The Marriage Misconception

by SareBear69

Summary

“Oh yeah, there might have been some small details I forgot to mention about the bond,” Gabriel teased.
“What kind of details?” Dean growled uneasily.
“Oh just the Holy Matrimony kind,” Gabriel smirked.

When Cas's grace is running out for the second time, the Winchester brothers enlist the help of a certain archangel to save his life. Gabriel comes up with the perfect solution: Dean and Cas bond. This seems like a great plan until Dean discovers too late what the bond really means. Gabriel informs him, much to his delight, that he is now Angel Married to Cas with no way of reversal. Little does Dean know, Gabriel is messing with him and the bond isn't a marriage at all. Cue a bunch of embarrassing misunderstandings as Dean struggles with his new "marriage" to Cas.
Notes

This fic takes place after Season 10 Episode 6 Ask Jeeves, meaning the events that took place in the episodes that followed didn't occur.
Chapter 1

It’d been almost two months since his last hunt and Dean wasn't sure how much longer he could
stand it. Sam'd had him on house arrest ever since the incident with the vamp nest in Colorado.

Fine so he’d been a bit more *creative* when it came to ganking them? Big deal. It wasn’t the mark,
he’d assured his brother. But Sam just wouldn’t believe him. Hence the most boring two months of
his life. God, he just needed to hunt something. *Anything.* Hell he’d even take a witch if it meant
leaving this god forsaken tomb.

Of course Dean loved the bunker, it was the closest thing to a home he’d had since Baby. But
spending so much time cooped up indoors was driving him nuts. It really didn’t help that he spent
most of it alone. Sam kept hunting without him, leaving the bunker for days at a time and heading off
again almost as soon as he came back. And Cas was apparently tracking down renegade angels with
that other angel, Hannah, but Dean hadn’t heard from him in over a month. He fidgeted with his
phone within the confines of his pocket as yet again he resisted the urge to call the angel. Cas was a
big boy, an *angel,* he could look after himself.

His thoughts were interrupted as he heard the entrance of the bunker give way. He reached for the
gun under his pillow in practiced precaution, heading to determine the visitor. He lowered the gun
once he realised it was just Sam.

“You’re back early,” he noted, switching the safety on and slipping the gun into the waistband of his
jeans. Sam nodded at him in greeting before dropping his bags and collapsing in the nearest chair.

“It was just a simple salt and burn. The drive there and back was more exhausting to be honest,” Sam
grumbled. Dean tried unsuccessfully to ignore the jealous twinge that ran through him, even a salt
and burn was starting to sound appealing.

“Maybe I should take the next one, let you rest up a bit,” Dean suggested casually, trying not to
appear as desperate as he felt.

But Sam was shaking his head before Dean even finished his sentence.

“No way, not while you’re still…out of commission,” Sam said, gesturing to Dean’s right arm where
the Mark of Cain was currently hidden under his sleeve.

At the reminder, Dean was forced to acknowledge the ever-present burning sensation that had
accompanied that arm since his last kill. It was a throbbing need that pulsed through the arm, willing
him to touch the first blade again. He forced himself to ignore the ache, wishing for the blissful
ignorance he’d had moments ago.

“Come on Sam, it’s so boring in here. What do you expect me to do all day?” Dean groaned in
frustration, settling in the seat beside Sam.

Sam gave him a pointed look, or ‘bitchface’ as Dean had dubbed it, before pointing towards the
library.

“You’re *supposed* to be researching anything you can find on removing the Mark of Cain. We
literally live in the world’s most extensive supernatural lore archive. If there’s a chance of curing you
it has to be here somewhere,” Sam assured him.

“You know how much I hate research, Sammy, that was always *your* thing. Come on man, I just
need some fresh air. And I haven’t touched Baby in two whole months. You haven’t let me go to
any bars either, so I can’t even get laid. This is cruel and unusual punishment,” Dean complained,
giving him a childish pout.

They’d had this same argument every time Sam returned from a hunt, so Dean knew what his
brother was going to say before he’d even opened his mouth. However, before Sam could start they
were interrupted by a loud knocking on the bunker door. They glanced at each other apprehensively before reaching for their respective weapons. The brothers hesitated at the door, Sam throwing Dean a “cover me” signal before finally opening it slowly. Dean quickly followed the action, pointing his gun towards the two figures in the doorway before recognizing them. Cas was unconscious, his arm wrapped over Hannah’s shoulder who carried his weight effortlessly. Dean dropped his gun instantly, rushing forward to help carry Cas inside, ignoring Hannah when she assured him it was unnecessary.

“What happened?” Sam asked when they placed Cas on Dean’s bed, his face filled with concern. Hannah appeared annoyed at the question and snapped her reply, “His grace is diminishing obviously.”

“But I thought he got his mojo back,” Dean insisted, thinking back to the night he’d been cured of being a demon. Now that he thought about it though, Cas had never actually explained what had happened. He chastised himself now for not pressing for more information. He should have made sure Cas was really healed, it didn’t matter that he’d had his own issues to deal with at the time.

“He was merely given the grace of another angel. It was only a matter of time before it was drained too,” Hannah explained regretfully, “I admit I am partly to blame. I should have realised his limits, he used his powers far too often on our journey. Adina’s grace was wasted quickly.”

Dean felt anger swell up inside him but he couldn’t quite bring himself to blame her. After all, she wasn’t like Cas. She was just an angel, a soldier first and foremost, she hadn’t rebelled or experienced humanity like Cas had. To Hannah, the mission was probably more important than any foot soldier, even one as important as Cas. He knew his anger was mostly frustration at how helpless he currently felt. They had no idea how to save Cas, they hadn’t even known he was still sick.

Sam had apparently left the room while he wasn’t paying attention, because he suddenly returned carrying a pile of old books. He placed them on Dean’s desk before turning towards Hannah and Dean determinedly.

“Look Cas probably doesn’t have much time left so you two better grab a book because I sure as hell am not gonna stand around and do nothing,” Sam demanded, grabbing a book of his own.

Dean studied the pile of books curiously, soon realising it must be every piece of angel lore the bunker had.

“Here,” Sam said offering one of the books to Hannah, “This one is written in Enochian. Let us know if there’s anything useful.”

Hannah nodded accepting the book and sitting on the edge of the bed carefully. Dean sat on the other side, glancing at Cas warily. He was so thin and pale, Dean noticed fearfully, the rise and fall of his chest was the only indicator that he wasn’t already dead. His mind flashed to all the times he’d almost lost Cas, each loss more painful than the last. No, Cas was his best friend and he wasn’t going to just sit here and watch him die. He’d do whatever it takes to make sure Cas lived through this, he promised himself, before hastily grabbing one of the many books cluttering the desk. Research was a small price to pay for the chance to save Cas.

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Twenty hours and eight volumes later, Dean was starting to lose hope. There was nothing in any of these books about finding an angel’s stolen grace or healing an angel whose grace was burning them from the inside. They were still no closer to saving Cas and all Dean had gained from his research was an extensive amount of knowledge on Angel biology that he really would have preferred not to know. If he had to look at one more overly detailed schematic of an angel wing he was afraid he’d shoot himself.

A tentative knock on the door startled him into looking up from the book currently curled in his lap. Sam was standing in the doorway cradling a cup of coffee, which he then offered to Dean who
accepted the beverage gratefully. Neither of them had slept since Cas arrived, not that Dean thought he could have even if he wanted to. Hannah had dutifully helped translate the Enochian book before apologetically taking her leave. Their mission was too important to abandon, she had explained before driving away in Cas’s Continental. Dean almost protested when she’d taken the car, but he decided it was probably for the best. If Cas survived this he would likely join Hannah in their mission again anyway. Dean deliberately ignored the disappointment that this particular thought brought him, forcing his attention back to his brother instead.

Sam sat in the chair in front of his desk, turning to face Dean, who remained at Cas's bedside refusing to leave the angel’s side in case he took a turn for the worst.

Sam fidgeted, looking at Dean with a mixture of excitement and wariness. Suddenly Dean was wide awake. He knew that look, Sam obviously wanted to tell him something important but was worried how he’d react.

“What is it? Did you find something to help Cas?” Dean asked hopefully.

Sam looked sheepish before replying, “I’m not positive but I may have an idea…”

Dean looked at him expectantly but Sam didn’t continue. He really didn’t have the patience for whatever Sam’s problem was and Cas really didn’t have the time.

“Well what is it?” he snapped and Sam jumped, obviously startled by his intensity.

Sam sighed and then looked reserved, “Okay, okay. Look you’re really not going to like it but it may be Cas’s only chance and I swear we can trust him. I mean, I think we can. I mean, he sacrificed himself for us. That’s gotta count for something, right?”

Dean was quickly becoming frustrated because Sam’s rambling wasn’t giving him any clues as to what he had planned and he really wasn’t in the mood to guess.

“Will you just hurry up and get to the point already? I don’t know if you’ve realised this but Cas doesn’t really have that much time left!” Dean hissed and both of their eyes drifted to his sleeping form. Cas hadn’t moved an inch since they’d placed him there.

“Ok look, I found a spell in one of the books to summon an angel,” Sam explained hesitantly, “so I was thinking who do we know that’s an angel who cares about Cas and might have enough juice to save him?”

Realisation dawned on Dean and his face twisted into a scowl, “No way, that son of a bitch has screwed us over more times than we can count. Not to mention he’s dead!”

“How many times have we thought he was dead only to have him turn up again, Dean? It wouldn’t be that unexpected if he faked his death last time too. Besides Dean, he might be the only one who can save Cas. If he’s alive that means he’s the only archangel left. Which means he could be the only one on earth with the power to heal Cas. He’s our only hope,” Sam claimed certainly.

Every fibre of his being told him this was a bad idea but as he looked at the rise and fall of Cas’s chest, barely even perceptible anymore, he knew they had no other choice.

“What do we need for the spell?”

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“You’ve got to be friggin' kidding me,” Gabriel complained from his place in the ring of fire. They’d made sure to add a ring of holy oil around the spell just in case Gabriel tried to make a run for it before they had a chance to explain.

“How the hell did you lumpheads find me? I wasn’t even in this dimension!” Gabriel scowled, flailing his arms like a child chucking a tantrum.

“Look we don’t have time for this, you need to help us save Cas,” Dean growled impatiently.

“What Dean means to say,” Sam said, throwing a warning look at Dean before turning back to Gabriel, “is that Cas is currently very sick.”

“Sick!? He’s fricking dying!” Dean interrupted fervently.

“Dying,” Sam corrected before continuing, “and we were wondering if you could help heal him.”
“Cassie’s dying?” Gabriel asked, his scowl replaced with a worried look.
“Not like you care. You abandoned him. Abandoned all of us. Do you even know what kind of shit’s been going down while you’ve been gone!” Dean growled at Gabriel furiously.

Gabriel squinted at him curiously, “Something’s different about you. You’re being very aggressive, even for a Winchester.”

After a moment his eyes widened in understanding, “Ah I get it now. So you went and got yourself the Mark of Cain. It’s corruption is visible all throughout your soul. Geez, you two just love throwing yourselves under the bus, don’t you?”

Before Dean could retaliate, Sam rushed to reply for him.
“Cas got his grace stolen so he had to take another angel’s grace, but now it’s killing him,” Sam explained hurriedly.

Gabriel looked at him in disbelief.
“Of course, it’s killing him. No angel can survive another angel’s grace, it’d be like shoving someone else’s soul into your body. The body will reject it,” Gabriel looked exasperated, as if he felt this shouldn’t have to be explained.

“But you can heal him, right?” Sam asked anxiously.

Gabriel shook his head regretfully, “You can’t heal an angel with foreign grace. The only way to save them would be to replenish their original grace. But grace doesn’t heal, except in rare circum-”

Gabriel’s eyes sparkled as he stopped speaking, a grin spreading across his face.
“Oh yes, that would work! That would work very nicely!” he sing-songed, bouncing around excitedly.

“What? Goddammit, why is no one ever straightforward around here?” Dean barked, looking even more annoyed.

“Oh Dean-o. Don’t you worry your pretty little head, I’ve just solved both your problems. No more mark and old Cassie here gets his very own grace back!” Gabriel chimed smugly.

“Really? How?” Sam asked, instantly intrigued.

“Are you boys familiar with the concept of a Bond?” Gabriel asked with a smirk.

“What like ‘Cas and I share a Profound Bond’?” Dean quoted incredulously.

But Gabriel chuckled and looked absolutely delighted, “Now you’re getting it!”

“Wait, what exactly are you suggesting?” Sam inquired, appearing more open to Gabriel’s idea than Dean.

“What I’m suggesting is we bond these two meatheads, soul to grace. And presto! Dean’s soul is purified, meaning bye-bye mark, and Cas’s grace is nursed back to full health thanks to a wonderful new battery known as Dean’s soul. It’s win-win!” Gabriel gleefully explained.

“How do we do it?” Sam asked, quickly becoming just as enthusiastic. Gabriel’s mood was infectious.

“Hold on a minute, I didn’t agree to anything,” Dean reminded them gruffly.

“Dean, why wouldn’t you say yes? Not only would it heal Cas but you’d finally be rid of the mark,” Sam looked at him pleadingly. Finally Dean sighed in resignation.

“Fine but if this whole thing goes sour, I’m blaming you,” he replied firmly before glaring in Gabriel’s direction, “what do I have to do?”

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Once Gabriel was free he explained the ritual in detail. Turns out he just needed Cas and Dean’s presence while he chanted a bunch of phrases in Enochian, no weird ingredients or hex bags necessary. So here he was, sitting by Cas’s bedside as Gabriel spoke gibberish next to him. It all seemed way too easy to Dean and he once again considered the fact that this might be a trick. I mean, this was Gabriel, the Trickster, after all. But it might be the only way to save Cas, so he ignored his suspicions and focussed instead on Gabriel’s chants.
“OLANI GE-IAD NOALN OL TOANTOH OI GASSAGEN OD OI CORDZIZ NOROMIOI OIAD NOALN BLANS IADPIL” Gabriel’s voice echoed slightly, as if lacing the words with his true voice.

As Gabriel continued to speak, Dean felt a weird tingling spark in his chest. It spread throughout his body gradually until it reached his right arm, but as the tingling passed over the Mark it began to burn painfully. He grit his teeth to keep from crying out as he felt the mark fighting whatever was happening within his body. For the first time, Cas began to stir beside him. Hissing a sharp intake of breath Cas reached out blindly, his hand slotting over a familiar spot on Dean's left shoulder as if it were made for him. This time Dean couldn’t suppress his groan, as suddenly the intense burning engulfed his shoulder as well. He screwed his eyes shut, head resting on the bed as he waited for the agony to stop. For the longest time it seemed like his pain would never cease, like he might just burst into flames entirely. But finally, it began to melt away leaving behind sweet relief and pleasant tingling in its wake.

The tingling took over in full force until soon his entire body was swept up in the sensation. Then surprisingly it continued, spreading to Cas’s body as if it were his own. He felt the buzzing pulses travel through Cas’s hand, down his arm, his torso. Soon he couldn’t even determine where he finished and where Cas began. They were one entity. One buzzing, spark filled entity that vibrated along every nerve and every cell.

Then just as suddenly as the tingling started, it faded. Dean’s breath was heavy like he’d run a marathon, but instead of sore his muscles felt relaxed. Dean was exhausted but, for the first time since he’d gotten the mark, he felt peaceful.

Groggily Dean opened his eyes to find himself kneeling beside his bed, rather than laying on it like he expected. His room was dark and he was surprised to find he wasn’t sore from sleeping in that position at all. In fact, he felt better than he had in months. Stumbling to his feet he crawled onto his bed, intending to sleep for a few more hours. His plans were abruptly forgotten, however, when his hand landed on something large and bony that was definitely not part of his bed. He whipped his hand back, falling out of the bed clumsily before diving for the light switch. His breath hitched as he caught sight of what his hand had brushed against. Wings.

Or at least that's what he assumed they were supposed to be. But these poor appendages had barely any feathers left, those that remained appeared frail and tattered, bones in their place. Connected to these pathetic limbs was Cas, curled on his side wrapped in a tangle of blankets. Dean's mind finally caught up with his situation as he remembered the previous day’s events. He quickly moved towards Cas and let out a sigh of relief as he took in the steady rise and fall of his chest. Cas was alive and, hastily he pulled back his right sleeve to reveal an unblemished forearm, the mark was gone. The ritual had worked!

Dean couldn’t help the hysterical laughter that escaped him as an intense relief flooded through him. It was finally over, no more bloodlust, no more fear of turning into a demon again. He was human, he was just Dean.

He giddily left his room, heading to the library after finding Sam’s room empty. His brother was curled up on a pile of books, apparently giving into exhaustion pouring over research like the nerd he was.

“You look like you’re in a better mood. I take it the bond worked then? No more Mark of Cain?” Gabriel’s voice piped up behind him and he spun around to find the archangel leaning against a wall, half eaten snickers bar in his hand. Dean wasn’t even annoyed to see him.

“You bet your ass it worked. Look see, nothing!” Dean grinned, flashing his bare arm proudly.
“And our little angel, how is he doing?” Gabriel asked curiously.
Dean’s excitement faded slightly, “Well he’s alive but, uh, h-his wings don’t look too good.”
Gabriel didn’t seem concerned, “They’ll be fine once his grace fully heals, it’s quite a process you
know.”
“So he’s definitely gonna be okay?” Dean asked tentatively.
“You betcha Dean-o, good as new. In fact, I’m sure he’ll have that newlywed glow soon enough,”
Gabriel snickered, wiggling his eyebrows.

Dean felt the rest of his excitement disappear. He didn’t like the look Gabriel was giving him, it
screamed Trickster.
“What's that supposed to mean?” Dean asked warily.
“Oh yeah, there might have been some small details I forgot to mention about the bond,” Gabriel
 teased.
“What kind of details?” Dean growled uneasily.
“Oh just the Holy Matrimony kind,” Gabriel smirked.
Dean knew what that sounded like but he refused to believe it unless Gabriel said so outright.
“Enough games, just tell me what you mean,” Dean hissed impatiently.

“You’re just no fun,” Gabriel pouted, “It’s not that big a deal. The bond is just an equivalent to
Angel Marriage.”
“What!? Take it back, I didn’t agree to that,” Dean demanded.
“There’s no such thing as Angel Divorce. We’re kind of traditional like that. Besides, why are you
complaining? This is what you agreed to. You no longer have the mark and Cassie gets to live. Now
you two can live happily ever after,” Gabriel explained with a wink.
Dean scowled, “You tricked me.”
Gabriel’s grin grew even wider pointing to himself exaggeratedly, “Helloooooo Trickster!”
And with that, he disappeared leaving Dean to glare at the empty space as Sam snored peacefully
behind him.

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Enochian Translation: O lord may you unite this angel and this human so that he may protect him
**twelve hours earlier**

“So how did it go?” Sam ambushed the archangel before he could leave Dean’s room.
“You doubt my abilities, Samsquatch? It went perfectly,” Gabriel assured him, flashing a grin.
“So they’re both going to be okay?” Sam asked in concern, glancing at the sleeping figures behind Gabriel. Dean lay passed out, cheek pressed against the bed with his arms sprawled out in front of him. Cas had curled in on himself, still clutching Dean’s arm loosely. They both looked surprisingly peaceful.

“Don’t you worry, those two sleeping beauties will be just fine in a few hours,” Gabriel informed him casually.
Sam knew he shouldn’t be so willing to trust Gabriel. After all, he had killed Dean countless times just for his own amusement. But he really didn’t think Gabriel was lying to him. In fact, Sam was glad he’d trusted his gut. Gabe had really saved them this time. Not only had he saved Cas, but the mark was gone too! He could finally stop dreading Dean going dark side again.

Gabriel followed Sam curiously as he carried the pile of books back to the library.
“Nice place you got here, by the way. About time you boys set up camp,” Gabriel noted, glancing around the bunker appreciatively.
“It was a stronghold for the Men of Letters. Turns out our grandfather was one of them,” Sam explained as he returned the angel lore books to their respective shelves.
“Ah yes, that nerdy bunch. Nosey bastards, they were, always trying to study us like lab rats,” Gabriel muttered begrudgingly.
“Well they obviously didn’t gain much. There’s hardly anything in these actually useful on angels,” Sam noted disappointedly, “there wasn’t even anything mentioned about a bond.”

Gabriel gave a noncommittal shrug, “Well yeah, there wouldn’t be. It was all pretty experimental stuff. Michael discarded the idea millenniums ago.”
Sam eyed him warily, “Experimental? Wait so this hasn’t even been tested?”
“Oh it was tested, alright. You remember the Nephilim? What do you think started all that? Angels don’t just disobey easily, you know,” Gabriel chuckled.
Sam felt queasy. What exactly had he signed Dean up for?

