure I have a death sentence on my head."

Pamela crossed her own arms, her leather jacket crinkling, "Why?"

"I disobeyed…which for us is about the worst thing you can do," she admitted. "I fell."

"Meaning?" Dean queried in confusion.

Pamela tilted her head towards Dean, "She fell to earth, and became human."

Sam shook his head as he tried to wrap his head around the concept, "Wait a minute. I don't understand. So, angels can just…become human?"

Anna chuckled and paced a little in front of them, "It kind of hurts. Try cutting your kidney out with a butter knife. That kind of hurt." She stopped, "I ripped out my grace."

"Come again?" all these new terms that Dean didn't have the meaning to.

"My grace. It's…energy. Hacked it out and fell," she shrugged. "My mother, Amy, couldn't get pregnant. Always called me her Little Miracle. She had no idea how right she was," she smiled fondly at the memory of her human mother.

"So, you just forgot that you were God's little Power Ranger?" Dean looked at her a little skeptically.

"The older I got, the longer I was human, yeah," she shrugged.

Ruby having had enough of the little Q&A they were having interrupted, "I don't think you all appreciate how completely screwed we are."

Anna nodded towards Ruby, "Ruby's right. Heaven wants me dead."

"And Hell just wants her," Ruby tacked on. "A flesh and blood angel that you can question, torture. That bleeds," she looked over at Anna. "And sister, you're the Stanley Cup. And sooner or later, Heaven or Hell, they're gonna to find you."

"I know," Anna acknowledged and that's why, "I'm going to get it back."

"What?" Sam questioned.

"My grace," Anna told him.

"You can do that?" Dean asked in surprise. There was a lot of things that he didn't know were actually a thing.

"If I can find it," Anna admitted.

"So what? You're such going to take some divine bong hit and shazam, you're Roma Downey?" Dean lifted an eyebrow at her, silently asking if he had the gist of it.

"Something like that," Anna nodded.
"All right," Dean smiled. "I like this plan," it would be nice to have an angel on their side, although, Maya would probably disagree vehemently if she wasn't hiding out somewhere. "So where's this grace of yours?"

Anna gave him a slightly sheepish look, "Lost track. I was falling about 10,000 miles per hour at the time."

Sam blinked owlishly in surprise, "Wait, you mean falling, like, literally?"

"Yes," Anna confirmed.

An idea immediately popped into Sam's giant head muscle that was his brain, "Like the way a human eye can see? Like a comet maybe, or a meteor?"

"Why do you ask?"

"'Cause it means I might have an idea of where to start looking for your grace," Sam smiled.

"Nerd," Dean coughed, unsubtly earning a Sam patented bitch face.

Maya

Scrapyard

Nighttime...

Maya was not a happy camper. It was already about mid-November and the highs were falling below double-digit degrees in Celsius and she was getting a little cold. Also she was hungry, having eaten her emergency snacks already to keep from passing out.

She peaked her head to look out of the window of one of the piled cars that she had found years ago to have an excellent vantage point. She could easily see Bobby's house, the rocky driveway, and a good ways in multiple directions. And she was high enough that most people wouldn't bother looking up or see her peak her head out.

The down side was, was that she'd have to climb down a 10-12ft drop and be pretty exposed the whole time.

A loud woofled (yes woofled) huff came from the bottom of the stack.

Another added downside was that Puck couldn't exactly follow her up either. She needed both hands to climb and even in his larger form, as they found out, he couldn't jump up that high.

Maya looked around and noticed Anna a ways away leaning against a car with her back turned to her. She carefully leaned over and whisper shouted, "Puck!"

Puck craned his head to look up at her, tilting his head curiously with perked ears.

Maya took a second to internally aww at her dog.

"Watch the angel! I need to head in for food!" she whisper shouted back.

Puck didn't give a nod but ran off to circle Anna. When he did appear it was on a car, in all his
large glorious form and lounged alert on a car in clear view. A clear distraction and warning to Anna not to move from her spot.

Smiling Maya carefully climbed down, confident that Puck would protect her if Anna tried to do anything. Brief moments of friendly camaraderie and flirting or not. Once on the ground she carefully stealth her way back to the house, cutting through rows and columns with a confidence that bespoke of hours upon hours of exploration in the scrapyard.

She made it to the house and carefully opened the back door then went into the kitchen and proceeded to raid the fridge for the pizza Sam had told her they had left for her. The allure of pizza hadn't tempted her out of hiding when Sam had ordered it earlier. Eating in the same room as an angel she was scared of and a demon she despised?

No thank you!

Maya didn't bother heating up the slices as she munched happily on them. She could faintly over hear Sam and Ruby talking in the den/library. From what she could gather Sam had narrowed down the possible location of Anna's grace.

So, instead of a super strength-wielding angel lacking most other angel powers like smiting, they'll have a fully powered one instead. With angel smiting action!

Greeeeeeaaaaaat.

Starting on her second slice she decided to walk a little closer to hear more of the conversation.

"Forget the angels, it's Alastair I'm scared of," came Ruby's clearly nervous voice. Maya stopped just short of the doorway, staying out of sight.

"Alastair?" Sam asked.


"And?"

"And you should pull him out," Ruby told him bluntly. Maya's eyes narrowed, this bitch was encouraging Sam in using his powers? It wasn't the powers that bothered her, although they were still worrisome given their origin, but what Sam used to fuel them.

"And throw him back into the pit…if you weren't so out of shape," Ruby admonished.

Maya's head jerked at that. Sam was out of shape using his demonic powers?

"Ruby…" Sam obviously didn't want to hear what the she-demon had to say, but that didn't stop her.

"No, you're abilities—you're getting flabby," Maya valiantly bit back the snort that wanted to escape. 'Flabby' and 'Sam' didn't necessarily belong together in the same sentence.

"Yeah, so how do I tone up?" Sam asked sarcastically.

"You know how," Ruby stated. Maya really wanted to peak her head around and see Sam's face. Was he actually considering whatever Ruby was alluding to? Was he hesitating? Ruby's lighter footsteps seemed to echo in the silence, "You know what you got to do."
Maya didn't hear an immediate denial, but it wasn't a prolonged pause either when Sam did answer, "No, I'm not doing that anymore."

"Sam…" Ruby tried to argue but Sam wasn't having it.

"I said no," came Sam's firm voice, leaving no room for argument. Maya felt a tenseness leave her chest. That sounded like the giant she had come to know and love.

"Then how do you expect to defeat Alastair? Or Lilith for that matter?" Ruby countered crossly.

Maya could almost hear Sam shrug, "By finding a different way of honing my powers." Maya wasn't too keen on the use of demon-begotten powers, but then again, her's weren't of the most innocent of origins either. But if Sam was able to put aside his thirst for revenge and all the hate and anger it brought out, maybe everything would be okay. Maybe she didn't have to worry about him…too much.

The powers came from the ingestion of demon blood as a baby. So let's be real, there will always be some worry.

"Seriously?" Ruby scoffed. "What are you going to do? Focus on peace and love? Finding your Zen? Please. Your abilities come from demon blood, Azazel's blood. They're not going to work with the power of love, Sam. Demons are cruel, violent, vicious, and filled to the brim with all sorts of other nasty emotions that makes flinging humans across the room as easy as breathing."

"You being the exception?"

Maya could practically see the bitch shrug in her mind's eye uncaringly, "Somehow didn't get turned all the way, but that doesn't mean I don't know demons, Sam. So my point still stands."

"I'm sorry, but I refuse to become something I swore I'd never be," Sam finished resolutely, much to Ruby's annoyance and Maya's happiness.

"Then you better pray that Anna gets her groove back, or we're all dead," Ruby deadpanned. "Including that half-breed of yours."

Maya listened as Ruby's footsteps went further into the house as she stalked away from Sam.

Finally Maya peeked around the double sliding doorway to look into the den curiously, spotting Sam leaning back against Bobby's desk with a grim face. Taking another big bite of her poor neglected second slice of pizza she pointed out around a mouthful of food to Sam, "You know, if you keep your face that ugly it's going to get stuck, right?"

Sam jolted at Maya's voice suddenly appearing and being directed at him. He looked up to see Maya leaning around the doorframe to look into the den at him. Eating pizza with a raised eyebrow at him.

Sam snorted, "And if you talk with your mouth full you might choke." He watched as she came out into the doorway more and walked into the room, looking at all the strewn about books and maps as she took another bite.

Sam frowned in thought then asked, "How…how much did you hear?"

Maya gave him a sheepish smile, "A good chunk of it…what-what did Ruby mean when she said you knew what you had to do to tone up your abilities?" She looked at him curiously and warily.
"You don't have to worry about it," Sam looked away pensively. "I'm not doing it anymore, so it's a non-issue."

"Like seeking revenge on Lilith?" Maya asked, taking another bite of pizza and walking a little closer to Sam.

"Yeah," Sam nodded with a sigh. "You were right."

Maya smirked that mischievous smirk her eyes glinting playfully, "Yeeeeses, I usually am." She walked up beside Sam, stuffing the last bit of pizza crust in her mouth and wrapped her arms around him, pulling him into a tight hug.

Sam was surprised by the gesture but only hesitated a moment before retuning it, wrapping his long arms around her small lithe frame fiercely. "I promise I'm going to do my damnedest not to turn into 'vengeful Sam'," he whispered into her dark curly hair.

She rubbed her head against his and gave a muffled "I know."

Sam felt a tension in his chest leave as he held Maya in his arms, and relief took its place, his resolve strengthening.

Then Maya had to go and ruin it by vocalizing obnoxious chewing sounds around the leftover pizza in her mouth in his ear, "Om nom nom nom."

"Ew! Gross!" Sam grimaced as he released her and tried to pry her off.

Maya shook as she laughed, but it quickly turned into coughing. She quickly let go and brought a fist to her mouth as she worked the chewed up food in her mouth so it was no longer on the verge of choking her. Once the danger was gone she carefully swallowed smaller portions, then looked back at Sam.

"Well that was an unexpected close one," Maya smiled a little sheepishly at an unimpressed Sam.

"Seriously Maya, you should really learn to eat your food properly," Sam deadpanned. "Of all the stupid ways to die, choking from trying to be funny with food in your mouth has to be one of the stupidest ones."

A pause of expectant silence.

"Your reaction was worth it though."

Sam's response was quickly standing up and wrapping an arm around her head, and then preceded to noogie her short hair.

"Let go you asshole!" Maya cried as she valiantly tried to pry her self from Sam's grasp.

"What you get from being a little twerp!" Sam quipped back with a laugh.

Neither of them saw Ruby with arms crossed and frowning at them from the doorway leading into the hallway.

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Back outside in the scrapyard...
Anna stared up at the night sky, the stars barely visible from the light pollution of the town near by. She knew she probably should head inside, but she found herself pinned by the unwavering hard stare of the Heaven Hound that lounged on top a car 50m away. Not its smaller size, but the **big** one.

She had wondered if Maya was near by watching her also, or if the Hound was tasked with keeping her outside while Maya made her way back to the house.

Anna turned at the rumble and glare of headlights from a car approaching. It was Dean coming back from taking Pamela back home.

Scrapping metal and the protested movements of rusted shocks had Anna quickly turning her head back to the Heaven Hound as it jumped from its perch and stalked its way back towards the house to be with his Mistress.

"Pamela get home okay?" Anna asked as Dean approached.

"She said she was sorry. It's just after last time she uh…this is just a little too rich for her blood," Dean leaned up against the car just behind Anna.

"I don't blame her," Anna sighed. "You guys should do the same."

Dean smiled, "Well, we're not that smart. Maybe Goldy since she's avoiding you like the plague now."

Anna gave a self-derisive laugh, "Yeah. I don't blame her. Angels haven't exactly been **kind** to demi-gods like her."

"Yeah, she uh mentioned once about angels hating her just 'cause she was born," Dean watched pensively as Anna nodded.

"In the eyes of Heaven the…**pagan** magic that laces the human soul of a demi-god is looked down upon as a…**taint**. An aberration. An…"

"An abomination?" Dean added. Anna nodded.

"There's no law or order saying they have to be killed, but their presence is like The Bird to our Father's creation. An insult. One that should be cleansed," she elaborated. "Before I fell…I was just as guilty as the rest of Heaven. I saw a human begotten demi-god and I…well you get the picture."

Anna didn't need to look behind her to know how Dean's body tensed at her words.

"What changed then?"

"I killed the half-human son of the Lebanese god of healing, Eshmun," Anna admitted as she recalled the event vividly. "The child was down by the Bostrenous riverbank with his human mother as she washed their clothing. The mother misplaced her footing and ended up badly twisting her ankle in the rocks."

"I was on assignment to observe the area when I felt the unrestrained presence of pagan magic. I immediately followed it and witnessed the child touch his mother's ankle and heal it. Good as new," Anna let a tear fall down her cheek at the memory. "Instead of seeing the kind boy that wanted nothing more than to heal his mother I saw an aberration, a perversion of a young human soul streaked with pagan magic."
"So I did what was expected of me, and I slaughtered him," Anna choked as she began sobbing. "I-I never f-felt so horrible as I wa-watched the mother cry out in such pain. I-I never felt m-much of anything before then. Until I be-became hu-human I never truly understood w-what I felt that day," the guilt in her heart twisted sharply and cruelly from the added sting of empathy and regret as she inadvertently put herself in that mother's place.

Dean softened his gaze somewhat. He'd grown angry at the thought of a child being meaninglessly killed, even a pagan one, but he could tell Anna truly felt horrible guilt over the act. With a sigh he let go of the anger and wrapped an arm around her shoulders, then let her cry into his chest.

Anna calmed and sniffled, "I became curious of human emotions and let myself begin to feel them somewhat. As time past I had more questions than answers, but that didn't keep me from dispatching others. Maya's the first demi-god that I've never felt even the remote need to...cleanse."

Dean released her and grunted, "Let's keep it that way, okay? Me and Sam are a little fond of that pain in the ass."

Anna chuckled at that, "Yeah, I kind of got that. I'd say the feelings mutual if she sees you and Sam like her brothers."

Dean rubbed the back of his head a little embarrassed, "She just brings it out in us. I mean, I've always been that way towards Sam but now there's Maya too. Somehow she just kind of waltzed into our lives like she was always supposed to be there, you know?"

Anna smiled at him wanly, "Sadly I've never met anyone like that before, so I can't really say. All of Heaven was supposed to be one big family of brothers and sisters, but...it hasn't been like that. Probably never has been to be honest. Heh, we're not even related the way humans are."

"Yeah?" Dean raised an eyebrow.

Anna shook her head, "No. When God created us, our grace came from the stars themselves. The reason we'd refer to each other as Brother and Sister is because we all had the same creator. Archangels, however, are the only true siblings. Their grace came directly from God, albeit an infinitesimally small portion of it. Making them extremely powerful beings and second only to God."

"Guess Heaven ain't all it's cracked up to be then, huh?" Dean quipped, earning a sad smile in return.

There was a comfortable silence before a question that had been niggling at the back of Dean's brain could no longer be silenced.

He asked about what Heaven wanted with him, why they saved him, but Anna didn't know as it was after her fall and the dicks weren't talking.

They talked about why she fell, giving positive and negative points. Dean couldn't really find a counter point when Anna simply stated 'sex' for the positive column of being human. Dean definitely couldn't argue that one.

Anna described what it meant to be an angel. To be a marble statue that would be shattered if they ever lost or questioned their orders.

They related to both their times out on the road, waiting for orders from an unknowable father neither could begin to understand.
"Hey," Sam called from behind them, making them turn.

"Did you find something?" Dean asked as he looked at his giant brother…and Maya who was standing slightly behind Sam and her hair looking a bit ruffled. Puck's large form padded its way to Maya's side, unnervingly silent for such a large dog.

"I think so," Sam nodded as they all made their way back to the house. Maya keeping one or both of the Winchesters between her and Anna at all times. Having Puck stay in his enlarged form acting like another barrier with more threatening teeth and claws was also very effective in making Maya feel safe too.

"Union, Kentucky," Sam leaned over the open map on Bobby's desk, pointing out the town. "Found some accounts of a local miracle."

"Yeah?" Dean looked at Sam as he leaned forward heavily on the wooden desk.

"Yeah. In '85, there was an empty field outside of town. Six months later there was a full-grown oak. They say it looks a century old, at least," Sam informed them. Well his brother, the angel, and the demon that were gathered around the map. Maya sat back on the couch—Puck standing guard beside her—and far away from both the angel and demon in their midst. She was listening…just from a bit of a distance.

Dean looked to Anna, "Anna, what do you think?"

"The grace. Where it hit, it could have done something like that, easy," Anna took her eyes off the map and looked up at Dean.

"So grace ground zero—it's not destruction. It's…"

"Pure creation," Anna finished for Dean. Maya kept silent but was mentally scoffing at the notion. 'Yeah till the angel decides its time to get smite happy,' Maya thought bitterly with a tinge of worry and fear.

Sam, Dean, and Ruby looked between each other. A silent agreement that that was a lot of power that they could use on their side.

"Guess we're heading to Kentucky," Dean straightened up, turning around to look at Maya who now sat straight and stiff on the edge of the couch. He had an idea of what she was about to say given the displeased and stubborn frown that marred her face. One that reminded him too much of a much younger and baby-faced little brother. "Maya…" Dean said in warning.

Her frown deepened as the other three turned to look at her, "I'm not spending however many hours in the back seat beside an angel." Anna looked away, a little hurt.

Dean rolled his eyes, glancing skywards for patience, "Then we'll stick Ruby between you and Anna." Ruby rolled her eyes at that, but didn't protest. "And it'll take a couple of days, or just the one if we don't stop."

"Oh fuck no!" Maya scoffed and settled back into the couch defiantly. "And sitting beside demon-bitch isn't exactly an improvement." Ruby sneered at her that it wasn't a treat for her either to be stuck beside her either and Maya returned the sneer with the added childishness of sticking her tongue out at the demon.

"Maya, c'mon…" Sam said in a pleading voice, sending his puppy-eyed face her way in full force.
The look begging her not to be difficult.

She crossed her arms and shook her head pointedly avoiding Sam's face, "No, Sam! I'll stay here. Hell, I'll even lock myself in the panic room till you or Bobby gets back. But there is no way I'm staying trapped in that damn car with a goddamned fucking angel!"

Couple hours later…

Random back road…

Maya planned to give both Sam and Dean the silent treatment as long as she could. With lots of glaring at the backs of their heads and obscene and insulting gestures!

Currently she was glaring only at the back of Dean's sandy head as she sat in the back behind him with Puck in her lap facing the demon squished beside her, letting out a displeased and warning growl every now and then. She actually really wanted to glare at Sam's head, but turning her head meant getting glimpses of the angel on the other end of the back seat in the corner of her eye.

It was easier on her nerves if she just pretended Anna wasn't in the car and the demon was just being a bitch by sitting too close to her. It was easier to pretend if she couldn't actively see Anna. So she settled for glaring at Dean's head instead.

Dean shifted uncomfortably in his seat as he kept his eyes on the road, no doubt feeling her malice filled stare drilling holes in the back of his head.

Good.

If she was being forced into being in an enclosed space like this then he can suffer—no matter how small—with her.

Dean glanced in the rearview mirror seeing the bored faces of the most unlikely trio in his backseat. Despite the damn near intolerable itchy feeling of being watched—Maya—he couldn't help the chuckle that escaped his lips.

Ruby met his eyes in the mirror, "What?" She wasn't too happy being stuck between an angel and a half-breed Trickster and her demon-killing dog.

"Nothing. It's just an angel, a demon, and a pagan riding in the backseat," Dean chuckled, Sam smirking and stifling his own chuckle. It was an odd group that was for sure. "It's like the set-up to a bad joke…or a Penthouse Forum letter."

Anna gave a silent smile, Ruby rolled her eyes, but Maya looked a little confused at that last reference Dean made. Despite her vow not to engage them, she really wanted to ask what a Penthouse Forum letter was. Then Sam gave her the general idea as he chastised Dean.

"Dude!" Sam reprimanded. "Reality…porn. You included Maya…in porn."

"Ah crap, sorry Goldy," Dean apologized, while looking a bit disgusted with himself. "No offense kid, you're pretty, but that's not how our relationship works," Dean used the mirror to look back at her—still glaring balefully at him with eyes flicking to Sam as well for a moment—and received the middle finger.
Yep, still pissed at them.

Then Ruby opened her mouth, "What is your relationship with the half-breed anyways? Why do you bother keeping her around? Especially given how weak she is?"

Maya glared at Ruby earning a sneer in return.

"Yeah, you're no more powerful than a normal garden variety human," Ruby needled, all the while keeping a wary eye on a none too subtly growling dog. "Pretty much useless now."

"Hey! Watch it!" Dean barked as he gripped the steering wheel tightly as he tried to keep his temper in check so he didn't run them off the road.

Sam turned to look at Ruby with sternness and a coldness Ruby hadn't received from Sam since they first met. "Maya is very important to us, Ruby. Powers or not. She's our friend and she was in trouble and her Dad couldn't get there, so she came with us," Sam then narrowed his eyes at the demon. "More importantly, Maya is like family, and you should know us by now that no one messes with our family," Sam turned around, not bothering to see the stunned look on Ruby's face at the way he had spoken to her.

Anna bit her lip, smiling at the protectiveness of the Winchester brothers. She carefully looked over at Maya to see her looking at the two with fond affection. When Maya glanced at Ruby it was with smugness that radiated a 'take-that-bitch!' kind of vibe.

"That was beautiful, Sammy," Dean said with a fake choke in his voice, thus ruining the moment. "How long have you been practicing that one for?"

"Shut up, jerk," Sam sniffed.

"Bitch," Dean retorted back.

"And it's been established that you're both assholes," Maya said, finally speaking up. Some of her ire having melted away.

"She speaks!" Dean cheered with a grin, his eyes crinkling as he looked at Maya roll her eyes at him affectionately through the mirror. "Done with the silent treatment now?"

Maya huffed and pointedly looked out the window into the night, but the small smile on her lips betrayed her lack of irritation. Yeah she could look after her self but she'd never admit to anyone about the warm and fuzzies she gets when Sam and Dean go into 'Big Brother' mode on her...well when they say they see her like family anyways, or act like it in rare moments of affection. The posturing and protectiveness against her having sex and bossing her around—granted usually with good reason—she could do with a little less of. No matter how amusing it was to fluster (read: Dean) them about her and sex.

