8 Reasons

by Threshie

Summary

Space pilot Dean is caught trying to break Sam out of prison, and ends up tossed into a cell with a half-man, half tentacle monster alien.

Notes

Hello, thanks for checking out my space Octo!Cas Destiel fic! I'll be posting new chapters for this one each Tuesday, and the rating MAY increase if Dean and Cas decide to take this in a tentacle smut direction later on. Without further ado, please enjoy chapter 1, and know that comments and kudos make my day! ♥
Dean was so fucked.

The plan to bust Sammy out of this planet’s prison was a long shot to begin with. Dean had managed to sneak inside undetected, but from there things had gone downhill quick. Case in point: he was a prisoner now just like his brother.

“I’m not scared of you,” the pilot sassed the two burly guards who had just hauled him into this cell block. “If anything, you should be scared of me. You leave me here alive, you better watch out.”

“Shut up,” the guard holding onto his cuffs snapped. The other was tapping an access code into the door of the cell they’d stopped at. Dean smirked just to piss them off, but inwardly he was panicking a little. The cells here had to be pretty secure, or Sammy would’ve already busted himself out. It had been days.

“We’re not what you should be scared of, pretty boy,” the lead guard snickered as they uncuffed him and shoved him through the door. The force shield hummed back to life a split second before the metal covering slammed down over it.

The air smelled odd in here, almost salty. Dean was struck by a weird combination of nostalgia about the beaches back on Earth and apprehension. It was dim in the cell, but also very quiet…and something was moving.

Putting his back to the metal door, Dean squinted into the darkness. The guards had acted like they were tossing him into a pit with some monster. They probably couldn’t care less whether one of the prisoners killed another…
By now Dean’s eyes had adjusted enough to make out the shape of a man’s bare torso in the dark. There were no legs, though. There was…

No, his eyes had to be playing tricks on him. There was movement beneath and around the eerily still man’s torso, but it was not anything close to human. It looked more like a writhing mass of… something dark and slimy.

What the hell was his cellmate?

“Hello.” The voice was low, with a scraping tone that seemed almost painful. The man…thing… spoke softly, but Dean still jumped at the unexpected greeting.

Warily, the pilot answered, “Hi there.” He had no idea what to follow that up with. ‘What are you in for’? Maybe ‘What the hell are you, and does whatever that is eat humans?’

Before he could come up with something halfway intelligent to say, his cellmate seemed to glide halfway across their small shared space. The light from the thin window on the door landed on his face, and Dean was pleasantly surprised. From the waist up, the creature was a handsome man with dark hair and bright blue eyes. He wore a solemn, slightly frowny expression, and his arms and torso would’ve seemed sexy if not for what was going on below the waist.

Dean recoiled at the sight. The man’s skin darkened from the waist down into black, shiny-looking flesh, and from that sprouted eight undulating, writhing, twisting tentacles. Each had two rows of thick white suckers along the underside, and every one of them was in constant motion, feeling around on the floor, twisting and curling around each other…

Reaching for him.

“Stay back!” Dean warned, holding up a hand. Tough as he was trying to seem, he knew he was screwed. Dean wasn’t born yesterday, and he’d been to some pretty deep parts of space. Most things with tentacles were the things nightmares were made of, and being locked in a tiny cell with one WAS a nightmare.

The tentacled man looked so perfectly human on the top that it seemed wrong to see him all together. He tilted his head at Dean’s weak threat, blue eyes narrowing. Of all the ways to die, Dean wouldn’t have called being used and then destroyed by some perverted alien monster as the winner.

“I—” His cellmate cut himself off abruptly, sucking in a wheezing breath. Dean blinked. “I’m a prisoner. Like you. Won’t harm you.” Now that he spoke enough to tell, Dean realized that the guy must not breathe this kind of atmosphere back home. He sounded out of breath, and really gravelly. Even knowing that, Dean wasn’t sure whether to believe him.

“What are you?” He asked, watching warily as the alien curled two tentacles up to hold his own hands. It seemed like an absent thing, and was strangely endearing. The guy had enough arms to hold his own hand if he was scared.

The thing frowned at him, crawling closer on his tentacles. They must have been strong — he towered over Dean by a good foot once he was close, and didn’t need all eight tentacles on the ground to support himself.

Dean pressed back against the door again, bracing himself for the worst. Maybe this kind of alien liked to play with their food. Maybe once he realized Dean wasn’t able to fight him off, he’d do worse than just kill and eat him.
“Castiel,” the alien said, holding out a hand. Dean looked at it uneasily.

“You’re a Castiel?”

“My name,” the alien wheezed, pausing to cough. “…I-is Castiel. What’s yours?”

“Dean,” the pilot returned cautiously. Castiel’s human half was even more attractive up close — and the tentacly half was even more disturbing. Maybe it was better to play nice, if he was offering. Dean shook the hand held out to him.

Castiel smelled of sea salt and just a general fresh watery smell, almost like ozone. Dean found he kind of liked it. He was being stared at with intent blue eyes, and only then did he realize he’d forgotten to let go of Castiel’s hand.

Hurriedly releasing said hand, Dean laughed nervously.

“So now what? They made it sound like you’d get rid of me for them.”

Castiel — Cas, Dean decided to call him, it wasn’t such a mouthful — Cas looked exasperated at his words.

“Did they?”

“Will you?” Dean returned, crossing his arms. It was tough to look so far up at somebody and try to seem unintimidated by them. “I don’t know you, Cas, for all I know you’re the kind of alien with a probing fetish,” he pointed out drolly. Much as he didn’t want to piss this guy off, it seemed like Castiel was a matter of fact kind of guy so far. Maybe honesty was the best policy.

The alien rolled his eyes so hard Dean swore his body tilted back a bit with the motion.

“Yes, you look odd to me too,” he rasped drolly, holding up several tentacles into the light. Dean cringed a little, then realized they weren’t actually reaching for him and tried to relax.

“Uh. Right, sorry,” he told Cas awkwardly. “Not trying to be rude, buddy. We’re inmates in a multi-planet prison, and how can I tell if you’re trustworthy?”

Cas shrugged, and Dean was a bit fascinated by how a few tentacles curled along with the movement of his shoulders.

“I don’t know you either,” he pointed out, coughing again. “But I already know we have something in c…common.”

“Oh really,” Dean said, raising his eyebrows.

“Yes,” Cas said seriously. “We both want out.”
“DEAN,” Castiel grumbled, exasperated.

“Sorry,” Dean cringed, trying to relax. Cas had stopped moving his tentacles, though, and was just giving him this look.

“This was your idea,” the alien pointed out dryly. “For the last time, I’m not actually going to hurt you.”

Dean looked at the dark tentacles hovering near his arms and waist and sighed. It had indeed been his idea. The guards seemed to think Castiel was this tentacled horror that would torture him to death or worse, so maybe if there was enough of a commotion, they’d get spooked and slip up somehow. It was the best option they had for an escape plan — Cas assured him he’d searched every square inch of the cell, and it was locked up tight.

In order to have his wits about him for the actual escape, though, that meant Dean needed to practice being wrapped in Castiel’s tentacles without freaking out about it. Thus, this bizarre coaching session of being coiled up.

The things Dean would do to save Sam…

Taking a deep breath, the pilot held out his arms again.

“Okay, take two, c’mon.”

Huffing a little, Castiel surged forward, four of his tentacles rising from the floor to wind around Dean’s arms and waist. Dean was staying pretty damned calm about that, in his opinion. Slimy as the tentacles looked, they didn’t feel cold and disgusting like he’d imagined. They were warm, almost silky, and he could swear he felt heartbeats throbbing through the flesh. And they undulated, stretched, but felt STRONG, like a snake’s coils.

“Now try to struggle,” Castiel suggested, the little rasp in his voice making Dean shiver. He wriggled around in the grip of the tentacles a bit, and realized just how helpless he was right now.

“That WAS me trying,” he told Cas, smiling and trying not to look as uneasy as he felt. The alien squinted at him and tilted his head, another tentacle sliding slowly up around Dean’s neck.

Nope, thought Dean. Nope, nope, nope to infinity.

“Okay, NO,” he told Cas, holding very still like the silky coil around his neck might choke him if he even breathed. He glared up at the alien. “We’re done, put me down. Now.”

Cas leaned down closer to his face, frowning. Gulp.

“We’ll only have ONE chance at this, Dean. It won’t work unless you stop secretly thinking of me as a monster,” he said bitterly. “You need to trust me.”

“Y’know what would go a long way toward trusting you right about now? Putting me the hell DOWN,” Dean snapped. The alien rolled his eyes, but the tentacles around Dean immediately started to unwind. Cas drew back from him several feet, crossing his arms and shaking his head. Dean crossed his arms, too.
“I haven’t even known you a day, Cas, cut me some slack,” he said. “What if we had to fake me strangling YOU to get out, would you be all hunky dorry about that?”

The alien snorted.

“As if you’d be able to manage that.”

“Ooh, aah, you’re stronger than me and you’d beat me in a fair fight,” Dean replied sarcastically, holding up his hands. “I’m not scared of you!”

“Oh, good, that was the point of all of this,” Castiel replied flatly. He narrowed his blue eyes, squinting down at Dean. “Except that I don’t believe you.”

It was Dean’s turn to roll his eyes. Cas was just as sarcastic and stubborn as him. He respected that, honestly — and he had to admit that he was the problem here. Cas was doing exactly as he’d asked, looking alarming and threatening while making it look like Dean was in some distress. This damned plan just called for a lot of trust in Cas that Dean hadn’t had time to build up.

He couldn’t fake the trusting Cas part, either. If he didn’t relax, they were gonna get shot. To Castiel’s credit, he wanted to work with Dean instead of just actually attacking him to get the guard’s attention. The plan required that Dean stay calm once they managed to get past the force field and barrier door.

Yay teamwork.

Dean took a deep breath and held out a hand.

“Sorry, Cas. I’m tryin’, here. Maybe if I could get used to them without all my instincts saying I’m about to get strangled, that would help, huh?”

Castiel uncrossed his arms and glided a bit closer, into the light again. He rose a tentacle and hovered it above Dean’s palm, looking almost sad.

“I won’t hurt you. I know you don’t believe me, but I’m not a violent person, Dean — I’m in here because I was betrayed.”

Dean rose his hand up to run along the underside of the tentacle, looking from Castiel’s face down to the suckers gripping in almost a tickle along his palm, his wrist. Cas wound his tentacle around Dean’s wrist, the tip curling over his thumb.

Some pretty dirty ideas drifted through his mind at that kind of sensation. Cas still looked disturbingly weird, but Dean found himself mentally checking the boxes for scared AND horny.

That was an improvement over just scared, right?

“You know, I do believe you,” he told Castiel, who looked bemused by his reaction to the touch. With good reason — it was pretty different from the other times. Dean held his arms up again, one wrist still wrapped in the tentacle. “I’m sorry, man. I’ve been in some pretty nasty fights, and it’s kind of a reflex to fight back when something’s on your throat,” he said sheepishly. “Let’s try it again. Maybe you could talk to me so you don’t freak me out.”

“Talk to you?” Cas said thoughtfully, more tentacles curling and arching up toward Dean. Dean held still as they approached, but instead of wrapping him up, Cas let go of his wrist and moved all tentacles away from him. “I have a better idea,” the alien said. “This will look better if you seem to be trying to escape. I don’t want to actually harm you, though, so why don’t you instruct me?”
“Tell you what to do to me?” Dean was trying very, very hard to keep the dirty interpretation of THAT request to himself. He could feel his face getting warm.

“Communication builds trust,” Castiel replied matter-of-factly, crossing his arms again. “If you tell me what moves to make, you will expect them…and then you can trust that I’m following our plan.”

He had a point, Dean thought, but this felt awkwardly like kinky bedroom negotiations. What had gotten into him? Castiel’s upper half had always looked pretty sexy, yes, but now suddenly his tentacly lower half seemed more hot than horrifying. “Dean Winchester, tentacle fetishist” sounded ridiculous, but somewhere deep down he had to admit THINKING about tentacles had been a guilty pleasure for a long time.

“Okay, let’s do it,” he told Cas, lowering his arms. The alien nodded, glancing around their small cell.

