Happily Never After

by G0tdem0nst0fight

Summary

The boys uncover a series of death and disappearances involving former contestants of a reality game show. They decide the best way to stop whatever's killing off contestants is to get on the show, but the catch is the show is about testing the relationship between fiancés. Dean and Cas have to go undercover as lovers and stay on long enough to find out what's killing all these couples.

Other tags:
- Descriptive mentions of blasphemous sex toys (But none have actually been used)
- Meta references
- On TV (but not The French Mistake)
- Background lesbian, gay, transgender and all around queer characters

Tags will be updated as the story progresses.
Chapter Notes

This is somewhere in or after Season 9, I wanted to write a human Castiel and so far I'm thinking if his grace isn't gone then it's diminished (more like grace residue if anything) to the point that he's pretty much 100% human, except maybe just a tiny bit harder to kill if anyone were to try.

I'm also not factoring in the Mark of Cain in this story.

Unbeta'd.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Wait, but why the hell does it have to be me and Cas?” Dean asked, his voice gruff as he protested their plan for the hundredth time.

Sam pressed his lips together tightly. He breathed in deeply through his nose and exhaled in a huff. “We've been over this, Dean. They’re looking for gay couples this season--and," he interjected before Dean could cut in, “I don’t fit their demographic.”

He didn't say it out loud, but it just made more sense for it to be Dean and Cas. Sam and Cas were close friends but he just wasn't as close to him as his brother was. It wouldn't have been anywhere near as easy to convince people that they were in a relationship as much as it was to sell that Dean and Cas were a thing. He also didn't mention that even if the show wasn't focusing on gay couples, it wasn't like they knew any girls that'd be able to fill in for something like that.

It probably would've ended up being Dean and Cas anyways.

Dean just didn't like the way those words rubbed off on him. Demographic. His more paranoid side thought it sounded too much like Sam was hinting at something else--like it was obvious it made more sense for Dean to be seen with, not just Cas, but a dude in general. So he did what he always did and scoffed it off. “Whatever, bitch. Just cause I’m prettier than you, I gotta get all cuddly with the angel on national television.”

He knew the other logical excuse was that Sam was too much of a damn sasquatch to be on TV. After they caught wind of the hunt they'd researched the screening process and they found that it'd be a bitch to get someone of Sam's height to fit a frame with the rest of the contestants so the producers probably wouldn't even consider him before moving on to the next couple.

“Don’t be such a jerk.” The younger Winchester rolled his eyes as he flipped through their case file. “Now stow your macho-man bullshit so we can get to work.”
Dean grimaced, resisting the urge to stick his tongue out at him. “Alright, so what’s the pattern again?”

It had taken a while to catch onto this case. Something was killing couples that had recently participated in a reality game show about fiancés. It was one of those shows that tested the ‘depth of your love.’ Dean thought the whole thing seemed like The Newlywed Game mashed up with a watered down version of The Hunger Games--minus the whole killing each other. (Well until now, that is.)

He didn't really get why anyone would be willing to publicly subject their relationships to that shit but he guessed the grand prize was enough of an incentive for some people.

The winning couple got their dream wedding plus an extended honeymoon paid in full by the show.

The reason it took a while to notice was ‘cause not all of the couples were getting ganked, and the ones that were had already lost the game and been sent home--after that, no one gave a shit about what happened to em anymore.

“There’s not much of a pattern. Two of the couples just vanished, two of em were listed as murder-suicides, the cops marked one of em down as a double homicide, and the rest were put down as accidents.” Sam sighed. He shuffled a few of the papers around. “There are twelve couples per season and there’ve been three seasons so far. Out of those thirty-six couples, nine of them are dead. That’s eighteen deaths, counting the ones that vanished.”

Castiel had been across the room, sitting on the edge of one of the beds and glowering at the wall where they’d set up most of the info they’d gathered for the hunt. He tilted his head, choosing to comment then. “I don’t understand. If one-fourth of the contestants have been presumed dead, why has there not been much of an effort to stop it?”

Dean snorted. “The show’s way too popular. They’re real good at covering up bad press. Plus, no one really bats an eye once your fifteen minutes are up.” He looked over at the former angel. “You sure we’re not dealing with a rogue cupid here?”

Castiel rolled his eyes, turning his head as he did to focus on anything but Dean.

He hadn't expressed it out loud but they all knew he was personally offended that Dean had put up such a fuss over pretending to be his lover--something he wasn't over yet, if his tone was anything to go by.

“That’s ridiculous, it goes against their very nature. Even if it was, Cherubs are at such a low rank in the order that they would have barely, if any, ‘juice’ left after the fall. Nowhere near enough to pull off anything like this.”
Sam let out a low whistle and just barely lowered his voice as he commented, “Looks like you pissed off your better half, Dean.”

“Shut the fuck up, Sammy.” Dean glared at him.

Sam just shrugged. “Alright well pretty much all of the couples affected either died or were last seen at night, and the ones that weren't were late enough in the evening that it’s a safe enough guess that whatever this thing is, it’s nocturnal.”

Dean nodded. “What about the one’s that weren't--y’know.” He mimed slicing his own throat.

“Alive, married, and happy--freakishly happy, actually.”

“And that doesn't seem a little off to you?” Dean frowned. “You think we’re dealing with some kind of trade off? Like that witch, what’s his name, the poker player,” He thought it through for half a second before snapping his fingers. “Patrick. Like you play your cards right you got yourself a happy marriage and if you don’t you end up roadkill?”

Sam shook his head. “The couples I interviewed were clean--I checked. None of em said anything seemed out of the ordinary either. Except, get this--all of them said they had this weird feeling, like they were being watched, but only at night. They all chalked it up to the hidden cameras the show’s known to keep. The only ones that didn't notice anything like that were the winners.”

Dean’s brow furrowed at that, his mind on the case but Castiel zoomed in on an entirely different point Sam had brought up. He side-eyed the younger Winchester. “Are you saying they will be observing us even when we are not aware?”

Sam winced in sympathy. “Uh, yeah. That’s the other thing. You guys are gonna have to be undercover practically 24/7.”

Dean’s head shot up, mouth flopping open as he looked from Cas to Sam and back to Cas. That meant he didn't just have to pretend to be with Cas, they were basically gonna be dating, like almost forreal dating if they wanted to have any chance at selling this long enough to gank whatever was killing all these couples.

Castiel looked resigned. He gave a slow nod in understanding. “I see. And when is our ‘audition’
“In a couple of days.” Sam hesitated for a second before pulling out another folder from his satchel. “I already started working out most of the paperwork if you wanna take a look.”

Dean worked on clearing his throat before holding out a hand for the folder. He took a peak. “Dean Smith and Castiel Novak?”

His brother shrugged. "Can't use the usual aliases and I didn't wanna change your first names so it'd be less complicated for you guys." He stood up and ran a hand threw his hair. "I'm gonna go get us some lunch." With a halfhearted wave, Sam fled the motel room.

Castiel finally turned to look at Dean head-on. He had a grimly determined expression on his face. "We should begin preparing if we have any hope of catching this creature."

The hunter gulped and nodded. He kicked out the chair across from where he was seated, the one Sam had vacated to indicate Cas should sit with him at the motel room’s little round table.

When he did, Dean slid the folder towards him. He took a minuscule sip from the two fingers of hunter’s helper he’d been ignoring before opening his mouth. “Look, Cas… I-it’s not about you, alright? I wasn't upset about you.” He knew it probably didn't look like much, but this was him pleading.

Castiel nodded, his somewhat petty ire dimming.

He had experience seeing past Dean’s coarseness, and even if at times he didn't quite understand what he found, he still trusted him and allowed the moment to pass. “Well, Sam has researched the show extensively and compiled a set of believable biographies that would present us sympathetically towards the ‘casting directors.”

He handed Dean a copy of their fake couple resume.

Dean’s eye scanned the sheet and snorted. Happily Ever After, the show’s name, was scrawled across the top.

“Yes, sympathetic is damn right. Have you read this shit?” He made a face as he skimmed the questionnaire. “We live in Iowa. I’m a mechanic, you’re in between jobs, and we’re doing this because we can’t afford a nice wedding.”

He glanced over at Cas to see his arms crossed and his head bowed. “Hey--what’s wrong?”
The former angel looked up, his adam’s apple bobbing as he swallowed (which reminded Dean of the time he took him to that brothel.) “I-I don’t think I would be a very believable lover, Dean.”

His marriage with Daphne as Emmanuel was a farce, April was the only person he’d ever had sex with and she’d killed him the morning after, and the one time he tried to go out on a date with his former coworker Nora, he’d found himself completely misinterpreting the signals and ended up babysitting while Nora herself went out with a more suitable companion.

And those were his experiences in heterosexual relationships, which were the only kind he’d truly observed before, because of course those were the only kind Sam and Dean found themselves in.

Since becoming human, Castiel had noticed that he did find himself objectively attracted to certain men but that didn't mean he understood any of the social nuances that came with a homosexual relationship. He was sure that he would end up jeopardizing their hunt.

“Hey, Cas, buddy, don’t say that.” Dean leaned forward, his brow furrowed as he regarded Castiel with confusion etched across his features.

He seemed to hesitate a moment, uncertain, before sliding his arm across the table and taking Cas’s hand in his. “Look, you don’t gotta worry. We’re not gonna change much about the way we act together, alright? There’s just gonna be more stuff like this,” he rubbed his thumb gently, back and forth across Cas’s wrist in emphasis, “that’s not too bad, right? We’re just gonna be a little closer, physically I mean--”

Dean decidedly ignored the hot flash spreading across his cheeks that meant he was blushing and pushed on quickly. “--and maybe a couple of schmoopy pet-names. Got it, babe?” He said the last part too gruffly to be an actual term of affection which made him think that he’d have to practice a little more if he really wanted to sell this.

A touch of the weight Castiel had been feeling in his chest eased at Dean’s persuasion and he decided it truly wasn't terrible, holding his hand. He was limited when it came to touch and he couldn't help comparing how much rougher the skin on Dean's hands were compared April’s, but it was also warmer, more reassuring than the memory of her touch.

Cas still didn't look one hundred percent convinced but it was enough for Dean.

“Good.” He eased into a small smile and gave Cas’s hand an experimental squeeze. “Plus, a catch like you? Man, everyone’ll think I’m the luckiest guy in the world.” His smile grew into a lopsided grin as he winked at his angel.

Castiel gave him a dry look in response.

He pointedly rolled his eyes before looking down at his copy of their false backstory. He cleared his throat awkwardly. “Yes, well, Sam tried to incorporate as much truth as he could in spinning our history as a couple. We’ve known each other for six years, but only entered a romantic relationship a little over a year ago. I am estranged with my family and the only family you have left is a younger brother who convinced you and I to go on the show. We’ve both been listed as bisexual.” His blue eyes flick towards Dean for a second. “So that we do not need to disguise our attraction to women.”
Dean was proud of himself for not reacting to the word bisexual. He ended up scooting his chair closer to Cas so they sat side-by-side rather than face-to-face, their hands intertwined between them.

That’s how Sam found them when he came back with lunch a little while later, Dean absentmindedly rubbing circles into Castiel’s skin and Cas comfortably leaning into Dean’s space every now and then as they poured over everything they needed to know to get this done successfully.

If he noticed a slightly more intimate shift in their dynamic, then he chose not to comment on it.

Chapter End Notes

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
5.14- My Bloody Valentine
5.07- The Curious Case of Dean Winchester
5.03- Free to Be You and Me
7.17- The Born-Again Identity
9.03- I'm No Angel
9.06- Heaven Can't Wait
Sam made himself scarce over the next few days. He found a car and left to question the couples he hadn't gotten to yet and gather up as much evidence as he could from the police stations that had handled the official cases. It meant he probably wasn't gonna be back until it was time for Dean and Cas to head to their audition.

That left a huge amount of time for the duo to study their backstories, double check on what they knew they had to keep an eye out for, and try and get as comfortable as possible with this whole pretend relationship thing.

It was easy enough to ignore on the first two days, they really just memorized their backstories and watched a few of the episodes from previous seasons--something Dean did lazily while Cas studied it intently. At one point they started shooting questions at each other, testing who knew the other better.

That was one of the things the show was known for: making sure you knew who you were marrying and letting America decide if your love deserves to last another week.

They made a bet of it—loser had to pay for dinner at the diner across the town they were staying in some rural area in Upstate New York. It was an excuse to get out after being holed up in the motel room and eating nothing but pizza and Chinese take-out for so long. Cas ended up winning, something Dean claimed he supposedly let him do because he was the one that had cash to spend.

It was only after they got to the diner, Cas sitting across from Dean with his legs stretched out in front of him and occupying half of Dean’s booth, that they’d realized the situation was more like a practice run on just how plausible their pretend relationship looked from the outside.

Dean hadn't seen it that way until the waitress caught them off-guard. He’d told Cas that he was ‘like a damn cat’ and curled a hand around the little expanse of skin where the leg of Cas’s jean’s had ridden up and exposed his ankle.

Cas had cracked a smile and hummed in content as he looked over the diner’s menu; so Dean kept his hand there, casually examining the smooth skin over the bony area with his two middle fingers while he checked out the dessert menu for their selection on pies. It was in line with the easygoing touches they’d been exchanging lately, the kind that weren't really romantic but were bordering on too intimate to just be friendly.

They'd barely thought twice about it.

That was when the waitress came over, greeting them a bit more cheerfully than they were used to from your run-of-the-mill diner staff. She told them they were ‘cute as a button’ asked them how long they’d been together.
Dean blinked up at her blankly, not really processing her question until Cas managed to save the day.

“That’s a year and a half,” he responded carefully, eyes flicking towards Dean to see if he was going to protest acknowledging their false coupling when they weren’t officially hunting yet. “But we were friends for much longer before.”

She beamed at them like the sun shone out of their asses and asked if they were ready to order yet.

Castiel darted another curious glance towards Dean before requesting a couple more minutes to think things through. The waitress smiled. “Of course, I’ll swing by in a sec with your waters.”

For the first time in three days, Cas hesitated before reaching out to touch Dean. He touched his hand gently with just the tips of his fingers. “Dean…? Was that alright?”

Dean seemed to shake himself awake at the touch. “Hmm? Oh yeah, sorry, man. I guess I just wasn’t expecting that.” He didn’t know if he’d been more surprised that she’d thought he and Cas were a real couple, even though they hadn’t been actively trying to look like one, or that she walked away thinking he was gay and still seemed pretty damn happy about it.

It wouldn’t be the first time he’d noticed people assuming he was in a relationship with a dude—hell, part of the time people thought he and Sam were a thing—but it was the first time they weren’t completely off base and one of the few times he wasn’t quick to correct ‘em. He gave Cas’s ankle one last squeeze and tried to reassure him with a small smile.

Castiel removed his hand from Dean’s but seemed to accept his reasoning.

They both sat in thoughtful silence before their waitress, Jill, returned with their waters and asking if they wanted some coffee. When they accepted and she filled their mugs before setting down the pot and taking out her notepad.

Dean smiled more readily now. “Thanks. I’ll have the Deluxe Burger and your finest slice of blueberry cobbler.”

She scribbled down their order and turned to Cas. “How about you, sugar?”
Castiel requested the same minus the pie.

Dean *tsked*. He rolled his eyes and exaggeratedly mouthed *'bring him some pie'* at Jill.

She chuckled and practically skipped away to fill out their order. She came back a little while later with two plates that had matching gourmet-looking burgers and crispy fries, garnished with a sliced dill pickle on each side.

The boys thanked her and started digging in. Dean stuffed a french fry in his mouth as he took the pickle halves off his plate and put them on the edge of Cas’s. Castiel picked off the tomato from his burger and placed it on Dean’s waiting bun. He cleaned his fingers with a napkin before picking up the glass Heinz ketchup bottle and banging on the end of it to try and get the condiment to come out.

This was something that had become routine for them since Cas became human, and it felt nice to do something familiar after days of building up all this fake history between them.

Dean rolled his eyes. “I don’t get how you don’t like tomatoes, yet you love ketchup.” He held out his hand for the bottle.

Cas frowned but handed it over without protest. “I don’t like the texture.”

“Oh but pickles are just fine?” He used his knife to coax out some ketchup onto Cas’s burger and the side of his plate.

“Pickles have a distinct flavor. I find it pleasant.” He sniffed, dipping the tip of a fry in ketchup before popping it in his mouth.

The hunter scrunched his nose up at that. “Whatever you say, Cas.”

Halfway through their meal, Jill came back with an unusually large slice of pie and two clean forks.

Dean perked up immediately, his face splitting into a huge grin. “Oh man, you’re the best.”
They finished up their lunch and Dean managed to convince Cas to split the pie with him. Well, Dean ate two-thirds of it but he was pretty sure that was the first time he’d ever willingly shared his pie with anyone. As the loser of the bet, Dean paid and left Jill an extra generous tip before the duo piled into the impala and headed back to the motel.

Dean unlocked the room and let Cas go in before closing the door behind them. Cas had started to walk towards the bathroom but Dean held him back, grabbing his hand before he could walk away.

“Uh--Cas, I was thinking… we haven’t really done the whole kiss thing.” Dean rubbed the back of his neck self-consciously with the hand that wasn’t holding on to Cas. “I mean, we’re gonna have to do it on the show… so I figured we should do it at least once before--kissing, I mean--not anything else.”

Jesus Christ, Dean didn’t think he’d stammered this much over a stupid kiss since he was sixteen, but then again this was his best friend, a former fucking angel, and not some one night stand he picked up at a less-than-reputable bar.

Castiel’s breath hitched. His gaze flicked down to Dean’s lips before going back to those bright green eyes that were awaiting his response. He hesitated before nodding once.

Dean let go of his hand and stepped forward, for once crowding in on Castiel’s personal space instead of the other way around. He leaned in very slowly, giving Cas the chance to back out if he didn’t feel comfortable with this.

Cas stayed where he was.

When their lips met it was just a barely-there press, held together while the seconds went by.

By the time they separated, Castiel was wide-eyed and he wasn’t sure if he imagined the feeling of his blood pumping through his veins, feeling much louder and much more forceful than he was normally accustomed to. He was pretty sure the taste of blueberry filling he felt when he licked his lips as they pulled away was not part of his imagination. “Can we--?”

The hunter nodded and leaned forward again, this time cupping Cas’s stubbled jaw-line as they kissed. It was still close-mouthed, restrained, but this time rather than just holding their lips together, he tried out a series of minuscule pecks, never really pulling back but letting their mouths move against each other.

Castiel had responded immediately now, mimicking the way Dean’s lips puckered against his as his hand found it’s way to Dean’s waist, gripping his hip tightly. It was… vastly different from any of the other kisses he’d participated in--undoubtedly chaste, yet it’s intensity felt even greater than the kiss he’d shared with Meg as an angel.
But of course, that was the moment Sam decided to return.

They sprang apart and started stumbling over each others’ words to explain.

“This isn’t--”

“We weren’t--”

“I’m not--”

“We were just practicing--”

“--for the show!”

Sam stilled, his mouth popping wide open. He seemed to remember himself and nodded. “N-no, no, I get it! The show. I-I could come back later, though, it’s fine!”

Cas and Dean shouted ‘NO’ at the same time.

Dean voice was hoarse when he spoke. “We’re done here.”

Castiel nodded, swallowing before announcing: “I need to urinate,” and disappearing behind the bathroom door.

Dean looked away, focusing on anything but the escaping former-angel and his little brother that was still standing at the door, looking like he wanted to bolt just as badly as Cas had. He turned towards the little round table littered with sheets of paper and motioned for Sam to come in. “Well, you gonna stand there all night or you gonna show us what you found?” He remarked, gruffly.

“Yeah, er, sorry.” Sam closed the door behind him. He put down a couple of folders on the table, his long legs folding as he took a seat. He didn't say anything for a while until Dean pointedly cleared
his throat. “Right. All of the victims died after losing the game. But it looks like only six of those couples died right after getting kicked out, the other three died a few days later.”

Cas came out of the bathroom, drying his hands on one of the motel’s tiny towels. He sat down on the bed carefully, between where Dean was standing and Sam was shuffling papers. “What differs those three from the rest?”

Sam shrugged. “As far as I could tell? Nothing. The ones that died the same day, died either at or near the studio. The other three died in their own homes.”

Dean frowned, singling out the photos of those three. “Is there a time pattern?”

His brother shook his head. “First couple died three days later, second couple died two, and the third couple died four.”

“What about the ones that died at the studio?” Castiel asked, leaning forward.

“Only two of them actually died on studio grounds, the rest had left already.” Sam responded.

“That’s where we confirmed the nocturnal thing, right? The ones that were ganked on set were booted off at night and the other four left during the day, so whatever's taking these people had to wait until dark--or well almost dark--to do it.” Dean explained. “But why the lag with the other three?”

Sam thought it through quietly. He didn't really get this things MO. Most of the creatures they hunted came with a set of rules, they had patterns and clean cut reasoning behind their kills, but this was still too scattered for them. It was really saying something considering the repertoire of monsters they had under their belt after doing this for so long. “I don’t think there’s much we could do now without more evidence.” He sighed. “Tomorrow’s your audition. We should get some sleep.”

Dean rubbed a hand over his face, suddenly tired. He nodded. “Alright, I’ll take the couch tonight.”

Sam slipped off to the bathroom to change out of his FBI suit.
Castiel, unlike the Winchesters, was not fond of sleeping in his jeans when he didn't have to, so he shucked them off and got into bed. He watched as Dean made himself comfortable on the motel’s old couch.

The hunter punched a pillow and turned inward towards the cushions, his broad shoulders the only thing Cas could see.

The former angel would have offered him his bed but he was more than well-versed to Dean’s moods when he wanted to avoid confrontation.

Sam came back out and shut off the lights, settling onto his own bed and soon drifting off into a light snore.

Nobody mentioned the kiss again.

The audition was pretty simple. Dean and Cas had to wait in a room with a bunch of other couples that kept side-eyeing each other for two hours. Then they got called into another room where a tired-looking gal with frizzy brown hair looked them up and down before looking through their application. She didn't ask them any questions before she nodded. “Alright, I’m going to take your measurements and snap a couple of polaroids.”

Dean thought Cas looked a little nervous so he squeezed his hand and gave him a small encouraging smile. He volunteered to be the first to get measured, got his polaroid taken, and stood back so Cas could get a turn.

Castiel kept his gaze locked with Dean’s while the woman measured his shoulders, across chest, around his waist, the length of his arm, and seemed to be measuring his leg in a manner he would not have found appropriate had not seen her do it to Dean moments earlier.

She snapped his photo and clipped it to the file where she’d jotted down all the information she’d gathered. “Perfect. You’ll be hearing from us in two days. If you make it through the final selection process we’ll have you come in and answer a couple of questions on tape, the measurements we took are for the wardrobe should that be the case. Now, will you be staying in town?” They nodded. “Good. We will email you with the final decision and more information should you have any questions. Please have a nice day.”

They took their abrupt dismissal graciously, thankful to leave after sitting around for so long in the
awkward waiting room.

The email arrived a few days later telling them they’d made the final cut and that they were scheduled to come in next Friday.

“Are you sure this is alright?” Castiel looked down at his outfit and frowned.

Since becoming human he’d grown fond of casual-wear but that did not mean he was adverse dressing the more formal attire he’d worn as an angel or whenever he had to pose as an FBI agent on a hunt. The email they’d gotten had requested they wear something at ease as wardrobe would be provided but that they would also like to see what kind of clothes they normally wear for future reference.

Dean had worn one of his usual flannels layered over a plain blue shirt and they had immediately made him change into a subdued green button-down with the sleeves rolled up, exposing his forearms, plus throw on a pair of jeans that weren't worn down to the bare threads. He now sat in one of those hair and makeup chairs, watching as Cas grew more confused.

Castiel had showed up in a simple pair of jeans he’d purchased with the Winchesters from a thrift store and a vintage grey AC/DC shirt he’d borrowed from Dean shortly after the fall and never returned. It was a little loose on his lithe frame and, although it was an article of clothing he’d grown quite attached to, he expected they would make him change into something much nicer for the sake of television. Instead, they’d had him keep the shirt and just change into a new pair of jeans.

Dean rolled his eyes, but his expression was undeniably fond. “You look great, Cas. Now shut up and sit down.”

The former angel took the vacated seat next to Dean. A moment later an attractive woman with green hair came in and introduced herself as Nicole, their hair and makeup artist. She took one look at Dean and tsked. “Look at all those freckles. It’s a damn shame we’re gonna have to cover most of em up.” Cas looked confused at that, something she seemed to notice.

She started on Castiel first, deciding his hair was the bigger task here.

That made Dean break out in one of his shit-eating grins. “Good luck with that, sweetheart. Don’t think you’re gonna be able to tame that head.”

Something that proved true because by the time she was done with him, Castiel’s hair was more unruly than it’d been when they came in.
It reminded Dean of the way he’d looked when he’d first seen him—back in the barn in Pontiac, when he’d swept in wearing Jimmy Novak’s disheveled state and flipped everything Dean thought he knew about the world upside down.

As soon as they were done with hair and makeup, they were ushered away by the same frizzy haired lady from their audition into a nicer room. “Alright, my name is Liz and you’ll be seeing a lot of me if you manage to survive this competition until the end. We’re gonna take you both into separate rooms and ask you some questions. You are being recorded and the answers we like will be cut and edited for the premier, so try not to swear. Now, Casteel, is it?”

“Castiel.” He corrected.

“Right, come with me. You,” she pointed at Dean, “can stay here.”

True to her word, she dragged the former angel into another room and had him sit down in a strategically lit chair as soon as someone finished pinning a discrete microphone on him. “In two minutes we’re gonna have you state your name and your purpose for being here. After that we’re gonna ask you a few questions, you wait ten seconds and then you answer them, and don’t forget to look at the camera.” And then she was gone.

The room went quiet, the lights in the rest of the room dimmed and someone signaled him to start. Castiel straightened his posture the way they’d told him to and looked directly at the camera. “My name is Castiel Novak and I want to marry Dean.”

“Good, got it in one take. What do you hope in achieving by coming on Happily Ever After?” A male voice asked from beyond his line of sight.

Castiel had been poked and prodded in the makeup department, he was separated from Dean, and now there was an uncomfortably bright light shining in his eyes, making him squint. He was exasperated enough to simply answer ‘to save lives’ but he knew to truly do that, he had to play his part and he had to make it believable. So he decided the only way that would work is if he was as honest as he could possibly afford to be and guilelessly responded: “I hope to bring Dean the happiness he deserves.”

In the other room, they’d given Dean similar instructions. Dean knew from the brief stint in that freaky alternate universe that he couldn't really act for shit, and he hadn't told Cas, but the whole time they were ‘studying,’ Dean was fully aware he had no intention of following this shit script for script like he’d led Cas to believe. He didn't think it mattered ‘cause studying just wasn't his thing--hell, he hadn't even graduated high school--but one things he did do well was lie.
Dean could lie through his pretty little teeth.

The only thing that was different this time was that he had to throw in a little bit more of himself in than usual if he really wanted to sell it. So when they asked him why he’d come on the show, he didn’t use the response Sam had cooked up for him, he just shrugged. “Cas has lifted me off my ass more times than I could count, I’ll be damned if I can’t get him the wedding he deserves.”

And that’s how it went, each of them in their respective rooms answering whatever questions got thrown at them and spinning out their false history with bits and pieces of truth in the mix.

They’d ask about their jobs and Dean would reply that he fixed cars. Castiel’s story wasn’t as simple-he told them he was unemployed and that his last job was as a sales associate, but that originally he’d been a religious scholar. He’d go on to tell them that his relationship with Dean had forced his superiors to sever their ties with him.

They’d ask how they’d gotten together and Dean would say that Cas saved him from a very dark place he’d been at in that point in time, and since then they’d had their ups and downs but that Cas had almost always been one of the most important people in his life, that he was family. Castiel replied that there’d never been anyone but Dean.

They asked each of them how they differed from their partner. Dean told them, ‘He’s more trusting when it comes to other people. See, that’s the problem. Cas doesn’t think anyone’s lying. Me? I think everyone’s lying.’ and then he quirked a grin. ‘It’s a gift.’ Castiel took a different approach: he stared at the camera for a long couple of seconds before deadpanning, ‘I am a brunette and Dean is a blonde.’

They asked each of them what their idea of a dream wedding was and Dean didn’t really know what to say, so he said ‘Whatever Cas wants is just fine with me.’ Castiel had to think about it for a few seconds before telling them that Dean preferred simplicity but that at this point they couldn’t afford much, something he said he felt was his fault for being such a burden on Dean.

The only question they hadn’t been prepared to answer was one that hadn't appeared in the previous seasons. The question was if they’d had anything to say about their sexuality.

Castiel swallowed past the sudden tension in his throat. He shook his head, choosing to opt out because it was not something he’d thought too much about and he didn't want to risk it.

Dean hesitated. A voice reminded him that he didn't have to answer if he didn't feel comfortable doing so but he made the effort.

“It’s not-it’s not something as easy to come to terms with, y’know? It’s like you think you’re straight for the longest time because that’s how you were raised, that’s what you know is normal--and yeah, you get that some people are gay and you accept ‘em for it, but you tell yourself its not your thing, ‘cause you’re still interested in the opposite sex. So what are you? You’re confused. You’re confused for a long time. Eventually you might come to terms with it, you start...accepting yourself for it, but then you gotta figure if you wanna tell other people, how to tell em, start stressing how they’re gonna react, y’know? You think they aren't gonna understand how someone can’t be 100%
straight, that they’ll tell you you’re confused or-or something worse. Life just ain’t that simple.” He’d stopped looking at the camera at some point, forgot it was even there. When he finished his little monologue, he looked up and blinked, coming back from wherever he’d been.

Someone called it a wrap, took their microphones, and Dean and Cas were finally herded back into the same room.

Liz seemed to pop out of nowhere. She gave them a smile, probably the first smile she’d ever given them and they weren’t sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. “We got some great material today, guys. We won’t need you back until Sunday, but we’ll be meeting at a different location, and after that we’re gonna go directly to the house you’ll be staying at with the rest of the contestants for the duration of the game. So have your bags packed. Someone’ll contact you at your cell with the rest of the info.” And then they were dismissed.

Dean and Castiel settled into the impala and just sat there.

“That was… more involved than I had expected it to be.” Castiel commented, dryly.

Dean made a noncommittal grumble and turned the key in the ignition, allowing his baby to roar to life. He drove her off the parking lot and headed in the direction of the motel.

Looks like they had some shit to pack.

Chapter End Notes

I'm 90% sure there is no casting in the history of reality game shows that does things this quickly.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
6.10- Caged Heat
4.01- Lazarus Rising
4.20- The Rapture
6.15- The French Mistake
9.21- King of the Damned

Plus honorable mention to:
Misha's infamous AC/DC shirt
Chapter 3

Sunday morning found the two of them leaning against the impala’s side. They were in the parking lot of the address they’d gotten from one of the PAs, staring at jewelry store where they could see Liz’s frizzy brown hair through the window as she bossed around people setting up camera equipment.

“We could always ‘back out,” Castiel mused. “Find another way to stop the killings.”

“Yeah,” Dean agreed. “But what fun would that be?”

The hunter pressed his back off the sleek black metal that made up his baby’s frame and stepped forward. After half a second of consideration, he held out his hand towards the former angel. Cas even looked momentarily surprised but he took it without skipping a beat.

Liz spotted them the moment they walked through the front door. “Excellent, you’re on time.” She looked at her watch and twirled her finger, some unspoken signal that had the rest of the crew redoubling their efforts to set everything up. She looked around, nodding in satisfaction before facing the duo once more. “Are you guys familiar with the show?”

“Only somewhat,” Cas admitted uncertainly.

She sighed. “Right. Well, we’re here to film you picking out your wedding rings. The production will cover the expenses, and you will get to keep the rings at the end of your time on the show, regardless whether you make it to the final round or not. Once you've selected your rings, we will place them in here—” She held up a lavender mesh jewelry bag. “—and they will be suspended, along with you and your partners name, at the contestant house.”

Dean nodded in understanding. They knew about the ring thing—every season, the show would hang all the couple’s rings in a circle, making them look kinda like a chandelier at the house’s entrance. Whenever a couple was booted off, they’d film the rings falling to the ground. He thought it was pretty over-dramatic. He just hadn't realized that the show paid for all of those wedding rings. That kinda stuff was expensive, but he guessed that was the point. Extra incentive: contestants could just pick out the most expensive rings they found so that even if they lost the game, they could just sell em later. It was smart—make em feel like they hadn't subjected themselves to all this shit, all that public humiliation, for nothing.
They had the makeup artist from the other day come in and mess with Castiel’s hair again before pushing the two towards the counter where a bunch of rings were on display.

Dean took one look at the selection and decided--nope, this was not what he’d signed up to do. He let go of Cas’s hand in favor of wrapping his arm around his shoulders, leaning in so his lips brushed against his fake boyfriend’s ear. “Hey, Cas? I’m not good at this kinda thing. How ‘bout you pick em, so we can get outta here?” He murmured, quietly.

The former angel shivered at the unfamiliar sensation of warm breath coasting against his ear. He didn't know the first thing about wedding rings but he was not one to turn away when faced with a task. He nodded and Dean pressed a kiss to his temple before stepping back, giving him some space to make a reasonable decision.

Cas scrutinized the selection with the same look he used to get when he was burning out some poor fucker's insides with just a press of his hand. Dean had told him once that he'd always attributed Castiel's intensity as an ‘angel thing’ but it was something that stayed even after his mojo was drained, making it more of a 'Cas thing’ really. Dean couldn’t help the amused smirk on his face as he watched him turn his laser focus on each and every ring, like it was a life or death decision. It was kinda hilarious seeing that look on Cas’s face because of wedding rings, of all things.

This 'thing' with Dean might not be real--after all, it was impossible to forget that the only reason they were doing this was to save future lives from being taken--but Castiel would be lying if he said there were no... ulterior motives behind his unwavering resolution towards doing his best on this case. He would have loved to admit that he was not a fool but he believed his track record would disprove that statement rather quickly. The point being was that there was one thing in particular he had not fooled himself into believing--and it was the idea that he would ever be able to experience a real romantic relationship.

As an angel, he'd held little interest in romance; he had never even considered doing any 'cloud-seeding,' as Dean had so delicately put it that night several years ago, just before he'd taken him to a brothel.

When he fell, he hadn't thought too much about it either. He'd been more focused on his failure and how he'd allowed himself to get tricked once again into failing his brothers and sisters.

It was slowly that Castiel had begun to experience so much more than he thought he could as a human. He'd begun to hope that perhaps he would do better as a human than he ever did as an angel, and so that is what he was doing by hunting with the Winchesters. It was going much more successfully than the first time he'd expressed his interest in hunting. (Most prominently because he was no longer being used as an 'angelic puppet,' as Dean had expressed before.)

But hunters did not have room in their lives for romance. He had seen the Winchester's attempts at it, even held himself accountable in more ways than one when severing the final ties between Dean and Lisa Braeden. It was on his long list of things he would not forgive himself for, even if Dean would have likely pointed out they’d all made just as many mistakes before. Now he watched as the
Winchesters closed themselves off from that, learning that less mistakes were made when you had less people to care for. He knew Dean kept himself sated with his string of one-night lovers and collection of erotic pornography.

Castiel simply did not feel he had much room left for any more mistakes and so he emulated him to a lesser degree, quick to accept that relationships of that kind were out of the question.

That was before this case popped up.

This was where his ulterior motive came in.

It was a silly selfish desire, and Castiel knew that, but he couldn't help but want to do his best because he wanted to prove that--in another life, perhaps--he would be good at this. At being in a relationship with someone. He wanted to prove he could do it because that was something humans did and he wanted to prove to himself he could be a good human.

Because maybe being a good human would be worth it after being such a poor example as an angel.

That was why Castiel was approaching the act of picking a ring with such intent. He was--briefly--imagining that he was truly in a romantic relationship with Dean, that this decision was not a trivial one. He wanted to pick something meaningful, something that would suit the both of them. So far none of the rings felt right. Many were too feminine, the masculine ones they’d had laid out were either too simple and felt impersonal or they were far too ostentatious for his liking. He could not imagine any universe where Dean would be pleased by the idea of bulky golden bands, peppered in colored gemstones.

It was only after he’d glanced through the glass case of the counter that he’d found what he was looking for. It was a cushioned rack of rings that had not been set out for them to pick from, presumably because they were not what this society considered typical wedding rings.

Castiel tilted his head to the side and crouched down to get a better look. Most of these rings were thicker, their stylistic designs carved into their metal bodies rather than embellished with gems as the previous rings had been. He noted one was carved into the head of a Tibetan Buddha, another seemed to have a serpent circling it, and a few of them were skull-themed. He zeroed in on one that was just as intricate as the others in this section, but not as brash.

The ring itself was thick. It had first caught his attention because from a distance it almost looked like a road. On further inspection, what Castiel thought was a road was really three rows of perfectly lined up circles that reminded him of stepping stones. The two outer rows were the same size and the more prominent row in the center had slightly larger circles, which was why originally he’d connected the image with the two-lane asphalt he’d grown accustomed to seeing when traveling with the Winchesters.
The thought was strangely soothing, the subconscious reminder of being in the impala, something he found amusing considering how slow and confining he’d found cars as angel.

He straightened up from his crouch and tapped on the glass, above where the ring sat. “I would like to see that one.”

The man behind the counter gave him an odd look. “But that’s not a wedding ring.” He lightly touched along one of the velvet rows of rings that had originally been set out for them to pick from. “These are our best wedding rings, and they are much more expensive than that ring there.”

Castiel narrowed his eyes at him threateningly.

The jeweler gulped, silently retracting his previous statement as he slid the counter open from behind and removed the ring Castiel had pointed out. He handed it to the intimidating blue-eyed man carefully.

The former angel ran his thumb along the edge. He could see now that in between the three rows of stones were two other less noticeable rows. They looked like minuscule chains had been carved out. If this were a real relationship he would have felt it was fitting--chains that would willingly bind one to the other. A commitment to one another. Or perhaps a reminder of all of the chains they’d ran over in their history together.

Yes. This was the ring he would've picked if this was real.

The curiosity was killing Dean. Cas looked like he was seriously thinking this through, so the hunter just stood back and gave him his space. When he finally picked a ring though, Dean had had enough anticipation and stepped forward. He placed a hand on the small of his fake partner’s back and leaned in to peek at the thing. He was surprised to find he actually liked it. Dean hadn’t really worn any jewelry since he got rid of the amulet, but if he ever got back into the habit, this was easily something he’d feel comfortable wearing. It was nice, masculine. He kinda wanted to ask Cas why he picked it, but something about that felt too personal to bring up when there were cameras around. He looked up to find Cas staring at him.

Castiel had been observing Dean’s reactions. He needed to know if Dean approved of the choice he’d made, if he’d done right by his decision. When the other man looked up, they locked eyes for a while before he spoke. "Dean--" he began hesitantly, "would you mind...?"

"Hmm? Oh! Right." Of course, they were supposed to be engaged. Dean gave his left hand over
easily and let Cas slip on the piece of metal onto his ring finger. Something about it seemed to satisfy Cas cause the former angel nodded, accepting he’d made the right choice.

It made Dean smile and he caught his gaze again. Kiss him. Right. That's what he should do. It felt like one of those moments when sappy couples did that kinda thing, and he and Cas were supposed to be a sappy couple, so that's what he did.

Dean cupped the guy's jaw and leaned in for a chaste kiss. This was the only other time they'd done this since the Sam incident and it was the first time they were doing it in public. It was somehow easier, easy to forget they had an audience too. This time he actually felt how soft Cas’s lips were, cushioned lightly against his. When he pulled away, he found himself caressing a circle on Cas’s stubbly cheek with his thumb and the former angel leaned into the touch. “I like it,” Dean murmured, and Cas looked strangely shy before clearing his throat and bringing them back to the now.

Castiel waited until Dean pulled his hand away from his cheek, making it feel unpleasantly cooler as he did, before allowing him to slide the ring off his finger. He turned back to the jeweler with a determined look on his face, chin tilted upwards in defiance. “Will we be able to get a matching set of these?”

Dean wrapped an arm around his angel’s waist. He almost chuckled when he saw the forlorn look on the other guy’s face at Cas’s request. The rings weren't anywhere near cheap but they were probably the cheapest wedding ring orders he’d ever had to fill out, especially if his store was the same one the show always used.

The guy answered yes and got their ring sizes measured before someone called cut and Liz was on them again.

She gave them one of those brief smiles--smiles they’d assumed were rare, because it was just uncomfortable to be on the receiving end of one of them--and started filling them in on what was supposed to happen next. “That was perfect. Now I’m assuming you have everything you need because you’ll have to head on over to the house after this. If you have a car here, you may drive it with you; if you don’t, a rental may be provided for your personal use for the remainder of your duration at the house. House rules are simple--no physical altercations are allowed; you may not spend more than eight hours a day away from the house while you’re on the show, but you may come and go as you please; we encourage that if you do decide to go out, to allow a camera crew to accompany; we also encourage you to go out with other contestants and engage them in friendly kinship; drug use and other illegal activity will not be condoned; and the production is not liable for any injuries sustained while on the show not directly caused by any of the segments or challenges.” She looked at her watch. “One of the PAs will give you the address and assist you with a rental, should you need one.”

The hunter looked like he was about to protest at the sheer idea of a rental but Castiel cut him off with a squeeze where his hand had been resting at Dean's hip. “Thank you, we will make note of that.”
One of the production assistants gave them the address and offered directions on how to get there. (Something Dean rolled his eyes at and said wasn’t necessary.) He also informed them that most of the couples had already arrived and that they would be sleeping in room number four. They said some guy named Jeremy would greet them at the door.

Twenty minutes later they were pulling up at the show’s mansion. They agreed to park at the house’s garage a couple of yards away from the entrance, opting to haul their two duffle bags instead of letting one of the show’s people handle Dean’s baby--Dean because he barely trusted Sam with her, and Cas because he was wary of letting anyone near the arsenal they had in the trunk.

A guy in a headset answered the door. He took one look at them and clicked something on his belt before speaking into the microphone. “The last ones are here, yeah, got it.” He clicked off and forced a smile. “Dean and Casteel, right?”

“Castiel.” They both corrected simultaneously.

The guy’s eyebrow rose, but he nodded in apology. “Right, sorry. I’m Jeremy.” He ushered them into the large foyer and they could hear music and chatter coming from elsewhere in the house. He seemed surprised to note their duffles were the only thing they had with them. “Are these all your bags?”

“We travel light,” Dean quipped.

“Great, well I can take your bags to your room. It’s on the first floor, number four, just beyond the kitchen--you can’t miss it. The rest of the contestants are out on the patio. Game doesn’t start until tomorrow, so you don’t have to worry about a thing.” He took their bags and pointed out where they could find the patio doors.

When they stepped out they were greeted by the sight of full on party. The patio itself was huge, all fancy concrete tiling around one of those amoeba-shaped pools that had an elevated hot tub spilling into it. There were people laying on white sun chairs, couples in the pool, and a few mingling around the patio’s outdoor bar. So these were their fellow contestants.

Castiel sighed. He took hold of Dean’s hand, a comforting weight in his, and ushered them both towards the bar where a guy wearing reflective sunglasses was perched and laughing loudly at something two girls in bikinis were saying. One of the girls noticed them and perked up immediately. “Hey! You must be couple number twelve! You want a drink?”
Dean squeezed Cas's hand and plastered on a charming smile. "Yeah, sure, what'cha got?"