"Well at least glare at Sam more," Dean shifted in his seat his eyes on the darkened road. "He's the one that got you with the vulnerable puppy-eyes of doom," he could feel the bitch-face Sam was sending his way.

Maya's shoulders shook in silent laughter as she momentarily forgot about the angel in the enclosed car and the demon sitting way too close to her.

Anna grinned some more at the sibling interactions between the three. There was closeness there that transcended blood relation between the Winchesters and the demi-god. It was odd, and she could maybe see how her angel brethren could mistake it for something more carnal in nature, but
it was such a stretch. A long one. Having been human for the last couple of decades for the most part helped her better understand human interactions than anything she or her 'siblings' ever experienced as angels.

Looking back, even the Archangels—the closest approximation to true siblings the angels had—had a kind of distance between each other. The only one that acted anything like what the Winchesters and Maya had was the Archangel Gabriel.

Gabriel kidded, joked around, could be overly affectionate and was the only older angel that took time to peek in on them as fledglings and help the caretakers look after them. He was Heaven's laughter and joy.

Those that were close to him mourned the day it was announced he was dead, killed by demons on Earth. Raphael had said it was Lucifer's most powerful demons that had cornered and ambushed the archangel. Then he ordered them back to work and to cease their mourning.

It was harder for some and they were sent somewhere to help them turn back into perfect marble angel statues. Unfeeling and cold statues like Michael and Raphael.

Anna mentally shook her head and stared out the window of the impala. There was no point revisiting the past when the future seemed so uncertain.

Ruby crossed her arms and glared out the front windshield. Sam was not reacting the way he should be to her. He's resisting and, so far, successfully! Her dark eyes cut briefly to the half-breed leaning against the window with droopy eyes in accusation. The small dog noticed and gave her a quiet warning growl.

She rolled her eyes, but couldn't hide the tenseness in her shoulders. Ruby then briefly looked at the back of Dean's head as well with the same accusing eyes.

Whatever was giving Sam purpose to resist the blood, resist his anger and his thirst for vengeance, had to be one of the two.

Either the big brother that went to Hell for him, or the demi-Trickster he saw—no doubt—like his little sister.

Ruby drummed her fingers on her arms in irritation.

She had her work cut out for her…well, at least until the addictive quality of demon blood kicked in.

Random Overgrown Field, Union, Kentucky

Following Evening…

They finally made it to the field this miracle tree was, after pestering the local drive-thru McDonald's cashier for some directions at oh-man-o'clock, Dean's idea, and then going with Sam's more sensible and less asshole-ish idea of asking a local shopper owner and not hold up the drive-thru.

Going down the beaten road they finally come to the end that opened up to a large field.
With one of the largest and most magnificent oak trees you've ever seen. It was like the whole deal was set up for just that picture perfect moment. The ground and foliage was wet from dew and the sun was still creeping up in the sky, shining from behind the oak, lighting up every drop like a sparkling diamond as the rays filtered through its lush branches.

There was no Heavenly Choir music, but it didn't take much for anyone to imagine that that was what they should be hearing as they all got out of the impala and stared up at the giant old/young oak tree.

"It's beautiful," Dean commented.

"It's where the grace touched down," Anna told them as she stared at the tree. "I can feel it."

Maya sent the human-angel a skeptical look from the other side of Dean and Puck, but her eyes were quickly drawn back to the magnificent tree and smiled.

It took some will power not to run over to it and stare up into its branches to see if it were possible to climb it, and see how far up its branches she'd inevitably lodge her self in.

Sam and Dean shared a look behind Anna's back a little wary of what was about to happen.

"Ready to do this?" Dean asked, looking back at Anna.

Anna sighed unenthused, "Not really." She liked being human, having a human life, having this breadth of emotions. Becoming full angel again wasn't appealing in the least, but there wasn't much of a choice.

They all walked up to get closer to the tree, Anna leading the way.

Maya looked up at the closest low hanging branch that was still a good three feet...above Sam's head. She looked at Sam then the branch and contemplated if she could convince him to let her use him as a ladder...Maya shook her head.

Time and place, Maya, time and place.

"Anna what are we looking for?" Sam asked as Anna walked up to the trunk, placing a hand on its mossy bark.

After a moment, "It doesn't matter. It's not here." The red-haired angel turned to look at them in disappointment, "Not anymore. Someone took it."

"So, no angel wings for you to fly the fuck outta here?" Maya drawled; getting unimpressed glares from Sam and Dean in return. She rolled her eyes and sassed, "I'm so sorry you didn't get your demi-god smiting abilities back. Real shame. Can we go now?"

Anna didn't look mad or even annoyed at her, just...sad.

Maya shifted under those sad eyes and...fuck, there's the guilty conscience. Why'd her human half have to be so damn strong?!

"Let's go," Dean said gruffly shoving her shoulder a little roughly, which to be fair she did kind of deserve. It's one thing to be scared and wary, it's another to be a mean asshole about it.
Random Abandoned Barn

Nighttime…

The town didn't have a motel, hotel, BnB, or what have you. And no one was keen on spending another day in cramped quarters in the impala. It took a couple of hours but they managed to find an abandoned barn in one of the farm fields. They planned to hole up there for the night at least and until they could come up with another idea.

They went inside to find some convenient oil lamps that…still had oil and worked. Maya briefly wondered if this was the Universe letting them have a tiny bit of good luck in recompense for the no doubt shit load of bad luck it was sending their way.

Undoubtedly very soon.

"Alright, we still got the hex bags. I say we head back to the panic room," Dean suggested.

Ruby scoffed, "What, forever?"

"I'm just thinking out loud," he fired back, loudly.

"Oh, you call that thinking?" Ruby insulted as Dean partially circled her and then squared up to her.

Sam quickly called out to them, "Hey! Hey, hey, hey. Stop it."

"Anna's grace is gone! You understand?" Ruby pointed out irritatingly. "She can't angel up. She can't protect us. We can't fight Heaven and Hell. One side maybe, but not both. Not at once."

Maya rolled her eyes for the umpteenth time and let them settle on Anna who looked a little spaced out. Puck gave a disquieted grumble as he stared at the wannabe angel.

"Um…guys?" Anna called out, still staring out into the Void. "The angels are talking again."

"What are they saying?" Sam asked as all eyes shifted to their portable angel radio girl.

"They've got wings like Kotex?" Maya shrugged, a small smirk playing on her lips. No one laughed.

"It's weird…like a recording…a loop" Anna frowned, ignoring Maya's obviously funny quip. "It says, 'Dean Winchester gives us Anna by midnight, or…'" she trailed off ominously.

"Or what?" Dean asked a bit worried… okay, maybe a lot worried.

Anna broke connection with the Void and looked into Dean's eyes fearfully, "Or we hurl him back to damnation."

Maya's eyes widened and looked at Dean's own flabbergasted and fear strewn face as his mouth opened and closed silently.

Sam quickly walked up to Anna, "Do you know of any weapon that works on an angel?" He wasn't about to lose his brother a second time.

"To what? To kill them?" Anna questioned him. Sam shrugged and stared at her pleadingly. Anna shook her head, "Nothing we can…" She paused as her eyes narrowed in thought, then looked over her shoulder in Maya's direction. Or more specifically at Puck.
Dean looked at Anna, taken back, "The *rat* can kill angels too?"

Anna shook her head, "No, he's too far down the generations of mortal canines. His bite can kill demons and most other creatures if it's a killing blow...but still. To an angel it'll still be excruciatingly painful." Puck sent Anna an unnerving predatory doggy grin. "If...he had an angel in his grasp he could restrain them...or viciously injure them at least."

Sam, Dean, and Maya all gave Puck an impressed appraising look.

Puck puffed up his little doggy chest in pride, smugness, and self-assuredness of his own awesomeness.

Ruby rolled her eyes with a scoff, "Still can't *kill* them, though. And there'll be more than one no doubt. And we're here with only the one mutt. So is there something else that *can* kill angels?"

"There *is* something but it's nothing we can get to. Not right now," Anna shook her head again apologetically.

"Okay, so the rat's not the best option then, but I say we call Bobby," Dean interrupted before anyone else could get another idea out. "We get him back from hedonism—"

Sam angrily turned on Dean, "And what's he going to tell us that we don't already know?"

"I don't know, but we gotta think of something!" Dean shouted back, memories of Hell swirling around his mind's edge.

Maya frowned at the tension escalating between Sam and Dean, both looking ready to get into it between each other.

"Guys! C'mon! We can't be fighting about this right now!" Maya piped up, having their hard gazes land on her. "Arguing's not going to get us anywhere," she sent them pleading eyes to stop this tension created pissing match and to stop fighting.

Maya hated watching them fight.

Dean scoffed, "Fine. Fine. I'm going to go read whatever we have stashed in the trunk. Maybe we missed something." He turned and exited the barn, but it was evident in his voice that he didn't really believe his words.

Sam sighed, releasing his own tension, "Yeah good idea." He rubbed his face and followed after Dean, "I take half and you take half?"

They didn't hear Dean's response, but with the lack of shouting and jumping at each other's throats, May guessed it was positive.

She released a sigh; glad they let it go for now.

"And what are you going to do then?" Ruby sneered at Maya, crossing her arms and cocking a hip. "Find a nice straw pile to hide in?" she mocked.

Maya scoffed and gave Anna a side-glance; Anna looked away helplessly. As much as the demon's idea appealed to her in regards to her still being scared of Anna, her fear of Anna had dissipated the moment she felt guilty for being mean to her.

Sure Anna could easily smite her from existence once upon a time, but she couldn't now and she so
far seemed completely different than the two dicks with wings they've been dealing with. Heck, she was different than what her Dad had described angels as to her.

Maya focused back on Ruby and drawled, "No, I'll be joining Sam and Dean in some light reading by oil lamp." She sent a heated glare at the demon, "Why don't you do something useful like walk the perimeter or something?"

"We don't have one dumbass," Ruby scoffed.

Maya looked at her like she was an idiot, "Then make one, oh intellectually-challenged-one."

Ruby took a challenging step forward that had Puck growling with shining and warning eyes, when Sam walked in with a couple of books. He raised an eyebrow at the scene between Maya and Ruby.

Ruby tsk'd, "I'll scout around the perimeter." She promptly left the barn so she didn't give into temptation and tried to shank the demi-god—even if it meant being killed by her mutt in the process. Wouldn't be worth it—if only by a little bit.

"Um, okay?" Sam said a little confused and looked to Anna and then Maya in the eye questioningly. Maya smiled and shrugged as she snagged one of the books from his hands.

Maya went to walk by Anna to claim one of the oil lamps but stopped and glanced a little at the red-haired angel. "Anna, I'm...sorry. About what I said when we didn't find your grace," she mumbled; face a little red from embarrassment.

Anna gave her a sad smile and took a step towards her, but Maya mirrored with a step away. Anna's smile fell a little, "I understand why you're afraid. You have every right to be."

Maya glanced back at Sam who seemed to have made him self busy at the wooden workbench and seemed to studiously ignore them. Though the way his head was canted a smidge in their direction he was no doubt trying to listen in a little. She rolled her eyes at him.

Maya then her eyes briefly meet Anna's before gazing away, "Doesn't mean I had to be a bitch about it."

"Fear leads to anger, and anger leads to hate..." Anna quoted, leaving it unfinished when Maya decided to finish it.

"Hate leads to suffering," Maya sighed with a smile.

Both ignored the slight choked laugh Sam gave from his spot at the workbench, his back to them.

"Star Wars, nice. Guess you're not soooo bad. For an angel," Maya smirked then frowned seriously. "Just...keep your distance okay? Gotta life time of fear and prejudice to work through here."

Anna smiled a little less sad, "Deal."

Maya turned her head when Dean walked in with some more books. Her eyes flickered to Anna mischievously.

"Hey, Dean! Your girlfriend just Yoda'd me!" Maya snickered at both of their slightly embarrassed reactions as she walked further into the barn and absconded with a lit oil lamp. It was so obvious they were attracted to each other it was almost painful.
Finding a crate Maya set up her own little reading corner and opened the book to the sound of Dean telling Sam off for laughing at her comment.

Couple hours later…

The words were blurring on the page. Maya blinked her eyes rapidly and tried to focus them but it was getting hard. Then she realized she'd been staring at the same page for the last 15 minutes and groaned in mental agony.

Sam chose that moment to walk over to her rubbing his own face, "You too huh?"

"My brain's so fried I'm not seeing straight," Maya snorted as she got up and stretched her stiff legs.

"You still got some emergency candy bars on you?" Sam asked a little worried.

Maya waved him off, "Yeah, I'm good on that front. No, this is from lack of sleep."

"Well I think I've come up with something that'll hopefully get us out of this in relatively one piece," Sam said with a strained smile. "And let us get a couple hours of rest."

"And you only thought of this…now?!" Maya demanded, grumpily crossing her arms and pouting up at him.

Sam bit back the chuckle trying to escape as Maya did her angry kitten face.

"Yeah, it was just something Ruby said back at Bobby's—"

Maya cut him off, "Again, just now?!"

Sam didn't bother holding back the laugh as he tiredly rubbed the back of his neck, "Yeah, sorry. Think you can you go grab Dean and Anna?"

"Ugh, fine," Maya grumbled and proceeded to exit the barn towards the impala.

The cool night air bit at her cheeks; reminding her that winter was coming. Puck trotted beside her as they made their way towards the impala. She frowned at the slightly fogged windows, but dismissed it as she looked around finding no Dean or Anna in sight.

Curiously she rounded the impala where the portable light and open book sat innocently on the trunk. Okay, that was odd.

Scratching her head she turned back to the fogged out windows and noticed what looked like was a hand dragged down through the condensation from the inside. But the condensation was already forming back up. She even thought she saw movement beyond the fog.

Next came the second most scarring moment of her life as she mentally shrugged and decided to check inside by opening the back door.

Her mind stalled a second but quickly went into overdrive that had her yelling in horror and disgust, "GAH!"

The two very naked bodies, if the door opening didn't startle them, were certainly startled from the sudden yell.
Dean was the first to jump and respond eloquently with, "SON OF A BITCH! WHAT THE HELL?! MAYA?!"

Maya by that point had about faced, sidestepped out of the view of the open door, and as extra precaution slapped a hand over her eyes.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WHAT THE HELL?! WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU DOING SEXING IT UP IN THE IMPALA?!" she shouted back sharply. "I'm probably blind now, thanks! Wait, nope. I can still see. Fuck, I can still see! I'll never un-see that! It's seared into my brain!"

Dean, although internally mortified, rolled his eyes and snorted, "Well if you don't want another showing, can you close the door so me and Anna can get some clothes on?"

Maya reached blindly for the open door and then preceded to slam it shut, much to Dean's insult to his Baby.

It took a few minutes of the car shaking and Maya yelling, "You better not be having round two in there!" before Dean and Anna emerged.

Anna red faced and disheveled, and Dean looking more unkempt than usual.

Maya pinned Dean with a glare, "I'm completely traumatized now. So thanks for that."

"Don't be such a drama queen. Never seen a naked body before?" Dean quipped trying to joke the awkwardness he felt having Maya see him like that. It was one thing for Sam to walk in on him, he was his kid brother. It was a whole other thing for Maya to when he saw her as his kid sister.

Maya gave him a deadpanned stare, "There's porn…and then there's the guy you see as your older brother." She looked at an embarrassed Anna with a little eyebrow waggle, "Didn't mind seeing you though."

Anna gave a shaky, red-faced smile, still a little embarrassed for being caught by the younger girl with her older brother figure.

"Okay, okay, what did you want?" Dean asked, steering this conversation away.

"Sam has a plan," Maya shrugged and started walking back to the barn. Puck following, his little body shaking in obvious amusement.

Maya burst through the doors of the barn dramatically, "SAAAAAAAAAAAM! Dean traumatized me!"

Sam pinched his face and looked confused at Maya, then looked at the disheveled clothes of Dean and Anna. A dawning look of understanding and sympathetic pity overtook his features, as well as exasperation with his brother.

He patted Maya's back as she glomped him in a bear hug, "I know Maya. Seeing way too much of him can do that."

"I have to sit back there!" Maya whined into Sam's chest. "I'm not sitting in a defiled backseat."

Dean snorted, "That seat has been defiled long before you ever came around, Goldy."

Maya turned her head to look at Dean in horror, and then back at Sam with wide eyes.

"Don't worry," Sam reassured her as he pointedly looked over her head at Dean. "I'm sure Dean
will make sure it's nice and clean for you," Dean sent him a 'duh' look. As if he wasn't going to make sure his Baby was clean and well cared for. Especially after such enjoyable activities.

"I'll still know, though," Maya pouted as she released Sam and glared at Dean. Sam patted her shoulder.

Ruby scoffed, "You're ridiculous."

Maya glared and went to rebuff her when she let out a jaw-cracking yawn.

Taking that as his cue Sam began to explain his plan.

No one liked it, especially Maya. But after another 20 minutes of arguing and resisting, mostly on Maya's part because she really didn't like it, they finally agreed it was the only shot they had.

That and Maya threw up her hands and grunted in a very Bobby-like manner, "Fine! Whatever! I'm too tired for this crap…"

Early Morning…

Anna looked warily out of the cracks between the planks in the barn for any sign of Ruby coming back, while Sam paced around a little impatiently. Dean sat anxiously on a barrel by some stairs that led up to the hayloft, and Maya sat on said stairs leaning back against them spread out.

Puck stayed at the bottom, tense and alert. Waiting for this foolhardy plan to go into action.

"Think we still got a shot?" Dean asked Sam as he took out a flask of whisky from inside his coat, taking a nervous swig. After what Uriel had threatened in his dream last night if they didn't hand over Anna…well, he wasn't doing too good, especially with this plan they've cooked up.

"I don't know, man," Sam's eyes darted around nervously. "Where's Ruby?"

"Hey, she's your Hell buddy," Dean answered tiredly, taking another sip of whisky. Maya sent him a worried look and pushed her self up from the stairs; ready to see if he was okay when Anna beat her to it.

Anna walked over to Dean and asked casually, "Little early for that, isn't it?"

Dean looked over at Anna and gave a nervous smirk, "It's 2:00 am somewhere."

"You okay?" Anna asked, tilting her head in concern.

"Yeah, of course," Dean answered unconvincingly.

Maya looked at a concerned Anna, then drifted back to Dean. "Dean—" Maya's concerned voice was cut off why the sound of the barn doors bursting open from powerful gusts of wind.

All their attention was drawn to the two angels striding purposefully into the barn, the same wind slamming the doors shut behind them.

Fucking Uriel and Castiel.

Guess it was now or never.
Castiel's intense blue eyes locked onto Anna, "Hello Anna. It's good to see you."

Puck took an offensive stance between the group and the angels, growling at the Heavenly beings. Uriel scoffed at him while Castiel briefly eyed him with wariness.

"How? How'd you find us?" Sam demanded in what hopefully would come off as fear. Well there was plenty of that still so no worries there.

Castiel's eyes shifted to Dean's, and Dean's face morphed into one of guilt. Sam and Anna followed Castiel's gaze to look at his brother. Maya smartly kept her eyes on the hostile angels along with Puck.

"Dean?" Sam questioned with believable disbelief.

Dean turned to look at Anna and whispered, "I'm sorry."

"Why?" Sam demanded.

Anna swallowed, understanding what Dean was silently telling her and remembering how Heaven worked. She turned to Sam, "Because they gave him a choice. They either kill me…or kill you."

Sam's jaw clenched and chest heaved as he tried to breath through his anger at the angels. Sure they assumed that this was kind of how it was going to go, the angels threatening one of them, but it didn't make it any easier.

And their plan wasn't working. Ruby still hadn't shown up yet, and it was obvious that when push came to shove Dean would choose Sam over Anna.

Anna knew this too. "I know how their minds work," she stared hard at an unblinking Castiel. She touched Dean's arm affectionately and turned to him, giving him a tender kiss on the lips. "You did the best you could," Anna didn't want the boys or Maya to get hurt in a battle they had very little hope in winning against the angels. "I forgive you," Anna turned back to Uriel and Castiel, purposely walking past Puck and towards them.

"Okay. No more tricks," Anna swallowed nervously. "No more running. I'm ready," looks like their plan was a misfire.

Maya looked at the back of Anna sadly as their plan to save her unraveled before them. 'Stupid demon,' she thought bitterly. Puck looked back at her questioningly, and she shook her head. Anna made her choice and Maya wouldn't lose Puck over it. Puck backed up till he stood in line with Sam and Dean, while she stayed behind the three of them.

"I'm sorry," Castiel intoned, but there was no true sound of remorse in his voice. It was…lacking. Uriel just stood beside him with that same smug grin plastered on his face.

Anna shook her head, "No. You're not. Not really. You don't know the feeling."

"Still we have a history," Castiel pointed out.

Maya's eyes squinted the slightest bit in speculation. Why would Castiel say that? He's an angel; he didn't feel, not really. But why imply the slightest bit of…regret? Her eyes flickered to Uriel who was as quietly smug as ever. Not blinking in the slightest at having to kill Anna, someone he'd once shared close quarters with. With a mental shrug she dismissed the slight oddity.

"It's just—" Anna didn't let Castiel finish.
"Orders are orders. I know," she stared steadily at Castiel. "Just make it quick."

Sam and Dean breathed a little heavily in sorrow and regret in not being able to save her. Maya felt her eyes water and a tear escape, unbeknownst to grief and regret at being so cold and distant from someone who was just looking for a friend in an impossible situation.

Then Puck released a growling snarl as he quickly turned around and darted behind Maya as a smarmy voice spoke up behind them, "Don't you touch a hair on that poor girl's head."

There stood Alastair, along with two demons holding up a bleeding Ruby between the two.

Looked like the plan was back in motion.

The instant tension that filled the barn between demons and angels was intense, especially the angry vibes coming off Uriel as he finally lost his smug smirk. When Uriel started to stalk his way towards the demons everyone in the middle got the fuck out of the way, even Puck. Although the little dog still kept him self between everyone and the squared off forces of Heaven and Hell.

"How dare you come into this room…you pu**sing** sore," Uriel insulted Alastair.

"Name-calling," Alastair nodded unimpressed as he and his minions, who had dropped a weak Ruby, advanced. "That hurt my feelings…you sanctimonious, fanatic**al** prick."

"Turn around and walk away now," came Castiel's gravelly voice.

"Sure, just give us the girl. We'll make sure she gets punished good and proper," Alastair winked and then looked over in their direction, creepy eyes pausing a little too long on Maya. "And the half-breed too while you're at it."

