Summary

Sam and Dean encounter what seems to be a standard hunt in Louisiana; meanwhile, Dean’s dealing with the fallout from Purgatory and Sam's trying to figure out how everything went so wrong. Post 8x06.

Or: Dean rediscovers some demons from his past, and Sam is forced to work with an unexpected ally along the way.

Notes

Hi guys! I know this seems like another standard post-purgatory fic, but everything is not what it seems ;) For anyone who might be wondering, italics = thoughts, flashbacks, or emphasis, depending on the context. Hope it doesn’t get too confusing.

Special thanks to KaenNoMai and AnotherWorld3111 for helping me construct this insane fic idea and for being amazing editors throughout!

This was really fun to write, and I hope you enjoy! (especially you, trevelies)
Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry, I completely forgot that I needed to post today!! Anyway, here's my peace offering...

PS: I should have mentioned this a long time ago, but I have extremely limited/no medical knowledge, so anything you see in this fic injury/health related is pure guesswork (based on what I assume to be common sense).

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sam rubbed his hands together nervously, glancing again at his watch. After leaving Missouri, Dean had dropped Sam off in a motel outside Livonia and “went out for a drink.” Which was a little worrying—back before Purgatory Sam had been subtly trying to wean Dean off his alcohol addiction, without success. He hadn’t seen Dean consume a drop of hard liquor since he’d returned, which might have been the only upside to this whole mess. Now he was out at a bar again, but since Sam was likely the cause of Dean’s little escape, he couldn’t exactly say anything about it. And after everything that went down with the spectre, Sam had to admit he’d needed a little space too.

He’d been angry. What Dean had said—all of it had hit pretty close to home. He knew he’d betrayed his brother, made mistakes. He’d harbored his own fair share of guilt for that through the years. But to have all that thrown back in his face as deliberate choices, and to have Dean tell him a vampire made a better brother than he did...that made him mad. Especially considering how Dean had kept Benny secret from him for months.

But now, Sam was just tired. He was tired of grieving for a brother who was right next to him, and he was tired of making up excuses. Because he was sorry he hadn’t looked for Dean, but he’d never said it. Maybe that was the problem. He knew what he’d said about Benny hadn’t helped, but he wasn’t going to think about it right then. He was already unpacking too much crazy for one night.

Sam let out a sigh, standing from the bed to pace around the room. Dean had been uncharacteristically silent on the drive there, and he’d been out for two hours now. If he didn’t come back within the next half hour, Sam decided resolutely, he would go out and drag his brother home.

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Dean leaned over the bar top, balancing a shot of whiskey between his fingers. He hadn’t actually drunk anything yet, besides a few beers. He wasn’t planning on going back to the motel wasted and spilling more of his guts to Sam.

Mostly, he wished Benny was there. Benny wouldn’t question him, put him in a hard spot. They could just relax, have a few drinks, maybe hustle some pool. Like he used to be able to do with Sam.

Then again, he wasn’t sure things would be so relaxed with Benny. His friend had taken some hard
hits recently, and he didn’t seem to be rolling with the punches. Dean was worried, but there wasn’t much he could do about it right then. He took out his phone, noticing a couple missed calls from said friend. He sent out a quick text, asking him what he was up to. There was a good chance Benny wouldn’t be able to figure out how to reply, but at least he would know he wasn’t alone.

Not like Dean, at the moment.

*Don’t be so dramatic,* Dean immediately berated himself. He’d been in tougher spots before.

Besides, whatever was going on with Sam, he knew that it was his fault. Truth was, holding on to the anger had kept him sharp, given him a focus. Without it… well, then he started to think.

Dean flinched as a woman’s sharp laughter pierced the air. He’d gotten a little more used to the overwhelming amount of feelings and noises and colors and smells since he’d gotten back, but mostly it was too much. Especially now, for some reason. Maybe the anger had helped with that, too.

Every time someone passed behind his stool, Dean’s grip tightened on his glass. Even the dull glow of the neon sign above the counter was bright, and he finally just slid his drink down the bar, knowing it wouldn’t help. He told himself he didn’t really want it, anyway. The buzz of the crowd grew louder with every passing second, and he was beginning to feel boxed in, paranoid. *Okay, Winchester. Time to go.*

The room seemed to shrink as Dean made his way through the bar, narrowing down on the distant exit. He quickened his pace, slipping past bodies - *not bodies, not bodies, they were alive* - and wincing whenever he bumped into someone.

Stumbling out into the alley behind the bar was a relief. The smell of sweat and smoke was still strong there, but greatly lessened by a cool breeze. Dean took a deep breath, rubbing a hand across his hair.

“*Dean…*”

Dean froze, whirling around to assess the alley while backing himself up against the wall. He carefully wrapped his hand around his gun.

“*Miss me, Dean?*”

No. That was impossible. It sounded like…

Dean fired three shots into the alley, bullets taking chunks of brick from the walls. Silence.

Dean shakily holstered the gun, hurrying toward the Impala. It was time to leave.

The phone went dim after a few seconds. The thin, metallic device felt flimsy in his hand, and it took a significant amount self control not to crush his only figurative lifeline.

Benny pressed a random button, screen illuminating his face as his eyes roved over words he’d read several times already.

*Hey Benny. You doing good?*

Such simple words, but the double meaning didn’t escape Benny. Straightening, Benny let out a dry
chuckle, his breath fanning out in front of him. He leaned back against the side of his camper and looked up at the night sky. He wasn’t offended—he got why Dean would be checking in every now and then to make sure he was still on the straight and narrow.

But it did make him wonder. Dean rarely contacted him, said it was only in case of an emergency.

And then this message out of the blue…

Benny stared down at the phone, which had gone dark again, and debated on how he should answer. If he should answer.

Benny stared upwards again, cataloging every star he hadn’t seen in...well, it had been a while. He tucked his phone back into his pocket. He still had a long way to go.

Chapter End Notes

Another thing I should have mentioned before - go check out my friend trevelies' fic! It's called Not All Good News and it's an AWESOME season 14 canon divergence with over 100k works so far! She has a lot of other great fics too, so go check it out!

Oh, and no one's asked yet but because I assume someone will, I WILL be adding more to the tags character/description wise, but I'm waiting until the whole fic is up to do so. Wanna surprise as many people as possible ;)}
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Sam gave up. It had only been fifteen minutes, but that was long enough. He leaned over to snag his coat off the rack, only to freeze as the door slammed open.

Sam stepped back at the sudden entrance, pulling his hand from his gun when he recognized his brother. Dean was pale, and surprisingly enough, not reeking of alcohol. He didn’t seem to see Sam at first, pulling aside the curtains to stare through the grimy motel window. His eyebrows were drawn together in a hard line.

“Hey man, you good?” Sam spoke up cautiously.

Dean started, curtains falling back into place as he spun away from the window. His shoulders relaxed when his eyes met Sam’s.

“I’m fine,” Dean answered, but there was a tremor to his voice that Sam didn’t miss.

Sam narrowed his eyes. Dean had been a lot of things since Purgatory. Aggressive, impulsive, even skittish, like the monster afterlife had flipped the reset switch and left him running on primary instincts alone. But what Dean hadn’t been was afraid. Except now his brother was more scared then Sam had seen him in a long time.

Which brought into question what had happened at the bar, if Dean had been where he said he was.

Dean tossed the Impala’s keys onto the desk and muttered something about a shower, edging around Sam to get to the bathroom. Sam let him go, more bemused than anything.

Sam waited until he heard the creak of the rusty shower handle and the accompanying spray of water to go check the window. He knew it was childish and irrational, but he couldn’t help it. With a deft twitch of the curtains, Sam exposed the gloomy motel parking lot to the dull light of their motel room. Nothing.

Letting out a frustrated puff of air, Sam walked over to sit on his bed. After a few moments of contemplation, he got up again to get ready for bed. There was no use confronting Dean tonight—he still knew his brother well enough to tell when he would just get pushed away.

What he could do was get some sleep, and work his lead on a possible case down in Louisiana. He could ask Dean for his input, and if nothing else, it might take their minds off things for a while.

“Dean.”

“Dean…”

“Dean!”
Dean bolted upright at the shout, whipping out his knife and pressing it against his perceived attacker’s throat.

It was only once the roaring in his ears died down and his sleep-blurred eyes focused that Dean recognized Sam frozen at the tip of his knife. He immediately flinched, dropping the weapon like it burned. “Geez, Sam. Give a guy a little warning, will ya?”

“Wha—yeah, sorry,” Sam nodded, subconsciously rubbing his throat.

Dean ran a hand mussily through his hair, trying to ignore the tremble in his fingers. He glanced up at the bedside clock from his less-than-comfortable position on the floor. “Any reason you woke me up before I fulfilled my eight-hour quota?”

Sam took a deep breath, grabbing his laptop and handing it to Dean. “Yeah, actually. Got us a case.”

Dean moved up to sit on the bed and stared at the computer blankly for a second, before blinking and skimming through the news article. Four regular citizens in the town of Carencro, Louisiana had disappeared two weeks before. They were found ten days later with their necks broken and blood drained. This was the most recent of three similar scenarios in two months, all in the same county.

Dean grunted, handing the computer back to Sam. “So we thinking vamps?”

Sam nodded. “Definitely.”

Dean rolled out of bed and made his way to the bathroom. “Alright, I’ll go clean up, then we can go. Hey,” Dean turned and tossed Sam the keys from the desk they’d been resting on. “Get me some grub.”

Sam smiled faintly. “Sure.”

Sam pulled the motel door shut securely behind him, and Dean slumped against the bathroom wall. He slowed his breathing, trying to get a grip on the irrational surge of paranoia that seized him. He was imagining things. Dreams didn’t mean anything, and the night before…well, he’d be the last person to say he wasn’t a little screwed up in the head. Dean shook himself and leaned over the sink, splashing ice cold water on his face and trying to focus on anything and everything other than his thoughts.

Dean left the bathroom just as Sam walked in, carrying a styrofoam drink tray and a white paper bag. Dean raised his eyebrows. “That was fast.”

Sam shrugged. “Coffee shop next door. You ready to go?”

Dean caught the keys Sam tossed at him. “Always.”

Benny maneuvered between the faint yellow lines, throwing the old camper into park. He let out a breath, feeling a rare smile grace his lips as he took in his surroundings. Carencro, Louisiana. Home sweet home.

They’d remodeled the Inn, but the low-budget establishment didn’t seem much improved to him. Even if they had upgraded to a five-star hotel, Benny knew he’d always miss the original. But it was
cheap and it was in town, so that was all Benny really needed.

The vampire heaved himself up from the worn seat, making a stop at the trunk to grab his cooler before heading inside. It didn’t take long to exchange pleasantries and cash with the girl at the front desk and get settled in a room.

Getting used to technology was a long and confusing process, but he’d managed to look a few things up before hitting the road. Like he knew that his favorite Cajun diner was still up and running, and that a young woman named Elizabeth Landry ran it. And, after making what little sense he could of his family tree, that Elizabeth was his great-granddaughter. His family.

Benny knew he’d have to wait to visit the diner - 7am was a little early for barbeque chicken, no matter the circumstances. Resigning himself to the sparse motel room for the next few hours, Benny slipped his phone out and checked for any new messages. Nothing, aside from the lone text from Dean. Sighing, Benny fumbled with the phone until he managed to type out a decent response, then stuffed it back into his pocket. He opened the door on his way out to get his duffel, then paused as a faintly rancid breeze drifted by him.

He knew that smell. Not quite the rich, sweet salt of humans, but drier, more metallic. Carrying with it memories of dark mansions and crazed victims and a river of blood.

As soon as the scent hit him, it was gone, blown away as easily as long-forgotten memories. Benny stood stock still, unsure whether he’d imagined it or not. He was probably just jumpy after clearing out his nest in Missouri, but he’d be careful regardless. He had the chance to start over again, and he couldn’t afford to screw up.

Sam leaned his head against the window, watching the barren landscape slide by in blurred greens and browns. They were halfway through Arkansas, and predictably, there wasn’t much to see. Dean hadn’t turned on the radio - not like he didn’t want to, but more like he was too distracted to remember it was an option. Instead he gripped the steering wheel too hard and checked the mirrors too often, like he was afraid someone was tailing them.

Dean checked the rearview mirror for what had to be the thousandth time. Sam propped his elbow up on the door and turned to face his brother. “Hey, what’s going on with you?”

Dean’s eyes didn’t leave the road. “What are you talking about?”

Sam gestured vaguely at his brothers’ tense figure. “Ever since last night you’ve been shaky, on edge. Even more so than usual.” Sam said frustratedly. Dean drew a hand across his mouth, like he always did when he was trying to keep from blurting out something he didn’t want to. Sam softened his tone. “What happened?”

Dean clenched and unclenched his jaw, before finally muttering, “Nothing. I just thought I heard…”

“Thought you heard what, Dean?” Sam suddenly leaned toward Dean, then settled back against the window when Dean flinched. “Is it—is it about Purgatory?”

Dean laughed bitterly. “Sam, how do you expect me to answer a question like that, huh?”

Sam grit his teeth and looked away. Dean was right. He’d told Dean to move on from his anger, his
betrayal. But it wasn’t that simple. And anything related to Purgatory was related to Benny, and that was an entire other issue Sam wasn’t sure how to even skim the surface of.

Silence prevailed throughout the next few hours. The farther they got from Missouri, the more Dean seemed to relax. Eventually he put on some music, albeit a little quieter than usual, and Sam could almost pretend the quiet was companionable.

By the time they reached Carencro, Sam was starving. It was nearing six, and he hadn’t realized that they skipped every meal since breakfast, having been lost in thought. It still surprised him that Dean would forget stuff like that too, now. His brother had been a little too lean when he got back from Purgatory. Still was, in Sam’s opinion. Sam hadn’t asked, but he got the impression that there weren’t burger joints around every corner down there.

“Hey, why don’t we stop and get some food? I’m starving,” Sam said, stretching his arms over his head and into the backseat.

Dean scrunched his eyebrows together, as if just recognizing his own hunger. “Yeah, me too.” He jerked his thumb at a sign indicating a motel up ahead. “How ‘bout we shack up first?”

The brothers swung open the door to the drab front office, where a receptionist wearily tapped away at her phone behind the front desk. Dean knocked on the false wood of the desk. “Hey, uh, Lena?”

Dean nodded at the receptionist’s name tag. “One double, please.”

Lena regarded them coolly, chewing gum with exaggerated labor. Sam shot her a tight smile, and she took Dean’s proffered credit card. After typing some information into the computer, she asked boredly, “And how many nights will you need?”

“We’ll pay by the day,” Sam answered dryly.

The receptionist handed back their card, already returning her attention to her phone. “Room 119. Enjoy your stay.” Dean raised his eyebrows at Sam, and Sam shrugged in response.

The room was pretty typical, if a little musty and color-bleached. Dean hauled in their bags while Sam set up his computer. “Hey, turns out one of the vics, Angela Williams? Her sister Lindsey works as a waitress at a bar right here in town. Wanna check it out?”

Dean inspected the machete he’d pulled from the weapons bag. “Sure, why not? Kill two birds with one stone. But man, we have got to get some Cajun before we go. It’s a sin not to eat that stuff when you’re anywhere near NOLA.”

Sam smiled a little. That was familiar, at least. He grabbed the coat he’d shucked a few minutes before and met Dean in the car.

The bar wasn’t far, and it was relatively quiet. Sam claimed a booth while Dean flagged down the waitress. The petite figure approached them confidently, whipping out her notepad and poising her pen to write. “What can I get y’all today?” she smiled, accent drawling softly.

Dean gave her his own charming smile, and Sam rolled his eyes. “Actually, before we order, we were wondering if you happen to know a Lindsey Williams.”

The waitress’ smile remained fixed in place, but her eye’s dulled a little. “That’s me.”

“We heard what happened to your sister,” Sam said sympathetically. “We’re doing an investigation on the strange deaths in the area, and we were hoping you could help us out.” Sam pulled out his FBI badge and stared expectantly at Dean, who smiled appreciatively up at the brunette. Sam sighed
exasperatedly and kicked Dean under the table, who startled and pulled out his badge. Upside down.

Sam did a mental facepalm, quickly distracting Lindsey from his brother’s fumble. “Are there any details about your sister’s disappearance you can share?”

Lindsey bit her lip, nodding. She slid into the booth next to Dean, setting down her pen and pad. “Um, it was about two weeks ago. Angela works—volunteered for a restoration committee. She was always so passionate about it,” Lindsey said, smiling softly. Blinking and clearing her throat, she continued roughly, “Anyway, we have this old theater in town. It was damaged in a fire a long time ago, and Angela was scouting it out to see if it was worth restoring. And then next thing I know, she’s—” Lindsey covered her mouth with a hand, and Dean hesitantly put a hand on her shoulder.

“Is there anything else you know? Maybe about the other victims?” Sam asked gently.

Lindsey wiped her eyes, laughing bitterly. “Victims. God, it just sounds so—” she took a moment to pull herself together. “Um, yeah. Vanessa was on the committee too, she was a good friend of Angela’s.” Lindsey pushed herself to her feet. “Can I get your orders now?”

Sam ordered a veggie wrap and Dean a medium rare burger - his tastes, when he did eat, were more carnivorous since Purgatory, something Sam had done well to note. Lindsey’s hands shook a little as she jotted everything down. Sam felt bad for interrogating her, but they had a lead now. They’d look into the other vics tomorrow, see if they were related to the theater somehow.

Sam turned his attention back to Dean, who was watching the waitress again, but this time his eyes were narrowed, expression confused. Sam looked between his brother and Lindsey. “Dude, what is it?”

Dean pulled his gaze from the waitress. “She seem familiar at all to you?”

“Lindsey? Dean, I don’t think we’ve ever been to Carencro. I don’t see how she could be.”

Dean glanced back at Lindsey, then shook his head. “Huh. Yeah, I don’t know. Probably just reminds me of someone.”

They ate and headed back to the motel room, ready to call it a night. Neither of them noticed the old, beat up camper parked just around the corner of the building.

Chapter End Notes

This, unfortunately, will likely be the first and last day I post two chapters in a row. The rest should come at semi-regular intervals—somewhere around two a week. Let me know if there’s anything you think I should add to the tags!
Benny smiled as the rickety screen door of the diner banged shut behind him. It hadn’t taken much to convince Elizabeth to give him a job there, and he would begin work the next day. It was hard for him to believe that everything had gone so smoothly, that Elizabeth was so welcoming. He found himself looking forward to something for the first time since he’d figured Dean could spring him from Purgatory.

He took the walk back to the motel slowly. On the way, he stopped and grabbed a newspaper from an enthusiastic vendor. He scanned the front page as he went, whistling an old sea shanty. Then he froze in his tracks, smile dying as his eyes fixated on the headline.

Benny turned around, angling his trajectory toward the morgue. He knew it would close soon, and he had some information to gather. These vamps may have found him, but he wouldn’t let them get to Elizabeth.