The girl jumped off her stool and headed behind the bar while the guy turned around to get a good look at them. "Hey, I'm Chris.” He introduced with a cocky grin. “This is Lucy-Lu,” he nodded to the strawberry blonde sitting next to him.

She narrowed her eyes at him before holding her hand out to Dean and Cas. “Actually, it’s just Lucy.” She corrected in a sweet Southern twang.

As the boys introduced themselves the brunette that had offered them a drink earlier popped up from behind the bar with a bottle of Jack Daniels in one hand and a bottle of Malibu Coconut in the other. “Chris likes to think all girls from the South have either ‘Anne’ or ‘Lu’ at the end of their name.” She rolled her eyes. “I’m Lucy’s girlfriend Ellie.”

“Are you girls from Georgia?” Dean asked, recognizing the accent.

“Good ear.” Ellie nodded in approval. “So what’s your poison?”

Dean looked towards Cas questioningly but the former angel just shrugged. Right. Cas had probably never had anything other than beer or some rotgut brown liquor Dean usually shares with him after a case every now and then. Well, at least as a human--he’s not sure about the time Cas drank out a liquor store. “You got any beer?”

Ellie popped open a couple of beer bottles for them and then headed off with her girlfriend Lucy after telling them to consider joining the rest of the couples that were indulging in the heated pool. That left Cas and Dean behind to ‘mingle’ with Chris.

“So you guys look pretty straight for a couple of queers,” he commented casually.

Dean choked on his beer, causing Cas to rub a hand along his back in response. He wrapped his arm around Cas’s waist in thanks and raised an eyebrow at Chris. “Gotta say, that’s the first time I heard that.” Hell, he spent most of his life on the road trying to convince people that his ‘delicate features’ did not automatically mean he was a ‘twink’ or whatever. Dean was kinda surprised to find himself slightly more offended at this guy's comment than he ever would have thought at being presumed straight. He cleared his throat. “So, who’s your other half?”
“I’m obviously the better half, but my baby’s pretty cute too. He’s the one in the blue shorts flirting with the blonde hunk over there.” Chris pointed him out and took a sip from his drink. “We’re trying to see if he’ll join us in a threesome.”

Castiel looked confused at that. “Are you not worried the show will find that a bit—uh… unconventional?” He could not imagine a couple going far in a competitive show about love and relationships if the first thing they did when they arrived was find someone else to have sex with, but then he wasn’t really familiar with those kinds of sexual escapades.

Chris laughed. “Oh, sweetie, the first half of the contest is just to get rid of the uglies and the losers.” He tipped down his reflective sunglasses to give them an appreciative once-over. “I don’t think you have anything to worry about, unless you’re boring. Hey, would you guys be down to have some fun with me and Danny?”

Cas looked as disgusted as Dean felt. It wasn’t even because they were being propositioned into having group sex with some douchebag and his boyfriend—that kinda thing could be blown off easy with a quick ‘no thanks.’ It was the shallow comment that had Dean feeling kinda queasy. He unconsciously tightened his hold around Cas’s waist and forced a polite smile. “No thanks, we’re—uh—pretty monogamous when it come to guys.” He lied.

Chris tsked in lament but he seemed to take their word pretty easily.

They managed to excuse themselves and meet some of the rest of the couples that were, thankfully, much nicer company to be around. They hung out with the other contestants for a while before everyone started excusing themselves and retiring for the night.

Room number four turned out to be a real cosy B&B style room, a big contrast to what they’d noticed was the more modern style the other parts of the house seemed to adopt. It was all creme hardwood floors and pale yellow walls that matched the rest of the room’s decor. Dean almost complained when he noticed the sheets even had tiny flowers on them, that is, until he sat down and realized complaining about this bed would be downright blasphemy. He laid back and let out a loud groan. “Ugh. Cas, man, come’ere. You gotta try out this bed.” He didn’t think he’d ever lay down in a bed that felt better than the one in his room back at the bunker, didn’t think it was even possible a bed this good existed until now.

It was only after Cas laid down and Dean turned to face him that he noticed that the bed was the only sleepable place in the room. Right. Because he and Cas were a couple and couples slept together in the same beds. He could always offer to sleep in the cushiony white armchair in the corner but it was kinda small and couldn't possibly be as good as this bed.

Dean visibly swallowed and he could see Cas tracking the movement as he watched him curiously.
Ok so he was sleeping with the angel tonight. Well, the former angel--the former angel who liked to sleep in his boxers. He tore his gaze away from those damn big blue eyes too look at the ceiling. He silently counted to ten before dragging himself up and getting his duffle from where it’d been placed on the ottoman at the foot of the bed. He took it with him to the bathroom as he grumbled at Cas to ‘pick a damn side of the bed and stay on it.’

Castiel shucked off his jeans and changed into a clean shirt. He waited until Dean finished using the bathroom before brushing his teeth--the right way, he found out, after Sam complained about the toothpaste being used up and realized he had been practically eating the stuff. Afterwards, he laid down next to Dean and they both drifted off to sleep on their respective sides.

The first thing Dean registered when he woke up was ‘warm,’ and then he realized the reason he was warm was because he was wrapped around Cas like a tortilla on a breakfast burrito. Dean had a leg in between both of Cas’s and another curled around the guy’s hip. Shit. He hadn't gone to bed sober with anyone in so long that he’d forgotten how much of a cuddler he could be. He felt Cas shift so he started to pull away, stammering out his apologies as he tried to shift his leg off the guy and pull his arm away from where it was trapped around Cas’s torso.

“Dean,” Castiel groaned, “shut up.” He let out a low sleepy whine and held onto the arm wrapped around his chest. He muttered something about ‘cold’ and blindly gripped around until he had Dean’s thigh back where it’d been acting as a second blanket.

Dean laid there with Cas for a while, letting the former angel’s even breathing lull him into a relaxed state that was more asleep than awake. He supposed he could count his blessings that Cas didn’t mind this--plus that it hadn't been one of those mornings where he was ‘standing at full attention,’ so to speak--and added it to the list of things he and Cas were never gonna talk about after this case.

Dean pulled away lazily when Cas began to stretch. They took turns showering and getting dressed--momentarily reveling in the fuzzy complementary robes they’d discovered last night, ones that even had their names embroidered on them.

When they left the safety of their room they found most of the other couples in the foyer, looking up at where production had finally hung the wedding ring chandelier. So the game had finally begun, and looking at the little section where ‘Dean & Castiel’ were engraved into it’s round metal base along with all the rest of the pairings, they couldn't help but realize this meant the hunt was finally on too.

Chapter End Notes
Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
5.03- Free To Be You and Me
8.23- Sacrifice
8.08- Hunteri Heroici
6.21- Let It Bleed
5.10- Abandon All Hope...
5.15- Dark Side of the Moon
5.17- 99 Problems
9.03- I'm No Angel

Plus honorable mention to:
"The Cockles Ring"
(and whoever got such a great closeup of it on this photo of Misha, 'cause all that detail was really helpful!)
“Are you sure we still have a case?” Dean sighed, leaning back on the bed in the motel room Sam was staying at. The mattress felt like a pile of rocks compared to the one he slept on with Cas back at the house. “How do we even know this thing is gonna kill again?”

Dean and Castiel had been on the show for little over four weeks now.

They’d managed to slip their handlers (telling everyone they were gonna go out for a ‘private lunch,’ all romantic and crap) so they could meet up with Sam and talk about the case for a bit. When they took on this hunt, Dean had theoretically known it wasn't gonna be as quick as their usual salt’n’burns but he’d had this idea in his head that there’d actually be something to do. Something other than stupid relationship show stuff.

So far, though, the trail had been cold. There were no signs, no creepy omens, no chill in the middle of the night, and all of the couples that had gotten kicked to the curb were still breathing.

Sam rolled his eyes. “We already knew it probably wasn't going to attack all of the couples, Dean.” He yawned and typed something up in the computer.

Castiel sighed. He was leaning against the wall with his arms folded across his chest and a brooding look on his face. He and Dean had swept the house from top to bottom and found nothing out of the ordinary. Currently they were keeping close tabs on all the production crew they had access to while doing their best to maintain in the running. Sam was handling the research from his motel room and whenever a couple was no longer in the running he would tail them for a day or two until they left town.

They were ninety-eight percent sure they were dealing with a deity of some sort. The problem was that there were hundreds, if not thousands, of deities dedicated to love and relationships and without any more leads they had no way of knowing which minor god or goddess was behind this. That left Sam swimming in piles of lore and Dean and Cas helplessly waiting while two of the people they’d been living with for the past month were inching closer towards an early grave.

After a couple of seconds of nothing but the quiet *tutthunk* of the laptop’s built in mouse, Sam pipped up. “Hey, did you know Cas has groupies?”
Dean’s head shot up. “What? My Cas?” He didn't realize he’d called Cas ‘his’ until Sam was giving him that damn floppy grin he always got when Dean says something stupid and he was trying not to laugh. Cas was just looking at him curiously. “Shut up, you know what I meant.” He glared at them both for good measure. “Now what the fuck do you mean by groupies?”

Sam twisted his computer to face them and on the screen was what looked like a whole website dedicated to pictures and drawings of Cas.

The elder Winchester scooted off the bed and leaned over to take a closer. “What the hell did they put on his head?”

“It’s called a flower crown. There are some of you too.” Sam smirked as he clicked on a link that took them to another one of those pages only instead of just Cas it was him and Cas.

“What’s a ‘Des-tile?’” Dean squinted at a screenshot someone took of him and Cas from the show that had been photoshopped with those ‘flower crown’ things plus a pink banner that had the unfamiliar word scrawled on it.

“It’s actually pronounced ‘Destiel,’ and it’s your ‘ship’ name.” Sam had a self satisfied look on his face that he knew his brother wanted to wipe off with a closed fist. “You guys are pretty popular with the viewers.”

“They have a name for us? What, like ‘Brangelina?’” His tone echoed his disbelief. This was almost as bad as the time they discovered there were ‘slash girls’ that thought he and Sam were doing it despite being related, all because of Chuck’s stupid Supernatural books. Dean scrolled through a few of the pictures of them and ended up on a really explicit drawing of him and Cas ‘embracing’ sans clothes just as the former angel started to peek over his shoulder. Yeah, no maybe this was even worse. He slammed Sam’s laptop shut, his cheeks burning and his voice strained as he spoke. “You know what, Cas? We should really go and grab some lunch before we get back to the house.”

The hunter almost tripped over his own feet in his haste as he gripped Castiel’s elbow and all but dragged him out of the motel room while Sam started cracking up behind them. They stopped to eat at the closest bar and grill and studiously ignored the topic over a couple of beers and a shared plate of loaded potato skins.

When they’d had their fill, they headed back to the house and bumped into Jeremy, the on-hand producer guy, on their way in. “Ah, there you are. We’re holding another Surprise Challenge tomorrow morning so be ready by eight AM.”
Castiel didn't really understand why they called it a ‘surprise’ if they were always informed at what
time and more often than not what the nature of the challenge was supposed to be. “Thank you, will
we be needing anything in particular?”

“One of you will need a bathing suit.” He checked something off on the clip-board he normally
carried and filled them in on a few more details before letting them go with a hasty good-bye.

“The game is simple: one of you is going to be taken aside and asked a couple of personal questions.
It's your partner's job to guess the answers to as many of those questions as they can for the most
points. The catch is--” The show’s host, Stephen Dobbs, paused for a moment as the cameraman no
doubt pulled in for a dramatic close up of his face. “--if our contestants can’t rack up a certain
number of points, their partners are going to have to face some pretty high stakes.”

They cut to film a few wide shots of the man-made waterfall thing they were standing in front of
while someone came in and fixed Stephen’s hair.

The contestants never interacted with the show’s host unless there was a particular challenge that
called for it but as far as Dean could tell he was one of those wanna-be Ryan Seacrest types. The guy
was cheesy and liked to pretend he was great friends with each and every contestant when the
camera was on. He supposed that was pretty much a reality game show host’s job description
though, so he didn't really care.

There was another call to action and Stephen started talking again. “Each contestant will have five
minutes to answer twenty questions about their partner for a total of five points per question. If they
can’t get at least fifty points in time, their better half will be taking a zip-line dive through that
waterfall.” It wasn't entirely true of course. The producers had let everyone know beforehand what
they’d have to be doing and preemptively gave them all the option of opting out of the full zip-line
through the waterfall in the case that they lost the challenge. The ones that weren't comfortable doing
it just had to be drenched in water and be filmed getting off a child-sized zip-line while the actual
waterfall shots could be done by stunt doubles. And of course, the host ended it with his customary
tag line: “Think these guys have what it takes to win their Happily Ever After?”

All of the couples stood in line while the crew filmed their reaction shots. Most of them went out of
their way to look scared or tough but Cas and Dean just looked bored.

Which of course meant they got picked to go first.

There was a moment where they had to pretend to flip for who did what but it was just another farce
because each couple had already decided who was supposed to go on the zip-line last night. They
had to flip a trick coin and make it look like Dean was the poor guy that got to fly through the
waterfall if Cas didn't answer all the questions right. Just about the only thing in this challenge that
wasn't made up was the Q&A part. They had the contestants doing the zip-line fill them out earlier
but they’d kept eyes on them the whole time afterwards to make sure there was no room for cheating.
Dean rolled his eyes and left to change into his new pair of board shorts. He and Cas had to go out and buy a couple of them this morning seeing as he hadn't actually owned a pair since he lived with Lisa and Ben and Cas hadn't even realized there was a difference between underwear and swimwear.

Castiel pressed a light kiss to Dean’s lips just as they fit him into the harness and stepped forward to his marker where they could film him answering questions while getting the view of Dean plus the waterfall in the background.

Liz popped up then to fill him in on the last minute details. “Alright, you actually have ten minutes to answer all the questions but keep your responses short so we can edit them into five later. You won’t know which questions you get right until we tally up the points at the end and let you guys know your score but on the show its just gonna be a little counter at the bottom of the screen.”

Castiel nodded in understanding. He let them know that he was ready and Stephen came forwards to start the challenge.

“So, Castiel, you have five minutes to get at least fifty points or Dean is gonna go bursting through that waterfall. Are you ready?”

Cas stared at him like he was an idiot and Dobbs pushed on, taking it as a yes. He started rambling off questions interspersed with weak attempts at witty banter but the former angel didn't pay that any mind as he rattled off his answers in a more or less clear and concise format.

“Let’s start off with something easy: Dean’s birthday?”

“January 24, 1979.”

“Favorite food?”

“Pie.”

“Are you sure? The question is food, not desert.” And Stephen would chuckle at his own observation.

Castiel squinted his eyes at him, legitimately wondering if the man had some kind of intellectual deficiency before reiterating. “Yes, with Dean it is always pie.”

“Oh-kay, favorite song?”

“I believe it is a tie between a song called ‘Ramble On’ and another called ‘Traveling Riverside Blues’ both by the artist Led Zeppelin.”
“Most prized possession?”

“His 1967 Chevrolet Impala, whom he affectionately refers to as ‘Baby.’”

“Biggest fear?”

Castiel hesitated. He believed Dean’s worst fear would be the loss of his brother but Dean would not admit that to himself, let alone for a ridiculous television show. “He fears flying in airplanes.”

“Favorite color?”

“Blue.”

“Do you know why?”

And Castiel shook his head because while most of his other answers were observations he’d made but when he’d asked Dean about why he preferred blue to most colors, the hunter would stammer that he did no such thing.

“Favorite TV show?”

“Doctor Sexy, MD—although I doubt he would admit it out loud.”

“Favorite movie genre?”

“Dean’s cinematic tastes are very diverse so I could not say for sure, but he does have an affinity for the wild west.”

“Favorite superhero?”

“Batman.”

The rest of the questions were just as basic and Cas answered them all in well under the allotted time. Afterwards he stood by Dean and the zip-line safety assistant as they started debating if Batman’s zip-line blaster would ever legitimately work while the production tallied up their points. Jeremy came up to them with their score a few minutes later, letting them know that they got an eighty five and that they could unharness Dean now.

“Wait, can I make the jump anyways?” Dean asked, clutching onto the harness.

Jeremy gave him an odd look and hesitated, consulting someone over his trusty headset. It took another five minutes but they decided Dean could do it because it’d make for good publicity to have a contestant willingly take the risk just for kicks.

“Dean Winchester, if you die because of something so stupid I swear on my father I will do nothing to bring you back.” Castiel grumbled quietly into his ear. Of course, Dean just flashed him a wicked grin and made no promises.
They had a camera come in closer to get the shot. Dean looked right at it and winked before jumping off the platform and yelling out that he was Batman.

Castiel let out an exasperated huff and rolled his eyes. He found Dean a few minutes later, dripping wet with a ridiculous grin on his face. It made him paused mid-stride and stare at the mostly naked man in wonder. It was... nice seeing him so happy. He couldn't remember the last time Dean had looked so carefree. Cas blinked, handing the hunter a fluffy towel he’d gotten from production and the two sat at a metal picnic table that had been set up nearby while the other couples took their turns.

It took anywhere between twenty-five to forty minutes to film each set of couples so Dean and Cas were already halfway through their lunch--Cas pretending not to notice when Dean would steal bits of chicken off his salad because the hunter had refused to eat ‘that damn rabbit food’ and opted for an unappealing soggy ham-and-cheese sub instead--when one of the other contestants found them.

Clara smirked at them, wringing out her long dripping hair before taking a seat at their table. She noted the towel by Dean. “Hey, you guys didn't make it to fifty in time either?”

Castiel rolled his eyes, swallowing a mouthful of lettuce and ranch before responding. “We did but Dean is an idiot and jumped despite not needing to.”

Dean made a show of looking offended. He stuck his tongue out at the former angel as he passed his mostly dry towel towards the soaked redhead. “Where’s Steph, anyways? I would've thought she’d jump at the chance to go zip-lining.”

Stephanie and Clara were one of the couples they'd actually gotten to know in the past month. They were a Cuban couple, born and raised in Miami, and it had become a running gag for them to try and expand Dean’s ‘musical horizons’ beyond classic rock. Dean wouldn't budge, but Cas had proven to be a bit more open towards some of the stuff they’d showed him. Clara was a bit loud and she and her girlfriend were pretty strong-willed but Dean liked them.

Clara laughed. She accepted the towel with a big dimpled smile and started drying off her curls. “She didn't wanna get her dreads wet, so I ended up being the one messing up my blower.” She pouted, her words affected by the Latin accent she claimed she didn't have.

Castiel made a sympathetic noise despite not truly understanding what ‘blower’ meant. He took a sip from the warm can of sprite he’d been sharing with Dean and frowned. “Do you know when we will be heading back to the house?”
“Yeah, we should be going soon. They’re just finishing up with Chris and Danny.”

Dean grimaced. He and Cas still didn't like Chris, the guy they’d first talked to when they’d gotten to the house. It didn't take long to realize his boyfriend Danny wasn't any better so they gave that specific couple a wide berth.

True enough, a little while later all eight couples were being piled into the show’s mini bus. The ride back was tense. Half of the couples didn't successfully complete the challenge but it looked like one of them did particularly bad. Dean and Cas didn't know much about them other than they were two guys from Oregon, but there were murmurs that the one that was supposed to be answering the questions hadn't even remembered their partner’s birthday correctly.

It wasn't too big of a shock that the couple in question had gotten booted off at the end of the week.

What was unexpected was the call they’d gotten from Sam a couple of hours later informing them that their former co-contestants had gotten into a car accident--a fatal car accident.

“Dammit, Sammy, you were supposed to be watching them!” Dean was pissed. They were back at the motel room but the atmosphere was heavier than the last time they were here. None of them were taking it well that civilians had been lost under their watch but Dean was taking it personally.

“I was, Dean! I was right behind them but they turned the corner and there was nothing I could do!” Sam’s jaw clenched.

“Yeah? Well maybe you sh--” Dean’s bellowing was cut off by a firm grip on his bicep.

“Dean. This is not Sam’s fault--” Castiel paused, giving his arm a squeeze as he lowered his voice. “-and it is not yours either.”

Dean held Cas’s weighted gaze. Finally, he swallowed and Cas let him go. He spared his brother an apologetic look that Sam seemed to accept.

“Sam, tell us what happened.” Castiel’s insistence was much calmer than that of his pretend lover’s but the determination was just the same. He wanted to catch this thing just as badly as Dean did.

“I was following them at a safe distance, it was still daylight and there was nothing suspicious as far
as I could tell. Then they turned the corner, and I lost sight of them for like two seconds.” Sam sighed and ran a hand through his hair in frustration. “By the time I was back on their tail, their car had flipped. The cops are sure it was because of this monster pothole—” He pulled out a photo of a big ragged hole surrounded by leftover debris from the accident. “—but there are no reports of it existing before the crash.”

A hole like that couldn't have been made from one day to the next without anyone noticing unless there was some kind of supernatural interference. Dean was almost tempted to make some kind of pun about ‘monster potholes’ but he didn't really feel like joking right now. “So you didn't see anything else?” He asked, his tone was still gruff but unaccusing.

Sam shook his head. “I did go to the morgue to inspect the bodies after and all the injuries are on par with the accident report. If I didn't know any better I wouldn't have found it suspicious either.” He set the case file down on the table. “I think what we need to focus on now is what separates the vics from the other couples.”

“Paul and Trevor.” Castiel murmured.

“Hmm?” Dean looked over to where the former angel was sifting through the accident photos.

“The couple that perished--their names were Paul and Trevor.”

Dean nodded in understanding. “Ah. Well, um, Paul and Trevor--” He looked to Cas for confirmation and got an approving look, encouraging him to continue. “—they kinda bombed the last challenge. Like, remember what that dick Chris said?”

Castiel tilted his head. “The insinuation that the first people to be removed from the competition would be because they were physically or mentally unappealing towards the show’s viewers?”

“Pretty sure he ‘insinuated’ it differently, Cas, but yeah.” Dean mused, a slight quirk on his lips for the first time since they found out about the accident. “Anyways, I don’t know about their ‘mental appeal’ or anything but they were kinda hot—objectively speaking.” He added when he saw Sam quirking an eyebrow at him. “So they were the first couple booted off because they just sucked at the game.”

“That would explain why not all of the former contestants were affected.” Sam acknowledged.
Castiel held up one of the photos and peered at it intently. “What is he holding in his hand?” He asked, passing the photo towards the younger Winchester.

Sam took it and noticed what Cas was pointing out. It was a close up of one of the vic’s hands. He’d been clutching a silky red strand that looked like it used to be knotted together at one point but had snapped apart. “They found another one of those in the car, figured they were just like matching bracelets or whatever.” He frowned. The only reason they’d had a photo of it was because the vic was holding it, otherwise no one would've paid any attention to some random piece of string. “I can look into it, but I doubt it’s gonna lead us anywhere.”

Cas shook his head. “No, it’s fine. It was just a thought.”

They stayed and discussed possible leads for a while before Dean decided it was time they start heading back. They said their goodbyes to Sam and got into the impala but Dean didn’t start the car right up like he normally did.

Castiel looked at him inquiringly. “Dean?”

“I just, uh, wanted to, uh.” Dean looked away, hiding his grimace. “I’m sorry for getting so mad. It was stupid.”

“Dean…”

“I just kinda forgot for a sec, y’know?” He didn't think that would make any sense but Cas touched his hand, forcing him to look at the former angel head on--and what he found there was empathy.

“You grew comfortable… I did too.” He admitted quietly. It made sense to Castiel. It made sense that Dean’s earlier aggravation was born from misplaced guilt, because Cas had felt just as guilty. It was easy to forget they were on a hunt when he’d wake wrapped up in a cocoon of warmth every morning instead of stretching out the kinks in his neck after tossing and turning all night on a questionable motel room couch, or when he’d see Dean laughing heartily rather than emerging from a dark alley covered in his own blood and some unidentifiable goo.

There might not have been anything they could have done to prevent the deaths of those two men but they had been… reveling. They had been happy while others near them were still in danger and it was not something that sat well with either of them.
Dean breathed in deeply. He took comfort in knowing Cas was in the same boat for a few more seconds--and then his Winchester genes kicked in and he started up the car, deciding he’d had enough touchy-feely crap for one day.

Chapter End Notes

P.S. I'm not sure if it's different anywhere else but just in case anyone is confused 'blower' is slang for hair that's been blow dried and usually straightened.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
4.18- The Monster at the End of This Book
6.01- Exile on Main St.
1.04- Phantom Traveler
5.08- Changing Channels
6.18- Frontierland
3.03- Bad Day at Black Rock
Dean woke to an empty bed one morning, snuggling up with a pillow while certain parts of him seemed pretty damn happy to be awake. He groaned and rolled over, burying his face into those stupid flowery sheets while he tried to will away his currently... pressing problem.

Shit.

He could count on one hand the number of times he’d woken up alone since he’d started this unspoken sleeping arrangement with Cas—and in the five and a half weeks they’d been living in this house, that was a grand total of four times, including today.

Fuck.

He figured Cas had probably woken up to Dean 'pitching a tent' and gotten skeeved out. It wasn't like he or Sam had ever taken the time to explain what 'morning wood' was to the guy. Hell, before this hunt he would've avoided any kind of topic like that when it came to the angel.

Now he wasn't so sure.

The hunter waited until his situation died down before getting his ass out of bed and into the first pair of jeans he found. They were the same ones he’d kicked off last night just before knocking out so they were wrinkled to hell and hung kinda loose on his hips. He didn't bother to look for a belt or fix his hair or anything; Dean just stumbled out of the room, barefoot and yawning as he set off on his quest to find Cas.

He wasn't sure what to do with what he’d find but they’d been crossing a lot of lines for this case. For the most part, it was kinda easy to accept all the relationship shit they had to do--he and Cas were good together, not like in a real relationship way, but they were partners; they didn't mind shifting their friendship in a way different direction if it meant saving people.

But Dean had this thing that had been building up in his chest for a while-- kinda like he was waiting for the wrong line to get crossed or the other shoe to drop.

Castiel was in the living room, having a conversation with James, Gabby, and William when a very sleep-mussed Dean trudged in. The sight had him straightening his posture and shooting the other man a tight-lipped smile that made the corner of his eyes crinkle.

“Mornin’,” Dean mumbled, popping down into the empty space next to Cas on the mansion’s swank L-shaped couch. That stupid feeling that'd been bugging him settled when Cas looked genuinely
pleased that he’d decided to show his face. He’d been ready to give the former angel some space but Cas wasn’t the type to hide when something bugged him. Actually, he was the exact opposite—the guy was as subtle as that damned trench coat he used to live in and now Dean felt kinda stupid about worrying over a friggin’ boner.

Castiel’s smile grew and he drew Dean in for a kiss, his hand rubbing along the overgrown scruff along the hunter’s jaw in a mimicry of what Dean often did to him when they kissed. He shook his head when he pulled back. “It’s past noon, Dean. And you haven’t brushed your teeth. If Sam were here he would tell you you’re disgusting.”

Dean looked confused. He pointedly looked around and then turned his smug expression back on Cas. “Well Sam’s not here, is he?”

The former angel rolled his eyes and placed his hand on Dean’s knee while he addressed the people he’d been speaking to. “I apologize on behalf of my lover,” he told them solemnly, “Dean often tries to correct my social etiquette but does nothing to correct his own.”

Dean kept telling Cas that calling him his ‘lover’ out loud was just plain weird but it was like trying to teach poetry to a fish. He let it slide this time and instead focused on how Cas was pretty much telling everyone he was rude. He scoffed but acknowledged that he’d been interrupting and that actually was kinda rude. He cleared his throat. “So, what’s the word?”

The other three contestants didn’t look offended—in fact, they look more amused than anything.

“Castiel was just asking us about our relationship.” Gabby clarified with a smile. She smoothed out the skirt of the bright dress she was wearing and trailed her fingers along her boyfriend’s hand.

Including Cas and Dean, there were seven couples left in the competition and Dean was actually really enjoying watching Cas communicate with people that weren’t the Winchesters. Well, that weren’t the Winchesters and weren’t stuck up angels, and demons, and things that would eventually try to kill them.

It’s just that Cas had always been a weird guy. He was a weird, dorky, little guy, and Dean just kinda assumed he (and Sam, of course) would be the only ones that could really hold a conversation with the dude. Lately, though, he had trouble remembering why he’d ever thought that—’cause Cas was awesome. Hell, according to Sam the former angel had groupies. It shouldn't have been surprising that the other couples warmed up to Cas real quick.

The couple Castiel had been asking about were from Chicago. Their names were James and Gabby,
and Gabby was a trans* woman.

So far Castiel had understood the term transgender with relative ease. He’d seen the word ‘transphobia’ before at the homeless shelter he’d briefly stayed at. It was on a piece of paper stating it and several other forms of violence would not be tolerated but he had not understood what it meant at the time.

He had once told the Winchesters that angels were multidimensional wavelengths of celestial intent and—if the multitude of times Dean had used the term ‘junkless’ as a derogatory term towards him and his former siblings was anything to go by—he assumed they figured angels were essentially genderless until they acquired a vessel. It was more or less true. Sometimes an angel’s true vessels would lean towards one gender more than another and that angel might develop a slight preference towards that gender, but otherwise angels were flexible. (The Winchesters might have even gathered proof of that through Raphael who had appeared to them in vessels of two differing genders in the past.)

It was not that which had Castiel processing the concept, though.

Castiel had been through a lot with his vessel, but it was no longer a vessel to him. Somewhere along his journey with the Winchesters, he’d accepted that this was his form now. That feeling only intensified when he’d begun the process of falling and found that this body was his own, that he was more human than angel—that he was a man of flesh and bone now. He’d never thought of it much before this conversation with Gabby began but she had him realizing that after everything he’d been through, if he were somehow to find himself in a female vessel, he would still be Castiel—not the multidimensional wavelength Castiel, but the person he had become—and it just so happened that the person he had become was deeply rooted in the acceptance that he was now far more male than he was angel.

While he did not believe he could ever empathize with Gabby—she had been through a different journey than he had, experienced things he had never experienced—he felt as if he understood what she’d told him. There was just one thing he had yet to fully grasp. “I’m having trouble understanding the nature of your relationship—everyone here is in a homosexual relationship, but you are a woman in a relationship with a man. Would that not make your relationship a heterosexual one?” His brow furrowed in concentration.

James grimaced. “Not everyone sees it that way, so we decided if we were ever gonna take a chance on the show, now would be the time.”

Gaby was kind and looked like she actually liked Cas. She got that his questions were born from confusion and an actual desire to understand instead of bigotry or insult. “Most trans* people phrase their sexual orientation based on their gender identity, though that’s not always the case. Like, there are a few trans* men that are involved with lesbian communities, and identify as lesbian despite their male identity just like some lesbians become sexually or romantically involved with trans* men. Some gay men do the same with trans* women, where both groups typically wouldn’t date members of the opposite sex.” She linked her fingers with James and smiled up at her partner. “James and I are pretty flexible. He’s pansexual, and I guess I’m more polysexual than anything else. While we like to emphasize that, because I am a woman and he is a man our relationship is heterosexual in nature, at the end of the day we’re both still queer and still belong within the queer community.”
James nodded. "Plus, it's not as if our sexualities change depending on the gender of the person we're dating. I mean," He indicated towards the two of them. "If one of you were to find yourselves in a relationship with a woman, you'd still identify as bi, right?"

Castiel cocked his head to the side as he processed that information and he found himself nodding. "Yes. My attraction to men differs from my attraction women. I would imagine my attraction to other men would not change should I date a woman, similarly to how being with Dean does not diminish how I view women I might be attracted to now."

There was a reason Dean corrected Cas’s ‘social etiquette’ all the time. He did it so Cas wouldn't offend anyone--save the guy from an unintentional bar fight or a shitty comment.

Sexuality, gender, all that kind of stuff were real sensitive topics that not everyone was comfortable talking about--he knew from experience--so he’d been holding his breath when Cas brought the topic up. That being said, he’d learned early on it was easier to keep his mouth shut than to go around asking questions so everything he knew about the whole ‘LGBT’ thing or whatever were personal observations he’d made over the years. Now he was kinda glad Cas chose to go ahead and start asking questions about stuff he wouldn't have been able to answer otherwise.

He was a little surprised that Cas had something to offer there. Something about his answer really resonated inside Dean but he didn't really want to think about that right now, much less talk about it. There was one thing he didn't really understand, though.

Dean hesitated for a moment. “Cas comes from a pretty sheltered family, and I didn't have the most… colorful upbringing,” he briefly imagined his dad driving the impala down a rainbow colored highway and yeah, no--not really colorful at all. “so we’re not all that familiar with the whole… pansexual thing.” He almost winced, hoping he hadn’t just shoved his foot in his mouth.

Castiel was almost proud of Dean for not making the joke about being sexually attracted to pans he’d most likely considered at one point. He nodded thoughtfully. “Well the prefix ‘poly’ comes from the Greek word ‘poly’ meaning ‘many’ or ‘several’ so--understanding now that there are more than two genders--I would assume if it is anything like ‘bisexual,’ it is the implication that a person is attracted to multiple genders. The prefix ‘pan’ mostly likely refers to the Ancient Greek term meaning ‘all’ or ‘every,’ which would imply ‘pansexuality’ is grander than ‘polysexuality’ in the sense that--linguistically speaking--a person who is polysexual would be attracted to multiple genders but not necessarily all of them, while a person who is pansexual would not limit their attraction based on gender.”

He tilted his head to the side and smiled, oblivious to the odd looks he was receiving from his companions. “The Ancient Greek would most likely pride themselves to know their language is being used for such terms--they were very free spirited towards sexual orientation.” He added, knowingly.

Dean blinked at his pretend boyfriend then looked towards the equally dumbfounded trio opposite
them. “Does anyone wanna narrow that down in English, please?”

William, who’d been quietly content with just observing the conversation thus far, let out a low whistle. “You really weren’t kidding when you said the guy was a scholar. He got all of that from just linguistics?”

Cas looked confused as to why his false academic backstory was playing any part in this but James took pity and decided to cut in, answering Dean’s question. “It means I dig guys, girls, and anything in between or outside of the gender spectrum while Gabby digs other genders but not really all of them like I do.” He simplified.

“I’m more selective.” Gabby teased.

Dave, William’s partner, came in then brandishing a platter of mini quiches. “Anyone hungry?”

Dave and William were an interracial couple from Philadelphia. Dave was a chef and Dean was more than happy to take advantage of the fact the guy seemed to appreciate people like him who ‘ate with gusto.’

While Dean plucked a few of the quiches off the plate, Dave took in his disheveled appearance. He sat back on the couch, placing an arm around his boyfriend’s shoulders as he raised an eyebrow at the hunter. “Rough night?” He asked with a suggestive glance between Dean and Cas.

Dean flushed at the thought, shoving one of the snacks in his mouth to avoid acknowledging anything.

The implication flew right past the former angel’s head. Instead, he was more focused on the mini quiche he’d taken. “What is this?” he asked. “It looks like a tiny salty pie.”

Dean almost choked on his mouthful of quiche. He forced himself to swallow and coughed. “Sheltered family--told you.”

The others laughed and explained to him what a quiche was.

A little while later, Dean started excusing himself to go take a shower. He stood up and pressed a kiss against Cas’s lips, murmuring a ‘You good here without me?’ He’d been trying to be sappy but
Cas just answered with a perplexed ‘Yes,’ clearly not understanding why he’d even ask. It made Dean grin.

That same evening found most of the contestants in sweatpants and pajama bottoms. They’d all been told to meet up at the entrance under the wedding ring chandelier. Cas and Dean were the last ones to get there—and the only ones still in jeans.

They’d arrived in time to find everyone surrounding Jeremy just as Liz came through the front door accompanied by some guy with a cane. She shook out her huge umbrella and turned to face the small crowd.

When Liz showed up, it usually meant she had something important to say but before she could start on why they’d been called down for a friggin’ slumber party at six in the afternoon, she ended up singling out Dean and Castiel immediately. One look at the two of them and she was narrowing her eyes. “We said comfortable.”

“What?” Dean looked down at his outfit. “This is comfortable.”

Liz sighed. She gave Jeremy a look that said ‘fix this before I rip out my frizzy brown hair and force feed it to these morons’ and pushed on with her itinerary. “Due to the unforeseen weather complications, we've had to shift around our schedule.” She sounded personally offended by the stormy weather they’d been having all week. “We had two challenges lined up for this week that were based outdoors. Obviously those are off the menu for now but seeing as we have a rigid schedule to maintain, we've brought our head writer to come fix this mess.”

The guy with the cane introduced himself as Mark Freely, the head writer.

“We’ll have a legitimate challenge on hand for tomorrow that’s do-able rain or shine—tonight, though, we’re going to have to improvise.” His cane clicked across the marble as he got a good look at them. “The game’s as simple as ‘simple’ can be: Never Have I Ever. I’m sure we’ve all played it at some point in or another, and rain does bring out the nostalgia in us, doesn’t it?” He smirked. “Of course, you can’t be officially scored for this but it’s a chance for our viewers to get to know you.”

“The network doesn't obligate you to drink—and if you don’t feel comfortable doing so you can switch out your drinks for something non-alcoholic—but we do require you to play the game for at least thirty minutes.” Liz added. She handed a couple of papers to Jeremy. “We’d like to make it look as if you've all decided to do this on your own—sort of a ‘bonding experience,’ if you will. There will only one camera man on hand for just the first hour. While we set up a few extra still-cams around the house, Mr.Freely has graciously volunteered to meet with you and answer any questions you might have.”

Liz excused herself to go instruct the rest of the crew where to set up the cameras. Jeremy wrote off some stuff on the papers she’d given him and then pulled aside Cas and Dean. He sighed. “Is it so
hard for you to follow instructions?” And Dean looked pretty damn pleased with himself at that but
Jeremy already knew better than to acknowledge the hunter’s quirks. “Go change into some
sleepwear before we start rolling.”

Castiel glanced over at the group that was crowding around the show’s writer, noting the
comfortable clothes they all wore. “Dean and I sleep in our underwear--I do not believe that would
be appropriate.”

Jeremy raised an eyebrow at him. “While that would probably boost up our ratings, I was thinking
more along the line of pants--one’s that aren’t made of denim.”

“We don’t have any like that, man.” Dean scoffed. He was pretty sure he’d never owned pajama
pants in his entire life.

The producer looked like he kinda wanted to strangle them but settled for sending off one of the PAs
to find some PJs that would actually fit.

They milled around the area, waiting for the new addition to their ever expanding wardrobe when
the writer guy approached them. Dean was just amazed he managed to shake Chris and Danny,
they’d been hounding him like he was their golden ticket into Wonka’s factory.

“Ah, just who I was looking for.” Mark smiled at the two of them.

“Mr.Freely.” Castiel greeted, politely.

“Please, call me Mark.”

“Mark.” The former angel conceded. He quirked his head, as if he could hear something the others
couldn't. “I recognize your voice from somewhere.”

“I was the one who ran your questions for the premier.” The man explained. “I’m not around much
throughout the filming process, but I like knowing who I’m writing for so I pop in from time to
time.”
Dean nodded. “Sounds good. Hey, how does someone even write for reality television?”

Mark chuckled at his bluntness. “It’s not the same as writing for a series with characters. You guys get to do what you want and say what you want; I just do my best to nudge you in the most entertaining direction.”

The guy was alright, he didn’t give off any creep vibes but Dean still wanted to tell him to shove that ‘entertainment’ up his ass just on principle. The PA showed up then and the writer took it as his cue to leave.

The hunter ended up having to wear some red flannel pants that weren't that bad despite the fact they were marketed toward chicks and had one of those stupid pockets that were too small to be useful. The feminine cut felt kinda weird on his bowlegs, loose on his hips but a little tighter around his thighs, and definitely not enough room in the crotch area than a pair of dude PJs would've been.

He wouldn't have minded at all but they’d managed to score Cas some almost entirely plain baggy grey sweatpants that had CAPTAIN AMERICA along the side and he thought it was entirely unfair that Cas got the cool superhero stuff while he had to walk around in chick pants.

The first thing they found when they walked into the rec room, where this thing was supposed to go down, was Tori walking around with a platter of shooters and offering them up like they were pigs-in-a-blanket. “Kamikaze? If we’re gonna have a rainy day, we might as well drink up.” She winked specifically at Cas.

Jenn and Tori were a couple from California who loved to party. Tori had a whole sleeve of tattoos up one of her arms, which Dean would have found hot as hell if he wasn't focused on looking like his world revolved around a scruffy former angel with perpetual bedhead. Her partner Jenn had that whole shave-a-fraction-of-your-head Skrillex thing going on, only it actually looked good on them.

The two seemed kind of wild most of the time but Jenn was a nurse and Tori was like a librarian or worked in a bookstore. (Dean couldn't remember which, he just remembered the dozens of lezbrarian jokes that had flitted across his head when she mentioned it.) They both really loved to mess around with Cas since he seemed like the picture of innocence compared to his hunter counterpart.

Dean accepted one of the tall shot glasses and swiped one for Cas too.

Castiel grabbed Dean’s elbow and leaned closer to whisper in his ear. “Should we be drinking on a hunt?” He’d asked similar of Dean the time they had been hunting a cupids bow, observing the bartender Dwight Charles from Houston and the man Heaven had deigned he should be with, and at the time the hunter had responded with a ‘What show have you been watching?’

He knew Dean could handle dark liquor and beer as if they were vitamins but all of the contestants
seemed on board with the idea of drinking to excess. What made him question it again was the reminder that since becoming human Castiel's tolerance had grown very very low.

After the last couple got ganked, the two of them had been a little more careful when it came to enjoying themselves. They’d been tip-toeing around that ease they’d developed in the first four weeks and Dean kinda missed it.

“It’s a free-day, Cas.” He downed his kamikaze shooter and let his system adjust to the quick intake of white liquor instead of his usual hunter’s helper. Not a second later he was pressing a big kiss on Cas’s lips and pulling back with a grin. “Live a little.”

As much as the former angel wanted to appear exasperated, he couldn't hide his amusement. He accepted the unfamiliar tall shot glass and mimicked Dean, ingesting it all in one go.

It wasn't long until all of the contestants found themselves a little buzzed and gathered around the black poker table for their game of *Never Have I Ever*.

“So what is the purpose of this game again?” Castiel inquired.

“Someone says something they’ve never done before, and anyone who has done that specific thing takes a drink. Game goes clockwise and I think the person with the fullest cup wins but you usually just play until you’re drunk.” Dean explained. He was pretty damn well versed in this game, well versed enough to know he always lost.

“I still can’t believe you've never played this.” Danny shook his head.

“How about you start us off, Cas, since it’s your first time playing.” Lucy suggested in her sweet Georgian twang.

Castiel tilted his head to the side. “Yes, well. I have never… played this game before.”

The group let out a collective groan and everyone took a drink.

Dean chuckled and sipped from his cup. Yeah, Cas was gonna win this thing. He ran a hand along his own flannel covered thigh and took his turn. “Never have I ever worn legit pajamas before tonight.”
Everyone except him and Cas drank, and on it went—turns circling over and over. Dean was losing, of course. He'd done most of the stuff mentioned: road-tripped across more than three state lines, slept under the stars, spent the night in a car, picked up a stranger at a bar, hitchhiked, picked up a hitchhiker, gone hunting, started a fire, slept with a member of the opposite sex—hell, he'd crossed most of that stuff off his list by the time he was sixteen. Cas had experienced several of those things before because of Dean but he still had the fullest cup so far, not counting the couple that decided to forfeit as soon as their obligated thirty minutes were up.

Still 'Never Have I Ever' had the tendency of getting real dirty real quick and soon enough the game took a turn towards TMI-ville.