“What do you mean? Dean isn’t gonna have some freaky angel baby is he?” he asked Gabriel nervously.
Gabriel shook with laughter, cradling his stomach as if afraid he’d explode.
“Oh man, why didn’t I think of that earlier? That would have been hilarious!” Gabriel snickered.
Sam relaxed slightly, at least he knew Dean wasn’t pregnant.
“Well what? How does the bond have anything to do with the Nephilim?”

Gabriel sighed, his laughter fading into a look of almost boredom. He leant against a shelf crossing his arms.
“It’s not as interesting a story as you’d think. Michael was always looking for ways to suck up to the Big Man. So he came up with a design to increase productivity. It was a simple idea, bond a guardian angel’s grace to the soul of their charge. And viola! The angel now experienced everything their charge felt, could always tell when they’re in danger, yada yada yada. It all seemed foolproof. That is, until it was put into practise,” Gabriel shrugged.
“So what went wrong?” Sam asked cautiously.
“What do you think? Angels were exposed to human emotions. The guardian angels developed feelings. Many of them grew “inappropriately attached” to their charges. Which, of course, led to the age of Nephilim. Quite an embarrassing mistake for my dear brother, as you can imagine. Michael had the program extinguished and all angels involved were eliminated. He destroyed any evidence that he’d ever been involved,” Gabriel explained coolly.

“So what you’re saying is, Cas is gonna fall for Dean now?” Sam asked incredulously. Gabriel chuckled, “I’m pretty sure that ship already sailed, Sammy-boy.” Sam flashed him a confused glance and Gabriel let out an exasperated sigh.

“Come on, don’t tell me you don’t see how those two look at each other,” Gabriel insisted.

Sam couldn’t deny he’d thought about it. Way too often he’d had to remind them of his presence when they’d stare at each other for way longer than was strictly platonic. And sure, there’d been a few times over the years he’d caught Dean checking out another man when he thought his brother wasn’t looking. But it wasn’t Sam’s business to pry into his brother’s personal life, if Dean wanted to keep his sexuality to himself then that was up to him.

“Yeah that’s what I thought,” Gabriel replied knowingly, apparently interpreting Sam’s silence as confirmation, “but unfortunately, Cas won’t even be affected. All the bond did was show the angels emotions for the first time. How they interpreted those emotions was entirely up to them. Since Cas has plenty of experience with human emotions already, he’s much more equipped to handle the bond than the angels before him.”

Sam felt a little more relieved now that he knew the bond wouldn’t force the angel’s feelings. The last thing he needed was those two under some form of love spell. Their relationship was complicated enough without consent coming into question.

“It’s too bad, really. They might actually be happy if they just stopped fooling themselves,” Gabriel confessed, looking disappointed. Sam wasn’t completely convinced. It just seemed too farfetched that an angel could be harbouring feelings for his brother. But even so, he had to admit they’d be good for each other. He knew how much Dean cared for the angel, it wouldn’t be that much of a stretch for it to turn romantic. In fact, Dean could use something good in his life for once.

“Oh boy, I know that look! I sense a matchmaking scheme,” Gabriel chimed excitedly, “Count me in! I do love a good rom com. What do you have in mind? Handcuff them together? Lock them in a closet? Ooooh leave them on a deserted island for a few years?” Gabriel suggested animatedly. Sam shook his head, “None of those would work. Dean’s too stubborn. He’d just pull away from Cas even more.”

Gabriel contemplated that for a moment before his eyes widened in delight.

“Then we need to cut right to the finish line! Dean-o can’t run if he’s already caught in the net,” Gabriel informed looking smug, “Sammy, I may have an idea.”

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*present*

Dean shoved Sam’s shoulder waking his brother roughly.
“Wake up, Sam, we have a problem,” Dean grumbled as Sam’s head snapped up, blinking blearily.
“Dean? You’re awake?” Sam groaned groggily, sitting up and shaking off his remaining drowsiness.
“Yep and the ritual worked, the mark’s gone,” Dean informed him, but his frown didn’t go away.
“Well then that’s a good thing, why are you in such a bad mood?” Sam answered, pretending to seem confused.
“Because Gabriel duped us again that’s why,” Dean growled, “he ‘forgot’ to mention that this bond
means I’m basically married to Cas!”

Sam kept his face neutral as he replied, “Dude, calm down. Can’t you just tell Gabe to reverse it?”
“No! The bastard says it’s permanent,” Dean admitted with an annoyed snarl.
Sam appeared contemplative before commenting, “How are you going to break it to Cas?”
Dean scoffed, “I’m just gonna tell him Gabriel tricked me and I didn’t know what I was agreeing to. You know, the truth.”
“You can’t!” Sam protested. If Dean did that it would completely ruin everything.
“Why the hell not!” Dean snapped.

Sam grasped for an excuse when an idea hit him.
“Because, what if this is a sacred thing for angels? I mean, the last thing he needs after waking from his death bed is a broken heart.”
“A broken heart? This isn’t a real marriage, Sammy!” Dean insisted.
Sam pulled a bitchface. “I know that, okay? But what if Cas doesn’t? He’s an angel, this marriage might be just as real to him as any human marriage. And you said so yourself, it’s permanent. Cas will never be able to marry anyone else again.”
“Jesus Sam, do you even know what you’re suggesting? If you’re right then I forced Cas into a marriage that neither of us even wanted and he’d still have to stand by it. God, I didn’t even ask him first. I married the dude without his consent,” Dean protested, his voice becoming panicked.

Dean was running his fingers through his hair anxiously and Sam couldn’t help the laughter that escaped him at Dean’s obvious discomfort. He tried to cover it with a string of coughs, which obviously didn’t work because Dean glared at him.
“This isn’t funny, Sam. What if he wakes up and hates me? What am I supposed to do? He’s my best friend I can’t lose him because of some stupid mistake,” Dean hissed.
Sam gave him a sympathetic look, patting him comfortingly on the shoulder.

“Look, Dean, he was dying. He’ll understand that you did it to save him,” Sam reassured him, “just don’t discredit the marriage in front of him, okay? You don’t want to offend him, do you? Maybe it won’t be so bad. It’s an angel marriage. That means he probably won’t expect anything romantic at all.”
Dean looked at him incredulously, “You really believe things won’t be different now? That me and Cas can just continue on like nothing’s changed?”
“I do,” Sam nodded firmly, then he added with a smirk, “now come on, you should go check on your husband.”
“I’m warning you, Sammy,” Dean grumbled before reluctantly heading in the direction of his room.

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Dean couldn’t even begin to describe just how screwed up this entire situation was. He never even wanted to get married, let alone to an angel. For Christ sakes, he’d been a demon just a few months ago. There had to be some kind of rule against an angel marrying a former demon, surely. Yet here he was, dealing with a marriage he didn’t even fully understand. He hadn’t even known angels got married! What was he supposed to do now? Was he expected to build a nest or something? Would Cas expect Dean to leave with him? Or would Cas stay here to ‘tend to his husbandly duties’? Whatever the hell those even were for an angel. He clung desperately to the hope that Sam was right about angel marriage being platonic.

Sure, Dean could admit Cas was attractive. Okay fine, he was gorgeous. But that was irrelevant. Dean couldn’t give himself over to this marriage with Cas. He’d spent years ensuring that he kept his bisexuality a secret. Not even his brother knew. Dean had never dared form a real relationship with another man, limiting himself only to occasional one night stands with men he’d met at bars.
It wasn’t that Dean was ashamed of his sexuality. In fact, he’d accepted that part of himself years ago. It was fear that kept him quiet. Being a hunter was a very masculine trade and they weren’t exactly the most liberal sorts. His own father had been the worst. Dean still remembered clearly the first and only time he’d allowed his father to see that side of him. He’d been thirteen years old and found himself growing close to a local boy on a particularly long hunt. His father had caught them kissing behind their motel and he’d dragged Dean away roughly, grumbling that he’d raised Dean to be a soldier not some ‘sissy’. Despite the fact that his father had been dead for almost eight years now, Dean carried the weight of that encounter with him like a chain even to this day.

Besides even if he decided to finally come out as bisexual, he refused to jeopardise his friendship with Cas over some phony marriage. A marriage that he still wasn’t even sure if Cas would perceive as real or not. Dean couldn’t even ask the guy because he hadn’t woken up yet. Not knowing was the worst part. While he waited for Cas, Dean’d had hours by himself to worry just how his friend would take the news.

Oh, who was he kidding? Cas was gonna freak. He was going to lose the best friend he’d ever had just because he’d been stupid enough to trust a Trickster. Dean knew there was no way Cas would be able to forgive him. He’d forced the guy into a commitment that he’d probably have to honour for the rest of his life. Or the rest of Dean’s life, he supposed. Oh god, what if this lasted even after his death? It was his soul that had been bound after all, not his body. And Cas was going to live forever. Would his soul be forced to follow Cas around for eternity, like a literal ball and chain? Dean felt like he was going to be sick.

He gave a ragged sigh, dragging a hand through his hair and forcing away those kinds of thoughts. He warily returned his gaze to Cas’s sleeping form. Dean had reoccupied the chair by Cas’s bedside ever since his conversation with Sam. Despite Sam’s protests, Dean had refused to sleep. He needed to be there when Cas woke up. He needed to explain. Dean was determined to do whatever he could to salvage their friendship while Cas was still willing to talk to him.

But there had been no change in Cas’s condition. In fact, the only sign that Cas was even healing at all were his wings. When Dean had first seen them they’d been little more than bony husks. There’d been hardly any feathers left clinging to the structures at all. They appeared so frail that Dean was afraid even breathing too close would cause the straggling few to fall. However, much to Dean’s relief, the feathers gradually began to grow back. It had been both fascinating and mesmerising. Dean barely even noticed as the hours ticked by, totally engrossed in the process. One by one they had appeared, littering each new section with glossy black feathers until finally they covered the wings completely.

He could hardly believe these were the same wings he’d laid eyes on hours ago. They seemed so much larger now, Dean realised, stretching far across the room in a limp blanket of feathers. The shadows he’d seen all those years ago seemed like a poor imitation compared to the real thing now. Dean’s fingers twitched as he resisted the urge to stroke his fingers through the massive black wings.

As if reading his thoughts, the feathers lining the closest wing trembled slightly. The movement would have been almost imperceptible had Dean not been staring so intently. He held his breath, tensing in anticipation, as he watched for any other signs of life. He didn’t have to wait long as soon both wings sluggishly started to shift position. Ever so slowly they arched up, folding themselves towards the bed as they drew close to Cas’s back.

Dean leapt from his seat as Cas began to stir, rushing to his side instantly. Then Dean hesitated, unsure of how to proceed, as he hovered over the angel anxiously. His first instinct was to cradle Cas’s face, gently comfort him through his awakening, as he’d done not so long ago in April’s
apartment. But now the action felt way too intimate, a painful reminder of how the bond would change things between them. He didn’t dare touch the other man knowing Cas would recoil, look at him in disgust once he realised what Dean had done. Dean tried not to notice how much the idea of Cas rejecting him made his heart twinge.

His attention was drawn quickly back to Cas, however, as the angel softly spoke. It was so quiet Dean almost missed it. But there was no mistaking what he’d heard.

“Dean.”

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As Castiel drifted into consciousness, he was first aware of an irritating ache along his back and wings. Instead of sitting in a comfortable resting position, they had strained to their full length, which left his muscles stretched and sore. Quickly rectifying this, he almost sighed in relief as the new position allowed his tense muscles to finally relax.

The second thing he became aware of was an almost overwhelming tirade of emotions churning around inside his mind. He could tell almost instantly that they didn’t belong to him. It was like feeling them through a veil, he had no connection to these emotions, yet he experienced them as intensely as if they were his own. He struggled to name them all as he sorted through the mess in his mind. Many he was familiar with such as worry, fear, hope, regret, anticipation and, most familiarly, longing. There were also several he hadn’t even come across before.

Castiel realised the longer he surrounded himself with these emotions, the easier it became for him to sense their origin. Following the trail of emotions carefully he found that they led him directly to a familiar presence.

“Dean,” he murmured, promptly startled by the sound of his own gravelly voice. Had he said that aloud?

There was a sharp intake of breath nearby and the sound encouraged Castiel to pry his eyes open groggily. His eyes immediately landed on Dean who was standing over him, watching him nervously. Castiel felt, rather than saw, relief rush over Dean. Before he could even wonder how such a thing was possible, Castiel took note of his surroundings.

He was apparently in the bunker, more specifically Dean’s room, laying in what appeared to be Dean’s bed. Although he had no memory of how he’d gotten there. In fact, the last thing he remembered was being on the road with Hannah. She had insisted on driving as Castiel’s condition was getting worse and he was becoming a danger to both of them behind the wheel. They had been heading toward Topeka, Castiel recalls, before his memory drew a blank.

“Dean, what happened?” Castiel croaked, his voice even rougher than usual. He began to sit up before Dean put a hand on his shoulder, gently pushing him back down.

“Easy there, buddy, you gave us quite a scare. I thought we almost lost you,” Dean stumbled over the last sentence, averting his gaze.

“I’m sorry if I startled you, Dean, I didn’t intend to worry you,” Castiel told him earnestly.

Castiel had wished to avoid this situation entirely, the last thing he wanted to do was become a burden. The Winchester brothers had enough to deal with without throwing his problems into the mix.

“You don’t have to apologize. Worrying about each other is what a family does,” Dean claimed and abruptly Castiel sensed anger forming amongst the other emotions.

“Dammit Cas! Why didn’t you tell us sooner? We could have helped! Or at least put you on bed rest instead of dragging you across the freaking country. I mean, what were you even thinking?” Dean demanded.

Castiel was alarmed by the sudden anger flaring through him, but it brought forth an important
“Dean, why can I sense your emotions?” Castiel asked in confusion. Dean froze, his anger melting away as anxiety took its place. Despite his growing panic, Castiel noticed that Dean maintained a nonchalant exterior. “Well no shit, I’m making them pretty clear here, Cas. I’m pretty pissed off! Don’t think changing the subject is getting you out of this,” Dean warned, although his words no longer held any weight.

“That’s not what I meant,” Castiel replied, shaking his head firmly, “I can feel them, Dean, as if we shared the same soul.” Dean cringed at Castiel’s choice of words and the angel was certain then that the man was hiding something. “What aren’t you telling me?” Castiel accused before squinting at Dean with a tilt of his head. Castiel sensed resignation and then trepidation coming from Dean as he fidgeted under Castiel’s gaze.

“Fine, but before I tell you I need you to promise me something,” Dean replied tensely. “Anything, Dean,” Castiel assured him. “You have to keep an open mind, okay? You were dying and there really wasn’t anything else we could do. Like you were on death’s door, man, it looked really bad. Sam and I looked everywhere for a cure, but we just kept coming up blank. That was when Sam came up with that stupid plan, I knew I should have listened to my gut but we had no other leads and—” Dean’s rambling became faster and he seemed more on edge the longer he spoke. Castiel decided to interrupt him before he hurt himself.

“Dean, just tell me what happened,” Castiel instructed him calmly.

Dean took a deep breath. “Okay, so Hannah brought you here when it looked like your grace was gonna burn out for good. So Sam and I hit the books, you know? See if the Men of Letters had anything that could help. When that turned out to be a bust, I didn’t know what to do. But then Sam suggested we summon Gabriel—” Dean cautiously began his explanation. “Gabriel? He’s alive?” Castiel interrupted hopefully. “Yep. But your brother is still a massive douche so don’t get too excited,” Dean grumbled. “But I don’t understand. He cured me, did he not? I no longer feel the burning of another angel’s grace inside me,” Castiel announced gratefully.

Dean seemed nervous as he spoke, “Look about that…Gabe didn’t heal you. Well I guess, he is to thank for you being healed. But he’s not the reason,” Dean admitted. “I don’t understand,” Castiel stated, frowning in confusion.

Dean hesitated, tightening his hands into fists by his sides before continuing. “Gabriel...bonded us,” Dean choked out the words reluctantly. Castiel blinked perplexed. He had heard whispers many centuries ago about such a notion, but he had always thought it was simply rumours. The concept had seemed too ridiculous, an angel binding their grace to the soul of a human, absurd even.

But he couldn’t deny the facts in front of him. His grace was restored and, he realised as he searched Dean’s aura, Dean no longer carried the Mark of Cain. Only the combined power produced from the bonding of Dean’s soul to his grace could have allowed such miracles. Castiel found his focus dragged back to Dean as an intense amount of fear and anxiety rushed through what he now realised was the bond. Dean was watching him expectantly, nervously waiting for Castiel’s reaction to the news.

“Oh,” Castiel replied. Dean gaped at him.
“Oh? That’s all you’re going to say!” Dean asked in disbelief. Castiel shrugged. “I suppose it would make sense,” Castiel added, “I’m surprised the idea never occurred to me before honestly.”

The bond swirled with so many emotions then that Castiel didn’t even attempt to sort through them. “What!?” Dean squeaked, his voice strained. Castiel attempted to be more specific in the hopes that Dean would calm down. “Well out of all the humans I’ve encountered, I believe I have grown closest to you by far. If I were to be bonded with anyone I’m glad it was you, Dean,” Castiel explained, hoping to reassure his friend.

This, however, only seemed to upset Dean more. “No, Cas, you can’t mean that. It should be someone you really care about,” Dean insisted desperately.

Dean wasn’t making any sense, his frantic behaviour was completely irrational. “Dean, don’t you see? We are both free of our afflictions,” Castiel said firmly, one last attempt at making him see reason, “I fail to see any negatives.”

Dean was rigid, face blank as he stared down at Castiel in shock. “So…you’re really okay with all of this?” Dean asked doubtfully. Castiel beamed at him widely, “Of course, Dean. This is the best outcome I could have imagined.” Dean looked pained and before Castiel could say any more he was suddenly rushing out of the room.

Castiel watched the other man leave at a complete loss. Despite his time spent as one, it appeared he still didn’t understand humans at all. They were just so illogical, their mood swings seemed entirely random. Castiel sighed in resignation, knowing he would probably never truly understand humans.

Pulling himself out of the bed, he decided it was time he call Hannah. Castiel knew the other angel would be worried about him and he had a mission to get back to.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to everyone who read this fic and a special thanks to those of you who left kudos, commented or subscribed! I really appreciate your support :)


Sam had just returned from his morning run when Dean stormed into the kitchen. Without even a glance in Sam’s direction, he purposefully headed towards the fridge before pulling out a beer and chugging half its contents in one long gulp.

“Dude, it’s 6am,” Sam commented with a smirk, “isn’t it a bit early? Even for you.”

His amusement faltered, however, when Dean didn’t reply. Instead he chose to collapse into the nearest chair, letting out a groan as his head dropped heavily into his hands.

Sam hesitated before reluctantly taking the seat beside his brother, watching him carefully.

“So I take it things didn’t go well with Cas?” Sam ventured after a few moments of silence passed.

Dean lifted his head then, as if noticing Sam’s presence for the first time. Dean scoffed but his only reply was another large gulp of beer.

Sam was growing worried, not only for his brother but for Cas.

“Wait, did something happen? I thought you said he was healing,” Sam insisted.

Dean gave a loud sigh before roughly replying, “He woke up.”

“He did? That’s great news!” Sam began eagerly before catching Dean’s glare and adopted a less cheerful tone, “Right, my bad. How’d he take the whole ‘bond’ thing?”

Sam tried to hide his nerves, as he waited for Dean’s reply. He’d never been a great liar and even Sam knew his excuse to keep the marriage quiet was flimsy. All Dean had to do was mention the word ‘marriage’ to Cas and it’d all be over. Cas would tell him the truth and Dean would head straight for Gabriel. It would only be a matter of time before he scrutinized Sam’s actions enough to realise he’d been in on it too. What if Dean already knew? No. If Dean knew he would have come in here yelling, not this bizarre brooding.

Dean finally broke the silence.

“He took it well,” Dean admitted before warily adding, “too well.”

“Well that’s great news! Why aren’t you- oh…oh,” Sam trailed off.

Dean continued as if now that he’d gotten that off his chest, he couldn’t hold back any more.

“He said it was the ‘best outcome he could have imagined’,.” Dean quoted with a grumble, “said there was no other human he’d rather be bonded with.”

He leaned his head on the table wearily, dragging his fingers idly along the condensation that covered his beer bottle.

Sam looked at Dean in pity, watching him struggle with his emotions like this almost made Sam want to drop the silly facade. But Dean’s reaction to this was the final proof he needed to decide Dean really was harbouring more feelings for the angel than he was letting on. If Dean didn’t care for Cas he would have just set things straight right away, reject him on the spot. In fact, this hesitation could mean that he was considering accepting the angel’s feelings. Because, at least to Dean, that’s what Cas had just announced. That he had feelings for him, enough to want to marry him.
“So…what are you going to do?” Sam pressed eventually.
Dean groaned, “I don’t know, Sam. Why do you think I’m sitting here, drinking a beer at 6am in the fricking morning?”
“Do you think he’s felt this way for years or did it start after he turned human?” Sam suggested, attempting to plant seeds of doubt into his brother’s mind.