There was something soothing about cleaning guns, Dean thought.

Of course, it likely wasn’t a commonly shared sentiment, since even Sam hadn’t learned how to shoot and clean a gun until he was well past eight years old. Regardless, the activity helped him focus, and Dean needed all the focus he could get these days.

It was hard for him to think. The cars whizzing by on the road outside, the cheap motel cleaner, the confining, too-soft feel of a mattress beneath him - they were all distractions. And they were throwing him off, making him hear things outside bars, and see things in strangers that were probably never there in the first place.

Dean slammed the slide into place with unnecessary force, catching some of his skin between the stock and barrel. He hissed, putting the gun down and grabbing his finger. Rookie mistake. It wasn’t nearly deep enough to need stitches, though, so he’d just leave it.

He looked over at Sam to make sure he hadn’t disturbed his brother. Sam slept soundly, rolled up in his blankets like some sort of giant, deformed burrito. Dean smiled fondly, turning back to his slightly more colorful arts and crafts project, wiping the blood off his Taurus. He’d wake Sam up in a couple hours. Just because he couldn’t sleep didn’t mean Sam shouldn’t.

Dean was fairly certain Sam would do the same for him, but he wasn’t sure of anything these days.

After taking out, cleaning, and putting away what seemed to be every blade and firearm they owned, even the expanse of the room felt repressing. Dean made his way outside, pausing quickly to check to make sure the salt lines remained undisturbed.

The noise wasn’t better outside, but it was cooler, less suffocating. Well, it was still humid, but Dean would take what he could get. He found himself irrationally thankful for the streetlights and flickering neon signs lighting up the street, pushing down too-fresh memories of dark allies and
He pulled out his phone, going through his notifications methodically, and blocking at least two new telemarketers. He saw a new text from Benny: *Hanging in there, brother.* Dean smiled at the mental image of Benny trying to figure out how to text on his phone. The smile faded as he remembered Sam, and his threat. These were two parts of his life he couldn’t let touch, for everyone’s sake.

Eventually the sun peeked over the horizon, and Dean scribbled Sam a note to let him know he’d gone to get breakfast. There was a small cafe nearby, and this town redeemed itself in terms of food quality if nothing else.

The smell of baked bread and coffee flooded the room, and as soon as Dean walked in he was drowning in the best possible way. He felt rejuvenated despite the lack of sleep, and he approached the counter with a spring in his step.

Dean stood with his back to the wall, surveying his surroundings as he waited to get called up. He did a double take when he locked eyes with Lindsey, who was leaning over a cup of coffee at a table by the window. She smiled and gestured for him to come over. Dean took the seat across from her, and couldn’t stop himself from asking, “You work here, too?”

Lindsey laughed, a bright sound that sharply contrasted her grief of the day before. “What, a waitress isn’t allowed to order food of her own?”

“Right. Dumb question,” Dean conceded, a little embarrassed.

“So, you guys are really settling down here while you investigate, huh?” Lindsey asked, taking a sip of her coffee.

“Not really. It’ll only be a few days, if everything goes smoothly.” But then, when did it ever?

“Well,” Lindsey said, raising her styrofoam cup, “best of luck to you, so you don’t have to stay in this muggy little town any longer than you have to.”

Dean chuckled, getting up when he heard his number called. “Thanks. It was good talking to you, Lindsey.”

“And Dean?” Dean looked back, and Lindsey winked at him. “Gimme a call if you need anything.”

Dean grinned. “Sure thing.”

It was only once he left the cafe and was well on his way back to the motel that Dean realized he’d never given Lindsey his name.

Hey guys! Sorry this one was a bit shorter and kind of boring, but I have to draw out the suspense somehow ;)
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Dean opened the door to the motel room, lost in thought. Sam was awake and showered by the time he got back, no surprise there, and Dean shrugged off his unease.

Sam plugged in his laptop to charge, instinctively catching the take out bag Dean tossed him. “Hey, you were up early.”

Dean shrugged. “Not letting you pick breakfast up again.” Sam shot him a pointed look. Dean ignored it. “So, what’ve we got?”

The third victim was a fourteen year old girl named Jamie Anderson. The bodies had been recovered only three days before, so Jamie’s wake was being held that day at the local funeral home.

“I figure we go talk to Jamie’s parents, see if she has any connection to the old theater. Then we should visit the morgue, see if we can dig up any information on the last vic,” Sam said as he spread organic cream cheese on his whole wheat bagel. Dean scrunched his nose in disgust. “What?” Sam defended, bagel halfway to his mouth.

“Nothing, Gwyneth Paltrow. Let’s hit the road.” Dean took out the keys and whisked out the door.

Sam stared down at his bagel for a moment before hurrying after his brother, slamming the door behind him. “You got me this, Dean!”

The funeral home wasn’t much to look at: small, gray, and decidedly depressing. It therefore didn’t attract enough attention to keep Dean from noticing an old, painfully familiar camper parked outside the entrance.

“Stay in the car,” Dean instructed Sam as he shifted gears and climbed out of the Impala, marching toward the front doors. He didn’t even register the sound of the passenger side door creaking open and slamming shut.

Dean stalked through the somber halls, so lost in his head that he almost crashed into Benny when he turned a corner.

Dean flinched back, barely restraining from pulling a switch knife on his friend. Benny put his hands up, taking a step back. If anything, he looked more startled to see Dean than Dean did to see Benny. “Dean? What are you doing here?”

Dean spread his hands and casually stepped between them, as if that would do any good against two potential nukes just waiting to go off. “Hey, let’s talk outside, okay? Don’t wanna freak out any flighty morticians.”

Dean opened his mouth, likely to ask some variation of the same question, but was cut off as Sam came barreling around the corner.

Dean flinched back, barely restraining from pulling a switch knife on his friend. Benny put his hands up, taking a step back. If anything, he looked more startled to see Dean than Dean did to see Benny. “Dean? What are you doing here?”

Dean opened his mouth, likely to ask some variation of the same question, but was cut off as Sam came barreling around the corner.

Dean felt a well of trepidation open up within him as Sam froze, stone faced. “Dean,” Sam said slowly, “what the hell is he doing here.”

“Funny, I just asked the same question,” Benny said coolly. Dean spread his hands and casually stepped between them, as if that would do any good against two potential nukes just waiting to go off. “Hey, let’s talk outside, okay? Don’t wanna freak out any flighty morticians.”

Sam continued to tower menacingly, and Benny offered a careful “Whatever you say, chief”. Dean
let Benny lead the way, sticking out an arm to stop Sam. “Talk,” he emphasized firmly.

Sam glared at Dean. “Fine.”

Benny was standing in the meager shade his camper provided by the time Sam and Dean exited the building. Dean stepped forward and clasped hands with his friend, ignoring Sam’s smoldering glower. “Didn’t think I’d be seeing you again so soon.”

Benny offered him a grin. “Not that I’m complainin’, but what are you doing so far down here?”

“Caught wind of a vamp nest.” Dean studied Benny for a moment. “That why you’re here, too?”

“Naw,” Benny drawled. “After clearing out my old nest, I figured I’d come back home.”

“Home? You grew up here?”

Benny nodded. “Born and bred. Came back, got myself a job. Even found myself some family - great granddaughter.”

Dean whistled. “That’s crazy, man.” He was glad Benny had found someone to hold himself accountable to; after Missouri, he hadn’t been sure of where his friend’s head was at. But then - “What are you doing at Jamie’s wake?”

“Well, I saw the deaths in the paper,” Benny said, adjusting his cap. “Figure these vamps are friends of the old man. Ain’t no coincidence them showin’ up in my hometown, where I’ve got family. I just gotta get them before they get her.”

“So, what,” Sam scoffed, reminding Dean unpleasantly of his brother’s presence. “You go around pretending to be a fed too? Hate to break it to you, but you’re not exactly dressed for the part.”

“Actually, I just went in and had a talk with that girl Jamie’s folks. Real nice,” Benny said flatly.

“Well, did you find anything out?” Dean asked.

“Sure thing. But I don’t think this is the best place to discuss it,” Benny remarked, nodding at the civilians beginning to make their way through the lot, presumably for the girl’s wake.

“Alright,” Dean clapped his hands together. “Since we’re all here, we might as well work the case together, huh? What do ya say, Sammy?” Dean didn’t give Sam a chance to respond, turning back to Benny. “You know the Economy Inn?”

Benny chuckled a little. “You could say that.”

Dean nodded, shooting a “meet you there” over his shoulder as he steered Sam back to the car.

Sam shrugged Dean’s hand off, spinning on his heel so they were face-to-face. “What the hell are you doing?” he hissed.

Dean stepped back, spreading his hands placatingly. “Look, man, I know we got our issues, but this is not the time. Benny knows the town, and his grandkid - who’s an innocent civilian, by the way - might be in trouble, here. We don’t know when these vamps are gonna get their Dahmer on again, and we need all the help we can get.”

Sam clenched his jaw. “He’s a vampire, Dean. What’s keeping him from turning on innocents, or us?”
“He wouldn’t do that, Sam,” Dean said slowly. “Look, I’m not asking you to trust him. I’m asking you to trust me.”

Sam looked away, throat bobbing. After a moment that stretched into eternity, Sam gave a tight nod.

Dean tried to ignore the sting. He knew he shouldn’t expect it to be easy for Sam to trust him, but it still hurt when he saw how hard it was.

Dean didn’t trust him.

Not that Sam had given him a lot of reason to, he supposed. It would have been more manageable if Dean hadn’t picked a vampire to be his new right-hand man.

Must be nice, finally finding someone you can trust after all these years.

But Dean had a point, Sam grudgingly admitted. Benny could potentially prove useful, and if he was telling the truth about his granddaughter, he had incentive to play on their team for now. Not that Sam wouldn’t be keeping a close eye on him, anyway.

Dean was tense in the driver’s seat, hyper-alert like he often was, recently. Sam found himself briefly wishing for a way to tell Dean that it was Benny he didn’t trust, not him. Faith in monsters only ever led to dark places. Sam had learned that lesson the hard way.

The Impala turned sharply into the motel parking lot, as if matching her driver’s anxious mood. Sam heaved a sigh as he extricated himself from the car, squinting into the late morning sun. He forced himself to uncurl his fists as Dean showed Benny into their room, and made his way in after them.

Benny made himself at home on one of the armchairs, and Dean sat down on the bed across from him. Sam made a point to stand next to Dean, arms crossed. Benny raised an eyebrow. Sam glowered some more.

Dean opened a beer - where had that even come from - and gave Benny a “let’s have it” gesture.

“According to her old man, Jamie was with some friends when she disappeared. She wasn’t even missing a day when her friends came clean, told Anderson that Jamie went in the old theater on a dare and never came out,” Benny explained.

Dean took a swig from his beer. “So we have at least three vics, probably four, who all disappeared into the same theater in the space of a few days, only to show up a few quarts empty two weeks later.” He let the bottle hang loosely between his fingers for a moment, considering it. He took a longer pull from it before discarding it on the nightstand, half-empty. “Sounds pretty open and shut to me.”

Sam paced between the bed and the door, momentarily forgetting his feud with their resident vampire. “Do we have anything on the last guy? Peter Matthews?”

“I checked out the morgue last night,” Benny spoke up. “They’re definitely vamp kills, in case there was ever any doubt. This Matthews guy didn’t seem all that well off, if you get my drift, but other than that I got nothing.”
“Do we really need to check, to see if he was there? I mean, it’s practically guaranteed. We might as well just go check out the theater,” Dean grated.

“You know the rules, man, we gotta be sure,” Sam said, not unsympathetically.

Dean leaned forward, gripping the edge of the mattress and drumming his fingers against the side. “Hey, you think your great-granddaughter would know anything about him?”

Benny shook his head. “Can’t know for sure, but I want to leave Elizabeth out of this.”

“Yeah, you’re right,” Dean acknowledged, blowing out a breath. “Well, that waitress, Lindsey, she said to ring her up if I needed anything. I mean, this probably isn’t what she meant, but - Sam, sit down, you’re giving me a headache.”

Sam rolled his eyes, but sat down next to his brother.

“I’m gonna go find Lindsey, see if she knows anything. You two behave, alright?” Dean slapped Sam on the knee and grabbed his keys, breezing out the door and hardly giving the others time to react.

Suddenly the room felt much too small. Sam and Benny turned to each other awkwardly. “You gonna try to kill me?” Benny finally asked.

Sam narrowed his eyes. “That depends. You planning on drinking me dry?”

Benny curled his lip slightly, and Sam felt strangely insulted. “Not in this life.”

They settled into silence. Sam mentally urged Dean to hurry up.

Benny thumbed through his phone, a bewildered crease marking his forehead. It might be funny, if Benny wasn’t an eighty year-old vampire who Dean had pulled from Purgatory.

Sam had to admit he didn’t know Benny. Not at all. So far, he seemed pretty harmless. But so had Ruby and Amy and Meg, and they had all killed and killed and killed. Whatever trust Dean had in Benny had stemmed from an experience, a place, that Sam had never experienced. But he knew the rules were different there. They had to be.

A small voice in the back of Sam’s head wondered how much of his hatred was jealousy, how much was guilt. He quickly crushed it.

“What’s up with Dean these days?”

Sam started, looking up to see Benny watching him intensely. “What are you talking about?”

Benny gave him a sarcastic look that made Sam feel like he was having an out of body experience. “C’mon, man. We didn’t have Rheingold down there, but I know that ain’t how to take a beer. I’ve only seen him that shaky a few times, and it was nothing good.”

Sam pursed his lips, staring at the floor. He’d assumed Dean being so on edge was just Purgatory catching up with him, and he knew that was part of it, but what if it was something else too?

Benny leaned back, surprised. “You don’t know. Huh.”

Sam glared up at him to retort, when the door flew open, banging against the wall. Dean grasped the doorframe, face pale and drawn. Sam and Benny were already on their feet, eyes trained on Dean.
“It’s Lindsey. No one’s seen her since this morning.”

“Dean, what does - ” Sam started.

Dean turned his distressed gaze on his brother. “She’s at the theater, Sam. Lindsey went to the theater.”

Chapter End Notes

Ugh this chapter did NOT turn out the way I wanted - sorry if it seems kinda rushed, because it kinda is... I was just really excited for the boys to get together with Benny and get to the exciting part of the case (more on that next chapter). I think I’ve decided to update every Monday and Friday, provided everything goes smoothly. I promise the next chapter will be much more interesting (and less amateurish).
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

This isn't the longest chapter, but I promise you it's packed. This is also the point at which my fic does a total U-turn and you start questioning my sanity. As usual, Dean angst abounds. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Dean stomped harder on the gas, speeding through downtown Carencro with no regard for the limit. He glanced over to see Sam focused on the road ahead, mouth set in a grim line, and Benny leaning forward from the back, face set with determination.

Before, it hadn’t been so much about interviewing Lindsey again as escaping the crushing tension that made him need a drink more than he had since Bobby—since Bobby. But then there had been that snarky girl covering Lindsey’s shift, whining about how she’d gone off to hide in the old theater, and all in all Dean wished he’d stayed in bed this morning. Or got in it in the first place.

Dean missed Purgatory.

No cases, no mystery, no victims. You killed the monster, and that was it. He would give anything for that kind of clarity right then.

It was a fifteen minute drive to the theater. They made it in six. Benny and Sam hadn’t thought to ask why Lindsey had gone to there, but Dean suspected it was some twisted form of closure. The waitress had seemed alright, but then, so did Dean, most of the time. Appearances could be deceiving.

They piled out of the car as soon as it was thrown into park, Dean not even bothering to take the keys from the ignition. The old theater loomed before them, decrepit and ominous. It had a sort of surreal atmosphere, like it had been transported directly from the 1940s, but lacking the luster of the time. The paint peeled off in strips, and the wood was rotted and worn. The windows had somehow remained mostly intact, but the door was hanging onto its hinges for dear life.

Despite his single-mindedness, something about the building gave Dean pause. The place had a familiar undertone to it, threatening in a way even its haunting exterior couldn’t express.

“Aren’t you gonna come in and play, Dean?”

Dean stumbled back, dropping his machete. Sam’s hands were on his shoulders and his lips were moving, but Dean couldn’t hear him over the buzzing in his ears.

It couldn’t be. It just couldn’t.

A sharp pain across his jaw. “Snap out of it, Dean!” Dean wasn’t sure whose voice it was.

“Don’t you want to see what I did to your little friend?”

Every fiber in his being wanted to run, to get as far away as possible. He couldn’t do this, he couldn’t—
But he couldn’t let him take anyone else.

Dean shook the hands off of him and the voice from his head, and he barged through the door.

The auditorium was impossibly large, given its meager outward appearance. Most of the seats had been removed, but a few lay strewn across the floor or stacked along the walls. Heavy velvet drapes had been tied aside on the far side of the room, revealing a stage with a screen stretching across its back wall. Everything was covered with a thick coat of dust and… sulfur.

The man standing on the stage wasn’t terribly impressive. Not exceptionally tall, with a thin, graying beard and a wiry form. He turned at Dean’s entrance, and his eyes rolled back white.

Dean forced himself to take step after step into the room, trudging through jello and cement and goddamn lava. He stopped in the center of the auditorium, unable to drive himself forward any further, unable to even take solace from the presence of Sam and Benny just behind him.

“You know Dean, the least you could do is say hello,” the demon hummed, smooth and viscous.

“Where is she?” Dean demanded, hoarse and tight.

The demon clasped his hands together. “Oh, delightful little Lindsey. Just a little insurance, I’m afraid. Wouldn’t want your brother there pulling any of his old tricks. But from what I hear, you’re a little rusty, aren’t you Sammy?”

Sam tensed next to him, and Dean could practically feel the horrified realization wash over his brother.

“Alastair,” he growled, and Dean wondered where all the oxygen in the room went because he hadn’t breathed and he couldn’t breathe —

“In the flesh,” Alastair chuckled. “Or, someone else’s, anyway.”

“Ain’t he supposed to be dead, chief?” Benny whispered into Dean’s ear. Dean didn’t reply. Couldn’t reply. There wasn’t a difference.

Alastair tilted his head at Benny, brows drawing together. “Have we met?”

“Don’t believe we’ve had the pleasure,” Benny responded warily.

“Oh, you’re a vampire, aren’t you? Dean, friends with a monster? How very bad of you,” Alastair purred as he began making his way across the stage. “You know, I have a few vampire friends of my own. Well, not anymore.” Alastair gestured at a grotesquely neat pile of bodies assembled near the foot of the stage.

The shock and panic seemed dull and faint compared to Dean’s mounting rage as he put the pieces together. He’d been tricked, baited, and trapped, all accompanied by a healthy dose of psychological manipulation. And he’d fallen for it. Like a fucking idiot, he’d fallen for it.

“What do you want,” Dean gritted out, jaw clenched so hard his teeth creaked.