Most of the contestants seemed unimpressed whenever their partners took a drink—something that seemed to apply to Chris and Danny, and Jenn and Tori especially—so it was easy enough to spot the glances between Cas and Dean when Dean would take a drink (which was often) and Cas would look at him curiously, or when Cas would drink at something (like stripping in public—something he did in the laundromat shortly after falling) and Dean would look astounded because when the fuck did Cas do that. It was different from how Steph and Clara, the Cuban couple they'd grown to like, acted when one of them would take a drink about something the other obviously hadn't been in on.

"Never have I ever had a one night stand." Lucy announced.

Most of the people still in the game circle would take a drink, including Steph. Clara seemed particularly unhappy about that one, but it didn't look like it wasn't something she hadn't already known—more like old unwanted dirt being kicked up.

Dean had snorted and taken a healthy gulp from his cup. Cas scooted closer to him and tentatively asked Dean if his brief stint with April counted as a one night stand. He almost chuckled. "Yeah, Cas, that counts."

Castiel looked ridiculously pleased that he could take a drink, despite knowing the point of winning was to take less drinks.

"I've never been in a threesome," Steph would say. Dean drank, Chris and Danny drank, Jenn and Tori drank, and Clara drank while Steph side-eyed her, looking surprised and a little pissed.

"Never have I ever had sex with a porn star." Gabby mused, probably intending it as a joke to ease the sudden tension 'cause everyone seemed surprised when the only one that drank was Dean. They
all zoomed in on him with expectant faces.

"Seriously?" Dean groaned. He really didn't wanna tell that story but they'd made it a rule that if only one person drank they either explained themselves or had to swallow down another kamikaze shooter. So far he'd downed like four of them since they started the game and if his tolerance wasn't so high he'd probably be twice as drunk as anyone here. As it was, he was a little tipsier than he usually was when he drank. He swept a palm down his face and silently prayed Suzy Lee would never see this. "Casa Erotica: Cabana Nights."

"You slept with 'Carmelita?" James looked a little star struck.

Dean rubbed the back of his neck. "Yeah, she's really nice. Unlike Cas's brother, who's a huge dick. He was in Casa Erotica 13--but I sure as hell never slept with him."

"And possibly 14, I am still not entirely sure." Castiel added, assisting Dean in shifting the unwanted attention away from the hunter's former lover. He ignored the questioning look from Dean considering he hadn't mentioned that Gabriel might still be alive.

Ellie seemed to notice their discomfort and moved along the game by taking her turn.

Everything went pretty smoothly after that until a couple rounds later when one of the lesbians decided to get a little cheeky and blurt out 'Never have I ever had anything up my backdoor' which made everyone laugh. At least half the table drank. (That included Clara which didn't seem to do her any favors with her girlfriend.)

Dean had sipped reflexively. He'd sort of let his filter die halfway through the game and just drank when drinking was due--that is, whenever he honestly had to.

Cas chose that moment to lean in to ask if the bunker had a 'backdoor,' clearly not getting that it was a euphemism for anal-play.

The hunter spit out the mouthful of booze when he realized he'd pretty much just confessed to butt stuff on TV, momentarily forgetting that--hey, everyone already thought he was doing that since he and Cas were a couple now. It took a panicked second to realize his mistake and he covered up his shock by coughing as Cas tried helpfully patting his back, thinking he was legitimately choking.

Which really only ended up drawing attention to the fact that he drank and Cas didn't.

Oh god.

He could already see the 'Dean is the bottom, it's canon' stuff that would undoubtedly pop up on those websites Sam liked to tease him with. It wasn't like it actually bugged him that people thought that, he wouldn't really be ashamed or anything, but it felt like something... personal. Which was
stupid considering some of the other shit Dean casually spilled tonight; stuff that was much more graphic than this admission.

"Alright, I'm out." Dean drained the last of his cup and flipped it upside down. He was pretty glad most of the contestants probably assumed he was drunk as hell because it would explain the residual flush he had staining his cheeks. He pressed his lips briefly to Cas's temple and went to sit on the rec room's couch.

Castiel joined him not long after. It seemed everyone had finally called it quits and Cas was unanimously named champion, just in time for the lights to go out because of the thunder storm.

There was minor pandemonium, the drunken mix of excitement and panic had Dean and Cas on edge until Jeremy came in and told them the backup generators would be up momentarily. Even after the lights were back on and the rest of the contestants were laughing and mingling, they were still on their guard--well as on guard as they could be while a certain lightly intoxicated former angel was glued against the hunter's side, his hand slipping into that otherwise useless pocket at Dean's hip.

Most of the couples dispersed to their own rooms, turning in for the night. A few decided to remain and Cas and Dean stayed, just to be on the safe side.

Dean sighed. "I feel like I'm on Jersey Shore." Which made sense considering how much in common he had with Snooki, them both having been to hell and all. He took a sip from his drink and stretched his neck. He could see Cas talking to some of the other contestants at the bar.

Some of them had gotten it in their heads to start doing body shots and they'd been trying to explain the concept to the former angel--or rather they were trying to rope him into participating. Castiel refused, insisting that it was unsanitary.

When that didn't work Tori pulled him aside and tried to get him to dance. It wasn't like dirty grinding or anything: Tori was Brazilian and it looked like she was trying to teach Cas how to samba, of all things.

Dean saw her grab at his waist and tell him to put his hips into it. For a second the hunter frowned, not happy that she was trying to force him into something... and touching him and stuff. He hadn't forgotten that the last time some girl got grabby with Cas, he'd ended up with an angel blade through
his chest after she was done having her merry way with him.

But then he caught Cas's panicked expression—blue eyes locked on his and Cas visibly gulped, pleading to be saved from whatever Tori had in store for him—and Dean's displeasure melted into amusement. He let out a loud laugh and called out to him. "You go baby, kick it in the ass!"

Clara had caught the fondness on Dean's face as he watched Cas fumble along with the other girls. "It's kinda gross how much you love him," she teased.

Dean barely hid his surprise at her comment. He hadn't been trying look especially involved, romantically speaking. He'd just been watching Cas being Cas and it was almost unsettling that she got love from that. He pushed that thought down and forced a smile. "Yeah, well I can't be the only one on that boat, can I?" He nodded towards where Steph was leaning against Ellie and laughing at something Chris and Danny were telling them.

The redhead glanced in her partner's direction. Her smile looked a little sad. "That's true. Pero, I don't think our love is the same as yours." She sipped from her own cup and they both sat in companionable silence until Steph, Tori and Jenn came back, pushing a drunken Cas into Dean's lap.

"Woah, there, Baby. Cas, man, your thunder-thighs are heavy as shit." Dean let out a huff. At Cas's worried look Dean chuckled, arms reflexively wrapping around the lapful of blue-eyed man over him. He smoothed some of Cas's messy dark hair up, away from his forehead. "You good?"

Castiel smiled, leaning into the gesture. "Yes, Dean. I am very fine now."

"You bet your ass you're fine," Tori sang with a wink.

"So Dean, how about you tell us about your tattoo? We got a sneak peek at it during the zip-line fiasco last week, and we were wondering if you were part of some freaky cult." Steph mused, plopping down by Clara and stretching her legs over her girlfriend's lap.

Dean rolled his eyes. He shifted beneath Cas, leaning away to give the others a better look as he pulled the collar of his Grateful Dead tee to expose the anti-possession symbol inked below his collarbone. "Got it when I was twenty-seven or twenty-eight; heard pentagrams or five-point stars or whatever were supposed to symbolize something good. Not evil. Not satanic. Just added some flamey sun styling to look cool," he lied seamlessly.

It was much better than explaining he'd hightailed it to the nearest tattoo parlor with his brother after
a demon bitch possessed him. (Well, at the time she was just a demon bitch, but he knew Meg ended up being the only decent demon he'd ever met, and wasn't that just all kinds of fucked up.)

The hunter took a moment to lean into the man sitting on his lap, brushing his lips against Cas's long neck as he questioningly murmured if he could show them his.

Castiel nodded his consent and Dean backed away from his immediate space only to slide a hand beneath his shirt. He let that hand smooth against the former angels chest, moving upwards as he exposed the Enochian warding tattoo across his ribs.

"I like Cas's better," Dean explained, just barely brushing his fingertips against the inked sigils. "It's some kind of dead language--religious scholar stuff--but it has meaning."

Tori nodded thoughtfully, her own hand unconsciously running up the sleeve of tattoos she had on her other arm.

They talked about tattoos for a while, a conversation that involved Steph taking off most of her shirt to show them the huge tattoo of the cycles of the moon on her back and Clara exposed one side of her ass to show them the tattoo on her thigh of a Cuban coffee maker with a flower, which she lovingly referred to as her 'cafeterita.'

While the conversations shifted, the former angel leaned closer to Dean with one of his serious expressions. "Dean. I have a confession." He took a deep breath, as if steeling himself. "I had once told Sam that I found his voice grating, but I had not anticipated his snoring... it is ungodly." Castiel sighed heavily, as if it was a huge weight off his chest and thoughtfully added: "We should invest in our own motel room on hunts."

"Sure, Cas, but we'd have to get the farthest room to escape that noise." Dean chuckled. "Trust me."

"I do." Castiel told him without guile.

The other contestants eventually gave him and Cas some space. He didn't know how they went from Cas scratching his nails through the short hairs at the back of Dean's head, right along his neck, to kissing.

They were kissing and it wasn't like any of the other times they'd kissed. It might have started out as soft pecks, mouths moving against each other, reminiscent of what they'd been been doing that first time before Sam interrupted... but it felt different. Then Dean pulled back, just barely to breathe, and
the feel of warm breath against his lips had Castiel chasing the feeling with his tongue. He hadn't meant to brush it against Dean's mouth.

The touch had Dean opening with a sharp gasp. They both seemed to hesitate, and suddenly they were mashed together again--Dean licking into Cas's mouth as Cas held his hands to Dean's chest, pushing him against the couch while he shifted in the other man's lap. Cas was straddling him now. Cas was straddling him and Dean was pulling him in closer.

Castiel ground his hips against the hunter experimentally, instinctively.

Dean let out a surprised groan. As much as it killed him to tear away, he pulled back, panting a little as he did so. "Cas. Cameras. Watching. We shouldn--"

There was a reason why humans had that metaphor--the one about having a bucket of ice thrown over you. Castiel understood that now, because the moment Dean mentioned the word camera Cas had frozen. Cameras. Of course. Because they were on a television show. He leaned away, blinking at the sight of the flushed hunter with his swollen lips. He did that. He put that look on Dean's face, and it only intensified the buzz that had formed low in his gut. They'd never done anything like that before, they'd never even kissed using tongue before, but now Castiel was extremely aware of his highly inappropriate erection pressed against the other man. He shifted backwards, limiting the areas they were touching. He interrupted Dean. "We should go to bed--to sleep, I mean," he added, hastily. "There's another challenge tomorrow and we're intoxicated," he muttered.

Dean didn't know what he'd been going to suggest before Cas cut in--all Dean knew was that he was confused and aroused and confused. He swallowed past the lump in his throat and nodded, letting Cas peel himself off his lap. Right. They had a challenge tomorrow and they wouldn't do anyone any good if they were tired and hungover and frustrated over some drunken mistake. 'Cause that's what it would be if they kept on like this. Cas held his hand out to help Dean up, he accepted it and held on--because that was safe, they could still do that and easily sweep it under the rug after this whole Happily Ever After thing was done.

They left the others with a hasty wave and dragged themselves to their room.

Castiel wrapped himself in the floral comforter and fell right to sleep, letting his drunken exhaustion get the best of him.

Dean ripped off the stupid chick pants with a vengeance. He fell onto his side of the bed, punching a pillow before settling and turning his back to Cas. They had more important things to worry about than whatever it was they'd gotten into at the rec room.
I was a little worried I might be shooting myself in the foot with some of this--side note: I'm not an expert on anything trans* and the stuff I've written doesn't apply to everyone--but it felt wrong to have so much plot based on the LGBTQ+ community and not have any representation of the T in there, plus I figured a show like this would make an effort towards having diversity among its contestants. (Also, all the sexual-orientation stuff doesn't apply to all of the sexualities mentioned either, I was mostly just basing it on myself and the stuff I already knew so I wanna apologize in advance if it offends anyone or if anyone else in the queer community feels left out--the LGBTQ+ stuff is part of the plot but it's really not the focus of the story, so as much as I'd love to include everyone out there, I wouldn't be able to without steering away from the intended focus I mapped out for the rest of the fic.)

If you have anymore questions consider checking out these resources:
http://www.glaad.org/transgender/trans101
http://rainbowgenderpunk.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/stuff-pansexuals-need-to-know/
(While a bit unorthodox, this may be one of the best resources about pansexuality I've found while scouring the internet as many more "legitimized" resources have some skewed and contradictory information that is not entirely accurate. Warning: might come off as a little aggressive to some due to language and uses a lot of terminology.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAJ5J21Rd0 (TEDx Talk "Fifty shades of Gay" by iO Tillet Wright about LGBTQ+ across America)

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
9.22- Stairway to Heaven
9.03- I'm No Angel
6.15- The French Mistake
6.03- The Third Man
8.23- Sacrifice
9.01- I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here
9.08- Rock and a Hard Place
5.19- Hammer of the Gods
9.18- Meta Fiction
9.16- Blade Runners
2.14- Born Under a Bad Sign
5.17- 99 Problems

Plus an ep that wasn't actually written out in specifics but tipsy Cas's slight flirtatiousness in 9.09- Holy Terror is definitely alluded to here.
It wasn't surprising that the next morning they'd shifted from their respective sides, meeting in the middle some time throughout the night.

Cuddling wasn't something they talked about. Dean didn't even like to think about it if he could help himself. Not because it was weird or felt wrong or anything--he just refused to admit he totally enjoyed participating in the act until they found a manlier way to describe whatever the hell this thing was they were doing. He might've indulged in the act every now and then but 'Professional Cuddling' had never been one of the special skills on his personal resume before this dumb case.

Then again, neither had 'acting on camera' but he was damn near ready to receive his Soap Opera Digest Award any day now.

Although the hunter may have been the one who initiated the unspoken ritual sometime throughout their first night night here, that first time they’d slept together in the same bed, he was by no means the only one that benefited from it.

Castiel sought out the warmth, maybe even more than Dean did. He knew Dean assumed it had something to do with the whole climate-control issues he’d developed since the fall and that wasn't too far off from the truth.

The former angel didn't do well when it came to feeling too hot or too cold; he’d go to sleep in boxer briefs and worn t-shirts, which was as bare as he thought was still appropriate while still sharing a space with his friend, but as soon as his temperature would start to drop he’d blindly seek heat. Usually when they were off on a case, Castiel would wake up tangled in questionable motel room comforters against the Winchester’s repeated warnings that they were probably littered with bed bugs and less than hygenic mystery stains. The comforter he and Dean shared now was adequate enough to sate his need but while he was asleep he'd just latch on to the most potent source of heat--which normally meant Dean.

Usually Dean was the ‘big spoon,’ waking up with more limbs around Cas than he’d thought possible; other times he’d find the former angel curled over him.

At first it was just an arm, loosely wrapped around his middle--lately, he’d been growing more confident while he picked up on Dean’s habits: like the way he’d slip his leg between his, just as Dean normally did to him.

That was how they were this morning: their hands held on Dean’s chest, Cas’s face pressed into the crook of his neck so that his breath was warm and steady over the exposed skin, and that leg that was
between his meant they were slotted together hip to hip—or rather ass to crotch.

Dean wasn't used to waking up with someone, especially like this. He’d probably never be used to it, and that was fine because this was just temporary. On those days when he was surrounded by Cas, he’d tense for a few moments before remembering the arms that were locked around his waist weren't holding him captive or threatening bodily harm and he’d pleasantly ease into the feeling.

This time when he went lax, trying to drag out their sleepy limbo—that little bubble of relaxation they both reveled in before it was time to get up and do whatever game show shit was lined up for the day—he felt a different sort of pressure against his ass.

Tentatively, he wiggled and the arm around him flexed in response, drawing him closer while at the same time he could hear Cas’s rhythmic breathing stutter against his ear.

Yup, that was an angelic boner on his butt—and those Captain America sweatpants Cas had passed out in last night were doing nothing to hide the hard length that brushed against his cotton clad cheeks.

Well... it looked like he didn't have to explain morning wood to Cas after all.

Dean squirmed again, but this time he was inching away from Cas, trying to save them both from a really embarrassing situation. "Um, Cas? Cas. Wake up.”

“No.” Castiel groaned. He held Dean tighter, preventing him from getting too far as he let out long 'hmmm' and buried his face in the dark blonde hair. “Please stop moving.”

“Dude. You have a boner.” The hunter emphasized, in case Cas didn't get that that was his dick that had been pressing up against Dean. Still, he was no longer trying to distance himself from the angel.

“I am aware,” Castiel grumbled sluggishly.

“Cas… Friends don’t usually rub their boners all over each other.” Dean stated, dumbly. He could practically feel Cas’s eye roll in response.

The former angel let out an exasperated sigh. “I would beg to differ considering the erection you prodded me with yesterday--and for the record I was not ‘rubbing’ it on you, you were the one moving against me.” He mumbled.

Dean balked at the image. So he actually had been poking at Cas with his dick the previous morning. He didn't even know how to process that bit of info. He especially didn't know how to process that Cas had apparently been totally cool with it--hadn't even hinted at it all day.
Castiel yawned, snuggling closer but taking care not to move his pelvis or purposefully press his erection on the other man. “Either it will go away or I will take care of it later,” he murmured into Dean’s hair. “Can we go back to sleep now?”

Dean hadn’t known Cas actively got boners, let alone that the guy knew how to jerk off. His head felt like it spun a little, momentarily trying to wrap his mind around where the hell he’d even picked that habit up before realizing—nope, should not be thinking about his friend masturbating, especially when said friend's boner was basically touching him right now.

It took a long minute to get past the idea but eventually the hunter grew comfortable and just rolled with it (metaphorically speaking). He tried his best not to think about the hot rod at his hip or the image of Cas 'taking care' of things later opting to stare at the white popcorn ceiling instead. Absentmindedly, he’d started smoothing the palm of his hand over the other man's arm in a slow repetitive motion where it rested over his abdomen.

Castiel had never wanted to cause Dean discomfort, just as yesterday he’d avoided pressing his erection against the other man for the same reason.

This was different from that. His erection yesterday was born from drunken hunger--inappropriate lust towards a friend who trusted him not to feel those things despite the nature of their intimacy as of late.

This time it was some biological factor he couldn't help and he wasn't planning on acting on whatever desires certain parts of him seemed to be conjuring.

With that in mind it was easy to ignore the sexual aspect in favor of squeezing out those last few minutes of comfort and safety that he found best between sleeping and waking--it was one of the moments he’d loved most about humanity despite how ‘grumbly’ Dean claimed he was in the mornings.

He was somewhat careful not to overstep his boundaries, though--hence why he’d told Dean to stop wiggling against his erection as soon as he was aware exactly why there'd been a sudden burst of pleasure cutting through his haze.

Castiel may have been half-asleep but had he noted any immediate distress coming from the man at his side, he would have let Dean go.

The hunter liked to point out that he was oblivious when it came to picking up on human emotion most of the time. It was something that had become both a running gag and a point of frustration for Dean--but he was the exception. When it came to determining Dean’s sentiments Castiel was so attuned to them he was almost better at knowing what the other man was feeling than he was at determining his own unsettling flux of emotions.

As it was, all he'd gotten from Dean was that 'mild awkwardness' that meant he'd committed some
faux pas but not something the hunter saw as a major transgression against his person; and at that point, Castiel would not have been willing to let him leave the safe haven of their bed for anything less.

When he'd first become human, the former angel truly hadn't understood why there were days when he would awaken to the sight of him sporting an erection. He’d worried that it was something that required medical attention but the thought of having a malfunctioning penis was mortifying.

There was a moment he thought he was so horrible at being human that even his sex organs were above his control. (He'd actually imagined explaining his affliction to Dean and had grown horrified at the thought.)

It had been the final push he needed to convince himself that these morning erections were probably one of those odd human things he hadn't been fully aware of, if only out of embarrassments sake.

The occurrences had become more frequent since he'd begun sharing a bed with Dean—something he wrote off as his body reacting to the heat and proximity of another—but more often than not his erections would effectively calm by the time they got out of bed. He had believed the same would happen today—until Dean began trailing his hand across his arm, the touch causing his hair to stand on end and his skin to pimple up like gooseflesh.

Although Dean had keen senses any other time—something that was a key part of why he was such a great hunter—Castiel had noticed that when he was lulled into a state where his defenses were lowered, he fell into these unconscious little habits. They were thoughtless motions that almost seemed restless, like an urge to remain in constant movement, but more often than not they came in the form of soothing touch.

The problem was that the caress over his heightened sensitivity only served in fueling his arousal.

By the time Castiel was fully awake, his arousal hadn't dimmed. The warmth at the base of his gut had actually grown and his erection was becoming a little uncomfortable. He sighed and dragged himself out of bed, (and away from Dean) escaping to the privacy of the bathroom.

Dean kinda failed at trying not to think of what Cas was possibly doing in the shower.

It was like that thing where they tell you not to think of a pink elephant, but then all you'd picture were pink elephants.

It didn't help that when Cas came out of the steaming shower all he had on were his undone jeans with his grey boxer briefs peeking through the opening. He was still shrugging on his white cotton dress shirt, hair wet and a dusky pink flush spread over his bare chest that matched the tint across his cheeks. Combined with the still-there scruff, it was easy to tell that the extra time he'd spent in the bathroom wasn't wasted on shaving.
Actually, it couldn't have been more obvious that the former angel had really 'taken matters into his own hands' when he got rid of that holy-boner.

Cas seemed to be speaking but Dean was spacing out, staring at the light blush staining the damp skin. He'd never noticed the little freckle Cas had just above his right nipple. It was kind of cute—objectively speaking.

The former angel zipped his jeans and started doing up each button slowly, with focused care (like he did pretty much everything, really) and Dean was honed in on the movement until Cas called his name.

"Dean? Did you hear what I said?" Castiel paused mid-button and was looking at him with a worried expression.

"Hmm? No, sorry." Dean licked his lips, looking up at Cas's face head on for the first time since he stepped out of the shower.

"I wanted to know if you’d like to have brunch with Sam before the challenge?" Castiel repeated.

“Uh. Yeah, that sounds awesome.” Dean responded distractedly. He sat up, straightening his posture as he bunched the comforter above his lap. “How about you go find Jeremy or something to check what time we have to be back by?"

Castiel still looked concerned but he nodded and finished getting dressed, leaving a few buttons undone the way Dean had once told him to. He left the other man in bed as he hunted down someone who would give him the details they’d need for today.

Dean let out a long, relieved huff as soon as the former angel was gone. He cupped his half hard cock through his underwear and groaned, pressing down at the base to try and kill his boner before it could fully form. He wasn't a damn teenager anymore--he knew it wasn't right to jerk off to the image of people you knew and weren't involved with, and dammit he wasn't going to start that shit now.

He was also too fucking old to freak out over finding someone sexually attractive so he wasn't going to do that either. Dean had already done enough of that throughout the first half of his life, especially when he'd been trying to cope with the occasional attraction to other guys. He was way past that phase.

Now he was an adult that did adult things like stop apocalypses and pay for gas.
So he was gonna do the adult thing and just shove those damn thoughts down where they came from and not acknowledge them--ever.

Plus, it wasn't like he was hot for Cas.

Aesthetically speaking, Cas would be one of those guys Dean would find good-looking in more than a 'yeah, dude's okay looking' kinda way. Although he swung more towards chicks, when he saw a dude he was attracted to, he'd take notice and he may have noticed that Cas (or Cas's vessel or whatever) was pretty attractive a couple of times before in the past--but Cas had been junkless then.

He'd been this overwhelming being who was above the Winchesters and all their stupid human stuff.

Dean just thought his dick was reacting to the hazy comfort he'd been enjoying, the knowledge that someone else had been aroused near him, and the fact that Cas was attractive and warm and human now when it had no right to do that--when Dean had no right to do that.

The hunter trudged into the shower. The air was still humid with the clean smell of the soap Cas favored and a few suds were still lingering on one side of the spacious bathtub neither of them were probably ever gonna use. He turned shower knob on hot, shucking off his boxer briefs and his t-shirt before stepping under the warm spray. He ran his fingers through the darkened strands, tilting his face up while the water cascaded down his shoulders and chest.

The water pressure here was just as good as it was at the bunker and it usually did wonders for the tension knotted along his back but it just wasn't hitting the spot today. He was too tense, trying to ignore the urge to tend to the annoyingly hard member between his legs when his friend's presence was still heavy in his mind.

Cas had been in here earlier, he'd been touching himself, he'd been naked and wet, like how Dean was now--but he wasn't gonna think about that.

He finished his shower faster than he usually did, towel drying off quickly and shoving on some button up jeans and a dark red tee. He swiped the condensation away from the mirror with a squeak and stared at himself. He was picturing dead puppies and his brother having sex with Ruby to kill the last of his boner (because God knows that always did the trick) as he brushed his teeth.

Dean rinsed, wiped his hands and his mouth off, and shoved his feet into some boots before heading out to find Cas.

"Will you stop doing that?" Sam gave Dean one of his bitch faces over his laptop.

Dean had been flinging little balled up bits of napkin at his brother since they'd sat down. "Not until you put that thing away. We told ya to join us to eat, talk case, and bond for a bit--not so you could spend the whole damn time playing Galaga."
Sam's bitchface intensified but he closed down the computer and shoved it into his messenger bag just in time for the waitress to come by.

Her nametag read Marilyn and she greeted them with a smile. "Hey, fellas. How are we doing today?"

"Well, we're just swell." Dean crooked a grin but his tone was kind enough that she took his subtle teasing well.

"Are you boys ready to order or should I come back with some coffee?"

"Coffee'll be great but I think we're good." Dean was sharing a booth with Cas--him sitting closest to the aisle because he and Sam both had a thing where they didn't like being trapped if they could help it, something that was never a problem when it was just the three of them because Cas liked to look out the window anyways. He bumped shoulders with the former angel to get his attention. "You in the mood for salty or sweet?"

Castiel turned to address Dean. "Salty, please." He glanced at the waitress and gave her a small smile in greeting.

"Alright, he'll have a spinach and cheese omelet--hold the tomatoes--and I'd like your grand slam breakfast, extra greasy." Dean ordered without a second thought.

The waitress wrote down their order on her little flip pad. She tilted her head to the side, peering at the two now that she got a proper look at them. "Hey--are you guys one of those gay couples from that TV show?"

Sam had been staring at Dean and Cas thoughtfully but at the mention of the show he let out a quiet snort. "You bet they are."

"Oh, you guys are real cute on there." Her expression was brighter now.

She spared them one last excited look before turning to Sam and taking down his order for some weird thing that had a couple of eggs over easy in an avocado half with whole grain wheat toast on
Dean didn't believe they made stuff like that in diners until the waitress propped the plate down on the table. "Sonuvabitch, you weren't kidding." He eyed the breakfast distrustfully.

Sam rolled his eyes and sprinkled some pepper over his avocado egg thing. He could already tell Dean was working up that age old lecture of fruit-and-veggies-ain't-food and huffed. "It's high in protein, fiber and healthy fats that'll keep me full for a lot longer than yours."

Dean shook his head but turned towards his own meal without comment.

They were all quiet for a while, each savoring the first few bites of their breakfast before Cas cut in. He took a sip from his glass of orange juice to clear his throat. "Have you made any new headway with the lore, Sam?"

"Not really. I cycled up the date and time of all the deaths and mapped it out on the calendar but the lore itself isn't that helpful if we still don't know what we're looking for." Sam dipped a corner of his wheat toast in some yolk and chewed it over for a moment. "I was up all night looking into the red bracelet thing just in case but there are still dozens of relationship deities that deal with some kind of string significance."

"No, it's fine. I'm sure you were right before, it'd just been a passing fancy." Castiel chimed, referring to Sam's previous dismissal of the supposed clue.

Dean grimaced and shoved another forkful of scrambled eggs and bacon in his mouth. He launched a discussion about the extra precautions they were taking when it came to the next couple to get booted off.

After they'd finished setting up their plans, Sam casually changed the subject. "So, what was the sweet?"

Dean's brows knit together in confusion. "Sweet what?"

"You'd asked Cas if he wanted 'salty or sweet," Sam explained. "So what was the sweet?"

"Oh," Dean blinked in understanding. "Probably waffles with chocolate chips on top. He usually
gets that or french toast with like fruit crap all over it."

"And we had french toast with bananas yesterday." Castiel mused, always surprised by the hunter's attentiveness.

Dean nodded, as if that explained everything.

"You ate bananas? With toast?" Sam narrowed his eyes. "I thought you said that was disgusting."

"No, I said that gross peanut-butter-and-banana sandwich you like is disgusting." Dean scoffed.

Sam looked offended. "Hey, I stand by that sandwich. Even Elvis liked that sandwich."

"So because Elvis liked it, I'm supposed to like it?" Dean snorted and they got into a heated debate that briefly involved Elvis but quickly returned to food.

Castiel cut in their squabbling over which Winchester had better taste eventually to remind them that he and Dean had to be back by two. They paid their tab and left towards the car.

Cas started to get into the back seat but Dean stopped him, placing his hand the former angel's arm. "Where do you think you're goin'?" That earned him twin looks of confusion from the other two but he shrugged them off and nodded at Sam. "We're just dropping off the Sasquatch. He can sit in the back, it'll be good for his freakazoid legs."

Sam pouted at Dean as he took his seat. He gave the duo riding shotgun a few speculative gazes but he chatted easily with his brother from the back while Cas looked on.

They left him off at the motel and roared back to the mansion where their next challenge was waiting.

"This is a game we like to call 'What Am I?'" Stephen Dobbs, their idiot host, was back and in the mansion's living room, filming the intro to their next challenge. "This is a chance for our contestants to prove how well they and partners really communicate. Each pairing will have five minutes to complete their round--that's two and a half minutes per contestant to get as many points as possible."
Stephen then launched into an overly detailed explanation about a relatively simple game—one of them had to hold up a card to their forehead and the other had to try and help them guess what was on the card without outright saying what it was plus they couldn't say certain words. They also had the option of 'passing' three cards and skipping to the next one.

Castiel was focused on the changes they'd done to the room. They'd cleared the blinds so that the pool deck was visible through the glass wall behind their host. They'd moved the couches, chairs, tables, and lamps to set up all of the studio equipment necessary to film a challenge plus a rectangular table where contestants could sit across from each other to play the game. They had also set up a scoreboard that was made up of sliding panels with each of the couples names etched into them.

At the moment the scoreboard had all of the pairings listed in order of how popular they were with the viewers in accordance to their voting percentage but later on they'd be rearranged by the points they earned in throughout the game.

Dean thought the only thing more surprising than the fact that Chris and Danny were first, was that he and Cas were second. After them came Jenn and Tori, James and Gabby, Ellie and Lucy, Steph and Clara, and finally Dave and William. Once the game was over and the new scores were up, viewers were gonna start casting in their votes and by the end of the day one of those couples was gonna get canned.

Dean and Cas didn't care about their scores, they just had to make sure they could stay on until this damn monster was put down.

"The makeup artist is really hot but I don't think she has a damn clue about how to work around my locks." Steph grimaced, tugging on one of her dreads. She nodded towards where Nicole, the show's the hair and makeup specialist, was trying to tame Clara's red curls.

Dean hummed his agreement. He and Cas had already been forced to sit through that whole ordeal. He thought he much preferred being covered in monster guts than having white eyeliner penciled along his lower eyelid margins. It was one of those 'barely there au natural' makeup tricks and Dean didn't think it made a damn difference other than leaving him with the dirty feeling of it seeping into his skin. It was uncomfortable and unnatural, and he and Cas agreed that it didn't seem safe to have that much chemical shit so close to their optics.

"Honestly, I can't wait to get home." The other girl murmured. "I mean its one thing to know you're being videotaped but these hidden cameras are so damn creepy. Like I know they say they're not but I know they're fucking watching us while we sleep."

Castiel looked at Steph in time to see her shudder. He was going to ask her about what exactly she meant by that when she was called away to hair and makeup.
Once everything and everyone was set up, the game had started. Every time a couple got a card right a bell would ding and a point would be added to the electronic counter above the scoreboard. Dean and Cas were the third couple to go and soon enough they were fitted with microphones with a stressed reminder that this was a live segment—something directed towards Dean in the hopes that he wouldn’t swear.

Castiel opted to be the card holder in the first round.

Dean almost snorted when the first card Cas held up was 'GHOST.' He wasn't allowed to say the words 'specter,' 'phantom,' 'spirit,' or 'apparition.'

For a split second he thought of saying 'Casper' or 'EMF' or 'Salt'n'burn' but he didn't know how far Cas's new-found pop-culture enlightenment went and after that thing he and Sam went through with the wraith they'd become more careful in letting loose obvious hunting references in plain sight. He went with stuff that Cas would get but that seemed broad enough that anyone with a computer could say the same. "Uhh--vengeful; ectoplasm; the Facers."

Vengeful was a broad term but combined with ectoplasm it made much more sense--so it was a spirit. As for 'the Facers,' Castiel recalled meeting with Harry Spangler and Ed Zeddmore many years ago as an angel after reading about them in the Supernatural books and he’d found them lacking. They'd called him a 'TOSH'--'translating opaque spectral humanoid'--and referred to themselves as 'the Ghostfacers.' "Ghost?"

A bell dinged loud and clear and Castiel was quick to pick up another card.

They found a pretty easy rhythm after that. Most of the couples had chose to blurt out words that any average person would connect with on the one on card their partner held but Dean had found a different route that worked for them.

"We had these in that place in El Paso; you like em soft, I like em crunchy."

"Tacos." Ding!

"War room table top; Sam has one tapped to the wall of his 'room' too." Dean emphasized the word room to clarify that he was talking about the motel room and not the bunker seeing as the only thing in Sam's room at the bunker was a TV.

"A map?" Ding!

"Dear old Zach said this was one of his faces."

Castiel looked confused for a second and picked the most probable of the four Zachariah would have
used to intimidate the Winchester's with. "A lion?" Ding!

"The thing you're never allowed to touch in the car."

"The stereo." He responded immediately. Ding!

"You don't like the texture," Dean scoffed with a grin.

Castiel smiled in turn. "Tomatoes." Ding!

"Use it in my car, someone might use it to light rings of fire." Dean gave Cas a meaningful look when expressing that last part.

"Oil?" Ding!

Dean had used his first pass to skip the word 'BALLOON,' second to skip the word 'PONY,' and the third skip was on the word 'WINGS' despite how easy a point that would have been. The time Cas had mentioned he missed his wings was still fresh on his mind.

It hadn't been a big deal when he'd mentioned it--Cas had that wistful tone on and followed the statement with 'Life on the road... smells.' It was cute, it was funny: it was the kind of thing he said in that guileless way of his that would have had his groupies melting, falling over themselves to talk about what a precious little angel he was. But to Dean it was a reminder of how far he'd fallen and the hunter was not the type to kick a guy when he was down.

Now Dean wished he hadn't skipped the word 'PONY' because they had less than thirty seconds left and 'BOARD GAMES' was printed across the card Cas was holding up against his forehead.

It brought up an image he would have preferred to forget.

"We played one of these once," he began in a more subdued tone, "In the Dayroom, back when you were under Meg's care."

Castiel leaned back, sucking in a soft breath. He understood the shift in tone. Dean was referring to his brief stint in the Psychiatric Ward at Northern Indiana State Hospital after he took on Sam's psychosis. More specifically, he was referring to the time they had played Sorry! when Castiel had been... broken. He had been more focused on playing than he had been on helping Dean clean up the mess he--Castiel--had left behind.

"Board game." Ding!--Ding!Ding!Ding!Ding!Ding!

The extra dinging marked the end of Castiel's turn as cardholder. He put down his card onto the scattered pile of used turns and slid the new deck to Dean. He had been hoping that the first card would be something that would lighten the sudden change in mood but, as fate would have it, the
word 'ANGEL' was printed along the card in clear block letters. "You used to call me this. The rest you would call 'dicks,' or 'tree toppers,"

Dean grimaced. "Angels." Ding!

The hunter thought he had been doing a pretty good job at describing cards but it was nothing compared to whatever the hell Cas was doing now. After that shitty angel thing they'd started burning through cards faster than before.

"Their males penises are sharply barbed along the shaft."

Leave it to Cas to turn the sucky memory into something, well, less sucky. Dean remembered just before the Sorry! incident, Cas had been going on about feline dicks and how he knew for a fact that 'the females were not consulted about that.' "Cats." Ding!

"You told me I shouldn't walk across bare carpeting without these." Castiel was almost sure he had been specific towards filthy motel room carpets but he knew Dean would remember the lesson he'd taught him about the dangers of athletes foot shortly after he'd fallen and they'd begun hunting together.

"Socks?" Ding!

The next card had Castiel rubbing the more-pronounced-than-usual scruff along his face, the smile on his face was one part rueful, two parts amused. "Perhaps I should have used one of these this morning."

Dean snorted. "A razor?" Ding!

"The pie we had just before our first kiss was of this flavor."

Dean licked his lips automatically. "Blueberry." Ding!

"They are very clever, and sensible in that they leave the skin on the bananas they eat. I still firmly believe it is unnecessary to test cosmetics on them."

Dean rolled his eyes. It looked like 'Crazy!Cas' was winning them a lot of points in this challenge. Dean remembered Cas asking him about how important lipstick was to him, not all that long before the day they ganked Dick Roman. "Monkeys." Ding!

"Fred Jones enjoyed these very much."

Fred Jones was the psychic that gave him his first beer. Cas had met him during that Loony case he'd
found for them right after he'd gotten back from purgatory, the first time he'd been hell bent on becoming a hunter. Dean smiled at the memory of Fred. "Cartoons." Ding!

"The first time I confided in you we were overlooking children in this place."

A few seconds ticked by as Dean tried to connect the pieces together--and then it clicked. The bench. It was during the Samhain thing--that one Halloween, way back when they were still trying to stop the Seals from breaking to keep Lucifer from rising. He and Sam had stopped the angels from 'purifying' a whole town and despite the fact that they'd exorcised the bastard, the Seal had still broken. He'd been sitting on a bench, watching all the children they'd saved play, when Cas had shown up. He'd been ready for the guy to tear him a new asshole but Cas surprised him. He told him that he wasn't a hammer, that he had doubts. "A park. We were in a park." He said, somewhat amazed. Ding!

The next card had the word 'FATHER' written on it. "Yours had very beautiful handwriting. Mine... I did not get to know mine very well, but He left behind beautiful creations in his wake."

Dean had the vague memory of Cas flipping through John's journal and complimenting his handwriting. He nodded thoughtfully. "Dad." Ding!

"They are small and are sometimes very loud. For some reason you refer to both me and your car by the same term." Castiel seemed mildly offended.

Dean huffed a laugh. "Baby?" Ding!--Ding!Ding!Ding!Ding!Ding!

Together they scored eighteen points. As soon as they had their microphone packs removed, Dean grabbed Cas's hand and all but dragged him in the direction of their room. "C'mon baby, I gotta wash out this gunk from my face A-sap."

Castiel lounged on the bed, leisurely cleaning away what he could with the moistened corner of his towel. From his seat he could watch Dean's reflection as he vigorously scrubbed at his face in the bathroom. He let out a low chuckle.

"What's so funny?"

"I don't see what the 'big deal' is." Castiel commented, making visible air quotes around the term 'big deal.'

Dean walked into the room and stole Cas's towel, wiping his face with the dry portion. "See I don't give a damn about the makeup thing, it's not for me--to each their own and all that crap. I just don't
like being treated like a painted whore." He gruffed in his loftiest tone.

The former angel rolled his eyes. "Either way, I believe I know who the next target is."

They were called back to the makeshift set by one of the PAs as soon as the last couple was done.

The lineup was already set—James and Gabby in first with twenty-one points, Ellie and Lucy followed with twenty, and Dean and Castiel had been nudged to third because of their score of eighteen. That left Jenn and Tori and Dave and William tied for fourth with fifteen points each, while Chris and Danny had dropped all the way down to second-to-last place with a score of thirteen, and Stephanie and Clara were dead last with eleven points to their name.

Their scores didn't always define their safety on the show but everyone was pretty sure Steph and Clara were 'going home' tonight.

Imagine the surprise when the votes came in and Jenn and Tori were the ones being sent packing.

"Catch any trouble?" Dean was checking in with Sam. He'd had eyes on the girls as soon as they'd left the house last night.

Sam yawned. It was already six in the morning and he was just about ready to start reliving some Hallucifer flashbacks if he didn't get to sleep soon. "They should be boarding now. Unless this thing is gonna bring down the whole plane, I think we're good."

Dean almost shuddered at the thought. He still wasn't over the time that friggin' demon tried to crash that United Britannia flight with them on it. "Alright man, go get yourself some shut-eye. We can reconvene at the tree-house tomorrow."

"Sound's good. Hey, how's life back at Villa De La Vina?"

"Not great. Cas and I are kinda 'persona non grata' right now." Dean glanced over to the bed where the former angel was sprawling over to his side and frowned to himself. After the big reveal, the producers screened some tweets and it looked like a lot of Cas'd followers (and Dean's by default) had got it in them to launch a hate crusade against Tori because of all the teasing she did. A few of his more zealous followers seemed to take her flirting a little too serious and spammed the poles, voting her and Jenn off the ballot. "Pretty much the only people willing to talk to us right now are Steph and Clara."
"Well, that's good cause we're pretty sure they're up next on the hit-list." Sam sighed. "Alright man, I'm tuning out."

"Yeah, gotcha." Dean clicked off and tossed his phone onto the arm chair. He ran his fingers through his hair, tugging on a few of the strands before getting into bed with Cas. He let the unconscious former angel pull him into a cocoon and eased into the comfort.

Chapter End Notes

Important note: The euphemism 'hot rod' is all Dean because Dean is a dork--that is all. Important note number two: the murder and cool case stuff will return next chapter as the author did not expect for this one to be so long.

Also, thank you for the great comments! I'll answer them all soon.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
9.06- Heaven Can't Wait
9.18- Meta Fiction
8.13- Everybody Hates Hitler
4.09- I Know What You Did Last Summer
7.10- Death's Door
5.11- Sam, Interrupted
3.13- Ghostfacers
Ghostfacers Special Webisode
5.16- Dark Side of the Moon
7.17- The Born-Again Identity
7.21- Reading Is Fundamental
7.23- Survival of the Fittest
8.08- Hunteri Heroici
4.07- It's the Great Pumpkin, Sam Winchester
5.08- Changing Channels
1.04- Phantom Traveler
9.22- Stairway to Heaven

Plus honorable mention to:
Jensen and Misha's resume battle at JIBCon 2013
Misha's nipple freckle
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"Villa De La Vina" is a reference to the mansion where contestants of the show 'The Bachelor' stay while filming
Dean and Castiel stumbled through their challenges easily enough but this week their focus was honed in on Stephanie and Clara. Unbeknownst to the two girls, the hunter and the former angel were playing bodyguard. They kept their eyes open for possible threats against the couple and clues that might finally let them pinpoint who and what they were dealing with. Then they just needed to figure out how to kill it.

Getting close to them was easier than they’d originally anticipated but the girls sought them out of their own accord.

In truth, Steph and Clara were pretty much the only ones acknowledging them right now. The guys had become pariahs of sorts with the other couples after the Jenn and Tori thing. Mostly they were treated with polite distance but they weren’t oblivious towards the outright distrustful looks they’d been getting from Chris and Danny.