“Perhaps first you run and hit the door,” he suggested. “Shout for help?”

Dean held up an index finger at him, nodding thoughtfully.

“Yeah, that’s good… Okay, so I’m gonna run to the wall, and then you grab my arms and pull me back, maybe?”

Castiel shrugged.

“I could lift you up, but I thought that might disturb you,” he said frankly.

Dean grinned up at him.

“Let’s save that for once the metal door’s open. Maybe you could slam me into another wall — I can smack my hands on it, make it sound like a really hard hit,” he suggested. Planning out a horrifying act was a lot more fun when they were actually working together.

“Don’t say it — show me,” Castiel said seriously. “I’ll follow along — we need to practice.”

Dean nodded and turned, dashing up to the cell door. He put his hands against the metal barrier, but took care not to make a sound.

Okay, grab me and pull me back.” Tentacles burst from the dark and wound swiftly up around Dean’s arms and waist, and he was dragged backward, his feet still on the floor. Castiel must have been even stronger than he was admitting to — he moved Dean easily with three of his eight tentacles.

When the door was about six feet away, Dean tried grabbing and pulling at the tentacle around his waist. It didn’t budge a bit.

“Dean?” Castiel hesitated, probably wondering if he was actually trying to escape.

“Just testing,” Dean told him over his shoulder, smiling. “Okay, hopefully they’ll open the door by now, ‘cause I’ll be screaming like you’re murdering me. Slam me right into that wall over there.”

He pointed to the left. Cas moved the pilot’s arms up in front of him with the tentacles around them, then easily flung him over against the wall. It was unexpectedly fast — Dean was bracing for an actual hit, but Castiel stopped a few inches from the wall proper.

“Oh, now strangle me!” Dean was, he thought, getting a little too into this. Castiel looked pretty
damn menacing towering at least a foot above him, winding a tentacle around his throat. Dean clutched at it with the one hand that could move in the grip of the coil around it, locking eyes with the alien’s blue ones. “Gotta sell it — so I’ll try to kick you,” he said, kicking a foot out. “And then you—yeah, perfect,” he said, as Castiel caught his ankle with another tentacle.

“And if they haven’t opened the door by now?” Cas growled. When he tried to whisper, the rasping got even worse. Dean shivered a bit, managing a nervous smile. His instincts had switched from flight or fight to ‘this is foreplay’ and he wasn’t sure how to tell his brain to shut up. Castiel just wanted to escape this tin can cell, and after that he’d probably ditch Dean and make a run for it.

“Then you pin me to the floor,” he told Cas, petting the tentacle around his neck with one thumb. Cas blinked and looked down at it, then back to him. “Either way, the minute the shield’s down you chuck me out into the hall and book it while they’re distracted.”

“Got it,” Cas said. Dean had to admit he was a bit disappointed when the alien didn’t go through the motions of pinning him to the floor, but it was probably for the best. This was weird enough without any awkward boners involved.
The look on the guards’ faces had been priceless. Dean had gone into the cell all bravado and talk, and the next time they saw him he’d been screaming for help like he was being tortured to death. Castiel played the part of looking menacing and monstery a little too well. He didn’t mention during their rehearsals that he’d planned to make growling, HISSING sounds while throwing Dean around.

That added the extra level of ‘holy shit’ they were hoping to inspire in the guards, apparently — they scrambled backwards, giving Cas the room to surge out of the cell with Dean still wrapped in his tentacles. Once they were clear of the door, Cas threw Dean down the hallway past the guards as planned. Then he rounded on the guards, tentacles raised threateningly and growling like some sort of feral thing.

The guards, wisely Dean thought, tripped over themselves to get out of his way. Leaving them, Cas charged over toward Dean again. The pilot had just gotten to his feet and started to yank the nearest vent cover off when he heard the guards open fire.

Cas had just reached Dean, and at least one of the energy blasts landed, because a spray of blackish blood hit the wall just past him and Dean heard him gasp.

“Cas!” Dean was shocked, horrified — was Cas going to make it? He was frozen, practically useless, when the alien easily picked him up with several tentacles and shoved him into the vent, then charged after him.

The sound of energy beams plinking off of the vent casing echoed dully inside; their gasping breaths were louder, especially Castiel’s. He was still wincing painfully.

“Cas,” Dean said again, trying to turn around and see how badly he might be hurt. “Cas, you’re hurt—”

“MOVE, Dean,” the alien ordered through gritted teeth, shoving him along with his tentacles. They needed to put distance between themselves and the vent the guards had seen them go into.

Dean turned and started to crawl as fast as he could. It was too small a space to be on hands and knees, more belly-crawling using his elbows to move. Cas was so much bigger than him, Dean had to wonder how he fit in here.

He was hurt. Was he dying?

“We gotta stop and patch you up,” Dean told the alien, after several minutes of crawling.

“Later,” Cas replied shortly, wincing again. “There isn’t time.”

“You’re probably leaving a blood trail for them to follow,” Dean insisted, “And I’m not letting you bleed out on my watch because you’re so damned stubborn!”

There was a brief silence punctuated by the sound of elbows and tentacles hitting the vent floor.

“…There’s a cover ahead that could lead to a room,” Cas allowed, sighing. Dean nodded in the dark even though neither of them could see it.

“Good, let’s find you a first aid kit.”
The room they emerged into was some kind of small office. It contained a desk, some filing cabinets, and — luckily for them — a small first aid kit that had been hanging on the wall. The alarms sounding from their escape seemed pretty distant from here. Maybe they were on the administrative side right now?

“I’ll heal in a few days,” Castiel said again. He seemed less annoyed this time, though.

“Well then we better keep you from bleeding for those few days,” Dean replied, gently dabbing dark blood off of one of the alien’s tentacles. Cas had taken two hits, luckily neither of them serious. One of his tentacles had been shot through near the tip, and another energy blast had winged the waist of his human half, leaving a blackened charred mark with an angry red burn in the center. Though the flesh on his torso was a human color, he bled black from it as well, somehow.

Castiel’s expression softened as he watched Dean tend to his wounds. It probably surprised him that Dean was being just as gentle with his weird tentacly side as with his human-looking one.

“Thank you, Dean,” he whispered, rasping a little. “You were right, the plan worked.”

“I never planned you getting shot, for the record,” Dean said a bit guiltily. “You weren’t exactly acting scared of their guns — probably kept them from firing more.”

“I’m NOT scared of guns,” the alien replied dryly. Dean patted a self-sealing bandage over the wounded tentacle, which looked odd since the bandage couldn’t quite match Cas’s blackish flesh tone there — it turned a dark grayish brown.

“You could’ve been a LITTLE more scared of them,” Dean told him with a pointed nod to the injuries. “Here, you need to move your arm so I can get to your waist, okay?”

Looking at him thoughtfully, Castiel lowered himself down about a foot on his tentacles, raising his right arm to expose his wounded side. Dean got more gauze and started to clean it as gently as he could. The alien still winced softly, but let him do it, holding still.

“Sorry,” Dean sighed. “I can’t give you a hard time about how you did things — you were protecting me with your body.” His nicely toned body, now that Dean was looking at it up close in good light. And had his hands all over it. Wow.

“Well, I’ll heal in a few days,” Cas pointed out, wincing again. “You won’t.”

Dabbing ointment into the burn, Dean smoothed a bandage over it carefully, unsure how to respond to that. So he’d been right, Cas wasn’t shot by accident — he’d let them shoot him to protect Dean. That was damned selfless of him, and Dean wasn’t sure he deserved that kind of sacrifice from anyone.

“That’s smart, but I don’t like you getting shot for me,” he admitted, closing the first aid kit and looking up at the alien. Cas looked back, tilting his head a little and squinting those blue, blue eyes. Focus, Dean told himself.

“You’d rather get shot yourself and take weeks to heal?” Cas asked, like that would be stupid of him.

“Yeah, I guess I would,” Dean said, “So you don’t get hurt.” He turned and put the first aid kit carefully back on the wall so nobody would see they’d gotten into it. Next he circled the desk,
tapping the computer’s touchscreen to find a map of the facility. Cellblocks, cellblocks, more cellblocks. Maximum security was the one he was going to head for next, but first…

“We gotta poke around in the computer and figure out where the nearest flight bay is. I can get you on a ship out of here.”

Castiel rose to his full height, flexing the tip of the injured tentacle like the bandage felt stiff. He probably wasn’t used to things being able to stick to him like that, but those bandages were the industrial-strength shit — Dean had patched himself up many times with the very same type.

“Why only a ship for me?” The alien asked. Dean turned around and found blue eyes squinting at him suspiciously. He held up his hands, smiling.

“It’s not that I’m eager to get rid of you, buddy. My brother’s a prisoner here, though — it’s why I’m here, to bust him out.”

“Good job,” Cas said dryly, brows furrowing. He leaned to look over Dean’s shoulder at the computer screen while the pilot rolled his eyes. Tentacles here was a real comedian.

“Gee, thanks, getting shoved in a cell with you was DEFINITELY all part of the plan,” he replied with dripping sarcasm.

Castiel blinked and looked down at the floor, moving back closer to the vent cover.

“No other prisoner has ever been willing to talk to me long enough to make a plan together.”

Dean sighed.

“You’re hurt now, so we’ll try and be quick about this. I stick you on a ship, then I come back for Sammy,” he explained. “How long have you been in here, anyway? Your friends and family probably think you’re dead, huh?”

Cas scowled, several tentacles lashing at the air in little circles.

“That’s what they’re probably hoping.”

Dean stepped around the desk and looked up at the alien, frowning.

“Yeah?”

“They’re the reason I’m in here, Dean,” Cas explained grimly, looking at him. He lowered himself down on his tentacles to be more at eye height, shrugging his shoulders. “They betrayed me. And I really have nowhere to go now, so let’s skip the flight bay, and I’ll come with you.”

“You sure about that?” Dean patted his side just above the bandage, trying to be careful. “You’re injured and all.” He was strangely excited at the prospect of the alien spending more time with him, though, and it came through in his voice despite his best efforts. When Cas nodded at him solemnly, Dean broke into a little grin.

“Back into the vents we go, then. I know which cellblock Sammy’s in.”

Crawling around in the vents was a lot more comfortable when, one, the guards weren’t actively shooting at them, and two, Castiel wasn’t slowly bleeding out in a big obvious dark trail. The alien went first this time, and Dean followed the soft patting, whispery sound of tentacles through the
dark as they crawled.

According to the computer, Sam was three floors up and about half the complex away. It made for lots of crawling. Castiel filled the time by telling Dean about his people. They were apparently hybrids, spliced together from human DNA and something definitely not human generations ago. That was why Castiel looked so normal from the waist-up — that part of him WAS human, more or less.

“Except you bleed black and don’t breathe exactly the same atmosphere,” Dean pointed out, intrigued.

Cas coughed in the dark and sighed.

“No, we do. My lungs are better suited to breathing liquids than gasses, though,” he explained, voice as raspy as ever. “My kind can breathe underwater, Dean.”

“Awesome,” Dean declared sincerely, and that was that.

At some point, Cas abruptly stopped moving. Dean, unable to see this, kept crawling and got a face full of silky tentacles for his trouble. That was…surprisingly not-awful. Castiel’s skin itself smelled of fresh salty water, and the flesh there was warm and pulsed with his heartbeats. Dean didn’t realize he’d frozen in place instead of pulling back until he felt several tentacles petting at his back and shoulders, one even patting his cheek.

“Dean?” Cas crawled forward a bit more, pulling away from Dean’s face, and the pilot sat up almost dazedly, flustered. Whoa, whoa, what kind of freak was he? Having his face covered in Castiel’s tentacly side was actually kind of a turn on, and he had NO idea what to do with that.

“DEAN,” Castiel said again, and a tentacle delicately patted the pilot’s cheek. “Are you still in there?”

“Uhhhh,” Dean managed, feeling flushed in the face and neck and chest. He chuckled nervously. “Yeah, uh, yeah I’m right here, Cas. Sorry.”

“We’re at the cellblock you named,” the alien informed him, sounding exasperated. “What does your brother look like?”