That was the plan, after all. They needed Dean to think Cas was serious about this marriage, so that he’d be forced to entertain the idea of a real relationship between them. Sam had to remind himself, as he observed his sulking brother, that he was doing this for Dean’s sake. So that he could finally be happy.

“Goddammit, Sam. I don’t know, okay!” Dean snapped gruffly.

Sam attempted to lighten the mood, “You know, you should probably stop using the Lord’s name in vain now that you’re married to an angel.”
Dean scowled at him. Okay, joking about the situation, probably not the best idea.

“Look Dean,” Sam tried again, “I know this is overwhelming. I mean, two days ago your best friend almost died and you were dealing with the Mark of Cain. But Cas isn’t just your friend any more, he’s your husband. You need to figure out how you want to deal with that. Especially since you now know how he feels about you.”

“How he feels about me? Sam, come on, this is Cas. He’s an angel. He doesn’t have feelings,” Dean claimed desperately. Sam shook his head calmly.

“You know that’s not true, Dean. Cas has gone to hell and back for us, for you,” he corrected, “He’s risked his life to save us, countless times. He was a human. If there was ever an angel that deserved emotions it would be Cas.”

“Dammit Sammy, who’s side are you on?” Dean groaned miserably.

“There’s no taking sides, Dean. I just want to make sure no one gets hurt,” Sam assured him.
“Of course I don’t want to hurt him, Sam. It’s just…why me?” Dean complained, “Out of all the people Cas could have fallen for, he just had to choose a worthless, broken guy like me. Hell I’m worse than broken, I’m a fucking mess. My soul’s got to be blacker than soot after all the terrible things I’ve done, even before the mark. He deserves so much better than me.”

Sam was stunned by the sudden declaration. He wasn’t surprised by Dean’s self-loathing. That he was unfortunately very accustomed to. No, it was the fact that Dean had opened up so quickly. Hell, when Sam had started this plan he’d expected most of Dean’s complaints to focus on their shared gender, but Dean hadn’t even mentioned it once. Instead, Dean’s biggest problem was that he didn’t think he was worthy. Which Sam knew was complete bullshit. Dean was the most selfless, courageous and kind hearted man Sam had ever known. But he knew telling Dean that was pointless. Trust him, he’d tried.

Dean looked absolutely exhausted after his confession. But it wasn’t purely from emotional strain, he was physically drained. Sam was reminded then that Dean hadn’t slept a wink in over 48 hours. “You need to get some rest, man. Just forget about all this for now, get some shut eye,” Sam instructed him firmly.

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Dean opened his mouth to protest but it morphed into a giant yawn instead. Sam looked at him smugly, his point proven. Dean sighed, admitting defeat. He finished off the last of his beer, dropping the empty bottle into the bin on his way out. Now that Sam had mentioned it, he realised how absolutely wrecked he felt. Sure he was used to surviving on little sleep as a hunter, but even this was pushing it. He needed his four hours at least. Though he had a feeling those four hours
would quickly turn into fourteen if he wasn’t careful. He’d been sleeping in a lot while he’d been stuck under house arrest.

He hesitated just outside his bedroom door. Dean really didn’t feel up to seeing Cas yet. He didn’t have the energy to deal with all the drama that attached to seeing him, especially as tired as he was now. But asking to sleep in Sam’s room or taking one of the spare rooms around the bunker would make it extremely obvious he was avoiding Cas. Dean wasn’t a coward, dammit, he wasn’t going to run from his own room.

Drawing in a deep breath to calm himself, Dean slowly entered the room only to find it empty. Cas was gone. Dean deliberately ignored the part of him that was disappointed. This is a good thing, he told himself firmly, now you can just go to sleep in peace. But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t ignore the familiar hurt that came whenever Cas disappeared. This time without even a goodbye. Maybe he wasn’t as fine with the bond as he’d seemed? For some reason, that thought hurt even more than the feeling of abandonment.

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“God, your wings are so soft. I could do this all day,” Dean breathed as he carded his hands through the feathers, gazing down at the large ebony limbs in awe. Cas gave a content sigh as he snuggled his head further into his pillow, spreading his wings out to allow more space for Dean’s eager hands to roam.

“Careful,” Cas teased affectionately, “if you don’t stop soon I might just take you up on that offer.”

A mischievous smirk spread across Dean’s face at the challenge before delving his hands deeper into the feathery surface, gripping the feathers in a playful tug. Cas jolted, his breath catching before escaping in an almost predatory growl. Dean barely had a moment to bask in his triumph before he was being flipped onto his back, their positions reversing. Now Dean was the one being pressed into the mattress, a very frisky, and very powerful, he reminded himself excitedly, angel looming over him.

“Dean Winchester, I swear you will be the death of me,” Cas growled, his voice husky with desire. “You knew marrying a Winchester would be dangerous,” Dean reminded him playfully. Cas smiled at him adoringly before leaning in close, just inches from Dean’s face. Dean imagined he could almost fall right into the depths of those bright blue eyes and wouldn’t mind one bit if he never got out.

“And I still wouldn’t choose anyone else in this world,” Cas reassured him before closing the distance between them.

Kissing Cas felt like finally coming up for air after being submerged for far too long. He was starved for it. He hadn’t realised how much he needed it until it was his for the taking. Tangling his fingers through Cas’s hair, he desperately tried to pull the other man even closer. One of Cas’s hands caressed Dean’s face before cupping his neck, stroking the skin gently with his thumb. Dean was sure Cas could feel his pulse thrumming underneath his hand.

In fact, he was sure Cas could feel his pulse everywhere. His heart was beating so loudly, reverberating through him like a drum. His skin tingled as if he was alight with electricity, sending delicious sparks through him everywhere Cas touched. Dean’s breath came out in pants as he was forced to break from the kiss for air. He opened his eyes to the image of Cas staring down at him hungrily, sending a shockwave of want up his spine. He hastily pulled the angel back down for another passionate kiss, trailing his hands over Cas’s shoulders in search of that marvellous softness once more.

He jerked back in shock as his hands were met with a hard, bony surface instead. Dean’s desire was
quickly replaced with fear as his eyes darted to the now desolate wings, their once beautiful feathers now haggard and worn. His eyes drifted to Cas’s face, looking for some kind of explanation to this horrible change, heart clenching as he was met by lifeless, blue eyes and unbelievably pale skin. No.

Dean struggled violently, trying to do something, anything, but found himself trapped under Cas’s dead weight. Black sludge steadily began to trail out of Cas’s mouth, slowly sliding down the back of Dean’s neck and causing him to shudder at the unpleasant sensation, it reminded him of the leviathans. But he knew this was different, he could feel it. What the hell was this stuff?

“It’s your soul, Dean,” a voice rose from the edge of the bed, instantly catching Dean’s attention. Gabriel stood there, looking over the pair solemnly.
“Gabriel, help him! He’s dying!” Dean pleaded urgently.
Gabriel only shook his head sadly. “He’s already dead.”

No. No, no, no. Cas couldn’t be dead. He couldn’t.

“You’re lying!” Dean insisted, his eyes beginning to burn with the promise of tears. He swallowed the lump forming in his throat determinedly.

“You did this, Dean. Your soul was just too corrupted,” Gabriel continued calmly. Dean shook his head roughly. No, that couldn’t be true.

But he knew deep down it was. He was nothing but a horrible, twisted shadow of the man he used to be. Even without the mark he was tainted. Cursed to carry with him the burden of the unspeakable things he’d done. He was a threat. He was a monster. He was-

“You’re poison, Dean.”

Dean jerked awake with a start, heart racing and breathing strained, as he tried frantically to remember where he was. Looking around the dark room, he felt himself calm slightly as he recognised the surroundings as his room at the bunker. It had just been a dream, he reassured himself gratefully, just a terrible, horrifying dream. But even with this knowledge he couldn’t stop the dread coiling in his stomach as his mind continued replaying the events of the dream over and over.

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Castiel supplied Hannah a quick farewell before hanging up, pocketing the phone automatically. He greatly missed the simplicity of before the fall, when his wings could carry him to his destination in a matter of seconds. Instead Castiel resigned to the fact that it would likely take hours for Hannah to arrive.

Although, Castiel noticed, his wings seemed to be gaining strength with each moment that passed. Dean’s soul was steadily healing his vessel at an astonishing rate. In fact, Castiel began to wonder if his powers would be restored completely, disregarding the effects of the fall. Perhaps soon, he’d be able to fly once more. The thought excited him and he unconsciously shifted his wings restlessly.

Boredom was, unfortunately, one of the various human traits Castiel had retained from his short brush with humanity. Before, Castiel would often stay in one spot for hours at a time as he patiently awaited his next mission. Now, however, the angel found himself agitated and restless when faced with long periods of monotony.

Castiel roamed the bunker curiously as he waited for the hours to pass idly. He eventually decided, after a few hours of aimless wandering, to return to the library. The room held hundreds of shelves lined with books featuring all manner of supernatural lore. Despite his already vast knowledge of the supernatural, Castiel was sure he could find something within the many shelves to occupy himself.

That’s where Castiel found the younger Winchester, curled up on one of the large armchairs
furnishing the room. He didn’t appear to notice Castiel’s arrival, too caught up in the book he was
reading.
“It’s quite an interesting series,” Castiel spoke casually, “Although I am still unsure what ‘Game’ the
title is referring to.”

Sam jumped, eyes flicking up from the page, before relaxing as he caught sight of Castiel.
Sam raised an eyebrow, “You’ve read Game of Thrones?”
Castiel didn’t wish to explain that, actually, Metatron had inserted the knowledge into his head. So
instead he simply shrugged, which seemed to be enough of a reply for Sam anyway.

Sam gently placed the book face down beside him, looking Castiel over anxiously.
“How are you feeling?” he asked, concern evident throughout his features.
Castiel gave what he hoped was a reassuring smile, “Your brother’s soul has aided the healing
process immensely. I should be completely recovered soon.”

Sam looked visibly relieved as he nodded.
“That’s great to hear, man. We were really worried.” Sam replied before adding, “especially Dean.”
Castiel nodded, “Yes, I imagine performing the bonding ritual was quite distressing for him.”
Sam rolled his eyes, “I meant he was worried about you, Cas.”

Castiel tilted his head, confused at what Sam was implying. Of course he knew Dean had been
worried about him. Castiel had noticed the overwhelming presence of emotion from the moment he’d
awoken. But Sam was looking at him meaningfully, as if Castiel was missing something important.
“Dean spends far too much time worrying about others when he should be worrying about himself,”
Castiel noted, his mind wandering to the Mark of Cain.

In truth, Castiel was far more relieved that the bond had healed the mark than saved his life. Castiel
had accepted his fate, believed his death was penance for all the crimes he had committed. But Dean
didn’t deserve the terrible fate that the Mark of Cain would surely have brought him. If his grace was
to thank for its absence, then Castiel was grateful that at least one good thing had been accomplished
from his continued existence.

“That’s why he has us, the people who care about him, to worry for him,” Sam declared resolutely.
“I will not allow him to make such a reckless mistake again,” Castiel vowed, nodding in agreement.
Sam beamed at him, “I appreciate that, Cas. It’s good to know someone will be there for him if I
can’t.”

Sam looked hesitant for a moment before saying, “Look I know Dean’s probably acted a bit ’moody’
since the bond. But you’re just going to have to be patient with him. He’s sharing his soul, it’s a lot
to take in.”

Castiel’s mind referred back to the confusing outburst of emotions he’d experienced from Dean
earlier, as well as his sudden departure from the room. He hadn’t given the behaviour much thought
since, brushing it off as human unpredictability. But he supposed Sam’s explanation made sense.
Dean obviously needed some time to process the adjustment.

At thoughts of the bond, he gradually became more aware of Dean’s emotions once again. They
were easy enough to block out, only requiring a small amount of distraction for his mind to dismiss
them. But once he focussed on them, the connection grew strong enough that he could sort through
each emotion individually.

He realised Dean must be asleep because his emotions were fuzzy and unfocussed, drifting by so
breifly he almost couldn’t identify them. The clearest emotion he felt was fear, with grief and remorse
as a close second. He frowned, wishing he could will away the negative emotions with a thought.
Castiel wasn’t sure whether it was because he’d opened himself so completely to the bond or if the next emotion was just that strong, but the sudden wave of guilt that crashed through him was overwhelming. He drew a quick intake of breath as the force of it surprised him.

Looking up, he noticed Sam was watching him expectantly. Castiel swallowed, trying to hide the disarray that was going on in his head. But he couldn’t ignore the sudden impulse to soothe and comfort that was rising within him.

“Yes, Sam. I understand,” Castiel replied quickly, “if you could excuse me, I have something that needs my attention.”

Without another word Castiel hastily left the library, heading in the direction of Dean’s room. He was just making sure nothing was wrong, Castiel attempted to calm himself, it was likely just a nightmare. But as Dean’s emotions became even more panicked, Castiel found himself walking faster.

He knew the moment Dean awoke because his emotions lurched, lacing in confusion, as awareness brought clarity among the previously muddled subconscious. Despite the source of distress being gone, Dean’s emotions continued to struggle with the aftermath of the nightmare.

As Castiel finally reached the door, he paused, unsure of how to continue. Dean was awake, which meant he could no longer hide his arrival. The man would no doubt be annoyed at his invasion of privacy and accuse Castiel of prying. Although, even knowing this, Castiel still wanted to go in. If only just to distract the hunter from the emotions currently plaguing him.

Before he could convince himself of doing otherwise, Castiel entered the room. It was dark and echoed with the sound of Dean’s deep panting. Castiel saw Dean freeze at his arrival, but didn’t protest. As he flicked the switch by the door, the room became flooded with light. Dean squinted at the sudden brightness, covering his hand over his eyes.

“I apologize if I disturbed you,” Castiel said carefully. Dean blinked, eyes adjusting, before glancing towards the figure in front of him. Relief flooded through Castiel that wasn’t his own and he noticed Dean relax considerably. The lingering emotions from the dream faded, leaving only a residing ache in its place.

Dean cleared his throat.

“Nah that’s okay. I was awake anyway,” Dean murmured, avoiding his eyes.

Castiel resisted the urge to say ‘I know’, as this would probably just upset the man further. Standing there awkwardly, Castiel realised he wasn’t sure what to do now that he was there. He had wanted to comfort Dean, but it became clear he wasn’t exactly sure what that entailed.

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“What can I do for you, Cas?” Dean asked attempting to sound nonchalant, but it came out shaky. His mind continued to flash with images of Cas’s corpse even as he watched the real Cas fidget in the doorway. Dean fought the urge to grab Cas, make sure it was really him and prove that he was okay. That this wasn’t some hallucination and Cas really was here, that he actually hadn’t left the bunker like he previously thought.

“I was making sure everything was alright,” Castiel admitted, “You were exuding some…alarming emotions.”

Dean had almost forgotten Cas could read his emotions now. Did that mean he could also read his mind? Did he know what the dream was about? Dean flushed at the thought, remembering the start of the dream. That in itself would have been an unsettling dream, even ignoring the horrific turn of events.
Mainly because Dean hadn’t even questioned it, being with Cas had felt like the easiest thing in the world. He was sure that the dream had been travelling down a very different path before everything went to hell. Dean wasn’t sure whether he was disappointed or relieved that they’d been interrupted. How would he have even faced Cas after having a sex dream about him?

Cas was watching him curiously and Dean realised he must be reading his emotions again. Forcing himself to remain indifferent, he lifted his eyes and stared back at the angel.

“Uh yeah, just a nightmare, no big deal. Thanks for the concern, Cas, but it wasn’t necessary,” Dean informed him.

Cas continued to stare at him scrutinisingly and Dean began to fear just how much Cas could see. Was Cas looking at his soul right now? What did he see? Dean shuddered as thoughts of the thick black goo ran through his mind. He definitely didn’t want Cas looking at his soul. It was bad enough that his grace was tainted by it.

“Um if you wouldn’t mind Cas, I’d like some privacy. Some of us still have to shower, you know,” Dean reminded him tensely.

Castiel hesitated and Dean was almost afraid he wouldn’t leave, before he nodded firmly.

“Of course, Dean. I’m sorry to delay you,” Cas apologised turning to leave.

Dean spoke before he could go, “Stop apologising, man. I don’t mind, really.”

Cas turned back and flashed Dean a soft smile.

“I am glad you are alright, Dean. Please do not hesitate to call me if you are in distress again. I will do my best to help you if I can,” Castiel promised.

Dean couldn’t help but smile back at him.

“I’ll keep that in mind. Thanks Cas,” Dean replied warmly.

They both continued to stare at one another for a long moment before Dean finally wrenched his eyes away from Cas’s bottomless blue gaze. Pushing away more memories of the dream from his mind, Dean didn’t look back up until the door closed and he knew Cas was gone.
Dean stared at the closed door for far longer than was necessary before forcing his gaze away, sighing heavily. He slumped back into the mattress with an audible thump, pressing the heels of his palms into his eyes as he tried to sort through the mess inside his head.

Seeing Cas after the dream had been both an astounding relief and an unwelcome reminder. To see Cas, alive and well so soon after his false demise, diminished all Dean’s lingering doubts about his safety. But his presence also brought the dream’s beginning to the forefronts of Dean’s mind, bringing with it different kinds of doubts.

Why the hell had it felt so natural being with Cas like that? Dean and Cas had never been physically close, save for one or two reunion hugs and Dean cradling Cas’s dead face in his hands. Dean shuddered at the memory and desperately pushed it aside along with dream Cas’s cold dead eyes and sludge ridden corpse. It worked just barely, leaving only a mild uneasiness that churned within Dean’s stomach. He ignored the feeling, choosing instead to focus on one internal crisis at a time.

His unnatural sense of ease to the situation hadn’t even purely been physical either. He’d felt so unbelievably happy in that moment, like they were real newlyweds, regarding Cas with so much adoration that Dean had felt drunk with the feeling. He hadn’t even felt like sex was needed until Cas had instigated the make-out session. Dean would have been happy just to stay there, caressing Cas’s wings, for as long as Cas had let him. Just being with Cas in that moment, had left him feeling completely content. Which was just downright terrifying to realise.

Yet part of him wished the dream had never changed. That if it hadn’t got dark and twisted, maybe he could have enjoyed it. Definitely would have enjoyed it, judging from the way just kissing Cas had lit a fire in him like he’d never felt before. God, now he was sounding like a damn chick!

Dean groaned, rolling reluctantly out of bed, glancing impassively at the clock on his way towards the bathroom. It was nearly noon, at least he’d managed to get about five hours sleep in before his rude awakening. It’s not like he could go back to sleep anyway, not after a dream like that.

Trudging into the empty bathroom, Dean locked the door behind him and unhurriedly began peeling off his clothing. A shower was exactly what he needed to sort out his head. He wanted to just wash away all the shit he’d been through these past few days. To finally relish in the fact that his right arm was now free of the ugly scar that’d been plaguing him for months.

Dean’s pre-shower calm vanished in a flash as a large red mark on his left shoulder caught his eye in the mirror. For one horrible moment he thought the Mark of Cain wasn’t cured after all, that it had just moved. But once he managed a better look he instantly recognised the mark for what it really was.

Cas’s handprint sat on his shoulder, exactly where it had been almost six years ago, as if it’d never been healed at all. He traced the raised flesh curiously, finding that it didn’t even hurt, instead a small shiver ran up his spine at the touch. Dean imagined he could almost feel Cas’s grace tingling underneath the skin, even though he knew such an idea was impossible. His arm would burn right through, just like poor Pamela’s eyes.

Dean refused to admit that he missed the damn thing, but acknowledged that he definitely didn’t
mind its return. It had been a symbol of, not only Dean’s resurrection but, the angel who’d risked his own life to pull him out of hell. *I’m the one who gripped you tight and raised you from Perdition*, Cas’s first words echoed in his mind. Dean couldn’t help the fond smile that tugged at his lips at the memory.

That is, until Dean’s eyes caught his own within his reflection, wiping the goofy smile off his face quickly. No. He couldn’t let himself fall into the trap of reminiscing. He’d spent too many years forcing himself to ignore how important Cas had become to him, looking back would only make it harder.

But even as he thought that, he couldn’t help but be reminded of the few times he’d slipped up. Let on just how important the angel had become to him.

“Don’t ever change.”
“Don’t make me lose you too.”
“I’d rather have you cursed or not.”
“I’m not leaving here without you.”
“I need you.”

*I love you.* That’s what he’d wanted to say, hadn’t *dared* say, when he’d begged Cas for his life in that crypt. Because deep down he knew that he couldn’t even *pretend* it was in the same way he loved Sam. That if he allowed himself to say the words, he might not be able to deny any more just how far he’d let the angel into his heart. And that revelation would surely have led to dangerous thoughts like hope.