"You know who we are and what we will do," Castiel threatened as he walked to stand uniformly by Uriel's side. "I won't say it again. Leave, now…or we lay you to waste."

"Think I'll take my chances," Alastair sneered at Castiel.

Holy crap the plan seemed to be working! Even with Sam's subpar acting skills.

With Ruby long discarded and out of the way, Alastair's two minions walked up beside him in favor of going head to head with the angels. The tension in the room climbs between the two groups, as both seem to wait for the other to make the first move.

The one to make it was Uriel as he looked between the two minions then lunged at the one on his right. Uriel pushed the demon into a support pillar with so much strength the wooden beam split. The other demon tried to get Uriel from behind but was elbowed out of the way in the face.

A necklace with a reliquary on its chain came into view, filled with a wispy white and glowing substance.

While Uriel dealt with the underlings Castiel took on Alastair him self, punching the demon ineffective in the face twice before grabbing his shoulder in an iron grip and putting a palm to the demon's forehead. Castiel tried to bring forth his grace to smite the demonic inquisitor in his grasp…but nothing happened.

Alastair chuckled, "Sorry kiddo. Why don't you go run to Daddy?" He released him self from Castiel's grasp before punching the angel and sending him sprawling backwards on the floor. Castiel had no time to recover when Alastair was on him gripping his throat.
Uriel meanwhile smote the demon he had pinned against the split wooden beam. The demon cried out in agony as his eyes and mouth lit up in a holy light as he was destroyed from existence, leaving his meat suit a burnt out husk on the barn floor.

With Castiel in his grasp Alastair began chanting, "Potestas inferma, me confirma. Potestas inferma, me confirma. Potestas inferma, me confirma!"

Whatever was happening with Castiel wasn't good, and between him and Alastair…well the Winchesters knew they'd rather deal with Castiel. Maya for the most part was still unsure who'd she rather deal with. Both angels and demons were seriously bad in her books. That's why she didn't protest Dean taking action. Dean had grabbed a conveniently forgotten golf club and swung at Alastair's head before the demon could finish whatever he was doing to Castiel.

Alastair released his hold on the dazed angel and faced Dean patronizingly, "Dean, Dean, Dean…I am so disappointed." Dean backed up warily closer to Sam and Maya, now that Alastair was focused solely on him. "You had such promise!" Alastair struck a hand out at them sending out a wave of demonic power at the Winchesters, squeezing their throats and bringing them to their knees.

Puck snarled and lunged, transforming mid air, clamping down powerful jaws on the demon's outstretched arm.

"AAHH!" Alastair cried in pain, his concentration on choking the Winchester's and the demi-god broken. The three of them gasped in air by the lungful as they watched the little-big dog shake its head and ferociously try to tear out the demon's arm, all the while using sharp claws to dig into Alastair's chest for leverage.

Anna who had slowly made her way towards Uriel, with all hostile parties thoroughly distracted, grabbed the reliquary of grace around Uriel's neck as he finished smiting the last demon underling.

"NO!" Uriel shouted as Anna darted away from him.

Alastair, having had enough of being some mutt's chew toy, slammed a fist against the side of Puck's head forcing the canine to reluctantly release his quarry. Puck quickly recovered and took position between Alastair and Maya and the Winchesters.

"Shut your eyes!" came the shouted warning from Anna as she slowly got up from her knees after drinking her grace. She got up on shaky legs her abdomen glowing, "Shut your eyes!" The glow started to intensify; Sam, Dean, and Ruby headed Anna's warning and covered their eyes as they began to feel the sting of the Heavenly light of her grace.

Maya didn't understand what was happening as she felt no warning sting as the light intensified. She didn't exactly know you couldn't look upon an angel's true form. She'd known angels had taken Pamela's sight, didn't mean she was told how.

Maya watched as Anna's stood straight up, head thrown back as her body arched, "SHUT YOUR EYES!" Anna screamed, as the light was about to reach its zenith.

Maya cursed as she felt her eyes sting and shut them, finally heeding the warning Anna shouted at them. But not before she glimpsed white wings, tipped in a soft and a slightly darker cream colour burst from Anna's back and spread wide.

*Shit they really stung!*

Puck and the other angels watched as the light recede—*only for a second*—before exploding out of
Anna then disappearing with her as she took flight. Alastair and went to grab the female angel, but had to smoke out of there when the grace exploded from Anna.

Too much divinity for him to handle if he didn't want to get second-hand smote.

With the light gone the occupants in the room slowly and cautiously uncovered their eyes.

Maya's own golden orbs still stung and hurt, almost like she kept her eyes open too long underwater in a chlorinated pool. Way too long. She carefully got to her feet with Sam and Dean, grabbing onto Sam's arm for support as she tried to blink out all the blotches from her vision.

She made out a Dean shaped figure walking up beside Castiel to grab something from the grou—oh yes. Demon blade! Score!

Sam looked down at Maya who seemed to be blinking and staring out a bit too much for his liking, "Maya you okay?"

"Yeah, yeah. I think I just kept my eyes open too—" Maya didn't get to finish as Sam moved quickly to take her head in his giant hands and sticking his face into her face.

"You didn't shut your eyes?!!" Sam demanded a little panicked, images of Pamela's burnt out eyes haunting him. He slowly calmed down as he saw Maya's twin gold coloured irises looking back at him, baffled. Granted they were surround by some broken blood vessels making them all bloodshot as hell, but her eyeballs were still in her head intact.

"Sham, let go of ma face," Maya glared, her face smushed between his hands.

"What?!" Dean quickly muscled Sam away and turned Maya's head with his one free hand. The panicked Mother Hen look he was sporting faded at seeing Maya's eyes intact, then came the anger, "What were you thinking?! Staring at an angel's true form burns your fucking eyes out, Maya! How do you think Pam lost her's?"

Maya gave him an indignant look, "Well no one told me how she lost them, okay? Just that angels did it!"

A pause.

"Still!" Dean countered eloquently. "If Anna was yelling at us to shut our eyes—"

"As touching as all this concern for your filthy pet is," Uriel interrupted, glowering at them. "I would like to know how you have the bastardized offshoot of a Heavenly Hound!" Uriel eyed the large dog in disgust as the hairs along its back all but stood straight up as it growled slightly illuminated fangs at him.

The three of them looked at Uriel, then at the enlarged Puck who stood between them and the angels, still on guard.

"Puck's my dog. He looks out for me," Maya answered, looking in the general direction of a dark blurred shape she knew had to be Uriel. Everything slowly coming into focus as her eyes readjusted, but just not enough to see the disgusted sneer on the angel's face.

"It should be fighting along side angels to protect the seals! Not guarding some abomination!" Uriel sneered taking an aggressive step forward.

Puck lunged a bit forward as well with a bark and dangerous growl at the dark skinned angel. He
could smell the barely restrained deadly intent and disgust he directed towards his Mistress. He
could also smell Maya's fear. Puck refused to let something that caused such distress get anywhere
near her.

Not if Puck had anything to say about it.

"My dog, disagrees," Maya let slip past her fear. Her vision clear enough to finally make out the
hatred the angel directed right at her, and how much he wanted to smite her. But she would not let
some dick just threaten to take her dog, her best friend!

Castiel shot a hand out to Uriel's shoulder, "Stop Uriel. The Hound has bonded with…her. It will
protect her with its life…and leave you grievously injured should you try and separate them."
Castiel caught Dean's eye, noticing the wary and curious look the Hunter sent his way along with
slight…approval? Why would he approve a logical decision? With seals breaking it was more
important to have every available angel battle ready and not indisposed from a foolhardy endeavor.

Uriel rounded on the other angel, "Did you know about this?"

"Yes," came Castiel's gravelly voice. "I noticed the Hound's predilection towards protecting the…
girl. It was immaterial as it was obvious it would not be swayed."

Uriel scoffed, but seemed to back down, "Very well. Despite this…disgrace of a Heavenly Hound
we have more pressing matters."

"Yeah, don't you two have a runaway angel to catch?" Dean asked, very little—if any—sincerity in
his voice. "Unless, of course, you're scared," he mocked, much to Uriel's incense.

Uriel shrugged off Castiel's hand as he growled and stalked one step too close to the humans and
demi-god, "This isn't over—"

Puck decided that the angel came close enough and launched him self at Uriel with a snarl, cutting
the angel off as large teeth ripped into the angel's shoulder.

There were shouts of surprise from everyone, but they were all drowned out by Uriel's scream of
agony as Puck tore into the angel's shoulder and dragged claws along his chest. Castiel looked on
in worry and slight fear, before rounding on Dean.

"Call it off!" Castiel demanded roughly.

Dean took his eyes off the bloody display that was giving him flash backs to his own encounter
with similar deadly claws and teeth. He paused a moment, because honestly Uriel was a dick…but
still didn't deserve this treatment.

"All right rat! That's enough!" Dean ordered, but Puck just ignored him.

"Dean, he's not our dog," Sam stressed urgently, his own memories of that night coming to the
forefront of his mind. "He's Maya's."

Feeling the stares of Hunters and angels on her, she rolled her eyes and stowed the vindictively
satisfied part of her at seeing her dog in action against a monster that haunted her dreams as a child.

"Fiiiiiiine," Maya sighed. "Puck! Heel!" she barked over the screams coming out of Uriel.

Puck's ears flicked at Maya's command and whined a little as he released the writhing angel from
his clutches. He trotted back to Maya, his muzzle and claws blood soaked. Maya lovingly petted his
head, giving him a scratch behind his ears, avoiding the blood, before the sound of movement from the other angel had him turning on a time.

Castiel quickly rushed to Uriel who struggled to get up, his suit and chest torn to bloody shreds with large deep gashes running down them. His shoulder where Puck had a death grip on him didn't look much better.

Looked more like a well-loved chew toy.

Castiel kept a wary eye on the dog as it watched his every move as he bent down to help a heavily breathing Uriel to stand. He slung an arm over his shoulder to support his fellow angel.

"That's one way to end things, huh, junkless?" Dean snarked when Uriel cast a dark scowl their way.

They all released a breath when Castiel and Uriel disappeared in a sound of flapping wings.

Puck eased the tension in his body now that the main threats had gone.

Ruby stumbled over to them, hand to her bleeding stomach.

"You okay?" Sam asked in concern for the demon-ness.

But Maya drawled out first, "I think my visions still a little iffy because I'm pretty sure she just got uglier."

Ruby sent her a glare before looking back at Sam, "Not so much."

"What took you so long to get here?" Dean asked, referring to the plan they had cooked up in the wee hours of the night.

"Sorry I'm late with the demon delivery. I was only being tortured," Ruby bit back at Dean, just done with his shit.

"I gotta hand it to you Sammy," Dean nodded at Sam. "Bringing them all together all at once… angels and demons. It was a damn good plan."

"Yeah, well, when you got Godzilla and Mothra on your ass," Sam sent a meaningful look to Ruby, "Best to get out of their way and let them fight."

"Yeah, now you're just bragging," Dean told him with a smirk.

"I still say it could've gone really sideways," Maya pointed out.

"You just didn't like it because we had to invite more angels around," Ruby scoffed, switching the hand that held the gash in her stomach.

Sam shrugged at Maya then looked at Dean, "So, I guess she's some big angel now, huh? She must be happy… wherever she is."

Dean shook his head, "I doubt it."

_________________________________________________

On the side of a back road…

.
After putting some distance between them and the barn showdown, Dean stopped at a liquor store, grabbed some bottles of beer, then drove a little more before pulling over on an empty stretch of road. The pavement was cracked with weeds growing out of it and looked like it hadn't seen maintenance for a while and the empty field was overgrown with tall weeds.

It was a good a spot as any to take a breather and appreciate getting out of that Heaven and Hell pissing match they were caught up in.

And to address something that Alastair had said about Dean.

Dean leaned against the hood of the impala, Sam sitting on top, and Maya kind of lay across the whole thing behind them. Puck lounged at their feet; cleaned of blood and any evidence pointing to him nearly tearing a new hole in an angel…Dean wouldn't let him up on the hood in case he scratched Baby.

"I can't believe we made it out of there," Dean commented, twisting the cap off his beer.

Sam scoffed, "Again."

"It was pretty close," Maya huffed as she sat up and pulled the tab on her soda. Dean was very strict with her about the beer…the ass.

They clinked their drinks and took a swig of their selected beverages.

"I know you two heard him," Dean stated with a sigh.

"Who?" Sam asked, not sure what Dean was referring to.

"There were multiple him's in that barn Dean," Maya pointed out with a raised eyebrow that asked for more specificity, even if Dean couldn't see it.

"Alastair," he told them bluntly. "What he said…about how I had promise."

"I heard him," Sam looked away from Dean pensively, waiting and dreading his answer. Maya shifted till she was sitting on the edge of the impala beside Dean, a silent support.

"You're not curious?"

"Dean, I'm damn curious. Pretty sure Maya is too, but you're not talking about Hell, and I'm not pushing," Sam looked back at his brother with a tight smile and a face that kind of begged Dean to willingly talk to them.

"Me neither," Maya chimed in and leaned comfortably against Dean.

Dean took a slow breath and another swig of liquid courage as he took in the silent support of Sam and Maya. His little brother and honorary little sister.

After a silent pause Dean said, "It wasn't four months, you know."

Sam quickly looked at Dean confused, "What?" Maya rubbed her head against his shoulder, earning the smallest and most fleeting of smiles from Dean.

"It was four months up here, but down there..." Dean shook his head as memories he'd been trying to keep down slowly encroach on the periphery of his mind. "I don't know, time's different. It was more like forty years."
Sam leaned back a little in shock, blinking in disbelief at this new piece of information. Maya
snaked an arm behind Dean for a quick and tight side hug, not knowing what to say. She knew he
remembered since Castiel spoiled that apparent secret, but she didn't…she didn't know how long it
truly was for him.

"My God," Sam breathed out in a horrified whisper.

"They, uh…they sliced and carved and tore at me in ways that you guys…" Dean stared off into
the distance as unwanted memories came back. "…Until there was nothing left. And then
suddenly…I would be whole again…like magic…just so they could start in all over. And
Alastair…at the end of every day…every one…he would come over and make me an offer. To take
me off the rack…if I put souls on…if I started the torture. I told him to stick it where the sun
shines," he paused as his Hell memories assaulted him, everything that was done to him…and
everything he did.

"For 30 years, I told him. But then I couldn't do it anymore, guys," Dean's voice began to crack as
tears welled up behind his eyelids. "I couldn't. And I got off that rack. God help me I got right off
it. And I started ripping them apart," he paused when he felt Maya give a brief surprised inhale
before taking his arm captive. He almost wanted to stop so he could shove her off, because how
could someone stand to touch him after knowing what he did?

"We're here for you," Maya murmured quietly. "Keep going."

With a shuddering breath and felt a gentle clarity wash over him as the overwhelming memories of
Hell were pushed back just enough to let him continue with a choked voice as guilt assailed his
entire being, "I lost count of how many souls. The—the things that I did to them." His far off stare
turned to the ground as he did his best to hold back a sob that desperately wanted to escape.

"Dean…" Sam didn't know what to say. What could you say to someone who experienced such
horror? Didn't mean he wasn't going to try, "Dean, look, you held out for 30 years. That's longer
than anyone would have."

Dean shook his head, taking a shuddering breath as a couple tears escaped. He rubbed his faced,
"How I feel…this…inside me…" his broke, "I wish I couldn't feel anything. I wish I couldn't feel a
damn thing."

There was a heavy silence between all of them.

"Dean, you know if you ever need to talk or—" Maya started gently, only to have Dean rip his arm
from her grasp, spilling a little bit of his beer.

"Nope. I'm done sharing. Told you what's up and that's it," Dean stated thickly, or more like
commanded, as he took a couple steps away from the impala, all but chugging his beer.
Encouraging the end of Share Circle.

Maya squinted at him in concern and opened her mouth to protest when Sam reached over and
poked her shoulder. She looked at him and Sam shook his head.

Now was not the time to badger Dean. He shared with them his feelings and what happened in
Hell.

That was a win.

Maya frowned at him, unimpressed. Sam shrugged and hoped Dean would open to them again on
his own. If they pushed, Dean'll clam up tighter than clam with lockjaw.
Maya pouted then turned away from Sam and took a drink of her soda, her heart hurting for Dean.

Then she realized something, she just had a silent conversation with Sam, like the ones he and Dean usually have over her head.

Huh. That was new and random.
AN: Behold! Another 24-25,000 word monstrosity as recompense for not updating last month. My aunt loved the blanket and it didn't take as long as previously thought, but since I said possible update in the New Year…I decided to power through three episodes!

Which puts this story at over 400,000 words!

December 1st 2008, Middle of Nowhere, Random State

Middle of the night…

It'd been a couple weeks since Anna got her grace back and flown the coop. As well as a couple weeks of what seemed like non-stop cases. They'd finish one then Dean would have them hauling ass off to another one right after.

It was late in the middle of forest country where the impala sat at the end of a gated off road, surrounded by trees and nothing but the sounds of the local nightlife to chase away the silence. The only sources of light being the stars that peaked through the remaining leaves on the trees and Dean's flashlight as he perused some police reports he printed off before they made tracks out of the last town they were in.

They didn't want law enforcement to come sniffing around and finding that burned body.

Sam was sleeping lightly in the back to better stretch out his long body, but it was still a tight fit. Maya was out for the count in the front from her own exhaustion, her head pillowed at a less than ideal angle on Dean's thigh.

And Dean was basically using her face as a place to set his reports while he flipped through them; even if he told himself he did it so the light wouldn't wake up the sleeping girl. But his lips would quirk in a smirk every time she shifted or scrunched her nose from the tickling sensation of shifting papers on her face.

Puck gave a snort in his sleep, earning Dean's brief attention as the little dog twitched a leg before going still again. Lost in his own land of dreams as he slept on Maya's chest under the hand that had petted him until she couldn't.

Dean looked back at the police reports intently, his gaze never wavering, even when he heard the distinct groan of disapproval from a waking moose in the back seat.

"What are you doing?" Sam groaned softly after seeing his brother still awake with a flashlight in hand.

"What's it look—" Dean stopped himself and readjusted his volume of voice so he didn't wake Maya. "What's it look like I'm doing?"
"Like you're looking for a job," Sam's voice droned in a whisper, unimpressed.

"Yahtzee."

With a tired sigh Sam sat up and looked over Dean's shoulder, seeing the printed reports. He scoffed quietly, "We just finished a job like two hours ago. And are you using Maya's face as a desk?"

Dean gave a quiet chuckled, "Heh, yeah. Pretty much. Kid's completely out of it."

"Probably from running away from that werewolf before Puck got to it," Sam rubbed his face tiredly.

"Yeah," Dean turned to look at Sam. "It was really weird how focused it was on her, right?"

"Extremely. It had me pinned and then it just let me go to go chase after her instead," Sam shook his head then sent tired narrowed eyes at Dean. "So, why are you looking for another job?"

Dean shrugged at him; not realizing Maya's breathing had changed. "Guess the adrenaline's still pumping," Dean turned back to the papers on Maya's face and held them up to Sam. "So what do you think... Cedar Rapids, Tulsa, or Chi-to-" Dean didn't finish as a hand shot up and grabbed the papers, and swiftly ripped them out of his hand.

Dean looked down to find Maya glaring tired gold eyes up at him, "Go. The fuck. To sleep!"

"Sorry, didn't mean to wake you Goldy," Dean put on a charming smile to get out of whatever retribution was running through the mini-Trickster's little head.

"Job, tomorrow. Sleep, now," she growled, her grip tightening on the papers.

"I'm with Maya," Sam nodded in their direction. "I'm all for working. I really am, but you've got us chasing cases nonstop for like a month now," Sam exaggerated a little. "We need sleep."

"Yeeeeeeessssss. Sleep goooodd," Maya groaned, her tired eyes starting to droop. She growled when she felt Dean try and tug the papers from her closed fists.

"C'mon, Golum. We can sleep when we're dead," Dean gave up his tug-o-war on the papers from the small ripping sound he heard come from them. Maya's breath began slowing and evening out again.

"You're exhausted, Dean," Sam pointed out.

"I'm good," Dean argued, annoyed as he half-heartedly glared at the once again zonked out Trickster in his lap.

"No, you're not," Sam argued back. "You're running on fumes, and you can't run forever."

"And what am I running from again?" Dean demanded, carefully turning his upper body to look behind him at Sam so as not to jostle Maya.

"From what you told us," Sam paused, and not for the effect. "Or are we pretending that never happened?"

Dean didn't answer. Instead he turned to the papers Maya didn't grab, the ones he hadn't put on her face, "Straton, Nebraska. A man gets hacked to death in a locked room inside a locked house. No
signs of forced entry."

"Sounds like a ghost," Sam said after a fed up sigh and glare at his brother.

"Yes, it does," Dean looked at the report grimly.

Sam gave a groan as he flopped back down, shaking the car a little bit and jolting Puck away.

Puck looked around confused, his little eyes focused on Dean for answers.

Dean shrugged at the dog, "Got another case."

Puck did a groan and flopped back down on Maya who let out her own grunt in protest of the rough treatment.

Dean didn't hold back the snort that escaped him.

He was surrounded by whiny bitches.

December 2nd 2008, Stratton, Nebraska, United States

Next Day… because Dean was an asshole …

Night…

Still wired on adrenaline, Dean decided to start driving to Nebraska that night. Much to the dismay of the other occupants of the car. Dean wanted to check out the house ASAP, but Maya and Sam were firm. Motel first, research, then house.

Well, after a less than stellar sleep the previous night the minute Maya flopped on one of the beds she was a goner. The brothers chuckled at her and decided to let her get some more rest. Both clearly remembering those tiring teenage years and what a shitty sleep did to you, especially if you weren’t used to it and went on back-to-back jobs (pointed glare at Dean). They left a note and some money for food when she woke up, and then went to go check out the house.

Things got complicated when the house was no longer for sale and a family was ready to move in. Sam and Dean bought some time declaring asbestos and a gas leak, hopefully another day or two.

They got to the motel, changed into their civil servant uniforms and questioned the housekeeper that found the dismembered body of Mr. Gibson. Maya had still been sleeping, but with the dog getting antsy most likely not for long.

Unfortunately the most likely suspects, the dead wife and daughter, were cremated. So highly unlikely it was them.

They went by the motel to grab a now awake Maya. They waited until nightfall before going back to the farmhouse…only to find the lights on. Evidence that the family had returned and had moved in.

"Crap," Dean cursed as he brought the impala to a stop near the end of the driveway. "So, what now?" he was open to suggestions.