Sam? Dean patted the mass of tentacles still just about a foot in front of his face.

“Move outta the way, let me see if I can spot him.”

Cas crawled up, and the faint light coming from the vent cover shone over the edges of his tentacles. The rows of little white sucker circles lining the dark, subtly moving tendrils was kind of…well, pretty. Weird word choice, but Dean felt it was the right one.

Focus, he told himself again, crawling up to the vent cover to peek out. The hallway was very similar to the one they’d escaped into before, lined with cell doors. The big difference here was that there were no metal covers on the doors — they had clear force fields sealing each room, and the prisoners were perfectly visible.

“Motley crew down there,” he commented to Cas, wrinkling his nose. Half of them weren’t even vaguely humanoid, and judging by the smell wafting from the far side of the hallway, at least one had body odor even force fields couldn’t contain. Lovely.

“There’s Sammy,” Dean whispered, spotting his brother’s long brown hair. Castiel leaned his face
close to Dean’s, peering down at the other human. Something was wrong. Sam was being led out of his cell in laser cuffs.

“Dean, this is bad,” Cas rasped grimly. Dean glanced at him.

“Where’re they taking him?”

“The computer said this cellblock was the maximum security,” the alien pointed out. “It’s death row, Dean. If he’s being moved like this, he’s likely being taken to his execution.”
Cas, Dean realized, had never answered the question about how long he’d been stuck here. Clearly it had been a lot longer than Dean had, because he knew where prisoners were taken to be executed without needing to see a computer screen. Knowing Sam’s life was at stake, he simply told Dean to follow him and started to crawl again.

“They won’t do it right away,” Cas reassured the pilot. Dean had been silently gritting his teeth since losing sight of Sam, and he had to admit that the words now were what he needed to hear.

“How can you be sure?”

“Because they have paperwork and regulations,” the alien replied flatly. He sighed. “Paperwork is probably the reason I was left in that cell for so many years. That, and not acting particularly dangerous.”

“Years?” Dean asked, incredulous. Being in the dark and in cells made people lose track of time. Maybe Cas meant it just FELT like years?

“The first guard who used to patrol near my cell retired last month,” Castiel said pointedly, sounding done with the situation. Cautiously, Dean reached up and patted the tentacles nearest to him. That wasn’t weird, right? That was like patting a friend’s foot.

“Sorry, Cas. That’s a long time to be alone,” he said, feeling worse for his own assumptions the moment he’d seen his cellmate. Cas had said other prisoners wouldn’t talk to him, so they didn’t count as ‘not alone’. The alien was obviously an intelligent person, not a monster, and Dean was grateful to have his help with saving Sam.

“It was,” Cas agreed wearily, light falling across his back and shoulders as he crawled past a vent cover. Dean watched the little lines dance across his bare back and arm, then over the dark tentacles. He really wondered about himself, that he could be attracted to something inhuman. Well, half inhuman. The tentacles were just as attractive as the other end, though, Dean had to admit it to himself. He was fascinated with them, and tempted to touch them every time they got too close.

This was no time to get distracted by weird fetishes, though, Dean told himself sternly. Sam’s life hung in the balance.

“Are we there yet?” He asked the alien, trying to joke but ending up sounding nervous instead.

“We have several floors to go,” Castiel replied evenly. “Tell me about your brother, Dean. Why is he a prisoner here?”

“That would be my fault,” Dean admitted, sighing. “Sammy and me, we, uh…we go around in our ship and try to help out people on the outer planets. You know, save people, if we can.”

“That sounds kind,” Cas murmured, coughing slightly. “Did you help someone who didn’t want to be helped?”

Dean snorted.

“Oh, they wanted the help. The government we were saving them FROM, though, not so much. They opened fire, and Sammy used the remote drive command in Baby — that’s, uh, that’s the
ship — to kick her into warp straight from the surface. I was onboard, the government goons were cluttering up orbit space, and I guess he figured it was better to get me outta there than to have us both get caught.”

He paused here and sighed.

“Damn it, Sammy.”

“So you were carried to safety, but you found out where he was taken and followed,” Castiel concluded, sounding thoughtful.

“Pretty much,” Dean confirmed. They rounded a corner in the vents, and he was momentarily distracted by the light dancing over Castiel’s body again. “Baby’s landed and stealthed up a few clicks out from the prison walls. The plan was to swoop in, get Sammy, and get us the hell outta here without being seen, but you see how well that worked out.”

“Not well at all,” Castiel said frankly. Ouch, he had to rub it in, didn’t he?

“Hey, you should be glad I got caught,” Dean grumbled. “That was how we met and you got out of that cell too.”

“I didn’t say that I wasn’t glad, Dean,” the alien murmured. Cue an awkward silence from both of them.

After a few minutes of quiet shuffling, Castiel said softly, “We’re here.”

“I don’t want you to get shot again.” Dean was adamant about this. “You might not have anywhere to go back home to, but that doesn’t make you expendable, buddy. We bust Sam loose, and then you’re comin’ with us, got it?”

“Thank you, Dean,” Castiel said, doing his best to cover up his exasperation from the sound of it. He did sound like he was glad Dean didn’t think of him as a body shield, but he’d also just gone through explaining the plan for the second time, and the plan didn’t actually involve Cas getting shot. Dean wasn’t ruling it out just because the alien said so, though. He’d gotten shot last time unplanned, hadn’t he?

“I don’t intend to get shot again,” Cas continued, and Dean was impressed with how he managed to sound both patient and put-upon. “Between the two of us, I am much more of a diversion, so I’ll just lead them on a chase while you free your brother.”

“Sammy’s no pushover,” Dean said pointedly. “How about we knock the guards out and get their guns, and fight our way out?”

“The less guards we have to fight the better,” Castiel grumbled. He coughed lightly, clearing his throat. “Dean, we can’t have half of the prison on our tips when we leave, or they’ll follow us straight to Baby.”

“Tips?” Dean raised his eyebrows. Cas brought a tentacle up and waved it at him pointedly. “Ohhh…” Right, why would a bunch of people with no legs use a phrase like ‘on our heels’, or even ‘on our asses’? Feeling dense, Dean changed the subject. “Okay, fine, we distract ‘em. But if it looks like you’re about to get shot, I’m not gonna just let it happen,” he insisted.

“Fine,” Castiel said, bemused.
“Fine,” Dean agreed stubbornly, nodding.

“Are we ready? He is not being placed in a cell, which means they likely intend to do this execution now and deal with the paperwork later,” Cas said grimly. If there was ever a way to light under a fire under Dean’s ass, Sam’s life being at stake was it — he immediately moved to start pulling off the vent cover.

“Okay, it’s showtime. You’re SURE you won’t get yourself shot and killed?”

“Would you feel better if I promised, even if I can’t possibly know that?” Cas asked dryly.

“Yes,” Dean shot back flippantly, sliding the vent cover aside.

The alien placed a hand on his shoulder, crawling up to get to the vent opening first.

“I solemnly swear, Dean, I won’t get shot and killed,” he promised. It was indeed very solemn.

Because Sam was considered a dangerous prisoner, the guards unfortunately did not leave him unattended. What they did do was to take him into one of the glass death rooms lining the hallway, and strap him down to a table. Most executions were done by lethal lasers through the eyes directly to the brain; it was quick and probably only hurt for a second, but it left a body with the eyes fried out as black holes, and Dean didn’t even want to think about Sam ending up like that.

There were four armed men down there, two guarding the door and two near the table. The fifth, unarmed man was wearing red, and seemed to be doing all of the talking to Sam, so Dean’s best guess was the executioner himself. Cas seemed to think they had some reading of final sentence before the lasers, and that bought them a few moments extra.

As soon as the man in red stepped up to Sam’s table and started to read from his tablet screen, Castiel slid forward out of the vent cover and to the floor. Dean watched in fascination as the tentacles drew down almost like liquid things, touching gracefully to the floor and catching Castiel’s fall without making a sound.

If Sam’s eyes hadn’t widened at the sight of the tentacled alien landing behind the guards, they never would have known that he was there. The two men inside the cell whirled around, alerting the ones outside, and Dean cringed in anticipation of their guns going off and blasting his new pal away.

Instead, Castiel arched his tentacles in the air, the posture an aggressive charging stance so intimidating the door guards scrambled back a few steps. One fired several frantic shaky shots, which hit the wall. Castiel swept a tentacle across the floor, knocking his feet from beneath him.

The second guard was halfway through addressing the guardhouse about the trouble when Cas smacked a palm onto his forehead. Dean was hopping down from the vent as this went on, so he didn’t really catch WHAT Cas had done, but there was a flare of brilliant yellowish light. Seconds later the man collapsed to the floor, his eyes burnt out of their sockets like he’d just attended his own execution.

What in the hell…

So much for Cas’s plan to just create a diversion. Had he been able to do that the whole time? Why didn’t he do that when they escaped their cell? Dean had so many questions.

He had a brother to save first, though.
Grabbing one of the fallen guards’ rifles, he leveled it at the men still inside the cell. The executioner was cowering behind them, Sam and the tablet forgotten for the moment. The guards opened fire, and Dean ducked to the side of the clear wall as dark burn marks flared on the other side not even an inch away. Luckily, the death rooms were designed to resist most weapons.

“Stand down, or we’ll execute the prisoner!” The man in red sounded totally confident now that he thought he had the upper hand. What a coward.

“Don’t do it, Dean!” Hearing Sam’s voice, the pilot gritted his teeth. There was no way he was leaving his brother here. He could hear one of the guards inside the cell reporting the attack in to the guardhouse. In just a few minutes, they were going to be swarmed with too many people to fight.

Dean had no choice — he dropped his gun, holding up his hands.

“You guys ever think maybe you’re not paid enough for this job?” Both guards and the executioner had their eyes on Dean. He approached very slowly, reminding himself to trust Cas. They’d anticipated more guards than this, and the original plan was not so guns blazing because of it.

Sure enough, seconds later the lights flickered and died.

There was the sudden shuffle of feet in the cell, and frantic voices. Dean slipped inside, sticking to the wall opposite where he’d last seen the men, and did his best to reach Sam’s table.

A brilliant flare of gold light burst from two points. It was almost blinding, but Dean saw Castiel was in the cell as well, his palms on the foreheads of the executioner and one of the guards. They screamed and collapsed limp to the floor, their eye sockets sizzling. He could smell burnt flesh from here. Ugh.

The remaining guard had wisely dropped his rifle and ran away while his comrades were being taken out; his footsteps pattered halfway down the hall, and Dean heard Castiel’s tentacles patting on the floor after him.

“Forget him, Cas! They called reenforcements, help me out here!” He felt over the cuffs on Sam’s wrists and neck quickly, remembering there were also some around his ankles. They seemed to be the same kind of cuffs as prisoners wore while being transferred, except since the person was strapped to a table, hitting the release button wasn’t a worry — so they were right on the outside of each cuff. Dean quickly started to press them one by one, going for Sam’s wrists first.

“Dean, what the hell are you doing here? You were supposed to be safe!” Sam would’ve sounded pissed if he didn’t sound so shaky. He’d come extremely close to getting his eyes burned out of his head, and they weren’t exactly free and clear yet, either.

“’Cause that sounds like me, keeping safe while you get executed,” Dean snarked back, moving to Sam’s feet. His hand landed on the familiar silky texture of one of Castiel’s tentacles, though. He’d already pressed the button.

“That’s all of them,” Cas rasped, apparently having already pressed the other one too. The moment Sam was free, Dean hurried to help his brother sit up, hugging around his shoulders with one arm.

“C’mon, Sammy, I’ve got you.”

Sam slid his legs sideways off of the table and stood, wincing softly. Dean didn’t like how much leaning on him his brother had to do to walk, and it felt like he was definitely doing so with a limp.
He’d been here longer, probably hadn’t had as nice of a cellmate as Dean did.

As they hurried out of the glass room, Cas turned and looked back at them, and his eyes were glowing bright blue in the dark. Dean blinked, but didn’t feel intimidated so much as fascinated.

Understandably, though, Sam stopped in his tracks.

“He…” He began, turning to stare at Dean.