Dean pressed his face into his shirt, still scrunched in his hand, muffling his sigh. He really couldn’t deal with these resurfacing feelings right now, especially not with his current situation. This was exactly why he’d determinedly never let himself even consider their friendship becoming something more. He would remind himself of this fact any time they shared a particularly long stare. He told himself this again when he went to 2014 and realised maybe Cas might actually be the first person in his life willing to stay. And especially, in those terrible moments where Dean thought Cas was lost forever, when his heart would ache with such a deep loss that he could swear a part of him died with Cas.

Even now, knowing how Cas felt about him, it still didn’t change anything. Dean knew he couldn’t let himself accept Cas’s feelings and drag the other man down with him. He just couldn’t. He’d known for *years* falling for Cas was never an option. Cas was an *angel* and Dean; well Dean was so *screwed up* there probably wasn’t enough duct tape in the universe that could piece together his broken soul. Cas deserved better, Dean had always known that.

Sparing one last lingering glance towards the mark on his shoulder, Dean finally moved towards the shower. Growing up on the road, Dean had been left with precious little time to himself. He had quickly realised the shower was one of his few escapes. In the shower, Dean could allow himself at least a small reprieve and just relax. A place where he could forget all about the shitty things in his life even for a few moments; pretend he was just like everyone else, that his life was actually normal.

And there was nothing he needed more right now than an escape. Leaning under the shower head, he tried to imagine the cold water was washing away all his thoughts. Forcing all thoughts of Cas or the bond from his mind. Dean slowly allowed himself to calm under the soothing pressure massaging over his scalp. He automatically ran a hand through his damp hair as he leaned back from the spray.

He expertly fiddled with the taps, quickly finding that perfect balance between hot and cold. Dean closed his eyes, focussing only on the pleasant sensation of warm water cascading over him. He could almost feel the tight muscles in his shoulders relaxing under its ministrations. The bunker really
did have great water pressure.

Dean almost cursed himself as his mind decided to remind him of a certain ex-angel who had shared those same sentiments all those months ago. Great and now he was thinking of Cas in this very shower enjoying the same water pressure. A very human Cas who was probably still very new to the idea of washing himself. Dean couldn’t help imagining Cas purposefully sliding his hands across his naked body, taking the task as seriously as he would any angel mission. He’d probably take his time too, making sure to lather the soap across every surface thoroughly. Maybe even hesitating slightly before tentatively trailing a hand down his stomach towards-

No. Dean forced himself to stop the thoughts there. He couldn’t think about Cas like that, the dream had obviously just messed with his head. Unfortunately thoughts of the dream led to flashes of Cas’s lips against his and Cas’s hands lighting a fire across his skin in their wake. And he definitely couldn’t help remembering how being manhandled by Cas, knowing he was a creature that could destroy him with less than a thought, had sent chills of excitement through Dean that he’d never experienced with any human.

Dean desperately tried to deny his body’s obvious interest as he felt the stirrings of an erection. Goddammit, he knew this was wrong. He couldn’t get off to thoughts of his best friend. But a traitorous voice in his head decided now was a good time to remind him Cas was his husband now. Getting off to thoughts of your husband was completely understandable, it told him firmly, healthy even.

Dean’s automatic response would usually have been to insist Cas wasn’t his real husband, but instead he found himself wavering at the words. Healthy, exactly. It’s not like he’d be accepting the marriage if he did this, Dean convinced himself, it would just be a healthy way to let off some steam after a really frustrating sex dream.

Before he could analyse his actions any further, Dean gave into his urges. He allowed himself to bring up the memory of where the dream left off, before everything went to shit. This time when his hands reached out, seeking Cas’s wings, he found them just as soft and irresistible to touch as they had been in the beginning of the dream. Cas gave a small gasp, hips jerking forward instinctively, as Dean buried his hands within the feathers. He teased them slowly, relishing in their softness. But Cas’s movements were anything but slow as he clawed at Dean’s shirt, worshipping the newly exposed skin with exploring hands.

Meanwhile, Dean trailed his own hands over his chest, mimicking the movements of dream Cas’s hands. He imagined Cas’s lips breaking from his own only to continue on a journey down his neck, nibbling at the skin teasingly. He could feel himself growing harder at the images, heart rate beginning to pick up loudly in his ears as the fantasy continued.

Dean reluctantly removed his hands from Cas’s wings only so he could remove his pants, leaving his boxers as the only piece of clothing left. Cas, however, was much too clothed for Dean’s liking and he made quick work of removing his tie before moving towards the trenchcoat. As his hands brushed over the familiar material, Dean briefly realised that it wasn’t his new trenchcoat. It was the one Cas had been wearing when they first met; the one Dean had treasured for over a year after Cas’s ‘death’. He stroked the material fondly, momentarily mourning its loss, before tugging it off the angel’s shoulders.

Soon Cas was as stripped as he was and they moved towards each other simultaneously. Cas hastily returned to his place above Dean, pressing him into the mattress and smothering his neck with kisses once more. Dean groaned at the weight, pulling at Cas’s hips frantically in search of more contact. Dean’s breathing hitched as Cas’s clothed erection brushed against his own.
In reality Dean finally gripped his hand around his already throbbing cock, beginning to stroke himself in time with his dream counterpart’s thrusts as he started rutting against the angel. Dean was achingly hard in his hand as he teased his thumb along the slit, bringing precome down the shaft as makeshift lubricant. When this still wasn’t enough he blindly reached for the soap, pouring the liquid over his erection generously. The difference it made was astounding and Dean couldn’t help the low moan that escaped his lips at the feeling.

The contact of their groins brought a startled moan from Cas, his lips raising from Dean’s neck, as the sound was torn from his throat. His eyes were almost completely consumed in black, the tiniest of blue iris still showing, want clouding his features as he stared down at Dean. Cas’s growl was practically animalistic as he firmly ground his hips against Dean’s in turn. Dean whimpered allowing the angel to decide the pace, enjoying him taking control, as his face was pulled into another passionate kiss.

Dean explored Cas’s mouth with his tongue, greedily trying to taste every inch. Cas tasted like nothing Dean could describe. It probably had something to do with the fact that he never ate or that he just wasn’t human. But Meg had definitely been on the mark when she said kissing Cas had made her feel ‘clean’. The memory sparked an unwelcome jolt of jealousy which coursed through Dean. He doubled his efforts, as if kissing Cas into oblivion could erase all other kisses. No more Meg. No more April. Cas would only know the taste of Dean and no one else.

Dean doubled his efforts with his hand as well, pace matching the ferocity of his counterpart’s kisses. His impatience bled into his fantasy as Cas decided he had been wearing that last piece of clothing too long. He broke the kiss, lips trailing down Dean’s stomach until he reached the waistband of Dean’s boxers. Blue eyes flickering up to connect with Dean’s, he smirked at him teasingly before slowly pulling the fabric down, lavishing each new piece with his tongue, careful to avoid the one place Dean wanted his mouth most.

Dean gave an exasperated moan as, even once his boxers were removed, Cas merely continued spreading open-mouthed kisses over his thighs.

“Please, Cas,” his counterpart spoke for the first time. Cas stopped his movements, tilting his head in that adorable way of his, pressing a stubble covered cheek against Dean’s thigh in the process. The pleasant grazing sensation caused Dean to shudder in anticipation.

“Tell me what you need, Dean,” Cas purred in a voice so seductive Dean could hardly believe he was the same angel who’d been scared out of a brothel. Well Dean knew it wasn’t, but he decidedly chose to ignore that fact. Who knew how sexy it was having Cas lead?

“Need you, Cas. Your mouth, please,” Dean whined and this time he could barely believe it was him who was making these needy noises.

Cas smiled tenderly at Dean, running a hand across Dean’s hip before settling along his left elbow.

“You can have anything you wish, Dean,” Cas told him earnestly before his eyes sparkled cheekily, “But first I would like you to admit you are mine. I want to hear it.”

Dean didn’t even hesitate before nodding fervently. “Yeah Cas, I’m yours. Just yours, please.”

Cas grinned so widely then, as if that confession was the only thing he’d ever wanted, before rising to catch Dean’s lips in a tender kiss. This one wasn’t as passionate as any of their other kisses that night, but somehow Dean felt it held much more significance. As they kissed, Cas’s hand slid up to fit over the returned hand print, gripping the mark tightly as if to proclaim, “This human is mine.”

When he settled back between Dean’s legs, he refused to remove his hand, fingers continuing to tease the mark gently.

Dean copied the action with his hand, fitting his own fingers over the mark. His left hand took over
as dream Cas finally licked a long line up the length of his cock and took him into his mouth.

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Castiel wasn’t expecting the wave of pleasure that hit him out of nowhere, causing his knees to go weak and he quickly grabbed the wall to keep upright. A noise was ripped out of his throat as if beyond his control and he covered his mouth, desperate to avoid the younger Winchester’s attention merely a room away.

He realised quickly the source as he examined the bond’s now open link. These feelings were coming from Dean. But they weren’t just emotions, like he’d previously experienced, this time he could sense every sensation the human was feeling. Castiel held back another groan as the onslaught of arousal and pleasure continued.

Castiel’s mind was quickly becoming hazy but he strained to stay focussed. He needed to ignore the link, push it to the back of his mind, as he’d done so easily before. Castiel couldn’t allow this to continue much longer, if Dean knew he was sure to be furious. Dean had often expressed his discomfort when Castiel ‘digs through his head’ as he’d put it. If he knew his privacy was being invaded like this, even if it was completely unintentional on Castiel’s part, Dean was sure to blame him.

But nothing Castiel could do would close the link, somehow the bond had been intensified leaving him powerless to stop the seemingly endless onslaught of pleasure. His breathing had grown ragged, his heart pounding in his head. Castiel noticed his body had responded to the stimuli, pants becoming uncomfortably tight.

Castiel’s knees dropped and he leaned against the wall, hand reaching to relief himself of the pressure but froze. With the bond open like this, there was no telling if the connection went both ways. If he could feel everything Dean felt, then it seemed likely Dean might very well feel him too. He couldn’t risk the chance. With great effort, he kept himself unnaturally still, only releasing soft moans and grunts against his hand that he found he couldn’t hold back.

He’d only experienced sexual pleasure once in his life, so these sensations were still so new and raw to him. He couldn’t help acknowledging that this was Dean’s hand he was feeling. His hips jerked forward at the air by their own volition, seeking more from those phantom touches. He wondered if it would feel the same, if Dean really touched him like this.

Castiel chastised himself for such selfish thoughts. He had no right to expect such things from Dean. The human had no way of knowing that the bond could cause such consequences. Masturbation was a normal human practise, he could hardly blame the human for wanting to satisfy his baser urges. Castiel knew all too well the great temptation that sexual desire brought forth. He himself had given into them so easily with April.

Castiel felt the familiar tightening in his stomach as his muscles coiled and he eagerly prepared for his release. He knew he should feel guilty for enjoying this, and likely would later, but his mind was too far gone to care. He was so close, he could feel it. Just a little more-

The ministrations stopped suddenly and Castiel let out a pathetic whimper in frustration. His erection throbbed painfully, as if attempting to punish him for its stolen orgasm. Sensing that the bond had returned to its usual status, Castiel determinedly pushed it to the recess of his mind. He couldn’t pay attention to such heated emotions if he wished to calm himself enough to will away his predicament.

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Dean’s hand dropped from the mark to his balls, fondling the sensitive skin, as he neared orgasm. He chased his release wildly, legs shaking as he felt like every muscle in his body was tensing in anticipation. His body gave a violent jerk as he came, painting the shower wall with white streaks. Dean relished in the aftermath, enjoying the post-orgasm glow as he finally went through his usual shower routine.

By the time he was finished, his breathing and heart rate had slowly returned to normal and the flush in his cheeks had lightened. Dean lazily washed all evidence of his activities down the drain, a satisfied grin plastered to his face, before stepping out of the shower and grabbing a towel nearby. Yep, a shower was just what he’d needed.

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Dean found himself humming the chorus of ‘Hey Jude’ as he made his way towards the kitchen. It was a deep-rooted habit that only occurred when he was in the best of moods. He assumed it was probably because the song was a direct link to one of the only times in his life that he’d been truly happy. A time when his Mother would lull him to sleep with sweet singing and promises that angels watched over him.

The phrase was much less comforting now than it’d been back then. Boy, if angels really were watching over him… well they’d probably have smited him already for what he’d just done thinking about their brother. But even that incredibly creepy thought couldn’t bring down Dean’s good mood.

It’s not like he usually got this blissed out after masturbating, hell he was pretty sure he didn’t get this cheerful even after sex. Dean just figured it was cause he hadn’t gotten laid in so long and that had been a really good orgasm. Like mind-blowingly good if he was being honest with himself. Dean hadn’t gotten worked up that fast since he was a teenager.

Sam was sitting at the kitchen table having lunch when he entered, munching on some of that rabbit food crap he loves so much. Dean didn’t even feel the urge to make an insulting comment about the food like he usually would, instead he flashed his brother a wide grin.

“Morning Sammy,” Dean chimed a greeting, plucking some leftovers out of the fridge before taking a seat beside his brother.

Sam eyed him suspiciously, “What’s got you so happy?”

Dean tried to school his expression, “What makes you think I’m happy?”

Sam gave him his ‘I’ve lived with you my whole life, don’t think you can fool me’ bitch face before simply stating, “You’re humming ‘Hey Jude’.”

Dean’s smile grew even wider at the comment, warm affection for his brother flooding through him. Sam knew him too well, it felt surprisingly nice being reminded of that. Their relationship had been pretty strained since he got back from his ‘road trip down demon lane’. It was good to see some things never change. Maybe they could finally get back to some normalcy now that the mark was gone.

“Why shouldn’t I be happy? The mark is gone, Cas’s grace is back and no one is starting any apocalypses. I’d say that earns a little happiness, Sam,” Dean insisted.

Sam didn’t seem quite convinced by his answer but obviously couldn’t think of any reason to argue his explanation because instead he gently smiled back.

“Yeah, I guess. You know, it’s nice to see actually. I was beginning to worry you didn’t know how to smile anymore,” he teased, punching his brother’s shoulder lightheartedly.

Before Dean could make some smart ass retort, a voice spoke up from the doorway.

“Sam, I believe Hannah should be arriving shor- Oh. Hello Dean,” Cas froze when he spotted Dean,
eyes going wide for a moment before dropping to the ground. “Heya Cas, I see your wings are looking much better,” Dean pointed out, unable to ignore the large appendages arched behind Cas’s back.

They were drawn close to him, in the same position they’d moved to when Cas first woke up. Cas nodded, eyes still trained on the floor, “Yes, I am truly lucky. Many of my sibling’s wings were devastated by the fall. But it appears your soul has nursed them to full strength once more.” Dean would have been happier at the news if Cas didn’t appear to be deliberately avoiding his gaze. And was Dean crazy or was Cas… blushing?

Geez, did he already step over some boundary? Were wings meant to be kept private or something? God, was he basically perving on Cas by even looking at them? Sam cleared his throat obviously trying to clear the tension that was starting to fill the room. “So you can see Cas’s wings now? What do they look like?” he asked Dean curiously. Dean wasn’t sure whether he should answer that or not, especially considering his new theories on the privacy of wings.

But to his surprise, Cas answered for him, “They are nothing special, Sam. I merely have one set of large black wings, similar to a crow, they are nothing compared to many others. Especially considering the magnificence of an archangel’s wings. Gabriel himself has three sets of stunning golden wings. I hope I may see him again, even if it is just to thank him for performing the ritual.”

Well that put his wing privacy theory down the drain, Cas didn’t seem to be embarrassed about describing his wings, a little insecure maybe, but not as if he was disclosing intimate knowledge. “Your wings are amazing, Cas, don’t be stupid,” he couldn’t stop himself from arguing. Cas finally looked up at him in shock and this time Dean knew he could see a flush in the angel’s cheeks. “You truly think so, Dean? I’ve been told many consider the colour of my wings… off putting,” Cas looked so uncertain when he looked at Dean then, as if he actually believed Dean might just be humouring him. Dean was determined to wash that horrible look off Cas’s face, he never wanted Cas to look so vulnerable again. “Of course, man! They’re the coolest things I’ve ever seen. Don’t listen to those other winged douchebags. Black is a badass colour. Baby is black and she’s the best car in the world,” Dean assured him firmly.

Cas beamed at his compliment and the red flush tinged slightly deeper. They locked eyes and simply smiled warmly at each other for a few long moments. Dean caught Sam rolling his eyes and muttering something about “eye sex” under his breath. Which caused him to immediately drop his gaze, realising how intimate the exchange must seem. He couldn’t lead Cas on, he still wasn’t sure what his game plan for this whole “marriage” thing was yet. But hurting Cas wasn’t part of it, that’s for sure.

When Dean chanced a glance up, Cas had dropped his gaze as well and was now looking at one of his wings. He had a small smile on his face as he straightened a few feathers, as if he was truly appreciating them for the first time. Dean couldn’t help a tinge of pride that swelled up in him at the thought. Cas deserved to feel good about his wings, they really were remarkable.

A sudden loud knocking on the bunker door broke the silence and all three of them startled at the sound. “Who the hell-?” Dean began just as Cas announced, “That should be Hannah.”
So I have a Tumblr if anyone wants to check it out :)
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry for how long this took to come out. I want to blame Christmas and New Years and all the other distractions I've had, but honestly it's cause I'm a horrible procrastinator xD

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dean didn’t know why he was so surprised. Of course Cas had called Hannah, those two were pretty much inseparable these days. Dean tried to dismiss his growing irritation as lingering mistrust towards the other angel. Hannah had tried to convince Cas to kill him, after all. He had every right to dislike her.

But Dean knew his spite towards the other angel wasn’t nearly so rational. It was quite petty of him, he knew, but Dean couldn’t help thinking Hannah was being greedy. He’d only just gotten Cas back, whereas Hannah had seen him every day for months.

It definitely didn’t help that she was currently wing groping Cas, in what Dean assumed was some angel version of a hug. He would have preferred she actually hug Cas, if that’s what this was, at least then he’d know what the hell it meant. For all he knew Hannah could be propositioning Cas right in front of them.

Her wings were reached out, larger feathers trailing gently along Cas’s resting wings. They were much smaller than Cas’s, pale blue feathers a stark contrast against his ebony ones, looking frail compared to his newly healed limbs.

In fact now that Dean was focusing on her wings, rather than the affectionate display, he noticed patches of missing feathers accompanied by black scorch marks randomly littering their surface. From the fall, he realised, his resentment almost replaced by pity. Almost.

He caught Sam looking at him inquiringly and knew he must’ve been caught scowling at the two. He tried to school his expression, knowing their actions were invisible to Sam and he would only see Hannah and Cas talking to each other with a few paces between them. It suddenly made Dean wonder how often Cas had been doing stuff like this with his wings, right under their noses.

He cleared his throat loudly, causing the two angels’ heads to snap towards him.

“As touching as this reunion is, I have a strict no chick flick moments policy in the bunker,” Dean informed them deliberately avoiding Cas’s gaze as he added, “so, uh, break it up you two.”

“I apologise Dean, we did not mean to cause you any discomfort. Hannah was simply expressing her relief at my recovery,” Cas explained, taking a step back to avoid the contact.

Hannah tilted her head in a very Cas-like gesture, before pulling her wings back into their resting position taking note of Dean’s gaze following the movement.

“I don’t understand. How can the human perceive our wings?” she asked, suspicion lacing her tone as she scrutinised Dean. Part of him wanted to step between them, grab Cas around the waist and stare right into Hannah’s eyes before announcing, “Cas and I are bonded now.” But as much as he’d love to see her face at the news, Dean knew doing that would be toying with Cas’s emotions.
Especially since it’d look like he was accepting their new relationship status.

Instead he decided to swerve the conversation.
“Yeah actually, how come I can see her wings but not Gabe’s?” Dean added curiously.
“Gabriel has been in hiding for many millennia. His wings have been cloaked from not only other angels but, to maintain his alter ego as Loki, even gods. It’s unsurprising you were not able to see them, Dean,” Cas explained thoughtfully.

Hannah gaped at them, eyes wide in shock and staring at them in disbelief, before inquiring, “Gabriel the Archangel? He’s alive?”
Cas had shared that same expression when he’d found out about Gabe’s survival as well. Sometimes Dean forgot Archangels were practically royalty among angels, especially when Gabe acted so immature all the time.

“We have many things to discuss, Hannah. I will update you of the situation on the way,” Cas informed her, flashing a comforting smile. He then stretched a wing out to brush against one of hers in a more subtle display than earlier. Dean tried not to scowl again, he knew Cas was just reassuring her like he’d said. It’s not like Cas would ever cheat on him.

Cheat? God we’re not really married, he told himself firmly, stop letting this fake marriage mess with your head! It didn’t matter how much Dean wished he could return Cas’s feelings, he would never be good enough. Better to save them both a lot of pain and just let Hannah have him. She was an angel after all, she was far better suited for Cas than Dean could ever be.