"We could tell them the truth," Sam shrugged unhelpfully.
Dean and Maya turned to look at him funny.

"Really?" Dean asked, wondering if his brother was serious.

"No, not really," Sam shook his head slightly.

Maya rolled her eyes, "So, we just wait here till we hear screaming?"

Both brothers shrugged as they kept their eyes glued to the house.

They didn't have to wait long before a shrill scream echoed in the night, coming from the house.

"That's our cue!" Dean grunted as he put Baby in drive and sped up the driveway.

They quickly jumped out of the impala and ran up the front porch steps and pounded on the door. Once it was opened they immediately rushed in.

"We heard screams. What's going on?" Dean demanded as he rushed by the matriarch of the family.

As they walked towards the other family members an angry father confronted Sam and Dean, "You two? Did you touch my daughter?!"

Dean looked at him surprised and disgusted, "What? No." The frightened girl was clearly underage and that was a big no-go.

"Who are you guys?" the father demanded.

The black and white shaggy dog approached Puck curiously. Puck was tense and on guard, keeping his senses open for the specter lurking in the house but...he got nothing. Puck saw the other dog approach, unaggressive, and took a quick minute to sniff each other in greeting.

The shaggy dog was satisfied that the other smaller not-quite-dog dog was friendly, and looked out at the now open front door.

Puck watched the other dog wander off outside. He mentally shrugged and lifted his nose, scenting the air and finding eight fresh and distinct scents, seven humans and one dog. There was also a ninth one but it was faded-old and hinted of blood, most likely the recently deceased.

Puck looked around the room and noticed only five humans, all with underlying scents of blood relations. The other two he picked up held no such relation to the family in front of him. He shifted uneasily as the two odd scents screamed of refuse-anger-dirt-sibling/aunt/uncle-sick-danger-DANGER.

"Relax," Sam told the protective father sternly. "You have a ghost."

The father rolled his eyes and scoffed, "A ghost."

Puck pawed at Maya's feet with a whine. Maya looked down with furrowed eyebrows. Puck discretely shook his head with another small whine.

Maya glanced at the others then murmured quietly to Puck, "No ghost?" She got a huffed nod in response.

The daughter escaped her mother's arms and ran up to her Dad, "I told you!"
The young boy exclaimed as he rushed up to his Dad too, "It's the girl!"

The Dad turned around, "Both of you, relax." He turned back to Sam, Dean, and Maya, "What are you guys playing?"

"Your family's in danger. You need to get out of the house, now," Dean ordered in his most authoritative voice. Sadly with no one else but the kids having seen anything the other adults weren't convinced.

"Dean—" Maya started to warn him about what Puck picked up when the lights went out, plunging them into darkness.

"What the hell?" the other adult male of the family questioned as he looked around.

"No body move!" Dean shouted.

"Dean—" Maya tried again, but stopped as loud pained whining came from outside.

"Buster!" the young boy yelled in fear, sending his Dad and—Maya guessed—his Uncle racing outside.

Dean sent them an annoyed glare at having his order ignored.

They all followed and Puck shot past all of them and around the house towards the moving van with a snarl.

"AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!" came the raspy and very human cry of pain, along with some ferocious snarling.

Buster came limping quickly around the corner, bleeding heavily towards his human family, whimpering in pain.

"Buster!" the Dad shouted as he ran down the porch to his injured dog. The Uncle kept going to look at what might have attacked the friendly dog, only to find a partially spelled message on the van…in blood.

"Brian! You might want to come looked at this!" the Uncle called back.

Brian had—with the help of Maya's thoughtfully lent silver knife—removed his shirt and cut bandages for their wounded dog when his brother-in-law yelled back to them. After tying off the last quick makeshift bandage, Brian rounded the house with Sam and Dean while Maya tried to keep the others from seeing whatever it was.

The porch sadly was a wrap around, so they all saw the partially spelled out bloody message:

**Too la—**

"Go back inside!" Brian shouted up back at his family. The mother ushered the children away, Maya—having picked up an injured Buster—followed behind them.

Sam and Dean had tried to follow Puck's barking and snarling to whatever the small dog was chasing, but stopped when he came racing back. His mouth and claws soaked in blood.

Dean looked at the still small dog, "Is it dead?"

Puck grumbled and shook his head, a clear sign that it got away.
"So, it's not a ghost?" Sam asked taking note of the blood covering Puck's muzzle. Puck sent the dog equivalent of a deadpanned stare. Sam looked a little sheepish at the reproachful look from the small dog, "Right. Sorry."

Sam and Dean turned back to Brian and the other man.

"We're not the bad guys, but you are in danger," Dean told them bluntly.

"First things first. You got to get your family out of here," Sam told them firmly.

The two men shared a look then looked back the bloody incomplete message.

"Okay," Brian agreed as he started heading back to the house with his brother-in-law.

"Great," Dean nodded then turned back to Puck. "Stay out here. We got Maya. If that thing comes back…you know what to do."

Puck huffed and ran off towards the vehicles to better hide and ambush the human that attacked the other dog.

"Did you just talk to a dog like it understood you?" the Uncle asked with a scoff as they jogged back into the house.

"You've got no idea what that rat can do," Dean gave the man a knowing look that had him sending a curious glance behind them where Puck ran off to.

"It's a dog. Sure Jack Russell's are smart but they aren't that smart," the Uncle scoffed as they entered the house.

Sam, Dean, and Maya stood on alert as the family quickly agreed to follow Sam and Dean's advice. As they hurried to get shoes and coats on, high pitched growling and snarling came from outside that quickly morphed into something deeper. Followed by two different voices screaming.

Sam, Dean, and Maya quickly rushed outside to find Puck biting down and tearing into the shoulder of a screaming dirty and scraggly longhaired young man in a loose and filthy long sleeved white shirt and brown trousers. On an enlarged Puck's back was an equally dirty and scraggly wild-haired young woman in a dirty grey nightgown screaming her head off as she stabbed at the dog with a knife.

"Puck!" Maya shouted in concern, even if she knew the knife wouldn't kill her dog. Didn't mean she liked seeing him get hurt. That was her dog and best friend, damn it!

"Wait! Maya—no!" Dean tried to grab her but she slipped through his fingers. Sam and Dean quickly followed right behind her.

Puck let go of the boy's shoulder then readjusted his target, grabbing the neck and quickly snapping it. Silencing his screams.

The girl screamed in heartbreak and fury as she jumped off the dog and darted away as Puck went to finally try and snap at her. Puck went to chase her but she weaved more easily between the vehicles than Puck's larger form.

Puck may or may not have dented the moving van.

Unfortunately that meant she had gotten away…again.
With narrowed eyes at the direction the girl disappeared to and a frustrated grumble, Puck returned to Maya's side to ease her worries over him. The wounds inflicted had already started healing and sealing closed.

"Couldn't get the second one rat?" Dean teased with a smirk, earning a grumbled growl from the large dog that stood still as Maya checked him over.

Maya breathed a sigh of relief as the last wound sealed shut and gave the giant dog an affectionate scratch behind the ear.

Puck gave Dean a warning growl when he cuffed Maya upside the head, "You know better than to run off like that!"

Maya rolled her eyes, rubbing her head, and pointed out, "Puck was right there and you two were right behind me."

Dean sent her a reproving glare and opened his mouth to say something when Sam called them over, "Hey guys!"

Maya and Dean looked over to see Sam had made his way over to the dead boy on the ground.

Sam looked up from his crouched position as they walked over, "Human, guys."

Maya felt dread pool in her stomach.

"Human?" Dean looked at Sam in disbelief.

Sam pointed at the boy's face and his open and unseeing overly dilated eyes, "Yeah. But look at the eyes and the skin. It's like he's never seen daylight before."

"So, it was these guys who killed the old man?" Maya questioned as she scrutinized the body. "Looks like neither of them had a decent meal their whole lives either."

"Dude was old and which ever one killed him had a knife," Dean shrugged and he scrubbed a hand wearily down his face. "Don't need to be strong if ya got a weapon and a captive audience."

"Hey, guys! What's going on—" Brian called out to them as he jogged up to them but stopped at the sight of the huge dog. "What the Hell?! Where'd that come from?" he staggered back as Puck pinned curious eyes on the man.

Before Sam, Dean, or Maya could say anything Puck, being a mischievous little shit shrunk back down to his fun travel size.

Brian stared at the small bloody dog with his mouth agape.

"Yeah, super smart and size-shifting dogs are a thing too," Dean scoffed. "Your ghost problem? Not so much," he gestured to the dead body.

Brian blinked in confusion, "W-What?"

Sam straightened up, "We were wrong about the ghost."

"You have a couple of feral humans running around," Maya explained with a sympathetic smile. "Not sure where they came from but they're out for blood. You guys need to—"

A terrified scream came from the house as the mother and kids ran out.
"The girl! She came out of the closet!" the boy babbled as he ran up to Brian.

"Ted's still in there!" the mother cried frantically.

"Get in the car and drive to that motel I told you about!" Dean barked as him, Sam, Maya, and Puck started sprinting back to the house. "We'll get him!"

The sound of lots of commotion coming from inside was a good sign. Ted was putting up a hell of a fight and was still kicking. Feet stomped up the porch steps and nails clicked and scratched at the wood.

Ted's pained yell echoed out into the house as they entered and the scuffle stopped. Dean went into the living room first to find Ted alive and leaning heavily against the fireplace holding his bleeding side.

Dean scanned the room and heard noise come from the coat closet on the other side of the room.

"Some ghost," Ted said with a pained scoff. "Just some backwards hillbilly bitch."

"Yeah, well, we can't be right all the time," Dean sassed, never taking his eyes off the closet. Dean connected eyes with Sam and motioned to the closed closet, Sam nodded his understanding. Dean looked at Maya and she sighed heavily but nodded as well making her way over to Ted.

"Let's get you out of here," Maya grabbed his arm on his uninjured side and slung it over her shoulder. "Can you keep pressure with your other hand?"

"Yeah, yeah," Ted grunted then chuckled. "Sorry if I'm a bit too heavy. Been meaning to go on that diet."

Maya huffed a small chuckle as she led him outside, Puck following beside them.

Once they got down the porch steps Maya looked down at her dog, "Go help them. You can sniff her out before those two can track her down."

She felt Ted scoff at her as they made their way further from the house.

Puck whined, weighing his options.

With a decision made Puck ran off, but around the house following the fresh scent of the _injured-sick-angry-female_ that he had chased before, but lost twice.

But not this time.

The trail led to a break in the trellis that bordered the bottom of the house, carefully hidden by farm barrels and tall grass under a storm drain. Puck's sensitive ears picked up Dean and Sam shouting, as well as the animalistic screaming of the girl.

Puck darted into the crawl space to find Dean struggling to keep from getting knifed by the girl in pitch darkness, his flashlight looking to have been smashed against the cement foundation.

The way the girl attacked Dean seemed to suggest that she had lived her whole life in darkness and had the upper hand, while Dean was floundering, unable to see his assailant.

Sam was shouting from somewhere, telling Dean to hold on while he made some hole bigger.

Puck had no such problem.
With a snarl he launched at the girl and darted away when she tried to slash him. They circled and danced, looking for openings. An overarching swing of her knife exposed her throat and Puck lunged.

The moment before he sunk small teeth into tender flesh he finally enlarged his shape. Teeth included.

A quick jerk of the head and it was all over in an instant.

Puck let his teeth, claws and eyes glow for Dean to better see what happened.

Dean let out a sigh of relief, "Never thought I'd be glad to hear a snarling dog before."

"Dean!" Sam's worried voice reverberated off the crawlspace walls.

"Fine, Sammy! The rat got the bitch!" Dean yelled back as he got to his feet, his body still hunched over from the low ceiling. Puck was much the same in that regard, his back just brushing the overhead support beams in his larger form. "So Rudolph, wanna lead me out of here?" Puck's answer was to cease glowing, shrink down, and trot away. "Rat!" Dean insulted as he was plunged back into darkness. "Sam, shine your light! The bitch broke mine!"

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**Sam, Dean, and Maya**

The Carter family hadn't left right away, so they were there to quickly take Ted to the hospital for his sliced side. The Winchesters and Maya would spend the next couple hours dragging bodies out and putting them in the shed for the police to deal with and poking around the house.

They found the old man's dead daughter's diary.

The feral twins were the forced love children of the father and daughter. There was much disgust to be had.

"Wow. Talk about a story ripped from Austrian headlines," Dean shook his head. "Humans, man. So they've been locked up in this house their whole lives?"

"We saw their eyes, Dean. Doubt they've ever seen the light of day," Maya pointed out with a tired grimace.

"They were barely human," Sam added, remembering the feral screaming.

"So they've been caged up like an animal then one day one of them, or both, break free and ganks dear old dad-slash-granddad?" Dean extrapolated, his face twisting in disgust at the incest.

"I guess," Sam shrugged.

"Well, can't say I blame them," Dean could all too easily imagine the hell they went through their entire lives at the hand of the old bastard.

"I'm sure their lives were hell Dean, but that doesn't mean they get a free pass for a murder spree," Sam disagreed, not realizing the effect it would have on Dean.

Maya grimaced at Sam's choice of words, but kept quiet. She was kind of in the middle with this moral debate. On the one hand they deserved the justice they received taking out the old man, on
the other…probably could have done something different instead of killing the guy. Although, to be fair, they weren't exactly raised to think of escaping and maybe getting the police involved. Hell they probably didn't even know those kind of people existed.

Dean gave Sam a deadpanned look, "Like you know what Hell's like."

"I didn't..." Sam sent Dean a sympathetic look, but he just shrugged it off.

"Forget it," Dean didn't let Sam continue and stalked his way out of the house feeling Maya and Sam's worried eyes on his back.

December 3rd 2008

Under a Random Deserted Overpass

Late the next morning...

They had found the Carter family and told them everything was taken care of and they could go back. They impressed upon them that it would be greatly appreciated if they were given a head start before calling the police. Brian had eyed Puck a bit warily, even if the little dog was now all cleaned of blood and no more wounds. But none could resist his plucky charm and soon won the man over.

They were thanked and quickly made tracks.

Under the overpass Sam and Dean leaned against the impala, Sam handing Dean a checkered paper wrapped burger. Sam pushed away from the car and opened the door to the back seat and shook a sleepy Maya awake.

"C'mon Maya. Breakfast," Sam smiled as she grumpily sat up and snatched the take-out bag from his hand. Sam rolled his eyes at the grumbled insult she sent his way and tucked into whatever he got her.

With his own food in hand, Sam returned to his spot beside Dean against the impala and noticed his brother not tearing into his burger like normal. Instead it lay on the roof beside him untouched.

"You okay?" Sam asked, his brow furrowed in worry. It seemed to do that a lot recently.

"You know I felt for those sons of bitches back there," Dean admitted. "Life long torture turns you into something like that."

After two weeks it seemed like Dean was ready to open up, at least a little bit.

"You were in Hell, Dean," Dean looked away from Sam to hide his shame, not meeting Sam's eyes. "Look, maybe you did what you did there…but you're not them. They were barely human," Sam tried to point out in an effort of comfort.

Their eyes briefly flickered over to Maya when she stepped out of the impala, looking at Dean in concern.

"Well, you're right. I wasn't like them. I was worse," self-hate and guilt flowed off Dean like a noxious miasma. "They were animals, guys. Defending territory. Me? I did it for the sheer
Sam looked at him surprised, "What?" Maya's face looked like her heart was breaking for him as she approached him and put a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"I *enjoyed* it, Sam," Dean admitted as he roughly shrugged Maya's hand off him. He didn't deserve her comfort and kindness. "They took me off the rack and I tortured souls, and I *liked* it. All those years…all that pain…finally getting to deal some out yourself. I didn't care who they put in front of me," Dean's voice began to get thick with emotion. "Because that—that *pain* I felt…it just slipped away. No matter how many people I save I can't change that. I can't fill this *hole*. Not ever."

"Dean…" Maya tried softly, ready to try and ease his pain, his guilt. The part of her she and Dean didn't know about, that would reach out to those around her brushed lightly against Dean's tattered mind and soul. An opportunity to—even for just a moment—let go of the pain that oozed out of him.

But this wasn't a nightmare he needed respite from. This wasn't asking the subconscious to ease up. He was awake and filled with so much guilt and anguish…

"It was Hell that made you like torturing souls. That's how it *burns* you away," Maya said calmly, trying again to place a hand on his shoulder. "You didn't really *want* to—"

Dean abruptly pushed himself away angrily from the car and fully faced her, "But I *did!* That's what I *just said*!" He brushed away the light feeling that asked him to listen to Maya's words, what she had to say. *Then* decide.

Sam was looking at Dean sadly, "Dean—"

Maya calmly met Dean's angry and frantic eyes that shone with the intensity of his guilt, interrupting Sam, "If you did, why do you feel guilty? Why are you beating yourself up over it then?"

That stopped Dean short as he stared into gold eyes that looked at him without an ounce of fear. Fear that should be there given what he revealed. His negative thoughts halted and receded, just barely enough to think past them.

"She's right, Dean," Sam added, seeing the opportunity to try and help his brother. He also suspected it had something to do with Maya, that energy she sometimes emitted subconsciously. Sam doubted it was anything like mind control or intrusive thoughts, he could still see the war going on in his brother's eyes. This time though Dean didn't seem dead set on shouldering every last bit of blame he could heap onto himself. Like he was tentatively willing to listen to what they now had to say.

Sam might not know what it was that Maya was unintentionally doing, but what ever it was it seemed to be trying to heal the wounds Dean had that *couldn't* be seen. And for that he was *grateful*.

"If you did want it and-and you *liked* torturing souls it's because you were in Hell. A place *designed* to *torture* people," Sam told him, his eyes begging Dean to understand that neither of them saw him any different. That they just wanted to be there for him.

"And what better way to torture someone who spent their entire life trying to protect and save people…than to have them become like the monsters they hunted," she said softly with a sad smile. "It wasn't the *real you*, Dee."
Somewhere inside Dean wanted to believe them. God did he want to.

But he couldn't.

Dean grimaced and shook his head, pushing away that little part that asked him to listen and believe their words. That his pleasure from torturing those souls was just Hell messing with him. Twisting the relief he felt when he got off the rack.

"I-I can't," Dean told them thickly, looking away as two sets of concerned and heartbreaking eyes stared at him. "I can't."

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**Sioux City, Iowa, United States**

**Late that night...**

A hokey-pokey magician falls dead on the busy sidewalk, late at night with ten stab wounds…but no holes in his shirt.

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**December 4 2008, Grand Island, Iowa, United States**

**Red Coach Inn & Suites**

**Early morning... again, Dean?!**

Dean found the curious headline of a stabbing with no tears in the shirt online only a few hours away. Sam and Maya were less than impressed at Dean continuing his non-stop hunting crusade.

Sure they better understood Dean's need to save people as some desire for redemption he thinks he didn't deserve.

But they both still wanted a break. Unfortunately they couldn't say no when more lives could be claimed if they didn't get on it.

And they already checked with Bobby behind Dean's back. The closest available Hunter was a couple of days away...

So...to Iowa!

Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay...

*Not!*

*Not yay!*

---

**Sioux City, Iowa, United States**
Palmer House Motel

That afternoon…

Maya walked into the motel with a plastic suit bag over her shoulder. Looking through the partial wall divider she greeted Sam, "Hey. How'd the interview with the assistant go?"

Sam looked up from his laptop on the small table and sighed tiredly, "Good, I guess. If you can consider every magician the vic ever stole a trick from a possible suspect good." He rubbed his face and shucked the jacket off his FBI suite, "How'd finding some cheap FBI clothes go?"

Maya sent him an annoyed look as she threw the garment bag on the bed, "Successful. It's stuffy. It's sophisticated. It's bland. And I hate it."

Sam sent her an entertained smirk and shrugged at her, leaning on folded hands and propped elbows, "Best way to make sure you're there for some important info gathering experience, while not raising too many eyebrows."

Maya hmm'd as she opened up the cheap garment bag and glared at the cheap outfit she got. Puck jumped up on the bed and looked at the outfit. He'd seen her try it on at the second hand store… and had laughed then just like he did now.

"Real supportive," Maya drawled at Puck who just snickered at her.

Sam stood up from his seat to see the outfit that Maya was stuck with and had to choke back a laugh.

The blouse was billowy and pink. Maya hated pink. It's why she did that illusion prank to Dean's precious car in that colour…along with some artful illustrations. The rest of it was fine if it looked a little big for her…and was a lot of grey.

"What, no skirts?" Sam joked, smirking playfully at Maya, his smile growing as she did—as Dean had often described—a bitch-face, one that apparently greatly resembled his own.

"I will if you do," Maya challenged with a glower. "Otherwise, fuck your skirts. Screw," Maya gestured rudely towards the offending outfit at a loss for words. "…I don't know! But that!"

Sam chuckled, "Did you remember to grab some shoes?"

Maya stared at him with a telling silence.

"No," she was not going back out again.

"If you want in on the next interview for this case you got to look the part," Sam grinned as Maya just stiffly shook her head with barely contained annoyance, and possibly some rage too.

With a frustrated sound she opened the door to leave room in a huff with Puck snickering behind her.

"Hey, can you grab some food while you're out?" Sam called as he went back to his computer.

"Usual Chinese?" Maya stopped in the door and sighed as she leaned back to look at him through the divider.

Sam gave her silent thumbs up, hearing the door click closed as she left.
It would be an hour later when Ruby showed up, giving him a heads up of the number of seals that had fallen, 34. And how the angels were losing that war unless someone does something about it, soon and not waste their time in Magic USA. Sam easily picked up the pointedness in Ruby's words.

"And that someone is me?" Sam motioned to himself, annoyed that all that responsibility was being shoved onto his shoulders.

"Who else would it be?" Ruby scoffed, hands on her hips.

"I don't know where these seals are," he pointed out angrily. "I don't know squat. So why don't you tell me where you'd like me to start!"

"Well, you can quit dicking around here, for one," Ruby retorted. "Bigger fish, Sam. And if the seals are being broken you might want to go after the one doing the breaking."

"Lilith," Sam surmised, seeing where Ruby was headed with this conversation.

"Cut the head off the snake," Ruby told him simply, like that's all it would take. "You're the only one who can stop her, Sam," she walked up into Sam's personal space. "So step up and kill the little bitch." She then brushed past him.

"Oh, I'm game, believe me," Sam told her, turning to keep her in his line of sight. "It's not the psychic thing I got the problem with," Sam said assertively, his mouth drying a little as that craving reared its nasty head.