“He’s with me,” Dean confirmed quickly, leading him past Castiel. The alien turned and nodded grimly to Sam, the soft blue glow of his eyes casting faint light on all of their faces.

“Hello, Sammy.”

Sam looked so bewildered to hear the nickname come out of his mouth that Dean was struggling not to laugh. This was not a laughing situation, he’d laugh later when they were safe.

A shrill alarm started to blare over the comm suddenly, making Dean jump. Right, more guards.

They had to move, quick.

“The vent trick won’t work forever, but let’s at least get to a different floor,” he decided for them all. “Sammy, Cas can help lift you.”

“Sure, thanks, uh, Cas,” Sam told the alien uneasily as Dean helped him over to stand under the vent.

Cas slid tentacles beneath him and easily lifted him up into the space. Dean was impressed — Sam wasn’t a small man. Then again, Cas had felt extremely strong when manhandling him during their escape rehearsals, so it shouldn’t be that surprising.

Cas lifted Dean up next, and then swooped up into the vent just as the tap of booted feet below announced the arrival of more guards.
Hi, happy 2019! Sorry for the lengthy time before this chapter came out -- I've had a lot going on in real life, and it's disrupted my writing and drawing schedules so much I haven't gotten a whole lot done recently. Getting back to writing on this fic made me really happy, and I hope somebody's still around to read this latest chapter. Without further ado, Space Team Free Will...

“Sammy—”

“It’s SAM.”

“SAM,” Castiel grumbled, “You’re standing on my tentacle.”

He got a grouchy wince in response, and Dean could feel both of them shift around, trying to remedy the situation.

Being packed into one of the prison’s industrial-sized laundry chutes and stuck together like lint in a pocket hadn’t exactly been part of the plan, yet here they were. Dean was sandwiched up against Castiel’s back, Sam against his front. There was a strangely pleasant amount of movement from the tentacles near Dean’s legs and waist, and he had a feeling Sam was enjoying it a hell of a lot less.

“Where are we supposed to go? The laundry pit’s probably full of chemicals,” Sam said wearily, giving Castiel’s shoulder a little shove. The alien scowled at him in the dim light of the chute’s reflective metal, shifting away as best he could.

“Tell me about it,” Dean replied, pulling a piece of dirty laundry off of his head. He didn’t even want to think about where some of these towels and prison uniforms had been, but the reek of that prisoner on death row seemed to be wafting around in here, for one. “Look, we didn’t exactly PLAN for them to activate the vent cleaning protocol.”

“You should’ve,” Sam pointed out, wincing. “You came out of the vents, they knew you were in there — go figure they’d turn on the cleaner and fry you after you killed their guards.” He was right, of course. Dean decided that now was a bad time to tell him that Sam’s escape was actually the third time they’d been in the vents that day.

They’d heard the alarms in time, anyway. Castiel had recognized what they meant, they’d all bailed out of the nearest vent cover, and flames had licked out after them. Judging by the seared flesh smell, at least one other inmate in the vents hadn’t been so lucky. Or a very big rat. Something.

“Yeah, well we didn’t get fried,” he said, shrugging. “We’re in a laundry chute, let’s move on from there.”

“Can’t go down into the chemical pit,” Sam replied flatly. “Can’t climb up something this slippery. We’re lucky there’s a bend in the chute or we would’ve just slid all the way down.”

“The laundry chute was a dumb idea,” Dean admitted. It had been his dumb idea, too. There had
been footsteps around the corner, and after the vent burny flesh cooky smelly incident Dean had been a bit on-edge, so he’d practically dragged Sam and Cas into the laundry chute.

It did work, though; they’d heard the footsteps pass by without the people making them noticing anything amiss. On the other hand, they’d slid down the chute thirty feet or so and climbing back up was not looking very…possible.

“I can climb up,” Cas said tiredly. “Just not carrying the two of you.”

“Great, ditching us, solid plan,” Sam muttered. “Where did you find him again, Dean?”

Dean cleared his throat, chuckling nervously.

“Um, he’s actually my cellmate. Lucky draw, huh?”

“…”

“I wasn’t suggesting abandoning you,” Castiel grumbled, coughing. “We’re surrounded by laundry — tie things together, and I’ll carry the rope with me and pull you up.”

As much as Dean wanted to forget about the dirty laundry and how they were even touching it, that was pretty damn smart.

“Let’s do it,” he agreed quickly. Sam couldn’t come up with anything better, so he damned well better not have a problem with the only viable plan just because Cas came up with it. Dean wondered if the inmate status or the tentacles were what Sammy had a problem with. Maybe he’d just had a really damn awful week, and it wasn’t Cas personally who was the problem?

It didn’t take long for them to fashion a knotted length of laundry for Castiel to climb up with. He started his way up the chute with the end of it over his shoulder, suckers easily finding traction on the smooth metal surfaces. He gripped both the walls and floor, Dean noted with fascination, watching him crawl up and away.

“How long have you been here, Dean?” Sam was whispering to stay out of Castiel’s hearing range. Remembering that they needed to keep tying onto the end of the rope, Dean plucked the least greasy-feeling piece of laundry he could find and handed it to his brother to continue the knots.

“Couple days.”

“And you TRUST this guy?” Sam looked at him like he was crazy. Dean frowned at him.

“Hell yes I do. He’s saved my ass a few times already.”

“Dean…” Sam took a deep breath. “I know you’re good at blending in wherever, but this place is for the real pieces of work. And your new friend just vaporized those guards’ brains right in front of us in seconds!”

“He didn’t tell me he could do that,” Dean admitted. “But I think it’s badass.”

“It’s dangerous, Dean! It makes HIM dangerous. What’s stopping him from turning on us once we get to Baby and flying off with her?”

Dean opened his mouth to reply, then shut it again, scowling. One, anybody mentioning stealing Baby always instantly brought murder to mind, and two, he had no good answer to Sam’s question.

“I trust him with my life,” Dean told his brother stubbornly. “You just need to get to know him.
“He’s great.”

“Obviously you think so,” Sam muttered, tying a jumpsuit to the end of the rope. He sighed. “Just stay on guard, okay? I didn’t live through an execution and drag you into a prison for us to get murdered by some criminal tentacle monster.”

“I knew it!” Dean pointed at him. “Really, Sammy? He just helped save your ass from the ol’ laser eye treatment and you hate him just because he’s got tentacles?”

“You’ve been to deep space even more times than me.” Sam looked him in the eyes, grim. “Every single tentacled thing we’ve ever met was nasty. Things with tentacles are nasty. You KNOW that.”

It was exactly what Dean had thought when he’d first laid eyes on Cas in that cell. He was ashamed to admit it to himself now, but he’d judged Cas on sight, too. Once Sammy got to know him a little better, hopefully he’d understand why Dean trusted the alien so quickly.

“Well this tentacled thing just wants the same thing we want,” Dean replied. “To get the hell out of this place. He was nice enough to put that on hold to help me save YOU.”

Sam was getting the start of that sad puppy look all of a sudden.

“Dean—”

“Are you two done?”

Both brothers looked up the chute to see Castiel peering down from the hallway, looking tired and annoyed. A bit pained, too; Dean reminded himself to check on the bandaged wounds and be sure they weren’t bleeding again.

Obviously Cas had heard at least part of this conversation.

“Sammy’s going up first,” Dean called to him, giving the back of Sam’s shoulder a small shove. His brother looked like he wanted to protest, but grabbed the end of the makeshift rope and tugged it to test. Whatever Cas had hooked it to was solid — it didn’t budge.

“Comin’ up,” Sam called. Cas nodded and kept to one side to let light down the chute, pulling on the rope hand over hand to draw it up faster. Sam did the same thing, climbing the rope as it rose, and the thirty feet went by in minutes.

“I’ll keep watch,” Dean heard Sam say from far away up there in the hall. “Pull Dean up here quick.”

“Oh, I thought we’d abandon him,” came the sarcastic grumble of a reply. It was followed by a cough. Castiel’s rasping had gotten worse since the vents, and Dean seriously wondered if the nearby flames had dried him out. Hopefully not; there weren’t exactly any bodies of water to dunk the guy in in the middle of a prison.

Oh, shit. Did that mean it had been YEARS since Cas had gotten to swim? He’d said his kind breathed underwater, and he was clearly built to move in it. No swimming in that long was just downright cruel.

These were the kinds of thoughts Dean dwelled on while climbing up the rope, looking up occasionally to see Cas carefully pulling him higher. When they were close enough, Dean reached and grabbed the alien’s hand instead of the rope, squeezing it. Cas tilted his head at the gesture,
which Sam most certainly had not done. A tentacle curled down the vent alongside his arms, coiling securely around one of Dean’s wrists. Dean found himself half-climbing, half-lifted out of the vent and placed on his feet on the hallway floor with care.

“Thanks,” he told Cas with a smile, letting the laundry rope go sliding back down into the chute. Good riddance — it stank.

Sam was already typing away at the nearest computer console he could find, which was ten feet down the hallway from the laundry chute. He was silent and scowly, and Dean had a feeling their whispered conversation had caused it. Well, too bad. He didn’t trust Cas, but Dean did — and they were getting out of here together.

There were footsteps far in the distance around the corner of the hallway.

“Sam,” Dean hissed, nodding that way.

“I know,” Sam said, typing faster. Castiel looked up and down the hall, tentacles lashing in agitation. They’d already taken too long getting out of the damned chute, and now Sam had to figure out where the ship bay was in relation to them.

“C’mon, Sammy, we’ll catch the next console,” Dean said, stepping over to grab his brother’s shoulder and try to pull him away from the computer. Sam hit one more thing on the touchscreen and turned to follow him immediately, though.

“I got it,” he whispered. “Maintenance crawlspace, let’s go!”

Oh, goody. More crawling.

When Sam said ‘I got it’ Dean had assumed he meant ‘I’ve got a quick route to the ship bay.’

Foolish Dean.

What Sam had actually meant was ‘I saw the entire map of the prison, I know the roundabout route to the ship bay that loops back on itself half a dozen times but doesn’t go anywhere too crowded.’ It was the SMART route, but not the fast one. Castiel seemed to be slowing down, too — ever since the vents purged them, the alien had seemed more and more tired and grouchy, and he couldn’t talk without coughing in the process.

Sam still walked with a limp, but was stubbornly powering through it and just wincing with each step.

Between him and Cas, it was constant. Cough, wince. Cough, wince. Cough, cough, wince.

After almost an hour of crawlspace time in close quarters with this going on, Dean finally had them stop to rest.

“Okay, we’ve gotta do something about this, Sam,” he said, gesturing to Castiel. As if on cue, the alien coughed yet again and frowned at them.

“A-about me?” He rasped, coughing some more into his hand.

“Yeah, buddy,” Dean told him worriedly. “Your cough’s getting bad and you’re slowing down. Would water help you out?” Obviously there weren’t any swimming pools around, but water
“Don’t…worry a-about it,” Cas replied, wheezing slightly. Even Sam glanced at him in concern at the sound of it.

“Too late,” Dean informed him, frowning. “We’ve got water on the ship, but even once we’re out of the prison we have to get there. It’s clicks away, remember?”

Castiel’s blue eyes were fixed on him, sharp and intelligent and most definitely plotting something he wasn’t saying.

“How far to the b-bay, Sam?” He hadn’t talked to Sam much directly since the laundry chute, but he did so now, rasping. Dean’s brother looked at Cas with a frown, shaking his head.

“Hours. You gonna make it?”

Seeing how both of them were looking at him, Cas let his shoulders slump in defeat. “When I killed those guards, it…it took a lot of my e-energy.” He paused to cough and clear his throat. It made a scraping sound that made Dean wince. “I haven’t done that in y…years.”

“Didn’t have much choice,” Dean pointed out. “They were gonna shoot us and execute Sammy.”

“Yeah, uh, thanks for stopping that, by the way,” Sam added awkwardly. Extra awkwardly, since Cas had overheard their conversation before, but he still made a point to say it.

Castiel nodded in response, tentacles gripping around on the floor near him. He coughed again softly into his hand and sighed.

“Water…m-might help.”

Dean stepped over and patted his shoulder.

“We’ll get you fixed up soon, Cas,” he encouraged. “We’ll figure something out along the way, okay? We’re all getting out of here together, I promise.”