They hadn't picked up much yet but Castiel often felt a note of resignation between the two girls, as if they were aware there was a target painted across their backs. Dean had explained otherwise--he said whatever was happening between them was a matter linked to their relationship.

Cas had been dragged off on a pharmacy run by Clara, leaving Dean behind with Steph. He pulled open the heavy stainless steel door to the huge communal fridge, grabbing a couple of beers.

Production had stocked up on El Sol as soon as they’d found out it was his favorite. They did the same with most of the stuff contestants seemed to favor.

It was eerily reminiscent of the way Zachariah tried to butter him up with whatever he thought could keep Dean Winchester placated the longest when he held him captive in the angel’s the ‘Green Room.’

He couldn’t really fault the show for trying to appease them any way they could when all they ever did was prod their relationships like a snot nosed brat who just found a pointy stick on the playground. It made little difference to Dean--they could sparkle everything up, make it look as nice as possible but even the Beautiful Room ended up being no more than some bullshit dingy office at an abandoned muffler factory in Van Nuys--and the hunter was nothing if not an expert at shearing through steaming piles of bullshit by now.

He used the silver ring he was wearing to pop each cap one-by-one off the bottles.

Dean and Cas had procured matching silver bands a while ago. They weren't like the wedding rings Cas had picked out--they were more like engagement bands. It was supposed to be a ‘physical representation that they were committed to each other.’ It seemed like a good idea considering everyone else in the house had something like that. (True, most of them had diamonds but the others didn’t seem surprised that Dean and Cas had gone the gumball machine route and went for something as plain as possible.)
Dean was just happy he had a portable bottle opener again. He used to use to have this ring he’d lost during the apocalypse--sometime between when that witch turned him into an old man and when Gabriel stuck him and Sam in TV land. It’d been beat up and scraped over from the billions of times he’d used it to crack open his beers so he didn’t lament the loss.

He passed Steph her beer and drank from his own, making a satisfied hum as he did. Dean’s left hand was free and he found himself using his thumb to fiddle with the ring, spinning it and feeling the marks he’d already started building up along the metal. For a second he thought he should probably take better care of the thing that was supposed to symbolize the depth of his big gay love with Cas--but that wasn't the issue right now.

“So if there actually are cameras in the bedroom,” Dean began, “how much you wanna bet these sick bastards watch us dance the mattress mambo?” He winked for added effect.

Steph snorted a surprised laugh and clutched at her face. “Aw fuck, you almost made beer come out of my nose, asshole.” She shook her head. “Mattress mambo? Are you serious?”

Dean shrugged, a shit-eating grin on his face.

The girl chuckled. “Well, I’m not too worried about them leaking our sex tapes.”

His eyes flicked over her face. “Then what are you worried about?”

Steph swallowed down a long pull of El Sol.

Dean knew that look. It was the look people got when they were gauging just how much they could confide in a near total stranger. Usually he got it from witnesses that caught sight of something supernatural-y but while monster info was his end game, he was genuinely interested in a civilian’s--in Steph’s--feelings. He was getting worse than Sam when it came to all that touchy-feely bullshit.

Finally, Steph sighed. “The bedroom is where Clara and I can bitch at each other in peace. The last thing we need is some shit-head TV dude using our personal business as ‘material’ to boost their fuckin’ ratings.”

“Ah,” Dean nodded in understanding. He wouldn't want to air his dirty laundry out on national television either--much less when it came to relationships. (Relationshits, his mind helpfully supplied.) He sipped from his beer then cocked his head to the side thoughtfully; vaguely similar to the thing Cas did when he was honing in on something. “How do you even know they’re filming you?”
“It’s that feeling, ya’know? Like that static when the TV is on but the screen is blank.” Steph grimaced. “Or it like that thing--that feeling when someone’s standing in the corner of your eye but there’s no one actually there. Clara thinks I’m being paranoid.”

Dean jotting down all those details in his head. “Yeah, I know the feeling. Is there anything else that might’ve lead you to thinking you’re being watched?”

She sipped her beer, thinking it over. “Oh! There is actually. There’s like this low whhsshh sound--like something light being dragged across the carpet. I figured those dumbasses probably stuck a defective camera in our room.”

The hunter forced a laugh and drank from his beer. He was pretty sure he got what he needed.

Elsewhere, Cas and Clara had been driven to a pharmacy market by production.

They had ‘encouraged’ them to allow the cameras along on the trip, claiming that they didn't have enough footage of Castiel interacting with people that weren't Dean.

The former angel had frowned at the implication but it made sense: he and Dean stuck together on hunts and despite the seemingly casual nature of this one, it was still a hunt. He noted that they also seemed a bit ‘put-out’ that the couple usually opted not to be filmed when they went out alone--something they did because they mostly just left the house to gather with Sam and discuss the case.

As it was, Castiel was not used to being focused on outside of the distanced care the show usually adopted when they filmed contestants at the house. Clara seemed relatively at ease with being on film though and eventually he adopted her method and acted as if there wasn't a posse of production crew trailing them with a large camera.

He didn't actually require anything from the market. He mostly just came at Clara’s request and followed her around with a shopping basket while the redhead chatted away easily in her Latin lilt and those odd colloquialisms Castiel didn't understand but found endearing either way.

“Do you mind hitting the femfresh section with me?” Clara asked at one point.

“Of course not.” Castiel looked confused at the inquiry. He clearly didn't know what ‘femfresh’ meant but he was more puzzled as to why she’d ask about a specific aisle when he’d already been accompanying her to all of them.

“If you’re sure,” She said uncertainly. There was a touch of mild concern on her face. She led him towards an aisle that had a number 14 on it and announced FEMININE CARE, FAMILY PLANNING, & SEXUAL WELLNESS.
He was curious as to why this section would be different from any other but he didn't find anything out of the ordinary. Clara was looking towards a selection of tampons, pads, and liners of different brands. Castiel was tempted to ask about the intricacies of feminine hygiene but he got the sense that it would be one of those topics humans were oddly uncomfortable speaking about and so he casually wandered to see what else the aisle had to offer.

When Clara found him again he was peering intently at a selection of condoms and lubricants. There was a sly grin on her face as she tossed two different brands of tampons into the basket Cas carried. “Stocking up on protection for you and your man?”

“Dean and I do not require protection.” Castiel had responded reflexively but the word triggered a memory of Dean asking if he’d had protection when he’d informed the Winchesters that he’d had sex with April, to which he’d replied with a perplexed 'I had my angel blade.' It made sense now why he’d asked and explained the hunter's reaction to the angel blade comment.

“Kinky. Well, the KY and flavored stuff is always decent but this one’s pretty neat.” She tapped on a pearlescent bottle that had *Slippery Stuff* written on it in a sylphlike scrawl.

Castiel picked up the bottle. Underneath the willowy logo there was blue printed text proclaiming that its contents was a Personal Lubricant GEL that was Water Based\Glycerin Free and then repeated it all in French in much smaller text. He thought it would be rude to turn down a personal suggestion and so he placed it into the shopping basket and smiled his thanks at her.

They moved on after that, stopping only to pick up a cinnamon apple pie for Dean before heading over to the cashier.

The plump cashier took in the sight of the two plus the camera man accompanying them with minor trepidation. She smiled at Cas. “Most men wouldn't walk around carrying their girl's tampons; it’s mighty kind of you to do so,” she commented as she started scanning a few of the items, “you guys make a cute couple.”

Clara looked as if she was tickled pink at being mistaken for Cas’s girlfriend so she linked arms with him and put on a huge overly sweet smile. “Isn't he just the sweetest. Aren't you, honeybun?”

Castiel appeared deeply nonplussed by the whole interaction. “I do not see why any man would be intimidated by feminine hygiene and Clara and I are not a couple as we are both in individual homosexual relationships.” He corrected in what he thought was a polite tone. He tapped the pie and
the lube. “If you could please place these in a separate bag.”

The cashier woman looked taken aback but she did as he asked and rang them up.

All the while Clara held back her laughter very poorly.

They arrived back at the house in time to find their respective counterparts on their third beer. It seemed as if Dean was trying to teach Steph how to open bottles using a ring.

“We come bearing gifts!” Clara announced, raising up her plastic shopping bags.

“About fucking time. Did you bring me my platanitos?” Steph asked as she tried snatching one of the bags from her girlfriend.

Clara pouted but handed her the bag that had her lemon zested plantain chips.

“I brought you pie.” Castiel informed Dean before the hunter could ask. He took a seat and passed Dean the shopping bag that held his packaged slice of apple pie and the other purchase he’d acquired.

Dean fished out the pie and looked in to see what else Cas had gotten. He pulled out the lube and his eyebrows knit together. “Uh, Cas, what’s this?”

“It is personal lubricant meant to enhance comfort and pleasure.” The former angel informed him, obviously pleased with himself for remember what the back of the bottle explained.

Steph and Clara were wearing matching smirks.

Dean flushed bright red. He put the lube back into the bag and stood up hastily, muttering something about a fork and more beer.

Despite their pleasantries with Dean and Cas, it was obvious the girls weren't doing well. Not just in the challenges but the ‘bitching’ they’d tried to keep personal eventually left the confines of their bedroom for the rest of the nation to watch from the comfort of their living rooms. At the end of the
week, the inevitable had happened and Steph and Clara were being sent home.

They spent their last day with Dean and Cas. The two guys helped them pack, took them out to lunch and a movie, and generally just acted as a living and breathing wall between them since it didn't seem as if they could bear to speak to each other without getting into a fight.

Mostly they were waiting for the monster to attack and the longer time went without anything happening, the more wound up they all felt.

By nightfall, the four of them were in the impala, driving towards the airport. Steph sat in the front seat with Dean, glaring out the window, and Clara sat in the back with Cas. To say the tension was palpable would be an understatement.

“I wish the moon was out,” Steph murmured, breaking the silence. “It always looks bigger here. You can barely see it in Miami.”

Clara hummed in quiet agreement.

Dean remembered Steph’s huge tattoo of the cycles of the moon and frowned. He offered to let her put on some tunes--breaking his golden rule of ‘driver picks the music, shotgun shuts his cakehole.’

Steph fiddled with the stereo aimlessly until she found one of those college radio station that played weird indie music and mildly obscure EDM.

Dean wasn’t surprised at the choice--she’d been trying to shove electronic music down his throat since she realized he only listened to classic rock. He’d expected they’d be driving to nothing but crappy synthetic instrumentals when the random song the station was playing melted into slightly haunting female vocals.

*The world was on fire and no one could save me but you*

*It's strange what desire will make foolish people do*

*I'd never dreamed that I'd meet somebody like you*

*I'd never dreamed that I'd lose somebody like you*

*And I don't want to fall in love*

*No I don't want to fall in love*

*With you*
It faded back into instrumentals and Clara leaned her head against Cas’s shoulder, listening.

What a wicked game you played to make me feel this way
What a wicked thing to do to let me dream of you
What a wicked thing to say you never felt this way
What a wicked thing to do to make me dream of you
And I don't want to fall in love
No I don't want to fall in love
With you

Castiel looked down to see a small tear rolling slowly down the girls face. He carefully wiped it away with the pad of his thumb and as he looked down on her he felt compassion bloom in his chest. Compassion and perhaps a bit of empathy.

And I don't want to fall in love
No I don't want to fall in love
With you
With you

The anger in the car had bled out as the song played, leaving behind a melancholy feeling that stayed long after they’d dropped off the girls at their gate and changed to a more Dean-appropriate station.

Despondency aside, at the end of the day Steph and Clara were still alive and that was the important thing.

“Perhaps we were incorrect about the manner it’s choosing it’s victims.” Castiel remarked.

Dean sighed and put the car into gear. “Dunno. We’ll regroup with Sam about it later.” He drove them away from the airport and back towards the house.

Two days had passed when they’d gotten the call from Sam that he was driving to Florida because Steph and Clara had been killed in a supposed break-in gone wrong. Both of them gone with a
headshot each.

Unlike the first vics, this time the news of the couple’s deaths got back to the other contestants. Knowing they’d been close to the girls, they’d begun to treat Dean and Cas far too sympathetically for people who’d been silently condemning them the past week for something that was never really their fault to begin with. The hypocrisy was mildly repulsive, albeit expected from this crowd.

Dean and Cas kept their distance; not as extreme as before but now it was by choice.

They channeled whatever feelings they had on about the girls’ deaths into the case instead. Sam emailed them photos of what he found in Miami and autopsy reports from the coroners office.

One of them contained two photos of separate silk red cords that had been snipped apart which looked as if they’d been left beneath the bloodstain pillows. Sam had added a message too: What are the chances they had the same matching bracelets as the other vics? Looks like Cas was right.

As soon as he got back, the trio holed up in the motel room digging through the lore and old case photos from the other vics to confirm if the red strings showed up in any of the other murders. It only showed up in the background of some of them but that made sense considering most police officers wouldn’t see any significance in some shiny piece of yarn.

Dean sighed, slamming closed one of the dusty tomes Sam had brought from either the Men of Letter’s bunker or one of Bobby’s old relics they’d kept stored at Rufus’s cabin. “So what’ve we got on our Kabbalah Killer?”

“Kalava, Dean.” Castiel corrected from where he was buried in a book Dean was pretty sure was one hundred percent Classical Sanskrit.

“What?”

“The string, it could be kalava--also known as mauli, which translates into ‘above all.’ It is used in different rituals of worship to Hindu deities. It can be used to ward against evil but in theory, most any ritual can be reversed.” Castiel flipped to a page in his book and slid it across the table towards the hunter. His gravely voice rumbled as he explained what he’d found. “There is much scripture about it. In the Mahabharata, Kunti tied a Kalava on right hand of Abhimanyu before his last day of war for divine protection. He was not defeated by many warriors as long as he wore the ‘Kalava’ on
his right hand. Lord Krishna wanted his death, as Kunti was evil in his previous life. Krishna thus sent a mouse to cut his Kalava and soon after, Abhimanyu was killed. Another legend has it that Lord Vishnu during his incarnation as Vamana tied a red thread on the hands of King Bali to grant him immortality and to rule the netherworld.

Dean couldn't read the book obviously, since it all looked like scribbles to him, but he got the jist of what Cas was saying. Red string plus ritual stuff equals evil shit, something about some dude who sent a mouse that cut the string and some other dude that was supposedly evil in another life died because of it, and then some other dude gave another dude some red string that made him immortal and let him rule 'the netherworld.' ‘The Kabbalah thing was a joke, but that’s some good work, Cas. We’ll add it to the list.”

So far the list consisted of two different kinds of Asian lore on ‘the red string of fate’--both Chinese and Japanese; something about Greek mythology where the daughter of Minos possibly had some kind of love triangle thing going on between Dionysus and Theseus--she was also the one who helped Theseus defeat the Minotaur by giving him red string she wove, and she had a lot to do with labyrinths and challenges and was possibly a ‘weaving goddess,’ so they thought it fell in line with the whole ‘if you suck at these challenges thing you die’ theme going on; there was also some obscure crap about Venus and sexual rapture; and now the Hindu lore Cas had found.

Sam scribbled it onto a post-it to look into later--preferably in a language that wasn't ancient Sanskrit. He checked his watch. “Hey, don’t you guys have to get going?”

“Shit, you’re right.” Dean stood up and stretched, his neck making a cracking sound as he did.

Castiel found himself distracted by the sight of Dean’s shirt riding up to expose his lower abdomen--until he noticed Sam had been watching him. He cleared his throat and got up from his chair, keeping his eyes downcast. ‘Yes, we begin that ‘special challenge’ tomorrow. They would not tell us what it entails, only that it would span across several days. We may not be able to return for sometime.”

“We’ll keep in touch, though. So beep us if you find anything.” Dean added with a frown. He noticed Cas wouldn't look at them so he glanced at Sam questioningly. His brother only looked amused.

They picked up some burgers from that place they liked on the way back to the house. Cas letting out a low moan when he bit into his swiss cheese and mushroom thing that made it harder for Dean to swallow down his own bite of bacon and cheddar. He turned up the radio for the rest of the way, trying to let Def Leppard drown out the unwarranted thought of ‘I wonder if he makes those noises when he jerks off in the shower.’
I'm normally not a big fan of fics that cut in chunks of song lyrics but I stumbled across this song and thought it felt fitting for all the parties involved for different reasons--I hope it didn't distract from the story!

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
2.20- What Is and What Should Never Be
4.22- Lucifer Rising
5.18- Point of No Return
5.07- The Curious Case of Dean Winchester
5.08- Changing Channels
9.03- I'm No Angel
1.01- Pilot

Plus honorable mention to:
Slippery Stuff which is a legitimate brand of lube (the top rated lube on the Walgreen's website actually + the pearlescent bottle and minor blue styling made it look oddly angelic as far as lubes go.)
Wicked Games (Original Mix) by Parra for Cuva ft. Anna Naklab (the song playing in the impala with Steph and Clara)
Also fraction of the kalava stuff was taken directly from Wikipedia and the Greek mythology is very poor paraphrasing that is mostly incorrect.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Extra warning: Descriptive mentions of blasphemous sex toys. (They aren't being used or expressed in a sexual situation.) This part can be skipped if descriptions of sex toys or blasphemy in such connotations make you uncomfortable, they make up about six paragraphs or so in the section titled Day One after a big portion that is all in italics. The other smutty stuff makes up the second part in Day Five if anyone wants to skip that too.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You've got to be shitting me.” Their host had just finished revealing their new challenge and Dean was pretty fucking far from pleased with it.

“Happily Ever After is taking a more literal approach to the expression ‘my old ball-and-chain.’ This week, in an extra special challenge, contestants have to prove just how they handle being chained to their partners,” cue semi-dramatic pause, “by literally being chained to their partners.” And then Stephen Dobbs pulled out handcuffs--actual freaking handcuffs.

They weren't the metal kind Dean was well acquainted with; they were made out of some kind of flexible material and had a long silver-colored plastic chain running between each cuff. There was also a weird little black box sticking to the side of both cuffs with a little red light on the end.

“Contestants will be handcuffed to their partners for a total of twelve hours every day for five days. Now for safety reasons we’re using cuffs made out of a flexible resin that are easy to cut through in the case of an emergency. In light of that, we've added some water-proof tamper-resistant technology--sort of like the kind you might find on an ankle monitor. So if anyone tries to mess with these bad-boys, we'll know.”

It was early morning and they were filming in the foyer.

There was a camera trained on their host and three more on the contestants: one that captured a wide shot of all of them and the other two focused on catching the best individual reactions.

When the episode aired there would be a spectacular close up on Dean going ‘You’ve got to be [BLEEP]ng me,’ which would then pull back to scan the lineup of grim-faced couples and pan up to the chandelier where the names of the original twelve pairings were still engraved.

It was a shot meant to enhance the fact that only five sets of wedding rings remained, ending the scene on an ominous note.

As soon as they cut, it was clear Jeremy and Liz were nowhere to be found, leaving the PAs to do their best to pacify the contestants and explain the new schedule for their handcuff situation.
Starting today, they’d be cuffed to their respective partners from ten AM to ten PM—enough time in the morning for them to shower and get dressed before they had to be chained together, and early enough in the evening for them to change into their sleepwear should they choose to turn in by then. The cuffs were designed so production could be immediately alerted if they tried to take them off—some of the examples given had been stretching them over their hands, cutting or attempting to cut through the resin or the chain, and tampering with the latch.

The PAs took the time to assure them that the cuffs weren’t meant to track or limit their comings and goings—and Dean didn’t know which he found more ridiculous—that they expected him to believe that or that they expected any of them to go out in public fucking handcuffed to each other.

The only time the handcuffs would come off during those twelve hours, other than because of an emergency, would be in regards to shirts and other tops that couldn’t be put on or taken off while both parties were still connected—and even then it would only be momentarily. (Which was mostly a clause they added in the hopes that contestants would continue to use the pool while latched together seeing as pool shots always added a little extra to the ratings.)

As soon as he and Cas were linked, red light on the little black box turned green, Dean dragged the two of them back to their room with a murderous look on his face. He really wanted to break something but he restrained himself to just punching one of those stupid yellow pillows. “I can’t friggin’ believe this,” he jerked the arm that was cuffed forward, unthinkingly tugging on Cas and making him stumble, as he took a seat on the bed. “We don’t have time for this shit.”

“Dean, watch it.” Castiel tugged back in retaliation.

“Sorry.” Dean grimaced. “Dude, how are we gonna find out who killed Steph and Clara? How are we gonna catch this thing before it kills again if we can’t take more than three steps away from each other without rebounding back to ‘Go’.” He paused. “Shit, how the fuck are we supposed to go to the bathroom?”

He let out a groan and rested his elbows on his knees, holding his head in his hands.

Castiel almost found it amusing that Dean seemed more despaired over that last bit than anything else, but he too was stressing over this sudden turn of events. He roughly nudged the hunter over to sit next to him in what was most likely the only stance they could continue this conversation without either of them being forced into some uncomfortable position due to their new accessory. “Well it would seem the only way to do either of those—would be to endure.” He exhaled a deep sigh. “As for the… other thing: I guess we will have to ’cross that bridge’ when we come to it.”

Dean let out a bittersweet huff of amusement at Cas using one of the Winchester’s token proverbs. He was not looking forward to crossing that particular bridge. “Looks like Sammy’s gotta dig on his own for a little while”
The conversation they might've gotten into about how to juggle this situation with the case was interrupted by a knock on the door and Castiel stood automatically, already forgetting that his movements were tied to Dean. It caused them both to jerk.

This was going to be a long five days.

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**DAY ONE**

The knock ended up being one of the PAs letting them know there was a package they needed to sign for at the door.

Dean scribbled D. Smith and accepted a large and heavy rectangular box addressed to the ‘Soon To Be Mr. and Mr. Smith-Collins’ with no return address.

Setting it down on the dining room table, the two exchanged a meaningful glance and hesitantly tore the brown packing paper open. It revealed a large wooden box with ‘Dean & Castiel’ burned into the top in a fancy script. They clicked open the latch and nestled over a layer of red tissue paper was a piece of parchment with ‘Hello Boys’ inked across it in a neat medieval scrawl.

The Winchester picked it up and held it so they could both read.

*Dearest Thelma & Louise,*

_Hades was so not-surprised to learn about your recent romantic merger--after all, you two were a match made in Hell._

_We’d been wondering when our own Mr. Del Mar would get over Daddy’s hang-ups and settle down in that little cabin in Wyoming with his forever paramour. It was a long time coming indeed and one can only assume over six years of foreplay only makes stemming the rose that much sweeter._

_Thought it’d be nice to send you lover-boys a gift in regards to the upcoming nuptials in the hope that you’ll keep your friendly neighborhood King of Hell in good thoughts during your behind-the-scenes pillow talk._

_Let’s just say many of the damned are looking forward to the next episode--you two certainly have developed quite the fandom. Have no fear; the demonic agenda has been put on hold for the time being. It seems the legion of morons I employ would rather fangirl over your darling little ship than wreak havoc among the masses. Consider it a bonus: an early wedding gift for the happy couple from perdition._

*Congratulations,*

_Crowley*

*P.S.: I think you’ll like the COLT.*
In no way did Dean actually believe Crowley would willingly send them the Colt. Even if he’d gotten a hold of it, fixed it up or made a new one, seeing as they hadn’t used it (in this timeline) since they’d tried to gank Lucifer. He would never hand over something that could be added to the list of things that could be used to skin his limey hide off his back, at least not unbidden as this seemed to be—but then again Dean hadn’t expected the demon to give it to them the first time around either.

Castiel scrunched his nose at the note and lifted the edge of the translucent paper covering Crowley’s precarious gift with great care, as if he expected a ticking time bomb or a severed head.

Which when it came to Crowley would be a severely accurate assumption.

The first thing visible was a package stamped with a logo that proclaimed DIVINE INTERVENTIONS with GOD’S IMMACULATE ROD below it in the same iconic print. Inside was a phallic object in metallic red with what seemed to be a napkin that had HOLY FIRST COMMUNION written in a gothic text.

It was so shocking he almost hadn't noticed that it was not the only object in the chest.

There was another package that held a larger dildo in black modeled in detailed after the (inaccurate of course) visage of ‘Satan.’ It included everything from horns, to a goatee, to smooth curves texturing the side that looked like they were meant to make up his pitchfork, and even an arrow-headed tail resting by the base where a pair of smooth testicles had been fashioned.

It was aptly named ‘THE DEVIL.’

After that was another phallic item in black that seemed much less intimidating. It was a bit smaller, simpler, with a suction base at the bottom. It was called the ‘COLT’ (which explained Crowley's cryptic post-script) and with it was a bottle of something called ‘HOLY WATER LUBE,’ all from the same brand as the first.

Dean didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Crowley’s ‘gifts’ didn't end there: there were some black-tinted transparent anal beads called ‘Anal Heven’ from a company named ToyDemon; a white silicone cock ring that had actual angel wings molded into the sides like little handles— which was probably the most innocuous looking thing in the whole box other than a set of ‘Naughty Candy Heart’ pastel butt plugs from a company called Adam and Eve.

There were three of them and they all had hearts at the base meant to look like those gross candies people give out on valentines day, each with something engraved into the bottom of the silicone.

The pink one said ‘Be Mine,’ the yellow one ‘Spank Me,’ and the purple had ‘Do Me Now’ on it.

So yeah, crying seemed like the best option. He slammed the damned thing shut and hefted it off the table. They had to get this out of sight before one of the camera people came by and the whole friggin’ nation started to think they were the extra kinky sacrilegious gays their parents warned them about.
But it seemed carrying a heavy wooden box of blasphemous sex toys while chained up to a former angel of the Lord wasn't kismet enough.

Gabby called out their names from behind them. It caused Castiel to automatically turn one way while Dean turned another, jerking that box right out of his hands.

There were anal toys flying everywhere.

This was the most mortifying experience of Dean Winchester’s life.

It was even more humiliating than the time he was sixteen and he came in his pants while on a date with this blonde girl who’d decided to play footsie with his crotch in the middle of a diner while he was mid-slice of pecan pie. What had made it the most embarrassing moment of his life was that he’d been dragged away minutes later by his dad to help him take down a coven of witches, all while a huge stain painted the front of his jeans.

He’d been living his life content with the thought that nothing could ever trump that but there he was with Cas, defying the odds again it seemed.

His face felt hotter than hell itself.

Gabby looked just as flustered as Dean did, a furious pink staining her round cheeks. “I, um..”

James, chained to her as he was, didn't comment. He just politely averted his eyes, staring intently at some far off spot on the ceiling.

“They were gifts!” Castiel blurted, wide-eyed and obviously trying to be helpful.

Dean wanted to shoot himself. He rubbed a hand over his burning front and grimaced. “Prank engagement present from a ‘friend’ of ours.”

Gabby nodded quickly and repeatedly in supposed understanding. “Ah, well, um--we’ll leave you to it then.”

The couple ran off, leaving Dean and Cas to silently pick up the sex toys that had spilled (something
that took longer than it should've because of their mobility limitations) and tuck them all away awkwardly, shame-faced all the while.

They shut the box, their engraved names staring back at them mockingly as they did, and carefully maneuvered back to their room.

Dean slammed the door shut and shoved the offending gifts below their bed, making a mental note to incinerate it later and maybe summon Crowley to show him just how well received his gifts had been once this damn case was over.

The two simultaneously collapsed over the floral comforter, their cuffed arms resting at the center with no more than a hair's breadth between them.

It was routine—a position they found themselves in when they were particularly exhausted—but today it was painfully obvious that even if they did want to move away, one of them couldn't so much as cross his arms without pulling on the other.

It was gonna be a long week.

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**Day Two**

"I don’t know if I should feel like we’re on house arrest or if this is some sadistic voyeuristic bondage kink,” Dean muttered as one of the show’s crew clicked the cuff onto his wrist the next morning.

Yesterday’s twelve hours went as bad as expected. Going to the bathroom was fucking awkward, eating was a damn hassle, everything had to be done solo handed, and they kept jerking each other around (in the non-sexy way) with all of their sudden movements—something that happened because neither of them were accustomed to the repercussions of having literally every action affecting the other.

They weren't the only ones suffering. All of the other couples were taking their situations just as hard and it made for a tense morning. Chris and Danny kept fighting, Ellie and Lucy looked exhausted, James and Gabby had matching expressions of extreme discomfort, and Dave and William looked a little distraught.

It didn't help that soon after Dean was getting dragged into a situation he’d swore when they’d first gotten cuff ed that they wouldn’t find himself in—they were going out in public.

It was at Cas’s insistence that they were going to the supermarket. They weren't even allowed to drive while handcuffed together so the two of them had to be carpooled in the back of an SUV like a couple of kids getting hauled to the grocery store by mom.
Now they were in the cleaning supply section bickering over air fresheners. “I still don’t see why we need any of this shit.”

“Dean, this is a necessity if I am going to continue accompanying you to the bathroom.” Castiel had that displeased look on his face that made his nose scrunch up. Once Dean had called that particular expression ‘adorable’ and Castiel had found it offensive. His expression soured further at the notion and he reminded him that he was older than the human species itself.

Dean grimaced. Yeah. Bathroom situations were really awkward. Air fresheners could come in handy. “Fine. But we’re getting something decent—none of that froofroo tropical shit.”

Castiel rolled his eyes. He purposefully picked a tropical scent first, one called Hawaiian Aloha, and sprayed it in the air between them. It didn't suit him so he frowned and put it back, chastised by the thought that perhaps Dean had a point when it came to synthetic smells. He continued to pick up aerosol cans and scenting them one-by-one until the hunter intervened.

“Damnit Cas, just pick one!” Dean growled, swiping the can of 'Wildflower Medow' out of his hand and putting it back. He scanned the shelf for a cinnamon smell that reminded him of the kind they’d had in the downstairs bathroom in Lawrence before his mom died. People weren't as careful with chemical shit around their kids back then and he remembered waddling into the small room and pressing the nozzle right up against the dark cupboard below the sink so the spray would come out white and kinda foamy--his four year old self pretending it was some sort of nice smelling temporary spray paint. That wasn't why he picked it, though. He picked it because at least this smell wouldn't give him a damn migraine and so they could move on and get back home, away from the odd looks their handcuffs were getting. “Can we go now?”

“Of course, Dean.” Castiel sighed and placed the air freshener into the basket.

They moved on to get greek yogurt for Cas and pie and brown liquor at Dean’s instance despite the former angel’s reminder that they had alcohol at the house. Dean, of course, replied with ‘There’s only rum and tequila; that shit it worse than rotgut, Cas.’ He paused and grabbed another bottle, as if it was a secondary thought. ‘We’re gonna need all the drink we can get if we’re gonna survive this bullshit.’

The teenaged cashier rang them up with an unfazed expression, as if he was sadly used to seeing things stranger than two full grown men handcuffed together purchasing little more than just air freshener and booze.

**Day Three**
The third day was coming to a close with Dean and Castiel outside in the patio, one of the bottles cracked open between them plus a shared glass.

Sometime after they’d gotten back from the grocery store yesterday, they’d gotten into a heated argument. It’d been pretty bad. They ended up giving each other the silent treatment for around two hours, something that made for an unpleasantly interesting experience while chained together.

Eventually they came to a compromise and developed a system.

The two found that when they combined their actions, almost as if half the time they made up one unit, things went more smoothly than when each was left to fend for himself.

They got in each others ways much less now and the initial awkwardness had dissipated, leaving them to go through day three rather smoothly.

Cas lifted up the bottle, tilting it to indicate that Dean should hold out the cup. He refilled the tumbler halfway.

It was almost parallel to an earlier time in their friendship when Cas had also poured him a drink in a similar fashion, only the atmosphere was completely different. That meeting had been stressful for both of them and Dean had remembered being pissed at the dude. Now without the threat of RoboSam or another angel war, they were at ease, enjoying a rare quiet moment away from the cameras where they could drop their charade.

Dean took a sip before passing the drink to Cas.

Castiel tilted his head in thanks and accepted a swallow of brown liquor.

It was almost dusk, the skies still bright and blue but the moon was already out. Something about it had shifted a gear in his subconscious and he thought back to the tattoo Steph had had on her back of the phases of the moon. He passed the drink back to the hunter. “Dean… why did we rule out lunar cycles?”

“Hmm?” Dean looked at Cas curiously. “Uh, the kills weren’t based on any specific moon phase. And some of them were during the day. Lunar monsters are usually sun-up, sun-down kinda things since that’s when the moon is out.”

“Yes, but Dean look.” Castiel pointed at where the moon hung large and innocent in the sky--almost completely innocuous except for the fact that it was much more prominent than he was used to seeing during the daylight.

“Mhm. Your point?” Dean took a drink, staring at the sight with furrowed brows.
Castiel pushed on with the theory that was forming in his head. “Steph and Clara left the game on a night when the skies were clear... What if the reason they were not murdered immediately is because of the moons absence? We could still be dealing with a lunar deity but rather than attacking the couples during a specific phase, it finds itself hindered when the moon is not out.”

“It could explain the timing. I’ll ask Sam so he could check out if the delayed deaths line up with the new moons.” Dean set the glass down and fished out his phone, opting to call since one-handing texting wasn't the kinda skills he possessed. He relayed Cas's theory and Sam let them know that he was gonna check the calendar and that he’d let them know what he’d find.

The pretend couple settled back into their pensive states, sharing their bottle of liquor as the sky darkened.

It wasn't even night time yet when Sam texted back confirmation that Cas's theory fit the bill.

Another step closer to catching that monster.

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**Day Four**

Cas's eating habits fell somewhere between Dean's affinity for diner meals and junk food and Sam's healthy traits and love for organic produce. Because of that he'd end up making these weird combinations for food that reminded Dean of the stuff little kids would do--minus the gross mad scientist experiment aspect. (He vividly remembered elementary school lunch hours when some of the other boys would mix orange juice with chocolate milk 'just to see what it'd taste like,' while he was trying to sneak extra cartons from the lunch line to take home to Sammy.)

No, Cas did things like eat 'Movie Theater Butter' microwave popcorn stuffed between a sliced warm croissant or Kraft mac'n'cheese with popcorn shrimp.

Today he had a plate filled with strawberries and blackberries and pretzel sticks that he was dipping in strawberry jam (because apparently jam with peanut butter was 'unsettling' but slathering it on everything else it was okay).

Dean had watched him dip a strawberry and take a bite; he pointed out that in doing so it kinda defeated the purpose of eating them fresh.

Castiel kindly told him that if he did not wish to try the combination he did not have to and popped another blackberry into his mouth.

The hunter rolled his eyes and went back to tinkering with the engine of Dave and William's car. They’d mentioned that there was an odd rattling sound and Dean offered to take a look seeing as he was supposed to be a mechanic and Dave always made really good pie.
Lucky the problem was easy enough that even being trussed up with Cas didn't complicate things too bad.

His phone started to ring but his hands were greased up and he didn't wanna mess up his jeans. (Last time he walked around with grease-stained jeans the wardrobe lady damn near threw a fit, and he didn't need that shit in his life--Samantha's bitching was enough for him.) “Hey, can you get that for me?”

Castiel licked off any stray berry residue from his fingers and fished out the cell phone from Dean’s front pocket. “It’s Sam.” At Dean’s nod, he accepted the call and placed Sam on speaker. “Hello, Sam.”

“Yo, what’s up?” Dean added.

“Hey, guys, I think I got a match on in the lore.” Sam’s voice blared from the phone.

“Wha’d you find?” Dean gruffed as he continued to work on the engine. He surveyed it for a moment. “Cas, baby, can you pass me that wrench?”

Castiel passed him the tool he’d indicated and Dean nodded his thanks.

There was a faint huff over the phone line that sounded vaguely amused. “Wow. You’re uh--really into this gig, aren't you?”

“What? No. Shut up.” Dean didn’t know if Sam was teasing him because he’d gotten into the habit of calling Cas ‘baby’ instead of calling him ‘buddy’ or if it was over his apparently new-found domesticity.

“Well then I haven’t seen you slip this deep into a cover since Hell Hazers II.” Sam quipped, referring to their brief stint on that haunted movie set.

Dean remembered that--he might've been just a little more into his fake job as a PA than the actual case. (But c'mon, being a PA for a Hollywood movie was awesome. He'd really felt like part of the team for a while.) "Yeah, well, maybe I was just destined for 'The Industry.' Now wha’d ya got for us?"
Sam had his suspicions that it was something more but he kept them to himself. The sound of shuffling papers fed in through the speakers. “I think I got a match on our deity,” he started. “Have you ever heard of Yue Lao?”

“The Chinese cupid god?” Dean asked, surprised.

“Yeah? How did you know?” Sam sounded equally puzzled that Dean recognized the name.

“He, uh, might’ve come up in the plot in a couple of the anime I’ve watched.” And by anime he meant strictly hentai, which was the Asian cartoon porn he liked to dabble in. “I thought that he was supposed to be some sagacious old man or something.”

“I didn't think that kinda stuff even had plot,” By the disgust coloring Sam’s voice, it was clear he knew exactly what kind of ‘anime’ Dean was into. “But yeah, his full name actually translates into 'Old Man Under the Moon,' and for all intents and purposes, all the signs say he's our guy.”

“Hey, you watch your mouth--it’s an artform.” Dean’s tone sounded genuinely offended.

"Have you discovered any weaknesses? Any way we could incapacitate it?” Castiel interjected, getting them back on track.

“I'm translating what I think is a summoning ritual. How soon till you guys can swing by the motel again?” Sam asked.

"We're getting 'unlinked' on Friday," Dean told him.

"And then they are going to allow the viewers an extra day to cast in their votes so we will be able to meet you on Saturday before the live screening." Castiel added. "With any luck we may be able to prevent it from killing again."

"Alright, sounds good. I'll let you know if I find anything else." They exchanged brief goodbyes and Sam let them go.
Dean went back to messing with the car while Cas sat by on a plastic upturned bucket, finishing his snack. When he looked up he found the former angel watching him with jam smeared across his lower lip. The sight made Dean smile. "You've got a little something--" He mimed at wiping his own mouth.

Castiel ran his tongue along his lips, trying to get at whatever it was Dean said he had there but he couldn't quite reach it all.

"You missed a spot--um, do you mind?" Dean was asking permission to get the rest of it. His hands were filthy but there was another way he could help.

It seemed to take a moment for the former angel to understand but when he did he nodded his consent.

Dean slowly inched forward till his mouth was close to touching Cas's. He cautiously licked at the line of red jam that coated the other man's lower lip. Cas opened up then and Dean's tongue slid along the exposed smooth area, nearly slipping into Cas's mouth.

It might have been Castiel who closed the distance or it might've been Dean, but neither seemed to have any qualms as their mouths melded together. The kiss was long and deceptively soft—deceptive because while the kiss wasn't as physical as the passionate drunken lip-lock from the other week, both of their hearts were thrumming just as hard as when they'd been rutting against each other.

Dean licked into Cas's mouth one last time before pulling away, just barely. He rested his forehead against the other man's and their breaths mingled together as they tried to settle down their heart rates.

This was the first time they’d kissed off-screen since they’d been on the show and it was… intense. He didn't know what to make of it other than recognizing that Cas was actually a damn good kisser, beyond than what he'd experienced from their chaste exchanges on cam.

The hunter leaned back, clearing his throat. “I–uh–I got it. Next time watch where you’re eating, ya big baby.” His voice was rougher than it was before, keeping that same brusqueness he usually had when he was bossing people around but he did steal another peck from his angel before turning back to the car.

Castiel felt a bit stunned, touching his fingertips to his own lips with his free hand.

The kiss was nice.

It was very pleasant.
He was a bit confused, of course, seeing as this wasn't part of their act but the moment did not feel strained. It felt oddly… comfortable once he passed the feeling of near cardiac arrest. He'd also grown to tell the difference between 'baby' as an endearment and 'baby' when Dean was insulting him by comparing him to a child--it was easy to see which this was and so he let out a huff in response.

The former angel remembered his abandoned jar of jam and turned back to it, absentmindedly screwing it shut.

They spent the rest of the time in companionable silence as Dean worked.

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**Day Five**

Although Dean and Cas had found a way to work around the handcuff impediment, not all of the couples had been on the same page.

It was late morning on the fifth day and everyone was crowded at the dinner table, enjoying the brunch spread production had laid out. (Something they'd started doing after the producers realized after several mishaps that cooking while handcuffed was a hazard.)

Seeing as it was the last day of this stupid challenge, most of them were in high spirits. Ellie and Lucy were feeding each other (Dean begrudgingly called the sight 'nauseatingly cute'); Dave and William didn't go that far, but they were sharing their meal; Gaby elbowed James playfully and stole a slice of buttered toast off his plate; and Dean was chomping on a sandwich made up of crispy strips of bacon slathered with maple syrup between two waffles (which Castiel found mildly disgusting) while Cas was carefully forking through a plateful of scrambled eggs and bacon with one hand, the other entwined with the hunters between them as they ate.

That just left Chris and Danny who were arguing again.

"Fucking watch it," Chris snapped, shoving Danny's hand away to grab at the last hunk of sausage.

"You already had some, stop being a bitch!" Danny tried to take it back and ended up tipping a carton of almond milk Chris favored, spilling it all over Dean.

"What the fuck, dude!" Dean jumped, picking up the fallen carton but his jeans had already been rapidly soaked through.

Chris and Danny didn't spare him any mind--actually Chris looked a little more concerned about his milk than the fact that it was seeping into Dean's underwear right about now. "Oh, well look what you did now, Dan."
Danny scoffed. "Me? That was totally your fault!"

"Like hell it was! Maybe if you dick was as big as your fucking fumbly ass arms, shit like this wouldn't happen." Chris sneered.

"That doesn't even make any sense!"

While they squabbled, Cas was trying to pat down the moisture on Dean's pants with his napkin. Lucy offered hers and the former angel accepted it with a briefly thankful look but Dean just shook his head and gently pushed him away. Shit, he felt like the victim of one of those moronic people you saw in late night infomercials, because this was just damn ridiculous. He sighed. "It's no good, man, I just gotta change. You done here?"

Castiel nodded. They excused themselves and made their way back to their room.

It was in the bathroom when things started to get awkward…

In the first day of their confinement to each other, they'd had more than a handful of uncomfortable moments in there. It was highly unpleasant and more than a bit humiliating for both parties but they'd mostly surpassed all of that.

Any other time they'd get in, do their business, and get out--ignoring each other as best as possible 'cause there was a time and a place for chit-chat and the bathroom just ain't it.

Hell, even Cas got that there was an unspoken 'don't-check-out-at-each-others-junk’ rule. (Not that it was too hard--Dean wasn't into watersports and, as far as he could tell, neither was Cas so the bathroom was pretty much the unsexiest place to check each other out.)

This was a totally different situation though.

“Cas, can you--ah--can you be a buddy and, um, help me take off my pants?” Dean had learned to be self-sufficient in their situation but popping a few buttons and undoing a zipper were miles away from trying to get these things off his damn bowlegs with just one fully functioning hand.

Castiel hesitated for a moment before replying. “Of course, Dean.”

There was an awkward pause after Dean moved in to unbutton his pants (he needing to do something at least, instead of feeling like a helpless little kid) when Cas moved to do the same and they just kinda stood at a standstill unsure of how to move on. Finally Dean nodded slightly, giving Cas the go ahead that he had full reign of the situation.
Castiel undid the top button slowly and with great care, highly aware of the trust that came with such an act. He undid the hunter’s zipper and slid two fingers beneath his waistband. It was then that he paused, head tilting and brows knitting together, because he hadn't actually thought this through—the physical act of taking off another person’s pants while attached at the wrists.