"Yeah, I know what you got a problem with, but tough," Ruby scoffed, not about to let the boy off that easy. She knew what she needed him to do, to be willing to do. "It's the only way!"

Ruby should really be given an Emmy.

Sam and Ruby starred each other down.

Ruby could practically see the fight between Sam the Hunter and Sam the Demon Blood Guzzler in his eyes. The tightening of the jaw, the clenching of the fist…Ruby waited for his answer. She hoped it would be in her favor to get the stubborn man back on track. Even when Dean came back Ruby was able to see his will weakening in his resolve to stop every time they saw each other and knew it was only a matter of time.

Then that damn half-breed came into the picture and all of a sudden that chink in his armor against the demon blood and the temptation of revenge against Lilith was smaller and more reinforced.

Sam could feel the blood rush through his ears as the craving, the need for what Ruby offered assaulted him. He didn't back down and steeled himself, thinking about Dean, about Maya.

"No," Sam finally told Ruby firmly. He swallowed down the dryness in his mouth thickly.

Ruby shook her head. It was time to try a different route if revenge wasn't as tempting as before, "You know, this would be all so much easier if you'd just admit to your self that you like it." Sam looked away from her, "That feeling that it gives you."

Sam returned her stare with a steely gaze and denied her remark, "You don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, I don't, huh?" Ruby scoffed. "Fine," she walked to the door before turning back to him one
more time. "It's simple—Lucifer rises, the Apocalypse starts. You think that you have demons on your hands now? People are gonna die Sam. Oceans of people. So you just let me know when you're ready," she walked out of the room leaving Sam to his thoughts.

Sam didn't want to think about Ruby's words, about admitting that he liked the power the demon blood gave him. The way it made him feel strong, almost invincible. And he didn't want to consider the consequences Ruby pointed out if he didn't start using again and ended Lilith now.

He had every intention of killing Lilith. That wouldn't change.

But he could find another way that didn't involve demon blood drinking.

Right?

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Agrosy Casino

Evening

Sam and Maya stood at the back of the entertainment hall by the bar in the Agrosy as they waited for Dean. Thank God that during the last couple weeks between cases they got Maya some fake ID's from Kinkos otherwise she'd be sitting in a motel room bored out of her skull…and possibly setting up pranks for them to keep herself occupied.

Although, she probably would be stuck wearing the God-awful suit she scrounged up on the fly. She could very well tell that her medical aid dog in his little vest still found the sight of her in the atrocity very amusing.

Dean came up behind them, "Hey, find anything interesting." He looked over at Maya, eyed her suit—particularly the pink blouse—and the bitch-face she was sending his way, daring him to say anything.

Well, no one said he wasn't a daring man, "Other than Goldy's vibrant shirt."

Oh the glower. Oh the glower that just made her look like an angry kitten with a ridiculously pink bow.

Sam stifled a chuckle as Maya pretended to gut punch Dean to make him flinch, "No. You?"

Dean eyed Maya warily as behind that glower sparked that oh so concerning spark of mischief. He turned to Sam, "Nothing I want to talk about or even think about ever again."

"What happened?" Maya asked curiously with a gleam in her eyes.

Dean shook his head, "Not happening Goldy." He then spotted the two older gentlemen that had tricked him earlier, "C'mon." He motioned with his head for the others to follow him.

The gentlemen turned as they made their approach.

Dean greeted them with, "The Chief, huh?"

The shorter man with white hair, black bowtie, and birthmark at the corner of his right eyebrow stifled a smirk, "What's the matter? The Chief not your type?"
Maya's gold eyes twinkled with curiosity as she did her best to suppress her brightening smile at the prospect of new teasing material against Dean.

Dean gave a fake chuckle and casually threatened, "You know, I could have you both arrested for obstruction of justice."

The other older gentleman with a balding head and graying pony-tailed hair and glasses looked at Dean with confusion, "How? You're no Fed."

"We con people for a living, son," the white haired man pointed out. "Takes more than a fake badge to get past us. That and little miss here's a bit young to be an agent."

With the ruse up and professionalism found in the Federal workplace no longer required, Maya broke into a smile, chuckled, and gave the two men a couple of slow claps, "We were going for junior agent or assistant. Now tell me about this Chief person you sent big Bro here to see? I assumed from the awkwardness and conversation it was—"

The two older men chuckled as Dean—without looking—wrapped an arm around her head and covered her mouth with his hand stopping her from speaking, "Ignore her. She enjoys finding new ways to torture me."

Sam pulled at his collar awkwardly, loosening his tie at not only being found out so easily but also from the way Dean and Maya were acting.

Why did they have to be so embarrassing?

Dean sent Maya a warning glare before releasing her then looked back at the other men, "Yeah, we—we are actually…aspiring magicians."

Maya covered her own mouth as her eyes bugged and she snorted loudly while trying to hold back the laugh that tried to escape her.

"Sorry!" she apologized with a strained chuckle. "Aspiring is putting it mildly. I swear if I wasn't around they couldn't pull off the simplest trick," Maya easily smoothed over and grinned at them mischievously.

Dean and Sam sent her a couple of half-hearted glares.

"And you can't get out of the box without showing a hand or a foot," Dean quipped, getting an affectionate eye roll.

"As you can see we—we came to the convention because we thought we could learn something," Sam shrugged as he moved the conversation forward, putting on his best sheepish and hopeful look.

"Yeah, get some ideas for our new show," Dean added.

"Ooh, what kind of show?" the man with the glasses asked, not quite believing them yet.

"It's a sibling act," Maya answered with practiced ease and confident smile. "Nothing complex right now. Simple stuff with rings and doves and card tricks, and as you might've seen earlier—lot's of sibling ribbing," her smile broadened and she sent the older men a playful wink. She then frowned seriously and growled out, "But I told these assholes if they think I am wearing some stereotypical sparkly, skimpy, girly leotard they got another thing coming!" Maya sent a glare at Sam and Dean for effect.
They both rolled their eyes at her while they did their best to contain their disgust at the thought of parading Maya around in front of an audience (cough-men in the audience-cough) in anything like she had just suggested.

"Sibling rivalry and bickering," the balding man with glasses mused with a chuckle. "Not bad—just don't focus too much between you two," he motioned between Maya and Dean. "Unless you want to act like a mediator in the act the whole time," he nodded at Sam.

"Wouldn't be too different than every other day of our lives," Sam sighed begrudgingly. "Sucks being the middle child."

That got the two men chuckling, but before they could get any further the announcer came over the loud speakers, "Ladies and gentleman, I give you the Incredible Jay."

The white haired man turned to look back at them, "You want to learn something? Stick around."

And they did.

What they witnessed shouldn't have been possible. Not the regular it's-magic/illusion-kind-of-not-possible. But the kind that was actually not humanly possible, as Sam had so eloquently put it.

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December 5 2008, Sioux City, Iowa, United States

Palmer House Motel

Late morning...

"Looks like this guy was a big deal in the 70's," Sam read off the website from his computer while looking up Jay.

"Which in Magician Land means what, exactly?" Dean asked from his bed, looking up from his books on different types of witchcraft.

"Big enough to play Radio City Music Hall," Sam answered back, his eyes still glued to the screen.

"What got him stuck in their 'Where are they now?' file?" Dean flipped another page in one of the ancient books spread in front of him.

"He got old," Sam shook his head.

"Outside of movies and music there aren't many exceptions to fame lasting past the prime years of someone's life," Maya commented as she flipped through a book on tarot cards to see if the card Sam and Dean got from stab-wounds-with-no-holes-in-shirt douchebag's assistant. "I mean, even the cute little kid who starred in Home Alone did not stay cute. Career? Done-zo."

Dean snorted at that comparison, "Right. So, maybe the Incredible Jay is using real magic to stage a comeback?"

Sam shrugged, "It's possible." It was a good enough a motive as any. Lose all that fame and money from something as unforgiving as age would make anyone bitter and jonesing for the good ole days. "Some kind of spell that works a death transference."
Taking out some real pieces of work in the same industry was probably enticing as well.

Dean pursed his lips in thought, "How does the tarot card mix into it? Goldy?"

Maya shrugged as she flipped the slightly blood stained card in her fingers, "Not sure. Wracking my brains on any spells my Dad or Bobby might've mentioned, but all my head is coming up with is a scientific principle."

Dean looked at her askance, "Science? Thought you didn't like school?"

Maya sent him a tired bitch-face, "The childish and petty social interactions part of it. I was perfectly fine learning and making friends, well the one friend anyways. Just couldn't handle the underhanded comments and snide remarks over whose dating who, whose loose, and how much so and so was a total loser."

Dean's lips quirked in a teasing smirk, "And those witches, right? You must just love this case."

Maya raised her face to the Heavens and groaned at the memory, "Don't even go there, assface."

Sam whistled for their attention, "Uh, guys? Back on track?"

Maya shook her head, "Right, right. I was just thinking about energy transfer. Where energy can be transferred from one object to another. What if this is the magical equivalent? But instead of energy…"

"It's death," Sam finished with a nod.

"I'm pretty sure that's how a death transference spell works, but what does the tarot cards—" Dean asked impatiently.

"A beacon," Sam concluded. "A way for the spell to know which target to send the…death energy too."

"Right, 'cause why not?" Dean sighed tiredly. With a shake of his head he stood up, "Man, I hope I die before I get old." Dean walked over to Maya to look at this beacon of death card. "The whole thing seems kind of brutal don't it?" he asked no one in particular.

Maya didn't know what to say to that. Her heart squeezed at the thought of anyone she cared about dying, let alone dying young. She licked her lips as an old thought of a possible future unfurled in her mind, but quickly shoved it away.

It was an errant thought. One she'd have every now and then as the weight of her demi-god status hit her.

When it did she'd think about Bobby, then over time included Sam, Dean, and Eli when they were still friends.

"You think we will?" Sam asked, drawing Dean's attention.

"What?"

"Die before we get old?" Sam waited for Dean's reply, not seeing Maya lower her quickly distancing eyes.

"Haven't we both already?" Dean answered with a slight smirk.
Sam scoffed, "You know what I mean, Dean. I mean, do you think we'll still be chasing demons when we're 60?"

"No," Dean shook his head, body turned to face his brother. "I think we'll be dead, for good."

Sam rolled his eyes with an incredulous smile.

Both didn't see as Maya bit her lip as their conversation kept the errant thought from leaving. It was distressing and something she might have to face if they manage to advert the Apocalypse.

"What? You want to end up like—like Travis? Huh? Or Gordon, maybe?" Dean pointed out some of the less mentally stable and well-adjusted Hunters they'd encountered.

"There's Bobby," Sam countered, with the sanest older Hunter they knew.

"Oh, yeah, there's a poster child for growing up gracefully," rolled his eyes with a huff and walked back to his bed and sat down.

Sam shrugged and tried hopefully, "Maybe we'll be different, Dean."

Dean looked over at him with a raised eyebrow, "What kind of Kool-Aid you drinking, man?" Sam looked away, rebuffed. "Sammy, it ends bloody or sad. That's just the life."

Maya stared unseeingly out of the window, her gold eyes shining and Puck curled up beside her, looking up at her with sad eyes. He nudges her hand in hopes petting him will ease some of her pain. It does, if only a little.

Sam partially closes his laptop, "What if we could win?"

"Win?" Dean looked at Sam skeptically.

"If there was a way we could just…put an end to all of it," Sam hesitated.

Dean picked up on something. He wasn't sure what but there was something going on, "Is there something you're not telling us?"

"No," Sam answered a little quickly. His eyes flickered from Dean to Maya, but quickly back to Dean when he said that dreaded nickname again. Sam noticed something off with Maya, but didn't get the chance to look further.

"Sammy," Dean said with a little warning in his voice.

"No," Sam asserted. "Look, I'm just saying…that—" Sam stood up in a huff. "I just wish there was a way we could…go after the source, that's all. Cut off the head of the snake."

"Well the problem with the snake is that it has a thousand heads," Dean pointed out. "Evil bitches just keep piling out of the Volkswagen."

Arms crossed, Sam's face became dejected as Dean's words hit home. First it was Azazel, now it's Lilith. It seemed like they'd kill one bad MOFO only to have another show up not long after. It was only two but hopefully it wouldn't become some sick horrific pattern.

"Yeah, guess you're right," Sam conceded and took a glance at their oddly quiet little Trickster, and immediately felt like an ass. "Hey, Maya, you okay?"

At being addressed Maya looked over at them over her shoulder from the other bed with distant
"Y-yeah," Maya sniffed thickly as she rubbed the tear and her wet eyes. "I'm-I'm fine. Just the topic of aging got to me, I guess," she gave them a strained smile.

"Why would aging bother you? Out of the three of us you're most likely to stay young forever, right?" Dean asked with a teasing smirk, to try and get her to smile a little…it had the opposite effect.

Maya's strained smile quivered as more tears welled up in her eyes.

"Yeah, and outlive anyone I've ever loved or ever will love," she choked. "If I'm more pagan god—in that way—I'll outlive everyone I've ever known. If you two don't bite it from hunting I'll just lose you to freakin' time!" she gave a sad chuckle. "If I ever find someone to l-love and maybe have a family with, I'll outlive them too. And…and any kids I have," tears fell from her eyes as she shut them tightly.

Maya felt a dip in the bed and a large palm on her back rubbing soothing circles. She opened wet eyes to see Sam looking at her with a sympathetic smile, his large hand remaining on her back as a comforting weight.

"Wouldn't your…kids…" Dean grimaced at the thought of her getting knocked up by some…guy. Ugh, gross and no way in hell! Not on his watch! "…live as long as you?"

She shook her head, "Unless I find a pagan god or demi-god, but pickings are slim with my moral compass." Maya gave Dean a grim smile, "Chances are my partner would probably be human. There are after 7 billion people on this rock, millions for every one pagan or demi-god out there. And even if I don't adopt, the kids'll be mostly human too. Human lifespan included and I…I don't think I'm strong enough for that."

Maya had wedged herself into Sam's side and let the giant man fully wrap his arm around her in a hug she desperately needed, but now it was time to move on from this sad and heavy turn in the conversation.

"At least either way I'd still age better than the both of you," she forced out a chuckle and small smile. "If you ever reach 60 I'll still look fantastic."

Sam and Dean shared a quick look over her head; both knowing what she was doing and they were all down for it. Well, mostly Dean, because emotions. Sam looked like he wanted to maybe try and keep her talking, get her to let all of it out, but Dean kyboshed that with what he did next.

Dean got up and placed his hand in her short fluffy brown curls and rubbed them, "In your dreams sweetheart! Even if you stop aging you'd still be grape juice in comparison to the finely aged wine I'd be!"

Maya finally snorted a real laugh as she pushed away from Sam, "Finely aged wine from a suck ass year you mean, and tastes like crap."

Dean wrapped her head in a headlock and began noogey-ing her head as she flailed in his grip, "What was that, Goldy?"

"You're an asshole!" was her muffled response. Puck moved to the head of the bed where the pillows were and watched them contentedly as the smell of her sadness faded.

Sam had gotten up, shaking his head with a smile at the two of them. His heart hurt for Maya's
predicament, and wondered if that was one of the reasons why she latched onto them so quickly. She wanted to spend as much time as she could with them, not knowing when they'd be gone for good, either from Hunting…or time.

"Well, while you two do, that," he gestured vaguely at them. "I'll go track down Jay and see if he's our guy. And try to dig up some more on that tarot card when you two aren't too busy, okay?"

Maya had broken free and launched her self at a chuckling Dean.

"Bye Sammy!" they called after him in unison as they continued the impromptu playful wrestling match.

He doubted they'd get any more research done and as much as it annoyed him, he also found himself not minding too much. It was good to see Dean take a moment from being the gun-ho Hunter he had been for the last few weeks and just act like his old self a bit.

Sam was grateful for Maya in their hectic lives for what she unknowingly did for Dean, for the both of them.

For being that little bit of light in the darkness.

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Patricia Hotel

That afternoon…

Sam walked into the lobby of the Patricia Hotel, after walking past cop cars and ambulance vehicle, to a full black body bag being wheeled out on a gurney. Seeing Maya, Puck, and Dean standing off to the side watching the proceedings he quickly walked over to them.

"Hey," Sam greeted as he walked up to them. "Got your text. What's going on?"

"Maid found Jeb hanging from the ceiling fan. Police think was a suicide," Dean pulled out a tarot card from his jacket. "I beg to differ. Pulled a little slight of hand myself," Dean held up the card for Sam to see.

Sam took the card and looked at the 'Hanged Man' tarot, "On Dexter's body?"

"Yeah, you and Goldy were onto something with the whole cards acting like some kind of black-magic beacons."

"Thank you, Bill Nye!" Maya quipped with a lopsided grin. Sam and Dean sent her a couple of quick and amused smiles seeing her earlier sadness no longer there.

Sam then asked in all seriousness, "Any connection between the victims?"

"Jeb was a total douchebag to Jay yesterday," Dean answered, the smile falling from his lips.

"What about the first vic, uh, Vance?" Sam probed further.

"Apparently Vance was heckling Jay at the bar the day he was killed," Maya answered before Dean, earning her a disgruntled pout that Dean would deny to his grave.
Sam gave a quiet coincidental chuckle as they all started walking further into the hotel, "So Jay sneaks a card into Vance's pocket, does the Table of Death…"

"Then takes ten swords to the chest," Dean finished for him.

"Then Jay slips a noose and Jeb doesn't. Hell of a trick," Maya added with a tight thin-lipped grin. "I mean, I applaud the just desserts angle going on here but the deaths were totally unnecessary."

The brothers give her a dry look that she just shrugged her shoulders at. Maya was what she was. At least she wasn't laughing at the whole thing, just acknowledging some coincidental facts.

"Yeah, well, I think it's time we had a little chat with Jay," Dean looked over her head at Sam, nodding at him. "Any luck tailing him?"

Sam shifted awkwardly and admitted sheepishly, "He slipped me."

Maya furrowed her eyebrows and looked up at him, "Seriously?"

Sam gave a helpless shrug.

Maya snickered, while Dean gave him a look of disbelief.

"He's a 60-year-old," Dean said pointedly.

"He's a magician," Sam said equally as pointedly, like that answer explained everything.

Maya covered her smile with a hand as she silently laughed as Sam and Dean argued how a magician, 60 years old or not, could still give someone the slip.

December 6 2008, Sioux City, Iowa, United States

Patricia Hotel

Next day…

Afternoon

Maya was delegated to wait in the hotel lobby in case Jay somehow made it past Sam and Dean. Dean was doubtful, but Sam and Maya were in agreement. Witch or not this guy was a magician, Master of Misdirection. Better safe than sorry.

Didn't mean Maya was happy about being stuck in the lobby as lookout. What if something happened and they needed her and Puck's help?

Sigh.

So instead she waited for a gunshot to go off.

And waited.

Waited some more.

Maya frowned from her inconspicuous corner near the staircase.
Something was wrong.

Thundering footsteps down the main stairs garnered her attentions as Sam and Dean came down, walked right past her and frantically looked around.

"No way he could outrun us," Maya overheard Sam breathlessly say as he scanned the lobby, looking away from her. "And Maya's around here somewhere."

"Maybe he vanished," Dean suggested not seeing her yet either. Honestly. "I mean, he really is good."

"Or maybe he found a backdoor," Sam added as he and Dean watched through a window as a police car came to an abrupt stop outside the hotel.

"Guys—" Maya called as she was about to make her way over to them, but stopped short as Jay ran down the stairs as the police burst into the lobby.

"That's them!" Jay shouted, pointing at Sam and Dean. Maya quickly backpedaled around the corner with Puck. "Those are the two nut jobs that just broke into my room!"

The lobby quieted as the police clicked back their safety and pointed their guns at Sam and Dean.

"Freeze! Hands where I can see 'em!" one of the officers ordered.

With guns pointed at them, Sam and Dean slowly turned around with their hands sheepishly raised.

A crowd had gathered as they were handcuffed, searched, and marched out the casino doors. Maya looked at them worriedly, unsure what to do. She caught Dean's and his tight mouth and quick discrete shake of his head, telling her not to interfere.

Maya watched them enter the cruiser and be driven off.

Now what?

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Agrosy Casino

That evening...

Maya hung around the bar with Puck anxiously in her overly stuffy feeling formal FBI attire. Silently seething with hatred at the god awful pink shirt she had to wear. Especially given the stealth she had needed to sneak into the sold out show. Maya bit her lip as she eyed the back stage entrance and its guard.

She'd been sneaky in her surveillance and noticed how much water the guard had drank. As the room slowly filled up for the nightly show her and Puck slowly made her way closer.

Maya didn't know what she was going to do. She didn't have a gun, let alone any witch-killing bullets, but she had to do something.

Well, worse comes to worse Puck could probably just bite his head off.

The guard looked around, not noticing the surreptitious eyes watching them as they made a beeline to the nearest rest room.
Maya and Puck then walked confidently and purposefully through the door like they totally belonged backstage.

People are suspicious of nervous looking people. 

_Not the confident ones._

Seeing a separation curtain she saw a brief glance of a lit up vanity mirror on the other side through the slightly parted sheets. Walking up she paused on the other side as she heard voices on the other side.

"Well, what about the escapes? I haven't been able to slip a pair of cuffs in 30 years!" was obviously Jay's voice, sounding angry and…confused. Maya frowned at the confusion in the man's voice. "And then there was that way—that Patrick Vance died and that Jeb Dexter."

"Yeah, no great loss there," came another voice, sounding like one of Jay's friends her and the boys had talked to the other night. There was no sorrow in his voice.

"Oh, Charlie, he didn't deserve to die," Jay chided.

"You had nothing to do with it!" Charlie pointed out a little aggressively.

"He was hanged the same night I performed the Executioner!" Jay argued loudly.

"Wait a minute," Charlie's voice paused. "Are you telling me you actually believe those guys? That there was some kind of 'real magic' involved?"

Maya kept her ear open as she looked around her to see if anyone was coming by.

"No," Jay denied at first then amended it with a quiet, "I don't know. I don't know, maybe."

There was a silent pause.

"I shouldn't go on tonight, Charlie," Maya could just imagine Jay shaking his head fretfully.

"Are you kidding me?" came Charlie's heated voice and thump of something being almost slammed on a hard wooden surface. "You have a sold-out house out there. Sold-out! When was the last time that happened?"

"The other night…when I was doing the Table of Death I was, um…I was going to kill myself. And I have no idea how I got out alive," Jay revealed.