Cas sighed and mumbled a “Thank you, Dean,” punctuated by a couple more coughs.

“On the bright side,” Sam said, “We shouldn’t meet anybody else for the rest of the trip down here.”

They met somebody else not long after that.

It was a burly bald-headed man dressed in maintenance coveralls, and he was so alarmed to see Cas that he never saw Sam’s fists moving toward his head. The guy was unconscious in seconds, slumping to the floor.

They left him there alive, but not before Sam went through his pockets and came up with buried treasure: a keycard with security clearance for a bunch of the sections in the prison. This guy must be allowed in and out of different areas to maintain the technical stuff. Now, he would be their ticket to the ship bay.
“The mess hall,” Dean suggested as they walked. Castiel had started to lag behind, and as it turned out he weighed quite a bit, so he was leaning heavily on the brothers, who walked on either side of him. The maintenance tunnel wasn’t an actual crawlspace, but the ceiling hung low enough that all three of them had to duck as they walked.

Sam frowned around Cas’s shoulder.

“What’re we gonna do, stick his head under the water dispenser?”

“Look, it’s a place with water,” Dean replied, frustrated. “You’re SURE this damned place doesn’t have a shower room? It’s a prison, they usually do.”

“The cells are the showers,” Sam sighed, shifting Cas’s arm that was draped over his shoulders. “They just hose the prisoners down occasionally. You weren’t here long enough to get washed, apparently.”

Dean blinked, glancing up at Castiel, who nodded wearily.

“I—It’s how… I’ve lived here… so long,” he managed, between short coughs. Dean patted the alien’s hand, which was draped over his shoulders just like Sammy had the other.

“We’ve got an access card. We could go almost anywhere here. Somewhere must have a bunch of water. Are there any prisoners who’re aquatic?”

“From what I saw on the cellblock map, only ones big enough to eat him,” Sam replied, sighing again. He was still walking with a bit of a limp, and having Cas lean on him seemed to be making it worse. Dean made a note to make sure his brother wasn’t hiding some more serious injury once they had a few minutes of downtime.

Right now, Castiel was about ready to keel over, so he had to be the priority. That and getting the hell out of this place before the guards caught onto where they were hiding. They had to have found the knocked out maintenance guy by now, and he’d be able to describe Cas.

“I’ve got it,” Sam said, after a few minutes of walking in silence punctuated by Castiel’s coughing. “Let’s rest a second, okay?”

Dean helped him ease Cas to the ground, where the alien gratefully curled his arms around his torso. His tentacles were moving a lot less than before. Dean was really worried about that.

“Where?” He asked Sam, staying knelt down to pat Cas’s shoulder gently. Castiel looked up at him hazily before closing his eyes. His breathing sounded a little wheezy now.

“The staff quarters,” Sam said, watching at Cas with a worried frown. “The staff is all human, right? The bay’s not big enough to bus them back and forth on top of prisoner transports — I’d be willing to bet they live here in shifts.”

“And none of ‘em looked like they hadn’t bathed in forever,” Dean agreed, standing. “Okay, I’m with ya, Sammy. Did you see where the quarters are?” How to get an ailing half-human, half-tentacles guy like Cas in without being noticed was a whole other issue, but it was the best plan they had so far.
Sam sighed.

“Yeah, and they’re not far, but Dean…trying to sneak him into their showers would be suicide,” he said, as if he didn’t realize that Dean knew that.

Castiel gave a dry cough and wheezed, his chest heaving. His human-looking half was starting to look a little grayish, and that could not be a good thing.

“Look at him, Sammy,” Dean told his brother. “We’ve gotta do something, what the hell else can we do?”

Sam’s eyes narrowed, and he looked up and down the tunnel. When his gaze swept the ceiling next, Dean frowned at him, turning his attention to Castiel instead. The alien looked like he might be in pain, dark brows pinched low over his eyes.

Dean sat down on the floor beside him, placing a hand on his shoulder. He didn’t know what else to do, but leaving Cas behind wasn’t an option.

“I have a better plan,” Sam declared, stepping quickly over and grabbing Castiel’s other arm. “Help me lift him, quick.”

Dean hurried to assist, cringing as Castiel winced when they squeezed his arms tight enough to hold his weight. Between the two of them, they lifted the alien up enough to drape both of his arms over their shoulders again, and Sam began to lead them down the hallway before Dean could ask what this new plan was.

“Here, sit him down here,” Sam ordered about ten minutes later, glancing up at the ceiling as he spoke. Dean followed his lead, looking up too. There was a bump in the ceiling trailing along up there.

“You located the water pipes,” he said, brows shooting up. “And they’re right in here?”

“It’s a maintenance tunnel, Dean,” Sam reminded him, giving Castiel’s shoulder a pat as he got back to his feet. There was a definite wince as Sam leaned on his hurt leg fully, but right now he was ignoring it. “Stay here with him, I’m gonna see if this card can access the pipe cover.”

Dean nodded, taking a seat on the floor beside Castiel.

“Cas, stay with me, buddy,” he told the alien, patting his cheek. Cas groaned and rolled his head to the side, blue eyes slitting open to peer up at him in a squint.

“All right, now we can talk,” Dean said. “This card is programed to tell the guards where we are. Once you’re in fighting shape we’ll get outta here.”

Dean wanted to hold his hand. If Dean was dying, he’d want somebody to hold his hand…

“If…if they come…leave me,” Cas rasped out, shuddering. ‘Fuck it, Dean thought, and took one of his hands, lacing their fingers. The alien blinked at the gesture, looking at their hands hazily like he thought he might be imagining that part.

“You took a laser shot or three for me,” Dean pointed out, squeezing his hand. “And you didn’t get out of that cell finally to die down here in some tunnel. We’re getting outta here, all of us.
Castiel closed his eyes, wheezing softly with each inhale.

“Dean…”

The mechanical buzz of the pipe covering above them sliding aside interrupted whatever the alien had been about to say. Dean looked up at the exposed piping, mentally taking note of how long they might have before the guards traced the card of the downed maintenance worker to this location. Not long, if they were watching for it in the system.

“Excuse me,” Sam muttered as he stepped over Castiel’s tentacles and around Dean’s legs. It was easy for him to reach the pipe near the roof, and Dean only realized that his brother was brandishing a very large electric wrench when he slammed the head of the thing into the pipe. It dented inward visibly, the wrench giving a tiny spark as the electronic part undoubtedly got damaged.

Determined, Sam slammed the wrench into the pipe a few more times. By the third or fourth, Cas was looking up, and Dean was glancing up and down the tunnel. Anyone in the place had to hear the echoes of what they were doing.

The pipe caved, finally, and Dean felt a pressurized needle spray blast him in the back of the head.

“Take that,” Sam told the pipe like he’d just defeated it. Dean wasn’t listening — he’d scrambled out of the spray and sat up to look at Cas, and he was stunned.

The water was striking Castiel’s chest and face at first. Almost immediately, he felt well enough to sit up, and then it showered down on his back and shoulders, drenching his dark hair down over his forehead, streaming down over his tentacles.

The tentacles that were curling and weaving around on the floor almost like a dance — nothing like the feeble thrashing they’d been doing before. Dean saw faint intricate patterns of luminescent blue across the inky surface of the tentacles, the same patterns tracing up onto Castiel’s human-looking torso and out to the tips of his fingers. His eyes smoldered blue like cold embers.

“I hope you feel up to moving, because we need to,” Sam said. He didn’t seem awed or admiring of Castiel’s reaction to the water — his focus was on getting out of there before they were being chased again.

“I am now,” the alien said, and his voice was the least raspy Dean had ever heard it. It still had a bit of gravel to it, though. There were little splashes as Castiel stood up to his full height on his tentacles and almost glided his way out of the stream of water. His eyes returned to normal as he did so, and the beautiful blue patterns on his skin faded softly away. Still, he was a vision with his glistening wet bare chest and arms, dark tentacles flowing smoothly along now.

From somewhere down the hallway, there were the echoes of many footsteps.

“This way,” Sam said quickly, waving for them to follow him. He started the way opposite the steps. Dean scrambled after, noticing that Castiel waited for him before following Sam. The pipe leak was quickly flooding the tunnel, and they were walking in ankle-deep water by now.

Sam led them around several bends at a breakneck pace, gritting his teeth as he ran on his injured leg. Castiel’s tentacles made little wet slaps against the walls as he half-pulled, half-crawled along to stay to one side.

“We’re being followed,” he told the brothers quietly. Dean was glad he wasn’t coughing anymore.
“I know,” Sam replied, wincing. Dean glanced back the way they’d come. The water was knee-deep by now, and lights flashed from around the last bend they’d taken. The guards weren’t far behind.

Sam took them around one more curve, glancing quickly at the numbers on the panels around them. He stopped at one and slapped the keycard against the reader panel. The door made a low error sound and didn’t budge.

“They blocked it that fast?” Sam scowled at the card and threw it down the hallway back the way they’d come.

“Plan B,” Dean said, grabbing his arm and hauling him along further down the hallway.

“We don’t HAVE a plan B, Dean!” Sam winced, limping a little despite himself. Running on the injury was definitely not doing it any favors.

“Plan B is to keep moving ‘til we come up with plan C,” Dean told him breathlessly. “C’mon, Sammy. We can beat them, c’mon.”

They reached another bend, and Dean looked back to be sure Castiel was keeping up. The alien had stopped in the hallway, though, turning back the way they’d come.

“Cas, c’mon!” Dean called, alarmed. “You stay and they’ll shoot you!”

“I’m not staying behind,” Cas assured him grimly, looking back. His eyes were glowing that cold, ember-like blue again. “But we can’t outrun them. Go, Dean. I’ll meet you in the bay.”

That looked too much like goodbye.

“What? No!” Dean let go of Sam and started to wade back angrily. The water was nearly waist-deep by now, searchlights flashing and waving from just around the last bend. What was Cas thinking? He wasn’t expendable, damn it.

“Dean!” Sam immediately started back, too. Cas squinted at the brothers as they both came to stand beside him, stubbornly facing what could only be a firing squad of guards.

“I’ll heal from their weapons — you won’t,” he reminded Dean, frustrated. “I don’t want either of you to die. GO.”

“I’m not leaving you,” Dean said stubbornly, turning to face the bend in the tunnel.

Huffing for breath after their run, Sam stopped on Castiel’s other side and glared up at him.

“We ALL could’ve run away by now!”

“Surrender,” Cas snapped back as the first of the guards came wading around the corner. The alien dropped to the floor, ducking entirely under the water. Before Sam and Dean had a chance to process what he’d said, the dark shape of him under the surface rocketed off toward the guards at a shocking speed. It closed thirty feet in seconds, going right past the guards’ legs.

“FREEZE!” The newcomers shouted, training their rifles on Sam and Dean. The brothers both quickly raised their hands, Dean swearing inwardly. Where was Cas going?
It took the guards about ten seconds to realize that Castiel was not with the brothers. That was five seconds too long.

As the leader started shouting at Dean, demanding to know where the alien prisoner was, Dean was too busy staring to even register his words. Behind him and the other men, several dark tentacles rose from the water, silent and graceful. One curled sideways along the wall, over a maintenance panel, and the others extended toward the nearest guards.

Castiel’s head rose from the water next, the glow of his blue eyes visible before he broke the surface. The glowing patterns were drawing themselves onto his skin again gradually. With his hair hanging in his face and the smoldering eyes, he looked like a beautiful and terrible thing.

One of the guards happened to look back.

He screamed — right before a tentacle caught him around the throat, dunking him under the water. The rest of the guards whirled around, and Dean felt his stomach drop as not one, but all of them opened fire.

“Cas!”

Castiel took several dozen laser rounds right to the chest and torso. Dean started toward him, sure they’d kill him, but Sam caught his arm.

“Dean—”

“We’re not leaving him!” Dean snapped at his brother over the laser fire. Across the room, the guards were screaming and blasting Cas. The alien had drowned one of them and two more were struggling to escape his clutches and get above water again. In the flashing laser flares, the thrashing tentacles and churning water mixed with blackish blood painted a nightmarish scene. In the midst of it, Cas was stony-faced, eyes blue points of light.