“What do I want?” Alastair feigned surprise. “I want you, Deano!” He rounded the front of the stage,
Dean flinched, suppressing the urge to cover his ears, because his voice was ringing in his head like it always was “you’re just not getting deep enough” but it was also right there—

He barely registered Sam moving forward, stepping in front of his big brother. “Why not me, huh? I’m the one who killed you!” Sam yelled.

Alastair tilted his head, as if considering. “Thanks, but I think I’ll pass. It’s just not as personal between us, darling.”

“Now, here’s the deal.” Alastair casually extended a hand, and Sam and Benny gave startled shouts as they flew backward. Dean tried to turn to see them, but suddenly found himself unable to move. “You can heel like a good mutt, and I’ll send over Lindsey in one piece. Or you can try to fight, and we’ll use Lindsey to… relearn a few things,” Alastair said, lips curling smugly.

Dean licked his lips, tried to keep his voice steady. “How do we know she’s still alive?”

Alastair held a hand to his chest in mock offense. “What, is my word not good enough for you anymore? It used to be. It used to be good enough for anything,” he sighed. “Fine.”

And then Lindsey was there, huddled at the demon’s feet. She gasped and looked up, knotted hair falling limply across pale features, haunted eyes drinking in her surroundings before latching onto Dean.

She gaped at him, but before she could say anything, Alastair had her by the throat. “Let her go,” Dean tried to yell, but it really came out as more of a croak.

“I will,” Alastair said merrily. “Just as soon as you agree to come with me.”

“Don’t do it, Dean!” came a yell from behind and Dean started, having all but forgotten about his companions. Alastair ignored them, eyes trained on his former student.

Dean looked back and forth between Lindsey and Alastair, unable to turn around to see his friend and brother. Lindsey was mouthing something from Alastair’s loose grip. Dean couldn’t quite make out what it was, but he could guess.

There was only one option here, and he knew it. He took a deep breath, and locked eyes with Alastair.

Only, Alastair wasn’t looking at Dean. He was glaring behind him, and he was… shaking.

Time sped up, and Sam’s voice rose from a whisper to a shout as he chanted the exorcism louder and louder. Dean watched, stunned, as Alastair released Lindsey and stumbled back against the stage. He realized he could move, and whipped around to see Sam and Benny sprinting towards him.

Sam had reached the halfway point of a powerful exorcism, and Alastair clutched his head in pain. The three of them approached the demon together. Dean felt a surge of pride for his little brother when he realized they might actually win this.

Then Alastair started laughing.

He straightened, removing his hands from his head and laughing so hard it almost looked like he was
giving himself an exorcism. Sam faltered, and was thrown back again as Alastair casually flapped a hand in his direction. “Oh, Sammy,” Alastair chuckled. “You’re gonna need something stronger than that if you want to do more than tickle me.”

Dean took an involuntary step back, berated himself for being stupid enough to forget Alastair wasn’t your typical demon. He glanced nervously at Sam, who was starting to drag himself to his feet. If only he had his angel blade instead of his machete…

A yelp had Dean whipping his head around to see Alastair yanking Lindsey up by the hair. “Clearly you fellas need some time to think things over,” the demon remarked. “Take your time; this little dame and I are gonna be having a blast. Catch me if you can, boys.”

With a final, revolting grin, Alastair was gone. And so was Lindsey.

Chapter End Notes

Let me just say, Alastair is hella fun to write. I know this twist is kinda crazy (but is it too crazy?... Probably), and if any of you saw this coming, I will be legitimately impressed. Also, sorry for posting so late today, I was on break before but now I have like... stuff to do during the day. Yeah, I wish I didn't either. Next chapter on Monday!
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

This one’s a little longer, but somehow less action-packed. Funny how it seems to work out that way.

The ride back to the motel was silent.

Benny watched Dean carefully from the back seat, marking the tension in his shoulders and the hard set to his jaw. He didn’t say anything. He had a feeling Dean wouldn’t appreciate anything he had to say, anyway. Sam seemed to have the same instinct, as he was drooping uncomfortably in the passenger seat, shooting his brother worried glances every few seconds. Not that Dean didn’t warrant them.

Once Lindsey and the demon were gone, they had all stood there in stunned silence. The auditorium seemed barren, then, and empty. Much too empty.

Dean swiftly turned and stormed out to the car, throwing open the theater door with such ferocity that it was ripped off its weakened hinges. Sam had tried cut him off at the pass when Dean made a beeline for the driver’s seat, but Dean radiated so much fury and confusion that when he shouldered past Sam, Sam let him. Benny exchanged a glance with Sam over Dean’s head, and it made them both uncomfortable enough that they quickly clambered into the car after Dean.

Benny wished he’d been able to do more, back at the theater, but the demon had pinned him like a fly to a wall. He hadn’t been able to do anything but watch as that bastard twisted Dean into knots. But then, Alastair had been messing with Dean for as long as Benny knew him.

It was Benny’s watch again. The vampire stood vigil over his companion, alert for any sign of danger. This was one of those rare nights when everything would just stop, and quiet would descend in a dark shroud, the whole forest holding its breath. Calm before the storm.

Dean stirred, shifting against the bank of the ditch they’d taken shelter in. Benny glanced at him once before turning his gaze to the trees again. They’d been watching each other’s backs for what had to be weeks now; he knew the guy wasn’t an easy sleeper, and for good reason.

Dean stirred again, mumbling something as he scrabbled softly at the dirt beneath him. Benny furrowed his brow, but only moved forward when Dean cried out. He gripped the hunter’s forearm, shaking him roughly. Dean quieted, muttering a few words Benny would soon forget, and one name that he wouldn’t. “Alastair.”

Benny sat back on his heels, scanning their surroundings to make sure they hadn’t attracted any attention. Another cry, louder than the last, forced him to choose between Dean’s beauty sleep and both of their asses. It wasn’t a hard decision.

The knuckles against his sternum had Dean immediately gasping and sitting up. Benny cautiously clapped a hand on his shoulder. “You trying to get us found, brother?”

Dean brushed the vampire off, batting his hand away and scrubbing a hand through his dirt-caked
They sat in silence for a moment. Wind didn’t rustle through the trees, because there was no wind there. Benny wondered what it felt like.

“You been through the thick of it, haven’t you?” Benny asked, but it wasn’t a question.

Dean chuckled a little. “There are a few things worse than Purgatory, brother.”

Benny never asked, but he’d found out a bit more during their time together. Sometimes out of necessity - Damn, Dean, you wait until now to tell me you got a bum shoulder? - and sometimes just because there was little else to do but talk. It went both ways, of course, and neither had told the other everything, but neither had expected anything to begin with.

So what Benny did know about Alastair was that he was a demon Dean met downstairs, and he was supposed to be dead around four years now. Which made it a little strange that he’d popped up out of nowhere to get his revenge.

They’d pulled up to the motel, but no one moved to get out of the car.

“How is this even possible? I ki - Alastair is dead,” Sam spoke up, shock and disbelief coloring his tone.

Dean suddenly smacked his hand against the steering wheel, hard, before shoving open the door and stalking from the car. Sam jumped out soon after, but Benny stayed where he was, watching.

The brothers exchanged a few heated words, before Sam said something sharp and pleading, his eyes wide and raw. Dean took the words like a hit, slumped almost imperceptibly. The older hunter turned back to the car, expression more than tired.

Sliding into the driver’s seat, Dean twisted to face the backseat without quite looking at Benny. “I’m gonna go for a drive. You mind?”

“Sure thing, chief,” Benny murmured, clapping his hand on his friend’s shoulder before stepping out into the muggy parking lot. The impala was squealing away before both of his feet hit the ground.

Benny glanced at Sam, who was watching the lonely road with a mournful look on his face. Benny felt strangely misplaced, like he was intruding on a private moment. Which he probably was.

“You, uh, did Dean tell you anything about…?” Sam muttered, wiping his hands tiredly down his face.

“I know the basics,” Benny shrugged. “I don’t know why this Alastair guy wants Dean so bad, but I figure Dean’ll tell me if he wants to.”

Sam looked up then, a mixture of surprise and grudging respect adorning his features. He turned away, swallowing hard. “Look, I don’t know you, and I can’t say I trust you. But… I appreciate what you did for Dean, down there.” Sam opened his mouth to say more, then snapped it shut again, eyes glued to the cracked cement beneath their feet.

“Ain’t no thing,” Benny said quietly. He paused for a moment, gave the Winchester brother a searching look, before nodding and heading back to his own room. He couldn’t say he was fond of Sam, but he could see there was more than blind anger and mixed feelings there, a lot more. That would have to be enough for now.
Sam stared at the ground for an indefinite amount of time, too exhausted to move. He finally summoned the willpower to turn around and drag himself into their room, before collapsing on the bed nearest the door.

He drifted for a while, in that undefinable in-between place where you just skimmed unconsciousness, immobile but still sensing enough of your environment to know you aren’t really asleep. So when he woke feeling a little more human a couple hours later, he wondered how he hadn’t noticed Dean enter the room.

His brother had pulled a pillow to the floor again, unwilling or unable to sleep on the mattress. Sam sighed and gently tugged the comforter down to cover Dean. He hesitated before getting up, watching the furrowed brow and twitching fingers that Dean was unable to hide while asleep.

What happened earlier that day simply shouldn’t have been possible. It might have made sense, oh, four or so years ago. But the fact of the matter was that Alastair was dead. Sam had killed him, remembered ripping him apart from the inside out as clearly as if it were yesterday. Some deep, dark part of himself wished he could do it all over again.

Dean didn’t talk about hell. Not for a long time, and never in detail. Sam stopped pushing after he got back from his own trip downstairs; he knew talking wouldn’t change anything. But he knew the… relationship between Dean and Alastair was not only that of the tormentor and the tormented, but also that of a master and a student. And it made him sick, because now Alastair was somehow back and was trying to get his hands on Dean again.

Well, it wasn’t going to happen. Not if Sam could help it.

He’d love to give Dean some time to rest and recover and process, but the waitress, Lindsey, was in serious trouble, and they needed a way to get her back. Without handing over Dean, obviously.

Sam set up his computer, and began searching for… he wasn’t sure what. He briefly wondered if they could summon Alastair, but there was no guarantee Lindsey would show up with him, and they couldn’t torture the information out of him. Not with what happened last time.

He settled on bringing up security footage of the street outside the theater, looking for clues. After watching the comings and goings of average citizens about their everyday lives for a solid 45 minutes, he concluded that there was probably a back door. Oh, and yeah, Alastair could freaking apparate.

Sam sighed for the thousandth time that day and leaned back in his chair. They needed serious back up. And he was pretty sure a vampire, however chummy with Dean he might be, didn’t count.

But then again, Sam thought bitterly, there’s no one else left, is there?

Dean woke up around eleven that night, and Sam wondered futilely if they would ever return to a normal sleep schedule. Considering how incredibly long their days were - they had met Benny at the morgue just that morning - it seemed unlikely.

“You gonna help me with this, or just sit there staring at me all day?”

Sam blinked, averted his gaze from the figure of his brother hunched over the same laptop he’d
searched fruitlessly hours before. Doing the same fruitless searching.

“Dean, we’re not going to find Alastair unless he wants to be found,” Sam ventured.

Dean clenched his teeth, fists curling on the keyboard. “That’s just it Sam. You don’t… he wants to be found. This is all some fucking game to him.”

Sam but his lip, mentally shielding himself from the waves of fury that rolled off Dean. Not directed at him, but there all the same.

“Dean, can you just—” Sam had started, confronting his brother outside the car earlier that day.

“What do you want me to say, Sam? Huh?” The words were bitter, laced with pain and anger and fear. “You want me to say I don’t know? I don’t! I thought he was dead. I was sure he was…’’ Dean trailed off. Sam belatedly realized that his brother was shaking again.

“Dean, he was dead. He’s just… back somehow,” Sam said softly.

“Yeah, that’s real comforting Sam,” Dean snorted, but it somehow wasn’t as derisive as usual.

They were both quiet for a moment.

“Alastair wants me,” Dean stated boldly. “He has Lindsey, because he wants to get to me. Maybe…”

“No. No. Dean, listen to me.” Sam took a step forward. “This is not your fault. We’ll find some other way to deal with this, you hear me?” He paused, regarding his brother’s defiant stance, sharply contrasting his tortured eyes. The eyes had been a constant for far too long, but the defiance only seemed dependable when one of their lives was at risk.

“What happened to being a warrior, man?” Sam challenged, pleaded, hoping all the aggression Dean had been sporting since Purgatory might amount to something good.

Dean slumped then, not a lot, but just enough for Sam to notice. “Warriors don’t break, Sam,” Dean said quietly.

Dean had said he’d changed in Purgatory. And he had: he coped more with blood and less with booze, had a shorter fuse and was more trigger happy than ever. But underneath all that, he was still the same Dean who had the weight of the world hanging over him like a cloud. He was just better at running away from it.

Sam blew out a breath. “Look, how about I set up an algorithm to search for demonic activity? Then we can come up with a plan instead of sitting around waiting for Alastair to find us.”

“Don’t need to.” Sam and Dean simultaneously jerked their heads up as Benny barged into the room. The vampire took a folded piece of line paper out of his pocket and slapped on the table in front of Dean.

Dean immediately picked it up, and Sam stood behind him to get a better look. “It’s an address,” Sam said slowly.

“Nah, that’s my grocery list,” Benny said dryly.

Sam shot him a look. Benny blinked innocently.

“Benny, where’d you get this?” Dean asked, tone cold and distant.
Benny sobered immediately. “Came back from patrolling the perimeter, found it on my ride. It has to be that demon, right?”

Dean scrutinized the note for a moment longer, before crumpling it in his fist. “It’s Alastair,” he growled.

Sam didn’t want to know how Dean knew.

Dean stood abruptly. “We need to go. Now.”

Sam opened his mouth to protest, but Benny beat him to it. “Whoa, now hang on a minute, chief. Don’t we need some sort of game plan, here?”

Dean’s mouth hardened and his posture stiffened defiantly, but he didn’t meet their eyes. “We have one.”

The confusion only lasted a second before the realization hit Sam like a freight train. “No. No. No way, Dean.” Sam shook his head vehemently. “I won’t let you.”

“Let me?” Dean scoffed. Benny watched the exchange like it was a tennis match, eyes bouncing back and forth between the players.

“Dean, you can’t tell me you really want this!” Sam cried. He couldn’t just watch his brother throw himself at Alastair, not when this had already happened once before, not when the last time it had been all because of him -

Dean’s eyes softened a little, but Sam wasn’t sure whether it was out of concession or exhaustion. “It’s the only play we’ve got, Sam. Trust me, Lindsey doesn’t have a lot of time.”

Sam remembered all too easily that he wasn’t the only one with leftover guilt from his brother’s tour in Hell. Far from it, in fact. “I know, Dean, but - God, there has to be something else!”

“I’m not saying I like it,” Benny hazarded, “but say we do send Dean in?”

Sam could practically feel the heat peeling from his own glare, and felt a spark of satisfaction at Benny’s flinch.

“Not like that. I mean… what if we use one of those curse-things? Make the exchange, then trap Alastair and go in after Dean?”

Sam stared blankly for a moment, then blinked thoughtfully. “You mean a hex bag?”

Benny shrugged. “Yeah. Sure.”

Dean made a face and muttered something about “witch stuff,” but Sam was too engrossed in his thoughts to pay him any mind. It would take complicated magic, but they might be able to create two different spells - one to bind Alastair, and another to track him, because he would likely make a getaway as soon as he had Dean. Of course, they’d have to make some alterations to be sure the spells would work on such a powerful demon and activate at the right time, but… Sam broke out of his reverie, shaking his head furiously again. “No. I’m not letting Alastair have Dean.”

Dean scrunched his eyebrows. “You know how that sounds, right? And how do you know I won’t have him ?”

Sam pursed his lips, sent his brother a look that said You tried that already, remember?
Dean rolled his eyes. “Sam, I’m a big boy now. I can handle it. Just… look into it? Please?”

Sam regarded Dean for a moment. He knew lives were at stake, and so far, they didn’t have any better ideas. That wouldn’t stop him from trying to think of some, but in the meantime… “Alright,” Sam said tiredly.

Dean gave him a small grin, then surveyed the small room like he was looking for something. The grin faded as his gaze became distant. “Well, I could use a drink.”

“I’m coming with you,” Benny declared. Dean shrugged his shoulders, already halfway out the door.

Sam grabbed Benny’s arm before he could follow his brother out. “Keep an eye on him, would you?”

Benny’s eyes flicked back and forth between his for a moment, before he offered his own smile. “What do you think I’m doing, chief?”

It was only once the Impala sped away that Sam realized what he’d asked of the vampire. But underneath the disbelief Sam felt at his decision, he somehow knew that Benny would keep Dean safe. His track record was a lot better than Sam’s at that, anyway.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

I’m so sorry, I totally forgot I had to post today! Anyway, here’s my peace offering...

PS: I should have mentioned this ages ago, but I have very little/nonexistent medical knowledge, so keep in mind that anything injury/health related is purely guesswork.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dean registered that Benny had climbed into the impala next to him, but he didn’t acknowledge him other than a brief nod in his direction. He wasn’t in the mood to talk, and Benny respected that. God, Dean should have brought Benny along on a case months ago.

They didn’t say a word on the way there, but when Dean parked in front of the grungy bar on Elms and Baker, Benny pinned him with a look before he could get out of the car. It wasn’t fierce or demanding, just concerned. Just cautious.

“You sure you wanna do that, brother?” Benny asked softly. Dean swallowed, eyes meeting Benny’s for a moment before flicking away.

He knew what Benny meant, knew his friend wasn’t just warning him of a bad hangover. And Dean should listen, he really should, because he didn’t want to fall into that hole again.

After Hell, Dean drank a lot. When Lucifer came topside and things were a few thousand miles short of okay, he drank even more. Then Sam was gone and then he was back but he wasn’t Sam and Cas betrayed them and Cas died and Leviathan and Bobby and on and on and on, until Dean couldn’t go five fucking minutes without a drink because otherwise it was all just too much.

Then he killed Dick and hitched a ride to the monster afterlife, and he hadn’t really thought to bring a couple of pints along.

The first two weeks or so - Dean wasn’t really sure - were by far the worst. He’d passed out and thrown up so many times it was a miracle he hadn’t ended up a monster’s chew toy. Dean vaguely remembered having to hide in caves, ditches, behind jumbo-sized tree roots, anywhere to try to ride out the most recent spike in his constant fever.

Eventually he’d recovered and begun making his way through Purgatory in earnest, slicing past monsters to find Cas, a way out, anything. But occasionally the cravings still hit him hard, and he’d have to wait it out for anywhere from half an hour to half a day.

Then he met Benny.

Trust was forged between them fast and hard, like everything else in Purgatory. But that trust formed into a bond, brothers in arms and all that, and Dean knew he had someone he could rely on. It had been at least a month or so since his last craving, so when it hit him, it hit him hard.