The chain between them wasn't very short but it wasn't very long either. He wouldn't be able to remove the other man’s jeans while they were both still standing and Dean couldn't very well sit down because that would make removing them all that much harder.

It took him a moment to suss it all out in his head but when he did he finally understood just what to do.

The former angel straightened out his expression to one of determination, his head lifting as he corrected his posture and looked Dean dead in the eyes. “Kick off your shoes.”

Dean blinked at the change. He did as he was told and Cas ordered him to lean against the wall by the shower.

Then all Dean could do was watch as Cas slid to his knees in front of him.

Castiel steadied himself for a moment by placing his hands on Dean’s denim wrapped thighs. He looked up through his lashes at the wide-eyed hunter questioningly.

Dean took the hint and lifted his shirt up a bit, exposing his lower abdomen and the now-undone jeans where the band of his boxer briefs were peeking through. He arched his back a bit so that the only point of contact with the wall’s cool tiles were his broad shoulders.

With his fingers methodically gripping the waistband of other mans jeans, their backs brushing up against the lightly tanned skin where his abdomen met the elastic of his underwear, Castiel cautiously eased his pants off--his hands skimming his rear, his thighs, the back of his knees as he pulled them down.

The hunter shivered at the light touches. He lifted one foot, allowing Cas to get one leg completely off, and then did the same to the other. That left him leaning against the bathroom wall in just socks, a black t-shirt and his grey boxer briefs that were also soaked through with milk.

Cas was still kneeling, looking up at him with an expectant look. He was waiting for Dean’s authorization to go ahead and help him take off his underwear too. Dean swallowed. “Do you--are you sure you wanna... I mean, I get if this is some line you don’t wanna cross.”

“My only concern is that my aid is not unbidden.” Castiel answered honestly.
Dean’s brow furrowed. “Of course not, man. I just don’t wanna--y’know, make things awkward.”

“Your body does not make me uncomfortable, if that is what you’re implying, Dean.” The former angel’s tone was patient, as if he was politely explaining to a child that made an incorrect statement just why what they said was completely ridiculous.

Dean rolled his eyes at the mildly condescending attitude Cas was giving him. “Alright then, get on with it.”

A corner of his mouth lifted briefly and then Castiel was turning his ‘laser focus’ back on the task at hand.

The task being the removal of Dean's underpants.

The fabric was soaked through with milk (to be honest, it was an obscene sight) and he was sure Dean must feel uncomfortable having that much dairy product in a place where it had no right to be.

Despite the confidence he was projecting though, Castiel was a bit tense. Touch was still novel to him. Even when it came to Dean--who at times was the only person he truly felt kinship with in his long and somewhat lonesome existence--it was still startling to be touched by something other than violence.

Since becoming human touch came with much more connotation than it did before. It stirred up comfort, discomfort, warmth, pain, and arousal among other things--feelings he often found consuming. He occasionally wondered if he was more susceptible to touch because he was so unaccustomed to it--if he felt these things more strongly than Dean did because he’d never truly experienced them until now. Or maybe touch and what came with it was just that powerfully overwhelming to all humans.

He thought of that now as he gently flattened the palm of his hand over the other man’s lower stomach, swiping at the residual almond milk there and absentmindedly wiping it onto his own jeans.

It made Dean automatically arch his back again, his stomach tightening, defining abs that are usually hidden under a light layer of (mostly pie-induced) softness.

This time Castiel noted the shiver that ran through Dean when he did that. He thought the man must be cold (which would logically make sense seeing as he’d had his lower half drenched in cool liquid and was now partially naked) and so he moved on--pulling the elastic of his underwear back to comfortably remove it. A few of his fingers brushed against Dean’s penis and he mumbled an apology.
“It, um, it’s okay.” Dean murmured. He was thinking of dead puppies and translating Latin and witches spewing their gross bodily fluids everywhere to keep the familiar flutter in his lower gut from spreading further, and had been ever since Cas first got on his knees. But that was getting harder now (almost literally).

He resisted the urge to cover himself as Cas dragged his underwear down his legs, touching the same places he had when he’d taken off his pants. It was doing nothing to stave off his current impending plight.

He stepped out of the wet drawers and the action made him feel that much more exposed. “I should, uh, clean myself up…”

“I can, well, I can continue to assist you--if you’d allow it.” Castiel added carefully.

Dean just stared. This sounded like the beginning of a bad porno, but he knew Cas was just offering… because it was Cas.

The dude had gotten into this whole overly-helpful mentality after he’d fallen. He kept offering to do every little thing (and sometimes doing em wrong, which did more bad than good) because he wanted to prove he was still useful without his angel mojo. Dean had to smack that kinda thinking out of him a couple of times.

He was about to do it again, assuming this was one of those situations, when Cas interrupted.

“I want to... Please.”

The hunter swallowed. He hesitantly nodded, giving Cas the go-ahead.

Castiel leaned over to where there was a nearby washcloth he enjoyed using while bathing. He gripped Dean’s hip with one hand as the other reached towards the tap, letting the water run hot to wet the small towel. When it was damp, he squeezed out some of the excess and brought it back.

He ran the warm cloth over Dean’s hips, following the V meticulously. The former angel mopped up the residual sticky-sweet dairy, cleaning up Dean’s muscular thighs one after the other, he swiped at the expanse along his lower abdomen, dipping in close to his crotch but he would evade actually touching the area.

He reached back towards the running water and wet the towel again, rinsing it out. When he was done he held it in his hand and looked up at the hunter with wide blue eyes.

Cas was waiting for permission again--this time to touch his cock.

Dean’s chest rose and fell in a shallow rhythm. He was already sporting the beginnings of an
erection because of all the attention Cas was giving him and he wasn't sure if letting the him touch his penis was the best idea... but right now he found he couldn't actually get the words out.

So he just nodded.

When the warm washcloth touched his dick, he breathed out a quiet gasp and all his stupid head could think was: yeah, he wasn't gonna make it through this without getting totally hard.

Cas’s motions were slow and precise, cleaning up along his shaft, gently running the towel along his cock in a manner that was probably not meant to be as teasing as it felt.

Dean reached out and grabbed Cas’s wrists, stopping him. “Cas, I, um, I think we should stop.”

Castiel’s heart was booming in his ears, a sudden fear that he’d overstepped his boundaries and an even stronger fear that he was about to surpass them even farther. “What if… what if I were to say I’d like to continue?” He asked, cautiously.

“Cas.” Dean sucked in a sharp breath and blinked down at him. “Do you even know what you’re asking?”

“Of course I do, Dean.” The former angel rolled his eyes. “Unless your genitalia does not have the same functions as mine, I am fully aware of what I’m suggesting.”

Cas could be a sassy little shit when he wanted to be, and normally Dean would call him out on it, but this was… this was something else.

This wasn't pretending for a camera or practice--this was real.

...This was like that kiss in the garage: just the two of them, stumbling head first (and there was probably an innuendo in there somewhere) into a situation they’d entertained but never truly considered doing before fate smacked them in the face with it.

Dean gulped. “Well, I’m gonna get some awkward chaffing if you keep using that damn towel.” He croaked.

Falling back to sit on his heels, Castiel looked comically stunned. He’d been expecting a flat out rejection. (In fact, more than one of the scenarios he’d imagined had involved outraged yelling.) And now he was a little stumped.

He looked up at Dean, noting that his nerves were transparent despite the slight amusement and the cocky facade that colored his demeanor. It settled something in Cas to see he was not the only one ‘freaking-out.’

He adjusted his stance (wishing now that he’d laid out a couple of folded towels, as being on his knees for so long was getting to be uncomfortable) and put down the washcloth.
Castiel ran his hand back up the hunters tanned thigh, this time skin on skin. Dean spread them automatically, his splayed thighs making the ‘Texan-style bowleg’ he resented that much more pronounced.

The hand that was chained slid up his other thigh and over his waist line, caressing his hips and settling his palm there. He finally took hold of the other man’s (now fully developed) erection and gave it an experimental pump.

Dean audibly bit back his groan.

That was Cas’s hand was on his dick.

Cas was touching his dick.

Cas was touching his dick and Cas was giving him a handjob.

He was pretty sure this was just some vivid wet dream and he was gonna wake up with his sticky underpants and gross out his angel.

But for now Cas was still working him over with his long (albeit slightly inexperienced) fingers.

Castiel had never done this to anyone other than himself. He’d never even had it done to him so it was only expected that his touch would be uncertain. But it was curious and a bit eager now that his nerves were beginning to dissipate.

He looked up at Dean to gauge his reactions as he pumped his shaft, settling in a rhythm where he eased at the base and then tightened as he approached the tip. He seemed to be doing something right if the sight of Dean’s face was anything to go by.

The hunter had a pink flush staining his freckled cheeks, his eyes were fixated on Castiel with a purely debauched look, pupils dilated and plump lips popped open.

It encouraged the former angel to try out something that he’d done to himself and found pleasant--this time he stopped at the tip, squeezing for a bit longer before pulling back a bit and circling his thumb around the sensitive nerves that made up the head of the man’s cock. He ran gathered up the cloudy moisture that had been leaking from the slit and spread it down over the frenulum, that little v below the head of his penis, and down the bottom of his shaft--slicking up the way so he could speed up his rhythm just slightly.

Dean moaned at the little trick Cas had picked up. His breath had started coming in pants and he leaned more heavily against the cool tile of the wall, their surface a bit slick with humidity since Cas had never turned off the hot water and the bathroom had been steaming up.

Castiel found his own breathing affected, his own erection straining against the inside of his jeans. He paid it no mind--choosing, rather, to lean forward and place a soft kiss against the other man’s hip. It earned him a pleased hmmm so he did it again, this time more lush.
Dean seemed to enjoy it so he ended up sucking a mark into the smooth expanse of skin all while continuing his rhythm.

Somehow their cuffed hands ended up entwined together against his lower abdomen. That and the bathroom wall were the only things keeping him grounded right now. He let out another moan as Cas squeezed the head of his dick again. “Cas, I’m gonna--” He broke off in a gasp as Cas redoubled his efforts and sped up.

Castiel watched as Dean’s orgasm overtook him, his pink lips circling over a groan after calling out ‘Cas!’ the physical evidence of it spurted up over the former angel's hand as he worked him through it.

He picked up the discarded hand towel from before and wiped the sticky substance off his hand and then tried to gently clean up the residue off the hunter.

Dean hissed. “Oversensitive, Cas, watch it.” He grumbled.

He grabbed at the former angel’s wrist like he did before only now he slipped his hand in his and pulled him up to his feet. He gazed at the guy with no little wonder, falling into one of those long looks that’d become their ‘thing’ since they’d first met. (The kind that usually had Sam in the background looking on with one of those scoff-y 'wtf you two aren't even listening' faces they never paid attention to.)

He slid his free hand up Cas’s arm, sliding across his face (and the scruff he’d grown used to feeling), and into his hair. He searched the former angel’s blue eyes--knowing that all that stuff that just happened could’ve been some kind of experiment to Cas--before leaning in and gingerly pressing a kiss on those lips.

Castiel melted into it and the Winchester took the advantage and deepened the act. He was unprepared for Dean’s other hand when it started palming at the forgotten bulge in his jeans. He’d been on the precipice of his orgasm for so long that it took him by surprise, coming suddenly from just a bit of friction from Dean and groaning into the other man's mouth.

He pulled back to breathe and hid his face into the crook of the green-eyed man's neck as he tried to catch his breath.

Dean smoothed a palm over the back of his angels head, chuckling lightly. “Well you could’ve offered to buy a guy dinner first before getting into my pants.”

Castiel pulled back and narrowed his eyes at him in a bleary imitation of his usually intimidating squint.
He vaguely looked like like a house cat that thought he was a mountain lion and the thought made Dean smile. “Not that I don’t love hanging out in the bathroom, but I need pants and you’re gonna wanna change out of yours soon.”

Castiel ‘mmm’d in agreement and tossed the hunter the pair of fresh boxer briefs they’d brought into the bathroom. He shut off the hot water that’d been running during their little tryst before assisting Dean in putting them on (and perhaps leisurely pressing a few kisses onto his lower abdomen and against the hickey he’d left as he did).

They escaped back into the room. Dean sat down on the plush bed, pulling Cas close by the waistband of his jeans before unbuttoning them and sliding both pants and soiled briefs off in one go so Cas could step out of them, kicking off his shoes as he did.

Dean used the filthy underwear to wipe clean whatever spunk was left on Cas, trying to show at least a minuscule amount of the same kind of attention the former angel had given him.

He silently urged him to support his hands on his shoulders so the hunter could help him into a fresh pair.

After they were both semi decent in nothing but t-shirts, boxer briefs, and socks, they laid down side-by-side on the bed.

The big question was heavy in the air and they were both stuck waiting for the other to either bring it up, ‘roll with it,’ or ignore it all together and go back to the way they’d been before.

It ended up being Castiel who made the choice, if just because he couldn’t hold out succumbing to the lazy jelly-like feeling that usually accompanied such a large orgasm. He tentatively scooted closer to the other man.

Dean got the message and let out a small dramatic groan as he wrapped an arm around the former angel. “So you’re one of those post-orgasmic cuddlers.”

Castiel eased into the embraced. He elbowed him for that comment, letting out a huff as he did. “Might I point out that it is you who initiates these ‘cuddles’ more often than not.”

“Just shut up and enjoy it while it lasts, angel.” Dean gruffed.

He chose not to point out that he wasn’t an angel anymore and did just that, closing his eyes in the
hopes that they might be able to sleep most of the day away until it was time for the cuffs could come off--before they delved deep into the actual ‘hunting’ part of this case, and before it came time for them to spell out what had actually happened and what it meant towards the nature of their relationship.

Chapter End Notes

I'm really dumb so sorry if any of these scenarios sucked. I am also sorry for the stupidest porn scenario ever. (Fucking milk, what was I thinking?) Again, I am vvv dumb and I am so so sorry.

Also as much as I love Crowley, I didn't have any plans to include him in this case but then I got the image in my head of a bunch of demons in hell huddled around a television watching the show and couldn't resist--some voting against the Winchester and his pretty boy angel, some legitimately enjoying the show and placing bets on their favorite couples, but more importantly a bunch of demons in some dungeon snuggling up with pillows and blankets (while a bunch of tortured souls moan, all chained up in the background) as they watched Dean and Cas go through challenges like 'I fucking knew it' 'about damn time' 'told you they were the otp'

PS. In case it wasn't clear--the reason when one of them tried to do something for himself it'd be a 'one handed' job while the other could do it for him with two is because while chained together, moving their hands towards their own body tugged at the other's arm awkwardly but if the other person leaned in, they could do it for them with two hands because it wouldn't affect much how the other persons arm moved. (Does that make sense? I dunno. This authors note is too long. I'm really dumb. Sorry.)

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
5.03- Free to Be You and Me
4.01- Lazarus Rising
5.10- Abandon All Hope
6.20- The Man That Would Be King
6.06- You Can't Handle The Truth
6.07- Family Matters
9.11- First Born
2.18- Hollywood Babylon
7.12- Time After Time

Plus honorable mention to:
-Ceci (duck_poot) for bringing up the idea of Dean and Cas handcuffed together on one of our Skype sessions.
-'Mr. Del Mar,' 'Daddy's hang-ups,' 'cabin in Wyoming,' and even 'stemming the rose' are all Brokeback Mountain references + stemming the rose is a euphemism for anal sex.
-All of the crazy sex items listed in Crowley's treasure chest actually exist in real life. (Brands were mentioned within the text with the exception of the Angel Wing Cock Ring that was from a company called Fun Factory but is currently discontinued and the 'Candy Heart Butt Plugs' are actually manufactured by a company called Blush but they do sell on a website called Adam and Eve so I chose that route to continue Crowley's offensive theme.)
Also a warning to those who Google the company Divine-Interventions--it is not for the faint of heart. All of the products I chose (with the exception of THE DEVIL) are from their 'non-denominational' line as their other products can be a little (or a lot actually) more offensive seeing they're modeled explicitly after religious iconography. (So unless you're ready to stumble upon a BabyJesus buttplug, I would not go to their website.)
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

I'm pretty sure this fic is gonna come to a close a few chapters from now (long chapters like this though) and possibly an epilogue, *maybe* a crack-y timestamp of the demons watching the show in hell, and *probably* a couple of related pwps (added on as stand-alone works in a 'series' but that have nothing to really do with the plot so they don't really affect this story.)

Warning for a huge chunk of lore in Dean's pov, turn back now while you still can.

Also there's a sentence where he tries to make a lame joke that, considering the context, is a little racist and Sam calls him out on it. (So why was it included? Because cheap jokes like that slide in real life and on TV shows all the time and don't get called out often enough so here's an instance where it was.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sam sighed and looked over his computer screen to where his brother was sitting with his fake boyfriend. “Don’t you guys have somewhere to be?”

What he go back were two suspiciously emphatic and simultaneous: “No!”s

Dean and Cas were being especially weird today. They showed up at the motel at around ten AM, insisting they were ready to sift through the lore.

Thing was, they kept tiptoeing around each other--and instead of playing their usual game of 'don’t blink,' they were taking turns sneaking these long gazes when one thought the other wasn't looking.

When they weren't actively avoiding one another, Sam would catch them shifting into those same little habits they (probably) wouldn't have adopted if it hadn't been on this case for so long--Dean scratching his nails through the hair on the back of Cas’s head; Cas breaking out of his normally straight posture as he draped his feet over Dean’s lap; Dean popping out for grub and coming back with whatever Cas was in the mood for without even asking beforehand (though Sam had to text him twice that he wanted his order WITHOUT feta cheese); Cas leaning over when Dean looked uncertain about a specific translation and helping him through it, and Dean letting him help without the snide commentary he’d’ve given Sam if Sam had offered in his stead.

He couldn't really pinpoint what was up with those two--but if there was one thing the younger Winchester knew was that, when it came to those idiots, there was no point in trying to work it out.

Dean was as chatty as a brick wall and Castiel was just as reticent as his brother.

They’d been at this for the better part of six hours now and Sam was getting a little stir-crazy from the vibe they'd been putting out.
“They have allowed us to stay away longer than normally permitted as we are not required at the studio until eight.” Castiel added. "I believe it is their way of repaying us for any lasting damage from the previous challenge.”

“I'm pretty sure they're just buttering us up before they pimp us out.” Dean scoffed. Production was forcing all the couples to get dolled up tonight, just so they can boot one of them off. He closed the old journal he’d been reading through and added it to the pile of shit he’d already scanned. “Anything on the fed front?”

“Nothing.” Sam replied. He'd been keeping extra close tabs on all the law enforcement fronts for this case. "You'd think dead or not that someone would notice you look an awful lot like that Winchester character that was number two on the FBI’s most wanted list.”

“Like anyone could see my handsome mug under that ten-foot-tall shadow.” Dean smirked. "But no Samsquatch? No problem.”

It was kinda true for a situation like this. The nation might've been on the brink of becoming doped up cattle at the time, but put Sam and him side by side in front of a camera and it just might start jogging some memories out there. Separated they were way less likely to be recognized.

Plus, other than the time he hulked out on film--unconsciously slaughtering Senator Walker’s 2012 campaign office in the process--they wouldn't know to look out for Cas. “Feds are weak, Sammy. They're just bureaucratic civilians.”

Sam rolled his eyes. He sat up and got that subtly-excited not-completely-hidden grin on his face that usually meant Dean wasn't gonna like what he had to say. “Well, someone actually did make you.”

“What? Who?” Dean’s eyes widened. Crowley and the demons realizing he and Cas had Brokeback’d their way onto a dating show was one thing (even if it was a pretty friggin’ humiliating thing) but anyone (or any thing) else catching up to them was too messy.

Deity be damned, they’d bail if shit got complicated but... Sam still had that stupidly pleased look on his face?

A second later he knew why: “The fan girls.”
Dean groaned.

“The who?” Castiel asked, brow furrowed and clearly perplexed.

“Those people that actually like Chuck’s stupid books. Supernatural fans or whatever--they’re all crazy people.” Dean grounded out in tone that showcased how clearly not-amusing any of this was. “We’re supposed to be fictional--how the fuck did they find us?”

"The Winchester Gospels?” Castiel questioned, surprised to hear of the former prophet’s work.

Sam nodded at Cas while his brother just rolled his eyes.

"Well, there’re only so many 'Castiel's in the world--even less running around with butch assholes named Dean.” The younger Winchester quipped.

He thought back to the whole tattoo scene from the other week.

The one where Dean gave his usual cover story about how his tattoo wasn’t a Satanic cult brand and pretty much drunkenly groped Cas while he spouted some bullcrap about the enochian warding. (It was right before they had that whole makeout session he’d studiously not asked Dean about, despite the part of him that really wanted to know if his brother was just a better, more 'dedicated' actor than he’d given him credit for or if there was something more at play.)

If the names 'Dean' and 'Castiel' plus the fact that they were a dead ringer to the descriptions from the books didn’t send out some bat signals, those tattoos sure would’ve.

Sam clicked through something on his laptop. "I'm kinda surprised it wasn't pointed out earlier but the 'Carver Edlund' books online cut off a little after the apocalypse--I guess they were expecting an angel in a trench coat."

Sighing, Dean closed his eyes and used three fingers to pinch the bridge of his nose. He was beyond done with this Supernatural nonsense. "Is this gonna complicate the case?"

"Probably not. Not all of the fans believe it--most of them think it's either a hoax, elaborate cosplay, some kind of alternative publicity for the books, or really that it's just a weird coincidence; a lot don't watch reality TV; others don't care. But some of them are, uh, a little more enthusiastic--claiming they knew it was real all along. Actually, check this out--" Sam showed them the screen of his laptop that was set on a gaudy website done up in black and red.

It had SUPERNATURAL flashing across a banner with a poorly drawn anti-possession symbol next to it.

The page he'd pulled up was a message board started by none other than beckywinchester176 titled
"Goddamn it, Becky." Dean muttered after snatching the computer away from Sam. He thought it kinda explained how they'd made it this far into the competition.

The hunter scrolled down to see a post by someone that called themselves superfanstiel talking about how 'everyone already knew Dean and Cas were meant for each other,' spouting some 'love at first sight' crap and claiming 'omg, do you remember all the UST in the chapter at the end of Lazarus Rising when Dean saw Cas for the first time? You could totally tell Dean was channeling all that sudden sexual attraction into his anger.'

“This is fucking ridiculous.” Dean shook his head in disgust, sliding the computer away before he could catch sight of something worse. (The never have I ever 'bottom' incident flashed through his mind and nearly made him cringe.) He glared at Sam. “Why the hell are you so damn happy about this? This is like--like invasion of privacy! Its practically slander.”

“On the upside, a lot of them stopped writing incestual porn about us.” Sam pointed out.

Castiel looked up at that and glanced between them with a bewildered look on his face.

“Yeah, that totally makes things better, Sammy! Now they’re writing it about me and Cas.” Dean rolled his eyes. "Awesome."

It didn't matter that it was kinda-sorta-true now, it was still freaky.

He was cool (for the most part) when it came to forking over some of his privacy rights while being ‘Dean Smith.’

'Cause all that?

That was just pretend. (..Well, mostly just pretend.)

But Dean Winchester?

It didn't matter that most of them thought he wasn't real, or that they didn't know his real last name, or actual bits of his real life, or even that they were just fucking around as an excuse to write extra kinky porn--it was still all too close.

He didn't need anymore people trying to dissect who they thought he was. He thought he’d had enough of a surreal experience with that during Chuck’s stupid haunted convention.

Hell, he still couldn't shake the memory of that one panel--'Frightened little boy, the secret life of Dean.'

He was a hunter dammit! He deserved to be taken seriously.
It was almost worse that Cas got dragged into it.

Where it mattered, the dude was still an angel. He was older than dirt, older than the human race—he was once powerful enough to literally *drag a guy out of hell* while other, lesser angels apparently died trying to do the same.

Now people were sitting in their mom's basements writing creepy invasive gay porn about the guy? Frankly, Dean was kinda outraged on his behalf.

He turned to look at the former angel, expecting like a revolted look or something—but what he found was Cas clicking through Sam's laptop curiously.

"What is 'Wincestiel'?" The man asked innocently as he stumbled upon the word in the list of title 'threads' under a forum labeled 'Fic Recs.'

It took half a second for Dean to connect what the unfamiliar term could've meant—and when he did, his head snapped towards Sam so fast his neck damn near cracked like a whip. He should have taken pleasure in the light green sheen coloring his brother's disgusted face—finally, something got an appropriate reaction out of him—but he couldn't enjoy it because that look just confirmed that his horrific assumption was correct.

He stole the computer away from Cas immediately and slammed it shut, gagging a little bit as he did. "That's just all kinds of wrong, man, c'mmon.” He ran the palm of his hand roughly over his face in exasperation. “Can we get back to the damn case?”

“Yeah, okay, sorry.” Sam frowned. He opened up a file from where he’d set up camp on the edge of the motel’s bed, using a spare chair as a makeshift computer desk seeing as Dean and Cas had taken over the rickety wooden table.

He passed a photo over to where the two had been driving through a mountain of ancient lore books and handwritten journals that Sam had brought up from both the bunker, plus a few single-copy relics Bobby had stored at Rufus’s cabin. “That’s Mei Wilson. She and her fiance Jacob were the first vics.”

The picture Dean laid between them was of an attractive young woman of Asian descent with a big smile on her face. Clipped behind it was another photograph that looked to be a printed screencap from the show as it showed her, and who Castiel presumed to be Jacob, in the mansion’s amoeba-shaped pool.

She’d been laying on a translucent pink raft while her lover lingered by her in the water.

Below the image was a duplicate that had been zoomed in to showcase her foot. She’d been wearing a silk string tied around her ankle that was almost identical to the ones they’d been finding with the other victims.
“Since she’s the only one with any connection to the string premortem, I did a little digging. Her family moved here from China six generations before her. Parent’s had been settled into the suburbs for nearly as long--white picket fence, corn casserole for dinner and all that--but her great-grandfather had a Chinese antique store. I talked to her sister and she said their granddad had been deep into cultural folklore and that he and Mei were close." Sam passed his brother the rest of the file. "The shops been shut down since his death in '09--and the guy lived to the ripe old age of one hundred and twelve--but I checked out the spot anyways and I found these Chinese protection marks carved all over the building's facade."

"And these are legit?" Dean asked as he examined the photos of intricate characters etched into different bricks that made up the former antique store. "This isn't, like, when someone asks for a tattoo that says 'forever' and they end up with 'soy sauce' inked across their ass, it?"

Castiel had given him an odd look at the question but Sam nodded as if it was a completely valid thought and confirmed that the markings were real.

"Alright, so we're thinking grandpa 'Mister Miyagi’d' a different kind of secret arts to our vic and she used it to call herself up her own personal love guru--" Dean paused, then got one of those small boy-ish grins that meant there was a ridiculous joke or cheesy pun on the line. "--like special delivery from Panda Express."

Sam huffed at Dean’s derogatory attempt at humor. “One, that's racist. Two, Panda Express doesn't even do delivery.”

Dean nodded towards his first point, conceding that it was pretty fucking shitty and making a mental note to watch himself in the future. He put up some bravado for the second point, though. “Whatever, bitch, you know what I meant.” Cas scooted closer to take a look at the warding marks and it made the hairs on Dean's arm stand on edge. He cleared his throat and passed the file towards the former angel. “But this thing supposed to be about love and marriage and stuff--why’s it going all David Berkowitz?"

They'd uncovered more dirt on this episode’s ‘monster of the week’ in the last six hours than they’d managed in the past month.

Dean sifted through piles of lore, Cas had mostly been on translating duty, and Sam manned the computer stuff.

Everything they found ended up on the wall, steadily fusing together each piece of the puzzle until they finally got a clear picture of what they were up against.

So far they knew their monster was most commonly known as Yue Lao, a shortening of 'Yue Xia
“Lao Ren,” meant to translate more or less into ‘Old Man Under The Moon’--a phrase so commonly associated with the deity that the Chinese characters simply came up as ‘matchmaker’ when they ran them through Google Translate.

Most of their digging had brought up Chinatown parades with small floats dedicated to the guy--stuff that was more cultural than actual worship--along with statues, mini figurines, and those bamboo calendars that depicted Yue Lao as an old Asian man with a long white beard, draped in traditional robes, and carrying a walking stick in one hand and red cords and a book in the other.

Most of the source they found told the same story over and over again: Yue Lao's legend.

It started out with a young dude named Wei Gu who was having trouble with the ladies--guy was pretty desperate to find himself a wife. (Sounded like a loser, if you asked Dean.) He'd been to a city called Song--some versions said he was passing through on business, while others suggested he was on another ‘prospective marriage trip’ that ended up being a bust--when he came across an old man with a sack, reading a book under the moonlight.

Wei Gu got curious and approached the man to ask him about the book.

He informed him that it was a book of marriages, listing who was meant to marry whom.

Wei then asked him what was in the bag and the old man told him they were red cords for ‘tying the feet of husband and wife,’ stating that when a male and a female were tied together with those red strings that they would be destined for marriage in the future.

It sounded like a load of crap, and Wei thought so too, so he asked the old man if he could show him his future wife.

The next three parts of the legend changed a little more from source to source but the premises were still the same.

First the old man would show Wei Gu a woman and a small child, stating that the kid was meant to be his future wife. In some stories an old woman would walk by carrying a child, both appearing to live in poverty. Some stated the old man would take him to a crowded marketplace and show him a blind woman and a three-year-old. Other times it was just the little girl alone, playing ball or whatever little kids in ancient China did for kicks.

The next part of the legend usually had the guy ordering one of his servants to kill the little girl. Wei’s reasoning changed depending on the source. Half of them said it was because he thought the old man was making up silly stories so he’d have the girl killed to prove he was telling ridiculous lies as a way ‘to prevent him from lying to other people,’ while the other half was usually some classist bullshit where he thought the little girl looked too poor to ever be his wife and would have her killed.
to prevent the old man’s prophecy from coming true.

Then the story would fast forward so that fourteen years later and Wei Gu would end up marrying the daughter of a high official, usually a governor who had trouble finding a better standard as a suitable match for her, despite the often stated claim that she was beautiful.

All of the stories pretty much implied that the dude was a total last resort and way below her league. Her hand would be offered to Wei Gu and he would marry her. Later that night, he would notice a scar and ask her about it.

In one version, the man that Wei had sent would be too kind and took pity on the child. On their wedding night she’d tell him the story of how fourteen years ago she’d been walking alone when a man came out of nowhere, slashing her face. She’d explain that the injury was not serious but that the scar had never fully healed. (Wei, of course, would realize that fourteen years ago was also when he’d met the old man and dickishly ordered someone to kill an innocent little kid.)

In another, the woman he married was the beautiful daughter of Wang Tai--the governor of Xiangzhou--who’d had trouble finding a match for his daughter because she had difficulty walking. Wei Gu would notice a large scar on the small of her back and when asked she’d tell him that, as a child, a man had stabbed her in the marketplace.

Sometimes the scar would just be a tiny thing between the girl’s eyebrows or along her stomach and she’d tell him that she was stabbed in the City of Song.

Every single time she told her story, the guy would figure out that ‘oh shit, this is the girl I tried to have killed--the crazy old man wasn’t lying,’ and the story spread from there. He had never told Wei Gu his real name so he ended up being known as ‘the old man under the moon,’ 'the old man of moonlight,' or in short ‘Yue Lao.’

A little more searching found them a lesser known epilogue where Wei Gu and his wife had three children and after ten successful years of marriage, he made contact with Yue Lao to ask him for help in finding matches for his two younger sons and daughter. Yue Lao refused (on a count of he was dick, probably) and Wei Gu spent years searching for suitors.

It must’ve just been a ‘coincidence’ that none of them ever ended up getting hitched.

So far, their supernatural resources hadn't churned out the thing’s real name yet or his full origin story.

The oldest known record was that legend from the Tang dynasty but they did dig up a couple other facts.

Apparently, the thing was supposed to live either on the moon or in ‘the obscure regions’ known as Yue ming--which was pretty much the Chinese equivalent of Hades. (Dean thought hunting a think
that might live in Oriental hell sounded super promising for them.)

Yue Lao was also immortal. He came out when the moon was out, which usually meant at night, and was especially powerful on the full moon.

This guy was supposed to live inside the moon where he sat at some big heavenly computer desk and had some kind of database that let him access info on all the little humans down on earth, typing into his mystical search engine so he could find just what two people were 'meant to be together,' and then clicking his special buttons so that they'd meet under the right circumstances. Then he'd show up, looking like a regular human dude, and tie them together with an invisible red string--a red string he used kinda like cupids used their bows and arrows.

It was where the saying 'the marriage of two people from thousands of miles away is brought together by a string,' came from. It was where the whole 'Red string of fate' thing started, and that's what those silk cords they were finding were supposed to be.

He supposed it was reminiscent of the golden life threads Atropos left behind when she'd been ganking descendants of the Titanic in that weird alter-verse where there was no impala and Ellen was married to Bobby, seeing as she and Jo never died in that explosion.

The thought that life could be taken away by snapping a loose thread gave him the creeps.

The traditions that bled down from this changed over the years, new ones developing with similar concepts or as tributes to the original red string. One of them was a thing called the 'Knot of the Common Heart,' which is made by tying two simple knots together. It's usually given as a wedding gift to signify 'tying two hearts together forever,' or whatever.

It made Dean wonder if that's where the expression 'tying the knot' came from.

Sam had also found a (barely credible and supposedly fictional) short story where a version of Yue Lao corrupted all the djinn in China from good 'I dream of genie' types into horrible monsters.

Still, as 'helpful' as all that knowledge was, none of it exactly screamed 'kill innocent couples for no reason.'

They were still waiting on a proper motive, a viable suspect, and for Cas's dissection of the summoning ritual Sam had found, plus a way to subdue or kill it but--with the exception of archangelic powers, Thor's hammer, Artemis's arrows, and more specific cases like the Ram’s horn for Osiris, a knife dipped in dog’s blood for Veritas, that tree they burned way back when to get rid of the Vanir, or the time they decapitated that pagan god that had been wearing Paris Hilton’s face using an iron axe--killing a deity usually meant some kind of wooden steak that had ties to it. That either meant it was made with special wood or anointed with meaningful blood or something.

"Zodiac would've made more sense," Sam countered, absently commenting on Dean's mention of a semi-popular serial killer that had murdered couples in the past.

"That's not all though--" He scooted forward, closer to the other two. "--I found out Jacob was cheating on her. I didn't think it was relevant at the time--but get this, I took another look at the rest of
the vics and their relationships weren't perfect either, like probably shouldn't be getting married 'perfect.' I mean, not all of them had to do with infidelity but they definitely weren't all matches made in heaven.

Sam handed over a piece of paper with the list of all the couples that died or went missing shortly after leaving the show.

Next to each pairing was a single word explanations over what seemed to be causing a rift between them--probably the same things that led them to getting kicked off the show in the first place. Most of them involved a 'third party'--or in a few cases several third parties--and had 'cheating' or 'ex' next to their names. A few had 'jealousy,' and the others ranged anywhere from 'kids,' 'mom,' 'communication,' to 'religion.'

Dean glanced up in momentary consideration of Sam's Zodiac Killer reference (tipping his head in silent acquiesce that Zodiac did make more sense when it came to couple-killing killers) before focusing back on the case.

The list had everyone from the first vics--'Mei and Jacob - cheating'--to the last ones--'Stephanie and Clara - cheating (multi), jealousy, ex(es)'.

He and Cas had noticed that Steph and Clara didn't have the strongest relationship but they didn't think it was that bad. Now he felt like it was an even bigger failure on their part for not realizing all this sooner.

He frowned and looked over to his angel, holding his gaze properly for the first time today. Dean's lips parted and he took in a shallow breath as they had their little stare-down. "Not all relationships are perfect," he murmured as he turned back to Sam, "you really think this could be our motive?"

Sam did that whole shrug-nod thing he did which was just his way of saying 'I don't know, man, but probably, yeah.'

"So Yue Lao is prosecuting those who claim commitment to marriage yet do not seem ready to fulfill the responsibilities that come with it?" Castiel clarified once he finally tearing his sight away from Dean, where he’d kept it long after the hunter had already glanced away.

He tilted his head in consideration. "It sounds reasonable. Chinese philosophy was heavily embedded in the belief that marriages were arranged by fate, so the couple in question must support each other and never leave their partner. Calling a creature built on such ideals to a place that exploits the shallow imitation of everything it represents would be enough to elicit such a reaction."

"Exactly. So now that we know how it's picking it's victims, we know how to lure it in." Sam added.

Dean pursed his lips and started to nod in agreement--but then he thought about it and his brow furrowed. "Wait, so how are we gonna lure it in?"
"Well, Yue Lao's going after couples that probably shouldn't get married, right? So if we make it look like you guys are on the rocks, it'll come after you instead of one of the other couples. I figured the best way to do that--" Sam elaborated, "--is for you to cheat on Cas."

"Um, excuse me, what?" Dean's tone had a dangerous note in it and his face schooled into a deceptively blank look. "Did you just tell me to cheat on Cas?"

Sam's eyes widened fractionally at the change. "...Yes? I just figured it'd be ok--"

He was going to say he thought it was okay because it wasn't like Dean was one to turn down getting laid. (He figured other than hell and purgatory, these past seven weeks must've been something of a celibate milestone for him.) He also figured it wasn't like Dean would actually be cheating on Cas since they weren't really in a relationship.

After all it was just a cover, wasn't it?

Dean didn't even let him finish his sentence.

"I'm not gonna cheat on Cas." His tone was hard, final.

Sam held his breath, hesitating. "Alright? Well, how about we just make it seem like you did at one point? It'd be the easiest way to--"

Dean cut in again. He stood up from his chair, pressing the base of each palm against the rickety table which creaked in protest at the extra force.

"I don't think you get it, Sam. I'm not gonna cheat on Cas, and I'm not gonna 'pretend' to cheat on Cas. I don't care if this is 'fake'--" and honestly Dean wasn't sure if he was referring to fake cheating on Cas, the original nature of their cover, or if he was not-so-subconsciously considering the thought that whatever 'thing' he might or might not have with Cas might be fake, "--I'm still not gonna go on camera--in front of over three million viewers--and betray Cas like that."

The younger Winchester figured now was not the best time to mention that, with this season's decision to 'go gay,' they'd nearly doubled their viewership so the count was more around six million. He kept his mouth shut.

Dean wasn't done yet.

"You know what, Sammy? I've let down Cas enough times, how about we just pull up one of those
and let the rest of the nation in on just how fucked up our 'relationship' is." He let out a humorless chuckle. "Hell, maybe we can pull up some of Cas's mistakes too, really get the ball rolling with our greatest hits."

He looked down at the table, expecting to see an appropriate glass of 'hunter's helper' but all he got was zilch.

When had they stopped drinking whiskey during research?

He bit down, jaw ticking as he did.

There was a sixty percent chance Dean was overreacting to his brothers suggestion, but it just--it didn't sit right with him. Especially after he and Cas had done that… thing yesterday.

He knew he needed to take breather before he ended up said something even more stupid--so he left the room.

Castiel had held his breath when Sam explained (or rather attempted to explain) his suggestion on how to lure the deity.

There'd been a moment of silence 'so loud you could hear a pin drop,' as Dean would say.

But Dean had... other things to say.

On the one hand, there was a strange, aching relief in his chest that the elder Winchester had shut down the idea almost immediately, with surprising vehemence at that, but the ache twisted into something sour as he continued.

It began with the 'fake' comment and only grew worse as he touched on the times he had 'let him down;' how 'fucked up' they were; again, the emphasis that this relationship was truly just pretend; and finally, the reminder of Castiel’s numerous failings--of all the times he had not only betrayed the Winchesters, but every time he let Dean down personally.

It only made it worse that Dean hadn't so much as glanced at him throughout the whole tirade.

Sam was left dumbstruck.

Dean had walked out on him during a fight plenty of times before but he hadn't expected such a strong reaction to something he’d really thought wasn't gonna be big deal. He started to get up, intent on following his brother, but Cas stopped him.

Castiel placed his hand on Sam’s arm. “Perhaps… I should speak to him first.” He sounded as uncertain as he felt but the Winchester nodded and admitted that might be a good idea.

The former angel exited the motel room and looked around.

It was surprising to see the impala was still there and Dean-free. He’d been sure the hunter would have been driving away by now.
Further inspection led him to a set of broad shoulders hunched over the motel’s out of order vending machine, head bowed against the glass.

Dean looked up as he heard Cas walking towards him. He sighed. “Look--”

“I know, Dean.” Castiel cut off whatever protest or apology Dean was going to give him.

The hunter sucked in a breath. Cas was all up in his personal space again, giving him the big blue-eyed empathetic look that always kicked him right in the gut. “I’m not gonna cheat on you.” He blurted.

Castiel hadn't been expecting that. A small, stunned smile spread slowly across his face. “I know,” he repeated.

It wasn't a love confession, yet Dean still felt like he’d just been Hans Solo’d. He slid his hands over the other man’s hips and spun them, suddenly, so that Cas’s back was pressed up against the broken vending machine.

And then he kissed the shit out of him.

He didn't even try to deepen it with tongue, he just kissed him and nibbled along the other man's lips. His hands edge under Cas’s t-shirt just enough to rub circles into the smooth skin he found there with his thumbs.

The former angel arched into the caress, brushing their hips together. One of his hands snuck over one side of Dean’s face and into his hair. The other balled up the collar of his button up and tugged lightly.

He received a low rumbling groan in response--a pleased sound.

He didn't want to (God, he really didn't want to) but Dean eventually pulled back to catch his breath.

From the way Cas’s lips were chasing after his, the two of them stealing a couple more pecks, he wasn't the only one that felt that way.

He hid his face in the crook of Cas’s neck, breathing in the guy’s scent in shallow breaths. It was… kinda comforting. It was nice.

They stayed like that for a moment, Castiel smoothing the palm of his hand across the span of Dean’s
back in a repetitive motion. But eventually he quietly suggested they go back inside. “Your brother appeared quite bewildered by your reaction.”

Dean snorted a hearty laugh, albeit a slightly bittersweet one. He wasn't ready to touch that talk with a ten foot pole.

Reluctantly, they pulled back--something that involved lingering touches, heavy looks, and a last minute lip-lock: all the shabang that came with sneaking around.

He hadn't done this kinda thing since the times he used to persuade janitors to let him fool in closets and spare classrooms back in high school.

He cleared his throat. “We should probably get back to Sam… and the case.”

Dean had begun moving away but Castiel stopped him. He wordlessly worked on fixing the Winchester’s disheveled appearance with a look of concentration on his face.

The hunter thanked him with another kiss. He used the opportunity to run his fingers through the messed up mop of dark hair. Smirking, he tugged on a small handful. “Am I supposed to fix you up too?”

Castiel sighed. “I don’t believe we have enough time for that.” He’d long learned that taming the unruly strands was a painstaking process and so it wouldn't be very out of place for his appearance to come off as tousled at times.

As soon as they stepped into the room, Sam was on them with an apology on the tip of his tongue. Dean held up his hand. “It’s cool, Sammy. Cas and I talked and we decided cuckolding ain't our kinda thing.” He sighed. “We don’t have a plan yet, but we’ll work something out.”

Sam just nodded and stayed quiet.

The atmosphere turned awkward enough after that that even Castiel was able to take notice. He cleared his throat and sat back down at the table. “I finished the translations.” He passed over a papyrus-like scroll with Chinese characters that was covered in post-its towards the Winchesters. “What Sam thought was a summoning ritual was really just a prayer.”