Dean stopped yanking on the arm Sam had hold of, realizing there was nothing he could do. Cas was hurt bad — that was a lot of blood. Even if Dean jumped into the fight, all he’d do was get himself shot.

Cas was gonna die. After years in this damned prison, he was gonna die in it, and he was doing it to save THEM.

It wasn’t fucking fair.

Sam let go of him. He was saying something, but Dean wasn’t paying attention. Cas was singlehandedly holding off at least ten guys over there. Three of them were dead so far, and Cas’s chest was a bloody mess of gunshots — what the hell could they do? Leaving him wasn’t an option, damn it!

The sizzle-snap of a laser rifle firing much closer made Dean jump. Sam…had grabbed one of the guards’ guns they’d dropped, and was grimly shooting men in the back while Cas kept them occupied.

SNAP, one. SNAP-SNAP, two three. Sammy always was a good shot — he didn’t falter once, and he had no qualms killing people who’d tried to kill him first. Dean was wading toward Cas before
the last few men even fell. The water blackened as he approached the alien, whose eyes were flaring dangerously as he fried the face of the last man and dumped him to the side.

There were dead bodies bobbing in the water like leaves. Holy shit, maybe they WERE dangerous escaped criminals…

“Cas!” Dean approached the alien, whose eyes and skin markings were still flaring bright. The tentacle on the panel sizzled and sparked — was he drawing from it somehow?

Getting a good look at the laser wounds made Dean feel queasy. There were pits burnt down into Cas’s chest, raw red flesh flowing black blood into the water.

Castiel sat up sharply as he approached, eyes still smoldering. This close, he was taller than Dean, and it was actually pretty damn intimidating.

The pilot held up his hands.

“Easy, Cas. It’s me,” he reassured Castiel. “You kicked their asses, buddy, but you got pretty shot up. I wanna help — let me help, okay?”

Cas opened his mouth, but no words came out. Instead he made a rasping HISS that made the hairs stand up on the back of Dean’s neck. Abruptly, the light in the alien’s eyes died — and he pitched forward into the water, tentacles and arms still.

“Cas!” Dean sloshed over to him, using both hands to turn him over. “Don’t be dead, c’mon, you’re too tough to die, right? You’ve had worse, right?”

Behind him, he heard Sam splashing closer.

“Is he…?”

Dean ignored him, patting Cas’s cheek. Maybe Sam was right, maybe he was crazy to get so attached so fast. Cas deserved it, though. He kept getting himself shot for Dean, the guy he’d only known a few days too.

Castiel’s eyelids fluttered, and he made a wheezing sound, rolling over to be face down in the water. As a big bubble of air came up from around his head, Dean realized that he needed to breathe the water to feel better right now.

“Oh…okay, good, you got this,” he told Cas, resting a hand on his back and rubbing it gently. Sam stopped on the other side of the alien, resting a hand on his shoulder lightly too.

“They’re gonna send more guards, Dean,” he said, watching Castiel unhappily. “And the body count just went up, so they’re shooting on sight from now on for sure.”

Dean looked from Cas to him and back again, desperation squeezing at his chest.

“I-I know, just…we gotta help him.”

“I don’t want to leave him, either, Dean,” Sam promised, looking around the hallway. Someone must have sealed the pipe cover once they realized the flooding was happening — the water levels were staying around chest height. Sam waded to the nearest guard’s body and pulled him closer, going through his pockets.

Castiel’s tentacles were moving more again. Dean noticed when one brushed against his legs, then
curled experimentally around his ankle before letting go.

“Cas?” Dean glanced down at his feet under the water, then back to the alien. “Uh, buddy, you doing that on purpose?”

Sitting up abruptly, water streaming off of his face and hair, the alien coughed up a mouthful of water and shook his head. Dean stared at his chest.

And it was a chest worth staring at, but that wasn’t why. The laser marks were half healed already — how? Cas was still recovering from the first few shots he’d taken in the hallway, as far as Dean knew!

“Hey, wow, you’re…well, you seem okay,” Sam commented, coming back over to look at the alien worriedly. “But you were Swiss cheese a minute ago, what happened?”

“I’ll explain later,” Cas grumbled, swiping his hair out of his face. “We need to go before more guards show up.” The look he gave Dean was almost apologetic, and Dean concluded his own expression must be emotional. As it damn well should’ve been — he’d seriously thought Cas was going to die.

Now Dean was considering whether the alien was immortal or something.

Sam held up a bunch of the guards’ ID cards like a royal flush and smiled.

“Let’s go.”

“I’m not so sure about this anymore!” Dean shouted over the wailing alarms. After the shootout in the maintenance tunnel, Sam had used the keycards they had to get them to the ship bay without encountering any more people. Nobody felt much like talking, so it had been a quiet trip. They hadn’t had a whole lot of ship choices in the bay, though, and they’d ended up in this larger-than-planned, slower-than-hell prison carrier ship.

The ship that was currently getting blasted in the ass by the prison’s anti-air lasers. They’d taken off from the bay not even five minutes ago, and already the hull integrity was questionable. Through the grimy bridge windows, the dull desert surface of the planet spread out before them.

“We can make this work,” Sam said with forced cheer, sitting over by the ship’s detection readout. “Dean, step on it!”

“This’s as fast as she goes, Sammy!” Dean snapped back, the alarms still blaring. Beside him, Castiel was somehow working three different panels at once with his tentacles. Looked like it took a lot of concentration. No wonder he wasn’t saying anything.

“We’re a target the size of the fuckin’ moon,” Dean added, in case Sam somehow had forgotten that part. This thing wasn’t exactly made to maneuver — or even to steer in atmosphere. It was basically a ‘descend from orbit and land’ kind of vessel.

The whole ship rattled in the air as another blast landed on what Dean had a bad feeling was the port engine. Yep, the listing sideways confirmed it.

“Great, we’re going down — are you happy, Sam?” He shouted at his brother.

Looking up from the radar, Sammy grinned.
“This’s perfect, let’s get in the pods.”

“Into the pods!” Dean called to Cas, in case he hadn’t caught that over the din of the alarms. The alien immediately abandoned his stations, gliding along to the hall that led to the escape pods. He waited at the door until Sam and Dean joined him before they all retreated to eject themselves.

Sam had been happy about the enormous escape ship. They’d shoot it down for sure, he said, and that was perfect for the plan. Getting shot down had been the plan, but Dean hated the feeling of piloting a ship as it started to crash — even a planned crash was awful in his book.

The pods in a transport like this were made for groups. No luxury one-person escape pods here, they were more like a tiny coffin for five bodies to fall in from space. At least they hadn’t flown out of the atmosphere this time. Sam, Dean and Cas all piled into one pod and closed the door. It was surprisingly comfortable in there with Castiel and his tentacles pressed up to Dean’s side. Sam probably disagreed.

They didn’t launch until Sam confirmed from his palm readout that the ship was starting to break apart in the back. His plan to disguise their pod — and escape from being blown up — in the debris seemed to work, because nobody shot the pod down as they descended. It had been a very real possibility, but it was also the best chance they had to escape.

The landing was not a gentle one. The pod’s internal gyro feature was still working, thank God, so even thought the world was whirling and flinging around outside the pod windows, the inhabitants didn’t go tumbling.

When they finally came to a stop, Dean immediately popped the pod, crawling out into the dirt. Cas followed him, then extended several tentacles to help pull Sam to his feet. The alien’s chest and torso were almost completely healed; Dean still wanted to know how the hell he’d pulled that off.

Now wasn’t the time, either, though. They still needed to get off of this planet.

“We landed a little further than planned,” Sam admitted, looking at the palm readout again. He knew how to calibrate any tracker to Baby’s signal by now — she was home. Shrugging, Dean’s brother smiled. “Not a bad walk, though. Nicer walk out here without prison walls closing us in.”

That was right…Castiel hadn’t been outside of that prison in years, had he? The place didn’t have a lot of windows, especially not in the cells. Dean turned to look at the alien and found him gazing up at the sky with a longing kind of sadness.

This wasn’t the most friendly planet ever. On Dean’s walk from Baby to the prison he’d seen pretty much only scrub brush and rocks in the desert. The sand here was a slightly greenish gray, all plants withered to black husks since terraforming destroyed their atmosphere. “Destroyed” from the locals’ perspective was “made breathable” to humans.

As Dean had hiked along to the prison, he’d really hoped there were no indigenous intelligent life that suddenly stopped breathing in the process. Right now he just wished the place was a little more spectacular since it was Castiel’s first glimpse of nature since he’d been imprisoned. The alien seemed to have forgotten where he was, and was just gazing skyward, silent and distant.

Dean gently placed a hand on his shoulder, and even that made him jump slightly. Uncertain blue eyes turned on him, and Dean offered a small smile.

“C’mon, Cas. The ship’s this way.”
Hey, I'm still alive and kicking! This chapter took so long mostly because I had plotted the ending here...and then decided I had more antics for these fellas to get into, so I re-wrote that entirely and here we are. Please enjoy the new chapter, and know that I have more of them in the works. ♥ Comments and kudos fuel the writing machine -- thank you!

At some point during their walk, the stress of Sam almost being executed, escaping prison, and seeing Castiel nearly shot to death had all caught up with Dean. He was trying to maintain a neutral facade, but he was exhausted and too damn emotional over his companions.

Luckily Sam was focused on his palm readout, limping and navigating their path through the increasingly rocky terrain as they moved toward the petrified forest Dean had put the ship down in. Castiel, though...he caught on right away that Dean was bothered by something, and kept giving him sidelong glances.

“Dean,” he began quietly. The pilot hastily cut him off.

“How’d you live through that back there, Cas?” Dean used a frown to hide the way his brows actually wanted to furrow — that was to say, sadly. “Getting shot up like that. You did know you were gonna live through it, didn’t you?”

Judging by Castiel’s suspicious squinting, he wasn’t buying the tough act.

“My people don’t just live in water,” he explained after a moment, sighing and looking ahead to Sam’s back. “Everything on their planet carries some electric current. Electricity and water together...with them my body can repair itself, even if entire limbs have been cut off.”

Dean’s brows rose, and he was so impressed he forgot to be upset.

“Really?” He gave Cas a look up and down, eyes lingering on the tentacles as they moved in a fluid way along the ground. “You mean this isn’t the original you?”

There was a twitch at the corner of Castiel’s mouth that looked suspiciously like a smile trying to happen. He held up his right hand.

“Just this arm. A childhood accident.”

Now Dean was picturing adorable tentacly kid Cas crying and missing an arm. That bothered him, and he tried his best to focus on the man beside him instead.

“You said ‘their planet’ but you’re talking about your own people,” he noted. Saying ‘their’ instead of ‘our’ seemed kind of odd.

“Yes.” Cas looked skyward and frowned. “It’s not my planet anymore.”

Right, he’d said he was betrayed. It must have been a hell of a betrayal to make Cas disown the
entire planet, though.

Dean opened his mouth to reply and was interrupted by Sam, who was pointing ahead of them. The dark spiky shapes of trees loomed there.

“The tracker says Baby’s just over this hill. You put her down in a crater with a rock forest around it?” He asked critically. Dean’s gaze lingered on Cas for a moment more, watching him watch the sky. He sighed.

“It’s a CLEARING, Sammy. I don’t care if it’s in the middle of a rock forest, half this planet’s a rock forest,” he pointed out, starting ahead quicker. He fell into step beside Sam as they walked over the hill; the soft sound of Castiel’s tentacles in the dust told him the alien was following.

Long shadows fell across their backs as they went into the cover of the petrified trees.

Baby was a special ship. She looked like a fairly old (CLASSY old, not junky old) little passenger vessel, but she’d had a lot of special modifications made. Sam and Dean’s dad had fitted her with a stealth generator back when he was still alive, for one.

“Hi Baby, it’s Sam,” Sammy called into the clearing. “Unlock.”

Castiel stopped beside Dean, looking ahead with a frown as the empty air in the clearing seemed to split in the middle. Baby’s stealth field rippled slightly around the doorway, distorting the images of the rocks and sand and petrified trees like heat waves.