Leaves crunched beneath Dean’s boots as he trudged through the foliage. He swallowed convulsively, throat dry, and shook his head in a vain attempt to clear the foggy vision that had developed over the last few hours.
Benny picked through the trees ahead of him, both of them on silent lookout for threats. Well, Benny more than Dean at this point - Dean was having trouble just staying upright.

Darkness was stretching across the sky when Dean went down. There was no warning, and the fall wasn’t slow or gentle by any means: simply a buckling of knees and the soft thump! of a body hitting topsoil.

Benny was by Dean’s side in a moment, but his eyes were up, trying to find the source of the presumed blow. When he found none, he returned his attention to Dean, whose skin had turned pale and his breathing harsh.

Dean groaned when he felt his shoulders being shaken, unable to focus on much past the sensation of burning alive from the inside out. He forced his eyes open to blurrily fix his gaze on Benny’s furrowed brow.

“What happened?” Benny shook Dean again as his eyes tried to drift shut. He licked his lips, aching for a drink, just one drink, to ease the pain and make the burning stop.

“Dean!”

“Cold…” Dean tried, but his lips were numb and he thought he might throw up if he’d eaten anything in the last two days.

Benny stared at Dean for a moment longer, then slung his arm over his shoulder and dragged him over to a nearby tree. Dean didn’t resist, legs dragging limply behind him.

“What wanna try that again, chief?”

Dean took a deep breath trying to clear his head. “Went cold turkey,” he muttered, not meeting Benny’s eyes.

Benny was quiet for a moment, then said incredulously, “You mean to tell me you’re a druggie?”

Dean chuckled dryly. “Try booze.”

Benny shook his head slowly. “You never cease to amaze, brother.”

That had been one of the worse relapses, and they didn’t happen too often after that before they ceased altogether. Benny helped him through it, didn’t ask any questions. Dean wondered once why Benny’s respect for him didn’t falter, him being a drunk and all. When he pieced together a little more of Benny’s story, he realized the vampire had his own experience fighting addiction.

Ever since then, Dean had been careful not to touch the heavy stuff. A beer here and there, sure, but nowhere near the amount he’d consumed before. He never wanted to need booze again, but on the bad days, he wondered if needing it was such a bad thing.

Today was one of the bad days.

Dean climbed out of the car, didn’t wait to see if Benny would follow him. Right now, all he cared about was forgetting the taste of dust and ash and blood and fire, the paralyzing feeling of fear he thought he’d never feel again, the smell of sulfur and the piercing of white eyes into his soul.

“Honestly, Dean. You have no idea how bad it really was. What you really did for us.”

He needed to forget.
It was easier to find the spells than Sam had thought. Tracking spells weren’t difficult, and he already had knowledge of some pretty powerful ones from all their years hunting Azazel. For their purposes, it would be much easier to track Dean using some of his DNA than to try to pin down Alastair. Then it was simply a matter of linking the spell to a map they could track Dean from.

As for the binding spell, that one was harder. They wanted to bind Alastair as soon as possible to keep him from hurting Dean, so a hex bag would be best. Getting the materials wouldn’t be an issue, but it would take complex magic to ensure the spell would work.

Sam shook his head as he stared down at his notes. He couldn’t believe he was actually considering this. This was worse than throwing his brother to the wolves; this was throwing his brother directly into his worst nightmare. And he’d just gotten Dean back from the dead, again.

Sam took a deep breath, reminding himself that this was a back-up plan. They would figure something else out, this was just in case, he told himself. He wasn’t sure he believed it, but he picked up his pen and started working over his notes again.

It was around two in the morning when the motel room door swung open abruptly. Sam stood up quickly, but Benny was already dumping a practically-unconscious Dean on the bed. Dean flopped limply across the mattress, and Sam wrinkled his nose at the overpowering smell of alcohol.

After checking over his brother - who, besides being completely plastered, seemed okay - Sam turned to Benny, who was finishing up locking the door he had so rudely barged through.

“You were supposed to keep an eye on him!” Sam hissed, careful to keep his voice down but not sparing the vampire any venom.

Benny shrugged, not taking his eyes off Dean’s slumbering form, and if Sam didn’t know better, he’d say he looked… sad. “I kept him from comin’ to blows with some fella.”

“What, and you figured ‘good enough’?” Sam exclaimed.

Benny turned a surprisingly open gaze on Sam. “The booze was his choice,” he said firmly.

Sam suddenly felt like he was missing something vital, some agreement between the two that he wasn’t privy to. He nodded, the knot of jealousy and resentment twisting a little tighter in his stomach.

Benny made his way to the door. “Why don’t you catch some shut-eye? You look like you could use it,” Benny remarked, then slipped outside before Sam could respond.

Sam blinked, a little affronted, then moved to sit on the bed next to Dean’s. He couldn’t say he was astonished to see Dean gazing up at him from under drooping eyelids.

“Izz’t really so hard for you two to get along?” Dean slurred, cutting off any inquiries Sam might have had.

Sam didn’t respond, instead busying himself with working Dean’s boots and jacket off. When he sat down again, Dean was staring straight up at the ceiling, looking strangely sober. Sam sat quietly next to him for a while, hands clasped between his legs, watching the circles under Dean’s eyes and the
lightness of his frame. Watching his brother recover from the effects of what had to be more alcohol than he’d consumed in at least a year, all in an attempt to lessen the pain.

“I miss it,” Dean mumbled, starting Sam out of his reverie. It was frankly impressive that Dean was still awake at this point.

A few moments crawled by. “Miss what?” Sam prodded, his voice piercing the heavy silence.

Dean flapped his hand lazily. “Down there. No… no demons. No Hell.”

Purgatory, Sam realized. Dean missed Purgatory, and the idea of it was so foreign and unwanted that it left a sour taste in Sam’s mouth.

“It was pure,” Sam remembered. He remembered Dean’s bloodlust, the way he sliced through monsters like they were nothing these days. He wondered, not for the first time, what Purgatory had really been like.

“Benny was there, an’ Cas, an’ there wasn’t anybody t-to save,” Dean said, swallowing thickly. He turned his gaze on Sam, and Sam almost flinched at the rawness there. “But you weren’t,” he whispered.

Silence lingered again. Sam choked out, “I missed you too, Dean. More than anything.”

Then shields were slamming back up, and how Dean managed to do that while drunk was beyond Sam. “Shoulda thought of that,” Dean said bitterly, his voice fading out as he lost his hold on consciousness and his eyes slipped closed.

Should’ve thought of that when you left me there, Sam filled in sullenly. He wanted to be angry about that. Wanted to be angry that Dean still blamed him after all this time. But he was beginning to see how nothing he said would ever justify leaving his brother in Purgatory, would ever justify moving on, and that thought left him feeling very, very tired.

He got up and shut off the lights. Despite his exhaustion, Sam didn’t sleep for a long time that night.

Chapter End Notes

Not a whole lot of action this chapter, but don't worry, you'll get some soon enough...

Speaking of things I forgot to mention, go check out my friend trevelies' fic, Not All Good News! It's an AWESOME season 14 canon divergence with over 100k words so far (an absolutely epic read), and she has a lot of other good stuff too :)

Also I WILL be adding more tags, but only once the whole fic is up. I want to keep as many of you in suspense as possible.
Chapter 8

I'm posting a day (or a few hours, however you want to see it) early, just because I have to get up early tomorrow and don't really want to wait until 6 pm to put this up. Not gonna lie, this chapter's pretty rushed... it's one of those things where I just wanted to get from point A to point B as soon as possible. You'll see ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dean woke up sore and more than a little cranky. For a fraction of a second, the pounding of a headache and the garden variety nature of the motel room removed him from time, throwing him into a million post-hunt hangovers that spanned his entire life. Then red flickered at the edges of his vision, and Dean remembered he’d had more than one lifetime.

He rolled over, pushing himself to his feet. He put out a hand to steady himself as the room spun. Whoa. Maybe a year without booze had taken more out of his tolerance than he’d thought.

Dean stumbled to the bathroom and washed up, made his way out again and noticed Sam for the first time, curled up on his bed, crease between his eyebrows never lessening, even in sleep. He also realized that his own blankets were strewn across the floor again, which was probably why he was so sore. He shook his head and went to grab a fresh change of clothes.

Dean reached into his already-unzipped duffel when he froze, blood draining from his face. He curled shaky fingers around a photo, one of those old polaroid ones you print out. It was splattered with blood, scribbled over in familiar handwriting: Running out of time.

Dean stared at Lindsey’s dated but easily recognizable smile in the picture, feeling dread sink in his stomach. He read over the words again, then one more time.

The knife bit into Dean’s skin, and he screamed. After an eternity, Alastair tossed the blade aside, smiling at his handiwork. “See, Dean? Now you’ll always recognize my handwriting.”

Dean shuddered, tried to control his sudden nausea. He distantly heard Sam getting up, calling his name, felt the picture pried from his hands. When Sam shook his shoulder, he looked up, not bothering to hide the despair, the determination.

“We have to make the exchange, Sam. Now.”

They were all piled into the Impala again, and Dean pushed the pedal to the floor. The address Alastair had given them was somewhere in Greenville, Alabama, and they were halfway through what would normally be a six-hour journey. Dean was pushing for four.

Saying the atmosphere was tense would have been a major understatement. Sam was fuming in the passenger seat, and Benny seemed uneasy at best. But there was no third option: they made the
exchange or the girl would die. They all knew that.

Dean tried not to wonder how Alastair had gotten the note into his bag, but it was hard not to. With all the warding, it seemed the only way would be to force some poor shmuck to break in and put it there, but if someone had broken in Dean would’ve known. Impossible and with a flair for the dramatic: par for the course when it came to Alastair.

Dean reached surreptitiously into his front pocket, closing his fingers around the hex bag. Sam had barely managed to throw it together before they’d left, insisting that if they were going to jump in feet first they at least needed some sort of flotation device. Dean would’ve mocked him for the metaphor, but he was honestly relieved to have at least this much going for him.

It turned out the address led to an old, yet mostly inhabited, subdivision. Dean felt a little nervous at seeing cars occupying driveways and TVs flickering in houses - all these people were leverage, and they didn’t even know it. The house was small but neat, paint peeling from the walls but patchy yard well-kept. A Toyota was sitting next to it, and Dean desperately hoped it whoever owned it wasn’t around.

Dean parked haphazardly in front of the sidewalk and stepped out of the car. He didn’t rush in this time. This was all a battle of the wills for Alastair; the less rushed he seemed, the smoother this would go. He waited for Benny and Sam to flank him before approaching the door.

As Dean reached for the handle, Sam grabbed his arm. “You don’t have to do this,” he pleaded softly.

Dean gently pried his arm away, didn’t look Sam in the eyes. “You know I do.”

The screen door didn’t resist as Dean pushed it open, and he made his way into the house. No lights were on, but the mid-afternoon sun filtered through the windows, displaying dust motes drifting lazily through the air. Dean signaled for Benny to go right and Sam to go left, then began his own search.

Despite the sheer amount of stuff it contained, the house didn’t have many rooms, and it didn’t take long for them to regroup in front of the door that led to the basement. It creaked open easily, and yellow light from a naked light bulb was already glowing softly above the stairs. Dean took a deep breath, tried to ignore the overpowering smell of mildew and sulfur, and made his way slowly down the steps.

The basement was much larger than the size of the house might suggest. Wiring and plumbing poked through the walls, and boxes of storage were pushed to the side. In the center of the concrete floor, lay Lindsey.

Her dark hair, tangled and clotted with blood, covered her face, but Dean was still able to make out the gag in her mouth. Cuts littered her arms, which were bound cruelly behind her. Lindsey’s t-shirt was torn, and her bare feet were curled beneath her. She whimpered softly, and Dean made to step forward.

“Ah, ah, ah. Not so fast, hero.”

Dean turned to see the darkness shrouding the rest of the basement beyond the stairs flicker away, revealing Alastair crouched next to three people bound to a support beam, also gagged. Tear tracks stained their faces, and Dean knew with a pang that this was the family who lived there. Alastair held a knife to the little boy’s throat, ignoring his parent’s desperate, muffled pleas.
“We had a deal,” Dean gritted out. “Me for Lindsey. You didn’t have to involve them.”

Alastair shrugged, cocky grin splitting his face unnaturally. “Well, I didn’t have to, but it sure was fun. Besides, a little insurance never hurt anybody.”

Dean threw out his arms. “And now I’m here. Let them go.”

Alastair cocked his head. “What, no please?” Dean glared. “Fine, fine. But here’s the thing. Since you took so long to get here, I figure you came up with some sort of fancy plan to trap me.” Alastair smiled then, wrapping his fingers tighter around the blade. “So how about something else to keep you busy?”

Then the blade was arching down toward the boy, slicing into his dark skin, drawing blood from his inner thigh. Dean didn’t even have time to cry out before chaos erupted, the family screaming, Alastair laughing, Sam already rushing forward to stop the bleeding.

“Oh, that looks serious. I would get him to a hospital, if I were you,” Alastair said, mock-worry dripping from his tone.

Dean curled his hands into fists, arms shaking with rage. “You bastard,” he seethed.

“Now, now, Dean, you know we don’t use language like that.” Then Alastair’s hand was splayed out and Dean was skidding across the floor. He came to a stop next to Lindsey, who had retracted even more in an attempt to shield herself.

Benny rushed toward them, but Alastair pinned him in place. “What, one not enough for you?” he growled. He balanced the knife in between his fingers before flinging it through the air, lightning fast, and burying it in the man’s shoulder. Dean knew without having to look that the blade had punctured the man’s subclavian artery.

Benny was released from Alastair’s hold, but froze, eyes darting back and forth between Dean and the family. “Go!” Dean croaked. He met his friend’s eyes, tried to tell him everything he couldn’t say. Benny nodded reluctantly, understanding in his eyes, and ran over to put pressure on the wound.

Alastair stalked forward, and Dean scrambled to his feet, unsheathing his angel blade. He smiled a little at Alastair’s raised eyebrows. That’s right, we came prepared this time.

“You wanna play dirty?” Alastair inquired, not looking in the least bit threatened.

Dean’s smirk faded a little. “Well, you started it. Let her go, and I’ll come with you.”

Alastair tapped his chin, then shrugged. “Alright. You’re free to go, whore.”

Dean stumbled back as Lindsey tore off her bonds and removed her gag, climbing her feet. “It’s about time,” she grumbled, eyes flashing black.

Dean’s jaw dropped, and he barely registered the angel blade flying from his hand. Sam yelled his name, and Dean belatedly looked over to meet his brother’s wide eyes. Dean wanted to tell him everything was fine, but he couldn’t make himself move. A cold hand clamped down on his shoulder, and Sam faded away, along with everything else.
C'mon, like you guys didn't see that coming. I guess you'll have to wait until Friday to see what happens next...
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In muted shock, Sam looked on the space Dean had occupied only moments before. The hum of the air conditioning seemed overly loud, muffling out everything else. He heard someone yelling, but he couldn’t make out what they were saying. Then time seemed to speed up, and he finally heard Benny shouting his name. He blinked and refocused on the small boy, six years old at most, bleeding all over the floor.

Sam reapplied pressure to the leg, then looked up to see that Benny had gotten the man to cover his own wound while he untied his wife. Sam looked down and realized he had yet to remove the boys bonds, and quickly shifted the pressure to one hand so he could do so. The boy had stopped crying and was slumped against the beam, eyes wide with shock. Sam clenched his jaw. Civilians first. If they didn’t take care of this properly, and soon, these people would die. Dean still had some time. Besides, Alastair probably didn’t want to kill him.

Somehow that seemed worse.

The woman immediately ran over to her son when she was free, and although she was frantic, her hands weren’t shaking and she knew where to apply pressure without Sam having to show her - she was probably a nurse or an EMT, which would make things a little easier. Benny helped the man up the stairs while the woman carried her son. Sam called 911 as he brought up the rear, forcing himself not to look back as they left the basement.

Once they were outside, Sam dragged the first aid kit and some towels from the trunk of the impala. He gave one towel to the man for his shoulder, then another to the woman for the boy’s leg. Sam decided not to break out any pain pills - that would just make things more complicated when the paramedics got there.

Sam flicked a glance at Benny, who had distanced himself quickly from the family. His fists were clenched, but his features remained distinctly human, and Sam felt an unexpected rush of respect for the vampire. He knew from Dean what it was like to crave like that. Hell, he’d craved like that himself.

Shaking himself from his thoughts, he put a hand on the woman’s shoulder. “Hey, what’s your name?” he asked gently.


“Jennessa, your family’s gonna be fine, okay?” Sam assured. Just as Jennessa nodded, Sam made out the distant sound of sirens growing closer. “Look, we gotta go,” Sam said regretfully. “Do you think you’ll be okay from here?”

Jennessa choked out an affirmative, and Sam and Benny hurried over to the car, pulling away without responding to her shouted “Wait, you never told me your names!”

Only once they were outside town did Sam slow down, processing the blood coating his hands and the astronomical absence in the car. He could feel himself trembling slightly, but ignored it and tried to focus on the road.

The roiling mix of emotions in his gut only served to further his exhaustion, and he wondered how it
was possible to be so simultaneously furious with and worried about someone. Damn Dean and his self-loathing, self-sacrificing, bull headed tendencies.

“Maybe we should find a place to hole up, chief,” Benny ventured. Sam wanted to argue, but he knew they wouldn’t be able to activate the tracking spell until they stopped, and he also knew that running the impala off the road wouldn’t help anyone. He’d just have to hope Dean was holding up for now.

It was a couple miles until the next exit, and Sam forced himself to relax, think through what happened. He glanced over at Benny. “Hey, with that family back there… how did you, you know…”

Benny frowned a little. “I drink blood, man, not people.”

Sam bit his lip, nodded. Kept driving.

They ended up checking into a shabby hotel just off the main road, only getting one room on account of Benny not needing sleep anyway. It was still a double, a decision the vampire didn’t question. They quickly set up the spell, and with a few muttered word of latin, it activated.

Sam stared down at the map of the continental US, not noticing any change at first. Then a black film settled over the states, and Sam rocked back on his heels, blowing out a breath. Benny looked up skeptically. “So, what? We lookin’ for a black cloud?”

Sam shook his head, still staring at the map. “Now we wait.” Magic was a fickle tool, and it would take time to locate it’s target. Maybe if Sam were a psychic or a witch this would go faster, but he wasn’t, so all they could do was have patience.

Sam wondered how much patience Dean could afford.

Dean was pretty sure he’d never closed his eyes, which didn’t help explain why he couldn’t see anything.

The darkness was suffocating, like being trapped in a cloud of demon smoke - and damn, wasn’t that just the perfect metaphor? Dean was well-trained, though, and if he’d been thinking clearly, he would’ve been focused on his other senses, trying to find out more about his surroundings.