Dean shook himself from his thoughts roughly, he had more pressing matters to deal with than some internal crisis. Cas’s words kept ringing through his head.
“You’re leaving already?” Dean murmured. The words came out much softer than he’d intended, but he couldn’t bring himself to say it again. But Cas had heard him anyway, turning towards him in surprise before his expression changed to one of concern.

From the look on Cas’s face, Dean knew he must have felt his hurt and disappointment through the bond, but Dean found he didn’t even care. For some stupid reason Dean had thought this ‘marriage’ would mean Cas would actually stay a little longer for once.

It was foolish of him to think they’d ever have any kind of ‘honeymoon period’. Cas was a very busy man, angel Dean reminded himself bitterly, who had an entire legion of fallen angels relying on him. He didn’t have time to waste spending it with a human, even if that human was technically his husband.

Dean was silent as Cas studied him curiously, trying not to let too many of his emotions spill into the bond. His attempts were futile, however, since he didn’t even know how the bond worked in the first place. Dean knew they were staring at each other again but he couldn’t draw his eyes away, ‘eye sex’ complaints be damned.

Sam cleared his throat uncomfortably, eyeing the interaction between Dean and Cas awkwardly.
“Hannah why don’t I show you the library, maybe we can find something useful in there to help you track down angels,” Sam suggested, locking eyes with Hannah meaningfully. As expected Sam’s intentions went right over the angel’s head and she simply squinted at him confused.
“That won’t be necessary-” she deadpanned but Sam cut her off with a sigh before simply grabbing her arm and pulling her in the direction of the library.

Dean was relieved to see them go, noting that save for small protests, Hannah allowed Sam to drag her out of the room despite the fact she could have easily escaped his grip if she wanted. However, once they were alone, Dean found he didn’t know what he even wanted to say to Cas. ‘Don’t go?’ “I
miss you?’ ‘We haven’t even talked about the marriage yet?’ ‘I think I might even feel the same way?’ No, he couldn’t say any of those things. All any of those would do is dredge up conversations that Dean wasn’t anywhere near ready to deal with.

Thankfully Cas decided to end the silence himself.
“Dean, you know I must return to my mission. The angels need someone to guide them,” Cas assured him resolutely. Dean gave a heavy sigh.
“I know, but why does it have to be you?” Dean objected, knowing that he sounded like a whining child.

Cas gave him a pained expression, “You know why, the fall was my fault. I have to salvage what’s left of my family.”
“We’re your real family. Those winged douchebags never cared about you like we do,” Dean accused resentfully. Cas dropped his eyes to the floor, running a hand agitatedly through his already unruly locks. It was a familiar gesture and Dean was sure Cas had adopted the habit from him.

Cas looked so torn and Dean wanted desperately to know what he was feeling in that moment. Why did the bond have to go one way? It wasn’t fair.
After what must have been an internal struggle for Cas, he looked up at Dean defeatedly.
“Regardless of their sentiments towards me, they remain my family and as long as they require my assistance I will not abandon them. You know if things were different I would not hesitate to stay here, but I cannot ignore my duty,” Cas told him firmly.

Dean knew he was being unreasonable, that everything Cas was saying made sense, but that didn’t make him feel any better. In fact, it just made him madder. Before he knew it Dean found himself doing what he did best: hiding his true feelings with anger.
“Fine, just go already then! Why are you even still here? Surely your time is too precious to waste on me,” Dean lashed out before grabbing his keys and instead choosing to leave himself, “I’d say don’t bother calling but you never do, do you?”
Dean forced himself not to look back as Cas watched helplessly while he stormed out of the bunker.

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It felt so great to be behind the wheel again after months of being stuck in the bunker. Dean couldn’t help stroking the steering wheel fondly, mentally apologizing to Baby for neglecting her for so long. The distraction of driving helped for a little while at least. He let his mind go blank, focussing only on the familiar actions that came second nature to him now, not really heading anywhere in particular.

He lost himself in his music, singing along to every song since he knew them all by heart, which helped to soothe his anger. But once his anger was gone all that was left in its place was regret. The music had helped to distract him for only so long, and with no other means of distraction available, Dean was forced to face the reality of what he’d just done.

He hadn’t meant to overreact like that, but his emotions were already strung so high lately and he couldn’t help but feel betrayed by Cas’s departure. Sure it wasn’t the first time Cas had ran out on them, in fact it was pretty much standard procedure by now, but Dean couldn’t help thinking this time should have been different. That, with their new ‘marriage’ and Cas having confessed his feelings, maybe he’d finally stay.

But, of course, that had been wishful thinking on Dean’s part. He knew Cas would never abandon his mission, no matter how human he’d become since the fall. Cas would always be an angel, first and foremost. He wouldn’t choose a human over his own kind, Dean told himself.
Yet Dean knew that wasn’t true. Cas had chosen Dean over the angels, multiple times. So many times, in fact, that Dean honestly should have guessed Cas’s true feelings sooner. Hell he’d given up an army all for Dean. He’d rebelled and killed his family, for Dean. What good had Dean ever done for Cas? All he’d ever given the angel was more pain.

He was still causing Cas pain even now, throwing around harsh words carelessly. Dean was glad he hadn’t looked up to see Cas’s face before he left, there’s no way he’d have gone through with it if he had. Seeing the broken, disappointed look in those big blue eyes would have stopped Dean in his tracks. Even thinking about it made Dean want to turn around, drive back to the bunker, so that he could beg Cas’s forgiveness. Dean wanted to wipe that terrible look off his face with apologetic words whispered in his ear, he wanted to kiss it off him.

But those were exactly the kind of thoughts that forced Dean to keep driving. They were the last proof he needed to know he’d finally fallen off that cliff he’d been toeing for years. He could now let himself analyse his feelings for Cas for what they truly were and knew they weren’t exactly platonic. Somewhere along the line Cas had become more than just an ally, more than just the best friend he’d ever had. Dean needed him, and that phrase in itself was a symbol for so much of their relationship. Every time he’d said ‘I need you’ he may as well have been saying ‘I love you.’ Because, Dean now realised, he did. He loved Cas and there was nothing he could do about it.

But he knew he’d never be what Cas needed, couldn’t allow himself to indulge these kinds of fantasies. It didn’t matter that Cas felt the same. It didn’t matter that the bond meant that they were already technically expected to be together. Dean knew that it would only end in heartbreak. Just like every relationship Dean had ever had. He was poison, just like dream-Gabriel had said. Cas was already tainted enough by tying himself to Dean’s dark, mess of a soul. Of course Cas had wanted to leave him.

Before Dean knew it, he found himself at a bar. It was the usual routine for drowning away his sorrow. He’d drink himself stupid and then maybe find a nice warm body to distract him from his worries for a while. There was a sickening coil in his stomach when he thought about sleeping with someone who wasn’t Cas, but he determinedly ignored it. He knew he couldn’t have Cas, so why shouldn’t he have someone else?

Besides, Dean hadn’t been laid in months. Which was probably why he’d let this whole mess with Cas get into his head. He was sure he just needed a good roll around in the sack, then it’d definitely be easy to bury his feelings for Cas again. Then Cas could find someone who was better for him. Hannah was definitely vying up for the position, Dean thought with a scowl. Encouraged by the jealousy that now sparked through him, Dean scanned the bar for a target.

Dean liked to think he was different than all those other sleazy dudes who regularly picked up chicks at bars. He treated it like an art form, making sure his advances were not only wanted but respectful. Because Dean really did respect the hell out of any woman who was brave enough to go home with a stranger, especially from a shady bar in the middle of nowhere. So he always tried his best to do anything he could do to ease their worries.

If a women wasn’t interested he didn’t pester them and simply went on his way. Since he knew many women automatically feared men they didn’t know, with good reason, he always tried to make his presence as non-threatening as possible. If he ever bought them a drink, he made sure they could clearly see it being made and did his best not to handle it even once. And finally, he always made sure to ask if they preferred to go to their place or a hotel, since many women didn’t want one night stands to know where they lived.

But as his eyes connected with a pair of pale blue ones from across the room, Dean knew instantly a
women wasn’t what he wanted tonight. The man looked to be in his mid-twenties, blonde curly hair framing his face. The eyes that had caught Dean’s attention were, on second inspection, more grey than blue but Dean was relieved by this. Otherwise they would have reminded him too much of- No, he wasn’t going to think of him.

Picking up guys was a bit trickier than women, even without all the precautions, since you could never be quite sure if they were actually interested. Especially in a bar like this you ran the high risk of hitting on a straight dude and getting punched in the face. But over the years Dean had learned to pick up the signs.

Despite what many people think, there’s no standard criteria a gay man would fit into. Dean was proof enough that the feminine stereotype was complete bullshit. Sure there were guys out there who enjoyed the flamboyant stereotype and quite happily embraced it, but assuming all gays were going to appear that way was ignorant. So instead of judging from appearance, Dean would determine a guy’s interest by certain interactions.

Prolonged eye contact had already been established, so Dean checked that off the list. Flashing the other man a flirtatious grin, he raised his beer bottle in a small gesture of greeting and waited for the man’s reaction. When the gesture was returned and the other man not only flashed a grin of his own but a wink, Dean knew he had assumed correctly.

Before he could talk himself out of it, he left his seat to join the man in a booth in the far corner. “Hey there, I’m Dean,” Dean greeted the other man, putting on his best charm.

“Sean,” Sean replied smoothly, raking his eyes over Dean appreciatively. Dean took that as permission to do some ogling of his own.

Sean wasn’t as muscled as Dean but he was far from scrawny. His face was clean shaven and his hair was a wild tumble of golden curls. Despite paling in comparison to Cas’s bright blue, don’t think about him dammit, his blue-grey eyes were still appealing. He was good looking, Dean had to admit, but a part of him couldn’t deny he wasn’t quite what he wanted. Ignoring this, he tried his best to appear interested.

“What do you say we get out of here? I have a pretty sweet ride that I could show you if you wanted,” Dean suggested, this time it was his turn to wink.

Sean’s grin widened, “That sounds like a wonderful idea, I do love cars.”

It didn’t take long to lead Sean to the Impala, which was parked far enough away from the bar that their activities wouldn’t be noticed. There were no more words exchanged, they both knew what the arrangement was between them. This was strictly business, which was more than good enough for Dean. It had been so long since he’d picked up a guy and he found himself eager, despite the reluctance swirling around in his gut.

Dean’s uncertainty was making him uncharacteristically nervous and he found himself hesitating to make the first move. Thankfully, Sean leaned in to kiss him first and Dean was relieved to find the other man had taken the role of leading. It would make it so much easier to let go if he wasn’t the one in control. Sean was a good kisser and Dean found it easy to lose himself in the act.

Sean stepped closer and Dean’s back was suddenly pressed against Baby, one of Sean’s hands tangling in his hair. The other slid down to cradle his hip as he pulled their groins closer. Dean could feel the beginnings of Sean’s erection pressing against his stomach, but his own dick remained unresponsive. He tried his best to submerge himself in their actions, willing himself to react.

Sean hadn’t noticed yet, or if he had he hadn’t mentioned it. Instead the other man was trailing kisses down his neck, taking a moment to nibble at his earlobe. Dean’s head lolled back, allowing more
skin for Sean to explore, closing his eyes to enjoy the pleasant sensation. Sean was very good with his mouth and usually Dean would have been thrilled to find such a skilled lover. But despite this, Dean still wasn’t hard.

He gave a frustrated sigh and Sean pulled back instantly. “Is something wrong?” he asked looking over Dean in concern. Dean shook his head, “It’s nothing you’ve done, it’s just…” Understanding flashed over Sean’s face and he took a step back. “You’re straight,” he didn’t phrase it like a question but Dean still felt like he should correct him. “No, no. It’s not that,” Dean assured him, “any other time I would have been all over you.”

“Then there’s someone else? You have a boyfriend,” he guessed, when Dean hesitated Sean looked at him knowingly, “You don’t need to tell me, the answer’s written all over your face.” Dean couldn’t hide the guilt he was feeling, both at leading Sean on and betraying Cas. Even though he hadn’t talked about their situation yet, Cas had still confessed his feelings and they were technically married. Now that his attempt at fucking away his problems had failed, all he could think about was just how terrible a plan this had been.

“I’m sorry,” was all Dean could say.
Sean didn’t look upset, he just shrugged, “Go home and make up with your boyfriend. Screwing around isn’t going to solve anything.”
With that small piece of advice, Sean casually made his way back to the bar leaving Dean alone leaning against the Impala.

He stayed that way for god knows how long, trying to psyche himself up to returning to the bunker. Cas would most certainly be gone by now, but the slim chance of him still being there made Dean pause. He couldn’t face Cas after everything that had happened. Not only because of the fight but for fear that Cas would know where he’d went. That he’d take one look at Dean and sense that he’d made out with a stranger.

He felt dirty and sick with guilt, like he’d cheated on Cas for real. Their marriage wasn’t real, but Cas’s feeling were and Dean had completely disregarded them tonight. Even though he hadn’t gone through with sleeping with Sean, the betrayal still felt just as significant. The part of him that had wanted to stay loyal to Cas, that had been filling him with a sense of dread ever since he decided on picking someone up, was disgusted with himself. And Dean found he didn’t disagree.

Eventually he dragged himself into the car, if only to escape the chill of the night air. The way back to the bunker was silent, he didn’t even bother turning on the radio. He spent the trip in a stupor of self-loathing, his guilt and regret weighing on him like his own personal storm cloud.

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The bunker was quiet when he made his way in and he felt Cas’s absence like a physical presence. It left him both relieved and disappointed. He moved slowly, each step dragged down by exhaustion and melancholy. He didn’t even hear Sam enter the room, didn’t notice his arrival until the light turned on.

“You’re home late,” Sam noted warily.
Dean shrugged noncommittally, “I needed to get out of the bunker.” Sam noted his dishevelled appearance and Dean knew he must reek of alcohol. “You shouldn’t drink and drive, Dean. The last thing we need is for you to die just after getting your life back,” Sam chastised him.

Something on Dean’s neck caught Sam’s eye and he raised an unimpressed eyebrow.
“Seriously, Dean. You couldn’t even be married one day before cheating on Cas,” his tone was teasing but Dean took his words like a slap to the face. He couldn’t stop the venomous words from tumbling out. “It’s none of your fucking business what or who I do, Sam! I’m sick of hearing about this marriage crap, if you mention it or Cas to me again I swear I won’t hesitate to punch you,” he growled menacingly.

Sam looked at him wide eyed, obviously startled by his outburst. Dean felt the urge to apologize, knew it would be the right thing to do, but the anger swirling around inside him wouldn’t let him. He wasn’t angry at Sam, or Cas, or even Gabriel. No, all his anger was reserved for himself.

He deserved whatever spite or resentment Sam gave him. He deserved Cas’s hatred, in fact he hoped the angel hated him after the harsh things he’d said to him. It would make ignoring the ache of these feelings so much easier. Dean didn’t deserve a family who loved him, not a brother nor a husband. Those were luxuries he’d given up a long time ago. From the moment he’d picked up that knife in hell, Dean knew he would never deserve happiness. Not now, not ever.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the angst guys, Dean's just too stubborn to let himself be happy. I swear you'll get fluff again soon!

I'd also like to take a moment to give special thanks to RebekahNesbitt14 for her comments and sending me a super cute message on tumblr. Without her I probably wouldn't have finished this chapter anytime soon. So thanks for the motivation, lovely! :D
Chapter 6

Castiel had never felt more confused. Just when he thought he was finally beginning to understand humans, Dean’s erratic behaviour had to prove him wrong. It just didn’t make any sense. Why had Dean snapped at him like that? His actions suggested that he was angry at Castiel, but his emotions were telling a completely different story. Even as Dean instructed him to leave, his emotions had screamed at Castiel to stay.

Then, before Castiel even had time to process what happened, Dean had run off leaving him to worry over the events alone. All the while, Dean’s emotions continued to swirl around his head like a physical reminder of their dispute; the emotions so chaotic and disjointed that Castiel couldn’t even begin to decipher them all.

Thankfully it seemed the further away from the bunker Dean drove, the dimmer the emotions in his head became. In fact, with the added distance of his own departure, they became so dulled he could barely register them at all even if he tried. But their absence didn’t quell the constant longing he felt from Dean. Even without the bond he could sense longing; it was a gentler, milder form of prayer.

Actually, feeling Dean long for him wasn’t anything new to Castiel. He’d experienced it many times over the years, much more often than he knew Dean would ever admit. Which was exactly why he’d decidedly never told him, knowing the hunter would likely react negatively to the news.

Usually Castiel would ignore the feeling, knowing his friend would appreciate the privacy. But this time he wasn’t able to shut it out. Whether the bond had intensified his ability to sense Dean’s longing or the longing was for some reason stronger this time, he wasn’t sure. But it was almost all encompassing now, pressing at him constantly, as if trying to physically drag him towards Dean. It took every piece of self-control Castiel had not to give in and fly straight to the bunker.

For days it was all Castiel could concentrate on, no matter how hard he tried to focus on his mission. It was a persistent throb in his chest, chanting a mantra of Cas, Cas, Cas.

“Castiel!” Hannah’s voice cut through his foggy mind like a knife. He looked up from his desk guiltily, knowing she’d no doubt chastise him for being caught daydreaming once again.

He reluctantly raised his eyes to meet her stern gaze.

“My apologies Hannah, what were you saying?” Castiel asked sheepishly.
Her light blue feathers ruffled in annoyance behind her but her face remained stoic.
“I was saying, that many of the runaways have returned upon hearing my news of Gabriel’s return. I believe the fear of upsetting an archangel has provided the perfect incentive for any angels who doubted returning to heaven was the right choice,” Hannah explained proudly.

“That’s excellent news, Hannah. Although surely they will eventually realise Gabriel isn’t among us, nor would he care if they abandoned Heaven. Especially considering he himself has abandoned Heaven,” Castiel pointed out.
Hannah didn’t appear concerned, in fact, she flashed him a rare smile.
“Which is why I suggest we find him and convince him to join us at once,” she declared confidently.

Castiel almost laughed outright, which was another testament to how human he was becoming. The old Castiel never laughed at anything. Yet here he was, smirking to himself as he held back snickers. Poor Hannah didn’t know Gabriel at all. She still expected him to behave like an archangel, not realising Gabriel behaved like anything but. There was no way in Hell, or Heaven in this case, that Gabriel would join them.

Castiel stood, planning to tell Hannah just that, but the action brought a dizzy spell over him and he wavered, slumping back into his seat. Hannah took a concerned step towards him.

“Are you sure the side effects of the foreign grace have completely healed? You can barely focus lately, you look exhausted and your wings have been deteriorating ever since we left the Winchesters,” Hannah noted, gesturing to what remained of his wings.

She was right, of course, he had been gradually losing feathers for the past seven days. Castiel had been avoiding looking at them, afraid of what he might find, but as he finally inspected the damage he realised his wings were in far worse shape than he’d even imagined.

“Perhaps I came too soon, I should have let you rest longer,” Hannah reasoned regretfully.

“I told you to come as soon as you could, Hannah. You have no reason to doubt yourself,” Castiel assured her before evasively adding, “Do not worry. I am fine, my wings are merely shedding.”

Castiel knew it was a lie, he had felt himself weakening more and more each day. The bond must not have been enough, he supposed. His grace had likely been too far gone even for a soul as strong as Dean’s to heal. But he couldn’t allow Hannah to know that, not when she’d finally begun making progress among the runaways.

Besides, Castiel knew she was far better suited to lead the angels than he was. The world would no doubt be better off without him. At least then he couldn’t cause anyone, especially Dean, anymore unnecessary grief. Their last encounter was just more proof that he only brought pain to those he loves.

Hannah didn’t seem convinced at all, “I think you should rest. The circles under your eyes have grown considerably darker, I believe you are extremely sleep deprived,” Hannah informed him worriedly.

At the mention of sleep Castiel wanted nothing more than to curl up and do just as Hannah instructed. But he knew doing so would only raise her suspicions, so instead he forced himself to shake his head.

“Angels don’t need to sleep,” he said firmly, forcing himself to stand once more. This was a huge mistake, however, as the action caused his vision to spin and this time instead of falling back to his seat he tilted forwards. The last thing he saw was the ground rushing up towards him before everything went black.

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Sam didn’t know how much more of Dean’s sulking he could take. It was just over a week after Cas had left the bunker and Dean had barely left his room since. And when he did decide to grace Sam with his presence, it almost always ended in an argument usually started by Sam asking him if he was okay. Sam hadn’t seen Dean this depressed since Lisa and Ben got mind-wiped.