Hearing footsteps approaching and Puck's anxious huff Maya quickly left the curtain to find a hiding spot. Besides, she'd heard enough.

Jay wasn't their witch.

Maya and Puck stayed out of sight until Jay was about ready to go on. Taking a risk she quickly approached him, "Incredible Jay?"

The older white haired gentleman turned to her and Puck with a charming smile, "Oh, hello young lady."

"You know something is going on Jay," Maya wasn't beating around the bush. The show was about to start and the only way to prevent another death tonight was to stop Jay from going on. Who ever was doing the casting was obviously doing it for him.
No death-defying stunt, no death transference.

"I beg your pardon?" Jay looked at her quizzically, but she could see the undercurrent of nervousness.

"You do this trick, someone will die in your place," she said bluntly. "They'll suffer the death you were supposed to. So, please," she pleaded with him, "Don't go on."

Jay narrowed his eyes slightly, but not enough to conceal the dread the lurked inside them, "Are you threatening someone's life?"

Maya shook her head, "I'm not, but you are. Someone is using magic to help you perform these dangerous tricks and to keep you from dying! I overheard you tell your friend that you don't know how you survived the other night! You were cuff to the table, wanting to die…how do explain escaping and Vance getting ten stab wounds to the chest that would match that death machine you have out there and without a single tear in his shirt?" She looked at him with pleading eyes.

Turmoil whirled inside of Jay as he looked between the odd young woman with a small medical aid dog and the stage.

Jay shook his head and steeled his resolve, choosing to believe his long time friend Charlie and that he had found his groove again, that spark that had drawn crowds to him in the height of his career.

He then gave Maya an accusatory look, "You're with those two that broke into my hotel room today aren't you?!"

"Yeah," Maya answered calmly and bluntly. "We were looking for the witch that has been using a death transference spell. We thought it was you, but you're obviously clueless about real magic. You're just an unwitting pawn reaping all the benefits."

"I'll call the police and—"

"And what, Jay?" Maya cocked her head to the side with a lopsided smirk that would look at home on her Dad's own Trickster face. "Arrest me for sneaking back stage to see an old magician in the middle of reclaiming his fame? C'mon, you and your buddies are con men. You really think that'll slide?" Her smirk grew as Jay deflated a bit, but still glared at her.

"If there is a witch helping me out…do you know who it is?" Jay asked, sounding skeptical, but Maya could hear his curiosity and desire to know. To know if there was such a thing as real magic and if…someone's been using it to save him in exchange for the lives of others.

"No, that's why I'm asking you not to go on. No unexplainable death-defying trick," she held out one empty hand, "No poor schmuck taking your place on the chopping block," she sighed as she offered her other hand. "Your as much an innocent in all this as the others."

Jay shook his head not wanting to believe it, "I'm sorry, but there's no such thing as magic. Their deaths were just…horrible coincidences." He needed to concentrate, not doubt himself before he's strapped to the table once more.

Maya gave him a defeated look and turned to Puck, "Smell anything?"

Puck looked up at her with a whine and shake of his head.

"Damn," Maya cursed as she turned and bumped into one of the magicians she'd met yesterday that had come up behind her. "My bad," she gave a strained smile and made a quick exit.
Charlie watched her go for a minute with narrowed eyes before turning back to Jay to talk him out of not going out.

Again.

After Maya had left the back stage she made a beeline to the women's washrooms just outside the hall. The act was about to start any minute and even if Jay wasn't the witch she wanted to make sure she didn't find herself sporting some new holes later. Going into the large handicap stall, Maya quickly stripped down while Puck kept an eye out under the door.

Naked, she palmed through her FBI getup looking for anything amiss. Mainly looking for a possible tarot—

She pulled out the battered card from the inner pocket lining of her jacket.

*The Tower card*, a symbol of fire.

Without a second thought Maya tore the card into little pieces and flushed it down the toilet for good measure. She doubted it was Jay, but that didn't mean the witch behind all this didn't see her try to talk him out of performing, or talking about *bitchcraft* in general.

Back on stage, Charlie and Vernon watched Jay begin his performance behind the shimmering curtains.

Charlie stiffened imperceptively when he felt the death transference beacon card was no longer active. He left Vernon to watch the show as he quickly pulled out another fully loaded card. Then added another spell.

There was no other body around to place it on. Looked like he'd have to reveal himself to the others sooner than he'd planned.

Oh well. He was done being old anyways.

A minute later the swords fell and Jay walked out from behind the curtain unscathed.

Five seconds after that a woman screamed and Jay ran to find Charlie dead on the ground, ten wounds bleeding through an unscathed and fully intact shirt.

*Patricia Hotel*

*Same night…*

Jay, Maya and Puck watched as Sam and Dean walked in the front entrance of the hotel.

Sam saw Maya standing with Jay in her street clothes, Puck loyally at her feet, and nodded at her, "Hey Maya, you doing okay?"

She gave him a half smile at his concern, "Yeah. But there's been…another death." Maya motioned her head towards Jay.

"Jay," Sam greeted. "Thanks for dropping the charges."

Dean came up behind Sam after giving Maya a quick once over then turned his attention to the
older man, "Mind telling us why you did it?"

Jay's lip quivered slightly as he looked at Sam and Dean, and gave Maya a quick glance, "We have to talk."

Jay took them to a nearby dive bar, because the conversation they were about to have was best had over hard liquor.

Jay told them how Charlie was dead. Ten stab wounds in the chest, but no puncture holes in the shirt, like Vance. He told them how him and Charlie became friends, more than friends, *brothers.*

"I'm sorry, Jay," Sam said sympathetically. They all knew too well what it was like to lose a sibling, or in Maya's case someone as good as.

"When you told me that my show was killing people, I should have listened," Jay lamented.

"Well you weren't the one pulling the trigger," Dean pointed out helpfully.

Jay shook his head, "Yeah, but someone did, and I want to find out who did this to Charlie. So I'll do whatever you guys say. Just tell me what to do."

Sam, Dean, and Maya looked between each other, all of them knowing he wasn't going to like what comes next.

Maya was the first to speak up, "Jay, whoever's doing this…they like you. If they didn't and it was just revenge against Vance and Jeb…you probably would've succeeded that first night and not be here right now." Maya sent him a knowing look; she knew what he had planned.

Sam and Dean sent her confused and curious looks, but Maya shook her head. It wasn't important now.

"Yeah, so they're probably close to you," Sam suggested, pushing the conversation forward. Now for the hard part, "Did Charlie and Vernon get along?"

Realization dawned in Jay's eyes and he shook his head in denial, "No. No, it's not Vernon."

Dean sighed heavily as he lifted his eyes to meet Jay's, "He's the only one that makes sense."

"Charlie and Vernon were your family, Jay," Sam added, his face wincing a bit at what was being implied.

"And now Charlie's gone," Dean finished, not trying to be insensitive but just stating facts.

"Yeah, but…they butted heads sometimes, but Vernon could never do something like this," Jay defended his last friend.

"See the thing about real magic, it's a whole lot like crack. People do surprising things once they get a taste of it," Sam gave Dean a side-glance at his words, the words hitting a little too close for comfort. Maya frowned openly at Dean.

"Not magic, Dean. *Unchecked power,*" Maya corrected earning a look that told her how much he wanted to argue on that point. "There's a difference. I mean, what do you think gave me my innate powers, huh? But you don't see me abusing the crap out of it."

Dean blinked in astonishment then demanded, "Wait, what?!" Sam looked almost as surprised, but more like he was chiding himself for not making the logical leap. Anything that could make
physical constructs out of nothing had to have some kind of innate magical ability.

Maya gave him a bland look and said very slowly and condescendingly, "Trickster. Magic."

"Trickster?" Jay questioned as he looked at the girl sitting in front of him.

"Hello, my name's Maya and I will your demi-god on this supernaturally charged excursion," she gave Jay a lopsided grin with mischief sparkling in her eyes. "Please keep all asshole-ery to a minimum if you are unprepared to receive comical just desserts," the lopsided grin became a little more predatory.

Any cautious feeling Maya may have stirred up inside Jay's chest disappeared the moment Dean whacked her upside the head and she glared angrily at the eldest Winchester with a particular face. She looked like an angry fluffy kitten.

With last drink of his scotch Jay told them he was in, "You better be damned sure about this. Vernon's all I got left."

December 7 2008, Sioux City, Iowa, United States

Patricia Hotel

The next evening…

Sam, Dean, Maya and Puck had gone into Vernon's room once he'd left to go talk to Jay at the casino. They searched through the cluttered room, but found no traces of bitchcraft. Puck even sniffed around for anything that would be classed as black magic but didn't find anything either. Just a lot of old time magic memorabilia. Guess these guys liked drowning in the past.

"It's just a bunch of old timey magic stuff," Dean put it eloquently as he threw down some posters. "None of it magic."

"No herbs, no candles—"

"And no tarot cards," Maya finished for Sam with a sigh as she surveyed the room and Puck gave her a small apologetic whine for not being more helpful.

Dean pushed through some of the posters on the bed, one catching his eye. Picking it up he looked closer at it, surprisingly recognizing the man on the old poster, "I'll be damned." Dean flipped it around to show Sam and Maya, "Look like anyone we know?"

It was a 1920's poster of The Great Dessertini, showcasing the man's right side of his face with a very familiar and distinctive birthmark at the corner of his right brow.

"Charlie?" Maya said with surprise. "Well that explains the tarot card I found on me just before Jay's act."

The tense silence and pointed eyes directed her way was telling.

"What?" Maya glanced between Sam and Dean.
"So, you were supposed to get it last night instead?!" Dean demanded. "Why didn't you say anything?!

"Because it didn't happen?" Maya raised an eyebrow. "Otherwise I wouldn't be talking with you right now, would I?" she snarked.

Sam sighed seeing Dean starting to work himself up, "Maya we're just shocked that's all. How do you think we'd feel if you didn't catch that card on you in time?"

Sad puppy-eyes with laser beam focus right to the goddamn heart.

Maya immediately looked repentant, "Sorry."

Dean let his anger over Maya keeping something like that from them go in a drawn out sigh, "Just—just tell us next time, yeah?"

Maya gave them a sheepish smile before squinting at them, "But wouldn't you guys just freak out sooner and go into tag-team mother hen mode?"

Oh the protesting she received as they quick left the hotel and drove as quickly as they could to the Agrosy.

Agrosy Casino

They quickly made their way to the entertainment lobby after entering (sneaking in for Maya) the casino.

Dean handed Maya the extra handgun he grabbed for her, "Don't shoot unless it's only the witch in your line of sight. Your aim still needs work and I don't feel like getting shot in the ass today."

"Safety on until the last second then?" Maya asked dryly as she carefully took the gun.

"Please," Dean stressed as they came to the double doors and a young male voice offer Jay and presumably Vernon immortality. "We'll keep him busy. Try to surprise him from the side, get him off kilter."

Sam and Dean quickly entered, getting the attention of the men in the auditorium. Maya waited till Dean had command of the witch's full attention, "Not so fast! I ain't Gutternberg, and this ain't Cocoon."

Sam and Dean jogged up the stage to face Jay, Vernon, and a young Charlie. Dean motioned with his gun for Jay and Vernon to move away from Charlie.

Maya and Puck quietly slipped in and discretely as possible made the long way around to the stage.

"Immortality. That's a neat trick," Dean said with a strained and mocking tight-mouthed grin.

"It's not a trick. It's magic," Charlie said simply, not at all threatened by the Hunters facing him.

None of them saw the noose that descended from the ceiling to ensnare Dean around the neck and hoisted him up in the air with a strangled noise. Maya's eyes went wide and clenched her teeth as she tried to find a good angle to take a shot from.
One that didn't possibly endanger anyone else's life other than Charlie's.

In response to Dean's distress Sam quickly raised his gun and fired, but it didn't have the desired effect.

Charlie had simply turned his head and then turned to look back at Sam like he was chewing on something. He held up a finger and spat the bullet out, "Hey, bullet catch—been working on that."

Sam unwittingly followed the bullet as Charlie tossed it up in the air before disappearing. Maya frantically searched the stage for where Charlie could have ended up.

"Get him!" Dean shouted as he gripped at the noose to keep his neck from strangling too quickly.

Sam saw him first at the side of the stage beside the Table of Death. Gun raised he advanced on Charlie, "Let him go! Now!"

"Just leave me and my friends alone."

"I said, now!" Sam demanded angrily.

Maya had seen Sam move and cursed realizing she wouldn't have a good shot from where she was, especially with Sam there. She crouched low as she moved along the bottom edge of the stage, using it as cover.

Charlie calmly put his hands up, "All right, I will give it up—the spells, the hexes. This is the last time. I promise." Sam lowered his gun, looking like he might believe him, but instead took a swing at the witch.

Only for his fist to hit air as Charlie teleported behind him, back to Maya.

As Sam turned around Charlie pushed him back onto the Table of Death, the clasps locking Sam in place as the rope holding ten swords slowly began to break.

'Crap!' Maya thought frantically as she unclicked the safety and took aim.

She fired, but only managed to lodge a bullet in Charlie's shoulder.

Charlie gasped from the pain and turned to look at her.

"Uh oh," Maya gulped with wide eyes before finding herself suddenly suspended over the seats in mid air, her arms and legs spread eagle and useless.

"I wondered where you'd gone," Charlie said with strain in his voice as he rotated his bleeding shoulder. Scratch that—healed shoulder.

Puck quickly transformed as he leapt on stage with a snarl, then lunged at the witch. Jay and Vernon gave shouts of surprise and fear at the sight of the enlarged and ferocious looking canine.

"Whoa!" Charlie dodged and lost concentration for a moment on Maya, causing her to fall with a yelp.

Maya quickly stood up with a grunt and took shaky aim once more, "Puck! Grab him!"

Charlie was splitting his attention between the two, but focused on the dog trying to sink its teeth into him, artfully dodging every lunge and attempted chomp to subdue him.
Charlie actually looked somewhat worried. He'd never encountered such a creature before and if he thought the girl was different before, this just cemented that fact as he maneuvered himself closer to the stage curtains.

After all, what human knowingly had a supernatural canine as a pet?

Maya gritted her teeth as she tried to aim at the witch again. Unfortunately with him getting further and further from the edge of the stage it became harder to aim, not to mention he was constantly moving to avoid Puck's teeth.

Puck made another frustrated lunge, narrowly missing the infuriating witch and sliding a bit into the draping red curtains.

Curtains that suddenly came alive and wrapped around his body like a vice and then lifted him into the air. He twisted and turned trying to get the fabric in his claws or teeth to cut himself down, but it was useless and had to watch as his Mistress clambered on stage and shot off another round—just grazing the witch's cheek as he dodged.

"Well, enough of that," Charlie swept his hand and the gun was forcibly ripped from Maya's grip. "Ah ah ah!" he tsk'd as Maya took out her engraved machete and made to swing at him only to have her arm freeze mid air.

Maya tugged on her arm but it was stuck. Not even moving the slightest bit.

"Now, let's get a better look at you," Charlie said with a too wide grin as he approached her—a little too close for comfort.

Maya's eyes darted to Dean who still struggled in the air and then to Sam as the rope continued to slowly snap one strand at a time.

Jay watched as Charlie held out a hand to the self-proclaimed demi-god and hovered it around her as he circled her. "Charlie what are you doing?"

"Putting the pieces together. I mean, I sensed some magic off of her but I wasn't sure what," Charlie answered his long time friend. "Then she has this killer attack dog, and now that I can examine her...she's a little demi-god," Charlie laughed. "Hunters and a Demi, working together! That's hilarious!"

The witch's eyes grew curious when his hand hovered over where her gauntlets were and illuminated the engraved markings.

The engravings lit up in a sickly light purple, showing druidic knots and bands. On each wrist where an empty circle once was, the cuffs now held a new symbol on each one.

On the right that had a Celtic inspired horn (Horn of Gabriel) with harp strings was the more recognizable Celtic Harp, the symbol of immortality of soul and royalty.

On the left containing the candy-fied stylization of the Sword of Justice was the druidic symbol of Fire, with some later Celtic influence with the Awen (Triple Flame) symbol incorporated into it, a symbol that represented balance and transformation through fire.

Charlie read the symbols and his eyes lit up, "A little Trickster demi-god. I guess that Tower card I planted on you the other night fit huh? Your kind is all about evening out imbalances from injustices and putting your victims through trials of fire. Creation and destruction. Forced changes and enlightenment," Charlie gazed into Maya's terrified gold ones, "Oh all the powerful spells I
could do with your blood alone! Not to mention all the other squishy bits." He poked her side for emphasis, not phased in the slightest at her terrified cringe from him. He easily sidestepped the pathetic and desperate kick she sent his way.

Charlie turned to Jay and Vernon, "We won't even need other people for the immortality spell. With just her—between the three of us—we won't have to worry about getting old for at least a couple of centuries!" He threw out his arms with a wide satisfied grin.

If Jay even had the slightest second thought of doing what he was about to do, it was immediately killed at what Charlie had just said.

'Dad. Agrosy Casino, Sioux Falls. Help!' Maya sent in a desperate prayer, not seeing Jay take out a dagger and stab himself, but still remained unharmed.

The stab wound in his gut having been transferred to Charlie.

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Random Ass Location

Gabriel

The prayer hit Gabriel like a freight train as he snapped his fingers and pinned the demons he was forced to face to the ground by their feet as the angels slew them.

Gabriel turned to the seraph he was supposed to be taking orders from, "Are we done here? Seal saved?"

The seraph looked down on the perceived pagan with a sneer, "No we are not, filth!"

"I just got an SOS from my kid! I need to go to her!" Gabriel was so close to smiting a bitch ass angel it wasn't even funny. He had felt the fear in that one prayer from his daughter.

"It was my understanding that the Righteous Man and his abomination of a brother were looking after it," the angel scoffed as it struck down another demon.

"Obviously that's not working!" Gabriel growled out with clenched fists, ready to fly to her and expose himself, and not in the fun way. Because, what's the point of hiding if the one you're trying to protect dies anyway?!

"Then muster up whatever amounts to a bit of faith in the Righteous Man. If not," the angel sent him a bland yet still disdainful look. "Heaven will end it regardless. It, and by extension you, cannot end up in the wrong hands."

Oh ho ho, Gabriel was ready to show them 'the wrong hands' when he received another prayer from Maya.

'Nevermind. It's over. All good,' came her voice inside his skull.

Despite the relief he felt as he turned away from the arrogant angel and punched a demon a good fifty feet away from him, the prayer hit him harder than the first one.

He had heard her worry, uncertainty, sadness and…doubt. In him.
Gabriel took an unnecessary breath to calm his vessel's increasing heartbeat and the frustrated and sad tears that burned behind his eyes.

He'd always answered her before. Always went to her when she called, even for the littlest of things, even in the middle of an important trick.

But when she really needed him, Gabriel didn't show.

His heart clenched painfully as he prayed to an absentee Father that she would understand when he could finally hold her in his arms again.

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December 8 2008, Sioux City, Iowa, United States

Nearby Dive Bar

The following night…

Sam, Dean, and Maya had kept their distance after Charlie was killed the previous night and that day as the police combed and worked through the new crime scene at the Agrosy Casino. They doubted the police would have forgotten about Sam and Dean that quickly, despite the charges being dropped.

There was one more thing they needed to do before moving on, so Sam and Dean poked around with Maya following along unnervingly quiet the whole day and found Jay.

As they entered the quiet bar they saw Jay sitting morosely alone at a small table with a glass of dark amber coloured scotch and a deck of cards falling a part in his hand.

"Hey, Jay," Dean greeted as they walked up to the older man's table.

Jay opened his eyes to look up at them slowly, obvious in his desire to not see them.

Dean swallowed under the man's heavy grief laden gaze; "We wanted to thank you for what you did yesterday."

"I killed my best friend yesterday, and you want to thank me?" Jay asked with a deprecative chuckle.

Dean looked down and Sam and Maya couldn't meet the man's grief stricken gaze. If they hadn't interfered Jay's friend might still be alive, but if they hadn't who knew how many people would be dead by now.

It'd been a lose-lose situation.

"Where's Vernon?" Sam asked. He'd thought the other magician would be there to grieve with his last friend.

"Oh, he's gone," Jay shook his head with a sigh. "Said he didn't want to speak to me again after what I did to Charlie."

"Listen, Jay…” Dean paused as he used a relatively unused brain muscle to try to give the older man some kind of comfort or closure. "You know Charlie was never gonna give up what he was
"You sure about that?" Jay questioned, his voice tight. "You know, Charlie was like my brother. And now he's dead...because I did 'the right thing'," Jay pushed back on the table as he stood up and threw his card down the wooden and stained surface. "He offered me a gift, and I just threw it back in his face," Jay stumbled to his feet and picked up his whiskey glass. "So now, I have to spend the rest of my life old and alone," bringing the glass to his lips he drained the last of the whiskey inside it.

Jay went to walk by the silent trio—and Puck—but stopped beside Dean and said in a grief-stricken whisper, "What's so right about that?"

Sam and Maya both gave the older gentleman sad apologetic eyes.

Jay's eyes lingered on Maya, the young whatever she was.

"I'm sorry," she told him softly, gold eyes conveying the depth of her feeling she felt for his plight and something else.

"Me too. So, don't waste it," Jay didn't elaborate further as he headed to the pub door. The unspoken words heard loud and clear.

_Don't waste the sacrifice I made to save you._

As he went to leave a young waitress called out to him, holding his forgotten cards with a friendly smile, "Jay...your cards."

Jay shook his head, "Throw them away." With that he left the bar, the waitress' smile falling.

"Well I don't know about you two, but...I could go for a beer," Dean sighed, looking at Maya and Sam tiredly.

Maya licked her lips; she knew she was just holding herself together. Her Dad not coming when she needed him had left her feeling shaken. She knew they had to stay radio silent with each other in order to keep whatever trouble her Dad got into away from her, but...Maya never thought he wouldn't come when she needed to pray to him for help.

It felt like whatever safety net or crutch she hadn't realized she had was all of a sudden ripped out from under her, leaving her feeling scared, uncertain, _vulnerable_. The only consolation being that she wasn't completely alone with Sam, Dean, and Puck there.

Didn't mean it wasn't jarring as _fuck_.

"I...I kind of want to call it a day," Maya said with a quiet voice, getting worried glances from both Sam and Dean. "I think I'll...I'll head back to the motel," she rubbed the back of her head and went to leave, but a large hand grasped her elbow.