But all he could think about were Sam’s wide eyes and the cold fingers gripping his shoulder, because now he was here, but where was -

“Like the place, Dean?”

Alastair’s taunt echoed from every direction, bouncing off walls that felt too close for comfort. Dean twisted to locate the voice, but metal dug into his wrists and ankles, keeping him in place. At that point, he decided he must have lost a little time in between then and now .

“Of course, you can’t see much of it. I wanted to keep it a surprise. Let’s fix that, shall we?”

Dean cringed as dull light flooded the room with a soft whirring noise, still too sharp for his poorly-adjusted retinas. He squinted through the glare, trying to make sense of his environment.
Old lights stuttered over a barren, broken room, covered in dust and cobwebs. An assortment of exposed pipes snaked across the ceiling, and the walls were a patched mixture of metal and brick, littered with grates that let in the merest amount of fresh air. It was only when Dean saw the imprint of majestic wings scorching the floor, the mark of an angel’s death, that he truly recognized the room.

He felt himself tense in his shackles as crushing, horrific memories washed over him in acidic waves. He knew this room. This room had been the beginning of the end for him, not so very long ago.

Alastair stepped into his vision, looking around nostalgically. “You know, this was the last place I ever saw before your brother fried me. But it has so many better, sweeter memories than that, don’t you think?”

Dean stared at the ground, wishing that this was just another twisted dream, or that he was drunk off his ass, or both. Alastair grabbed his chin, forcing him to meet his eyes. Dean shuddered.

“What, got nothing to say?” Alastair pouted. “What happened to that Winchester wit I’ve come to know and love?”

All Dean mustered was a glare. Alastair sighed, then drove his fist into Dean’s jaw with such might that Dean’s head snapped back against the wall.

“Disappointing. So, so disappointing,” Alastair tutted as Dean spat a glob of blood out of his mouth. “No clever comeback? No bad jokes?”

“Go screw yourself,” Dean growled.

Alastair tapped his chin lightly, watching Dean like a bug under a microscope. “There’s something different about you, isn’t there?” he hummed. “You know, I heard you took a tour through Purgatory recently. Wasn’t sure I believed it, but here you are, running on more base instinct than brain power.” Alastair shook his head sadly. “And I thought I burned all that out of you.”

“So you know where I’ve been. Now you tell me where you spent your summer vacation,” Dean leered, hopelessly struggling to maintain some semblance of confidence.

“Curious, are we?” Alastair sauntered over to a half-hidden table against the wall to Dean’s right, fiddling with something at waist height. “Well, one minute I’m getting dropped into the abyss by brother dearest, next thing I know I’m back downstairs, home sweet home. Best guess, it has something to do with our pal Cas going crazy and opening up that monster-infested shithole. Everything’s connected, you know,” Alastair picked something up, turned it, and the sharp edge of a knife caught the light.

Dean swallowed. He had questions, needed to know whether anyone else had come back, needed to know what Alastair had been doing for the last two years, needed to know where Lindsey was, but all his concerns narrowed down to the tip of the knife.

The knife wasn’t the most threatening torture instrument wielded in hell, not by a long shot. But when held by a master, by Alastair, it was certainly the most efficient. Alastair knew how to do things with that knife that no one up here could dream of, not even Sam, because for all his brother’s painful experience, he’d never felt the vicious accuracy of Hell’s chief interrogator.

Alastair turned around, knife in hand. He twirled it idly between his fingers, watching it slice through the air with a morbid fascination that ill-suited the man he was wearing. Dean watched the knife just as closely, remembering how it would feel when the blade cut through him instead of air.
The knife stopped moving, and Alastair held it still as he met Dean’s eyes. Dean forced himself not to look away. “Let’s make some introductions before we get started, shall we?”

Confusion momentarily drowned out fear, and Dean’s gaze darted around the room. A dark form unfolded itself from a shadowed corner behind a support beam, and Lindsey stepped into the light, looking much more put-together than she had before. Dean would even say she looked good, if it wasn’t for the black eyes.

“Dean,” she purred, lilting accent colored with European instead of Cajun. “It’s such a pleasure to see you again.”

“Sorry, have we met?” Dean asked, forcing brashness into his weak voice.

“Why, Dean,” the demon smiled, slow and venomous and… familiar. “Don’t you remember me? Remember how you cut into me on that rack? I’d think it would be difficult to forget. After all, I was your very first.”

Dean stared at her, uncomprehending. Then his eyes widened and his blood ran cold.

“Bela?”

Chapter End Notes

Not gonna lie, I struggled with Sam's bit a little, but Dean and Alastair were so fun to write... and I particularly pride myself in this cliffhanger. Until Monday!

PS: the wings on the floor of the room are Uriel's, if you don't remember from 4x16 - it's a throwback, I know. I had to re-watch the episode myself.
Benny leaned back against the impala, staring at the last remnants of sunlight draining into the horizon. He’d left his camper at the diner with Elizabeth, but he’d thrown his cooler into the trunk of Dean’s car. After all, he needed to top off just as much as the next guy.

This whole situation was a new level of crazy for him. Sure, he’d heard about demons, but he wasn’t completely sure he believed they existed until he’d met Dean. Monsters were one thing - hard to deny their existence when you were one. But the horror in Dean’s eyes was too sharp to be imagined, and he’d known then that some sort of hell was real enough. And then, of course, he’d met Cas, and that really sealed the deal.

Strange to think that angels could die. Benny set the empty plastic container in the cooler, stared up at the stars. He wondered if there was a heaven up there, whether angels got to return home when they were ripped from life.

Benny knew Dean felt guilty about Cas. He didn’t know exactly how it all went down, but he knew Dean, and Dean would’ve done his best to save anyone he considered a brother. He’d saved Benny’s hide more than once, and now Benny needed to return the favor.

This demon was smart, that much was obvious, and he’d forced Dean to choose between himself and innocents. Benny didn’t regret saving those people, but he regretted that he hadn’t found a way to save his friend, too.

Dean was strong, though. He was the strongest person Benny had ever met, and he would hold out until they got there. Benny was sure of it.

Until then, he had an obligation to watch out for Sam. Benny might’ve only known Dean for a year, but they’d fought together, and they didn’t need words to know what the other was saying. In that last look Dean had sent him, he’d asked for a promise, and Benny was never one to break his promises.

Slamming the trunk closed, Benny walked back to the motel room, not bothering to knock before entering. Sam barely looked up, switching periodically between staring at the shrouded map and searching uselessly on his laptop.

Benny wordlessly dropped into the chair across from Sam, glancing at the map. The black film had faded from the left side of the map, and seemed to be slowly narrowing down to the east coast. That was good news, at least, since they were already east of the Mississippi.

Minutes ticked by, droning on with the rhythmic tapping of the keyboard. Sam’s shoulders were hunched up, and there were dark smudges already growing beneath his eyes. He probably wasn’t doing anyone any good by running himself ragged, but Benny didn’t say anything. Sam was a lot like his brother in some ways, and Benny figured any remarks on his probable exhaustion would not
be appreciated.

The air was uncomfortable between them, and Benny eventually got up to get Sam a coffee. Sam nodded his thanks, but it was accompanied by a look that said *this doesn’t mean I trust you, got it?*

Benny sighed, attacked one of the many elephants in the room head-on. “So what’s going on between the two of you, anyways?”

Sam’s jaw ticked a little. “What?” he asked sharply.

“The way he talked about you down there, I figured you were perfect, you know?” Benny chuckled a little. “First impression threw me off a little.” He looked at Sam, harder this time. “I see it now, though. You’d do anything for him, just like he would for you.”

Sam averted his gaze, swallowed, then returned to his computer, the pale glow deepening the shadows on his face. A few more minutes dragged by, and Sam paused without looking up. “Thanks for… you know, for helping those people. I know it’s hard to…” Sam trailed off. “And for… Dean said you’ve never let him down, and just… thanks for that,” Sam finished quietly, looking down.

Benny nodded, touched by the sentiment. He felt there was more Sam wasn’t saying, but he wouldn’t push. Sam and Dean cared about each other, that much was obvious. Maybe they just had trouble telling each other that.

Dean stared at her, uncomprehending. Then his eyes widened and his blood ran cold.

“Bela?”

The demon sauntered up to him, ran her hands slowly down his chest. Dean shuddered, tried to pull away, when she dipped her hand into her pocket and deftly pulled the hex bag out, eyeing it critically before dropping it disdainfully to the ground. “I think we both know you can do better than that, don’t we?”

Dean swallowed, mouth suddenly dry. “You been riding that chick around this whole time?”

The opaque film lifted from Lindsey’s eyes, revealing the soft hazel underneath. She smiled, slow and self-assured, and Dean wondered how he hadn’t seen it sooner. “Did I ever tell you I went to acting school? Didn’t stay long, but I was a natural.”

Dean tried not to swallow again. “Of course you were.”

Alastair stepped up next to Bela, shadows spilling around him like ink. He rested a bony hand on her shoulder, wrapping long fingers tightly around fabric-covered flesh in a possessive gesture that made Dean want to vomit. “As fun as this has been, I think it’s time my old apprentice and I have a long-overdue chat.”

Something sharp flashed briefly in Bela’s eyes, traces of lightning flickering across a cloudy sky, but it was gone as quickly as it had come. She turned to make her way out of the room, then paused. “Would you like me to disable their tracking spell, too?”

Dean froze. Without the hex bag he was practically defenseless, but without the tracking spell -
But Alastair laughed, loose and grating. “Let them come. We’ll need someone for Dean to practice on soon enough.”

The words were so familiar that Dean almost forgot where he was, when he was. He almost forgot that Alastair was talking about Sam. He opened his mouth, not sure what he planned on saying, wires and old wounds overlapping and short-circuiting his brain.

“What?” someone said, voice weak and shaky. It took Dean a moment to realize it was him.

Alastair turned to him, all traces of mirth replaced by millenia-old cruelty. “You didn’t think I’d just play with you and throw you away, did you? No, Dean. I’m going to remind you what you really are.”

Sam looked at the map again. It had been almost eight hours since Alastair had taken Dean, and they’d gotten nowhere. It was time to find other options.

He got up, closing his laptop and grabbing the weapons duffel from the bed. Benny stood up with him. “Where’re we going, chief?”

Sam slung the duffel over his shoulder. “I’m gonna go find Dean. You stay here and watch the map.”

“Whoa, let’s just think about this for a minute,” Benny placated. “What do you mean, you’re gonna go find Dean? We don’t even know where he is yet!”

“I mean,” Sam gestured frustratedly at the shadow-covered map, “this isn’t working! We don’t know how much time Dean has, so I’m going to find other options. I need you to watch the spell in case it finds Dean before I do.”

Benny shook his head stubbornly. “No way. We can’t split up right now.”

“Why the hell not? We both want to get Dean back, and this is the way to do it.” Sam stared Benny down, challenging him to give Sam a reason to back down.

Benny met his eyes evenly, searchingly. He nodded, once, and Sam turned to make his way out the door.

“Sam.”

Sam stopped without turning around. There was a short pause.

“Be careful, alright?”

Sam knew the warning was more out of respect for his brother than concern for him, but he nodded anyway, steely determination emboldening him as he made his way out the door. It was time to reach out to some old friends.

“You’d do anything for him, just like he would for you.”

Benny had no idea how true that was.
Benny didn’t stay behind to watch the map.

Sam had had a wild look in his eyes, one Benny had seen in Dean more than once. One that meant he would do anything to get to his brother, at any cost to himself. However admirable that loyalty was, he couldn’t let Sam go out there alone to do whatever he was planning on doing. He had an obligation to Dean, and despite everything, he had to admit that the lanky hunter was growing on him a little. He had fire, that was for sure.

Benny waited until Sam was pulling out of the lot to get into a nearby station wagon. He’d pickpocketed the owner when they’d bumped in the lobby - old habits never died.

He located the impala quickly, the moonlight gleaming off it’s chrome roof as it sped down the nondescript road. Benny followed at a distance, aware that Sam would easily notice another presence on the lonely asphalt lane.

Eventually Sam pulled over into a deserted park-and-ride, and Benny drove past to keep up the facade. Once Sam was about a third of a mile behind him, he did a U-turn and parked on the shoulder. Never let it be said that century-old vampires weren’t good drivers.

He jogged quickly to catch up to the young hunter - he could thank Purgatory for making him a decent runner, at least - and slowed once Sam came into view. There were some sparse clumps of trees scattered around, and Benny took cover in one of them, counting on the shadows to hide him from sight as dewey grass soaked his elbows and a mosquito tried to find purchase on his skin. The irony of the insect’s dilemma didn’t escape him.

Sam had found a cross section of road near the small parking lot, and was using spray paint to create a large pentagram on the ground, encircled by another line of red paint. Then Sam hauled assorted materials from the trunk of the car, none of which Benny could recognize from a distance, besides the shining silver knife he stuck in his belt loop. He walked to the center of the circle and threw several items into a bowl, his words carried to Benny on the wind as he chanted something softly. Finally Sam struck a match and dropped it into the bowl, igniting the contents, and backed out of the circle.

Benny wasn’t quite sure what any of that was supposed to do until he saw the short, suit-clad man appear in center of the circle.

The man surveyed his surroundings with a critical eyebrow. “Really, Sam? A crossroads? A bit overkill, don’t you think?” the man scoffed, British accent somehow making him sound even more condescending than one might expect from someone critiquing a summoning ritual location.

Sam ignored the man’s taunt. “How long has he been back, Crowley?”

Crowley studied his fingernails, as if searching for blemishes. “Who?”

“Alastair!” Sam barked.

Crowley looked up then, surprise coloring his features. “So, he’s finally come topside. I was wondering when he’d get around to that.”

Sam opened his mouth as if to demand more answers, but Crowley cut him off. “A few demons -
and angels, I’d wager - filtered back into our cozy little realm when Castiel betrayed me and opened a door to Purgatory. Everything’s connected, you know.”

“He’s been back for *two years*?” Sam shouted, hands clenched into fists.

“Now, now, Samantha,” Crowley mocked. “No need to get your panties in a twist. He’s been surprisingly cooperative - doesn’t really mind who’s running the place as long as he gets to do as he pleases. Not to mention, he’s great for advertising.”

Sam threw out his arms frustratingly. “What, so he’s been running around in Hell, and you’re just letting him carve up whoever he wants?”

“Well,” Crowley said slowly, “that is what Hell’s for.”

Benny narrowed his eyes at the exchange, ignoring the pinecone digging into his side. This was another demon, that much he could figure. But how he knew Sam, or why he acting like he was in charge of the place, was beyond him.

“Can you at least tell me where he is?” Sam tried, desperation sharpening his tone.

Apparently the demon sensed the desperation too, as his lips curled up at the corner. “Sure. What do I get out of it?”

Sam’s demeanor suddenly cooled, and he took a threatening step forward. “You get to walk away.”

Crowley sighed. “Winchesters. Always so cliche.” He whistled, and Benny became aware of the roar of an approaching engine. Beams of light pierced the darkness less than two hundred yards away, and grew rapidly as the vehicle sped towards them.

Sam spun on Crowley, eyes wide and jaw set in frustrated rage. “How?”

Crowley shrugged smugly. “Wouldn’t be royalty if I didn’t have an entourage, now would I?”

Benny cursed and pushed himself to his feet as three demons sprang out of the SUV. Two of them rushed Sam, while the last ran towards the devil’s trap containing Crowley.

By the time Benny got there, Sam had taken down the first demon with a knife to the chest, but the second got a hit in before Sam could raise the knife again. The demon, a short, greasy-haired man, hefted his own weapon, but Benny jumped into the fray. He brandished Dean’s angel blade, stabbing the man in the back and severing his spine. The light flickered out of the demon’s eyes, and he collapsed to the ground.

Benny extended a hand to Sam, pulling him to his feet. “You alright there, brother?”

Sam nodded, breathless. “How did - Where - ” he stammered, staring at the angel blade.

Benny glanced down at the blade. “Oh, this little old thing? Picked it up where Dean dropped it. Figured it might come in handy.”

Sam opened his mouth to say something else, but his eyes shifted the the right, caught by a flash of movement. Benny turned to see the two remaining demons standing together outside the trap, Crowley tilting his head knowingly, curled lips half-hidden behind salt-and-pepper scruff.

“See you around, boys. Give Dean my best regards.” And with the hardly any indication that they’d ever been there, the demons were gone.
Benny blinked in confusion. Sam simply huffed out a breath and walked over to the trap, like this was a typical occurrence for the younger Winchester. He crouched down to run his hand over a breach in the red paint. “Dammit,” he swore. He stood up, and turned to face Benny. “Were you there the whole time?”

Benny shrugged. “You complainin’?”

Sam smiled a little at that. “No, man. Not at all.” The smile faded as he examined the devil’s trap again. “Didn’t get much for our trouble, though.”

“You know how he’s here. That’s gotta count for something. What’s this about Cas cracking Purgatory open?”

Sam stared at him for a moment. “Weird to think that you knew him,” he muttered. He glanced at his watch, and began making his way back to the impala. “Cmon, we have to check the tracking spell.” He stopped and looked around, as if just realizing something. “How’d you get here anyway?”

Benny lifted the keys into the air. “Stole a car. Should probably return it before they notice, though.”

It wasn’t funny, wasn’t even meant to be, but Sam laughed anyway. Benny grinned, and thought maybe his promise to Dean wouldn’t be so hard to keep.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the late update, AGAIN! Things have been a little hectic over here, and this chapter desperately needed some reparations, possibly still does, to be honest. Anyway, not a cliffy for once!...kinda. Yeah, this was basically a filler, but it’s necessary. The next chapter should be a little more exciting.
Dean gritted his teeth, biting back a scream as the knife dug into his ribs, scraping across bone.

Alastair finally pulled the knife free with a flourish, but it offered no relief. Dean knew this was only the base on which to build up the torture, the first of many marks to be made on his skin that day.

“How does it feel, Dean? Being back up on the rack? I know it’s not the same, but I can tell you missed it,” Alastair said, bringing the knife up for inspection. He put it down on the table, picking up a bag of salt. “Then again, judging on how quickly you got off of it the first time, I’m guessing you miss the carving more than the being carved.”

Dean glared at Alastair through blurry vision. “You always did talk too much.”

“Well, you would think so,” Alastair said thoughtfully. “I’ve always preferred the more psychological approach to torture, but you - your style was always more savage. Less talking, more tearing.”

“Oh, shut up,” Dean groaned, letting his heavy eyes slip closed.

Only to immediately fly open, and he let out a harsh, unprepared shout as his chest seemed to ignite from beneath the surface. He gasped as the sensation dulled slightly, looked down to see salt coating the cut on his chest. No, not just coating it: pressed into it.

Alastair stepped back, returned the salt to the table. “I’ve been studying up on you. Helped your brother stop the apocalypse - not too thrilled about that, by the way. Almost let Michael wear you to the dance, too, I hear. Always give up so easily, do we?”