Sam couldn’t help feeling responsible. If he hadn’t suggested this prank then Dean wouldn’t be having some sort of mid-life crisis right now. To be honest, he was this close to coming clean to Dean about the whole charade. The only thing stopping him was the knowledge that Dean’s bad mood would almost certainly become directed at him and that couldn’t possibly end well.
I wish Gabriel were here, Sam thought pensively, then I wouldn’t have to take all the blame.
“You rang?” Gabriel was suddenly sitting on the arm of his chair, smirking at him playfully.
“Jesus Christ!” Sam gasped, almost jumping out of his skin.
“Not quite,” Gabriel chimed, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

Sam rolled his eyes, ignoring the archangel’s wise crack for a more important question, “Wait, can
archangels read minds? How did you know I was thinking about you?”
Gabriel conjured a lollipop, tapping it against his lips in pretend contemplation.
“Hmmm that would come in handy. But don’t worry Samsquatch, your giant head is safe from my
clutches. I just sensed you longing for me,” Gabriel purred, wiggling his eyebrows at him
suggestively.

Sam flushed and quickly clarified, “I wasn’t longing. I just wished you were here so Dean could get
mad at both of us.”
“Sure, sure. Whatever you say, Sammy,” Gabriel teased. Sam didn’t bother defending himself any
more, knowing it would be pointless and just make him look guiltier.

“We have to tell Dean the truth,” Sam announced getting up from his chair determinedly. Gabriel
grabbed his arm, pulling him back down.
“No way, the plan is going perfectly! Dean’s totally love sick over Cas. I give him a day or two
before he starts blasting break-up songs and eating ice-cream,” Gabriel said giddily.

“Wait, have you been watching us this whole time?” Sam accused.
“Of course! You didn’t actually think I’d just set up a prank and not stick around to see it play out,
did you?” Gabriel scoffed.
“Look, this isn’t what I had in mind. The plan was to get Dean and Cas together, not to make Dean
miserable. This plan’s a bust, Cas isn’t even in the bunker anymore,” Sam sighed.

“That won’t be the case for too much longer,” Gabriel replied knowingly, “Cas’s grace can’t heal
this far from Dean’s soul.”
“What? But I thought Cas was healed already!” Sam insisted.
“I said it was ‘quite a process’, what made you dummies think it would be finished in one day? It’ll
take at least two weeks,” Gabriel informed him.
“Then why wouldn’t you tell us that earlier?” Sam snapped.
“It was more fun this way. Besides now that Dean’s had his angel taken away, he’ll be that
happier to get him back,” Gabriel guaranteed him.

“Or he’ll be even more pissed off to know that Cas is only sticking around to heal himself,” Sam
replied skeptically.
“Don’t be such a downer, Sam. This will work, trust me. Manipulating people is what I do,” Gabriel
assured him. Sam wasn’t convinced at all but before he could argue more there came a persistent
banging at the bunker door.

“That’s my cue!” Gabriel declared and with a snap of his fingers, he was gone. Not gone, Sam
reminded himself, no doubt the trickster was still lurking around here somewhere. There’s no way he
would miss the ‘big show’.
“Goddammit Sam, are you deaf or something? Do I have to do everything around here?” Dean
grumbled, surfacing from his room to begrudgingly make his way up the entrance stairs.

Dean’s arrival made Sam realise that he still hadn’t moved from his chair, too distracted by Gabriel’s
disappearance. Springing up from his seat, he followed after Dean. If the visitor was who he thought
it was, he wanted to be around to see Dean’s reaction.

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Dean’s hand hovered over his gun in his waistband, ready to pull it out if there was any trouble. It was always a gamble when they had visitors at the bunker, since only a few people knew of its existence. Considering one of those people was the King of Hell, Dean was pretty wary of any visitors at all.

Surprisingly enough, Sam wasn’t reaching for any hidden weapons. In fact, he was just standing next to Dean, watching him expectantly, his stare pretty much translating to ‘open the door already.’ Shaking off any lingering reservations, Dean complied, slowly pulling the door open cautiously.

All caution was thrown out the window when he was faced with a familiar scene. It was like he’d stepped back in time to last week. Except this time Cas was completely unconscious and instead of being draped over Hannah’s shoulder, she was carrying him bridal style. When he locked eyes with Hannah he found her frowning at him impatiently.

“Finally, I was beginning to suspect you were not home,” she replied irritably, stepping inside the door while effortlessly supporting Cas’s weight as if he weighed nothing. Cas’s wings drooped sadly behind him, looking frail but not as devastated as they had been when Dean first saw them. Dark circles framed Cas’s eyes and he looked alarmingly pale.

“What happened to him?” Dean demanded, following Hannah down the steps anxiously.

“At first I believed it was over-stress from not allowing himself to heal properly before returning to the mission,” Hannah explained, placing Cas gently on the couch Sam had been sitting on earlier, “but on the journey here I noticed some of his feathers returning.”

“So?” Dean snapped impatiently, why was everyone so hell-bent on never fully explaining themselves?

“I’m not sure what it means,” Hannah admitted, “I only know that being here seems to be helping him.”

Dean looked down at Cas realising she was right, Cas already appeared less pale than he’d been only moments ago. The colour had returned to his cheeks and more feathers were appearing on his wings. “Maybe being separated from Dean’s soul meant he couldn’t heal properly?” Sam suggested tentatively.

Hannah seemed to contemplate this carefully before replying, “That seems to be the most likely explanation. In that case, he must remain here until the healing process is complete.”

Dean’s heart began to pound eagerly at the news, but he couldn’t let himself hope just yet. “And how long will that take?” Dean asked, attempting to sound indifferent.

“It is hard to say, an angel has never recovered from tainted grace before. I would suggest he stay as long as possible, to be sure. I do not wish to drag him here unconscious again,” Hannah stated calmly.

Dean tried to hold back the grin that desperately wanted to spread across his face. Cas was going to be here indefinitely! He’d get to wake up every day knowing his angel was somewhere in this very bunker. His angel? No, Dean reminded himself firmly, Cas wasn’t his angel. He couldn’t forget that. It would be too easy to let his feelings for Cas cloud his better judgement, but he knew he still wasn’t what the angel needed. Even if technically right now Dean was exactly what he needed. Well, Dean’s soul was anyway.

“Why isn’t he waking up?” Sam pointed out worriedly.

“In a weakened state, angels require regular sleep like any human. However he has been avoiding rest for the past few days, likely in an attempt to appear well. I believe his unconsciousness was mainly due to sleep deprivation, he should wake in a few hours,” Hannah assured them.

“You should stay with him, Dean,” Sam suggested, “the closer you are the faster he should heal.”
Dean’s immediate response was to protest. What if Cas would sense the change in his feelings through the bond? Would he wake up and instantly know Dean was in love with him? How was he supposed to deny his feelings if the angel automatically knew he was lying?

He pushed his fears aside and forced himself to nod. If it was for Cas’s sake, he’d just have to shove his feelings deep down so he could stay with the angel. Even if just the idea of being alone with him made Dean’s heart race and his stomach flip nervously.

“Ok, I’ll take him to my room. The bed will be more comfortable than this armchair, that’s for sure,” Dean replied with forced nonchalance before gently picking up Cas, just as Hannah had done before. Cas was heavier than he expected and he struggled momentarily before steadying himself. Dean tried not to let it show in front of Hannah. It didn’t matter if she was an angel, he refused to admit that a girl was stronger than him.

Cas’s weight was forgotten, however, when Cas shifted in his arms to snuggle closer against Dean’s chest. Dean tried to hide his glee, internally revelling in their closeness as he continued toward his room. Sadly, the ache in his arms quickly reminded him of Cas’s weight, forcing him to end the experience quicker than he would have liked.

Dean was sweating by the time he made it to his room and relief washed over him as he finally placed Cas’s sleeping form atop the covers. Dean turned to leave but was stopped as he remembered Sam’s words, “the closer you are, the faster he should heal.” If that was the case then surely he should try to get as close to Cas as possible right? It was the honourable thing to do, he assured himself.

He didn’t need much convincing before he found himself claiming the other side of the bed. He could just lie here while Cas healed, Dean told himself, there was nothing weird about a friend laying next to his buddy while he slept. Dean leaned back against the head board, trying to ignore the urge to get even closer. Wait, why should he have to ignore it? I mean, it would only be helping Cas if he got closer right?

Yet again he was easily convinced, soon finding himself gently dragging Cas’s sleeping form towards him. Thankfully Cas didn’t wake from the slight jostling, simply shifting dozily as his head found its new resting place upon Dean’s chest. Cas automatically searched out Dean’s warmth, his legs tangling around Dean’s right one.

Curling up like this, Dean could almost pretend they were a real couple. He knew this entire situation, especially thinking stuff like that, was dangerous. It would almost certainly cause him more heartache in the end. But, lying here with Cas like this, he couldn’t seem to care. He honestly hadn’t felt this content in days. It was like all the bad vibes he’d been building up all week had disappeared the moment Cas arrived. Dean was going to enjoy this moment while it lasted, it was worth dealing with the consequences later.

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Castiel drifted back to consciousness slowly, unwilling to let go of this blissful sensation. He struggled to recall a moment he’d ever felt such warmth, such comfort. The closest memory he could recall was the moment of his creation, those few precious seconds of being cradled in God’s embrace, before being released amongst his brethren.

But somehow, this felt even better. He felt completely safe; as if his grace was totally at peace. Was this death? Had he finally succumbed to his failing grace? No, there was no after life for his kind. Surely purgatory would be his final resting place and this certainly wasn’t there.
He soon became aware of a gentle stroking against his head, the object trailing through his hair in soothing ministrations. The gesture almost tempted him back to slumber, but he forced himself to keep awareness. He stirred in a failed attempt at raising his droopy head. The object in his hair was gone instantly and the warm pillow he’d been leaning against tensed.

Blinking blearily, Castiel turned in its direction surprised to find, not his pillow, but a person. Not just any person, but Dean. Dean was watching him guiltily, as if he’d been caught doing something wrong.

“Dean?” Cas grumbled, his gravelly voice coming out even deeper with grogginess.

“Hey Cas, you feeling better? Sorry if I woke you. I, uh, needed to be close to help your grace heal or whatever,” Dean mumbled rubbing the back of his neck, “I’ll just, um, leave now.”

Embarrassment flared through the bond and Dean avoided meeting his eyes. Before Dean could stand, Cas found himself reaching for the hunter, clutching at his sleeve.

“No,” Cas said before he could stop himself, “you can stay.”

Dean froze, like an animal caught in a trap. Cas felt the need to add, “If you would like to, that is.”

“Ah, yeah. Um, sure,” Dean muttered, trepidation swirling among his quickly growing pile of emotions. Castiel realised then that he’d missed feeling Dean’s emotions, even if he couldn’t really understand them. Their presence was reassuring. They were the most solid reminder of Dean’s humanity, proof that the demon was truly gone for good. It also made Castiel feel infinitely closer to the human, even if Dean wanted him gone.

It was then that Castiel remembered their last encounter. His good mood quickly darkened.

“Why am I here, Dean?” Castiel asked cautiously, “You told me to leave.”

Regret and guilt surfaced within the bond and Dean’s face hardened.

“I shouldn’t have said that. I know you were only doing what needed to be done. I shouldn’t have blown up like that. I just…” Dean paused, scrabbling for words, “I mean, we hadn’t seen each other in months, Cas. And then you almost die and then just when things get even more complicated between us you decide to leave again, just like that. You didn’t even give me time to process everything, the bond and your-”

Dean cut off his rambling, obviously thinking he’d said too much. Cas couldn’t help feeling like Dean had been about to say something important, but he knew Dean’s emotions were telling him not to press the matter.

Instead Castiel said, “I didn’t realise my departure would cause you such distress, Dean. You know I would not have done so if it wasn’t necessary.”

“About that,” Dean interrupted warily, “you kind of can’t leave again. It looks like being too far away from my soul cuts off all the healing mojo. You might be stuck here for a while.”

Despite Dean’s dejected tone, his emotions seemed thrilled at the news.

“Hannah must be informed immediately. She will need to become my replacement in my absence,” Castiel said anxiously. He began to rise but Dean gripped his shoulder, stopping him.

“Hannah already knows, who else would drag your comatose ass across several states? That girl seriously needs a raise,” Dean informed him, chuckling fondly.

“She is a very loyal friend. I am grateful to have her company,” Castiel agreed.

“We should probably let her know you’re awake,” Dean admitted reluctantly, “She’s been checking on you almost every hour since dropping you here.”

True to Dean’s words, Hannah was waiting in the library attempting to distract herself with a book. Which obviously wasn’t working, as she agitatedly tapped a finger along the page steadily. Such a show of unease was unusual among angels, meaning she must be incredibly restless. Upon seeing
him she jumped to her feet, her wings trembling in relief.

“You’re awake,” she stated calmly, her voice not betraying her distress at all. “Yes, thank you for delivering me to safety once again. I am lucky to have such a resourceful companion,” Castiel told her gratefully. Her wings shuddered at the praise, but her only response was a tense nod. Castiel stepped forward to trace her wings with his in both gratitude and reassurance.

A flash of jealousy sparked through him suddenly, catching him off guard. He glanced back at Dean to find him stone-faced, as if visibly trying to control his expression. Curious, Castiel stepped even closer to Hannah. Without thinking, he began carding his feathers through hers in a more intimate, not necessarily platonic gesture. Hannah’s eyes widened, giving him a questioning glance. Normally he would have never acted so inappropriately, but a part of him felt like he needed to be sure his actions were causing the jealousy. His suspicions were confirmed when he noticed the jealousy burning more intensely at his actions.

Stepping back, Castiel hoped he hadn’t offended Hannah with his behaviour. He had simply needed to test his theory. And there was no doubting it as Dean’s relief washed over him almost as soon as he moved out of Hannah’s personal space. This was quite a surprising development, Castiel mused.

He wondered when it had occurred. Was it while he was asleep? Maybe even before that? Castiel supposed it didn’t really matter when it had happened. Or even how. It was obviously out of his control and there was likely no changing it. For reasons Castiel couldn’t determine, that thought made his chest constrict uncomfortably and his stomach churn at this particular revelation.

But, of course, there was no denying it. All the signs pointed to the obvious conclusion.

Dean had clearly developed romantic feelings towards Hannah.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

OMG guys, I can't tell you how happy I am that so many people liked the last chapter. Seriously all your comments were so amusing to read, I got a chuckle out of every 'facepalm' I swear xD
Thanks for every comment and hope you all like this chapter too! :)

Dean had known all along it was a mistake lying in bed with Cas like that. Self-control was never his strong suit. With each minute that passed, Dean had found it harder and harder to resist touching Cas. It especially didn’t help that Cas’s wings were so close. It would have been so easy to just glide a hand over the alluring feathers. But Dean knew he couldn’t, he had no idea what that could mean. What if touching Cas’s wings was violating Cas? He wasn’t going to risk becoming a rapist just because he couldn’t keep his hands to himself.

So that’s how Dean had found himself petting Cas’s hair instead. It was a fair compromise, he’d decided, to stop himself from touching Cas’s wings. Honestly he couldn’t say he was disappointed, the urge to touch Cas’s hair had been just as tempting. Dean would be lying if he said he’d never thought about running his hands through that constant ‘sex hair’ Cas always sported. It would only be a few minutes, he’d promised himself, Cas would never even know.

But before he knew it, hours had gone by and he continued trailing his fingers through the soft locks. It wasn’t until Cas stirred that he knew he’d been busted. Dammit, he knew this would happen! Cas would no doubt be so creeped out he’d never want to talk to him again. Or worse, he’d consider Dean’s actions acceptance of their marriage and Dean would be forced to break Cas’s heart.

The hardest part of all was that Dean knew if Cas were to ask him outright, there was no way he’d be able to lie about his feelings for the angel. But Dean was adamant that Cas deserved better, even if that meant he’d have to break his own heart as well.

It was for this exact reason he’d been avoiding mentioning the marriage altogether. Sure he knew Cas was bound to bring it up eventually, they really should talk about it, but Dean sure as hell wasn’t going to be the one to bring it up. He was more than happy to prolong the inevitable and enjoy his friendship with Cas while it still lasted, thank you very much.

But to Dean’s surprise, neither of those scenarios happened. In fact, Cas had asked him to stay. And, despite the fact that staying left major risk for the “dreaded topic” coming up, Dean hadn’t been able to pass up a chance to spend time with Cas. He’d missed him more than he would ever admit aloud and being with Cas awake was way better than unconscious. It felt less creepy that way. Cas had been the “watch you while you sleep” type, not Dean.

Unfortunately, Dean knew their alone time couldn’t last. As much as he hated to admit it, Hannah had a right to know Cas was awake. She’d obviously been worried about him, even if she didn’t seem inclined to show it. Without the constant checking in, Dean might have been fooled into thinking she was just as calm as she appeared. Or he would have if he wasn’t able to see her wings. They couldn’t keep still, constantly fidgeting and fluffing in distress, it didn’t take a genius to figure out what that meant.
Wings were actually pretty helpful in seeing past the stoic angel front, Dean realised. If only he’d been able to see Cas’s wings when he’d first met him, it sure would have made things a lot easier back then. It didn’t really make much difference now though, since he already knew how to read Cas pretty easily.

Well… at least that’s what Dean had always thought, that was of course, until he’d found out Cas was in love with him. Yeah, he definitely hadn’t been able to read that. Maybe he did need the extra help, it was only fair since Cas had a front row seat to his emotions after all.

Which was actually really starting to bite him in the ass, Dean realised later as Cas interrupted his “angel hug” with Hannah to flash him a curious glance. Which pretty much confirmed, much to Dean’s dismay, that yes the angel had felt his jealousy just now. Great.

Dean tried his best to reign the emotion in but it was all in vain when Castiel suddenly moved even closer to Hannah and trailed his wing through hers suggestively. Dean suppressed a growl, trying to remain calm on the outside at least. Maybe he could convince Cas it was a faulty signal or that the bond was messing up. He hoped Cas would believe that lame excuse, at least.

He was busy planning his defence when Cas addressed him, “Don’t you agree, Dean?”
“Um… what?” Dean asked sheepishly.
“I was just suggesting to Hannah that she should stay here at the bunker while we locate Gabriel. There is plenty of lore here that we could benefit from in our search. I am certain Heaven has no immediate concerns that our subordinates couldn’t handle in our absence. Don’t you agree?” Castiel explained, grinning at Dean expectantly.

Dean more than anything wanted to say ‘hell no’, but Cas was looking at him so excitedly he just couldn’t bring himself to do it. Besides, he did kind of owe Hannah for bringing Cas here and helping save Cas’s life. Twice.
“Sounds fine with me. It’s not like she’s gonna need a room anyway since she doesn’t sleep. Just no wild angel parties,” Dean warned her, attempting to hide his annoyance with humour. Hannah obviously didn’t get the joke because she just squinted at him in that universal confused angel way.

Hannah then turned to Cas, looking like she wanted to protest but Cas was having none of it. “Then it’s settled, I’ll go inform Sam,” Cas announced happily, before glancing from Hannah to Dean and adding, “you two should get to know each other while I’m gone. I’m sure you’ll be spending a lot of time together from now on.”

Unsurprisingly, instead of taking Cas’s advice, Dean and Hannah spent less than a minute glancing at each other awkwardly before excusing themselves from the room as well.

It’s not like Dean hated Hannah or anything, he actually kind of respected her. She was obviously really dedicated to helping Cas and that made her good in Dean’s books. But the problem was she was too dedicated and that made Dean question just how close she wanted to be to her leader. And now Dean couldn’t even have Cas to himself for a few days without ‘Miss Perfect’ around, constantly there to remind him how wrong he was for Cas. He already knew Hannah was better for Cas than him, didn’t exactly mean he wanted a daily reminder.

At least Cas hadn’t mentioned the jealousy, Dean tried to console himself. Maybe the bond wasn’t that accurate after all.

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Castiel was extremely pleased with himself. He was definitely a great “wing man”, as Dean had once called it. Dean would surely be proud of him. Finding Gabriel was going to be difficult, especially now that he knew people would be summoning him. He could ignore a summons if he was
expecting it. Which meant Hannah would need to stay for at least a few days. Which meant Dean would have plenty of time to win Hannah’s affections.

Which he would definitely need considering angel courtship traditions. Despite the fact that angels don’t procreate, courting has been a timeless and honoured tradition. An angel will only choose one mate in their lifetime, which means it can usually take millenniums before an angel chooses a mate.

Fortunate for Dean, Hannah has yet to choose a mate so she may be open to Dean’s advances. Honestly, Castiel couldn’t think of even one reason she would have for rejecting him. Dean may be human, but he had one of the brightest souls Castiel had ever seen. If any human deserved the love of an angel, it was Dean.

That unpleasant clenching of his chest started again and Castiel did his best to ignore it. He was happy for them, Castiel assured himself, there was no reason for him to be upset. Hannah was loyal, caring and dedicated. Castiel was also sure that with enough time and guidance, she could begin to understand human emotions and come to appreciate them just as he has. All in all, she was a fine choice for Dean’s affections.