Without a word, Sam limped his way over to the door and stepped inside. Dean looked at Cas, gesturing toward the ship.

“Welcome to our home. She’s bigger on the inside,” he joked, starting that way slowly as well. He glanced back as he went, though, to make sure that Castiel was following. He was, blue eyes squinting up at the air around the ship doorway critically.

The rippling had faded once the door finished lowering; Dean wasn’t sure what Cas was looking at. With all the talk about electricity and his people, maybe the alien could see not the ship, but the field itself? That would be an interesting skill to have.

Dean tiredly hauled himself up the ramp into the ship and started for the cockpit. Sam had sat heavily down on one of the side bench seats in the big main room; his injured leg had probably had just about enough of him using it.

“Lock it up, Baby,” Sam said behind Dean as the older brother started punching the launch sequence into the panels on the ship’s dash. There was the distant sound of the ramp and doorway sliding closed.

“Can I help?” Castiel’s voice had a rasp to it again. When Dean looked up he found the alien in the doorway to the cockpit, glancing around the tiny room. Dean reminded himself that Cas hadn’t seen any environments besides the prison and this desert in years.

“I’ve got it covered, buddy,” Dean told him. When Cas looked at him uncertainly, Dean remembered that his only impression of Dean’s ship navigation skills was crashing their stolen escape vehicle. He offered a reassuring smile. “Not sure we ever talked about this, but I’m actually a pilot, so I’m not just saying that. Just go hold onto something — we’re gonna make quite an exit. And tell Sam, will ya?”

Cas gave him a serious nod and glided back out to the main room on his tentacles. His voice drifted
back to the cockpit, telling Sam to hold onto something as promised. Hopping into the pilot’s seat, Dean strapped himself in and kicked the ship into launch.

Baby wasn’t exactly a stealthy ship when going full speed, and right now Dean was happy about that — her energy signature probably looked like fireworks on the prison’s readouts as they blasted overhead and out of the atmosphere. He really hoped they knew exactly which escaped prisoners were flipping them the giant bird in the sky.

They’d have to talk about a long-term destination; for now Dean set course for a little outpost where working freighters and other smaller ships often stopped to fuel up. It was far enough away to get out of the prison’s scan range, but close enough to reach in 24 standard hours or so.

Hopefully they never saw this planet again.

“There we go, all patched up,” Dean said, smoothing the last bandage down over Sam’s knee. They were sitting in Baby’s main room. Dean had insisted on taking a look at his brother’s injuries once they were clear of the planet.

Sammy had definitely taken a beating or three while in prison, but it was just minor cuts and not-so-minor bruises. Well, and the twisted ankle he’d been walking on, but he’d be okay. They would be okay.

“Thanks, Dean.” Sam glanced over at Castiel, who lingered on the other side of the room, a hand and several dark tentacles held to the window. He was watching the stars blur slowly past them in warpspace. “Is Castiel gonna be okay?”

“Yeah, he’s tough,” Dean assured his brother. Really, he wasn’t as sure as he sounded. Cas’s injuries were all practically healed by now…the physical ones. Mentally, he was a guy who’d been in a cell for years, after being betrayed by his own family. That had to be tough to process now that he was free again.

He’d been quiet since they left the planet.

“Still think he’s gonna turn on us and steal the ship?” Dean asked softly, giving his brother a small smirk. Sam’s reaction could only be described as “the bitch face.”

He just barely restrained himself from rolling his eyes, replying just as quietly, “I think now he thinks we’re gonna ditch him at the outpost and take off.” He started to roll the leg of his suit down over the bandage.

Dean glanced at Castiel, wondering if he really thought that. Technically they’d done what they’d promised — they’d left the planet and taken him with them.

“Maybe he wants to go his own way now that he’s free again,” he suggested to Sam. His brother looked up from shoving his boot back on to give Dean a dubious look.

“But maybe you should ask him,” he said. His expression said it all: he knew about Dean’s thing for Cas. Dean shouldn’t have been surprised — his little brother wasn’t stupid.

He also noticed Sam wasn’t trying to convince him not to trust Cas and to stay on guard around him anymore, and that felt like a big step forward. Cas taking on the guards had definitely made an impression on Sammy.
Whether the alien was attracted to Dean or not was a mystery, though. He’d gotten shot for Dean twice in the last day, but he’d also justified it because he’d heal up a lot faster. Maybe he’d do that for any partner in crime helping him escape space prison. It didn’t feel like it, but…

Should Dean say something? Would he scare Cas off if he was wrong?

“I’m gonna go make sure Baby’s on-course,” Sam said casually, standing and limping his way toward the cockpit. Dean shot his brother’s retreating back a grateful look, getting to his feet as well. Maybe he wouldn’t mention how attractive Cas was, but it felt wrong not to talk to him at all.

“Nice view, huh,” Dean murmured, standing beside the alien and peering out into the smudged starscape. Warpspace bypassed the normal flow of time, and the stars outside were more or less visible based on how many light-years away they were at whatever point in the journey the ship was at. To Dean and Cas they just glimmered, like fireflies stuck in the ocean of space.

“Yes,” Cas said quietly, not looking up. It had taken him a long time to reply.

Dean nodded, turning his gaze out to the stars. They stood there and watched the universe in silence for awhile. Sam had not returned from the cockpit; Dean had a feeling he wasn’t going to while they were standing there. Hopefully he wasn’t spying on them from around the doorway.

“How’re you doing?” He asked Castiel. There weren’t very many ways to ask ‘are you okay?’ without just asking it, but he was still trying not to get too emotional, damn it.

Castiel did turn to look at him this time, blue eyes studying Dean’s face. Dean turned to look back, hoping it was clear that he was concerned, not considering Cas weak. After the way they’d escaped prison, Dean was firmly convinced that the alien was a badass.

“I don’t know,” Cas admitted after a moment, frowning. He looked around the ship like he was at a loss, then turned back to Dean. “I never thought I would be free again. I have no idea where to go.” He was being very blunt and matter-of-fact about it, but Dean could see sadness behind his eyes. He didn’t really think they were gonna drop him off at the outpost like Sam thought, did he?

Dean turned his back to the window and leaned against it, crossing his arms.

“Well, no rush. You can just stick with us until you decide,” he offered, glancing at Cas. Was it too obvious what he was hoping for?

He was surprised at the bright emotion in Castiel’s eyes.

“You would let me stay?”

“Hell yeah. You risked your life to help me and Sammy. You can stay with us as long as you want.”

Cas flexed his tentacles a bit, glancing at the cockpit door.

“We should rest while we can,” he said, like he wished he was saying something else. Dean caught the wistful tone and blinked.

“Yeah, I’m pretty beat,” he admitted. “Make yourself at home, sleep wherever you want.”

At that, the alien flexed his tentacles again, curling the tips up almost in unison. Dean found it a bit mesmerizing.
“Anywhere?” Castiel asked softly. “Could I stay with you?”

Dean felt his heartbeat speed up, but he tried to play it cool, smiling.

“Thought you’d be sick of me after a couple days in a cell together,” he joked. Castiel opened his mouth and then shut it again, looking uncertain now. Discouraging him was the last thing Dean wanted, so he hastily added, “Hey, after being locked up so long, I can’t blame you if you don’t wanna sleep alone. Sure you can stay with me.”

He sat up from the wall and offered his hand, smiling.

“C’mon.”

Castiel placed his hand in Dean’s grip and allowed the pilot to lead him toward the back of the ship, toward the quarters on either side of the hallway. As tall and imposing as Cas could make himself, he seemed almost shy now. Dean decided to be as nice to him as he could be.

If Cas didn’t share his lusty thoughts, that was fine. They could just sleep, and he’d let Cas have some company for the first time in years, if that was all that the alien wanted.

Letting the door whoosh closed behind them, Dean gestured around his very modestly-sized quarters. The bed took up most of the floor space, and every wall plus the ceiling were composed of shelves and compartments for storage. It was a little messy in there, with the blanket strewn sideways on the bed and both pillows somehow dumped onto the floor. The first jump to warpspace Sam sent him on hadn’t exactly been planned, and the one leaving the prison had been full speed ahead.

“This’s my room,” Dean told Castiel, chuckling at the dubious look on the alien’s face. “I think our cell back there was bigger, but I promise this’s more comfortable. C’mon.” Cas followed as Dean led him over to the bed. The pilot sat on the side and quickly pulled off his boots, then started to unbutton his shirt. He paused mid-way down the buttons, looking up at find Castiel watching him.

“Oh, uh…is this okay?” Dean asked, gesturing down to himself. “I could sleep in my clothes, if you’d rather.”

Cas glided closer on his tentacles, settling over and onto the side of the bed near Dean.

“I would rather you be comfortable,” he said, looking at the half-unbuttoned shirt. Dean watched in half-anticipation, half-amusement as the alien hovered a tentacle in the direction of his chest. “May I?”

“It’s okay,” Dean breathed, heart in his throat as the silky tentacle slid up against his skin, then down beneath the edge of his shirt. Okay, he admitted it, he was a some kind of freak. That felt so damn good. “C-Cas, uh, you know you don’t HAVE to do this, right?”

Castiel turned to face him, two more tentacles gliding their way underneath the bottom hem of Dean’s shirt as he used his hands to unbutton it the rest of the way.

“Don’t you want me to?”

He drew Dean’s shirt open and down off of his shoulders, and the pilot shivered.

“Well, yeah, but only if YOU want to. I-I mean, we don’t know each other all that well, it’s okay if you don’t…ohh, wow…” Whatever he’d been about to say, he forgot the words. Castiel had drawn him close enough to hold, chest to chest, and tentacles were caressing down Dean’s back. Several
were wriggling their way underneath the hem of his pants, too, and Dean squirmed when they crossed the ticklish spot on his hip bone.

“Dean,” Cas whispered, cupping his face in one hand. “Look at me.”

Dean did it, gazing into the alien’s blue eyes. He was a little nervous now. Cas seemed to be interested…unexpectedly so.

“You’re right,” Cas murmured to him, “I don’t want to be alone. It isn’t only that, though…I want to be with YOU.”

Dean’s face felt hot. His everything felt hot, actually. The tentacles resting just under the waistline of his pants seemed to be on some sort of standby. That sure set his mind to work imagining all sorts of things he should be anticipating.

He couldn’t think of the right words to convey how he was feeling, so instead he leaned in and kissed Castiel. The alien seemed surprised at it, but he relaxed after a second or two, his lips soft and warm against Dean’s. Dean brought a hand up to run through Cas’s dark hair the way he’d been wanting to do for awhile now, licking gently at his lips to coax them open. Cas obliged him, opening his mouth and making a soft, needy sound when Dean’s tongue caressed over his.

How long since he’d been kissed? How long since someone touched him gently?

The tentacles at Dean’s waist were wriggling again, making him squirm. They popped open the button of his pants, Castiel slowly exploring his mouth with his tongue all the while. He tasted cool and fresh, like something to drink down.

Dean sighed and reached a hand down to help slip the pants down off over his hips. A tentacle caught it, though, holding both gentle and firm around his wrist as more silky tendrils easily drew the pants down.

Well, there was no hiding how turned on he was now. They broke the kiss, Dean panting and planting a hand on the alien’s bare chest, and Castiel peered down at his cock curiously.

“Are you alright?”

“Th-that means I’m better than alright,” Dean informed him, flustered. He’d gotten so carried away that now he had to wonder how exactly Castiel…WHAT he had from the waist-down. “You, uh, you’re probably pretty different down there, huh?”

Seeing his nervousness, Castiel wrapped him in both arms, kissing him gently.

“Teach me about you, and I’ll teach you about me.”
Remember that author's note in chapter one about the rating changing if Dean and Cas took things in a tentacle smut direction? Well, the rating is now Explicit, the tags have been updated, and this whole chapter is them taking things in a tentacle smut direction. If tentacle smut is not for you, fear not, The Plot will resume next chapter, and boy do I have some plans for this story. :D As always, comments and kudos are super appreciated and fuel the writing machine. Thanks for reading my fic! ♥

If somebody had told Dean last week that he’d be happily jumping into bed with a tentacled anything, he would’ve laughed at them. If only Last Week Dean could see himself now.