Dean didn’t respond, letting his head sag against his chest as waves of exhaustion and pain pulsed through him.

“Then you went and got yourself a real, live family,” Alastair chuckled. “I would include them in our little party, but I don’t think I could make that whole situation any worse than you already have.”

Alastair grabbed his chin, forcing Dean to look him in the eyes again as he drove a red-hot knife into the muscle above his collarbone.

This time Dean screamed, hoarse and raw as the blade carved a fiery trail from his shoulder to the tender skin beneath his arm. He cried out as the knife was ripped from his flesh, only to tense as the tip of a scalpel was pressed against his knee.

But then the sharp tip was pulled back, as Alastair leaned forward and dug bony fingers into the salt-covered wound on his chest. Dean groaned in pain before clamping his jaw shut, trying to focus on anything else.

“You know, through all our years of knowing each other, I’ve discovered the most fascinating thing,” Alastair sang. “No one needs to take anything away from you, because sooner or later, you’ll just take it from yourself.”

“And through all these years, I’ve discovered that you’re a massive dick,” Dean panted.
Alastair sneered, and the scalpel dug into his knee. Dean didn’t say anything for a while after that.

Sam gripped the wheel tightly, any peace of mind he’d managed quickly stripped away with the constant picking of worry at the back of his thoughts. Rays of sunshine were just beginning to peek over the horizon, casting the dreary countryside in a grayish glow. Dean had been gone - had been with Alastair - for around twelve hours now. Twelve hours unaccounted for, in which any manner of things could’ve been done to him.

Some part of him, impossibly, hoped Dean would find his own means of escape, save himself. And while the notion usually wasn’t entirely ludicrous, these weren’t usual circumstances. Alastair had a hold over Dean, and more than that, he was impossibly clever. Like a serial killer with a fixation for knives and a penchant for torture. He was practically Hell’s version of Elizabeth Bathory. Or more accurately, Bathory was Alastair’s watered-down carbon copy.

Sam scrunched his brow, forcing all useless serial killer statistics to the back of his head. Crowley hadn’t provided anything relevant, and right then, they were two steps behind just about every demon involved. Which, for all Sam knew, might be all of them.

At least he knew how Alastair had gotten back - and frankly, he was almost glad Cas wasn’t around for that conversation. The guilt of killing scores of humans and angels had already been too much for the angel. But bringing back Alastair, the scourge of heaven, Dean’s very own personal nightmare? That would have destroyed him.

Sam flicked a glance at the rearview mirror. There were thankfully no other cars on the road, just the tacky station wagon Benny had stolen riding close on the impala’s metaphorical heels. Sam was a little surprised that the dinky car could keep up, since he was pressing the pedal down hard enough to leave indentations on the floor of Dean’s baby.

Dean’ll kill you for that, he thought. Then he fervently hoped Dean would, because that would mean Dean was in a state of mind to care.

Sam remembered how Dean had been after their last encounter with Alastair. His brother should’ve been dead, for all life left in his eyes. He’d been well and truly broken, more than Sam had ever seen him. It had taken Dean years to redesign and reconstruct whatever shields and safeguards he’d needed to keep everything locked down tight, but Sam had always known that Dean wasn’t really better. Stronger, yes, but still not all there.

After Purgatory, things had changed. Dean had been different. Not like Dean before Hell, or after Hell, although he carried traces of both. No, Dean still hadn’t been all there, but the part of him missing seemed to have relocated to the monster afterlife, and Sam had thought maybe that was better. Because Dean was more intense, maybe, and definitely more aggressive, but he was also tougher, more resilient. Sturdier. And Sam thought he would take a little less of the Dean he knew if it meant a little less pain for his brother.

Now, though, after seeing Alastair again, after meeting Benny again, after everything that had happened the last few days - now Sam knew that wasn’t true. Purgatory hadn’t moved Dean’s missing piece. It had broken off another one. All Sam could hope for was that he’d get to his brother in time to salvage whatever was left.
Sam blinked at the suddenly rapidly approaching motel sign, and had to spin the wheel sharply to the left to make the turn. He wasted no time parking, screeching to a halt in the center of the lot and hopping out of the car almost before it had completely stopped. Sam hardly noticed Benny swerving wildly to avoid the impala as he sprinted to their room, feet thudding dully on the eroded concrete.

He burst through the door to see the map lying meekly on the table, black film receded to cover the center of the east coast - primarily, Virginia. Sam had barely registered the information before he was slinging his already-packed duffle over his shoulder and heading back to the car.

Benny had just let the door fall shut behind him on his way in, and Sam immediately tugged it open on his way out. Benny pivoted around to follow him. “Hey, where you goin’?”

Sam didn’t bother to look over his shoulder as he called out, “Virginia. The spell’s closed in enough that we can at least get a headstart.” He looked up as a few fat raindrops landed on his head. Perfect.

After throwing the duffles into the trunk and slamming it closed, Sam skirted around Benny as he went back inside to grab the map. It wasn’t ideal, but they’d have to lay the spell out in the backseat on the way there. Sam moved to the driver’s door, was just about to open it when he noticed Benny still standing in the room’s doorway.

Sam thumped the roof of the impala impatiently. “You coming or what?”

Benny rubbed the back of his head, peering into the abandoned room. Sam huffed out a breath. “What is it?”

A shadow crossed the vampire’s face as he turned back to the car. “Nothin’. It’s nothin’.”

The rain picked up quickly, and they got into the car just as it began pouring down. Sam paused for a second, key halfway to the ignition, glancing back at the motel room with the unexplainable itch that he’d forgotten something.

Then the hurried anxiety of the last few hours reminded him of his priorities, and he revved the engine. The car rumbled forward, cloaked from any curious motel residents by heavy rain, and they were on their way.

As soon as the black, ‘67 Impala pulled out of the parking lot, the angel released the shadows that he had used to cloak himself. He watched as the retreating car slowly disappeared over the eastern horizon, and he smiled.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Posting a bit early! I didn't want to make you guys wait until really late on Monday, so here you go.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Dean blinked slowly, hazily processing the fact that he wasn’t in pain.

Well, that wasn’t true. His knee hurt and his chest hurt and his shoulder hurt and actually everything fucking hurt, but there wasn’t any pain being inflicted on him at that very moment, which was new. In fact, all things considered, Alastair had gone easy on him. And while that had its perks, it certainly didn’t bode well.

Dean looked up, watching the room spin with detached fascination before it clicked (more or less) back into place.

The sky had dulled to that ashy, gray stage where it wasn't day anymore but it wasn’t really night, either. The weak light filtered in through the grates leading outside, somehow making Dean feel even more trapped. The table near the wall was littered with implements, more used than not. He cringed a little at the sight of his fresh blood staining the floor, covering where he’d bled the last time he was there.

“Look who’s finally awake,” came a decidedly bored sneer from the far side of the room. Dean jerked his head up to see Lindsey - or rather, Bela - leaning up against the far wall, eyeing him reproachfully.

“Where’s the boss?” Dean coughed out, wondering if the frigid air was giving him pneumonia or some shit. Would be just his luck, too.

Bela stretched against the wall, cat-like. “Out.”

Dean raised an eyebrow. “What, like running errands or something?” The visual image of Alastair zipping around Target with a shopping cart was almost enough to make him burst out laughing right then and there, and if that wasn’t an indication he had a few screws loose, he wasn’t sure what was.

She didn’t say anything, just crossed her arms and watched him. Her predatory gaze settled over him in a way that made him just a tad uncomfortable, and he tried shifting his position a little, but only managed to remind himself that metal chains were digging into his wrists and ankles.

Eventually Dean blew out a breath, the awkward silence getting to him. “You planning on taking a turn with the slicing and dicing? Might as well get started.”

“Trust me, I’d love to,” Bela growled. “But Alastair wants you in one piece.” The edges of her lips curled. “He has plans for you.”

“Yeah, I got that,” Dean said. He scrutinized her for a minute, felt blood drip from his arm and chest.

“You really want this, Bela? Want to work with Alastair, carve me up? You’re better than this.”
“Oh, that’s adorable,” Bela snarled. “You’re the one who broke, remember? You’re the one who picked up the knife in the first place. I’m not better than this. I’m better than you.”

Dean flinched a little, tried to quell the overwhelming surge of guilt and shame that rose up in his gut. “Yeah, well, revenge isn’t all it’s cracked up to be,” he offered weakly.

And all of a sudden Bela was right there, hands clenched at her sides. “You think I don’t know that? I was never a saint, Dean, and after what you did to me, I’m not even human. Why should I give a damn about anything you have to say?” she hissed.

Dean stared at her resolutely. “Everyone deserves a second chance to do the right thing,” he said. “You gonna take it this time?”

She opened her mouth to respond, when the heavy door at the end of the room creaked open. “Having fun, lovebirds?” Alastair asked, a sneer underlying the false cheer in his voice.

Bela snapped her mouth shut with an audible click and stepped back, staring at Alastair as if waiting further instruction. Dean shook his head. *How the mighty have fallen*.

Alastair approached Dean, and he felt himself seize up a little, heart rate picking up even as his face remained motionless. He cursed his weakness as a knowing smile crept across Alastair’s face, like he sensed Dean’s fear. Which he probably did.

Dean braced himself for whatever the demon had in mind, but Alastair turned away and beckoned for Bela to follow him outside. Dean watched, powerless, as the two demons left the room, steel door slamming shut behind them.

The slam of the door seemed to echo throughout the room for a moment, before fading into nothing. Dean wondered distantly where Sam was, if he was looking for him. Maybe he’d just decided he was a lost cause, like he had while Dean was in Purgatory.

He mentally kicked himself. No, Sam was looking. He’d gotten the spell ready and everything, he knew where Dean was. Besides, Benny was with him, and Benny would always come.

*But even if they come*, Dean realized, *isn’t that exactly what Alastair wants them to do?*

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Sam parked a half mile away from the plant in Richmond about twelve hours after leaving the motel in Alabama, which was impressive time, especially considering the traffic. They had been halfway through North Carolina when the spell finally narrowed down on an exact location.

“Richmond,” Benny read from the backseat of the impala, where he’d moved once they decided one of them should keep an eye on the map. Sam had nodded, stayed on course, since they were headed in that general direction anyway. He tried to put his finger on the last time he’d been there, god, it must’ve been -

And he had to clamp down on the steering wheel to keep from swerving into a ditch, because the last time he’d been to Richmond was when the angels had kidnapped Dean to torture Alastair.

Sam remembered this town with a kind of blurry clarity, like the memory was too sharp to see properly. He remembered driving like a bat out of hell to get there, storming into the abandoned plant
with a frightening sort of righteous fury. Then Cas and Alastair and oh god Dean, and not much else until the hospital.

Now he found it strange that the property hadn’t been cleared and repurposed, but he supposed even regular people could sometimes feel when someplace had been touched by evil. Whether the evil had been Alastair or him, he wasn’t sure, but he was certain he didn’t want to know.

It was a little past seven in the evening, sun almost completely submerged over the edge of the horizon. A thick, chilly fog coated the air, making Sam feel like he was swimming as soon as he stepped out of the car. He gently closed the car door behind him, glared at Benny when he slammed his. The vampire shrugged.

“It’s not like they can hear us,” he said. Sam shook his head and went to the trunk to load up on weapons.

Frankly, it didn’t seem like they would be able to use much other than the angel blades - and Sam made sure they had the angel blades, because he knew from bitter experience that the demon knife wouldn’t work, not on Alastair. Regardless, Sam hoisted a duffle with salt, spray paint, and holy water, because if there was one thing this job had taught him, it was that you just never knew. He glanced over at Benny, who gave him a thumbs up while sheathing his own - Dean’s - blade, and they set off.

The American United Meat Processing Plant was ominous, to say the least. It was far outside of town, only barely qualifying as part of Richmond - there weren’t any other buildings around for at least a mile. It was all worn brick and rotting boards and grimy windows, a sign advertising its use plastered limply to its side. The plant was put together like a kid had repeatedly jammed round pegs into square holes, rooms and facilities stacked haphazardly on top of one other. The overcast sky and smothering fog blocked any light the setting sun might’ve provided, leaving the building with an eerie, desolate feeling.

Sam and Benny paused behind the crest of a nearby hill, lying down on the dewy grass and surveying the perimeter to get their bearings. At first glance there was no one guarding the facility, but Sam knew that didn’t necessarily mean anything. He narrowed his eyes and did a visual sweep of the area, trying to come up with their next move.

“Hey, Chief?” Benny murmured.

“Yeah?” Sam answered distractedly.

Benny tapped his shoulder and pointed, and Sam felt his eyes widen. Because there, outlined against the weathered side of the plant, were dark, feathered wings. Angel’s wings.

Sam tightened his suddenly sweaty grip on his angel blade, carefully set the weapons duffle on the ground. He signaled to Benny, and the two of them rose up from the cover of the hill, not bothering with stealth. They couldn’t fool an angel - not without a lot of forethought, something they definitely didn’t have.

Sam came to a stop in the gravel lot surrounding the building, Benny stepping up next to him. A great gust of wind ruffled Sam’s hair, accompanying the flapping of incorporeal wings, and a man in a business suit alighted in front of them, seemingly appearing out of thin air.

He couldn’t have been much younger than Sam, with olive colored skin and close-cropped dark hair. His eyes peered hawkishly out from under dark brows in the calculated manner which angels tended to employ, but Sam couldn’t say he’d ever seen this particular vessel in his life.
“You here for the demon?” Sam twisted the angel blade in his grasp, but not raising it, not yet.

The angel grinned a little. “You could say that.”

Benny advanced on the angel, clearly not having the same qualms about sporting his weapon. “I think what my friend here is asking, is are you with us, or are you with him?” Benny jerked his head toward the plant.

The angel’s face remained still in that sinister, holier-than-thou stare, and Sam found himself shuddering and thinking he maybe recognized it.

“Sam Winchester, friends with a vampire,” the angel shook his head. “And I thought you couldn’t fall any further.”

Sam clenched his jaw. “Who are you?” he demanded.

The angel’s grin widened, and his eyes lit up with a light that looked less heavenly and more manic. “You knew me as Uriel.”

Chapter End Notes

Probably a few more things that need fixing, but it's late and I'm tired, so bear with me. Next chapter should come on Friday as scheduled!
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sam only felt the briefest flash of shock before he was overwhelmed by a raw, burning anger. Honestly, at this point he wasn’t sure what it would take to truly surprise him.

He and Dean hadn’t known Uriel for very long, but it was long enough for Sam to know there were few other angels he hated as deeply. This was the angel that had let Alastair loose in the first place, back in this very same plant. He was the reason Dean’s throat had been damaged so badly that his voice had never been quite the same, always just a trace rougher, a hint deeper than before. And that didn’t even account for how he’d manipulated them and had been hell-bent on decimating an entire city. So yeah, Sam couldn’t exactly say he was happy to see Uriel.

And of course, they weren’t lucky enough to get any other angel back from wherever angels went when they died. Even Balthazar would have been an improvement.

“You always make a regular habit of working with demons?” Sam spat, not sparing the angel any ferocity.

Uriel chuckled, straightening the suit jacket on too-narrow shoulders. “Well, I’m certainly not going to align myself with any angels, with the way heaven is. Besides, the demon and I share a goal.”

“And what would that be?” Benny asked.

Uriel raised a slim eyebrow. “The same as it’s always been, of course.”

Sam stared at the angel for a moment. “You’re kidding,” he said disbelievingly. “After all this time, you still want to start the apocalypse. Is that what you’ve been doing since you got back? Trying to break the seals again?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, boy,” Uriel scoffed. “The seals can only be broken once. No. The demon and I intend to open the cage in a more direct manner.”

Sam shook his head, pushed down the hysterical urge to laugh. “You’re insane. That’s… You realize he’s only using you, right?”

Uriel’s face remained impassive, but his eyes gleamed dangerously. “I didn’t get the opportunity to destroy you before, Sam Winchester. There’s nothing stopping me now.”

Sam spread his arms out by his side. “Then what are you waiting for?”

Before he could blink, Uriel was there, blade arching toward Sam’s face. He only just managed to bring up his own blade to deflect the blow, and then they were locked in an endless exchange of strikes and blocks, a fatal dance of skill and chance. Sam threw everything he had at the angel, mind blank in his complete and total focus on the fight.

Alastair must have had other demons on guard, because during a split-second reprieve of the onslaught, Sam saw Benny taking on three assailants, with a fourth coming at him from behind. Sam was only barely able to shout a warning before Uriel was back on him, blade arching viciously at his chest. Sam ducked to avoid the swing, jabbed his own blade up blindly where it caught on Uriel’s forearm, cutting deeply enough that the angel dropped his weapon and stumbled back in shock.
Sam pressed his advantage, stabbing at Uriel’s chest. Uriel twisted out of the way just in time, making Sam miss his mark and puncture his shoulder instead.

Uriel let out a roar of anguish, striking at Sam before he could pull his blade free. Sam jerked to the side, but was unable to avoid the blow entirely. He cried out as the sharp edge sliced a fiery trial past his hip, but wasted no time in pulling his blade free and shoving it directly into Uriel’s heart.

There was a moment of calm, in which the whole world seemed to come to a halt. Then Uriel’s tainted grace was burning through his eyes and mouth, exploding outward with such force that the windows on the ground floor of the plant shattered, pushing Sam back to land hard on the gravel. He shielded his face from the brilliant light, removing his hands only when his surroundings regained their previous dull quality.

Sam knelt there for a moment, staring at the charred wings scarring the ground on either side of the body. Wondered who was missing their brother, or husband, or son, and would never know what happened to him. More than that, he felt a terrifying surge of triumph.

A primal cry pulled Sam from his reverie, and he looked up to see Benny taking on the last two demons one handed, right arm hanging limply by his side. Sam tried to climb to his feet, winced at a sharp pain in his side. He quickly inspected the cut, decided it wasn’t serious enough for more than a few stitches, and rushed over to aid Benny.

With Sam’s added manpower, the two of them were able to subdue the remaining demons relatively easily. Sam grimaced at the messy array of corpses littering the lot, but there wasn’t anything they could do about it right then. They’d just have to pray no one decided it was a good day for a stroll out of town, or more likely, that no teenagers came by to drink and throw art up on the walls.

Benny was carefully flexing his right hand, and Sam sent him a look. “You alright?”

“Fought with worse,” Benny said with a shrug. He glanced at Sam’s side. “You?”

Sam nodded impatiently, then turned back toward the plant. He cautiously approached a heavily rusted side door, knowing there were likely more reinforcements inside.

Sam kicked the door open easily, and made his way into the mysteriously empty and appropriately-dubbed slaughter hall. He allowed himself a moment to picture animals filling the broad pens lining the walls, the clinical precision with which they would be killed. Ironic that Alastair, and the angels, for that matter, would use such an establishment for torture. He shook his head and made his way across the lengthy room, keeping his guard firmly in place, Benny’s light footfalls trailing behind him.