Maya turned to look at Sam who was giving her the gentle 'I'm-here-for-you' face.

"Everything okay? You've been quiet all day," Sam pointed out as he released her elbow.

"Yeah," Dean nodded with a worried frown. "It's _weird_."
Maya looked at them, her eyes flickering between their green and brown ones before casting them down with a wobbly frown, "My Dad didn't come."

"Maya?" Sam questioned.

"We were all pinned. And I couldn't move and I did the only thing I could finally remember to actually do when I'm in trouble like that," Maya kept her eyes downcast and looking Puck in the eyes. Puck gave a small whine up at her.

"I prayed for him. Told him where we were—where I was. He told me he'd always come running if I needed him, but he didn't," her lower lip quivered as she felt the unshed tears burn in her eyes. "Not last night."

"And Bobby said he was keeping away to draw some gods he angered away, so they didn't find me, but what does it matter if I got killed by something else instead?" she choked out a hollow laugh as a tear fell down her cheek. Maya saw Dean's feet shuffle awkwardly, but Sam moved to her side and used a large arm to press her against his side. "I-I...I'm scared," she admitted in a whisper as she finally looked up, tears making thick watery tracks down her cheeks and gold eyes shimmering.

Sam and Dean felt their hearts ache a little for their honorary little sister.

Dean ran a hand through his short sandy hair and shared a look with Sam before sighing, "Can you give me a minute to get a beer to go, or something?"

Maya opened her mouth to protest that they didn't need to come with her, but Sam squeezed her shoulder, getting her to look up at his soft smile. Her shoulders sagged and she seemed to just... deflate before their eyes looking smaller and younger than she was.

They left the bar together and made their way back to the motel in silence.

None of them really talked as they went about their own businesses—well Sam and Dean did. Maya kind of flip flopped between the two of them, either sitting across from Sam as he browsed his computer while she sketched a bit, or plastered herself to Dean's side as he watched some random show or movie on the TV. Puck loyally following her.

It wasn't said, but Sam and Dean could tell her confidence in the one person she trusted above all else was horribly shaken.

Dean was the one to call it a night first and Maya wasn't too far behind him, climbing into Dean's bed and immediately cuddling up to him and ignoring his weak protesting. They all knew he didn't mean a lick of it, especially if it reassured Maya that she wasn't alone, when her trust in her Dad was fractured (not broken, there's a difference).

While his two siblings had gotten ready for bed, Sam had texted Ruby behind his computer screen.

Sam: Okay. I'm in.

Ruby: Good to hear.

Ruby: On my way.

Ruby: I'm here. Let's get this show started.

Sam saw that last text and let his eyes drift over the calmly breathing bodies on the other bed. He
frowned at the text, hesitating.

This case had gotten to him.

How much more pain will he have to witness? Be a part of? Experience?

If Dean was right, will he have to live with his brother dying again fighting some big bad that had them cornered? Or even some regular monster that finally got lucky when he could have stopped it if he hadn't stopped using his powers?

And what about Maya? Sure she was apprehensive about possibly living forever, but he doubted she wanted to die young. And since she seemed to favor the life of a Hunter the later seemed almost guaranteed.

Could he really handle all of that when he was an old man?

After shrugging his tan jacket on with a resigned sigh, Sam then wrote a note for Dean and Maya and went to place it on the nightstand.

Well, until his hazel eyes met gold looking up at him.

"Sam?" Maya queried quietly. "Where you goin'?"

Sam gave her his best reassuring smile, even as his gut twisted at what he was about to do.

He had told her whatever had strengthened his powers that it was a non-issue, one that she didn't need to worry about because he wasn't going to do it anymore.

But so many seals had already fallen, more than half. What was worse? Letting the Apocalypse start…or becoming a liar?

"Just need a walk to clear my head," Sam told her softly. "Thought you were sleeping?"

Maya disentangled her self from Dean and stared up at him, giving him a light shrug and said pitifully, "I guess despite my tear-fest earlier I just—I just can't turn my brain off."

Sam could see the doubt, fear, and failing confidence swirling like miasma in her watery gold eyes.

"Do you think he's okay?" she asked quietly, her eyes showing worry. "My Dad?"

Sam gave her a strained smile, "I'm sure he is."

Still not his favorite person though, but he wasn't about to be an ass about it.

Maya gave him a sad sigh accompanied with equally sorrowful eyes, "Then where is he, Sammy?"

Sam's eyes fell and his smile turned sadder at the sorry state Maya was in and suggested, "You want to watch one of the movies I have on my computer?"

She gave him an assessing look before nodding with the smallest of smiles and slipping out from beside Dean…who unconsciously frowned at the loss of the warm and soothing presence he'd gotten used to over the last few weeks.

As Sam pulled up the movie folder, Maya asked quietly, "Will you stay?" Sam looked at her and made the mistake of making eye contact, "Please?"
What was worse? Not using his powers to help prevent the Apocalypse?

Or becoming a liar to the pair of gold eyes that were looking up to him so imploringly and trusting?

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**Palmer House Motel Parking Lot**

**Ruby**

The demon-ness was furious. Scratch that, there wasn't word to *describe* the emotion she was feeling right that second.

Ruby almost had him! Almost had that damn stubborn *Sam Winchester* back on track!

He was *in!* He was ready to get back on the blood drinking bandwagon to freeing Lucifer!

Then he pulled *this* bullshit:

**Sam:** *Sorry. I can't.*

What the hell does he mean, *'he can't'?!* It all hinges on him! Dean breaking had set everything in motion, now they need to make sure they got the other Apocalypse starting *book end* to this thing ready!

**Ruby:** *What the hell Sam? Why the fuck did you change your mind?*

Ruby stiffened as she remembered the conversation between Sam and that damn half-breed during the whole *Anna Debacle* a few weeks ago.

So maybe it wasn't Dean giving Sam the boost he needed to resist the call of the demon blood after all. But she still couldn't be certain.

**Sam:** *Leave it alone Ruby.*

Ruby scoffed at that text. Like hell she was and she told him so, but received no reply in return.

Ruby growled and quickly pulled out of the parking lot, tires screeching in protest.

She would spend the night fuming and devising a way to get Sam to come to her for a shot of some Grade A demon blood.

Perhaps if Dean or Maya was seriously injured on a hunt? Something that Sam could have prevented if his powers were up to snuff? Mainly the telepathy?

It would probably be *especially* devastating if the half-breed he saw as a *little sister* was hurt… or… *almost killed.*

With a plan forming Ruby now just needed to find the *perfect Hunt.*

A malicious grin split her face as she sped down the highway.

Dean may have the angels looking out for him, but she doubted Heaven gave a shit about the demi-Trickster.
Lilith might not like her risking the toy she really wanted, but they needed the Apocalypse to get back on track.

A shiver of fear ran down Ruby's back.

Lilith would not be happy.

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**Palmer House Motel**

**Middle of the Night**

Dean startled awake from another nightmarish Hell memory. The first one he seemed to have in a while. Rubbing his face tiredly he turned his head to find Maya no longer cuddled into his side, except the small dog at the foot of the bed sitting up looking at him.

Puck—*having been rudely awoken*—stared back at Dean with complete unimpressed-ness. Dean offered a muttered and quiet apology, that he in no way completely meant. Puck huffed his displeasure, jumping off the bed then hopping up on the other bed.

Dean's eyes trailed to the other bed—*following Puck*—where a harsh light illuminated the dozing features of Sam and Maya, both sitting up and leaning against each other with the laptop settled between them. Dean rolled his eyes and got up, closing the laptop, and dousing the room back into darkness.

Puck settled down in his new spot on the new bed with a contented sigh, closer to his Mistress.

The scene had brought back memories for Dean of growing up on the road when him and Sam would stay up late watching late night movies on small crappy TV's and questionable motel couches, falling asleep sitting up and waking up with sore backs and stiff necks.

Sam woke up as he felt Dean gentle nudged him to lay back down, "Wha…Dean?"

"Heya Sammy," Dean said quietly with a smirk as he brought the blanket over Maya's shoulders, the little Trickster not even waking up a little as Dean readjusted her. "Good movie?"

Sam stretched a little, frowning as he felt the stiffness that had already settled in his neck, "Yeah, but I also found us a case not long after Maya zonk'd out."

Dean's interest was peaked and raised a curious eyebrow, "Yeah? Thought you were tired of the non-stop cases?"

"I know, I know," Sam rubbed his face with his hand. "But I really think we should check this one out."

Dean gave him a blank but tired stare, his nightmare still fresh in his addled mind, "Alright, what's the skinny?"

Sam scoffed at him, "*What's the skinny?* Dude, how old are you?"

"Bitch."

"Jerk," Sam replied with a tired smirk. "A girl is saying she was possessed when she bashed the
head of her classmate against a bathroom mirror and then *swirled* the girl to death. From the way the article described how she portrayed the incident we might be looking at possible demon possession."

"Uh huh, and we want to take the demi-Trickster being *hunted* by Lilith and her band of *not-so-merry* demons….towards a possible *demon*?" Dean asked with complete disbelief, his eyes flickering over to a peacefully dozing Maya.

Sam looked at her too, the short dark curls flying off in every direction giving off the vibe of a possibly *epic* case of bed head when she woke up in the morning.

"Why I said possible demon possession," Sam answered with a small shrug, not letting the selfish guilt rise into his face. He had another more personal reason for going to the school. "If we get a whiff of demon we get another Hunter on it and bail," he compromised reluctantly.

Dean frowned hard as he mulled it over in his sleep-deprived mind.

They could check it out. Might not even be a demon possession and the kid was just using it as an excuse not to get sent to juvie.

With a put upon sigh Dean agreed, "*Fine.* But the first sign of anything *demonic* we get Goldy out of there and have Bobby meet up with us or something to take her if we can't get another Hunter in time. I don't want her anywhere near one of those sons of bitches if we can help it."

"Yeah, okay," Sam agreed readily as he stood up and went to his bag to finally change out of his day clothes. Jeans weren't exactly the most comfortable thing to sleep in.

With his back turned Sam didn't see the shit-eating grin that split Dean's face as he said, "*But you* get to explain to Goldy why we're diving straight into another case in the morning."

Puck gave a quiet and huffed laugh at that, from his spot on Sam's bed curled up against Maya's side.

Dean watched as Sam's shoulders stiffened. Sam slowly turned around and bitch-faced *so hard* at Dean, that Dean barely had time to stifle his abrupt laughter.

Gee, wonder what Maya's reaction was going to be in the morning?

The answer?

*Bitching of epic proportions.*

Dean was greatly amused as he watched Sam try to sell the case to a tired and fed up little Trickster. Brought back memories of being in Sam's position and Sam being in Maya's.

*Karma was a wonderful wonderful bitch.*

But like Dean—*on occasion*—Maya crumpled quickly when hit with some powerful Sammy patented pleading puppy eyes of doom.

Seriously, those things are damn near *lethal!*

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*December 10 2008, Fairfax, Indiana, United States*
Sam came out of the psychiatric ward dressed in white like one of the orderlies after talking to the girl who claimed she was possessed when she killed that other girl, headed towards the impala where Dean and Maya sat waiting. He looked in the window to find Maya leaning up against Dean while she read some random paperback book. Dean didn't seem to mind and was just bopping his head to a Journey song on one of many tapes their Dad owned.

He opened the door, "Hey." Dean and Maya looked up, Dean turned off the radio and Maya awkwardly flipped herself over the bench seat into the back, narrowly avoiding accidentally kicking Puck in the head in the process. Sam's lips quirked up in a brief smile at her, but he still felt a sense of worry.

Maya had been too quiet during the last couple days, usually plastering herself to him or Dean. Dean was a little annoyed having his personal bubble constantly invaded, but he understood. How much longer he'd remain understanding was yet to be seen.

After eyeing Maya—making sure she didn't scuff the seats—Dean turned to Sam, "So?"

"I think she's telling the truth. I mean the way she talked about being there mentally but not physically kind of sounds like demonic possession to me."

"Kind of?" Maya popped her head over the seat between them and looked quizzically at Sam.

"She didn't see any black smoke or smell sulfur," Sam admitted.

"Maybe it's not a demon," Dean suggested, looking around Maya's curly head at Sam. "I mean, kids can be vicious."

Maya's lips quirked in a small mischievous smirk, "I mean, I water ballooned the football at Gloversville High after a fag comment against Eli's Dads. They needed to show a little more pride."

Dean gave Maya an impressed and slightly worried look, "And you're still alive?"

Her grin fell slightly, "Had my Dad backing me up against the Principal who wanted to let them off with just a warning." She went quiet again and retreated fully into the back seat, getting worried glances from Sam and Dean.

"It's going to be alright Maya," Sam gave her a smile.

"Yeah Goldy, we got ya," Dean drawled out less enthused. "Truman High. Home of the Bombers."

Sam raised an eyebrow at him, "Your point?"

Dean shrugged, "I don't know. I mean, we went there, for like...a month a million years ago. Why are you so jazzed to go back?"

"I'm not," Sam shrugged and tripped over his words a little. "I just think it's worth looking into."
"All right, well, what's our cover? FBI? Homeland Security? Swedish exchange students?" Dean smirked at that last suggestion.

Sam smiled, "Don't worry. I got an idea."

Maya did not like his face and sent an open frown at Sam, "What are you planning?"

Sam turned to give her another smile, a glint in his eye that Maya could spot from a mile away.

She stiffened as her eyes went wide and guessed what Sam might be thinking, "No! I refuse! I did high school—"

Dean scoffed, "For what? Two months?"

He was ignored, "—and I am not a fan!"

"Maya," Sam said her name in that voice that parents used to chide children and get them to do what they want.

"No!" she vehemently protested, some of her spunk resurfacing. "I'm not doing it! You can't make me, Samuel Winchester!"

Sam and Dean gave her raised eyebrows, shared a look between each other, and then smirked conspiratorially at her, sending her even more on edge.

"Wanna bet?" Dean grinned; pretty sure he had witnessed her stomach drop behind the petulant and defiant glare she was throwing at him.

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December 11 2008, Fairfax, Indiana, United States

Truman High

Morning

Maya moodily stepped out of the impala with Puck decked out in his medical aid vest and looked up at the bustling school Sam and Dean had gone to about a decade earlier.

Sam got her attention when he came up beside her by clapping a hand on her shoulder and smiled cheekily at her, "Ready for your first day, twerp?"

Maya gave him a baleful and unimpressed glare, "I hate you, asshole." With that she roughly shrugged off his hand and walked confidently through the throngs of students with Puck through the front doors to the school office to wait for Dean, or…substitute Coach Roth, as it were.

Her legal guardian.

Snicker.

Her ire and very recently developed resting angry bitch-face giving her an aura of imminent murder vibes, causing most students to get the fuck out of her way.

Sam shook his head at her as she stalked off, and then spotted the administrator he needed to talk to to start his undercover janitorial job. It was a good way to investigate the entire school without
looking suspicious.

Gymnasium

2nd Period

Maya was lined up with some of the other students as Dean—sorry—Coach Roth walked in front of them like a drill sergeant...in bright red Bermuda shorts, a white t-shirt, a red sweat band around his head, and a whistle around his neck. While the other students watched him with a sense of nervousness, Maya watched him with unimpressed eyes and an incredulous face.

"Today, you will have the honor of playing one of the greatest games ever invented," Dean announced as he paced in front of them with hands behind his back. "A game of skill, agility, cunning. A game with one simple rule..." he bent over to pick up one of the bright red dodge balls on the floor, "...dodge."

Then the idiot whipped it at the boy at the end of the line only a couple feet away from him. He immediately realized his mistake when the young boy bent over in pain and apologized curtly, "Sorry."

"Wow," Maya drawled, arms crossed and with a raised eyebrow. "What skill, what cunning," she stated sarcastically, complete with eye roll.

"Take a lap!" Dean ordered pointing out towards the gym. "Now!" he asserted when Maya gave him a less than respectful look.

With a huff Maya started jogging, and silently mouthed 'oh my God' when Dean ordered her to make it two for her sass. Puck watched from the sidelines, contemplating where he could hide to avoid the rubber balls when they started flying.

"Uh, substitute Coach Roth..." one of the other boys in the line spoke up with a raise of his hand.

"Yes?" Dean walked over to him.

"Ms. Boudreaux never let us play dodge ball," the boy pointed out.

Dean tsk'd with a smile, "Well, Ms.B's in Massachusetts getting married, so we're playing."

"But she says it's dangerous!" the boy protested, jumping when Dean blew the whistle loudly.

"Take a lap!"

"But..."

Dean blew the whistle again and the poor boy started running with a slight whimper.

Maya was about to finish the second lap when the gym doors opened revealing Sam peaking his head in.

Seeing her look his way, Sam nodded at her, "Hey. How's gym class?"

"Dean's become a tyrant," Maya sighed as she stopped and turned to glare at Dean when he walked over after telling the class to go nuts.
Sam eyed Dean's outfit, "Having fun?"

Dean smiled, "The whistle makes me their God."

"Right," Sam scoffed. "Nice shorts."

"Don't forget the 80's sweat band," Maya's lips quirked in a teasing smirk.

Dean shifted a little self-consciously then asked Sam, "Find anything?"

Sam sighed, "I've been over the entire school twice. No sulfur."

"No sulfur, no demon. No demon, no case," Dean pointed out.

"And the sooner we can leave," Maya chirped with a happy smile.

"I don't know, maybe I was wrong," you could see Sam going over all the facts in his big head.

"Well it happens to the best of us," Dean shrugged. "I say we hit the road, huh? But after lunch, it's sloppy Joe day."

Sam and Maya flinched as the kid that questioned Dean was hit square in the face with a ball. As the poor kid ran by holding his face Maya eyed a another boy smirking and laughing with his friend over the other kid's pain.

"Good hustle, Colby! Walk it off!" Dean called after the boy, as he no doubt ran to the school nurse's office.

Maya turned to look at Dean, "Seriously?" She scoffed and rolled her eyes when she got only a shrug from him.

With purposeful steps Maya walked into the fray, dodging a ball then picking up one that rolled near her. She used it to deflect another ball then took aim at the asshole kid who no doubt aimed for Colby's face purposefully.

In the next moment the idiot was bent over in pain grasping something precious between his legs in pain.

"You're supposed to dodge, dumbass!" Maya yelled and quickly covered her head when his other remaining team members ganged up on her, getting her out. "Worth it!" she crowed as she sauntered towards the sidelines, taking a seat beside Puck who huddled by the ball rack.

Sam and Dean were looking at her in something akin to amused horror.

Maya sent them an innocent smile that then sent a prickle of fear down their spines.

"Cheap shot, Goldy!" Dean shouted at her, but keeping his distance. He was under no illusion that he'd be her next target if he weren't careful.

Maya's smile widened and became toothier as she innocently batted her eyelashes at him.

Sam leaned over to Dean's ear and chuckled unsympathetically, "Good luck, Dean."

Dean scowled at Sam's retreating back and muttered quietly, "Bitch."
Sam

Few minutes later…

Sam felt no pity for Dean as he left him in a gym full of rubber projectiles and a less than happy little Trickster grinning madly at him. As he walked down the hall he heard screaming coming from the Home Economics room as students fled, one with a teacher holding a towel around his hand.

The fabric becoming more and more blood stained.

Sam walked into the classroom to find a boy with blood splatter—no doubt responsible for injuring the other student—fall to the ground in a fainting spell. He rushed to help him as the boy quickly came to, asking what happened.

That's when Sam noticed something black and viscous ooze out of the boy's ear.

Ectoplasm.

December 12 2008, Fairfax, Indiana, Untied States

Truman High

Next morning…

While everyone, including a grumbly Maya, was in assembly Sam scanned the school with an EMF reader not getting anything. He turned when the doors behind him opened and Dean walked up to him in full on red sweater and sweatpants combo.

"How's the non-violence assembly going?" Sam asked as he turned the reader off.

"Apparently shoving a kid's arm into a Cuisinart is not a healthy display of anger. Or flipping some asshole on their back and stomping a foot right next to their face," Sam noticed one of Dean's eyes twitch in barely contained annoyance.

"I'm guessing Maya was the second one?" Sam sighed, because honestly that sounds like something she might do.

"Some asshole stupidly tried to get hands-y with her on the way to the assembly. Thankfully Goldy took care of it before I did," Dean smirked with no small amount of pride. "Hate to admit it though, but I kind of of keep forgetting how capable she is," he added, his smirk turning into a frown. "Not to mention terrifying when she wants to be. I mean, the way she talked and smiled at the kid after she stomped her foot—I thought I was going to have to go all Batman vs Joker on her."

Sam huffed a small laugh, "I both kind of wish I was there to see it, but also glad I didn't. But, yeah. I'm guilty of forgetting how well she can handle her self too."

"Right, so the kid...had ectoplasm leaking out his ear?" Dean asked Sam as they walked down the hall, getting the conversation back on track.
"Yeah, which only comes from a seriously pissed off spirit. It's got to be ghost possession," Sam stated, it was the only thing that fit.

"Yeah, but that's pretty rare," Dean pointed out.

"Yeah," Sam agreed then added, "But it happens. I mean, they get angry enough, they can take control of a person's body."

Dean nodded his agreement to Sam's argument, "All right, so, what, we got a ghost in the building?"

"Yeah, but where? I mean, there's no EMF and Puck hasn't indicated anything about a ghost being nearby," Sam sighed then shrugged. "Maybe we could find out who it is, at least. You know, check and see if somebody died bloody around here or something?"

"Way ahead of you," Dean pulled out some papers from his red sweater. "I had to break into the Principal's office to get this. So, there was only one death on campus. It was a suicide back in '98. Some kid named Barry Cook."

At the kid's name Sam quickly took the papers out of Dean's hands to look at them himself.

"What?" Dean asked at Sam's reaction.

Sam sighed as the papers confirmed it, "I knew him." With another sad sigh he asked, "How'd he die?"

Dean was a little taken back as he answered, "He, uh, slit his wrist in the first-floor girls' bathroom."

Sam looked up, "That's where—"

"Right where the chick got swirlied to death. Exactly," Dean finished for him.

Dean looked around before asking, "So what? This ghost is possessing nerds?"

Sam gave a small nod, "And using them to go after bullies, yeah."

"Well, does that sound like Barry's M.O?"

"Barry had a hard time," Sam told him as he remembered all the bullying the poor kid went through…his dream of being a vet. "And it doesn't sound like him, but it's the only thing that fits."

As they walked further down the hall, Sam commented, "I'm actually surprised you didn't look up to see if any of the cheerleaders were legal."