He’d gotten out about three sentences about how human sex worked before they’d both gotten too impatient and started kissing again instead. Castiel was smart — he’d figure it out. In the meantime, they’d knocked all of the pillows off of the bed, and Dean’s clothes too. He chose to forget all of that right now, to forget the damned prison and how close he’d come to losing Sam — to forget how exhausted he was.

Right now, the rest of the universe may as well not exist, just Dean, Castiel and this room.

The alien had seemed almost shy being led into the room, so Dean was surprised by how eager he was now. He couldn’t get enough of hands on him — he would shiver at Dean’s touches, pressing into the pilot’s palms almost desperately. He kissed like that, too — hungrily, like he’d been starving for touch for years.

And he probably had.

Thoughts like that made Dean feel like an asshole for being so casual about this. Castiel probably hadn’t been with anybody in a long time, so maybe Dean should try and make it a little more special for him. His cock didn’t like the idea, but he made himself slow down anyway.

“Lay back, let me see you,” Dean coaxed between kisses. He was surprised when Castiel did it without hesitation, settling on his back on the bed. His blue eyes were full of longing as he looked up at Dean, though.

Dean sat up to admire him, promising himself he wouldn’t go long without touching Cas again. The alien was breathtaking in the cool starlight from the window. The distant colors of space moved slowly over his dark hair and just-kissed lips, that little dip where his hips faded into the tops of the tentacles…

The tentacles, themselves. Coiling, fluid black tendrils with their perfect rows of white suckers. Now that Dean had gotten used to them, they were less weird and more entrancing. His gaze moved to Castiel’s bare chest as it rose and fell with each breath. He placed a hand where the last marks of the laser shots were still trying to fade, running his palm slowly down to Cas’s stomach.

Cas looked down at the hand and back up at Dean, flexing his tentacles impatiently. He said
nothing, though, and let Dean do what he wanted.

Dean placed both hands on his sides and ran his fingers from Castiel’s waist down into the lines of two tentacles, then two more.

Cas sighed softly, shivering again.

“Dean,” he murmured.

Dean lifted one of the tips of the tentacles and turned it over, admiring the perfect white suckers lining the bottom. They were so tiny at the tips, but they got pretty big near the bases. The ones near Cas’s body were over an inch in diameter.

Dean stroked a fingertip over some of the rings on the tentacle he held and watched them suckle at it. Damn those felt good on bare skin. Cas made a little sound and glanced quickly at Dean’s finger and back up to him again.

“You taste good,” he murmured, flexing the tentacle up into a curl on the tip.

Dean stared at him.

“You can TASTE things with these?” At Cas’s silent nod, he lifted the tentacle to his lips. “How’s this taste, then?”

Gently, he mouthed over the suckers, letting them move against his lips before parting them and running his tongue over the circles. It tasted the same as Castiel’s kisses — fresh, like Dean could drink him down.

“Good,” Cas growled, and the want in that tone sent a throb straight to Dean’s cock. He was probably just answering the question, but damn if that didn’t sound like he was praising Dean’s efforts. Dean started to lift the tentacle to his mouth again, but felt the smooth weight of several others coming to rest on his back. The suckers kissed hard against his skin, almost a biting feeling as Cas easily lifted and moved him.

Dean blinked, finding himself on his back with the alien settling over his lower half in a mesmerizing, fluid fashion. The hot slippery sensations made Dean squirm in the best way.

“You like that?” He asked Cas, smirking. “Wait ‘til you taste the rest of me.”

“Are you asking me to?” Castiel rumbled, sliding heavy and hot across his legs. The suckers pressed and pulled at Dean’s skin in very subtle waves, pulsing in time with his heartbeats. Dean’s cock was being kissed by them as much as anywhere else, and suddenly he was panting. It felt so damn good he could hardly think straight.

“Fuck y-yes, I am. Please?”

Cas made a pleased rumbling sound — if Dean didn’t know better, he’d call it purring — and slid easily toward the middle of the bed. His free tentacles curled and danced as he moved, and it was a strange, mesmerizing sight when combined with the feel of the suckers.

Dean went easily along when Cas turned onto his back and pulled the pilot on top of him. He shivered as he felt the rings kissing at the insides of his thighs, drawing his legs slowly apart. Cas’s tentacles were so strong Dean was supported by them — his arms were free, and he sat up to find himself straddling Cas’s hips.
The alien looked up at him, dark tendrils curling and writhing around them both, and Dean thought his eyes were somehow even bluer than before. They practically glowed now. He rested his palms on Cas’s chest and stroked slowly over it, looking down as he felt the faint scars from the laser burns. Dean had never been with anybody willing to take a shot for him.

Their eyes met again, admiration welling in Dean’s chest and, he was sure, shining in his eyes. Castiel’s still just called for him, longed for him. Dean stared for a moment longer, and then Cas was pulling him down on top of him, tangling his fingers in Dean’s hair and crashing their lips together so hard it almost hurt.

Dean gasped into him, stunned by the sting from his hair being tugged. Well, shit, it WAS possible for him to get harder. He braced a hand on Cas’s chest and melted into the kisses, letting his head be moved where Cas wanted.

“Mmm…” Dean groaned into Cas’s mouth at the heat slipping between his legs, parting them wider to let Cas touch him. The tips of the new tentacles arched up and curled over, the undersides suckling and sliding wetly back and forth over Dean’s cock and balls.

Hell yes. Fuck YES…

Dean had noticed Cas wasn’t slimy before, but it turned out that he got slippery when he was in the right mood. The scent of it was almost addictive, this salty musky smell that made Dean tingle in the best way. His senses were drowning in Cas, taste, smell, touch, and he loved it.

Dean made a tiny whimper as the alien broke the kiss and drew him down against his chest. Cas slid his fingers through Dean’s hair far more gently than last time, then down to cup a hand against the back of his neck. They both panted, chests pressed against each other, and Dean let himself relax into the waves of pleasure coming from his cock. The suckers kissed and pulsed; his hips were working on their own, rubbing himself down into the tentacles’ caresses.

“I need more, Dean.” The rough-edged voice was in his ear as Dean pressed his face into the side of Cas’s neck, moaning shamelessly. Thank God Baby’s walls blocked sound, because this felt too damn good to be quiet.

Having this many limbs to work with wasn’t even fair. Cas’s arms were at his waist and neck, two tentacles wound around Dean’s thighs, another two were driving him crazy between his legs, and now the tip of one was rubbing up and down over Dean’s hole, making him hot and slippery.

“Whatever you want,” he managed, his voice shaking.

He meant it, too. Dean had briefly told Cas how sex usually worked for him, penetrating or getting penetrated, and he’d mentioned stretching before taking a cock. He was regretting it now, because he wanted that tentacle in him. Instead of entering, Cas was teasing around the edges of his hole, rubbing at him, driving him crazy.

“Cas,” Dean whined, wriggling against the feel of it. He couldn’t wait anymore, and pushed himself upright, reaching back to grab the tentacle that was rubbing at him.

Cas groaned at that, wriggling in his hand, and Dean realized the tentacle he was holding had no suckers on the end. It was bigger than the rest on the tip, too…swollen, erect like a cock. Cas’s eyes were full-on glowing now, faint blue patterns dancing across his skin as Dean turned back to him. They stared at each other.

Dean maintained that eye contact as he moved the tentacle back to his hole and held it there,
feeling it writhe and struggle to reach. He guided it to him, then gasped as he felt it stretch him open. The tentacle throbbed with Castiel’s rapid heartbeats, and he shuddered as he pushed deeper into Dean, reaching up to grip the arm Dean was leaning forward onto. His eyes were like cold embers again, dangerous, unreal.

“Ngh,” Dean panted, an approving sound more than a word. This tentacle got thicker the deeper it went. When the erect part bottomed out inside of Dean, the fullness of it was almost too much.

“Dean,” Cas hummed, eyes half-lidded. The blue patterns flickered and flared in time to his heartbeats. He slowed to shallow thrusts for a moment, letting Dean adjust.

“Fuck…oh, fuck,” Dean groaned, trying to relax and open up for Cas. His muscles wanted to squeeze and contract, and he couldn’t help arching his back at all of the sensations. As if the bigger one wasn’t enough, there were still other tentacles sliding over his balls and the insides of his thighs.

Overwhelmed, Dean fell forward against Cas’s chest. The alien was shaking a little now, too, as he drew Dean down and kissed him slowly again. Dean found himself rocking back onto the tentacle as it moved faster and deeper, moaning softly into Cas’s mouth. Tentacles were amazing — Cas was amazing. Amazing didn’t come close to good enough, but his brain couldn’t come up with a better word right now.

Cas wrapped Dean in his arms and they rocked against each other as more tendrils wound around the pilot’s legs and ankles. It was a good thing, because his legs felt shaky, and he probably wouldn’t have been able to hold himself up for much longer.

The thrusts were sharp now, urgent, and he could feel Cas’s pulse throbbing through every part of him. Dean buried his face in the side of Cas’s neck and cried out against it, mouthing at it, wanting to bite but gasping too hard to really follow through. Cas’s hold on him was firm, keeping his legs apart and body held tightly, but it wasn’t forceful so much as protective. He had a hand in Dean’s hair, cradling the back of his head. The other arm was around Dean’s waist, hand pressed to the middle of his back.

“Ahh! Ahh! Cas!”

Dean’s cries were getting so intense that Cas must have been concerned it was too much — he steadied his thrusts to a slow, smooth slide, turning his head to press kisses into the pilot’s hair and against his ear.

“Shh, Dean,” he whispered, his voice rough again. That rasp was husky now, though, almost a purr in Dean’s ear.

Dean was on the edge of something he couldn’t describe, and he could hardly breathe. It felt like Cas might stop. He couldn’t — not now, he couldn’t. Dean made a needy sound and nipped at the alien’s neck, breaths coming fast and hard.

“Don’t… Stop,” he begged, hips stuttering down into the kisses of the suckers. “I-I can take it. Oh please, Cas… Lemme have it…”

Cas obliged him, speeding up again. As Dean started to groan and writhe on top of him again, Cas stopped holding him so tight, instead petting at his hair and his back.

“Yes, Dean,” he purred, kissing Dean’s throat while Dean keened against his shoulder. “So good, so wonderful…nngh, i-it’s been so long, Dean, and you want me…”
“W-want you…” Dean almost sobbed, he was so overwhelmed. “I want — ohhh!” He cut himself off with a desperate cry as Cas wound a tentacle around his cock. It felt hot and slippery, the rings all sucking and throbbing along every inch of skin.

Dean didn’t last long like that. He clutched at Cas’s shoulder and let himself fall over the edge, shooting off hot and messy all over Cas’s stomach.

Castiel made a growl of pleasure and shuddered, his tentacles almost painfully tight around Dean. He was throbbing both around and inside him, especially inside, hot, wet — so wet. They both cried out at once as Dean felt it fill him up, gushing out around the tentacle still buried in him.

Cas didn’t withdraw right away, leaving them intimately connected. Instead he trembled and held Dean against his chest as they both sucked in ragged breaths.

“H…holy shit,” Dean managed after a moment, still gasping. He pressed a breathless kiss to Castiel’s neck and rested his forehead against the alien’s shoulder again. They were both slick with sweat by now. “Cas, you’re…amazing.”

If his brain had been unable to come up with a better word before, it really wasn’t up to the task now.

Castiel easily turned them both to lay on their sides, cradling Dean’s face in his hands. Abruptly, Dean felt vulnerable, looking into Cas’s eyes and still feeling him inside. Cas drew him in close and kissed him, though, and it felt warm, safe. His tentacles caressed over Dean’s bare skin, all up and down his back and his legs. Dean hummed pleasantly and let his eyes fall closed, slipping his arms around Cas.

“Amazing,” Dean repeated against the other man’s lips, sighing. He felt like he’d been melted in the best way possible, but with the way Cas was touching him, it was only a matter of time before he was hard again.

And why the hell not? They could sleep when they were dead.

Chapter End Notes

(Fun facts: Octopuses really do have a breeding tentacle among the eight limbs, and they do taste things with their suckers. Octopuses are alien enough for this story, and also really fascinating!)

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