As they walked, Sam tracked the relatively-fresh footprints disturbing the thick layer of dust on the ground. There were a lot of them. Too many to account for a handful of demons and one angel.

Sam knew the corridor at the end of the room led to an old freezer, which was where he’d found Dean last time. He figured he’d find his brother there again. He took a deep breath as they rounded the corner…

And immediately had it knocked out of him as something solid slammed him against the wall.

Surprisingly powerful lights illuminated the hallway, and a small army of at least twelve demons converged on the hunter and vampire duo. Benny quickly cut down the demon that had jumped Sam with his recently-acquired angel blade, but they were soon separated as they were swarmed with black-eyed attackers.
Sam cut down demon after demon, fueled by his need to get to his brother. Demon blood coated his chest and arms and even his face, and he would have grasped the significance of that if he’d had a thought to spare. Their fists and blades grazed Sam but never hit him head on - he was a whirlwind of fury, untouchable, invincible. And finally, there was no one left to kill, and he stood in the passageway, alone.

Alone.

Where was Benny?

Sam looked around frantically, unable to see past the haze of red - which he eventually realized was blood dripping into his eyes. He absentmindedly wiped his face with his sleeve, surveyed the carnage, searching for any sign of the vampire lying dead amongst the demons. But each body was just another faceless meatsuit, destined to be cut down without any say in the matter.

Sam felt a pang in his gut, but pushed it down to focus on matters at hand. He was sure now that there weren’t as many bodies as there had been assailants, which meant Benny wasn’t just gone, but that he’d been taken.

He had to go after Dean. It wasn’t even a question - if the situations were reversed, Sam knew what Dean would do. Sam was too close to give up now. Giving Benny a silent apology, Sam made his way down the hallway.

A sharp right turn had Sam facing down another corridor, this one shrouded in darkness as old lights flickered and sparked overhead. He immediately gravitated toward one of the many doors lining the wall, which was in remarkably good condition, considering he had practically ripped it from it’s hinges the last time he’d been there. Adjusting his grip on his blade, Sam reached for the handle.

“Hey there, Sammy.”

Sam stilled, turned slowly to see the sharp-angled businessman standing just down the hall, smile creasing his face in all the wrong places. Another light flickered, and Sam's eyes were drawn to the drops of blood decorating his otherwise-pristine shirt.

“You’re not going to stop me,” Sam said, unconsciously stepping back as he placed his hand on the door handle and extended his blade out in front of him.

Alastair’s smile grew, eyes cold and dead behind the unnatural expression. “Don’t be so sure.” He raised his hand, pressing forefinger to thumb.

The demon snapped, and everything went dark.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like the ending here is maybe a little rushed, but y'all know how it is with action scenes. And look, another Thanos Snap! I know, I know, as if we don't get enough of those already... but I couldn't resist ;) Next chapter should be up Monday, but due to my hectic life I'm not as caught up on writing as I should be, so we'll just have to see. I hope you enjoyed!
Benny had been two steps behind Sam when the younger Winchester was thrown into a wall.

They’d been making their way carefully across the hall and just stepping into the corridor beyond when light flooded the area, much brighter than it had any right to be. Benny had cringed and covered his face, enhanced retinas screaming from the exposure. It was only once his vision cleared a little that he was able to process what was going on and take notice of the demon assaulting Sam.

From then on it was chaos. Even the battle outside with the angel and his demonic companions couldn’t compare, although Benny’s injury and exhaustion from that fight couldn’t have been helping. His partially-dislocated shoulder refused to allow his right arm full range of motion, and he was forced to grit his teeth and rely primarily on his left side. Not that Benny hadn’t made do with worse, but as the tide of demons showed no signs of abating, he began to wonder whether he’d make it out of this one.

Every now and then he caught a glimpse of Sam, the gargantuan hunter carving a path with a single-minded fervor. Benny tried to make his way over to his companion, but the assailants were dead-set on keeping them separated. He struggled to cut through demons of all shapes and sizes, swarming his vision and so dense around him it was like swimming in barbeque sauce. Slowly they overwhelmed him, getting in more and more hits as he lost strength.

The gleaming hilt of a machete flashed to Benny’s right, seemed to arch down in slow motion. Sorry, brother, he thought, and reality slipped away.

Benny’s first realization upon awakening was that he was not, in fact, dead.

But if he hadn’t known that death led to a place even more pain-filled than this one, it almost would have been preferable. He squeezed his eyes shut as the hands dragging him across the floor wrenched his bad shoulder, the excruciating epicenter of the pain emanating throughout his body.

Reality dulled for a while after that, not completely gone, just muted. After what could’ve been hours or minutes, Benny registered that he was no longer being moved. He swallowed dryly, blinked. His eyes slowly adjusted to the room, and he found a variety of old, rusted machinery scattered around him in tatters, but when he tried to sit up and get a better look, he discovered the thick rope binding his hands and feet to the table he was lying down on. Except it wasn’t a table - tables didn’t tend to extend so far in either direction. No, this was much more likely a primitive conveyor belt, which helped him not at all.

Well, apart from the fact that it told Benny he was probably still in the plant - that was rather useful
information. Which wouldn’t matter at all if he couldn’t escape. God knew he couldn’t rely on anyone else for a rescue, not with Dean likely out of commission and Sam MIA as far as he knew. He silently hoped Sam had managed the impossible, and that he and his brother were already long gone.

But Dean would never leave him behind, which left a variety of possibilities that Benny didn’t want to think about.

Distant voices made their way into earshot, and he paused his musings to try to decipher their conversation. Gradually they became louder, and Benny relaxed onto the belt in an attempt to appear unconscious, fruitlessly willing the pounding in his head to fade.

“- said he wanted him alive,” a matronly voice declared.

“I don’t really get why,” another grumbled. “Might be fun to take a vamp for a joyride.”

“We have our orders,” a stern, but surprisingly young voice contributed. “He’s going to stay alive, and he’s not going to be moved. Unless you want another turn on the rack?”

Benny tried to slow his breathing as footsteps trod across the cement floor, growing ever closer to him before finally coming to a stop. If he’d had to guess, Benny would’ve said they were now on the other side of the room he was trapped in. He forced his body to remain limp, even as he carefully extracted a paper clip from the inside of his left shirt sleeve with his forefinger.

“You sure this is necessary, Chief?”

“Trust me,” Dean said, giving the paper clip one last demonstrative twist. “Things aren’t quite as easy upstairs as they were fifty years go. This’ll come in handy. Here,” he tossed Benny the clip. “You try.”

Unfortunately, the ropes wouldn’t be as easy to remove with a paper clip as, say, a pair of handcuffs, but Benny would just have to make do. He unobtrusively bent his fingers to get the right angle, and began scraping methodically at the rope.

“So what does he want us to do with him?” the grumbling voice asked, slightly mollified now.

Dainty footsteps edged closer, and Benny stilled his hand, willing his breath not to catch. “Alastair wants a lot of things from Benny Lafitte,” the young voice informed. A cold finger traced down Benny’s face, and he tried not to shiver. “But there’s nothing to come of a soul intact.”

Suddenly Benny’s cheek was stinging with pain, and he couldn’t keep his eyes from flying open as his head whipped to the side from the force of the blow. He desperately tried to orient himself, staring up at the demon until he (it?) came into focus.

Looking impassively down at him was a small boy, no older than ten or eleven years old. His features were slack and pale, eyes beetle-shell black. Stepping up next to him was a large woman, heavyset with graying hair knotted in a bun, and a lanky college-age kid, with dark circles under his eyes and a slim shadow of a beard. Benny thought distantly that they might be a family. Then the boy pulled out the hammer.

Benny immediately began struggling, abandoning any pretense of remaining unconscious. He tried to regain his grip on the paper clip, but felt it fall from his reach. The hammer rose, and Benny snarled, letting his fangs slide out as he strained against the ropes.

His efforts did nothing to keep the hammer from smashing down on the fingers of his right hand.
Benny howled, writhing in pain. He pulled harder against the ropes mindlessly, startled when he felt
the one he’d been picking at give a little. At first his thoughts were too jumbled to process what he
should do with that, but then the boy lifted the hammer again, and adrenaline pumped through his
system. With a ferocious cry, Benny surged upward from the conveyor belt. He tore clean through
the thick rope restraining his left hand, and reached over to make quick work of the ropes on his right
hand and ankles before rolling to his feet.

The demons stumbled back in shock, giving Benny the second he needed to regain his balance.
When they still didn’t move, Benny pulled a fat knife from a concealed pocket in his coat. “Little
tip,” he panted. “Might need a little more than rope to keep the likes of me down.”

The college-age kid brandished an angel blade, Dean’s angel blade, and they were on him. Benny
easily knocked the boy aside and swept the woman’s knees out from under her. The college kid bore
down on him, arching the blade toward Benny’s head. Benny easily caught it on the hilt of his knife,
twisting it to the side and disarming the demon before stabbing his knife deep into his gut. Before the
he could make another move, Benny swept up the angel blade from the ground and buried it in the
demon’s throat. With a surprised gargle and a dull glow, the demon collapsed to the ground.

Benny spun around to face the other two demons, just in time to see black smoke billowing out from
the woman and child before bursting out a nearby window into the night air.

Blowing out a breath, Benny allowed himself to slump briefly against the conveyor belt. The pain in
his head was dimming a little, but he’d need a little A-positive to heal up proper. Or any type, really.
He wasn’t picky.

But that would have to wait. Right then, he needed to find Sam and Dean. Dean had a habit of
getting into some deep shit on his own, and Benny suspected that if the brothers were together, the
situation wouldn’t improve.

Hefting his blood soaked blade and rolling his shoulders, Benny purposefully exited the room. He
had some Winchesters to save.

Dean had been unconscious again.

He wasn’t quite sure how, only that one moment he’d been awake, and the next he hadn’t. And that
now he was blinking his eyes open to an empty room. Empty all except for Sam, tied up against a
pillar, feet scraping the edge of Uriel’s fossilized wing.

The blood cloaked Sam in a blanket of red, and Dean had to search to meet his eyes among it all.
Sam’s exhausted gaze locked easily onto his, like he had been staring at Dean forever without really
seeing him. They hung there, suspended by silence, surrounded by absence.

Something seemed to click for Sam, because suddenly his gaze was raking over Dean, eyes wide
with shock and fury. “Dean?” Sam’s voice was small, trembling, making him seem farther away than
he was.

Dean managed a bare smile. “Took you long enough.”

Sam swallowed. “What did he do to you?”
“Less than I expected, actually. You?”

At Dean’s nod, Sam apparently realized that his skin was more red than anything else, and his hands shifted in his bonds, like he wanted to move to wipe it off. “Lotta demons,” he mumbled.

Of course Alastair had an army for Sam to fight through - Dean wasn’t sure what else he’d expected. But Sam shouldn’t have been alone, where was - “Benny?”

Sam’s gaze fell, mouth twisting in what Dean would’ve thought was regret if he didn’t know any better. “We got separated. I think some of the demons took him, I’m not sure where.”

The news was shocking, if only in that Benny and Sam had worked together long enough to get all the way there. Dean opened his mouth to ask another question, but at that moment, the door swung open.

Lindsey’s slim figure glided in first, loose and relaxed in a way it hadn’t been the last time Dean had seen Bela. Alastair followed, polished shoes tapping lightly against the rough cement.

The door had barely slammed closed behind them when Sam strained viciously at his bonds. “I’m gonna kill you,” he seethed. “Again.”

Alastair arched a brow. “Oh, I’d love to see that. You drink any of that demon blood you’re wearing, Sammy?”

He stepped toward Sam, casual-like, but Dean knew better. “Stay away from him!”

Alastair locked his eyes onto Dean, sadistic amusement twisting his expression. “Oh, Dean, did you forget already?” He slithered forward, and Dean couldn’t help but flinch back as Alastair wrapped his cool hand almost gently around the base of his throat. “You’re mine. And that means you don’t get any say in what I do to little Sammy here. Capiche?”

Dean shuddered reflexively, but forced open eyes that had slipped shut and felt his lips twist into a snarl. “You aren’t touching him.”

Alastair’s eyes were stone-cold cruelty, and for a second, Dean wondered if he’d gone too far. But then his lips curled, and he stepped back. “Of course, you’re right. We wouldn’t want to forget who the main event is, would we?” He tapped his chin, regarding Dean thoughtfully. “Speaking of which, I think it’s only fair my apprentice has a turn, don’t you?”

Dean’s blood ran cold. His gaze swiveled to Sam, who was regarding Bela, brows furrowed. Sam didn’t know. He knew the basics of what Dean had done, but he didn’t know this. And despite everything, Dean found that deep down, that scared him.

Alastair watched them with amusement. “Oh, that’s right. How rude of me not to make introductions. Sam, you remember Bela, don’t you?”

Alastair leaned in conspiratorially, looking positively gleeful. “Your brother broke in thirty, you know. And everyone needs to start somewhere.”
Dean stiffened, stared blankly at the far wall even as he felt Sam’s eyes on him. He couldn’t meet those eyes, couldn’t admit it, even though he knew looking away was telling Sam everything he needed to know.

“It took a bit to get him off the rack, but once he was off… Well, let me just say I’ve never had a more enthusiastic student. Isn’t that right, Bela?”

“That’s certainly one way of putting it,” Bela said, and Dean closed his eyes as her accent rasped painfully against his ears. Remembered what it sounded like hoarse and begging and screaming.

His head was being pulled down, a slender hand against the back of his neck. Bela narrowed her eyes at him, and Dean wondered when she’d gotten there. He could see Sam over her shoulder, blood-matted hair tangled in Alastair’s grip, gaze fuming. Bela rattled him, bringing his attention back to her.

Dean closed his eyes, waited for the blade to press into his skin, for the nails to dig into his still-throbbing chest or shoulder. He tensed as she leaned forward, breath hot on his ear.

“You owe me,” came the husky whisper. And then Dean’s eyes shot open as the chains fell away, and the steel-plated door burst open once again.

Dean crumpled to the floor, bloodless limbs refusing to support him. He must have lost a few moments, because when he looked up, demons were streaming into the room. Sam had somehow been freed, and was facing off against Alastair’s forces, side by side with… Benny? Dean blinked to clear his vision, watching his two best friends fighting back-to-back, with a synchronicity that simply shouldn’t have been possible.

Before Dean could marvel any more at the scene, someone was pulling him up from under the arms. “Come on, up you go,” Bela grunted, and Dean pushed to get his wobbly legs beneath him. He cast his hazy gaze around the room, but Alastair was nowhere to be seen.

Bela and Dean hedged around the fighting, making their way slowly toward the door. The sputtering cry of demons burning out of their hosts reached Dean’s ears more than once, and he thought dizzily that this had to be another trick, because there was no way Alastair would let them win.

“You’ve always been a quick learner,” Alastair remarked, appearing just outside the freezer door. Before either of them had time to react, Bela went flying back with a twitch of Alastair’s fingers. “I’ll deal with you later, sweetheart.”

Dean had a feeling he should have fallen over by then, as his vision swayed and blood dripped steadily from countless wounds, but he stayed upright and immobile. Alastair cocked his head at him as he strolled leisurely into the room. “And where do you think you’re going?”

Dean opened his mouth to respond, nothing but a harsh, wet cough coming out as Alastair increased the pressure on his chest, slowly crushing him.

Suddenly the room seemed much quieter, and Dean realized belatedly that there weren’t any other demons in the room, aside from Bela and Alastair himself. Only corpses.

That was around the same time that he noticed Sam launching himself at Alastair out of his peripheral vision.

Alastair actually seemed surprised by the attack, just barely managing to deflect Sam, who hit the ground and tumbled into a wall. Bela took the opportunity to rush Alastair, and he growled, tossing
her aside, only for the barrage to continue as Benny charged Alastair head-on, weapon clutched in his left hand as his right hung limply by his side.

Dean fell to one knee, Alastair having released him from his mental hold in the melee. He leaned forward to support himself with his hands, head bent as he felt the lightheadedness of blood loss sweep over him.

That was when he saw the angel blade.

Dean later realized that Sam must’ve dropped it when Alastair had thrown him, but in the moment, it hadn’t mattered. He crawled forward, arms threatening to buckle beneath him, unnoticed in the chaos of the fight. He was mere feet from it when his shoulder spasmed with pain, and he fell to his stomach. Dean groaned, lacerations on his chest screaming in pain.

Panting harshly, Dean slowly leveraged himself up onto his elbows and dragged himself across the ground in an army crawl, and finally stretched his arm out, fingertips just grazing the sharp edge of the weapon.

He heard Sam cry out in pain, and surging with desperation, Dean grit his teeth and closed his fist around the blade.

Time seemed to slow, and Dean dragged the blade back toward himself, grabbing it by the hilt this time. He looked up, and Alastair was crouched over Sam, fists pummeling into his face as Benny and Bela lay pinned to the floor nearby, helpless. Dean pushed himself up unsteadily, using every last scrap of energy to get to his feet. He limped toward Alastair, who’s back remained to him as he beat down on Sam. Dean’s vision tunneled, world narrowing down to the man on the ground and the blade in his fist.

Step after step, Dean drew closer, colors leaching from the scene before him as he walked until everything was black and white. Then Alastair was right there, and Dean let a heavy hand fall on his shoulder, leaned forward to put his mouth right next to his ear.

“You may have beat me, you son of a bitch, but you will never own me.”

And Dean shoved the angel blade straight through Alastair’s heart.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked that chapter - it definitely took me a lot of time to write! Part procrastination and part I-have-no-clue-where-im-going-with-this, I suppose. All in all, I think it turned out okay, but I did just edit it today and I'm a little under the weather - so if there are some things that sounded a bit weird, just keep in mind it was my fever-brain unable to make sense of the English language.

There's one more chapter left, then the epilogue, and I think I'll be posting them together provided everything goes smoothly. And don't worry, there are still some twists, and lots of angst, yet to come ;)
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Here's my VERY LATE final chapter... (please don't maul me). Enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For a single, eternal moment, everything was still.

No one seemed to breathe as the metal edge of the blade slid smoothly from Alastair’s back. Dean stood there, weapon slipping from numb fingers as he watched the demon tip forward. Blood pooled on the floor, glinting under the reddish-orange of the ancient industrial lights. Not for the first time, Dean wondered whose blood it was.

Then Alastair’s knees hit the ground, and a scream pierced the air. The demon’s borrowed skin smoldered as the twisted remnants of his soul erupted from the depths of his being, and he fell, becoming just one more corpse on the floor.

Dean stared at the body, uncomprehending. He slowly looked up and met Sam’s eyes, who was propping himself up on his elbow and gaping openly at him. Dean managed a weak smile, and plummeted to the ground.

Before his knees could buckle all the way, Benny was wrapping his arm over his shoulder, and Dean immediately leaned onto his friend, unable to take his own weight any longer.