Although Dean may be human, Hannah would still expect, and deserved, to be courted properly. Dean may be an expert on courting humans, but angels had their own customs and techniques when it came to courtship. So, of course, it was up to Castiel as a fellow angel and both their friend to make sure Dean knew what was expected of him.

Which was why Castiel ambushed the older Winchester in his room later that night. Admittedly, it wasn’t much of an ambush, more just Castiel sitting on Dean’s bed reading A Game of Thrones until Dean finally entered the room.

“So this is where you’ve been all day, huh? Sam and I were starting to think you’d gotten lost. This place is big enough for it,” Dean pointed out with a chuckle. He stood awkwardly by the bed, waiting for Cas to move. Cas didn’t, instead simply placing his book down beside him.

“You haven’t claimed my room, have you? Cause I’m sorry, buddy, but it took me way too long getting this place how I like it and don’t think I’m giving up that memory foam without a fight,” Dean teased. Castiel suddenly found himself hesitant, unsure of how to start this conversation. Uncertainty and anxiety eased its way into the bond as the silence became thick with tension.

“Dean, I believe there are some important matters we need to discuss,” Castiel finally began.

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Dean’s stomach dropped as he heard those words. Oh god, this was it. The conversation he had been dreading ever since this marriage fiasco began. He wasn’t ready, he wanted to run, but his legs remained frozen in place.

“I’m not sure if you’re aware, Dean, but there are certain procedures you must follow if you wish to court an angel. Certain responsibilities you must fulfil in order to please your mate,” Castiel explained hesitantly.

Please your mate? Oh god, Dean was definitely not ready for this conversation. He’d been clinging to the hope that angel marriages were platonic. There’s no way he could stay neutral towards their marriage and ignore it if Cas expected them to actually act like a couple. He couldn’t do that to Cas. Cas needed to find someone better. It would be selfish of Dean to accept the perks of their fake marriage when Cas deserved so much more. Dean obviously couldn’t avoid it anymore, he had to set Cas straight about this whole marriage thing. God, he might as well kiss their friendship goodbye right now.
“First, you will be expected to groom your mate’s wings as a sign of intimacy and trust,” Cas continued warily, looking like an uncomfortable parent giving their child ‘the talk.’
Dean’s eyes were instantly drawn to Cas’s wings, compelled by the thought of finally touching them. No. He couldn’t. He was going to tell Cas they weren’t really “mates” and be done with it, Dean told himself firmly. He was.

Oblivious to Dean’s internal struggle, Cas continued on his lecture, “You will also be expected to build a nest to symbolise your unity and commitment towards each other.”

A nest? Cas wasn’t serious, was he? This had to be a joke, right? But Cas wasn’t laughing, in fact, Cas was bright red and avoiding Dean’s eyes. It became obvious why, as he spoke his next sentence, “Though, the nest isn’t permanent and may be dissembled after the couple is… intimate.”

Dean couldn’t help his own flush, at the thought of being “intimate” with Cas. Dean knew he had to stop Cas soon. He wasn’t sure he could hear much more of what he’d be missing out on after he turned Cas down. It was hard enough already without hearing about all these “traditions” Cas wanted to live out with Dean. Cas deserved all that stuff with a real angel, he was sure Hannah would know all about this stuff already. Dean couldn’t compete with an angel, even if he wasn’t broken.

Before Dean had the chance to speak, however, Cas spoke once more, “You should know, angels only choose a mate once in their lifetimes. It is an extremely important decision and must not be taken lightly. If you court an angel, it will not be like your previous encounters with humans. This cannot be a ‘one night stand’ or temporary fling. Do you understand?” Cas’s voice was stern, making sure Dean knew what he was saying was vital information.

The news almost caused Dean to have a panic attack right then and there. Sure he’d known that angels didn’t have ‘divorce’ but one mate per lifetime? That meant Cas couldn’t even find happiness outside the marriage with someone else. He would never be able to find someone who truly deserved him. Not even Hannah would be able to take Dean’s place now. It was everything Dean had been afraid of.

Dean finally forced himself to speak, “Cas, look, I’m not worth it. Not after everything I’ve done. My soul is broken; corrupted, twisted and scarred. I’m not even good enough for another human, let alone an angel,” Dean let all his self-loathing coat every word, hoping Cas would finally understand. Maybe it wasn’t too late, maybe Cas could break the rules. He’d done it before.

Cas was silent as he stared at Dean, complete disbelief covering his features before becoming quickly replaced with outrage.

Castiel snapped from his place on the bed, his hands fists at his sides, “Dean Winchester, you are the most infuriating human being I have ever met!”

Dean was taken aback by Cas’s anger. Sure he’d expected him to be upset, but this seemed a little extreme.

“Cas-” Dean began but Cas interrupted him.
“Don’t,” Cas growled, “Do you think I rebelled, killed my own kind and dedicated myself in the name of a “broken” man? Do you think I would have given up my army, throwing away my one chance to defeat Metatron, for a “broken” man? You are the bravest, most loyal and selfless human I know. So selfless that you’re blind to your own strengths! Your soul isn’t broken, it’s the brightest I have ever seen! Don’t you dare tell me you’re not ‘worth it’. Any angel would be lucky to have you, Dean!”

Cas froze, eyes wide, as if his own outburst had surprised him. Dean found he couldn’t speak, couldn’t do anything but stare at Cas. He knew he should say something, but his mind was still
processing this information.

His soul was pure? Not just pure but “the brightest Cas had ever seen”? That had to be a mistake, he was poison. His soul had to be black and broken, didn’t it?

“I have to go,” Cas spoke suddenly. Before Dean could even protest Cas was out of the room, leaving Dean to think over Cas’s words alone.

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*Any angel would be lucky to have you, Dean!*

It was as those words left his mouth that Castiel realised something truly devastating.

He was in love with Dean Winchester.

How could he have been so blind to his own feelings for so long? All those things he’d done for Dean, those things he’d screamed at Dean only moments ago, he’d done out of love. Sure, he’d always known he cared deeply for the human. But it hadn’t been until that moment that he’d realised just how deeply.

Castiel tried to think about the way he cared for Sam. He was a true friend and Castiel cared for him very much. But it wasn’t at the same level as he cared for his brother. Dean had always been different. He had once said it was because they “shared a profound bond”, well he now realised just how true that was. Castiel’s love for Dean was profound.

But he knew Dean could never return his feelings. After all, Castiel had just been in the middle of preparing him to court Hannah. He had no chance. Once Dean pursued her, it would be forever. He would be cursed to love Dean unrequited for the rest of his life. He couldn’t even imagine accepting the love of another, even if another angel were to court him. Though it was unlikely, no angel had ever attempted to court him before. He was a soldier first and foremost, love had never even crossed his mind.

Until now, of course. But he had realised it too late. Perhaps he could have had a chance with Dean once, but he couldn’t pursue him now. He would never sabotage Hannah’s chance at happiness and he especially wouldn’t sabotage Dean’s chance at happiness. Even if that wasn’t with him.

The cruel irony was that Castiel would be doomed to literally feel Dean’s love for someone else for eternity. It would plague him every day, taunting him with what could have been his. Even after Dean passes away, Castiel would mourn the loss for the rest of his immortal life.

The emptiness Castiel feels inside his chest now is worse than when his grace was stolen. He wishes he could go back to the blissful ignorance he had before, when Dean was simply his best friend and nothing more. Now he’s afraid he won’t even be able to look at Dean without being filled with regret.

But there’s no way he could imagine his life without Dean. Dean is the reason Castiel rebelled, he’s the one who introduced him to emotions and free will. He was determined to stay in Dean’s life for as long as he’ll accept him. Even if he had to pretend nothing changed. Even if he had to watch Dean court Hannah, all the while he would long it was him. Even if he had to watch the two of them be happy together every day for the next 60 years or so. Castiel could do that, just as long as he got to see Dean smile. It didn’t matter that he wouldn’t be the one who put it there.

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Dean’s entire world view had been turned upside down in one damn conversation. Everything he knew about himself might be a lie. How could his soul be as bright as Cas said? After everything he’d done? It just didn’t seem possible. It couldn’t be possible.

But Dean knew for sure Cas wouldn’t lie, so he at least had to believe it was true. But then what did that even mean for Dean? Did all the horrible things he’d done as a demon really leave his soul unscathed? Did torturing all those souls in Hell really not leave any marks? His soul should be in pieces…yet it apparently wasn’t. And if that really was true, did that mean he wasn’t the broken shell of a man he’d once believed?

He needed to talk to someone. But there was no way he was talking to Cas about this, especially considering how torn up he looked when he’d stormed out of Dean’s room. And he couldn’t talk to Sam about this, he’d never let him live it down. There’d be jokes about ‘chick flick moments’ for weeks. Besides, Sam would only tell Dean what he thought he needed to hear. Dean needed someone who wasn’t going to bullshit him and fill him with false hope…and Dean realised he knew just the person.

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Hannah wasn’t hard to find, Dean had been right in his assumption that she’d taken refuge in the library. It was quiet and filled with books, which could serve as excuses not to be social. She’d probably get along with Sam swimmingly.

“Hannah, can I get your advice on something?” Dean asked, trying not to sound as unhinged as he felt.
“If you must,” Hannah shrugged. She gestured toward the seat beside her and Dean hesitantly accepted.
“I need you to be honest with me on this okay? No sugar coating,” Dean insisted firmly.
“Sugar coating?” Hannah asked incredulously, “I don’t eat, Dean.”
“It’s an expression, look just never mind. I just wanted you to tell me… what my soul looks like,” Dean murmured uncertainly. He avoided her eyes, not wanting to see the disgust that was no doubt on her face.

“Your soul is what you would expect from the righteous man. It shines with your love for your brother, your compassion for others and your need to help those who cannot help themselves,” Hannah deadpanned.
“And you don’t see any darkness? Not even from my days in hell? Or the mark? I killed people Hannah and did a whole lot worse to a lot of others. That’s got to be on there somewhere,” Dean demanded.

“That’s not how a soul works, Dean. Do you feel regret for those actions? Do you feel guilt for the pain you have caused?” Hannah replied coolly.
“Of course, I do!” Dean snapped but Hannah didn’t seem disturbed by his outburst.
“Then your soul would not be affected. Your soul is what rejects those acts, it does not take damage from them. A soul is only darkened if an individual feels no regret for what they’ve done. Those who are truly evil, aren’t capable of remorse,” Hannah explained.

Dean was silent as he contemplated this. He’d never thought of it that way before. Yet it was exactly the kind of straightforward logic he needed to hear. None of this, “you’re a good person, Dean”, “everyone makes mistakes”, “it wasn’t your fault, it was the mark” crap. He didn’t want people telling him what he did was okay, because he knew it wasn’t. No amount of apologising or feeling bad about it would make that stuff go away.

But Hannah wasn’t doing any of that. She wasn’t denying the evil acts he’d done, she was telling
him that feeling guilty about doing that stuff was what separated him from actually being evil himself. It was a lot more reassuring than anything Sam or Cas could have said and Dean found himself grateful for Hannah’s presence. In fact, he could practically feel his mindless resentment for her melting away.

“Thanks Hannah, that’s actually exactly what I needed to hear,” Dean thanked her. He’d misjudged her. She was actually a pretty cool chick, even if she was still in that “robot angel” stage. He’d have to teach her how to let loose sometime to really thank her. He smirked to himself at the thought of taking the angel to a strip club. Maybe he could buy her a lap dance. Now that would be interesting. He’d probably have more luck with her at a “den of iniquity” than he did with Cas.

Speaking of Cas, “Hannah, can I ask you one more thing?”

“Is this about your soul again?” Hannah asked wearily.

“Sort of… do you think, even with all the horrible things I’ve done, that I’d deserve the love of an angel?” Dean mumbled the words quickly, feeling extremely self-conscious afterwards. He knew this was the closest he’d ever gotten to confessing his love for Cas aloud.

Hannah looked uncomfortable and her wings drew close to her body, as if shying away from him. “Look Dean, you are a very nice human but I do not wish to mate anyone for at least another hundred years. The fall is not the ideal time to choose a mate,” Hannah proclaimed assertively. Dean was already shaking his head halfway through her ‘rejection’.

“It’s not you, Hannah. No offence. I’m… I’m talking about Cas,” he admitted nervously.

Hannah didn’t look as surprised as Dean had been expecting, which made Dean wonder just how obvious he’d been this whole time.

“Ah yes, that makes much more sense,” she mused, “Dean, as an outsider who doesn’t know you very well I cannot give much of an opinion to your worth-”

“Yeah, of course, right. Thanks anyway,” Dean interrupted dejectedly.

“But,” Hannah continued firmly, “I know that the very first time I met you, Castiel gave up everything he’d spent months building in one encounter just to save you. You are all he talks about when we are not talking about work and he drops everything we’re doing, no matter the importance, the moment you call for his aid. I have grown very close to Castiel these past few months and I can say with certainty that, though I myself cannot determine whether you are worthy, I believe Castiel finds you worthy and that is what really matters. Don’t you think?”
Chapter 8

Castiel froze in the doorway, startled to find the very person he’d been attempting to avoid. Of all the places in the bunker Castiel had thought the library would be the safest, yet here Dean was and he was with Hannah no less. This was just the twist of the knife his heart really hadn’t needed.

The two were so caught up in their interaction that they hadn’t even noticed his arrival. Dean gaped at Hannah, stunned by overwhelming gratitude, as if she’d offered him the last piece of pie on earth. Relief, happiness, acceptance, admiration, fondness and, most of all, hope also flooded through the bond. Castiel knew he should leave but, just as the thought occurred to him, Dean suddenly pulled Hannah into an embrace making moving seem impossible to him now. He found he couldn’t tear his eyes away from the scene before him, vision too clouded by dismay to notice Hannah’s discomfort towards the action.

“Thanks, Hannah, you have no idea how much I needed this,” Dean’s voice seemed unexpectedly loud in the otherwise silent room, causing Castiel to startle out of his trance. The movement, however, drew the others’ attention and he found himself caught under their shared gaze. Dean quickly withdrew from Hannah, who appeared more than slightly relieved at the loss of contact, and she slowly relaxed her wings from their tensed position.

“Oh…hey Cas, how long have you been standing there?” Dean asked, forcing nonchalance. But Castiel couldn’t be fooled, he felt Dean’s panic and embarrassment clearly. Castiel realised he’d obviously interrupted a very intimate moment. Perhaps Dean had been confessing his feelings, Castiel thought regretfully.

“I just arrived, but I could leave if you wish to be alone?” Castiel offered, already turning to leave. He didn’t want to witness any more, watching Dean court Hannah was even more painful than he’d imagined.

“Wait,” Dean called, getting up quickly, “don’t go. We were finished talking anyway. I’ll let you guys get on with your angel business, I should probably hit the sack before daylight.”

Dean hesitated in the doorway, glancing between Castiel and Hannah nervously. Castiel felt Dean’s reluctance to leave and wondered whether he should suggest Hannah leave with him. Before he could make the suggestion, however, Dean spoke, “Look Cas, about earlier—” Castiel hurried to interrupt him, “I apologise for my actions, Dean. I merely overreacted, please forgive my outburst.”

Dean was visibly reassured by his words, flashing him a warm smile, “You really need to stop apologising Cas, especially when you didn’t do anything wrong. I’m just glad everything’s okay between us.” He paused, looking uncertain, “…it is, right? I mean, you’re not still upset? I know we didn’t get to finish our…um, talk.” Dean glanced at Hannah self-consciously, he obviously didn’t want her to know about their earlier
conversation. Castiel quickly came to Dean’s aid, burying the subject, “Of course not, Dean. I could never harbour any ill will towards you.” Even if you love another, he added silently.

Dean flashed a relieved grin and continued his goodbyes. Finally, before he left the room Dean locked eyes with Hannah meaningfully, “We’ll, uh, talk more tomorrow okay, Hannah? I still have some stuff to ask you.”

Hannah’s face didn’t reveal anything as she replied calmly, “Very well. I will see you tomorrow, Dean.”

Castiel held back the urge to interrogate Hannah as Dean finally exited the room. They had a right to their privacy, Castiel argued with himself, besides he really wasn’t sure he wanted to hear it. What he’d witnessed was painful enough without hearing the finer details. So instead he grabbed the first book on archangels he could find and began burying himself in his work. His task right now was to find Gabriel, he could succumb to heartbreak later.

They worked in silence for the rest of the night, Hannah occasionally glancing at him worriedly. Thankfully she didn’t bring any of her concerns to light and Castiel appreciated the space. He wasn’t sure he could decently explain his troubles without confessing the whole truth. Knowing Hannah she would likely withdraw from pursuing Dean in an attempt to please Castiel and, although the concept was extremely tempting, he couldn’t allow her to give up her chance at happiness for his sake.

He’d just have to accept that they’d find happiness with each other and be happy for them in turn. Unfortunately, Castiel realised as another flash of envy flared through him at that thought, it was easier said than done.

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Sam woke early the next morning to find Hannah and Castiel mid-ritual.

“What are you guys doing?” he asked, noting the familiar sigil marking the floor. He knew he’d seen it somewhere before…

“We’re attempting to summon Gabriel,” Cas informed without looking up from the spell he was brewing. The ingredients bubbled unpleasantly within the pot. So that’s why this seemed familiar, he’d been preparing this same ritual only a week ago. Well it had worked for summoning Gabriel last time, he didn’t see why it shouldn’t work again.

Sam left them to their ritual, hoping he’d be able to grab something for breakfast before he had to deal with a pissed off archangel. It was far too early in the morning to be dealing with Gabe, that’s for sure.

“I made you some pancakes,” Gabriel’s voice piped up behind him.

“Oh my god!” Sam hissed, almost dropping the jug of orange juice he’d been pulling out of the fridge.

“Wrong again, Sammy,” Gabe smirked, pushing a plate of pancakes in front of the hunter like a peace offering. Sam just glared at the plate of, admittedly delicious looking, pancakes before turning his glare at Gabe.

Gabe looked at him innocently, “What? Doesn’t the moose eat pancakes? They’re not poison, I swear. Scouts honour.” He even added a mocking scout salute.

When Sam still refused the plate, Gabriel pouted, “Come on, they’re chocolate chip! I’m just trying to be courteous to my partner in crime.”

“I’m not your partner in anything,” Sam insisted, glancing worriedly at the kitchen door. Hannah’s chanting continued to echo down the hall.

“Anyway aren’t you being summoned? What are you doing in the kitchen?” Sam whispered anxiously.
Gabe didn’t appear concerned at all, “Summoning isn’t some instantaneous booty call, you know. Powerful beings have the option to answer or not. The only reason I came last time was cause you caught me off guard. You can’t get me to show up again so easily, especially when I’m expecting it.”
“But you did show up, you’re here aren’t you?” Sam pointed out exasperatedly.
“Well duh, I never left,” Gabe replied casually.

“You can’t just spy on us, Gabe. It’s creepy!” Sam scolded him. The archangel merely rolled his eyes.
“Don’t get your panties in a twist, I’m only spying on your brother and mine,” Gabriel clarified. Sam gave him a bitchface, expressing his continued disapproval.
“Look Sasquatch, don’t be such a downer. Without me you wouldn’t know all the dirty goss happening right under that oblivious nose of yours,” Gabriel complained.
Sam looked at him skeptically, “Oh yeah? Like what?”

“Well for instance, your big brother snuck out a week ago for some rebound sex after Cassie left-” Gabriel began before Sam interrupted.
“Yeah I already knew that, smartass.”
“But did you know said rebound was male and the “rebound sex” didn’t even happen. Looks like poor Dean-o was too torn up over Cassie to get it up,” Gabriel snickered.
“Gross, I don’t wanna hear that,” Sam complained, but couldn’t help adding, “…what else do you know?”

“See, I knew you’d love a little gossip. We have more in common than you think, Sammy,” Gabriel smirked.
“Stop calling me that, if you don’t have any more to say then I might as well tell Cas and Hannah you’re here,” Sam suggested in warning.
“You wound me, Sammy,” Gabriel whined, blatantly ignoring Sam’s request, “and I haven’t even gotten to the good stuff yet.” Sam gave him a warning bitchface before allowing the archangel to continue.

“Well,” Gabriel chimed proudly, “I saw Dean go all Dr Phil with Hannah last night, he even admitted to being in love with Cassie!”
Sam gaped at him, “What? But he hasn’t even told me yet! He barely even knows Hannah, why would he tell her before his own brother!?”
“Don’t take it personally, Sasquatch. I’m sure Dean just needed some distinctly angel advice. I mean, he’d only just found out about angel courting after all.”

“Angel courting? How out of the loop am I!”” Sam snapped in disbelief.
“Don’t worry, I’ll fill you in on all the juicy details later,” Gabriel promised with a wink, “the major point of all this is that Dean has finally pulled his head out of his ass.” Gabriel was practically skipping with excitement, Sam wondered briefly just how much sugar the archangel had binged before staging this little ‘visit’.