There was a telling silence as Sam looked at Dean, unsurprised by his behavior, "You did, didn't you?"

"I started to," Dean shrugged awkwardly. "But then I remembered how close in age Goldy was, so, thanks for that," he grumped getting a strained smile and chuckle from Sam.

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**Farifax Memorial Park**

**Late that night…**
Between the three of them it was quick work digging up the grave, even with alternating who dug and who kept a look out for the grounds keeper or any other late night visitors.

Dean's shovel hit wood, "All right Goldy, up and out."

Maya tossed her shovel over the edge of the hole and pulled her self out of the grave while Dean moved to the edge of the coffin before prying it open to the decayed corpse of Barry Cook. She grabbed the lighting fluid while Sam grabbed the salt and they both doused the body.

Maya grimaced the whole time at the sight of the dead boy's body. It was gross. The skin had long since turned a sickly dark brown and tight against the young boy's bones. Then the smell hit her. It was damp and...rotting.

She clenched her jaw to keep the bile that threatened to make an appearance down. Glancing at Sam and Dean she noticed how they didn't even flinch at the sight or the smell.

But Sam did look sad and troubled as Dean lit a pack of matches and set Barry's remains aflame.

The drive back to the motel was silent even when the rain started pouring down.

Maya was knocked out in the back, while Sam looked broodingly out the window and Dean looked worriedly over at him.

"You okay?" Dean asked his dour brother.

"Barry was my friend. I just burned his bones," Sam told him thickly.

"Well, he's at peace now, Sam," Dean offered.

"I mean, if Dad had let us stay just a little while longer, maybe I could have helped the kid, you know?"

"You heard the coroner's report, same as me," Dean pointed out glancing at Sam. "Barry was on every anxiety drug and antidepressant known to man. School was hell for that kid. His parents had split up. He just wanted out. It was tragic, but it's not your fault." Dean turned back to the road, "To tell you the truth, I hated that school."

Sam gave him a slightly puzzled look, not remembering Truman High being all that bad for Dean.

"It wasn't all bad."

Dean gave a cynical chuckle remembering how he found out some jerk ass kid was bullying his younger brother and Sam didn't fight back even though he could have. "How can you say that after what happened to you?"

Sam stayed silent as he shook his head, his mind taking its own trip down memory lane and the teacher that changed the course of his life.

Well, for a time anyways.

Unfortunately Azazel hadn't let him get away that easily.

A choice he made for himself that had gotten Jessica killed and dragged right back into the life he had tried to escape.
Dean put the impala in park and turned to Sam with an incredulous expression, "We came back here so you could talk to a teacher?"

"I'm with Dean. I'm pretty sure school gives me hives, so can we just go?" Maya complained from the back, shifting as she eyed the building distrusting. Puck lounged in her lap comfortingly.

You would too if a student and teacher practically took over your mind, witches or not. That experience would sour the idea of going to school for anyone.

"He's a good guy," Sam told them. "Just give me a few minutes, okay?"

Maya huffed and Dean rolled his eyes muttering mockingly, "Well whatever. Go have your Robin William's 'O Captain! My Captain!' moment. Just make it quick."

It wasn't even 10mins later when Sam came rushing out of the building looking harried.

Dean rolled the window down, "Sam, what's wrong?"

"It wasn't Barry!" Sam exclaimed as he rushed to the window.

Maya looked at him alarmed when she saw some red spreading on his chest, "Sam, you're bleeding."

Dean looked back at her then at Sam noticing the small and slowly growing blood spot.

"I'm okay," Sam assured them. "But this ghost knew me. It possessed this girl and she stabbed me a little, but the ghost possessing her said my name. Knows I'm Sam Winchester."

"Shit!" Dean cursed harshly before ordering Sam to get in and quickly drove to a secluded underpass by some train tracks than ran over the nearby river.

Sam breathed heavily through the pain as he shrugged off his jacket, the light stab wound throbbing but thankfully had stopped bleeding. Maya was the first to the trunk and moving their stuff to get at the Hunter's first aid kid.

Sam gave her a thankful smile as he unbuttoned his light blue shirt enough to get at the wound and began cleaning it before securing it with some gauze Maya handed him.

Dean walked over with some 'Hunter's Helper', "Trust me. This will help." Sam took the bottle filled with golden whiskey with a groan. "That ghost is dead. I'm gonna rip its lungs out!" Dean yelled out angrily getting identical looks from Sam and Maya. He tilted his head at them in amendment, "You know what I mean."

"It knew my name, Dean. My real name," Sam said troubled while Dean pulled out the file on the students that were possessed. "We burned Barry's bones. What the hell?"

"Maybe we missed something?" Maya shrugged, trying to rack her brain over different ghost lore.
She never heard of a spirit surviving a salt and burn, unless it was attached to something else but only usually happened if the body had been originally cremated.

"Yeah," Dean nodded as he scrutinized the list. "Like, maybe it wasn't Barry. We just got to go back," he flipped a page and noticed something. "No way," Dean groaned. "How did we not see this before?"

Dean walked over to Sam and Maya showing them the page and pointed at the bus they all ride, "Check it out. Look, Martha Dumptruck, Revenge of the Nerds, and Hello Kitty—they all ride the same bus."

"Okay, so maybe the bus is haunted," Sam suggested.

"But the bus has been in use all year, hasn't it?" Maya questioned with a frown as she wrapped up the leftover gauze. "Wouldn't there have been more incidences, or at least have started closer to the beginning of the year?"

Dean nodded his agreement with Maya, "It might explain no EMF at the school, but not the attacks. Ghosts are tied to the places that they haunt. They can't just bail to haunt another place."

Sam got a thoughtful look on his face, "Unless this one can." Dean scoffed at Sam while Maya looked contemplative. "Guys, there's lore about spirits possessing people and riding them for miles. Then whenever they leave the body, they're bungeed back to their usual haunt, but until then, the ghosts can go wherever they want."

"So a spook just grabs a kid on the bus and walks right into Truman?" Dean still looked a little skeptical.

"It's possible," Sam said looking up at Dean from his seat.

"We'll have to look for anything new in the last couple weeks involving that bus," Maya rubbed her face tiredly wanting this case to be over. Maybe then they'll get a breather from the non-stop cases. "New students, students who moved, hell maybe even a recent tune-up..." Maya watched Dean open the cooler to grab himself a beer. "Hey, Deeeeeaaaaaan~" she called sweetly.

He didn't even look her way when he told her very curtly and firmly, "No!" Maya gave him a brief pout but didn't let it bother her too much. She was a bit curious about what beer tasted like, but she knew not to push it.

Apparently her birthday bender still wasn't too well received.

"Ghosts getting creative—" Dean grimaced as he twisted the top off. "Well, that's super," he finished sarcastically, taking a long swig of his beer.

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**Bus Yard (I don't know where they go during the day...)**

**That afternoon...**

Sam had the EMF reader out scanning the bus getting heavy readings as the lights turned red and made an alarming electronic whirring sound, "Definitely ain't clean."

Dean was checking through the rows of seats with his sawed off and salt rounds at the ready.
Deciding to be antagonistic he loudly tapped the metal roof with the gun and taunted it before being cut off by Puck running under his feet, "Here, ghosty, ghosty, ghosty! Come out, come out, wherever you—Whoa! Damn it rat!"

Puck ignored him as he scoured the bus for any sign of the ghost, and although he felt the spirit's presence it was laying low and he couldn't pin point it. He smelled plenty of human remains, but it was a bus. You couldn't sweep away every hair, fingernail, or dead skin cell. Hell, there was even chewing gum under some of the seats! So, with a whine to indicate disappointment he made a beeline back to Maya who stayed at the front of the bus to keep look out the driver's seat.

Sam watched the dog give up the search and return to Maya's side, he turned off the EMF reader, "Okay, so we've got a shit ton of EMF." Sam groaned and ran a hand through his long luscious hair, "But, man, I don't get it. No one ever died on this bus and it's not like you can hide a body anywhere on this thing."

Dean straightened up with a frown, "Yeah, but a flap of skin, a hair, I mean, hell, a hangnail, something's got to be tying the ghost to this place. We just got to find it."

Maya looked at the little alcove where the driver put their personal belongings with interest…and because she wanted to be a snoop.

"It's a bus, Dean," Maya called back as she took the stack of papers and paperback books out to flip through it. "There's human remains all over this thing, and you'd be trying to find just the one," she commented as she set aside the Bible and noticed the driver's permit. She read the name, looked at the picture, and then the issue date.

"Hey guys!" Maya yelled back. "I got a new driving permit up here. "Issued about two weeks ago," she handed over the green paper over to Dean and Sam for further inspection.

"Just before the first attack," Sam concluded, easily making the connection.

"Yeah, the name of the bus driver is Dirk McGregor Sr.," Dean read off the permit. "39 North Central Avenue."

Sam perked up at the name in surprised confusion, "McGregor?"

Dean and Maya looked at him curiously.

"Yeah, why?" Dean asked.

Sam frowned, "I knew his son."

Dean gave Sam a look of disbelief, "Did you know everybody at this school?"

Maya raised an eyebrow and huffed with a slight smirk, "Sounds like it."

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**Back roads of Fairfax, Indiana**

**That evening…**

They had learned how Dirk Jr. was bullied in school and full of rage after having watched his mother wither and die slowly from cancer. Dirk had overdosed on drugs at 18 and was cremated.
Except for a lock of hair that his father kept in a Bible in his bus.

The one Maya had had in her hand.

That little fact frustrated her to no end.

But the fact that the bus had been taken that afternoon after they left for a competition for the Boys' Wrestling Team had them all frustrated. It took some quick digging and some sneaky borrowing from the police station to get ready for that evening.

The early winter night fell on the darkened road the bus would drive down. They double checked to make sure so in other words they found the bus and sped as fast as they could ahead of it and laid down the spike strip.

Hiding in the darkened ditch along the side of the road in wait.

They didn't have to wait long before the big yellow bus to come speeding down the road—a bit too fast for such a large vehicle carrying so many kids. Loud pops were heard as the heavy-duty spike strip punctured holes in larges tires, the rapidly flattening tires screeching as they swerved on the road.

The bus came to a screeching halt just on the side of the road, no one the worse for wear.

Sam and Dean got up from the frosted grass and quickly and silently approached the bus with some salt-water drenched rope and their Sam's sawed off. Maya followed silently behind with Dean's sawed off, extra salt rounds, and an iron crowbar tucked securely in her jacket, just in case.

Puck followed tensely at Maya's heels, briefly wondering if Hunting will just be a phase. That one day she'll wake up and decide to go back to just tricking people and doling out just desserts…in her own way of course.

Puck did a little doggy like frown that none of the bipeds saw.

Not likely.

Dean went around the back of bus with the rope and Maya, while Sam went around the front to get Dirk's attention.

Sam waited as a middle aged, bald, white man in a navy blue jacket stepped off the bus to look around, but not at the tires. He looked out into the woods that surrounded the road instead, not even sparing a glance at the sorry state of their ride.

It was as good an indication as any that Dirk was more than likely possessing him.

Sam rounded the front of the bus completely, stopping at the open doors. "Dirk!" Sam called out as he cocked his sawed off and aimed.

The possessed man turned around and smiled, "Winchester. What are you gonna do, shoot me?"

Sam watched as Dean carefully snuck up behind the confirmed Dirk, Maya at the ready with Dean's sawed off, "Don't need to." Dean quickly jumped Dirk, wrapping the salt soaked rope around him. "That rope is soaked in salt-water, Dirk," Sam informed him. "You're not going anywhere."

Once secured, Dean made a beeline for the bus door and told the students and teacher to stay put.
When the teacher questioned him being the P.E. teacher Dean told them he wasn't really and he was more like 21 Jump Street.

That still got him a bunch of confused looks.

So he lied and said, "The bus driver sells pot." He didn't bother seeing what response he got as he went to the driver's cubby and began looking for the Bible. Finding it he flipped through its pages and even shook it a little, but nothing.

"It's not here!" Dean yelled out for Sam and Maya to here him.

Maya turned to Puck and quietly murmured, "Can you sniff it out?" Puck cocked his head up at her and thought about it. He looked back at the possessed man as Sam demanded the spirit to tell him where he hid the lock of hair.

Well it was in the Bible belonging to the ghost's father...probably had some lingering smell from him. Puck quickly ran to the bus, neither the ghost nor Sam paid him much attention.

"No way you'll ever find it," Dirk taunted, as Dean stepped down from the bus, narrowly missing Puck run up the steps and getting a good whiff of Dirk Sr.

Sam grabbed Dirk by the possessed man's shirt and roughly pushed him up against the bus and demanded again, "Where is it?!"

"Sam Winchester. Still a bully," Dirk wasn't the least bit perturbed or frightened of the display. "You, you jocks...you popular kids...you always thought you were better than everybody else. And to you, I was just Dirk the Jerk, right? Now you evil sons of bitches are gonna get what's coming to you."

"I'm not evil, Dirk," Sam released his hold on him. "I'm not. And neither were you. Trust me. I've seen real evil. We were scared and miserable, and we took it out on each other—us and everybody else. That's high school. But you suffer through that, and it gets better. I'm just sorry you didn't get a chance to see that...you or Barry."

Puck jumped off the bus and began sniffing the ground. Dean sent the little dog a side-glance; Maya kept her eyes on both Dirk and Puck.

"Nothing is gonna get better for me. Not ever!" Dirk roared at Sam's sympathetic gaze and broke the salt drenched rope.

A testament to how pissed off this ghost was, either in general or at Sam.

Probably Sam.

Dirk went to attack him but instead got two loads of salt rounds in the possessed man's chest. When the man fell to the ground unconscious, Dirk bounced back to the bus.

And into another body.

The body of a large and very muscled teenage boy that ran past Dean and body slamming into Sam from behind sending them both to the ground.

"Sam!" Maya shouted in fear as she watched the now red adorned track suited Dirk roll Sam over and begin punching his face. She raised her sawed off and fired one shot into Dirk's chest while Dean fired off two into his back, but to no real effect.
Yeah, this spirit really hated Sam.

Puck had eyed the two on the ground and quickly went back to sniffing and picked up the scent he was looking for…coming from the driver's right shoe!

"Find the hair!" Sam grunted out at them as he struggled against the assault.

Puck took that as his cue and barked loudly at the shoe getting Dean and Maya's attention. As Dean rushed over, Puck quickly got out of the way as Dean removed the shoe, shaking it until the lock of hair fell out.

In seconds it was over as the hair went up in flames and Dirk left the boy's body, his black tormented soul going up in flames and cinders.

The now unconscious student fell limp and heavily on a beaten up Sam, squishing him.

"A little help?" Sam called in a strained voice, his chest being compressed by the large student.

Dean looked over and grimaced in disgust at the sight of the large student pretty much sleeping on top of his brother, "Ew. He's giving you the full cowgirl."

Maya snorted a laugh at Sam's predicament, feeling some karma for Sam dragging them out here right after their last case.

Sam groans, not amused since he was slowly being crushed to death.

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December 14 2008, Macon, Missouri, United States

America's Best Value Inn & Suites

That night...

After Sam's 'O Captain! My Captain!' moment they made a quick escape out of town before anyone looked too closely at the 21 Jump Street substitute gym coach, new janitor, and new student.

You could be certain that those boys didn't keep quiet about what happened the previous night.

Sam casually browsed the Internet looking for any signs of any possible seals—*not purposefully looking for demon omens or Lilith*—while Maya, Dean, and Puck lounged on a queen bed watching some cheesy B-rated horror flick you only ever find late at night.

Dean shifted at having his personal space invaded once more by the little Trickster snuggled into his side and clung like a limpet. A part of him wanted to bark at her to man up, but then the mental image of her sad Sam worthy butt-hurt face would pop up and he'd lose steam. She wasn't raised like him and Sam, not exactly.

Sure there was the constant moving, not staying around long enough for friends, or getting a steady education; and being exposed to the dangerous side of the world that most people only thought were fiction and stuff of legends, fairytales, and nightmares.

But she never had to fully rely on herself, and it was obvious that she was never discouraged from
showing her feelings. Be they happy, sad, angry, or scared.

Maya wasn't...hard like him and Sam. Well, mostly him.

Even now with everything going on, all his memories from Hell swimming around in his brain; Dean didn't soften. He didn't let himself crack or crumble, to just let himself feel scared and terrified and hurt from what he'd gone through.

He couldn't, so maybe that's why he found so much tolerance and patience for Maya's clinginess. A little reminder of what he kept doing all this for.

Dean wrapped an arm casually around her shoulders, feeling her snuggle more firmly into his side with a content and happy sigh that brought him his own small smile of happiness on his face.

Then there was a knock at their door and Dean—without looking—handed Maya some cash for the pizza they ordered before removing his arm. Maya gave a small stretch and opened the door, her eyes flying open in surprise.

It was not the pizza.

Her surprise quickly turned into an ugly expression of contempt as she slammed the door on whoever was on the other side.

Sam and Dean from their respective spots reared their heads back in shock at the outburst and watched her grumpily return to Dean's side.

"Uh—" Dean was about to ask what the hell when a familiar muffled voice sounded on the other side of the door.

"Really, half-breed?" came Ruby's muffled voice. "And after I booked it here to tell you guys of a seal breaking," Sam had hurriedly rushed to the door and opened it for the beat up she-demon. She looked like she went a round with Muhammad Ali.

But before Sam could properly greet her and ask what was going on, Maya beat him to it.

"BE GOOOOOOONE SATAAAAAAAAAAN!" Maya bellowed comically at Ruby making Dean choke on a little on the laugh that tried to escape.

Sam clenched his jaw to keep the smile from turning the corners of his lips. It took a lot of effort.

Ruby glowered at her and the growling dog at the foot of Dean's bed.

"What do you want Ruby?" Dean demanded as he got up from the bed crossing his arms.

"I've got info on a seal about to break in the next couple of days not far from here," Ruby informed them as blood dripped down a gash on the side of her head.

"Yeah?" Sam looked curious. "What's the seal?"

"Blood drainings. Lots of them. Autopsies showed their throats torn out and bodies completely drained of blood," Ruby took some printed out photos of her pocket.

Sam took the photos and looked through them with a frown, "How is this a seal? They'd have been going about their business even before Dean went to Hell."

Ruby cracked her neck with a jerk of her head; "They never went after a sucker a night for the last
two months and drained them dry at midnight. Pretty sure it's a nest on a binge streak. Or the Hungry Hungry Hippo of vampires."

"How come we haven't heard of this then?" Dean asked as he expertly looked through the photos. Definitely looked like a vamp. "It's pretty ballsy of the bloodsuckers to take a vic a night."

"Been moving around all over the place randomly and they never took the same type of victim twice," Ruby shrugged and looked at them seriously. "But if we don't leave now, all the tracking and double backing I've done the last couple weeks would've been a waste. They've probably already scoped out and nabbed their next victim."

Sam shot Ruby a harsh look, "Wait, a couple of weeks?"

"What?" Ruby gave Sam a confused eyebrow raise before over exaggerated understanding overtook her features. "Oh, you're mad I didn't tell you about what I was doing when I dropped by in Sioux City. Well I was still working over an…informant on how they were deciding which city or town to hit and where they liked to shack up for their midnight snack."

Maya blinked in surprise at what Ruby revealed, but not at the vampire information, "You two… met up during that death switcheroo-ing fiasco?"

Dean sent Sam a hard look for not being told about his little rendezvous with the demon.

Sam's shoulders stiffened and bit back defensively, "She was telling me how many seals had already fallen, guys. It was more than half. Probably a couple more now since then."

"Exactly!" Ruby exclaimed impatiently with carefully masked smugness at seeing the distrust brewing between them. "That's why we should leave now if we have a chance at stopping another seal from breaking and being one step closer to Hell on Earth. And believe me, that's not an exaggeration."

Maya sent a glare at the demon, but one look at Sam and Dean and she knew they'd be scrambling in about a minute, maybe less.

Maya cursed as she grabbed her backpack before following behind a rushing Sam and Dean, "Vampires. Why'd it have to be vampires?"

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**Random Abandoned Warehouse**

**Few hours later…**

It wasn't vampires. There wasn't a single bloodsucker to be had.

Instead they had a small (read: 3) contingent of black-eyed sons of bitches.

Dean had finished off his demon with the knife and quickly plunged it into the demon Sam was trying to fend off. The skeleton lit up, signifying another son of a bitch killed. They turned to see Puck leap at the escaping black smoke of the demon that had tried to run after Maya and the would be victim, sinking glowing teeth into its center mass and tearing it to shreds.

"A little help!" Ruby shouted angrily at them as she punched the demon she was facing in the face with a snarl.
Neither Puck nor Dean lifted a finger, but they did let Sam take the knife and stab the offending
demon.

The one that was not Ruby. Just to be clear.

With that done, Sam turned to Dean, "Think Maya got the guy to the car okay?" Puck didn't wait
for Dean's answer and loped away in the direction his Mistress went.

*She'd been out of his sight for two whole minutes! Too long! Too long!*

"Yeah, she's fine. It was just the three of them. Right?" Dean looked pointedly and angrily at an
even *more* beat up Ruby. "And what the hell happened to them being vampires? We're tying to
keep Goldy away from demons, not hand deliver her!"

Ruby rolled her eyes, "Geez, sorry, for not thinking that these bastards were demons when
everything else said vampire. But yeah, Dean. It was only the--"

A quick feminine shout tore through the night air accompanied by loud vicious snarling, before
being abruptly cut off.

Sam and Dean felt their hearts drop as they sprinted in Maya's direction yelling her name in fear.

"*MAYA!*"

Chapter End Notes

But look!

I have left you with a cliffhanger after such a long wait. Mwaahahaha! No regrets! It
wasn't going to be demons, but actual vampires, but it just didn't fit with the whole
Ruby plotting against Maya thing. And before people ask about Lilith…Lilith wasn't
very happy at the possibility of losing the toy she's had her eye on. But Apocalypse
and raising Lucifer comes first!

So sorry, but not really.

I guess the chapter with Maya and vampires will have to be another time. They just
can't get enough of her once they get a whiff of her blood.

End Notes

Thanks for reading and hope to receive reviews and constructive criticism. I haven't written
something in a long while and even when I did I don't think it was all that good thought I've
been told otherwise.
I have an account on FanFiction.net with the same username/author name. I've also started posting on Wattpad just so no one decides to steal it and post it over there. My friend gave me horror stories of people copying and pasting her work and getting rewarded for it.

Story's under the same title.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!