“Wait so the thing is just here cause this chick prayed to him? I thought the guy had temples and stuff.” Dean commented.

True, the temples were mostly just tourist-stops for couples and singles making fake offerings in
exchange for 'prosperous love' and marriage and all that but there were still some old-school Chinese parents and grandparents that prayed to the guy in the hopes their kids and grandkids would get hitched and start popping out little Asian babies. (Actually, he’d stumbled across a couple of stories where some of the more homophobic parents would pray to Yue Lao for their gay sons and daughters to marry a nice respectable member of the opposite sex.)

Sam looked over the scroll with furrowed brows. “If Yue Lao’s cashing in prayers left and right, why the focus on the show?”

“I don’t believe Mei would have resorted to simply praying. There is an ancient book of love spells linked to Yue Lao. One of the spells in specific--when translated in modern dialect--implies that it is meant to strengthen the bond between lovers.”

Dean thought the ‘book’ Cas passed them looked more like a beat up pocket journal. The page that apparently had the spell he was talking about was held open by what looked like some kind of handwritten ledger Cas had made with two slightly different rows of Chinese characters. “I’m guessing that’s not actually the case?”

Castiel inclined his head slightly in affirmation. “The way language develops over time can often affect a meaning of a word, changing it’s definition entirely. This spell is from the beginning of the Song dynasty--which, as you know, came after the Tang dynasty--when the legend had already become widespread. The formal prose of Song doesn't correlate precisely with today’s vernacular.” He explained. “What one might believe is a spell to strengthen a relationship is truly a request for judgment. When combined with the prayer, it calls upon Yue Xia Lao Ren to examine if the coupling is destined at its core.”

Sam looked over the unfamiliar calligraphy coating the delicate paper of the old journal. “So Mei worked a spell to try and fix things between her and Jacob and she ends up calling down a holy inquisition.”

“And in the process, brings the guy to his own personal World Cup for this sorta thing.” Dean grimaced. It was easy pickin’s out there for him.

“There is also another spell.” Castiel started, “It’s meant to bind a lover to oneself but… it may be possible to rewrite it and shift the focus of the binding.”

“Are you saying you know how to trap this thing?” Dean’s eyes widened. “Why didn't you just start with that!”
Castiel gave him a look. “I had been prepared to mention it earlier but it hadn't seemed like an appropriate time considering you’d left the room.”

Dean opened his mouth like he was gearing up to say something but Sam cut in before they could start their bickering. “Is that possible? Rewriting a spell like that?”

“If done properly, yes. The spell would have to be worked by two people and rather than binding one soul to another, it would hold Yue Lao to us for the time being.” Castiel explained. It was a bit more complicated than that: it involved proper knowledge of the antiquated dialect and the two people performing the spell required a sort of intimacy. Afterwards, of course, they’d have to find a way to kill him or trap him permanently.

“Alright, great.” Dean clapped his hands together. “So what’re we waiting for? If we can get this ready by eight o’clock, we’ll be able to trap this thing by the end of the episode.”

“Wait, wait--do we really think it's a great idea to go in there guns blazing?” Sam stressed.

Dean gave his brother a look that said *are you fucking kidding me, that’s literally all we do, all the time.*

They’d been on this case for seven weeks.

It didn't matter that Abaddon was dead, it didn't matter that Metatron was locked behind pearly gates, it didn't matter that (at the moment) they were mostly stuck with salt’n’burns and rugarus--this was still too damn long for just one case.

He was itching to get back on the road, back in the shadows where they might actually kill a couple things that go bump in the night without having to think about not looking at the camera or remembering not to curse.

The trio set to work on building up a plan and prepping for what they might face tonight. With the info they had, they were pretty sure Chris and Danny were next on this thing’s list and with any luck they might be able to save those dick-bags from becoming monster chow.

When they got back to the house, someone had laid out two garment bags on their bed with their names on each one respectively.
Cas told him to go ahead and shower first while he triple checked if the spell was right and if they had the right prayer to go along with it.

By the time Dean was dressed in the dark silvery grey suit production had gotten for him, (white dress shirt open and with the buttons undone, just like he’d showed Cas that one time) one of the PA’s was already knocking down their door, requesting that at least one of them come down to get some formal portraits done.

“Yeah, hold on,” Dean told them. “Lemme just let Cas know.”

He’d learned long ago that Cas didn't really have any sense of privacy so the guy never bothered locking the door when he was in the bathroom. He knocked once to let him know he was coming in and then just opened the door.

Cas seemed to be in a, ah, compromising position.

Any normal person would’ve covered themselves, poked their head out of the shower curtain or something, but Cas--well Cas wasn't normal.

Seriously, Dean really should give him another talk on the concept of privacy because the former angel just opened the whole thing, giving him a clear view of, well, everything.

The dude was all out in his birthday suit, dripping wet and full frontal.

And it was the first time Dean had seen him like this and actually looked. (Because Cas naked in a steaming shower, sporting a hard-on was a far cry from crazy!Cas on his car, covered in bees.)

Cas had seen him, touched him, got him at his most vulnerable--but Dean hadn't ever really gotten a chance to return the favor. At least, not properly. Now it was all he could think about.

Castiel had been so absorbed in appreciating the sight of Dean in a fitted suit--the first time he’d seen him in any kind of formal clothing that wasn't the cheaply made thrift wear they’d adopt when impersonating federal officers--that it took him a while to take in the hungry look on Dean’s face.

It fueled the warmth at the base of his stomach.

He normally neglected his erections until he was done thoroughly washing himself. He’d found that truly, the only thing he wanted to do after a pleasurable orgasm was to lay in bed, and having to go through all the of the maintenance his human body required afterwards tended to dull the pleasant buzz.

The look on Dean’s face made him want to reconsider that thought but he aware that social customs dictated that masturbating in front of others was impolite, inappropriate, and highly frowned upon.

He diverted his attention back to the purpose behind Dean’s interruption in what the hunter liked to refer to as ‘me-time.’ “You look very nice, Dean.”

Dean blinked. “Uh, thanks, Cas.” He cleared his throat, aware that he was probably blushing like a virgin. “They’re, uh, asking me to go do some photo stuff or whatever. I’ll, um, take what I gotta
“Of course, Dean.” Castiel responded, not taking his eyes off of the hunter as he tilted his neck to the side, allowing the warm spray to hit at another angle.

Dean’s eyes widened and followed the rivulets of water that ran down the other man’s chest, trailing over his belly button and down towards his--oh-kay, it was time to get going.

He fumbled over a vague goodbye and sort of tripped on his way out the room.

The two only saw each other about an hour and a half later after production had finished taking a few solo photos of Dean and had him do some kind of preliminary on-cam interview about ‘what he thought was gonna happen tonight,’ asking about his feelings and all that crap.

He was walking around backstage--looking for something to snack on--when he caught sight of Cas.

The suit they had the angel wear was a shade of charcoal that complimented Dean’s own. Normally, the hunter hated dressing up in monkey suits but seeing em on Cas… well maybe they were starting to grow on him.

It looked like Cas had shed his suit jacket so that he was just in a black dress shirt and silver tie.

There was just one little thing out of place.

Castiel had been in the middle of his own interview when he felt a pair of familiar fingers tugging at the back of his collar, thoroughly correcting whatever wardrobe malfunction he’d committed. The interviewer ‘aww’d and he tried to turn his head to get a look at his pretend fiancé. “Dean?”

“Hey, babe.” Dean let a couple of fingers slip below the dark material and brush up against Cas’s neck. He probably spend longer than necessary fixing something very few people probably would’ve noticed but seriously--the dude was human now. Every guy should know how to do up their own ties, even if lately they’d spend most of their time in jeans and t-shirts. He finished and clapped his hands over his shoulders, giving them a light squeeze. “What, were you born in a barn?”

The former angel finally turned his head and thanked Dean just as he felt the other man’s hand slap against his rear. He turned back to the camera when Dean walked away, mouth open in a slightly dazed expression now that he’d been derailed. “Ah, I’m sorry, where were we?”

The rest of the show went almost completely as expected. Everyone was dressed up in the new digs production had given them and trying to act on their best behavior. With the exception of Dean and Cas, all of the couples were nervous--Chris and Danny especially because there was very little doubt that they weren’t going home tonight.
Chris had kept sneaking dirty glances towards the former angel and his hunter, noting their apparent ease compared to the others.

Dean supposed they did look a little cocky but it really had nothing to do with the competition. At this point he could give a flying fuck if they were getting booted off or not. Hell, that’d just make things easier for them.

They had their war faces on, nerves held steady, because they finally had a plan. They were finally gonna trap this thing and gank that mother before it offed anyone else.

Neither Dean nor Castiel could have expected that they’d come in first place with an outstanding fifty-one percent of votes in their favor.

Ellie and Lucy and James and Gabby, both tied in second, congratulated them heartily; Dave and William looked relieved that they came in third and clapped politely for the two winners--which just left Chris and Danny.

Danny cursed and Chris stormed off stage, yelling *'This is bullshit! I can’t believe this!’*

Now is when they had to act fast.

It took a little bit posturing before they could exit the stage and follow their disgruntled contestants.

Once backstage, they pushed past the scarcely populated area and started searching for Chis and Danny.

Towards the back of the theater, Castiel heard a pained grunt coming from behind one of the curtained off areas. He and Dean sprang towards it on a run, pulling back the black curtain to reveal a ghostly figure lifting Chris up in the air by his throat. Danny was lying on the floor, neck seemingly snapped.

*“Well aren't you an ugly sunuvabitch,”* Dean boomed, the thing turning to look at them and dropping Chris in the process.

It kinda looked like Tessa when he’d first seen her (as an ethereal reaper-ghost thing rather than the hot-chick look he’d seen her wear up until the day she died) only more… smokey.

Smokey and golden, with more 'hair' and something that might’ve been a long beard or might’ve just been part of its robes.

It was a little hard to tell when it flipped them using that stupid invisible Jedi power half the monsters...
they hunted seemed to have.

They toppled back onto the heavy stage curtain with enough supernatural force that it was ripped from the ceiling, the metal pipe it had been supported on tumbling down with it.

It was a struggle to get free, Castiel managing to get out from under the thick material and pulling Dean up with him.

“Cas, now!” Dean spun him around to where the thing was floating towards them again.

Castiel pulled out something that was tied up like a hex bag only larger and made with red silk and covered with drawn-on Chinese characters in a white chalky substance.

He held it out to Dean who lit it on fire and tossed it on the floor, towards where the deity was.

The flame surrounding the hex bag went from blue to green to an unnatural shade of yellow.

Dean started yelling out the prayer Cas had translated for him while Cas chanted the spell in a language that sounded somewhere between Chinese and Enochian.

Golden sparkley vapors started to fume from the bag towards the ghostly figure, wrapping around some of its limbs.

The thing was thrashing pulling away from their spellwork when suddenly the whole ground started to vibrate. The fly system started shaking. The ceiling started to crumble, lines started to snap, and the wiring and steel battens started to break down, raining debris over them. There was a loud achy creek coming from above them.

Dean covered his eyes with his hands to glance up at the theater’s ceiling.

One of the stage lights had snapped off the pipework and it looked like a huge area heavy with lighting equipment was two seconds from turning them into man-shaped pancakes.

The hunter acted on reflex. He broke off from the intonation of the prayer to move out of the way and jerk Cas along with him. “Chris! Move!”

Chris had been letting out these broken hoarse wails, curled over Danny’s body and looking between Dean and Cas and Yue Lao as if he couldn't tell who were the bad guys.

The moron wouldn't move and Dean had started toward him when they heard a crack.

Chris looked up and one of the stage lights fell right on his face.
Castiel broke his chant too, holding Dean back and urging them to cover their heads as a portion of the building came down in sparks and white clouds.

After everything had settled, Dean checked over Cas quickly to see that other than a possibly sprained foot, they'd gotten away with just a few scrapes and bruises.

Definitely a lot better than Chris, anyway.

Right now, though, they had bigger problems.

Yue Lao snapped out of the incomplete spell and started looming towards them dangerously.

Suddenly there was a flash of bright light coming from behind the deity. Yue Lao’s spirit-like figure turned it’s head towards it in something akin to surprise.

The light grew brighter and brighter, and Dean and Castiel covered their eyes.

There was a loud roar that sounded like it came from Yue Lao and then the brightness receded.

When they opened their eyes, it wasn't Yue Lao that was coming towards them, it was… a large fluffy bunny rabbit?

Chapter End Notes

This would be the part in an episode where they zoom in on Cas's face, then Dean's face, then the rabbit while they play that suspenseful tune they normally play as the scene blacks out into commercial. (I swear the rabbit isn't meant to be crack, there is a legitimate reason behind the rabbit, the rabbit is the key, yes.)

Also, in case you haven't noticed, I'm a little addicted to poking at that fourth wall. (But anything implied wasn't meant to be wank or pro or con Wincest/Wincestiel.)

The lore in this chapter is more or less accurate (Yue Lao is a real deity, I'm just pretty sure he's not supposed to be evil) but the portion about spells and translations is pretty much total BS.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
7.06- Slash Fiction
7.01- Meet the New Boss
4.18- The Monster at the End of This Book
8.20- Pac-Man Fever
5.22- Swan Song
9.04- Slumber Party
4.01- Lazarus Rising
4.16- On the Head of a Pin
6.17- My Heart Will Go On
5.10- Abandon All Hope...
2.20- What Is and What Should Never Be
5.19- Hammer of the Gods
8.02- What's Up, Tiger Mommy?
8.16- Remember the Titans
7.04- Defending Your Life
6.06- You Can't Handle the Truth
1.11- Scarecrow
5.05- Fallen Idol
8.01- We Need to Talk About Kevin
9.21- King of the Damned
9.23- Do You Believe in Miracles?
9.06- Heaven Can't Wait
7.23- Survival of the Fittest
2.01- In My Time of Dying
9.22- Stairway to Heaven

Plus honorable mention to:
Jensen and Misha's outfits at Paleyfest 2011
Also three specific portions of this bit from a Misha interview also from Paleyfest 2011:
Exhibit A- uno, dos, tres
Exhibit B- hello thank u
Exhibit C- B E S T
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

This chapter has been split in two because I'm having trouble working out a time to write the second half properly.

The author's notes were written with the entire chapter in mind so they probably don't make that much sense right now.
The episode reference list is up to date and limited to this half though.

Chapter Notes

It only just occurred to me that some people might have an issue with the implication that Dean might be canonically bisexual (not saying he is or he isn't but for the sake of this fic, I've been implying that he is) and this chapter and the next one deal with that theory explicitly.
So this is a warning for that and I modified the tags to include something about Bisexual!Dean plus a few other new updates--one of them a warning for detailed smut:
Also this is a warning for implied biphobia, passing mention of homophobia, certain implications surrounding a semi-forceful confrontation about a persons sexual orientation, and implied (past) internalized homophobia--well, really more like internalized biphobia than anything else. (Is that a thing? it might be a thing, it feels like a thing, it's a thing now.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

PART ONE

Dean’s reflexes kicked in and he pulled out his trusty .45 caliber engraved ivory-handle colt from where it’d been tucked into one of the inner pockets of his suit jackets. He cocked it into place and pointed it at the big grey rabbit.

The thing just gazed at them, nose twitching in a seemingly innocent display.

It isn't the first time he’s had a critter staring down the barrel of his gun (that yorkie he almost shot when he’d been hopped up on djinn juice came to mind) but PETA could rest assured that Dean
Winchester didn't go around shooting up harmless animals, much to Bobby’s dismay.

Hell, he could still hear the old coot complaining how he could never get him and Sam to gun down a buck--Dean telling him it’d be like pulling the trigger on Bambi while Bobby just responded with ‘You don't shoot Bambi, jackass. You shoot Bambi's mother.’

Only time he came close was when he’d nearly blasted the wings off that douche bag pigeon.

But that didn't mean Dean was above emptying his clip into a monster no matter the face it wore--and a magic rabbit that just showed up in a great white light right as they were about to become the gunk at the bottom of some god’s shoe?

Yeah, that looked pretty monster-y to him.

The sound of voices and hoarse exclamations filtered through the front of the theater. Castiel gripped Dean’s arm in warning. “Dean.”

Dean glanced at Cas then back at the rabbit. He cursed and clicked the safety back in place before shoving it into his pocket just as the beam from a couple of flashlights came into view. Reaching forward, he scooped up the furry animal thing and quickly shoved it at Cas. “Hide this!” He hissed.

“How am I supposed to that, Dean!” Castiel shot back in hushed disbelief.

He glared at the hunter when all he received in response was a frenzied shrug.

He had only just managed to cover the creature with his suit jacket, pressing it up against one side of his chest, when two fire rescue officials broke through the scene.

One of them started to help them but Dean waved him away. “We’re fine! Go help them.” He indicated towards where Chris and Danny were buried under a pile of rubble and lighting equipment.

Those two were beyond help but right now he and Cas needed a distraction so he could get them out of there.

Dean got himself up and worked on getting Cas to his feet--a task made harder by trying to keep the rabbit out of view while making sure they didn’t put any unnecessary pressure on his injury.

The sight of them, worn and ragged while Dean supported a wounded Castiel as best he could made them looked worse than they actually were.

Dean had his arm wrapped around the former angel's back as they shuffled out of the studio, allowing the injured man to lean most of his weight against him. All the while, Castiel had to depend on the one arm he had wrapped around Dean’s shoulders as the other surreptitiously clutched the rabbit to stomach, concealed below the material of his jacket.
Holding his gut that way had the dude looking like he’d taken a serious beating, which Dean guessed wasn't too far off considering they’d just survived an attack from a god.

Despite all that, they almost made it by undetected thanks to confused rumble they stumbled out to find. The studio had all been evacuated because of Yue Lao’s shake up. Talk among the civilians was that it was a 'sudden earthquake.'

It was only just as they’d reached the impala that of the EMTs ran over and stopped them.

“Hey! Where do you think you’re going?” The guy had one of those medical duffles and looked somewhere between concerned and pissed that they’d been trying to run off without medical attention.

“Look, buddy, we're fine. I'm good enough to drive the both of us to the hospital and a lot of people are hurt worse than we are.” Dean growled as he used one hand to open up the back seat so Cas could get off his feet.

The medic set down his kit and helped hold the door open for the former angel.

Castiel hissed as he sat down, still unaccustomed to the fluctuations in discomfort as a human.

They only managed to convince the EMT to stop insisting they seek attention now because, at that very moment, a couple of the rescue workers wheeled out an occupied gurney covered in a white sheet. Dean guessed it was either Chris or Danny and the thought made his stomach churn,

He let them go once he briefly checked to see if Dean had a concussion and with instructions to the nearest hospital.

Of course, they weren't actually heading to the hospital.

Dean peeked at Cas through the rear view mirror. “You okay back there?”

Castiel had his back pressed against one of the doors, half laying in the backseat with his suit jacket balled up under his swelling foot. The rabbit sat harmlessly on his lap, nose sniffing as he ran his fingers through its soft fur, both carefully and curiously. “I’m fine, Dean.”

Dean looked unsure about that.
He momentarily adjusted the mirror to glance at the rabbit before speeding up.

When they got to the motel, tires skidding to a halt in front of Sam’s room, Dean jumped out and rapped his knuckles roughly over the door.

It opened to the sight of Sam in his FBI suit, white dress shirt partially unbuttoned. “I saw the news— I was just on my way out. Are you guys okay?”

“Not sure yet, we've got company.” He urged his brother towards the car, making him hold the rabbit so he could help Cas out the back seat.

The rabbit had been amicable so far but as soon as Sam got his hands on it, it started thrashing from side to side, attempting to escape.

“What the hell is this thing!” Sam held the rabbit away from his body, trying to be as careful as possible so that he wouldn't hurt it and it wouldn't hurt him.

“Long story,” Dean grunted as he pulled Cas out.

They made their way back into the motel room and Dean helped Cas ease onto the bed. He shut the door and looked side-to-side out the window before pulling the curtains closed.

The rabbit managed to nip at Sam’s finger. “Ow!” He dropped it and it fell onto the bed. The thing hopped over to Cas and into his lap, snuffling curiously. “Okay, so now will you tell me what’s up with Thumper?”

To their surprise, Castiel huffed a small laugh. “It does have defining characteristics in resemblance to the character.”

“Wait, when the hell did you watch Bambi?” Dean asked incredulously, completely thrown off track for a second.

Castiel ran a hand over the rabbit’s ears. “Technically, I haven’t.”

“Right,” Dean nodded in understanding. “The Metatron thing. I still gotta get used to that.”
It was kinda freaky when Cas got all pop-culture on them. It’d always come up in such a ‘Cas’ way, but it was just so weird.

Though he guessed the alternative would’ve been a super serious, unnecessarily gravel-ly ‘we have not named the rabbit yet, Sam’ and probably fancy celestial pet-name suggestions.

He shucked off his now-torn suit jacket, removing his gun from the inner pocket to shove it at the back of his waistband. He hung the tattered article of clothing across the back of a chair before taking a seat.

Sighing, Dean started rolling up his sleeves.

It was going to be a long night.

"So you’re saying a bunny rabbit might’ve killed Yue Lao.” They had given Sam the rundown on what had happened and now he was looking between them with a face that was clearly questioning if they’d gotten hit in the head when it’d been raining theater equipment backstage.

“I’m saying ain't no way this thing is a damn rabbit.” Dean grimaced. They’d checked the thing over twice now, rubbed it with silver, had it sniff at a bit of iron, made it step in some salt--hell, they even splashed the thing with holy water.

They almost considered redoing the Inuit spell but Dean was not going to relive that damn thing again--acting like a dog was one thing, but mind-melding with a rabbit was not something he ever needed to do in life.

Not that any of that would've done any good if they were dealing with something that could wipe out a deity.

All they’d found out was that the thing didn't like Sam.

It’d do this little chittery bunny growl when Sam came too close and kept trying to nip his fingers off.

Sam sighed. “We need more information. The cops already think I’m here on a case so I’ll go see what I can get about what happened at the studio and we can hit the web when I get back.” He started doing up the loose tie around his neck. “With any luck, we can figure this out before you have to head back.’”

He patted down his pockets to make sure he had his cell phone, his wallet, his fake badge, and the keys to the car he’d had to acquire for the case (seeing as Dean and Cas had the impala most of the time) and left with a comment that he might stop somewhere for a cage and some carrots or something for the rabbit.

Dean rolled his eyes.
Even if this thing was just a rabbit—and he was three-thousand percent sure that that was impossible—it wasn't like they were gonna keep the thing.

He told Cas to give him a sec while he went outside and ‘borrowed’ one of the motel’s recycling bin boxes, emptying out the bottles into a trash can. (Fully knowing Sam would've bitched about if he were here ‘cause, hell, all those bottles were probably his. It wasn't like motel patrons were exactly known for being ‘socially conscious.’)

He brought it back into the room and put it at the foot of the bed before scooping up the critter and dropping it in the box.

Admittedly, he might’ve scratched behind the things ears after putting it down, but that was nobody’s business but his.

He turned back to Cas. “Think you can make it to the bathroom?”

“’It’s not broken, Dean, it’s merely a sprain.” Castiel responded in a curt tone, but he didn’t push the hunter away when he offered his assistance.

He was made to sit on the closed toilet lid while Dean checked him over with clinical precision, a skill obviously ingrained from years of caring for his younger sibling.

In truth, Castiel almost felt as if he was being ‘babied.’ He didn't like to be perceived as weak, as incapable. What made him hold back his protests was something about the way Dean went about it.

Dean cradled one side of Cas’s face, holding it steady as he cleaned up a cut along his other cheek with gentle precision.

Cas was a big boy, he could take care of himself, but the guy was just so… human. Sometimes they’d get back from a hunt and the three of them would be pretty banged up. When they were riding that high after getting rid of some bad mofo, none of them really blinked at a couple of dental floss stitches or fixing up a dislocated shoulder.

A situation like this?

There was no thrill, no touchdown dance at the end zone—nothing to distract from the reminder that Cas wouldn’t’ve been phased by a crumbling roof if he still had his mojo. Which admittedly wasn't even the real problem—the real problem was that, when he got a reminder like this, Dean could still see that reaper bitch poking a blade through Cas’s chest and Cas getting snuffed out with just a groan and a gasp... no blinding bright light or giant wing burns; nothing to show that the dude was special.

Castiel watched as Dean dropped a towel to the bathroom floor and knelt.

It was such a submissive gesture from a man who normally refused to showcase any kind of vulnerability and it made Castiel wonder if the decision was conscious; if Dean was aware of how affected he truly was by the thought of weakness. Because the Winchester, choosing to kneel before him right now, brought them both to an equal level.

Of course, as Dean rubbed a palm over one of his thighs, the sight of Dean on his knees also brought
back the image of what happened the last time one of them knelt before the other in a bathroom.

“We’re gonna have to wrap it,” Dean commented as he finished inspecting Cas’s foot. “The good news is, I think Sammy stocked up on actual bandages.”

Hunters weren't strangers to improvisation. An injury like this would've probably meant old bar rags and duct tape.

He was mostly just glad it wasn't that bad. (He'd had a brief flash of perpetually fucked up, love-guru, orgy-enthusiast, alternate 2k14 Cas telling him about how he'd broken his foot and got laid out for two months and that was not a thing he needed a reminder of.)

They finished up and Dean helped Castiel get to his feet.

What they were not prepared for was the sight that greeted them when they entered the living room.

There was a naked dude.

On Sam’s bed.

Naked.

Dean pulled out his gun immediately, cocking it and pointed it at the guy. “Who are you!”

The man was pale with dark shoulder length hair and had the kind of lithe body that was solid, implying strength despite being considerably smaller than the likes of Dean or Sam. He was Asian with delicate facial features that were squared into a cockily amused expression.

“Oh Dean, haven’t we been over this already?” He wrinkled his nose in a decidedly bunny-like manner.

“Are you a familiar?” Dean barked, refusing to lower his gun. He couldn't be a skinwalker ‘cause they’d tested for that already.

“I am no sorcerer's pet.” The naked man scoffed. He glanced towards where Castiel was supporting himself against the wall to keep pressure off his foot. “I can fix that for you.”
“Hey!” Dean stepped forward, grip tightening around the gun. “You’re not fixing anything until you tell us what you are!”

The man’s demeanor was the perfect picture of exasperation and his tone, when he replied, was lazy. “My name is Hu Tianbao.”

Castiel’s eyes widened in recognition. “I understand. You are the Rabbit Deity.”

“Another one? Awesome.” Dean lowered his gun and tucked it away ‘cause it’s not like it’d be any good against a god anyways. He glared at the supposed Rabbit Deity. “Would it kill you to put some clothes on?”

Hu Tianbao rolled his eyes. With a snap of his fingers he was suddenly dressed in leather pants. Just the pants, though.

He chose to remain shirtless.

“Great. Stuck in a room with God of the Lizard King.” Dean muttered, comparing the deity’s appearance to Jim Morrison’s trademark long hair/leather pants/shirtless look. He glanced at Cas and indicated with a head nod that they should take a seat at the motel’s wooden table.

Castiel was grateful for the reprieve and sat down, both his and Dean’s chairs angled towards the bed. “He is actually the god of homosexual love and relations.” He corrected, seriously.

The deity looked over Castiel with studious eye. "You're new to this, yet not because of indecision." He commented, cryptically. "How is that so?"

The former angel shifted in his seat and looked away.

Dean's eyes bounced between them. Whatever Hu what's-his-name was implying made Cas uncomfortable, and that in turn made Dean uncomfortable. He huffed. "How bout you tell us why you blasted away your hetero alter-ego instead?"

"He’s not dead. I merely... reminded him that his recent conquests were not subjects of his, per say.” The deity replied as his critical gaze turned on Dean. "You should be glad I arrived when I did, Dean."
Dean grimaced. He didn't like it when things he didn't know how to kill yet knew his name.

Hu Tianbao wasn't done speaking. “Yue Xia Lao Ren will not be harming any more couples under my jurisdiction.”

“Your jurisdiction? And what jurisdiction is that?” Dean pressed. “What, you think he’s just gonna give up his little game because you said so?”

The deity sighed. “We had an understanding, and he disregarded it. I truly don’t care what he does as long as he doesn't meddle in the affairs of my people.”

Dean’s brow furrowed in understanding. “So what, you’re just gonna let him keep killing?”

The rabbit-man-god-thing shrugged in response and that really pissed Dean off.

“Oh, no, I’m sorry. You’re totally right--he can just keep doing what he’s doing, so long as ‘your people’ aren't affected.” He stood up, shoulders squared. “None of them deserved to die--it didn't matter if they were gay or straight or anywhere in between.”

Hu Tianbao narrowed his eyes at the hunter. “In between?” He gave the hunter a condescending smirk. “I often forget how you ‘in-betweeners’ are--always so ‘on the fence’ about everything, always so confused, so conflicted.”

Dean’s face grew hard. “I ain't confused. Don’t give me that bullshit because you know that’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about your buddy killing off innocent people, and I’m talking about clean cut right and wrong here. That ain’t got nothing to do with sexual orientation.” He pointed a finger at the god in leather. “So you’re either with us or against us--and lemme tell you, you’re not gonna like what’s coming to you if you’re against us.”

The deity laughed. “See, that’s where you’re wrong. Sexual orientation is always about ‘right and wrong,’ isn't it? So why should I care if a couple of heteros are eradicated because their love isn't deemed ‘good enough’?” He sat up and ran a hand through his shiny hair. “After all, isn't that what they do to us?”

He didn't raise his voice but there was an note of power in it that wasn't there before. “Isn't that the reason behind so many deaths within the homosexual community? Perhaps its time the tables have turned. It’d be an act of--Hmm, what’s the word the kids are using these days?” He pretended to think about it and snapped his fingers. “Equality.”
Dean opened his mouth to say something but the rabbit deity cut him off.

“As a matter of fact, isn’t that all you want?” He tsked. “You can’t hide things from me, Dean, I know you. Once upon a time you might’ve wished to be ‘normal.’ That uncontrollable need you have to be accepted, to be loved, forcing you to pick a side--but that’s all gone now isn’t it?”

Hu Tianbao tilted his head to the side in quiet contemplation as he stared the hunter down. “Well, mostly gone. Washed away by the need for a different kind of acceptance--one I know you truly yearn for no matter what you tell yourself at night.”

The deity stood up from the bed in an elegant fashion and walked toward Dean until his face was intimidatingly close to the humans.

Dean swallowed and forced himself not to take an automatic step back.

Hu Tianbao’s voice had lowered. “You’re not gonna find that unless you open up. After all, it’s not just about you, is it? The things you do, things you say, the way you act--all of that affects the people around you.” He held Dean’s gaze for a moment before stepping back. He glanced towards where Castiel had been sitting, hands gripping the seat as if he’d been ready to intervene. “And it affects some more than others, some that might be taking a ‘page from your book’ in such matters.”

Dean was holding his breath, eyes flicking towards Cas nervously.

“I don’t believe murder is an appropriate tool to promote social justice.” Castiel spoke up in an authoritative tone. “Did your murder serve a higher purpose for heterosexuality? Did any of those deaths, the ones meant to go against the homosexual community, help in any way?”

The former angel scooted forward, sitting on the edge of his seat as he fixed his sharp eye on the deity. “Why would the reverse be any different.”

Hu Tianbao said nothing, simply lifted his chin up and, with a snap of his fingers, he was gone.

Dean did a 360. “Dammit!”

“Dean.” Castiel blinked. He held out his formerly injured foot and rolled his ankle.
The hunter frowned. “Well at least that fucker was good for something.”

He plopped down on the foot of the bed. The encounter with that rabbit douche really drive the nail home and made him bone-tired in a way he hadn't felt in a while.

Dean rested his elbows on his knees, holding his head in his hands for a moment before running his palms over his face and tilting it up towards the ceiling. He’d definitely had enough excitement for one day. He didn't look at Cas as he told him to call Sam and ixnay their order for a bunny cage.

When Sam returned, Castiel gave him a very brief and slightly edited recount of what happened with the deity--keeping out the more-or-less unrelated ‘commentary’ it had made--and explained that he’d come across it’s legend in his translations. He wrote down the name ‘Tu Er Shen’ for the younger Winchester to research. Luckily Sam seemed to understand that they were not in the mood for any more ‘chit chat.’

Afterwards he and Dean drove away in complete silence.

A ridiculously relieved Liz greeted them at the door. "Thank god, we thought we'd have to shut down a weeks worth of production and stage a memorial episode in your honor."

Liz looked as if she was about to bombard them with questions but Cas cut her off. "We are tired and we are going to sleep."

They pushed past the woman and headed towards their room.

Dean knew they had to talk about it eventually... He just hadn't expected he'd be the one bringing it up. “I know you heard… I know--”

He stopped and sucked in a surprisingly shaky breath.

“The things Bugs Bunny was saying back there…” He face twisted into a pained frown. “You’re not dumb, Cas, you know what he was suggesting back there.”

“Dean…” Castiel’s fingers stilled from where they were undoing the tie around his neck. He hesitated for a moment before speaking again. “You don’t have to--”

“So help me god, if you say say I don’t have to.” He shook his head as he chuckled in humorless disbelief.

Taking a seat on the edge of the bed, Dean ran his fingers through his hair and and looked up at the
angel with a pleading look. “I have to do this, Cas. Please.”

That look pierced through Castiel and he returned it with his own wide-eyed, slightly scared look that he hoped conveyed enough encouragement for the hunter to continue.

“He wasn’t wrong.” Dean started in a subdued tone. He wouldn’t look at the other man directly--couldn’t look at him right now. “I like--” He sighed. “--I like dudes, ok?”

That was… not what Castiel had been expecting.

Chapter End Notes

Dean, well this version of Dean, was close to gearing up to coming out even without the forceful push from Tu Er Shen. Please never let anyone push you into coming out before you feel comfortable enough to do it because it is something that you deserve to do when you feel ready. Concealing your sexuality if you're not prepared to let others know is not cowardice and it is not wrong--that is a part of you that you choose to let others in on, and do not believe anyone that tells you otherwise.

Tu Er Shen/The Rabbit Deity is just as real as Yue Lao, he actually is the god of homosexual love and sex in Chinese lore and there'll be more info about him in the upcoming chapter.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
6.01- Exile on Main St.
7.09- How to Win Friends and Influence Monsters
9.05- Dog Dean Afternoon
9.03- I'm No Angel
5.04- The End
8.15- Man's Best Friend with Benefits
6.08- All Dogs Go to Heaven
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Edit: This chapter has gotten plenty of mixed reviews because it deals with a LOT of stuff taken out of canon and honestly very little action happens here other than emphasizing their sexualities so it's 100% skipable. I've cleaned it up a bit and I put distinctions between the inner monologue stuff and the real time action stuff but I'm not taking it out despite those that would prefer the story without it because it's important to me.

I will apologize because its tedious to many and because my writing, as always, sucks, but... if it means something to me then it might mean something to someone else who might've felt these kind of feelings before (not the canon!destiel crap but the dealing with your sexuality and feelings of self-worth stuff) and I won't apologize for that.

On the upside: there is porn in the next chapter.

Warnings For This Chapter
-mention of homophobia/biphobia
-mention of internalized homophobia/biphobia (mostly past)
-internal use of a certain disgusting homophobic slur
-mention of Dean's daddy issues
-idk dude there's just a lot of bi!dean, bi!cas, and canon!destiel meta and not all of it might be agreeable

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

PART TWO

Dean didn’t wait for a reaction. “Not just dudes, y’know? I like chicks too--” He almost snorted. “--obviously.”

He fixed his gaze upwards towards the ceiling. “But… there’s just something about certain guys, that I’m kinda... into.”

Guys like Dr. Sexy, guys dressed as cowboys--he even had a soft spot for certain guys in uniform. He'd never really thought too much about what attracted him to someone but he definitely had a thing for badasses, that much was obvious.

Hell, Eliot Ness caught him checking out that soldier’s ass in favor of the two classy broads walking in the opposite direction. (Or was broads the offensive term? It might have been dime dollys, or something with the word ‘dish,’ the guy used all this weird '40s slang that Dean couldn't really remember in his mortification.)
Lucky for him the Untouchable didn't seem to care. He just took him by the arm and dragged him away to get some new clothes seeing as—according to Eliot Ness—he looked like a ‘bindlestiff’ or whatever.

The problem was that he was raised to think badasses were all macho, that they were guy’s guys—that the hero was supposed to get the girl at the end of the day.

‘Cause that’s what dad would do.

Dad was a hero and he said it plenty enough times for it to sink in: hero gets the girl, monster gets the gank—a happy ending with a happy ending.

Dad raised him with that clear image that a guy’s guy didn't go around kissing other guys.

Dean didn't think it was a big deal at the time because he loved chicks anyways, so why should it bother him if he just chose them over the occasional attractive dude? He used to think it was probably just a fluke, a random thing that happened now and then, or maybe that he was just appreciating the aesthetics of another dude--nothin' wrong with that, right?

Leaning more towards women was what he thought his natural instinct was supposed to be. It just made it easier to turn down any guys he wasn't into. It made it easier to tell complete strangers that he was totally, one hundred percent straight.

After all, a simple ‘I don’t swing that way,’ was always nicer than a ‘you’re not my type’ any day.

Nicer than getting stuck in a situation where being queer could cause a problem and not just of the violent sort.

(Although Dean liked to think that up against a guy or two, even a monster or two, violence wasn't that big of a deal--especially if he had back up--but it wouldn't be the first time he’d wandered by a homophobic biker gang while on his own and noticed those weren't really the kind of odds he could walk away scratch free from.)

No, being outed as queer was dangerous in different ways too.

It was dangerous to his reputation—something important to someone who lived off their rep, someone who used fear and intimidation as a weapon. It was dangerous because… well, mostly it was dangerous because of what his dad might think.

He was thirty-five years old and the thought still terrified him.
Shit, if he had daddy issues now, it would've been nothing compared to how much more fucked up he’d’ve been if he’d come out to his only family—if he’d gone against everything he’d been taught, everything that had been expected of him.

Dad would've disowned him if word got around that his son was a faggot.

Or well, kind of a faggot.

‘Cause the implication that he was gay?
Sometimes that didn't feel like too big a deal either, ‘cause he wasn't really gay, was he?

Dean wasn't just making shit up during that big schpiel he gave when they first started this Happily Ever After crap.

It wasn't simple, figuring out that you were attracted to more than one gender.

It was messy and confusing, and just real hard to get over that stigma that sexuality was clean cut ‘gay’ or ‘straight.’

He’d grown up hearin’ talk at seedy bars that bisexuality was this myth--just something chicks pretended to be when they were drunk and wanted to show off or just a phase ‘homos went through’ when they were lying to themselves about how gay they were.

But Dean was sure he liked chicks (not just liked them, ‘cause although he didn't do the whole ‘L’ word thing, he definitely admired women--all kinds of women) so he went through a rough time in his younger years toggling with the difference between ‘attraction’ and ‘admiration.’

He went through (what he figured) were typical ‘gay freak outs,’ he went through some denial, and he went through some ‘experimentation’ around his late teens before he came to terms with it.

And it was good for him.

He knew what he was and he was the one that chose what he wanted to do about it.

But when his dad was alive, he thought it was just easier to keep the status quo--chicks
before dicks and all that.

He got into the habit of it after. It was what he was used to, what he was comfortable with.

Because what if he got outed and he lost Sammy, or if he'd lost Bobby when he was alive, or the respect of the hunting community--not that he really gave too much of a crap about that. But what if they hunted him? What if John Winchester's old 'buddies' confirmed what he already knew dad would've thought of him? What if all the chicks in the world heard he was half gay and refused to sleep with him on principle? Or maybe that people would think he was really just pretending to be bi for attention or whatever. (Which was why he'd been bugged by Chris's 'you guys look straight' comment when they'd first gotten to the house.)

Maybe that was dumb, maybe all of his reasoning was dumb, maybe he was just a coward but they were thoughts that legitimately fucked with him--so he shoved them into that little box at the back of his head with the rest of the stuff he didn't wanna dwell on.

It was his 'things Dean Winchester doesn't need to be thinking about when he should be trying to save the world instead' box.

Dean was nothing if not skilled at keeping all those feelings locked away.

The only times it'd be an issue was when something would to get a little too close to the truth.

Then Dean would start to get cagey about that side of himself.

At one point he’d thought he’d noticed a pattern: that most of the time when people assumed he and Sam were a thing, it was only after they’d spoken to Dean. It made him a little paranoid that everyone could see right past him, that the reason they all figured they were a couple was because looking at Dean made them think ‘oh this guy’s gay so that must be his boyfriend, right?’

And he wouldn't admit it out loud but maybe he did try to overcompensate, just a little bit.

He got over that eventually, got more comfortable with it, with himself.

Hell, he was proud that he didn't have some kind of internal conniption over that siren they took care of.

‘Cause the thing might’ve talked big game about how Dean’s greatest love was his love for his little brother, for family, but that wasn’t all it was, was it?

The siren lured him in by being Nick Munroe--attractive dark-haired stranger in a suit
with a heroic job description, an appreciation for cars, buffed up on his classic rock trivia, and not afraid to have a little fun while still keeping his focus on the game.

He--it--was a sexually ambiguous creature.

It wanted to fall in love over and over again, and enjoyed having control over its victims in an inherently sexual way. That’s why it showed up as every guy’s personalized dream-girl--every guy except for Dean.

The thing might've been posing as an FBI agent for convenience, to get close to the hunters, but that wouldn't've been enough to trick them. It hooked Dean in by being, well, a guy’s guy.

Nick Munroe came off as everything he wanted.

And once it had Dean by his own accord, it just had to Obi Wan him into holding his brother still long enough to spray him with its nasty monster venom poison-saliva thing and then they were both under its spell.

Lucky Bobby was smarter than all of them combined and saved the day.

The incident should’ve been enough to shake him, and maybe it did to a certain extent, but he’d already started to get the idea that maybe other people seeing that side of him wasn't such a bad thought.

It was a slow-going process but over the years Dean started embracing those little bits about himself that he used to keep down--keep hidden for the sake of the whole image of what he’d grown up thinking a hero should be like.

All that stuff that didn't have to do with hunting like his dorkier side or the domestic shit like cooking and cleaning, how he’d all out nested when they found the bunker--he’d even dabbled in golf when he lived with Lisa and found he’d liked it (something his dad would've thought was a joke if anyone told him.)

His bisexuality was another thing on that list that he was getting around to letting people in on.

That was why he didn't let his eyes slide by as quickly as he used to when he noticed an attractive member of the same sex. That was why he’d been confident enough that he could help Charlie flirt her way past that security guard so they could finally get rid of Dick. (Even if that one made him feel a lil’ dirty after.)

That was why he had that whole awkward, fumbly rom-com moment when he thought Aaron was legitimately interested in him--that moment of ‘oh wow, somebody--a dude--likes me.’

That last one, at the time, had sort of strengthened that possibility--that potential for ‘love
Dean just hadn't been… he hadn't been ready to come out yet but he'd been working up to it.

He'd thought about it plenty of times, sure, but telling someone you might be into LARPing was one thing--telling someone you might like getting fucked in the ass was a whole other ball game. (And there was definitely an innuendo there.)

Letting someone in on a huge part of you, a part of you that had been hammered in as ‘wrong’ for so long, without the complete reassurance that they aren't just gonna put you back down was never gonna be easy.

This? This was the first time he was gonna let his freak flag fly and it was almost scarier than going head on with something that went bump in the night.