Awareness came in fragments after that. One minute Sam was in his face, mouthing nonsense at him, and the next he was lying down in the backseat of the impala, his feet propped up on someone’s lap. Then it was all bright lights and scrubs and screaming machines, before everything was finally, blissfully, quiet.

Dean knelt in the foliage, breathing hard as he peered out at his surroundings. Two days. Two days since he and Benny had been separated by the vetalas, two days of running without anyone to watch his back. Not that he wasn’t used to that, but something had caught his scent, and it wasn’t letting him go easy.

He drew a bloody forearm across his forehead, wincing at the pull on his ribs. Damn things still hadn’t healed since the scuffle with the werewolves a couple days (weeks, months?) ago.

A low growl wove it’s way through the forest, and Dean’s vision blurred and shifted. He tightened his sweaty grip on the makeshift blade. Nothing moved.

Then it was exploding out of the bushes, in all its monstrous, red-eyed glory. Dean scrambled back, managing to roll away before its jaws ripped his throat open. He stumbled away from it, forcing
himself into a sprint as its harsh barks tore at the space behind him.

Air rushed shallowly in and out of Dean’s abused lungs as he raced away, feet slapping against the dry dirt and dead leaves beneath him. Shapes morphed and disjointed around him, causing him to narrowly avoid crashing into trees more than once.

The barking continued, spurring him into motion even when he thought he might drop from exhaustion. It was fear-fueled adrenaline, the result of memories he wished he didn’t have. So he kept running, because he didn’t know what he would do if he stopped.

And wasn’t this entire situation just a perfect metaphor for his life?

Suddenly a clearing opened up, and even with the exhaustion and the dehydration and the damn hallucinations, Dean recognized it. This was his and Benny’s last established rendezvous, not long before the vetala nest had found them. Which really meant Dean had just been running in a giant circle for the last two days, but he was too relieved to worry about the wasted time.

So relieved, he temporarily forgot he was being hunted by a hellhound.

Dean spun around, but he was too late. The weight of the hound was crashing into him, pinning him on the ground, twigs and rocks digging into his back. The beast stood over him, terrifying in all it’s gruesome glory.

Dean had never seen a hellhound before. For all his experience with them, they’d always appear in growls and sharp teeth, no visible indication of their existence - aside from a blurry outline and a pair of red eyes, with the assistance of holy fire-scorched glasses. Apparently those rules didn’t apply to Purgatory, because he could see this one in excruciating detail.

This one was massive. They all were, probably, but this one’s shoulder probably came up to his own, and it had to be at least seven feet long - not to mention the sheer amount of muscle rippling beneath its mangy coat. Strings of saliva dripped between its fangs as it growled deep in its throat, blood-red eyes piercing into Dean’s soul and condemning him.

Dean tried to scramble back, but the hound’s claws were digging into his shoulders, and he cried out in pain. He desperately reached for the blade he’d dropped, feeling along the ground for the coarse wood and coming up empty.

Then the hound was arching down toward his neck, and Dean couldn’t even raise an arm to defend himself with its claws in his shoulders. He squeezed his eyes shut.

The pain was excruciating. Fangs pierced the flesh and muscle between his neck and shoulder, and Dean couldn’t even cry out because he wasn’t in Purgatory anymore, he was in New Harmony being torn apart by beasts he couldn’t see, and Sam was screaming and he was screaming and he was burning burning burning but then he was waking up in a pine box and oh god he couldn’t breathe -

Suddenly the weight (of six feet of dirt, of the hellhound) was gone, and a wounded whimper came from somewhere a few feet away before being abruptly silenced. Then someone’s hands were on his face and chest, pressing something painfully to his neck while searching him expertly for more injuries.

“I can’t leave you alone for two minutes without you gettin’ into some kinda trouble, can I, brother?” Benny said breathlessly.

Benny?
Dean cracked his eyes open, which thankfully weren’t too offended by the dull light filtering into the clearing. Benny stood over him, blood splattered in his scruffy beard, eyes bruised and relieved and worried. Dean coughed, felt something wet moisten his lips, watched panic seep into Benny’s eyes.

“Where’ve you been?” Dean managed, and felt something shift in his chest. His ribs, maybe.

Benny ignored him. “This doesn’t look good, Dean.”

Dean tried to roll his eyes, but they fluttered shut instead. The throbbing pain in his neck faded a little, and so did he.

Then came the flames.

Something was dripping.

Dean looked down, expecting to see a puddle of blood gathering beneath him.

Instead, he furrowed his brows at the sharp tip of a knife, drops of red collecting and falling, one by one by one. He curled his fingers experimentally around the handle, surprised when they obeyed. Wondered at the rust embedded in the crevices of his hand.

He looked up, a question on the tip of his tongue. It froze before he could put it into words, falling from his lips and shattering on the ground.

“Why,” she said, not begging anymore, not able to. “Why.”

Dean stared, thought he should ask what had happened to her. Thought that maybe he didn’t want the answer.

A cold talon clamped itself down on Dean’s shoulder, and he didn’t think anymore. “Well done, apprentice.”

Dean opened his mouth to speak, but couldn’t get past the blood, and then it was surrounding him and choking him and it was dark and oh god he couldn’t breathe -

Dean’s eyes flew open, and he sucked in a ragged gasp of air. For a moment everything was too bright and too loud and too damn much, and his heart felt like it might pound right out of his chest, like he’d been running. Like he’d been bleeding.

His breathing gradually slowed, and he felt the adrenaline seep from him, leaving echoes of pain in its place. Dean leaned back with a grimace, raised heavy eyes to his dreary surroundings.

It was morning, that much he could tell. Soft light filtered in through thin blue curtains, bathing the room in an ethereal glow it had no right to exhibit. It was sparse to say the least - not much in terms of decoration, if you didn’t count the bed he was residing on and the veritable army of machines scattered around. The room was so familiar, so reminiscent of a thousand others he’d been in, that he almost didn’t take notice of Sam pillowing his head on the foot of Dean’s bed. He was practically a regular hospital accessory at this point.

Dean gazed out the window, sifting through the cobwebs in his mind and trying to separate then and now. Trying to let the pain ground him, instead of throw him spiraling into the past.
“Dean?”

With a start (and a wince), Dean looked to the end of his bed to find Sam staring at him, head just raised from his arms, hair mussed with creases from the blanket like print on his cheek. Though part of that might’ve been the inky color of the bruises blooming on his face.

“You alright?” Dean asked, brow furrowed, voice hoarse. He swallowed compulsively at the soreness, trying not to remember another time he’d woken up in this hospital after a meet-and-greet with Alastair.

Sam leaned back in his plastic chair, stretching with a grimace and pressing a hand briefly to his side before pulling it away. He scrubbed a hand through his ridiculous hair, and met Dean’s worried gaze earnestly. “I think I should be asking you that, man.”

When Dean kept staring, Sam sighed, relenting. “Just a few stitches and a bump to the head. That’s all.” He reached out to smack Dean lightly on the foot. “C’mon, humor me.”

Dean rolled his eyes. “I’m fine, Sam.”

Sam’s expression said something along the lines of then why are you in a hospital bed, genius? Dean looked away, cleared his throat.

“So, what happened?”

Sam clasped his hands together, seemed to consider his words for a second. “How much do you remember?”

Dean looked away. “Enough.”

Sam nodded, uncertainly, like he wasn’t quite sure what Dean was referring to. Not that it mattered. It was true all the same.

Sam shifted in his seat. “Well, uh, after you were… yeah, I did a tracking spell, and Benny and I found you at the old meat processing plant.”

A beat of silence. “That’s it?” Dean asked skeptically.

Sam averted his gaze. “Yeah. Yeah, that’s it.”

Dean narrowed his eyes, but didn’t say anything. He and Sam would be having a conversation about that later, but right then, he couldn’t bring himself to care.

They lapsed into silence. Dean concentrated on the beeping of the machines, wishing in vain they would drown out the memories. They seemed like too much, sometimes, the way they built up and twisted and grew off one another.

He looked down at his hands, saw a fleck of dried blood marring the skin between his thumb and forefinger. Felt a memory poke at the back of his head, before slipping in almost unnoticed. Almost.

“Sam?” Dean called.

Sam leaned closer, trying to meet Dean’s unwilling eyes. “Yeah?”

“Did I really… Is he really?…”

Sam was silent for a moment, eyes searching, before a genuine smile tugged at the corners of his
mouth. “Yeah, Dean. You did it, man, he’s gone.”

Dean stared blankly for a moment, trying to process the words. They were delivered quietly, as if lessening their volume would lessen their significance. They seemed to float in the air for a moment, shivering, harmless, before detonating, crushing Dean with the weight of their meaning.

Alastair was dead. Dean had killed him. After all the years of nightmares, and pain, and guilt, Dean had finally gotten his revenge, his justice. A huge weight should’ve been lifted from his shoulders, releasing him. Delivering him.

But Dean just felt tired.

He sagged back into his pillows, let the drip of painkillers soften the sharp edges of his mind. Dean rolled his head to the side, met Sam’s anxious eyes. He gave his brother a small nod. “It’ll be okay, Sammy.”

Dean let sleep pull him away, knowing Sam didn’t need to hear him to understand.

“You’re gonna hurt yourself.”

Dean grinned, but grunted when he tried to shrug on his jacket. Sam huffed a breath, and went over to help.

“You get the AMA papers?” Dean asked over his shoulder.

“Just need a signature,” Sam admitted reluctantly.

Dean raised his eyebrows as Sam strapped his (now sleeved) right arm to his chest with the hospital-issued sling. “Well, it ain’t gonna be a pretty one.”

Sam pulled Dean upright, steadied him for a moment as he wavered. “You know you’re supposed to be staying off that knee.”

Dean pushed off Sam and patted him on the shoulder on his way out the door. “Never stopped me before.”

Sam allowed himself a small smile. It was good seeing Dean being… Dean again. Wires still a little crossed from Purgatory, edges still a little frayed from Hell fire, but always, at the core, Sam’s big brother. And nothing anyone else or even Sam himself did would ever change that.

Over the past weeks, he’d begun to realize that Dean’s traumas, his experiences in Purgatory and Hell and who knew where else, they weren’t things to be surgically removed and purged. They were a part of Dean, wounds that simply needed time to heal and scab over. They were the scars that shaped Dean, that made him who he was today.

Maybe part of the reason Sam had been so angry these past few months - and he wasn’t anymore, not really - was because he hadn’t been able to save Dean. Dean was always throwing himself into the line of fire for Sam, putting his neck on the chopping block so Sam could take his off. He’d saved Sam’s life with the demon deal, saved his soul with his contract with Death, kept him (mostly) sane until Cas could bear his memories of Hell for him. And that went without mentioning how
Dean had raised him, protected him, his entire life.

But whenever it was Dean in trouble, Dean who needed saving, Sam could never make the cut. It was Cas who raised Dean from Hell, Benny who’d had Dean’s back in Purgatory.

And so whenever Dean did come back, Sam tried to fix him, because he thought that was what his brother needed. Maybe he’d been wrong.

“Hey, Sasquatch, you comin’?”

Sam shook himself out of his reverie, rushing to help his still too-pale, too-lean brother onto the elevator. Dean was still healing, in more ways than one.

Benny was waiting for them in the parking lot, keys to the Impala jangling between his fingers. He narrowed his gaze a little at Dean’s obvious limp, and tossed Sam the keys. Dean had the audacity to look offended.

“You heard the doc. No driving, for three weeks minimum,” Sam declared as he removed a rumpled white bag from his jacket pocket and shoved it at Dean’s chest.

Dean looked inside at the assortment of translucent orange bottles, gaped up at Sam. “You actually picked up this shit? The stuff we have in the kit is fine!”

“No offense, Dean, but I don’t exactly trust pills that you take from an altoid tin labeled ‘Dr. Moe’s Magic’.”

Dean grumbled something unintelligible, but tucked the bag into his own pocket.

“Ready to hit the road?” Benny asked, clapping Dean gently on the back. Sam nodded, knowing the vampire was just as anxious to get out of there as the rest of them.

Benny had been coming and going over the last week Dean had been in the hospital, running whatever errands they needed, but mostly sticking around, standing sentry near the door. "Guard duty," Dean had called it.

The first time Benny had actually talked to Dean, Sam had been out getting coffee (and, admittedly, a massive pack of gummy bears from the vending machine. He still needed to eat, after all), and Dean had been asleep when he’d left, still easily tired out in those first days of consciousness.

He remembered striding up to the door, then slowing and stopping when he heard quiet voices emanating from within.

“You sure you’re okay?”

“Other than the pain everywhere? Just fine.”

Quiet laughter. “Wimp.”

A pause.

“This is some heavy stuff, Dean,” Benny said.

“Naw, man, this is just Tuesday,” Dean joked, but his voice was rough.

“I got your back, brother. Always will. Sam too, you hear?”
Sam had to strain to hear the next words. “Yeah, Benny. I know.”

When Benny had exited into the hallway, Sam walked up with his coffee like he was just arriving, careful to avoid his gaze. He was pretty sure Benny didn’t buy it, but neither of them said anything.

Benny had had his shoulder busted up pretty bad, but vampires healed fast, especially with lots of pre-packaged blood on hand. Sam wasn’t sure how he felt about blood being stolen from the hospital, but he knew there wasn’t a better option.

Sam almost chuckled at the irony as he packed Benny’s cooler into the trunk of the Impala, along with their overnight bags. Hospital stays were practically camp outs at this point.

“Are you sure you don’t want us to drive you?” Dean offered, leaning against the side of the car in a way that would seem casual to anyone who didn’t know what Dean looked like dead-tired.

Benny smiled in that way of his, and Sam suddenly wondered what had happened to make Benny’s eyes so sad. “No, brother. You’re already giving me one to the station. I don’t wanna impose on you anymore.”

“You wouldn’t be,” Sam said, drawing two surprised sets of eyes to him. “Dean needs to rest up anyway, we could spend a few days in Carencro. It’s not like we got anywhere else to be.”

“We all know that’s not true, Sam.”

The three of them whirled around to see a slim figure sauntering into view, midday sun igniting her dark hair. She came to a stop next to Dean, making him tense uncomfortably as she raked her eyes over him. “You’ve looked better.”

“Give us one good reason we shouldn’t kill you right now, Bela,” Sam demanded, cutting off whatever retort Dean was forming.

“I’ll give you two,” Bela said. “One, Lindsey here is still alive, in case you were wondering. Would be a shame to waste a body like this. And two, you owe me,” she emphasized, eyes trained on Dean.

Sam curled his fingers tighter around the demon knife, but Dean shot him a look. “She’s right, Sammy. We wouldn’t have gotten away if it wasn’t for her.”

Bela smiled smugly, raising her hands innocently in the air. “Hey, I’m not asking for any free passes here. I’m just asking that you let me go this once. If I stir up trouble, you’ll know where to find me.”

Benny’s visible uncertainty mirrored Sam’s own, but Dean nodded evenly. “Seems fair.”

Bela walked up to Dean, whispered something to him that Sam couldn’t make out. He watched Dean’s expression carefully, but Dean’s walls were back up, and he garnered no noticeable reaction. Finally she backed away and nodded at them, before turning to make her way across the parking lot.

“Bela?” Sam called. She looked over her shoulder. “Why’d you do it?”

She smirked a little. “That’s for me to know, and you to find out. But I think our friend Dean can make a guess.”

And with that, Bela was gone.

Sam and Benny both looked at Dean, but he wasn’t paying attention, staring after Bela and absentmindedly rubbing his chest where he’d been cut.
They piled into the car, making only small talk on the way to the station. Sam and Dean halfheartedly tried to convince Benny to let them give him a ride, but Benny insisted they had better things to do, like find their friend Devin or Kyle or whatever his name was. They’d told Benny about their discovery of the Demon Tablet, and they all knew that despite whatever issues they might be dealing with, closing the gates of Hell took precedence.

The station came into view, and Sam went around back to open the trunk as Dean clambered out to give Benny a hug. He clasped his friend’s forearm. “You stay clean, you hear me?”

“Always,” Benny said with a smile. “Make sure to give me a call if you ever get in another bind. But knowing you, that’ll be pretty soon.”

Dean laughed. “Likewise.”

Sam stepped up to give Benny a hug of his own, then looked him in the eyes when he pulled away. “Thank you, Benny. You’re a good friend.”

“Ain’t no thing,” Benny said solemnly, then picked up his bag and his cooler. “You two watch out for each other.”

“We always do,” Dean said, and Benny climbed onto the bus.

It was dark. Streetlights flew by at even intervals, alternately illuminating the interior of the car and throwing it into shadow. Dean stretched his leg carefully in front of him, wishing he’d taken up Sam’s offer to lie down in the back.

They were somewhere in West Virginia, on their way to pick up the trail on the Trans. They’d probably hole up for the night soon, but Sam had wanted to at least get out of the state, and Dean couldn’t blame him.

He stared out the window into the darkness, unable to see anything past his own hazy reflection in the glass.

“This doesn’t mean I forgive you, Dean,” Bela hissed. “I’ll never forgive you. But Alastair was getting in the way, and now I think things will go much more smoothly. Don’t you?”

Dean wouldn’t tell Sam what she’d said, what it could mean. Not yet, anyway. Not until it became an issue. Until then, they had more important things to deal with. And who knew? Maybe closing the gates of Hell would be enough to shut Bela away.

All Dean knew was with his brother by his side and his skeletons locked tightly in his closet, things had a chance of looking up for once.

Fin.
Chapter End Notes

First of all, I am SO SORRY for the late update. I had already had most of the other chapters prewritten, but not this one, so I had to work with whatever time I could. Also apologies for the varying quality - like I said, it was kind of written in segments, and near the end there I just wanted to get it done. I hope it wrapped things up decently for you guys!

Next to come, the Epilogue...
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

He made his way down the alleyway, faint beams of milky white moonlight reflecting in the oily puddles scattered across the pavement. The harsh staccato beat of his footsteps echoed against the walls of nearby buildings, amplified in the silence of the night.

He emerged onto the abandoned street, teeming with life only hours before. A street light glowed dully overhead, providing enough light that his image was illuminated in the glass of a shop window.

His lip curled at his appearance: dark hair, smooth skin, soft lips. Hardly the likeness of eerie intimidation he preferred to display. But it would have to do for now. If there were any benefits to a body such as this, it was that he certainly tended to come across as more… trustworthy.

He regretted the destruction of his last meat suit, and, in some ways, the loss of a talented student, but sacrifices had to be made. They meant nothing compared to the greater plan at work.

He turned and continued down the street, no specific destination in mind. He would exchange this meat suit for another soon enough, and would return to the lower recesses of Hell. But next time, he’d have Dean Winchester with him.

Lindsey’s eyes rolled back white, and Alastair smiled.

Chapter End Notes

And that's all folks! A sequel might be coming somewhere along the way, but until then, I'll leave you with this tantalizing cliffhanger. I hope you enjoyed this story - I certainly enjoyed writing it! Until next time ;)
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!