“That doesn't mean I've been carrying a torch for you this whole time--” Dean threw in, cautiously.

It wasn't completely true ’cause he’d definitely noticed that Cas was a good lookin' dude.

He’d checked him out a couple of times throughout the years--from quick glances to his lips when the guy got all up into his personal space, to looking him up and down and wondering what he had hidden under that ridiculously bulky trench coat, to one of the more recent times when he’d been helping Cas get ready for that non-date date and he may have possibly checked the guy out just a bit while he gave him some tips on how to look good for the ladies.

Shit, when Cas came back from Purgatory and walked out of the bathroom all spruced up Dean had damn near popped a boner. *(And the dude had been fully fucking clothed, stupid coat and all.)*

So yeah, he wasn't completely oblivious that he was attracted to Cas on some level but their relationship had always been… complicated.

Cas used to be this bigger than life angel. They’d been through hell and back more than just a few times over the years, and each time they made it out, it was a close call--ones they didn't leave behind entirely unscathed either.

Even if Dean had put in more of a… romantic credibility to their brothers-in-arms,
foxhole, down-in-the-trenches-again-and-again relationship--something beyond just a few charged stare downs and I-need-yous--how would he even begin to touch on that?

This wouldn't have been easy even if Cas had been a chick, cause Cas was family.

There was a small part of his brain pointed out that no one put him first before, no one except maybe Cas. And he knew it was stupid and selfish of him to yearn for that--for one of the people he’d die for to put him above everything else for once--because he didn't deserve it, he wasn't entitled to it.

Cas had given up so much for him before but it had never just been for him, had it? The greater good was always at stake; because Cas couldn't give up everything for just one guy--not for a guy like Dean Winchester.

There always had to be another reason, another explanation behind the things he did, 'cause in his head Cas had picked a lot of things over him before--he chose to return to heaven, he chose fighting in angel wars instead of fighting alongside Dean, he chose to become god, to stay purgatory, to try and lock himself up with the god-squad (never to be seen again, had it worked) with little remorse over what Dean might feel about loosing his best fucking friend yet again.

And it didn't matter if he said stuff like 'I'm doing this for you, Dean, I'm doing this because of you,' if he told him he gave up everything for him.

'Cause why would anyone do anything in his name?

Dean didn't always understand Cas’s choices, but he’d always thought he’d known he couldn't be the reason behind any of em.

Not him, an itty bitty human, a tiny speck on Cas’s vast existence.

But there was that one time… the most recent time when Cas chose Dean over everything else. When Dean was obviously the wrong choice, when Dean was the bad guy. When Cas chose him because he was Dean and not what was blatantly the better option.

Dean hadn't let himself think too hard on that because it didn't made sense to him--someone seeing how poisonous he was and still putting him first.

Now that tiny part of his brain was grasping onto that moment, selfishly hoping that--hoping that Cas chose him because he meant something to him. Something more than what he thought they were.
‘Cause confessing his big gay feelings to the guy that was like a brother to him, a guy who’d been his lifeline day-in and day-out before and vice versa?

Families and friendships’ve been broken up for less.

Dean felt like he was taking a shot in the dark here and he just hoped he wasn't too off the mark.

“--But I… That stuff we’ve been doing lately? That’s not ‘nothing’ to me.” Dean told him, looking at the other man for the first time. He ran a hand through his hair and sighed. "It's actually a whole lot of something to me..."

Castiel was sitting on the armrest of their room's white loveseat with look on his face that clearly showed he’d been stunned into silence.

It made Dean nervous. “Dammit, Cas, say something.”

Castiel blinked and sucked in a sudden, deep breath, almost as if he’d forgotten how to work his lungs for a moment.

He’d been concerned--perhaps a bit self-centeredly, he thought, now that Dean had finished speaking--that the nature of this conversation was going to be about him and his sexuality.

The things the deity had been implying had spun around in his head as a message that Dean had noticed that Castiel had been blurring the lines between their ‘cover’ and reality--that the hunter had noticed that, now as a human, he perhaps found men as attractive as he did women.

Because although sexual orientation, like gender, had never mattered much to angels, he knew it was not the same for humans.

Castiel, himself, had been utterly indifferent to it.

Humans could love and fornicate whomever they wished in heaven’s eyes because to them it seemed boring.

To an angel the repetition was tedious.

The only time the Host cared about who was fucking whom was when intended fates and future lineage was concerned and even then heaven did not discriminate against same sex relations, as Dean might have noticed when the cupid ‘fixed up’ the barman and his regular patron.
It had happened shortly before they retrieved the cupid’s bow and Naomi showed up to inform them of the true nature of Metatron’s plan but perhaps the moment, overshadowed by both of their seemingly life-changing missions, had gone by understated. Castiel had barely noticed it at the time because it seemed unremarkable to him, a human loving another human, regardless of what gender they both were.

Now he hoped Dean had paused to consider it, that it might have helped somewhat.

As a human Castiel understood that all he’d found mundane in the past was so much more profound.

There was more to humanity than just survival, and while so much of that was surprisingly wondrous, he was also finding it also meant there was a multitude of social etiquette and various stigmas he hadn't realized existed.

One of which was sexuality.

Being on the show and speaking to the other contestants about their experiences as individuals in openly ‘queer’ relationships, taught him that this was not something their society deemed ‘normal.’ He learned that people were often attacked (verbally for the most part but often times even physically) for who they loved and who they were attracted to; they were attacked for something they could not help and it was jolting.

He’d known such things had happened in an abstract sense… but why would it have mattered to him as an angel, to heaven?

Perhaps it had been a callous way to view things, but it hadn't meant much to him when he’d still been somewhat tethered to the Host. It had not seemed important when they were facing apocalypses, demon hoards, and angel wars.

Even when Castiel had broken free and become a new God, knocking down those that spoke against homosexuality in (what at the time was) his name, he had done so mostly in an attempt to eradicate hypocrisy in his visage of a new world with new order. They were actions born of hubris.

Now, reevaluating the world as a human… he would not have believed it if it weren't for the noticeable looks he and Dean received when they went out together: when they were either recognized as one of the couples from the show or when they did something that made it visibly clear that they were ‘together.’

Some looked surprised, some looked wary, some looked confused, and some looked outright disgusted.

Castiel noticed Dean would ignore them.

He would continue on with a closed expression and would not mention it afterwards.

The former angel mimicked Dean’s attitude on the matter. He always took his cues from the Winchester, his primary source for unraveling humanity’s eccentricities.

And while Dean had never stated anything against being attracted to the same sex, while they were obviously doing this ‘thing’ together--Castiel was somehow still weary of mentioning his curiosity, as it were.

That’s not to say it was Dean’s fault he hadn't voiced his doubt.
Not at all.

Castiel was still overwhelmed by how different it was to experience everything as a human.

It was all so... perplexing.

The feeling of attraction was such a strange new sensation.

He still had trouble coping with the recognition that he could be aroused by the female form. Recognizing that he was attracted to men as well was something he had been stumbling into without guidance him along the way--or well what passed for guidance.

Most of what Castiel knew of humanity came from observation. He never truly had anyone metaphorically holding his hand along the way, but the former angel 'got by' with his method. (Dean called it ‘monkey see, monkey do’ and Castiel had begun to explain the true process of evolution when he was informed it was just another idiom.)

Although his tactic failed him when it came to other men, as there was no one to emulate when it came to exploring same sex relationships of the more… romantic nature.

Not to mention that lust and who he lusted after were subjects Castiel was not completely capable of discussing with his closest friend, particularly if his closest friend was quickly becoming the sole object of such topics.

He had resorted himself to semi-discrete ‘oogling’--a term he’d learned from Ellie when she had caught him admiring Dean’s physic from afar.

One of the many new things he’d picked up from being in close quarters with people that weren’t the Winchesters.

Though perhaps one of the most important things he’d noted from speaking to the other patrons of the show was that 'coming out,' was a gradual process.

A person had to do it to themselves, before anyone else.

And if and when they felt ready enough to let someone else in, it would not be something undertaken lightly.

But 'coming out' would never be a process they would go through once or twice. As he understood, it was something they would do it to every time they met someone new or someone who did not know yet--they would have to gauge what the other person’s reaction would be, would have to weigh whether or not it would be worth expressing that part of themselves or if it was simpler to pretend it didn't exist, to disguise their whole selves because another person would not respect them for who they were.

So Castiel understood. He understood what a momentous occasion it was, how important this was for Dean.

He stood up, placing himself in front of the hunter and tentatively cupping the man’s jaw. “I don’t know...” He trailed off, a little unsure of what to say. “I don’t know when this ceased to be pretend for me.”
And it wasn't pretend. Castiel had cared for Dean for a very long time.

In a sea of solitude, Dean had become someone he felt he could confide in--often times the only being he could confide in.

Even in the unsteady genesis of their companionship, he’d expressed his doubt of heaven’s plans--of everything he had been built to have unvarying faith in.

At the time that was something an angel was easily killed for, or at very least ‘reprogrammed’--which he was after his superiors felt his loyalties had changed, that he had gotten too close to his charge.

He didn't remember what they had done to him back at ‘bible camp’ that time but he assumed it had been centered around the Winchester. Castiel remembered feeling… disdain towards the human. Whatever they had done made it clear that he served heaven and heaven alone, that man was beneath him, but it was slight compared to the contempt he held Dean at for leading him away from Heaven’s Plan.

He supposed it was something with a similar mindset as Naomi’s ‘training exercises,’ which had also focused on Dean--or rather on Castiel killing Dean, over and over again.

Because in the end it was always Dean, wasn't it?

Metatron had not been altogether wrong. Castiel had draped himself in the flag of heaven, had warranted his choices under the pretense of protecting humanity--the mission that so many of his brothers and sisters had lost sight of--and he wanted to do that but ultimately Castiel just wanted to save Dean.

It was what he had been tasked with--saving Dean, pulling that one human out of the pit and feeling so proud to have been the one to do it.

His empathy for humanity had been coaxed out of him through Dean. He had rebelled against all he had known for Dean. He’d sacrificed himself repeatedly without a second thought, surrendered armies, he had fallen--for one man.

His greatest mistakes, and the great triumphs he could never take much credit for being a part of… Dean had been the catalyst.

Because what was an angel without God?

What did he have left without heaven?

Because he found himself falling more in love with the thought of humanity but it was one human in particular that had led him there. So where would he be without that
The one human he would not hesitate to give up everything for, even when it meant losing his life or losing *him* in the process.

(Which incidentally was the reason why he’d been ready to seal the gates of heaven, knowing he would have most likely locked himself in as well despite the fact that heaven had not felt like home in a long time. Castiel had tried to do it, not simply to fix heaven, but so that he could fix the world for Sam and Dean and the rest of humanity. Heaven and hell shut so that Dean could live the rest of his life a little bit more peacefully.)

He did not think it had always been romantic... or perhaps it was and he had just been incapable of understanding.

There had been a moment when he’d been under Naomi’s control, when he’d been so close to slaying his friend in the crypt, standing over him with his blade poised to strike--the moment when the connection had broken. He’d always assumed it was the angel tablet, but he’d dropped the blade before he touched the word of God. He had dropped the blade after Dean said that he was family, that the Winchester’s needed him, that *Dean* needed him.

Was that part of what they had now?

Was it...

Castiel had developed emotions as an angel but it was different.

He couldn't identify them, he didn't think angels were hardwired to feel properly. The difference between emotions as an angel and a human were vast, everything was much more intense as a human, but perhaps he had been wrong.

He could barely work out his emotions now that he knew he had them, now that he was not 'desensitized' to them. Keeping that in mind, he wondered if he might have been missing something the whole time.

But whatever this was... if their history added to it or subtracted from it--it was real. It was tangible. It was not a ‘cover,’ or something Castiel had read too far into.

He drew a circle against unshaven skin gently with his thumb, a touch Castiel learned from Dean, a touch he hoped conveyed as much comfort as he felt when Dean did the same to him. “But Dean...
it's 'something' to me as well.”

Dean placed his hand over Cas’s where it sat warm against his cheek. He let it rest there for a second before sliding it down past the former angel’s wrist, over the curve of his arm, and then up to his bicep.

He could feel his heart trying to beat out a damn samba in his chest while Cas seemed to trail off whatever he was thinking of saying and leaned in closer, allowing Dean to cup the back of his neck and pull him down into a kiss.

A hot open kiss that Dean melted into with an unsteady gasp.

Chapter End Notes

The dialogue to inner monologue ratio was crazy unbalanced in this chapter due to the fact that these two fuckers never talk anything through the way normal people are supposed to--and because they've had too many years of UST to not just dive in and stick one of their dingle dangles into the others bunghole.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded To:
5.08- Changing Channels
6.18- Frontierland
7.12- Time After Time
4.05- Monster Movie
4.06- Yellow Fever
4.14- Sex and Violence
6.01- Exile on Main St.
7.20- The Girl with the Dungeons and Dragons Tattoo
8.13- Everybody Hates Hitler
8.11- LARP and the Real Girl
9.06- Heaven Can't Wait
8.07- A Little Slice of Kevin
5.22- Swan Song
6.22- The Man Who Knew Too Much
8.23- Sacrifice
6.20- The Man Who Would Be King
5.18- Point of No Return
9.22- Stairway to Heaven
7.01- Meet the New Boss
7.21- Reading Is Fundamental
5.14- My Bloody Valentine
9.03- I'm No Angel
4.07- It's the Great Pumpkin, Sam Winchester
4.10- Heaven and Hell
4.20- The Rapture
4.16- On the Head of a Pin
4.22- Lucifer Rising
8.17- Goodbye Stranger
9.23- Do You Believe in Miracles?
4.01- Lazarus Rising

Plus honorable mention to:
-Supernatural Magazine interview with Jim Parrack who played the siren's Nick Munroe guise.
-Paraphrasing comments by Phil Sgriccia and Ben Edlund from the Commentary track for “Everybody Hates Hitler”, Supernatural Season 8 DVD/Blu-ray.
Chapter 12

PART THREE

Castiel did not realize when he’d decided to move, nor did he care, because somehow he ended up on Dean’s lap, thighs spread on either side of the hunter as he straddled him. And it was incredible.

It was as if they had jumped right back into what they’d been doing that night of the drinking game challenge--only this time they were not muddled by drink or doubt or limited by curious eyes and not-so-hidden cameras.

The sensations came through clearer, hitting them both with a new intensity.

His fingers scratched at the short hairs on the back of the other man’s head as Dean coaxed his tongue into his mouth.

Despite the stubble, the obvious difference between a solid six foot tall man straddling him instead of a woman, the feel of a hardening cock brushing up against his through two layers of slacks--Dean was confident that this was something he knew how to do. Feelings and talking and stuff weren't his forte but years of practice meant he was a damn good kisser.

Something he got confirmation of by Cas’s reaction when he sucked on the former angel’s tongue.

Cas let out a throaty moan and ground against him *hard.*

It had Dean pulling back in a sharp breath, hands automatically finding their way to Cas’s ass.
They both paused, taking in their matching spit-slick, wide-eyed, eager looks.

Castiel’s tongue darted out to swipe at his lower lip and Dean’s eyes followed the motion.

The hunter carefully squeezed the two handfuls of angelic booty, pulling Cas down as he experimentally ground up.

The pressure on both their boners had them groaning and they settled into a rhythm--Dean tilting his head back and Cas hiding his face in the crook of his neck as they moved against each other.

Castiel didn't know this would feel so good.

He found his way back to Dean’s lips, reveling in the sensation of their crotches rubbing together as the Winchester’s experienced tongue simultaneously drew out and swallowed noises he had not consciously authorized himself to make.

The only issue was that they were still wearing their tattered layers and the rapidly spreading heat had him feeling as if his suit was attempting to suffocate him.

He pulled back and rested his hands on Dean’s chest--momentarily feeling his beating heart beneath his palm, how the hunter’s chest rose and fell as he tried to catch his breath. He pushed him, urging Dean to lay flat against the bed so Castiel could remove the stifling blazer.

Dean had already gotten rid of his suit jacket before he’d started his whole ‘confession thing’ (he didn’t really feel comfortable labeling it as ‘coming out’ just yet) but Cas was determined to get rid of that last top layer.

He was still straddling him, brow furrowed as he fumbled with the buttons on Dean’s dress shirt.

The Winchester was nervous and excited and really turned on right now but he could still find it in him to chuckle at the overly concentrated look. “It’s not rocket science, Cas.”

Cas glared at him. He seemed to decide his shirt wasn't worth saving anyways and ripped the rest of it open, letting the buttons pop off--and damn, if that wasn't one of the hottest things Dean had ever seen. He stared up at the former angel with wide eyes.

Castiel lightly smoothed a hand down Dean’s bare chest, his touch hesitant. Despite his ‘manhandling,’ he was unsure of what to do now. He didn't quite know how to… proceed.

Dean noticed and took pity on him.
He reached up and finished unknotting the silver tie around his neck, slipping it off before carefully undoing the buttons of Castiel's dress shirt with dexterous fingers.

Dean could feel the warmth radiating from Cas’s skin, he could feel his rapid pulse at the base of his neck, the sheer humanity of the gesture.

He still couldn't believe it.

He couldn't believe they were doing this either, because it felt more like a dream--like he was going to wake up on a double bed in another crap motel room he was sharing with his farty little brother. And that Cas was just gonna pop in unexpectedly, angel-ed up in a dirty trench coat with his stupid tie on backwards and that expression--that half-blank look that used to be a permanent part of his demeanor. The one that meant he didn't understand them, because they were human and he just… wasn't.

He’d been so caught up these past few months on feeling guilty that Cas had to trudge through all of the muck and shit that went hand-in-hand with being human that he hadn't realized just how terrifying it would be to lose this, to lose this version of Cas he hadn't known he’d needed.

So if this was just some freaky dream Dean wanted to make it last.

It didn't surprise him that the breath he let out was still a little shaky. He pushed away the lingering doubts poking around the back of his mind, the thoughts of ‘this is crazy,’ in favor of pulling Cas down slowly for a languid kiss.

Dean rolled them over so he was on top. He shrugged off whatever was left of his shirt and helped Cas get rid of his, tossing it to the floor just before he leaned in and licked across the other man’s lips.

Castiel’s mouth popped open in response. He found Dean’s plump bottom lip trapped between his and they fell into an alternating rhythm, their kisses almost nibbling.

The interaction itself was oddly playful in contrast with the weighted atmosphere that had been leaving Castiel short of breath. It distracted him enough that he had not been prepared to feel Dean’s hand cupping him through his slacks, causing him to pull back with a low groan.

Dean took the opportunity to kiss, lick, and suck his way down the stretch of Cas’s neck, the former angel rutting up into his hand as he did. He licked into the dip between his collar bones and looked up to find two bright blue eyes trained on him.

Cas was damn near panting and the look on his face was hungry.

It made Dean feel heady, knowing he was the one that put that look on his face, that he could affect
his angel like that.

The hunter smirked and continued his way down, pausing first to test if Cas’s nipples were more on the sensitive side, for curiosity's sake, (they were) and again at his hipbones. He trailed his fingers along the area teasingly, just above the other man’s waistline, making Cas squirm for a second before finally unbuckling his belt.

Castiel watched as Dean unbuttoned his slacks.

Dean had portrayed a brazen attitude when he had been unraveling him, confident in his ministrations--but Castiel did not miss the apprehensive glances, the silent ‘is this alright?’ the Winchester had been expressing.

He reassured him by tilting his pelvis off the bed, aiding Dean in the task of removing his pants.

As soon as they were off, Castiel eagerly pulled the other man towards him so he could reciprocate, working to divest him of his grey bottoms.

His tactic seemingly clumsier than the finesse Dean portrayed in his seduction but no less successful as he finally managed to get him down to his underwear.

The thin material of his boxer briefs left little to the imagination.

Dean toppled back down with Cas, pulling him into a messy kiss and settling between his legs.

They got to moving again but as good as heavy petting with Cas felt--especially now they there was more skin-to-skin contact and less layering separating their dicks--Dean had something else he wanted to do.

He crawled down a bit and had Cas rest against the headboard so that he was face to face with the other man's crotch.

Cas’s dick was hard and leaking through his pale red briefs, leaving a little wet patch at the tip of his erection.

Dean made the spot worse by mouthing at the head of his cock.

He fondled the guy’s balls through his underwear, trying to draw out his pleasure, trying to revel in his seduction, in making sure the former angel got the most out of this.

But Cas was an eager bastard.
Castiel rut up against the Winchester’s mouth and let out a throaty whine in annoyance. “Dean…”

Dean rolled his eyes but he relented and peeled away the material, letting Cas’s boner spring free. With the way Cas had been squirming, he'd been lucky the former angel even let him work the underwear all the way off.

He knew Cas wasn't all virginal anymore (hell, ever since Cas let it slip that he liked to jerk off in the shower a month ago, he'd been having trouble thinking of anything but Cas when it came to sex)--still, he never expected him to be so eager.

Dean wouldn’t’ve believed it if he wasn't experiencing it firsthand.

He grabbed the other man’s dick in his fist, pumping once before he leaned in and flicked his tongue out tentatively at the little sensitive V at below the head.

Cas gasped and the sound encouraged Dean to continue.

Dean licked along the shaft, slicking it up just a bit in a way he knew felt good.

As Cas’s breathing grew harsher, it triggered something in him, something proud and confident that spurred him on.

He wrapped his lips around the tip and sucked.

Dean hadn't been ready for the stream of precum that burst in his mouth when he did, but he managed not to choke on the surprising new flavor and lapped at the slit just before he swallowed around his mouthful of Cas.

The former angel let out a low moan. “Dean.”

He was holding onto the sheets beneath him with enough force that his knuckles whitened.

It was fortunate that the hand that Dean didn't have gripping along his shaft was pressed up against his hip, holding him against the bed and preventing him from bucking up into the moist heat enveloping the top of his penis and (most likely) accidentally harming Dean in the process.

Dean sucked and licked and pretty much slobbered all over Cas’s dick. He didn't trust his gag reflex so he used his hand where his mouth hadn't reached and tried to remember NOT to unsheath his teeth despite how weird it felt to have them digging into along the inside of his lips.
It was so worth it because of how receptive Cas was.

The only thing keeping the former angel from fucking his face was the arm he had braced across his lower abdomen.

And man, was Cas vocal. He groaned and gasped and called out Dean’s name like he was praying for help.

The Winchester pulled back to look up at him, allowing both of them to catch their breaths.

It was hard to say who looked more debauched—Castiel panting and flushed with a needy expression coloring his face or Dean with swollen, spit-shined lips gazing at the dark haired man hungrily.

His expression had the former angel breathing in sharply, another dribble of clear liquid escaping the tip of his erection.

Castiel had not dared touch the hunter while he was working for fear of hurting him in his uncontrollable frenzy, but now he unclawed a hand from the sheets to run his fingers through Dean’s hair.

Dean leaned into the touch, closing his eyes and smiling for a sec.

When he opened them he bent back down to slowly lick a long stripe from the base where a few soft brown curls tickled him, all the way up to where Cas had dripped a fresh new wave of precum.

“Dean—” Castiel groaned and hit the back of his skull against the headboard with a soft thud. “Stop, please. I want—more.”

Dean froze.

He was sure Cas had been ready to come at any second and was about to start working him up to it but at the mention of ‘more,’ he popped off the other man’s dick and sat back against his heels.
This thing with Cas reminded him of when he was a teenager.

It was fumbly and awkward and new, and he didn't know what to do with all these stupid gay feelings that bubbled around his gut— but it was also awesome and exciting and made him feel like he was about to come in his pants at any second. So he really didn't know what to expect when dealing with the angel. He just figured if they were gonna go about this like a couple of prepubescent snot-nosed brats, then they were probably gonna take it slow.

Or well, slow-ish. At least when it came to actually doing the do, 'cause he just figured frottage and blowjobs and handjobs and stuff were all on the table.

Now when Cas said 'more,' his head automatically jumped back to all the girls in high school that wanted 'more' too--more talking, more feelings, more 'I love you’s.

Dean didn't think he ready for all that yet. He didn't even know if he was capable of that.

He looked at Cas with wide eyes, mouth opening and shutting and opening again.

Castiel noticed the clearly panicked expression and frowned, sitting up slightly with a concerned look on his face. “What’s wrong? Do you… not want to have sex?”

Dean’s brow furrowed. “...What?”

“I wanted you to penetrate me but I understand if you do not feel prepared for that yet.” Castiel explained in a sympathetic tone.

Cas was staring at him with that big wide-eyed puppy dog look, like he was worried about Dean’s mental well-being and all that crap.

Dean blinked at him. “...Peni--You want me to fuck you?”

Cas looked like he was caught between serious and confused and solemn as he gave him one single nod of affirmation.

“Dude… are you sure?”

“Yes?” Castiel told him, still obviously puzzled as to why they stopped.
Dean let out a slow wide grin and laughed. He cupped his angel’s face and kissed him.

When he pulled back, Castiel looked even more confused at being kissed. “Is it customary to laugh during coitus?”

There was a slight pause and then Dean started laughing so hard he has tears coming out of his eyes. He sits back and trails off into a chuckle. “Sometimes, Cas, when you’re with the right person.”

The hunter smiled but the mood turned serious soon. He seemed to hesitate.

“Are you sure you want me to--” God help him, he was gonna say it. “--’penetrate’ you? Wouldn't it be easier if I...”

He gulped and gestured vaguely between them.

He’d never actually had a guy… back there before. But he’d tried it out with a few chicks so he was probably a little more prepared. (That time with the Doublemint Twins was definitely memorable, even if Sam had walked in--but hey, he’d been going to hell so why not bang a few gongs before the lights went out?)

Castiel shook his head. He frowned, trying to figure out how to phrase it. “I understand that anal sex requires some… preparation. I don’t know how to--I would feel more comfortable in your hands.”

He explained, a touch of nervousness coloring his tone.

Not to mention he was genuinely curious as to what it would feel like.

Although Castiel had read that, when penetrating, vaginal sex and anal sex supposedly felt different--and he did want to participate in ‘topping’ with Dean sometime in the future--he had already crossed that form of intercourse off of his ‘mental checklist’ and now he would like to know what it would feel like to be on the ‘other end,’ so to speak.

He thought that mentioning so to Dean might seem too much as if he was ‘experimenting,’ when he was not.

Castiel was sure of this. He was sure of Dean.

Dean believed him. He could see Cas had made up his mind and so he nodded--more to himself than to Cas.

Ok. So they were gonna do this.

“Ok, um, ok. So, uh, we need lube--and uh, a condom.” He told him, watching the other man’s face for any kind of doubt.
Castiel kept his face blank (well, as blank as he could after having been orally brought to the brink of orgasm) but he could feel an energy running through him. There were tendrils of anxiety—quiet doubts that he might not perform to Dean’s satisfaction—but mostly he was flaring with excitement and desire.

He frowned. “Are condoms always necessary during intercourse?”

Dean blinked. “No…” He got the image of fucking around with Cas sans condom and his dick gave a very interested twitch.

“Condoms are usually used when, uh, you wanna keep it clean or when you’re having sex with strangers or to, like, not knock anyone up.” His face was beet red—which shouldn't've made sense considering he’d literally just had this guys genitals in his mouth a few minutes ago. A little impromptu sex ed course shouldn’t’ve had him feeling this bashful. “I don’t, uh—I don’t think that’ll be an issue with us but a lesson in safe sex might be good for you, buddy.”

The whole ‘I had my angel blade’ thing after the April incident was still fresh on Dean’s mind and he tried not to look too pouty about it.

Castiel took the words seriously and nodded.

He admired Dean’s physique as the hunter got up in search of the necessary supplies.

Dean had to fish out his duffle from under the bed and dig through it for the (old) new package of condoms he still had in there. It reminded him that: wow, it had been a long time since he’d gotten laid.

He spotted the ‘gift box’ with their names on it and grinned to himself as he opened it up and pulled out the Holy Water Lube.

How this existed, he had no idea but if anyone could find it, he wasn't surprised it was Crowley. The thing had a silhouette of a half dildo, half crucifix and the words ‘SANCTUS ORGASMICUS’ on it.

He held it up so Castiel could see.

The former angel narrowed his eyes at him in an expression that clearly said You’re lucky I can’t smite you, Dean Winchester because so help me God if you touch me with that, I would if I could.’

Dean just barely choked down a snort and tossed it aside.

He remembered Cas had brought home some lube once and was kinda grateful since he didn't really
walk around with that kinda stuff in his back pocket. He went to the bathroom to get it and when he came back he found Cas checking him out. Dean lifted an eyebrow at him. “Like what you see?”

Castiel tilted his head to the side, eyes bright as he shamelessly replied. “Yes.”

That sent a shiver through the Winchester. He crawled back onto the bed and pulled Cas into another kiss, still marveling that he could do this now.

Castiel’s hand traced the muscles along his back, trailing downward until they were slipping below the waistband of the black boxer briefs he still wore and cupping his bottom. He copied what Dean had done earlier and squeezed.

Dean let out a pleased hummed in response and he felt a slight smile against his lips.

He took the opportunity to push down the last bit of cloth, finally freeing the hunter’s erection so he was as naked as Castiel.

When Dean pulled back he set up a pillow and told Cas to lay down over it, face up so that it tilted his hips towards him. He guided Cas’s legs apart, letting his hands smooth up the other man’s calves and linger against the softer skin behind his knees, the caress moving upwards so he could graze along the back of his thighs.

Castiel’s breath hitched in response to the embrace.

Dean tore off the plastic wrapping of the unopened bottle and replaced the cap so he could squirt a little onto his hand. He rubbed some of it between his thumb and his forefingers, testing out the feel.

(The lube was called Slippery Stuff and, man, it definitely wasn't false advertising.)

The two shared a long look, each of them searching the other for any last ‘second thoughts’ and caught between sheer anticipation and more than a little disbelief.

Castiel shifted on the pillow. His legs were spread, slightly bent at the knees as Dean had guided, and his erection sat hard, heavy, and glistening against his stomach.

It kinda took Dean’s breath away.
He applied a little more lube to his fingers and adjusted himself so he was practically on all fours, kneeling in a way that left him up close and personal with Cas’s privates. (‘Cause Dean wanted to see what he was doing—he wanted to make sure he was doing everything right.)

He ghosted the pad of his index finger over the dusky pink pucker and watched it twitch at the touch. “Sorry, it might be a little cold.” He murmured.

Castiel automatically nodded, only abstractly realizing Dean wasn’t looking at his face.

The Winchester place what felt like an apologetic kiss against the inside of his thigh.

A buzz ran through him at the gesture, humming beneath his skin. The feeling—combined with Dean’s finger repeatedly circling his sphincter, starting off as a gentle brush and easing into an almost teasing massage as Dean would slowly add pressure each round—had him holding his breath.

He tensed a bit at the first sign of intrusion but it did not hurt as Dean slowly pushed the digit in until what felt like the second knuckle.

It wasn’t painful, just an odd sensation of having something so solid entering in that orifice and the contrasting cold wetness of the lubricant with the heat from Dean’s finger.

Dean waited for Cas to get more accustomed to the feeling. He peppered his inner thigh with more kisses and murmured against his skin. “Breathe, baby.”

Castiel shivered, experimentally clenching the tight ring of muscle around Dean’s finger before relaxing. “I am ready for you to move.”

Dean hummed his agreement and set a slow pace, carefully moving his finger in a circular motion as he eased it in and out, Cas clenching around him at odd times.

He knew inner thighs were a hot spot for chicks and he started to wonder if it was the same for guys. Admittedly, Cas sometimes looked a little more fit than he was— he didn't have as much pudge and he was just a little more lithe compared to Dean’s bulk. He also had these weird legs. (Which was almost a funny thought, coming from the bow-legged guy.) His legs were sculpted like a runner but he had these like thunder thighs. They were toned but... meaty.

And they were perfect for testing out his theory.

This time when Dean leaned in to kiss the skin of his inner thigh, he did it wetly, flicking his tongue out curiously in a manner that had Castiel breathing more heavily.
Dean was sucking a mark into the unexpected erogenous zone, the sensation compelling enough that he didn't have time to think before easily accepting a second digit.

Cas was panting now.

Dean applied a little more lube and started working him open carefully. He knew when he’d finally brushed the little bundle of nerves inside him by the low moan that was ripped out of Cas.

“Dean!” Castiel canted his hips, unsure if his body was trying to move away from the overwhelming pleasure or if he wanted more.

The hunter rubbed over the spot again lightly and marveled over how Cas responded, trying to grind down on his fingers. Holy shit. He increased his pace.

When it was time to add a third finger, Dean took hold of Cas’s neglected cock, using the precum that had leaked from the tip to pump in time with his fingers. By then Cas was already writhing.

“Dean.” Castiel gasped. “Please.” He wasn't all that sure what he was asking for anymore, just that he needed more.

Dean’s breath hitched. He hadn't even touched his own dick yet and he already felt more on edge than he’d been in a long, long time.

He carefully inched out his fingers. Cas whined in protest but Dean ignored him in favor of fumbling around for the condom. He found the foil packet and tore the corner open with his teeth, hissing as he rolled it onto his cock and coated it with more Slippery Stuff.

Dean replaced himself between Cas’s knees.

As much as every inch of him was screaming to get in Cas, he couldn't just yet. He ran feather-light touches over the other man’s thighs, climbing up over his hips and lower abdomen.

“Are you sure, Cas?” Dean’s voice came out hoarse and he was focusing on Cas with an almost pained look.

Castiel glared at him, lacking the intensity of his normally wrathful gazes because of how needy he felt. “Dean, if you don’t place your penis inside me right now, I will not allow you to sleep on this bed tonight.”
Dean huffed in amusement but he knew Cas was totally serious. He sucked in a deep breath and positioned himself.

He inched in slowly, centimeter by centimeter, all the while gripping the base of his dick so that he wouldn’t end the party before it’d barely just begun. (Which was looking like a strong possibility after how high strung he was and how fucking good Cas felt—hot and tight around him.)

When he finally bottomed out to the hilt, they were both breathing heavily. Dean against Cas’s neck where he was hiding his face, and Cas breathing right by his ear.

He felt like he was surrounded by the former angel.

Dean could feel him pulsing gently around his cock, tiny spasms as he got used to the feeling of being full. Cas had both his arms wrapped around his back and he could also feel where the angel was gripping at his shoulder almost hard enough that he might wake up with a few extre.

Castiel shuddered. “Dean,” he breathed, “move.”

And so Dean did. He moved slowly, drawing in and out smoothly as they worked together to build up a pace.

He found his way back to Cas’s lips, melting into a deep kiss that had them increasing their speed.

It wasn't long after when Dean brushed up against his prostate and Castiel groaned, unintentionally scratching down the hunter’s broad back. “Do that again.”

Dean pulled back and rocked into him at that angle again, this time harder. The former angel moaned and met him on the next thrust. It was almost too much.

He groaned. Resting his forehead against Cas’s, he reached towards the tight space between them to wrap his hand around the other man’s dick, jerking him off as they raced towards their orgasms.

Dean wasn’t sure who came first because next thing he knew, he was squeezing his eyes shut as he came long and hard. He'd also felt Cas spilling over his fist, clenching around him and milking out the rest of his orgasm.

They breathed each other's air as they tried to catch their breath.

Castiel opened his eyes to find a pair of bright green ones staring down at him. He weakly reached up and ran his fingers through the short brown-blonde strands that were lightly dampened with sweat.
He used the hunter’s hair to urge him down into an exhausted kiss, gripping it lightly so he could press his lips against his.

Dean Winchester does not cry during sex.

He was a manly macho man.

But right now he was lucky he didn't tear up or something after an unexpected wave of emotion crashed over him.

(Again--he didn't actually cry or anything. He just had that, like, cry-feeling under his skin 'cause it'd been a long day, alright? Dean was paraded around in monkey clothes on live national television, got beat up by a god, picked on for being bi by another god, and confessed his big queer feelings right before having explosive sex with a former angel of the lord--a former angel of the lord that was also his best friend and he cared a lot about. So shut up, he was still a manly macho man with manly macho feelings.)

He lingered against the other man's lips a little longer but being buried in Cas was a little uncomfortable and sticky.

Dean pulled out slowly, apologizing at the slightly discomforted rumble Cas let out in response, and tossed the used condom into the trash can by one of the night stands. He used one of their discarded boxer briefs to wipe the cum off his hand and Cas’s stomach.

Castiel was content just to lay back and watch as Dean took over ‘clean up duty,’ observing him as he kicked the tattered clothes aside and shut off the room light before getting into bed with him. He pulled the comforter over their naked bodies and they snuggled closer beneath it.

“We’re sleeping in tomorrow.” He mumbled, resting his chin against Dean’s shoulder, arms wrapped around his midsection.

He heard Dean grunt in agreement and they started to drift off to sleep.

They were mostly asleep when Dean felt it. It was like the feeling Steph had described--like when the TV is on but nothing's playing. He shifted so he was facing Cas, snuggling closer and surreptitiously jostling him so he would wake up.

The former angel’s eyes creaked open and he sensed something was off, his hand automatically reaching towards the sheathed angel blade he kept beneath his pillow. (A habit picked up from Dean who did the same with his Colt M1911.)

They stayed like that, face-to-face for a while, eyes roaming the room where they could but mostly staring at each other as they waited to see what the presence would do.

It didn't do anything but even after it had apparently left they stayed like that for a long while, sleep a
little harder to find.

Chapter End Notes

First attempt at writing fumbly 'I've never done this before' sex, so sorry if it's not very good.

PS: I've been implying bottom!Dean because I love bottom!Dean, but I also love bottom!Cas so I did that to try and establish that this version of deancas doesn't have a 'true' or 'solo' top/bottom.
(A decision probably reached because thoughts of generous-lover!top dean/eager!bottom dean and adventurous!top cas/bossy!bottom cas are impossible to pick between.)

Also because I'm pretty sure if Cas tried to, um, 'open Dean up' without some experience under his belt (pun intended) he'd probably end up hurting his bowlegged lover by accident with his awkward eagerness.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded To:
9.03 I'm No Angel
3.01 The Magnificent Seven
5.04 The End

Plus honorable mention to:
Misha's thunder thighs. (I love Misha's thunder thighs.)
Whoever named serious quality lube 'Slippery Stuff'
The next morning Dean was woken up by a fucking ridiculously annoying ringing. He groaned and momentarily untangled himself from the cocoon of Cas’s arms, stretching towards the source of the sound. He didn't have the energy to open his eyes yet so he hit a button at random, hoping he’d clicked the right one.

He brought his phone up to his ear and grunted his hello in a way that vaguely sounded like ‘speak.’

Sam’s muddled voice came out from the receiver. “Dean? Are you guys still asleep?”

Dean grunted again in confirmation followed by a barely coherent. “Wha’d’ya want, Sam?”

“It’s almost three PM Dean, I can’t believe you’re still in bed.”

The elder Winchester let out a throaty sound of annoyance. “We had another ‘close encounter’ last night, man.” He grumbled. “Cut us some slack.”

“What? You know what--shit--just tell me later. I’m on my way there right now.”

Dean hummed his okay.

And then he finally processed what Sam had said and his eyes popped open. “Wait--what?”
But his brother had already hung up.

Dean cursed. He tossed his phone on the pile of discarded clothes that littered the floor after last night. Rolling over, he faced a certain sleeping former angel. “Cas, buddy, wake up. We gotta get a move on.”

Castiel grumbled and just snuggled in closer, his face sleepily rubbing against Dean’s naked skin as he nuzzled into the crook of his neck.

The hunter sighed. “I’m serious, man.”

“Is anyone trying to kill us?” Castiel mumbled, creaking one eye open just barely to peek at his (now seemingly no longer pretend) lover.

“I don’t think so?” Dean replied, still a little confused by the very literal wake-up call.

“Then we’re going back to sleep.” Castiel yawned. “We’ll kill the thing later.” He murmured.

It wasn’t a secret that Cas wasn’t as eloquent in the mornings. If there was an emergency or they had something to do, he could be counted on to rise to the challenge. Otherwise? It was a damn mission to get him out of bed—especially since they’d started their little cuddly sleepovers for this case.

One time Dean had asked him how he ever managed to hold down that job at the Gas-N-Sip if he wasn’t a morning person (and he’d just been fucking around because Cas was real big on ‘duty’—didn’t matter if it was getting up to do something key to solving a case or if it was his turn to pick up breakfast—he took it seriously and tried to do things ‘to the best of his ability’) but Cas had taken the question to heart. He’d sighed and said: ‘Waking up two hours ahead of schedule and having easy access to a copious amount of coffee was essential but mostly the... ‘fear’ of being tossed back out onto the street served as a sufficient motivator.’

He’d said the word ‘fear’ as if he’d been unsure if that was it, if that was something humans were allowed to feel fear over.

It hadn’t been hard for Dean to see why he’d think that because all the Winchesters’ had taught him about fear was that it was something you felt when a monster had you by the throat—a strictly physical thing only trumped by those not-so-rare (when it came to them) times when the weight of the world was literally on your shoulders.

Cas had taken a sip from the mug of coffee he’d been drinking and continued. ‘Plus, I have found that sleeping bags against concrete are uncomfortable and make the prospect of ‘sleeping in’ much less enticing.’
Dean’d had to swallow past the residual guilt lodged in his throat and managed a rough: ‘Yeah, I hear ya. We’ve all been there, buddy.’

Because he had. He and Sam weren’t strangers to squatting—not just as adults but sometimes dad would leave em somewhere vacated with nothing but a wad of cash for food, some roll up sleeping bags, Sam’s school shit, and a pair of duffles filled with enough clothes that no one would ask too many questions if they kept rotating outfits at school. When that was the case, they were lucky if dad dumped em somewhere with running water, a working toilet, or a hose so that they wouldn’t have to settle for trying to sneak whores’ baths in public restrooms. So yeah, they knew what it felt like to have that anxious itch creeping up behind you, worrying over the thought that they might get caught and kicked out or lost in the system—but Cas shouldn’t've had to deal with anything like that. He should've been with them in the bunker.

Back in the now, Dean rolled his eyes at Cas’s response. He let his hand slowly trail up from the curve of Cas’s waist, just barely skimming his chest and then back down again twice more. He didn’t pause at his hip on the third caress, choosing to continue downwards over the other man's leg.

Smirking to himself, Dean eased Cas’s thigh to curl over his hip, slotting in closer so that their naked groins brushed together.

Cas might've been willing to sleep in a little longer but a certain part of him seemed pretty interested in getting up.

The Winchester just barely let their crotches touch, choosing instead to let his hands wander more-or-less innocently as he buried his face in Cas's hair. He could feel Cas frowning just as the former angel tried to subtly inch closer—but there was nothing subtle about two half-hard pricks bumping together.

Dean grinned into the other man's hair. He let his hands slide down to the curve of Cas's ass at a syrupy-slow pace, building up the anticipation so that by the time he urged them together for just a lil bit of friction, both he and Cas were almost standing at full attention.

Castiel pointlessly tried to muffle his gasp against the smooth skin of Dean’s neck. He squeezed his eyes shut tightly as Dean did it again, dragging their hard lengths against each other in a slow taunt. He kept his face hidden and groused intelligibly, something akin to the phrase ‘I dislike you.’

Dean chuckled in triumph.

He kicked away the sheets--ignoring Cas’s grousing protests--so that he could roll them over.

When Castiel opened his eyes, he found himself sprawled naked in the center of the bed with Dean hovering closely above him--lips parted, hair sticking out at odd ends, green eyes unusually bright. His own lips parted in response, awaiting Dean’s.
Dean skipped over those lips for now, instead licking a stripe along the stubbled skin of Cas’s neck. He ran his teeth over the area teasingly before giving the space a lush kiss.

He sucked lightly enough that he wouldn't leave a mark but the sensation, combined with the hard grind of their cocks rubbing together, had the former angel moaning.

Castiel abandoned any pretense of going back to sleep in favor of bringing Dean into a deep kiss, his fingers pulling at the short brown-blonde strands.

It started out languidly but grew in short bursts until it turned into a fervor with Castiel's hands gripping at Dean's rear as they panted into each other's mouths in between kisses. Their combined efforts were focused on the frantic drag and pull of their erections, eased only by the droplets of pre-ejaculate from them both that mingled together as a natural lubricant.

Dean braced himself with one hand on the headboard while the other closed loosely around their cocks. He cursed at the first feel of them fucking into his fist. He swiped a thumb over their slits, gathering up more precum and actually felt Cas's dick twitch against his in response.

Castiel groaned and pressed his face against the front Dean's shoulder as he bucked up in time with Dean, the hot tension in his lower abdomen only growing, the pleasure prickling below every inch of his skin. He pulled at the other man, bringing him as close as he could without impeding them from the growing speed of their thrusts.

Their orgasms seemed to catch em both by surprise--Dean moaning loudly as he came, and Cas calling out his name. The Winchester stroked them through it until they both shivered from the sensitivity.

They laid side by side, shoulder to shoulder as they tried to catch their breaths.

Holy shit.

Not even in his wildest dreams had he ever imagined quick and dirty morning frottage with Cas. He glanced over at the combined mess they'd left on Cas's stomach and lifted his hand to note the sticky layer of spunk with a grimace. "We need to shower."

Cas hummed in sated agreement.
It took a second to come back to him but then Dean realized that was probably the least of their worries. He groaned. "Sam'll be here soon."

Castiel had almost begun to slip into a post-orgasmic nap but the mention of Sam brought him back. His brows furrowed and he peeked an eye open at his... at Dean. He was going to question why Sam would risk their cover to visit them at the house when there was a knock on the door.

Dean cursed and bolted up. He almost opened the door with his cum-soiled hand when his brain finally caught up to him.

He was naked.

Cas was naked.

Cas was covered in jizz.

This was not the best scenario.

"Fuck." He glanced over at the former angel who had sat up cross-legged on the bed. "Cas--shower."

Castiel nodded and hastily got up. He headed into the bathroom and closed the door behind him.

Dean tugged on a pair of boxers from the floor--he was pretty sure they were Cas's--and wiped his hand down on an already ruined dress shirt before creaking open the door.

He'd never been happier to find that it was just Jeremy and his stupid headset. "Yeah?"

"Production is off for the day and there's a federal agent that would like to speak to you and Castiel."

The hunter nodded. Fed. Right. That was probably Sam. "We'll be out in a sec."

Jeremy gave him a quick once over (unintentionally making Dean feel a little self conscious in the process) but he didn't comment other than offering up that they could take their time.

Apparently the agent wanted to speak to Liz first.

Dean nodded and repeated that they'd be ready soon. He closed the door, leaning against it for a long second as that old twinge of 'they'll catch me, they'll know' ease away before heading towards the sound of running water coming from the bathroom.
He knocked and heard a gravelly 'come in,' opening to find Cas pulling open the shower curtain, giving him a view of the dude already neck deep in hot water and shampoo.

"You're wearing my underwear." Castiel remarked before going back to scrubbing out what felt like left over debris particles from his hair.

"S'only thing I could find in time." Dean peaked at himself in the mirror noting his fucked-out look.

Shit.

No wonder Jeremy told him to take his time. Dean's hair was sticking out everywhere from being tugged on by Cas, he'd missed a little smear of almost dried cum on his lower abdomen, and when he looked closely he could see the faintest impression of a set of teeth marks by his collarbone. "Cas, did you bite me?"

"I don't recall but it's in the realm of possibility." Castiel mused over the spray.

Dean rolled his eyes. He kicked off the borrowed boxer briefs and joined his dumb angel in the shower.

Castiel turned around with a faint smile set across his lips. He scrutinized the mark in question. "I don't believe that qualifies as a bite. It should be gone by the time we finish bathing."

His voice was still a little hoarser than usual from the residual pleasure of his... intimate liaison with the Winchester combined with the current pleasure of the water pressure working against the muscles on his back--sore from both the explosive encounter with the deity and the intercourse with Dean. (Another part of him was a bit tender from the latter but it was an oddly pleasant form of soreness.)

Dean failed at hiding his grin. "Whatever, man, you still fucking bit me."

He swiped away some of the suds from Cas's shoulder and pressed a small kiss there before grabbing at the shampoo to start his own showerly routine.

They finished up pretty quickly, keeping it relatively chaste.

Cas had gotten out first and was already in jeans and the AC/DC shirt he liked by the time Dean emerged with a towel wrapped around his waist and rubbing his short hair dry with another.
He noticed Cas had more or less cleaned up. The comforter was balled up in the middle of the bed instead of dropping out onto the floor, their ruined clothes had been kicked into a corner, and the bottle of lube was sitting innocuously on Dean's nightstand.

When he turned his gaze back on the former angel, he found him eyeing him from head to toe.

Castiel passed him a pair of clean jeans and just barely hesitated before pressing a small kiss to Dean's lips.

Dean found himself pulling Cas back into another peck before watching as the man left to find the 'federal agent' that wanted to speak to them.

Castiel was carefully picking his words as he 'chatted' with Sam and Liz--his goal being that of remaining as formal as possible to maintain the facade that the younger Winchester was truly an authority figure he had never met before--when Dean finally walked in wearing the jeans he'd found plus a flannel button down over a navy blue shirt that made him look like a bit younger than he normally appeared.

It was... strange; taking in the sight of him after experiencing what they had done, after leaving the transient bubble of intimacy that was their room. He was vividly aware, though, that now was not the time to ponder over the unfamiliar mixture of emotions flaring through him and so he allowed himself only a smile in greeting.

Dean felt kinda dumb, because that smile actually had him faltering for a sec.

He literally had a moment of 'wait shit, its just Cas, don't be such girl' while he remembered that using his lungs was kinda necessary to survive and that he should probably at least try to tone down the warm smile he gave Cas in return. (Not that he'd ever admit to getting all breathless over a smile or the--God help him--fuzzy warm feelings that came with it out loud.)

And then he remembered Sam and his back straightened, smile just a fraction sharper.

Sam introduced himself as Agent Springsteen and repeated what he'd told Cas: that he was sorry to inform him that their former contestants had unfortunately succumbed to the injuries allegedly caused by the 'earthquake', that he was in town on a different case and had offered his services in overlooking some of the details of the incident, that it had been noted that Dean and Cas were the only ones in the immediate vicinity when they perished, and asking if they would be willing to accompany him downtown to take their statements.

Dean didn't ask as many questions as Liz did (or as many as Cas did, for that matter) so Sam thankfully didn't have to repeat that 'the reason the Bureau was investigating the incident' is because 'certain variables overlap with the case he was assigned to.'

The only thing Dean did to keep up their act was ask if they'd have to ride with him or if he could just take his car. (He finished the question with a shit eating grin that made it hard for Sam to keep
Whatever worries Dean might've had was washed away by Sam's bitchface as he informed him that they could just 'follow him down to the station,' and 'yes, sir, that means you can take your car.'

They left shortly after with a reminder from Liz that production was canceled for the day 'as a period of grieving.'

They told Sam about their brief nighttime visitor and in turn Sam filled them in on what he'd found as they walked to the garage.

"Alright, so this thing that called itself 'Hu Tianbao'? I found a folk tale, rumored to be from 17th century Fujian about a soldier who fell in love with an imperial inspector from that province--a relatively high-up male official." Sam said the word 'male' as if to emphasize the gay. "Anyways, one day the soldier was caught checking out the guy through a bathroom wall and they uh, encouraged him to confess his reluctant affections for the other man."

Sam paused heavily and grimaced. "Because of that, the imperial inspector had the soldier sentenced to death by beating. The soldier's name was Hu Tianbao."

While something like that obviously upset Sam to some extent, it was doubtful it affected him as intensely as the darker turmoil that churned within Castiel at the image. Even if the tale itself was incorrect, he did not doubt that such things had occurred in the past as they continue occur now.

Humans both in the West and in the East have long pushed the homosexual community into the margin, most often in the name of religion or with the support of their governments.

By the look on Dean's face, it was clear he was equally affected by the fate of this soldier and the thoughts that came with it. The reminder of the intolerance and hatred capable of certain humans towards homosexual affections was particularly unsettling so soon after the memory of last night: of the confessions, of the intimacy, of waking up this morning in a way that he imagined similar to how it would've been if he and Dean were truly just a couple in love on a ridiculous game show rather than brutally aware of the hidden dangers of this world.

It was almost ironic how focusing on the 'hidden dangers' often made it easier to forget the other dangers that continued to plague this earth--the ones most of humanity was aware of but so few made the effort to prevent.

Sam hadn't finished talking and pulled them back from that line of thinking. "According to the customs of the Fujian province, it's acceptable for a man and a boy to form a bond, kinda like brothers only with more mystical stuff--like dream walking. The lore goes on to claim that a little while after he died, Hu Tianbao appears to a guy from his hometown in a dream and tells him that,
because his 'crime' was one of love, the officials of the underworld decided to right the injustice by appointing him the god and safe-guarder of homosexual affections."

They'd reached Sam's car and he stopped talking to open his trunk and get out a tablet. It was one of those fancy Microsoft ones that turns into a laptop too and it used to belong to Charlie. She'd left it behind when she went to Oz since she'd managed to hack into that thing the Men of Letters called a computer and link part of it into the tablet.

(Personally, Dean found neither it nor the MoL thing could count as actual computers.)

Sam flicked through it and pulled up some info he'd started gathering on this new deity.

"He may or may not really have anything to do with a rabbit--the lore and the history are kinda muddled and I haven't gotten the chance to check out which is the real story but the guy he talked to built like a shrine or a temple where the villagers could go burn incense for 'the affairs of men'." Sam scrunched up his nose in annoyance but Dean and Cas knew well enough that his displeasure was aimed at the lack of certainty within the lore. "After that he became known as 'Tu Er Shen' which translates into 'The Leveret Spirit' or more commonly, as Cas found, 'The Rabbit Deity'."

Dean wasn't surprised at the thought that the deity didn't actually have anything to do with rabbits. "Figures that that dick would turn into a bunny just to fuck with us."

"I have some of the stuff I dug up on there and the rest is at the motel." The younger Winchester handed over the tablet to Cas so he and Dean could check it out. "I just wanted to swing by here to get some extra intel on what happened last night."

"What?" Dean glanced up quickly. "What do you mean what happened last night?"

Castiel looked away from where he'd been skimming an engrossing article on the deity Sam had collected on his computer device when he noted the distressed edge in Dean's voice at the mention of 'last night'.

Sam furrowed his brows at his brother in confusion. "The 'earthquake'?"

It had become the official accident cause over what had truly been Yue Lao's wrath. It made it confusing for some people who didn't get why a federal investigator would follow up on a natural disaster but, fake or not, his fed badge got him where he needed to be.
"Oh, yeah, that." Dean nodded and cleared his throat. "Alright, well then, let's get out of here and you can show us what else y'got."

Castiel, like Dean, did not take to technology very well but he was more patient, more willing to learn, and therefore (now) a bit more adept at handling it than Dean was. He flicked through some of the articles Sam had bookmarked as Dean started up the impala beside him. "I'm not sure how reliable some of these sources are," he commented, "but it appears as if Tu Er Shen acts as an alternative to Yue Lao when it comes to homosexual relations. Say if you were homosexual--"

Dean side-eyed him and the corner of his mouth twitched into a small smirk.

"--as in strictly attracted to only the same sex--" he clarified, easily recognizing the signs of a sarcastic comment threatening to bubble out of the Winchester. "--and you were to pray to Yue Lao for a successful partnership, the deity would attempt to place you in a heterosexual courtship. Tu Er Shen, while seemingly powerful, appears as if he can't intercede if unless you were to request to his assistance directly."

"Can't or won't?"

"Can't." Castiel stated surely, pulling up another file beside the web page he was on. "From what Sam found, he follows a formal set of guidelines. Although he is responsible in part for the affairs of those interested in same-sex relations, his actions are limited unless he has been sought after."

Dean made a 'hmmh' sound and Cas continued.

"From what few accounts there are, it appears as if he isn't limited to matchmaking as Yue Lao is." Castiel opened up a file containing photos of what looked like people who had been attacked. "He seem to take it upon himself to assist those who seek his aid in fear of harm. There's a pool of aggressors that have been seriously injured for attempting to target apparent members of the queer community--many of the members accepting credit under the appropriate pretense of self defense."

Dean thought that through and subconsciously nodded in approval. "So the guy's like a supernatural self-defense coach."

Castiel made a noise of affirmation. He seemed to decide that was enough for now and darkened the tablet screen, setting it down on his lap.
Dean took that as the perfect cue to power on the radio and turn the music up.

Halfway to the motel, Dean's eyes strayed to the rear view mirror and found a pair of sly almond shaped ones staring back at him.

"Jesus, fuck--!" Baby swerved for a sec and Dean only narrowly stopped himself from slamming her brakes mid-traffic. He almost didn't notice as the car behind him honked and sped up past them.

Castiel turned quickly to find Tu Er Shen at ease in the back seat. He opened his mouth but the deity spoke first.

"I've decided to help you."

"Help us what? Crash the friggin' car?" Dean glared at the smirking bastard through the mirror. He noted rabbit dude was shirtless again and huffed. "You better be wearing pants."

"He is nude."

Dean gave Cas a horrified look at the news.

The deity rolled his eyes. "You and I both know naked men do not bother you as much as you pretend they do." He glanced between them. "Particularly after last night, I would imagine."

How the fuck he knew, Dean had no idea, but even as he quickly turned three shades of red, he refused to let the smug douche bag get to him. "Dude! I don't want your ass prints on my upholstery!"

Tu Er Shen sighed loudly and with a snap of his fingers he was gone.

"Shit!" Dean hit his hands against the steering wheel. He was going to ask if Cas could call Sam but the former angel was already on it.

They turned into the motel parking lot to find Sam leaning against his car with another bitchface on. "Nice going, Dean."
"My car--" He started.

"Yeah, yeah--'your car'." Sam mocked but there was no real heat behind his words, just mild exasperation that their best shot to finally finish this case had gotten away yet again.

It was somewhat satisfying to see Dean pouting about it, though.

The taller Winchester got his room key out and opened the door, almost immediately swapping it for his gun when he found a man laid out on his bed.

It was just their new deity friend, though. Mercifully, he was back in his scanty outfit from the night before rather than totally nude.

The trio huddled into the room and locked the door behind them.

"You're kind of a nerd, aren't you." Tu Er Shen spoke in greeting. He nodded toward the wall of data Sam already had up about him. He'd seemed to have conjured up a few darts and had been using what was probably a centuries-old drawing that depicted what was supposedly one of his visages from a MoL book on Ancient Chinese folklore.

Okay, so maybe 'friend' was too grand a term.

Dean was reconsidering not hating the guy just out of amusement from watching Sam's bitchface intensify.

Castiel noted Dean's smirk and elbowed him. He addressed the Asiatic god. "You mentioned 'helping' us."

"Ah, right down to business." He sighed and threw his last dart, hitting the drawing right in the crotch before he turned his attention on Cas. "You seem like a real 'no nonsense' kind of guy--must be bossy in the bedroom."

The deity winked in the direction of him and Dean but all he received in return was a twin set of hard looks.

He sat up and made a show of cracking his knuckles and crossing his leather clad legs. "I refuse to assist you in tracking down Yue Lao but I have no qualms over providing you with information on
how to defeat him, should you get the chance."

"Why?" Castiel asked, squinting suspiciously.

"Hmm?"

"Why the sudden change of heart?" Dean clarified, on the same page as his--as Cas.

The god narrowed his eyes at them in a way that spookily made Dean think he'd caught the unrelated hiccup over Cas's romantic (or non-romantic) standing in his head. Thankfully, he didn't comment on it and focused on what they'd actually asked instead.

"You truly are some of the most curious humans I've ever met. Those who know of me have built shrines in my honor yet you lot would be hesitant to accept even an upside-down pineapple cake recipe if it came from me." Tu Er Shen mused. "Which, by the way, is incredibly delicious."

"We've tangled with bigger fish than you for a lot less and we know everything comes with a price." Dean retorted. (He didn't acknowledge the cake comment but it did remind him that he was pretty hungry.)

The Rabbit Deity glanced at Sam for a moment and then back at them. He seemed to decide honesty was the best policy when it came to them. "Two parts revenge for harming my kind and one part--whatever your little speech yesterday was." He nodded towards Castiel. "Perhaps you may have had somewhat of a point... And, as your tall friend uncovered, one of my specialties is ensuring those under my care are protected."

It was clear the three hunters weren't keen on buying what he was selling but there was a distinct note of 'we'll take what we can get' in the air.

That seemed to be enough for Tu Er Shen. He snapped his fingers again and an honest to god scroll poofed into thin air in front of Dean and Cas.

"What's this?" Dean peeked over Cas's shoulder as he unrolled the scroll to reveal a bunch of fancy Chinese characters. "'How To Fry Up Love Gods for Dummies'?"
He wouldn't put it above this guy to give them an actual upside down pineapple cake recipe after that one comment.

"It's a prayer." Castiel clarified as he looked over the text. "We must pray to you?"

"Well I cannot just give you the information." The deity scoffed. "You must formally request for my aid."

Dean rolled his eyes at the god's lofty tone. He didn't like it. It was too 'demon deal' for his taste to have to go through any kind of red tape and he could tell Sam didn't like it either. Cas seemed to think it was okay and since he was the expert on prayers here, they watched on with tight expressions as he shot off the 'formal request' Tu Er Shen provided.

The scroll was replaced by a less elaborate piece of paper, this time written in English detailing presumably what they had to do to ice the fucker.

"Yue Xia Lao Ren should be too weak to embody his physical guise after your attempt to bind him. He will not remain so for long, therefore if you intend on attacking him and succeeding, you must do so shortly after he is able to resume his current form."

"What kind of time-frame are we looking at?" Sam asked as Cas passed him the paper. It was basically a guide for what kind of stake they needed to stab Yue Lao with and how to prepare it. Typical god-killing stuff as far as they were concerned.

"I would say four days at most. He shouldn't be able to physically harm you for two of those days." Tu Er Shen yawned, as if he was growing bored by their presence. "Ideally you would be using his own walking stick to penetrate him but the instructions I detailed will work just fine."

"What, this guy actually has a pimp cane?" Dean figured gods didn't need 'walking sticks' when they didn't actually need to walk most of the time.

"He has a taste for theatrics." The deity said it as if he'd been forced to endure Yue Lao's dramatic flare for far too long.

Sam rolled his eyes. "Yeah, thank god you're above all that."
"Just remember to follow the instructions." Tu Er Shen glared at the younger Winchester and with a (super theatrical) *poof* of his own, he was gone.

"Man, that guy is a douche bag." Dean grimaced and popped a squat on the now vacated bed. "So what's the verdict?"

Sam read through their in "We need a stake made from the wood of an apple tree varnished with carnation oil and anointed with crushed peach petals and the 'mingled blood of lovers,' plus a magic chant that can be either spoken out loud or carved in."

Dean nodded. "Pretty basic."

They couldn't just take Bugs Bunny's help without checking things out first so they'd have to research the significance behind all the mumbo jumbo prep before gathering everything up. If he wasn't fucking with them they'd probably wind up with a decent amount of half-assed lore as to why these specific materials would be meaningful to this particular deity and go on blind faith that it'd be enough to gank the sucker.

"We've already got carnation oil. I can look up orchards and pick up some varnish at Home Depot." Sam was already making a mental checklist of what to do. He could probably get the peach petals at Home Depot too if they had a decent garden section. That would save them a trip to the florist. "I think the only tricky thing on the list is the blood." Because convincing a real couple to willingly give up their blood no questions asked would only happen if they had supernatural powers at their disposal.

Sam almost thought it was kinda like the Leviathan thing all over again--when they had to get the right kind of blood to hunt down Dick.

Dean glanced at Cas to find the former angel's eyes on him. They shared a long look.

"I think--" Castiel started, breaking the gaze and subsequently bringing the wordless conversation to a close. "--it would be best if I find us some breakfast. Would you like anything, Sam?"

"Hmm? No, thanks, Cas. I already had lunch." Sam was gonna offer Cas his car but, surprisingly, Dean was already fishing out the keys to the impala.

Dean pressed Baby's keys into Cas's hands and leaned in close. "If she comes back with even a
scratch on her, you're sleepin on the couch tonight."

Castiel narrowed his eyes at the hunter. He was unsure whether he should be offended that Dean would believe him foolish enough to damage his car or the threat over their sleeping arrangements (an echo of something he said in the 'heat of the moment' last night.) He ended up caught between mild annoyance paired oddly with the urge to kiss him.

He didn't, of course. But he had a feeling Dean knew by the way his eyes flicked down to his lips before meeting his gaze again.

Castiel departed with the distinct awareness that he was being entrusted with Dean's most beloved physical possession and a somewhat heavy heart.

That left Dean alone with Sam.

Chapter End Notes

Finally expanded this into a "series" so that I can leave this completed after the next chapter and leave the option open for those of you who are willing to put up with me for a little longer to get the timestamp with the demons watching the show in hell and probably a decent handful of little loosely related one-shots and pwps (including bottom!dean as some of you have requested.)

Oh crap, and someone asked if it was okay to publicly recommend this fic on their blog- -yes, it totally is!

The fic is littered with mistakes (spelling, grammar, and the like) in almost every chapter and no-longer relevant authors notes that I was hoping clean up once I finished but either way I'd be absolutely honored. (That goes for anyone else that wants to rec it too!)

Episodes Referenced/Alluded:
9.06- Heaven Can't Wait
9.04- Slumber Party
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

**Edit:** Similar to chapter 11, this one also has a lot of inner monologue crap. Some of which has been edited, all of which has been clearly split from the live action stuff.

**Warnings For This Chapter**
- Sam's POV on Dean and Cas + Dean's sexuality **with a reminder that not all of it can be seen as agreeable.**
- Manly feelings
- Another incredibly vague reference of implied pegging
- More mention of foods that might make you hungry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sometimes when Dean and Cas had those long, sort of soulful, looks it was because one of them was trying to tell the other something they couldn’t (or didn’t want to) process. Sometimes they were underscored with something neither of them had really understood.

And sometimes, like before, they were on the exact same page.

He and Cas knew their blood might work. He and Cas also knew revealing as much to Sam meant they’d both be ‘coming out’ and laying all their cards on the table. They’d inadvertently be handing over whatever rights they had at breaking in this... thing they had, or were, or could be privately. They’d known they never would’ve had the chance to have a ‘normal’ romantic relationship because nothing about their friendship, relationship, or whatever it was they had before was ever anywhere near ‘normal’. But this thing was still new, it was still terrifying.

It would probably always be terrifying to Dean.

He just thought he’d get the chance to adjust or something before breaking it to Sam. He’d figured Cas might need a trial run too ‘cause despite how they’d been rockin the gay agenda on a National scale for the past few weeks, that was different. *This* was real.

That's what he and Cas were silently working out. And he might not've said it out loud but it was clear Cas had given him both the ok to tell Sam and choice to opt out. He'd given them that *look* that just said *You don't have to do this if you don't want to Dean.* (Plus one of those particularly sappy *I'm here for you no matter what* gazes.)

He was right though, Dean really didn't have to do anything he didn't want to.
They could probably find the blood some other way, or they could lie and say that the blood wasn't theirs.

But the thought of lying to his brother again was exhausting. It never worked out all that well for him (or Cas, for that matter) when it came to Sam.

Technically this was something he'd been sorta been lying to Sam about for years--the part about his sexuality at least. If not outright than by omission. He wasn't sure if more terrifying to show that part of himself to Sam than he'd been at letting Cas in or if it was just a different flavor of fear. But, to be honest, Dean had already made up his mind a long time ago.

He let Cas in and got more than he'd ever bargained for. He let Cas in and the heavens (or alternately, a redneck with a beer gut and a double barrel) hadn't struck him down yet, although a small part of him had kinda sorta always assumed that’s the first thing that would’ve happened if he ever let it slip he dug dudes. He let Cas in and Cas would be there for him. 'Cause Cas accepted him and only asked for his acceptance in return, so he'd be damned if he wouldn't do one good thing and do right by him.

And to do that he had to let Sam in.

If not because of Cas, then because of himself and because his brother deserved to know every side of him--every good side of him. And that was one of his good sides. It was so hard to stop thinking of it as something he had to hide, something to put on that long scroll of reasons why he was broken, poisonous, a disappointment, a failure, ect ect. The list of negative adjectives Dean liked to relate to were endless. But that part of him didn’t deserve to be on that list.

Emboldened as the thought was, Dean was still nervous as fuck and all of his old worries--irrational or not--were quietly ticking away at the back of his head.

Out of the two of them, Sam was most like John even when he was outright defying him. Sam could be hard headed and surprisingly opinionated. Sam was his brother and he'd lost him too many times to let it happen again. After everything else they'd been through. After round after round of facing heaven, hell, and death (among other things) to lose him this way would probably be the most painful way yet. 'Cause Dean could get dying again, he could wrap his head around losing his brother to a demon deal gone south, or over another case of one or both of em trusting the wrong people. Those things just happened--not to other people, of course, but to them--because they were cursed.

His sexuality isn’t supposed to be part of that curse. Who Dean choose to love--if only for a night--shouldn’t be the kind of thing that could rip his only family apart.

And that was what had always terrified him the most.

But Sammy was also good and sympathetic and crap. He could sit down with those stupid puppy dog eyes and ask someone about their feelings and actually give a shit
about them. Even if he couldn’t understand at first, he’d try. Knowing Sam, he might even try harder than Dean would find comfortable.

So Dean was gonna man up and tell him just where his man parts have been.

Or, well, he was gonna do that but, like, as vague as possible.

"So, uh, Cas and I got the blood." Dean stated casually. He was looking through some files on Happily Ever After's production crew but not really focusing on what he was seeing.

Sam frowned. "You really think you can convince one of the other couples to give up their blood?"

Dean almost snorted at that. "No way in hell, man. But, uh--" He cleared his throat. "--me and Cas got it covered."

The younger Winchester obviously wasn't on the same page.

"Dean, if you're thinking of--you can just syphon off blood from someone like we're short on cash and need gas."

Sam had been thinking that they might've done that back when America was basically a Leviathan cattle farm but that was different--that was a National emergency. This was just another a C-list god with a skewed sense of justice.

"Dammit, Sam, that's not what I'm saying." Dean let out a frustrated puff of air.

He swallowed down past the lump in his throat and hoped his face wasn't too pink as he tried again, this time phrasing it more clearly. "I'm saying we can use my blood. And Cas's blood too."

Sam opened his mouth, almost to point out that they needed an actual couple for this, like a legitimately romantic couple, but he wasn't a moron. He shut it as soon as his brain caught up on what Dean was implying. "Are you--" He cut himself off, not really sure what he'd been going to ask.

Dean ran a hand through his hair and huffed, his face stony. "Look, man, we can talk about it later or we can talk about it never. I'm just saying we got the blood."
"No! No, I mean, I was just kinda caught off guard."

Sam was slipping into that lost puppy face.

It was the one that he got when he was trying his best to be empathetic while still not offending anyone, the one that said *'hi I care about you, let's sit down and talk about your feelings and afterwards we can hug it out and go to Disneyland.'*

True to form, Sam sat down across from him with those big understanding hazel eyes.

"We can talk about it now, I mean, if--if you want to."

Dean almost rolled his eyes. "We're not gonna talk about it." His tone was rough--final. Although after a pause he spoke up again, this time unsurely. “But… are we okay?"

Sam was still reeling from the revelation but his expression still twitched with that whole exasperated *'Are you serious? That's a stupid question, why do I always have to explain myself to you' that was so common between the siblings. "Of course we are, man."

If Sam was honest with himself, he'd admit that there had been times when he had sort of wondered about his brother and the angel. Cause he and Cas may be really close--hell, he and Cas were family--but there was no denying it was different between Cas and Dean. That was why *Dean* was the go-to on all Cas-related topics. From the casual *'Have you heard from Cas?'*’s that were always thrown his way to the pointed looks he and Bobby gave him for asking *'Why has it always got to be me that makes the call? It's not like Cas lives in my ass….'*

(The memory of the following *'Cas, get out of my ass!'* and the unfinished dismissal of the statement had Sam involuntarily wondering--not for the first time--if Cas had actually been in Dean’s ass or if it was the other way around. Which was really something he *did not* need nor want to actively think about because *ew* that was his *brother.*

Equally, that was why Sam always found himself patting his brothers arm in quiet support when something bad happened involving Cas; why he’d try to lure Dean into ‘chick flick moments’ over Cas despite how anathematic the shorter Winchester found them; and also why he knew when to take his leave, clearing the space for his brother and the angel when he felt those subtle cues that meant there was something going on he didn't need to be privy to. Sam had even taken advantage of their dynamic before, for Dean’s own good. When he’d seen the chance, he used Dean’s reaction to Cas to try
and pull him back from the deep end--because he could still see the way Cas could make him talk or smile or just do anything other than bark orders and slice through monsters at a point in time when that was all Dean seemed to be able to do.

But that tension, that thing they had--Sam had noticed it because more often than not Sam was the one reminding Dean that Cas wasn’t all powerful.

He knew his brother and he knew that when Dean admired someone, in any sense of the word, it was easy for his brother to forget that they were still capable of weakness.

It was why any mistake Cas ever made hit him harder than it would’ve Sam. It was why Sam had to be the one to point out to his brother when Cas was drained or that he’d tried his best, to point out he’d offended Cas, to remind him that Cas wasn’t infallible or immune to some of the same things humans were just because he was an angel--and he was the one that had to forcefully pry off his brothers rose colored glasses when Cas had been playing them.

Even then, it was only after all of that had passed that he’d really seen how much Cas meant to Dean.

Because Sam was the one sitting there watching his brother try to keep from coming apart at the seams and doing a piss poor job at it. Sam was the one that noticed how bad Dean got when Dean couldn’t even admit it to himself. He remembered the nightmares. He remembered catching Dean with that out of focus look on his face. Sometimes Dean would pop open the trunk and zone in on that trenchcoat, the one covered in blood and black goo and God only knew what else. At the time, it was the last piece of Cas Dean had left. Important enough that Dean even moved that thing with them from car to car up until Cas came back to get it.

He remembered Dean doped up on turducken slammers and the number one thing on his list of problems he was glad he didn’t give ‘two shakes of a rat’s ass’ about anymore wasn’t the Leviathans or Sam's head--it was Cas. Sam had tried bringing it up with Bobby after Dean was out cold, finally seeing his chance to express how worried he’d been about his big brother. He’d asked Bobby if he noticed that Dean wasn’t the same after his head broke, after they’d started losing Cas, about how Dean looked like he was just… going through the motions.

Bobby just responded with 'How could he be?'

He’d tried to press it again and Bobby shrugged him off.

Old man had gone on defense, tone as gruff as ever: 'What if what, Sam? You know, you worry about him. All he does is worry about you. Who's left to live their own life here? The two of you--' Bobby cut himself off there and started asking him about his Lucifer hallucinations.

Now Sam wondered if Bobby knew--if he might've guessed that Cas could have meant more to Dean than just another brother-in-arms.

He also wondered if Dean thought that because he was the little brother that he didn’t
keep an eye out for him—which of course he did. Sam had eyes and sometimes he saw things that maybe he wasn’t supposed to see. He used to pick up on that vibe every once in a while—that sense of ‘something more’. Not just from Dean, but from Cas. He’d catch it in the way they worried over each other, in the way little things could either piss the other off to an unreasonable extent or trigger a smile when there was nothing really worth smiling about. (Plus, after finding out Dean was tracking the GPS on Cas’s phone, it had started weaving things away from ‘worried mother hen’ into ‘crazy protective boyfriend.’)

He was pretty sure Dean caught him a few times—when Sam noticed a little too much. Of course, that just made his brother sit up a little straighter, tell a lewd joke, and maybe complain that it’d been a while since they’d last killed something.

So Sam would let it slide, give off that air that he’d just been imagining things. That was Dean’s business, not his. They had their ups and downs—and a lot of the time it seemed like mostly downs. But no matter what, he knew it wasn’t his place to demand any kind of answers from him. Not about that. Because while Dean had never stated out loud that he was anything other than straight, Sam never even thought to question that his brother wouldn’t have told him if he ever decided to seriously get involved with someone—no matter their gender.

And all in all, part of him was glad that now it wasn’t weird that he’d second-guessed at something else going on.

There were some details he was kinda curious about though.

They’d been quietly working since the initial news—or, well, pretending to work at least.

Dean was still reeling, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Sam was sort of... processing Dean's new (old?) relationship status and trying to figure out how to talk to his brother without offending him or committing some kind of transgression.

Not just because he was apparently queer—or at least in a queer relationship—but because Dean was (for lack of a better word) sensitive when it came to certain topics... And sensitive for Dean meant silent pouting and an eventual kick in the ass for Sam.

He hesitated before broaching the subject again. "Is it... Is it just Cas? Have you guys been together like..." He trailed off, intending to say 'all this time' and figuring Dean would get it.

Dean furrowed his brows at his brother. "Are you asking if we've fucked?"
"No!" Sam's eyes widened and he blushed furiously. "I was trying to ask how long you guys have, you know, been a couple?"

Dean let out an understanding 'oh' and nodded. "Well, um--"

He licked his lips and rubbed the back of his neck self-consciously. Were he and Cas even a couple? He wasn't sure. They hadn't gotten a chance to talk about it. (If they even would've thought of sitting down and talking about it 'cause it wouldn't have been out of character for them to've just let the dice roll.)

"It's new. Like really new." He finally answered, being purposefully cryptic.

"Well, me and Cas, I mean. But I--" Dean let out a small huff. "Man, if you really wanna know, then I'm somewhere between a '2' and a '3' on the Kinsey scale... But that--" he sighed, "--that ain't nothing new to me."

Dean didn't really remember all of the eccentricities of the Kinsey scale but he knew he was no doubt a solid '3'.

Didn't matter if he seemed to have more of a preference for women, he knew the guys he's been attracted to--past and present--weren't any less attractive to him just 'cause they happened to have dicks.

(And a smaller more socially conscious part of his brain reminded him that just 'cause someone has a dick doesn’t mean they’re a guy.)

He’d learned just enough to know that's what bisexuality was: it didn’t matter what gender he was currently boning or what gender he’d fucked around with the most because his attraction to them wasn’t less just because they were a man or a woman. But it felt... It felt safer to imply differently for now, at least when it came to Sam.

He wanted to be real with his brother but as accurate as it was to say 'hey, I'm Dean Winchester and I'm bi as fuck' it was fucking terrifying to tell Sam that.

Not because he was worried he wouldn't understand--that was much less of a fear now that he'd admitted out loud that he actually did have a thing with Cas--but because he just couldn't.

He'd spent most of his thirty-five years conditioning himself to hide it--especially from Sammy.

He was the big brother and he had to set an example. And the way they'd grown up taught them that 'dudes digging other dudes' meant 'dig up that goddamn grave--now salt 'em and light 'em up so we can get the hell outta dodge.'

Back then all they knew was that a dude wanting to have sex with or have any kind of relationship with another dude that didn't involve (platonically) trading favors or (platonically?) getting involved with monster guts was unnecessary. Winchesters didn’t need pointless acquaintances.
Not to mention that being gay used to mean you were weak or a joke or a probably some piece of shit pervert and that bisexuality wasn’t a real ‘thing’ when they were growing up. (Dean wasn’t even sure he’d actually learned the word ‘bisexuality’ until he was fifteen.)

Things were different now, mostly, but it was a hard stigma to shake.

Sam nodded, biting down on his lower lip as he did.

He couldn’t help but think back to some of those moments that might’ve hinted at Dean’s sexuality:

The obsessions with James Dean, Captain Kirk, and young Harrison Ford. (Hans Solo and Indiana Jones were practically Dean kryptonite growing up.) The cowboy kink. (He distinctly remember being twelve and definitely catching Dean with a stiffy while watching a much younger Clint Eastwood belting out ‘You see, in this world there's two kinds of people, my friend. Those with loaded guns, and those who dig. You dig.’--he just hadn’t realized the stiffy might’ve been because of Clint.)

The blatant attraction to Doctor Sexy; that one long look Sam had pretended not to notice when Dean was trying to ‘identify’ one of the old-coots-turned-young-again by the birthmark on his penis; the disappointment on Dean’s face when Aaron said the ‘moment’ they had wasn’t real--hell, what that one time when they were dealing with that old witch that had taken on the guise as a high school student? Dean had replied with ‘Yeah, well, if you were a six-hundred-year-old hag and you could pick any costume to come back in, wouldn't you go for a hot cheerleader? I would, hmm…’ and he sort of sat down and got this far off look on his face as he thought about it that always had Sam wondering who exactly Dean thought he’d be wooing if he looked like a walking Girls Gone Wild advertisement.

Not to mention the thing with the ‘doublemint twins’ was seared into his brain.

Plus that sort of awkwardness Dean had with guys. (He’d claimed Sam was weird that way with girls--when the younger Winchester knew he wasn’t. He should’ve realized it was just Dean’s habit of projecting stuff he didn’t feel comfortable owning up to.)

That wasn’t what had him upset, though.

Sam knew that for all his posturing about growing into his own person, Dean was still Sam’s big brother and it was harder to think of him the same way he would think another human being. Sometimes he took him far too seriously, took some of the dumbest of Dean’s words to heart, and sometimes he glossed over him far too quickly.
There was just something about family, about the assurance of knowing a person could care about you for better or for worse, that kind of makes you forget that your words and your actions towards them have consequence and vice versa.

Maybe that’s why Sam’s throat felt tight, accompanied by a stinging in his nose and behind his eyes as if he might cry. Because he’d known, part of him had known at least, and yet there were times when Sam had poked at that idea.

Not in cruel way, at least he hoped not, but in the same way siblings push each other around affectionately. It just hadn’t really hit him that maybe those kind of things might have affected Dean negatively.

Like the time Dean had asked him why people ‘always assume they’re gay’ and Sam teased him about being ‘butch’ and how they probably thought he was overcompensating; or how Sam thought he was being clever by asking Dean if he was ‘strictly into Dick now,’ (which he’d seen as one of his personal best from the wealth of dick jokes he’d made during their Dick Roman era); or when he asked Dean if he’d ‘serviced’ Oberon, King of the Fairies. (Admittedly he was soulless when he’d made that last joke but there was a fifty percent chance he would’ve done it anyways because at the time it was too good to pass up.)

The point was--what if they hindered his brother? What if they’d affected Dean more than he’d thought they would? What if the reason Dean was only coming out to him now, at the age of thirty-five, was because instead of taking the ease at which Sam had toyed around with the thought of his brother being anything other than straight negatively.

That wasn’t his intention, because Sam could never, ever, turn his brother away for something as inconsequential as the gender of whoever kept him warm at night, of whoever he chose to love.

Dean side-eyed him warily. “Dude. I swear to God if you start crying--”

Sam straightened his posture and stood up, cutting off whatever Dean was saying to pull him into a hug.

Dean sucked in a breath. He was slow to hug back but when he did, he did so fiercely, clinging onto his brother like a lifesaver.

It wouldn’t be long before he’d be pulling back, clearing his throat and making some comment about how Sam was such a girl or how he couldn’t believe he turned out to be gay brother after all--but for now, this right here meant the world to him.
The Winchesters had wrapped up their moment quickly after that and went back to work as they usually would, each of them feeling little lighter than when the day had begun.

Soon enough Cas turned back up with food from that Cuban place just outside of town that Steph and Clara had showed him and Dean. It was particular favorite of theirs but one they hadn’t frequented since they’d passed, both because it had been too much of a reminder of the two girls they couldn’t save so soon after they were gone and because they rarely had the time to drive out so far to eat when they had a monster to close in on.

Cas had brought him back this awesome pork sandwich he loved (Cas kept trying to remind him it was called ‘Pan con Lechón’ or whatever) and it was so good that Dean didn’t know whether to kiss him, profess his undying love, or tell him that he’d have his babies if he could. The only thing that stopped him was the recognition that Cas chose to get food at this specific place because he knew it’d stall him long enough for Dean to talk to Sam, and because he probably figured Dean could benefit from really extra good food after trying to force out ‘the talk’ with Sam.

“I know you stated you weren’t hungry but I took long enough that I assumed you might have acquired an appetite in the meanwhile.” Castiel told Sam as he pulled out an exaggeratedly large salad container. (In it was a salad of avocado, watercress, and pineapple that he thought the younger Winchester would appeal to.)

Sam stood up and took the salad. He glanced at it, then at Cas, and then he set it on the table in favor of abruptly bringing Castiel into a hug. “Thank you.” He told him meaningfully.

Castiel was just a dumbstruck by this hug as he was the previous time. Eventually he remembered he was supposed to respond and returned to embrace. “You’re welcome?” He squinted his eyes towards Dean to see the Winchester was blushing red.

Dean cleared his throat. “Alright Sammy, let go’ov my boyfriend or that salad’s gonna find itself where the sun don’t shine.”

Sam rolled his eyes and let go, taking his seat with said salad before Dean got any ideas.

Castiel shared a look with Dean and sat near him so he could finally pull out his own meal. Dean greeted him with a closed mouth smile (lucky for them, seeing as Dean obviously had a huge bite of pork sandwich behind those lips) and by smoothing the palm of his hand comfortingly over his back as he settled into his seat.

No one mentioned the ‘boyfriend’ comment but the atmosphere was content as they ate.
Disclaimer: any negative thoughts expressed Sam's had about his "actions against Dean's sexuality" is just meant to be typical Winchester self-deprication as Sam is a precious baby moosling and probably didn't do anything to negatively affect Dean's stance on his sexuality.

Episodes Referenced/Alluded To:
(NEEDS TO BE EDITED LATER)
2.17- Heart
6.19- Mommy Dearest
9.18- Meta Fiction
4.07- It's the Great Pumpkin, Sam Winchester
5.04- The End
6.07- Family Matters
6.20- The Man Who Would Be King
7.02- Hello, Cruel World
6.18- Frontierland
7.05- Shut Up, Dr. Phil
I'm not gonna list the individual episodes unless someone requests it but just as a reference: you can see Cas's trench coat briefly in the trunk of the Dodge Challenger in 7.07 The Mentalists but they change cars a total of 7 times up until the point where Dean gives Cas his coat back.
7.17- The Born-Again Identity
7.09- How to Win Friends and Influence Monsters
7.18- Party On, Garth
7.21- Reading Is Fundamental
7.23- Survival of the Fittest
8.07- A Little Slice of Kevin
8.17- Goodbye Stranger
8.19- Taxi Driver
8.22- Clip Show
5.05- Fallen Idols
9.13- The Purge
5.08- Changing Channels
5.07- The Curious Case of Dean Winchester
8.13- Everybody Hates Hitler
3.01- The Magnificent Seven
2.11- Playthings
7.12- Time After Time
6.09- Clap Your Hands If You Believe...

Plus honorable mention to:
-That one time Jensen was trying to say something and described the way Dean and Cas stare at each other as something along the lines of 'long, sort of soulful looks'.
-The recent J2 interview where they had to assign each other hashtags and Jensen said Jared was #Why-Do-I-Always-Have-To-Explain-Myself-To-Dean
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!