Although, he had to admit it really was great news. This meant maybe there really was hope for his brother and Cas’s happiness. It also meant their crazy scheme didn’t seem so ‘crazy’ anymore. Dean might even thank them one day. That is, if they ever managed to pull this off. Getting those two together was proving more difficult than he’d first thought.

“Even if he has, I know my brother and he might still try running from his feelings. Dean has commitment issues the size of Texas. I think we need another person on the inside to help convince them, Gabe. You know, someone already in-close and personal with both of them,” Sam hinted.
“Aww come on, not that stick in the mud. She’s no fun at all,” Gabriel moaned.
“And so that’s basically it,” Sam finished, waiting for the angel’s reaction nervously. It had been easy enough to excuse Hannah from the room after the ritual had failed. Sam simply explained he wanted to give her a grand tour of the bunker since she’d be staying for a while. She had been silent the entire time through his rushed explanation, barely reacting aside from raising an eyebrow.

He’d deliberately kept Gabriel out of the disclosure, fearing his involvement might convince the reserved angel not to join them.

“Do I look like an overweight naked man to you?” Hannah asked suddenly. Sam instantly became flustered at the unusual question, “N-no, of course not.”

“That is odd, because you seem to have me confused with a cherub,” Hannah stated matter-of-factly.

“See, I told you she wouldn’t help us,” Gabriel appeared next to Sam smugly.

Hannah took a startled step back, outwardly reacting to something for the first time since entering Sam’s room.

“Who is this?” she demanded, pulling out her angel blade defensively.

“Relax, princess. I thought you’d be glad to see me after all that calling before,” Gabriel jeered, “no offense, but I’m not really into the desperate ones.”

Hannah’s eyes widened and she lowered her blade instantly, “Gabriel?”

“The one and only,” Gabriel replied with a dramatic bow.

“Um, yeah. I may have left out the part where Gabe helped me come up with the plan,” Sam admitted guiltily.

“Helped? It was my idea, you mean,” Gabriel argued defensively.

Hannah stared at Sam accusingly, “Are you saying Castiel and I have been trying to make contact with Gabriel all morning, yet you’ve been cavorting with him the entire time?”

It was the closest Sam had ever seen Hannah to angry, which meant she must be really pissed.

“Hannah please, I didn’t mean to get in the way of your search. I don’t even have a say in what he does, he kind of controls himself. I’m just trying to help my brother be happy, that’s all. Don’t you want Cas to be happy too?” Sam pleaded with her.

She hesitated, eyeing them both methodically.

“Very well, I will join you in the courtship of Castiel and Dean Winchester.”

“Thank you so much, Hannah. I’ll make it up to you, I swear,” Sam guaranteed her.

“Oh I am quite sure you will. However I do not require a favour from you, Sam Winchester. What I ask in return is Gabriel’s assistance in Heaven,” Hannah informed him calmly.

“Like hell I’m going back there!” Gabriel shouted firmly.

“Then I suppose I will inform Castiel and Dean of your experiment, I’m sure they’ll be quite intrigued,” Hannah threatened casually.

“Gabe, please,” Sam begged him, slightly panicked.

“It need not be permanent, just long enough for word to be spread that Gabriel, the last archangel, has returned to the side of Heaven. You need only be a figurehead, nothing more,” Hannah assured him.

Gabriel seemed conflicted for a few moments before giving in with a grumble, “You’re a devious one, but I can appreciate that. Fine, we have a deal.”

Sam beamed, “Welcome to the team, Hannah.”

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The bunker was unusually quiet when Dean woke, he glanced at his clock to note that it was almost noon. He really needed to force himself back into the hunter sleeping schedule now that his 2 month hiatus was over. Sleeping in was becoming a bad habit of his and it didn’t help that Sam kept letting him.

He instantly forgave Sam, however, when he noticed the plate of pancakes on the kitchen table. Best little brother ever, Dean thought blissfully, as he shovelled the food into his mouth eagerly. Too preoccupied with his good fortune, it didn’t occur to Dean that Sam was usually a terrible cook. Nor did it occur to him that pancakes were much too sugary a dish for Sam to ever indulge in.

“Hello Dean,” Cas’s voice suddenly interrupted his pancake frenzy. He stood uncertainly in the doorway, as if unsure if he was welcome. Dean, cheeks swollen with pancakes, almost choked in an attempt at swallowing the contents of his mouth all at once. Trying not to splutter, Dean replied, “M-morning Cas, want some pancakes?”

Cas smirked at Dean fondly before making his way to the table, “Thank you, Dean. I think I will, actually. It appears my vessel has begun craving sustenance in my weakened state.” Settling in the chair beside him, Cas tore a piece of pancake from Dean’s without bothering to get a plate of his own. The action was so domestic, Dean could almost imagine they really were newlyweds.

Upon noticing a smudge of melted choc chip on his thumb Cas automatically brought it to his mouth, sucking the chocolate off eagerly. Dean couldn’t help but stare at the action, watching enviously. Catching him staring Cas quickly stopped, pulling his wings close around him in embarrassment. “It appears my table manners could be improved,” he noted self-consciously.

Dean couldn’t hold back a laugh, unfortunately causing Cas to turn red with further shame. “You’re eating with the King of Bad Table Manners, Cas. Trust me, you’re doing fine,” Dean hastily reassured him. His words seemed to soothe Cas’s unease and his wings relaxed considerably. Though, in the process a wing brushed against Dean’s arm gently causing both of them to tense.

Castiel’s blush quickly returned, “Apologies, my wings usually pass through humans unnoticed. But it appears the bond allows you to perceive them both visually and physically. I did not wish to alarm you, I know my wings may be disconcerting.” Dean tried not to appear too disappointed when Cas pulled his wing back. The small touch was unlike anything he’d ever experienced, like a mix between silk and velvet. It was the softest thing he’d ever felt.

“It’s no big deal, really. Seriously, I don’t mind,” Dean told him, trying to appear indifferent. Meanwhile it took everything he had not to reach out and drag his fingers through the alluring feathers. He thought it was hard not touching them before, but now that he knew what they felt like it was almost torture. Maybe he should ask about grooming Cas’s feathers, it was one of the things he’d be expected to do now after all. Especially since he’d officially decided to court Cas properly.

Before he even had the chance to open his mouth though, the moment was interrupted. The professional cock block himself didn’t seem to notice his older brother’s glare as he grabbed his lunch. Hannah followed not too long afterwards, hovering on the outskirts of the kitchen watching them eat awkwardly. Dean decided he’d spare her any further torment and rescue her from this obviously uncomfortable situation. Besides, he’d been serious when he decided he wanted to pay her back for last night. Dean was determined to show the angel a fun time whether she wanted it or not. “So Hannah, I was thinking about heading to a bar or two tonight. Want to come with?” Dean offered.
“Thank you but I believe my presence is better suited here-” Hannah objected.
Sam interrupted her, “I think that’s a great idea, Hannah. I can help Cas while you’re gone, right
Cas?”

Cas avoided their eyes as he murmured, “Of course. Go enjoy yourself, don’t stay on my account.”
“But-” Hannah objected but was once again silenced.
“Then it’s settled, you two have fun,” Sam announced locking eyes with Hannah meaningfully. The
interaction didn’t go unnoticed by Dean and he wondered briefly what was up with those two.

However, his suspicions were short lived as Cas stood suddenly, drawing his attention.
“Thank you for the food, Dean. If you’ll excuse me I have work to attend to,” Cas explained as he
fled the room. Dean frowned after him, it could have been his imagination but Cas seemed upset.
Should he go after him? Had he overstepped some unknown boundary again?

Eventually excusing himself from the room, Dean decided to follow his gut. But unfortunately, Dean
couldn’t find Cas anywhere. And considering how big the bunker was, the search was slow and
tedious. It took two hours to scour the entire bunker and by the time he’d finally given up it was
almost time to get ready. Dejected and more than a little concerned for Cas’s wellbeing, Dean
considered cancelling.

But when he offered the choice to Hannah, she surprisingly disagreed.
“He’s likely gone to find more research. We already exhausted all that was to offer in the bunker last
night. With his wings fully healed he’s able to fly, unlike the rest of the fallen, so his disappearance
isn’t surprising. It’s no doubt he’s relishing in his returned flight. I don’t think cancelling our plans is
necessary,” Hannah assured him.

Her words didn’t ease his worries but Dean was forced to admit he might be overreacting. He
internally agreed to go through with their plans and if Cas was still missing when they returned then
he could rationally be concerned.

Dean also had to acknowledge that cancelling was ill advised considering he still needed to ask
Hannah’s advice on how to court Cas. He had no idea where to begin and she was the only angel he
had available to ask other than Cas himself. And there was no way he was having that conversation
with Cas again, once was mortifying enough.

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Meanwhile Castiel sat on the top of Niagara Falls, broodingly watching the water crash against the
surface below. He was unbelievably grateful for his healed wings, for he couldn’t stand staying in
the bunker for a moment longer. He knew he was being melodramatic and that he’d have to return
soon or his grace would start to dwindle again, but having to watch Dean ask Hannah on a date right
in front of him had been too much to bear. It was downright cruel. How was he supposed to be
happy for them if he was forced to see them together all the time?

It didn’t help that it had happened just after Dean’s reaction to touching his wing. Dean had frozen at
the contact, he’d practically recoiled. Castiel knew he didn’t have the most desirable wings but
Dean’s reaction had still disappointed him. After his kind words the other day, Castiel had even
fooled himself into thinking Dean might actually like his wings. He realised now that was silly of
him.

Of course Dean wouldn’t appreciate such plain and ugly wings as his when Hannah’s wings were so
pretty. They were as blue as a clear sky and though they were wounded in the fall they remained just
as lovely. Hannah’s wings were delicate and slender, typical for Heaven’s internal angels. Before the
fall Hannah had been one of Naomi’s garrison, rarely venturing from Heaven’s walls.
Castiel, however, was a soldier and his wings displayed that. They were intimidatingly large with sharp angles and were made for practicality rather than appearance. They bore several scars from his fiercer battles and hadn’t been properly groomed since his rebellion. The colour was also displeasing, considering angel wings usually adopted paler colours. It didn’t help that humans considered black as an association with evil.

It was no surprise Dean was disturbed by his wings in comparison. He wished he could somehow remove Dean’s sight once again, but the bond made that impossible. Worse still, he would have to be cautious of how close he got to Dean since his wings took up so much space. Dean’s previous warnings about ‘personal space’ now seemed even more pertinent.

It was probably for the best that he kept his distance anyway. With his feelings realised, being close to Dean was much too tempting. Even this morning he had fought the urge to pull his chair closer, to lean into Dean’s side like some pathetic school girl with a crush.

If he wished to stay in Dean’s life he’d have to accept that Dean was his friend only and nothing more could come between them. Perhaps his feelings would fade after time, Castiel reasoned. Though he knew that was unlikely, his love for Dean rivalled that of his love for God, which had lasted countless millennia no matter how one-sided it often felt.

Darkness was beginning to fall and Castiel knew he should return soon. He was already beginning to feel weak from the distance forced between his grace and Dean’s soul. If he wasn’t careful he’d start to lose feathers and his flight home may be compromised.

Sighing he took one last look at his beautiful surroundings. He’d come here hoping the view would distract him and, although it hadn’t worked, he was grateful for the sight. There was still much of the world he hadn’t seen, even in his vast lifetime. He’d always been too preoccupied with his mission to sight-see. But it was places like this that reminded him the wonder of God’s creations and left him feeling closer to his Father in the process.

The bunker was empty when he returned, it appeared Sam had taken the opportunity to venture into town also. The silence was deafening compared to the roaring of the waterfall he’d just departed, which only seemed to emphasise Castiel’s loneliness.

Trying not to sink any further into despair, Castiel decided to curl up on one of the nearby couches with the book he’d tucked between the cushions earlier that morning. He’d recently started reading A Game of Thrones, upon Sam’s suggestion and taken to the series quite quickly. Surprisingly, reading them firsthand had proven far more enjoyable than the recycled knowledge Metatron had given him. Perhaps reading would even prove more successful in distracting him, considering his visit to Niagara Falls had been ineffective.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

A new chapter so soon!? No you're not dreaming this is real. You can thank work for cancelling on me today. Since I had the day free I thought I'd make it count. Enjoy! :) P.s. I'm going to admit right now that I stole the pub from How I Met Your Mother for inspiration. I don't go to bars a lot guys, okay xD

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dean didn’t feel like driving too far, especially considering the awkward silence he’d been suffering from Hannah the entire trip, so he decided to head to a bar in Lebanon. Sam and Dean had decided going into town too often might reveal the location of the bunker, so they didn’t go there very much. Nonetheless, Dean was a master at finding good bars in places he’d never been before, so it wasn’t long before he narrowed down his options.

He decided upon a small Irish pub called MacLaren’s, which was not too crowded with large booths lining the walls and a bar serving food and drinks on the left. Dean eagerly claimed the booth closest to the bar, throwing a quick glance behind him to make sure Hannah was following. She eyed the place apprehensively as she took the seat opposite him.

They had spoken little since leaving the bunker and the silence was more than a bit uncomfortable. Dean had attempted to break it a few times with idle chit chat but Hannah didn’t seem to grasp the concept and her replies were always short and to the point. He supposed he might as well lead by example and get straight to the point himself then.

“So the reason I asked you to come with me is cause I wanted to continue our conversation from last night. This is the best way to do that privately, without my brother or Cas around,” Dean explained sheepishly.

“Yes, I gathered as much. It seemed unlikely you simply craved my company,” Hannah confessed. “Hey your company isn’t so bad, we might even have some fun tonight if you loosen up a little,” Dean challenged, handing her a menu, “starting with a few drinks, on me. Consider it a thank you for helping me.”

“No thank you, I vowed to take care of this vessel. The consumption of alcohol is unnecessary and detrimental to the human body,” Hannah declined. Dean rolled his eyes and scanned the menu himself.

“One drink won’t hurt, I’m sure the girl you’ve got rolling around in there won’t mind. Besides I’m making it my official mission tonight to ensure you have some fun,” Dean persuaded and then gave her an honest smile, “Seriously though, I really do appreciate your help the least I can do is pay you back somehow.”

Hannah reluctantly accepted and allowed Dean to order for her. When their drinks arrived Dean took a long drink of his beer trying not to appear as nervous as he felt for their upcoming conversation. Hannah eyed her martini curiously before downing it in one smooth gulp, olive and all. She instantly scrunched up her face in disgust.

“Didn’t like the taste?” Dean asked her with a chuckle. She shrugged without looking up from the empty glass.
“The taste…” she murmured dully, “I shouldn’t be able to taste anything. The fact that I can is further testament to how far I’ve fallen. The reminder is actually quite troubling.”

Dean’s eyes flickered to the patches of missing feathers in her wings, sympathy flooding through him.

“It sounds like you need another drink. Don’t worry, I’ll order something sweeter this time,” Dean promised earnestly.

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“Why exactly are we here?” Sam grumbled as he watched his brother head to the bar again. They’d appeared in the booth on the other side of the room moments after Dean and Hannah sat down. One moment he was gratefully enjoying the peace and quiet of finally being alone in the bunker, the next Gabriel had popped in and flown them there without explanation.

“We’re here to make sure Hannah follows through, duh,” Gabriel declared.

“I already told her tonight would be a good opportunity to persuade Dean to follow through with his feelings so she said she’ll try her best and I trust her,” Sam told him defensively.

“I know she’ll try, but I think she’s a little out of her depth when it comes to human emotions. But we’re just here as back up in case she needs some help. Relax,” Gabriel assured him, snapping his fingers and making a plate of curly fries and a salad appear in front of them.

“Happy? It’s that rabbit food stuff you like instead this time,” Gabriel pointed out, popping a curly fry in his mouth. Sam had to admit the salad looked pretty appetising and he hadn’t eaten dinner yet...

“Thanks, I guess,” Sam mumbled before accepting the salad.

They ate in silence, watching the pair at the other table down drink after drink, engaging in light conversation.

“This is pretty pointless since we can’t even hear them,” Sam complained.

“You can’t hear them, but I can. Don’t worry it’s nothing interesting yet, Dean’s just trying to teach Hannah how to “loosen up”. As if that’s possible for a stiff like her,” Gabriel scoffed, adding air quotes around the two words. Sam raised an eyebrow at the archangel.

“You don’t seem to like Hannah very much, why is that?” he inquired.

“She used to work for an old enemy of mine before the fall. Heartless corporates, the lot of them. They did some really messed up stuff to their own kind, their brothers and sisters. Whether she was personally involved or not I don’t really care. She’s guilty by default, they all are,” Gabriel scowled, it was the most serious he’d looked in a long time. Sam almost regretted asking.

“Look Gabe, I don’t really know anything about her past or what she may have been a part of, but I do know we all make mistakes. I’ve made some terrible choices and so has Dean and Cas but we’ve all been given second chances, more than that if I’m being honest. Maybe Hannah deserves another chance too. She seems nice enough now,” Sam stated softly. He was greatly aware who he was talking to, if he made Gabe mad who knows what would happen to him. But he also knew this needed to be said anyway.

Gabriel was silent for a while, as if mulling over what he said. Sam would lie if he said he wasn’t curious but he knew bringing up the matter again was probably a bad idea. It was almost another hour before Gabriel spoke again.

“I have a theory that I wanna run by you that could change our game plan,” he admitted.

“What theory?” Sam asked relieved that the long silence was over.

“It’d been bugging me since last night but after Cas’s disappearing act this morning I think I finally figured it out. I mean, Cassie wouldn’t suddenly bring up angel courting if there wasn’t a reason and
he didn’t seem to be propositioning Dean—” Gabriel reasoned.
“Wait, Cas was the one who told Dean about angel courting?” Sam gaped, “I assumed he just saw it on the internet or in a book or something. Why didn’t you say that earlier? And why would Cas bring up angel courting unless he wanted Dean to court him?”
“Well if you’d let me finish that’s what I’m trying to tell you,” Gabriel pouted but it quickly broke into a mischievous smile, “I think Cassie believes Dean has the hots for another angel.”

Gabriel glanced meaningfully over at Dean and Hannah’s table. The two seemed to be a lot more relaxed than earlier. Hannah was no longer sitting rigidly straight in her chair and leaned her arms casually on the edge of the table. She was even smiling slightly at whatever Dean had just said.
“Wait, you mean Hannah?” Sam hissed incredulously.
Gabriel looked delighted, “Bingo! It has to be because of her, nothing else makes sense. The best part is Cas is completely and utterly miserable over it. Isn’t this perfect?”

“How is that a good thing? Oh god poor Cas, he probably thinks they’re on a date right now,” Sam objected.
“Exactly! Don’t you see? Castiel’s jealousy means he’s aware of his feelings too. He’s not as oblivious as we thought. Hell we could even use this jealousy thing to our advantage,” Gabriel suggested eagerly.
“This isn’t one of your pranks, Gabe. We don’t want to mess with them, this is to make them happy remember?” Sam warned.
“Why can’t we do both? It’ll just be a little bit of fun, come on!” Gabriel pleaded.

Sam sighed, he couldn’t understand why he had such a soft spot for the archangel. He was the exact opposite of him in almost every way. But for some reason he found himself greatly enjoying these moments with Gabe. It occurred to him that after this was over, Gabriel would up and disappear again. The temptation to prolong his stay was eventually what convinced him.
“Fine, but I reserve the right to call it off if it goes too far,” Sam begrudgingly agreed.

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“Ok I think I’m finally drunk enough for this conversation,” Dean announced, placing another empty beer bottle on the table. Hannah noted that she was also starting to feel the effects of the alcohol she’d consumed. Her body felt pleasantly warm and heavy and she found herself smiling for no particular reason. She forced herself to focus on Dean rather than what was happening inside her vessel.

“Very well, Dean. What do you wish to know?” she leaned back in her seat, spreading her arms in a gesture she hoped was welcoming.
Dean seemed nervous and he fidgeted with his empty beer bottle as he asked, “How do I court Cas?”
His question surprised her, from what she knew of him Dean Winchester was an expert at courting. “I assume you’re aware of the process. Do you not court women constantly?” she asked in confusion.

Dean looked exasperated, “Well yeah but Cas is special, I mean this isn’t just a one-time deal. Besides, Cas said something about angel courting stuff. You know, cleaning his wings and making a nest.”
Dean looked embarrassed and flustered and Hannah found herself smirking.
“Hey don’t laugh, this is serious,” Dean whined. Hannah attempted to reign in her vessel’s reaction, it was becoming a lot harder to keep her face neutral.
“I’m not laughing,” she promised, “angel courting isn’t very different from the way humans do.”
Dean scoffed, “Yeah cause I bet every husband has to build their spouse a nest when they get
married.”
This time Hannah did chuckle at the reminder of Dean’s confusion of the bond’s meaning. Dean flashed her a half-hearted glare but it melted into a smirk of his own.

“Do humans not move into a home together when they commit?” Hannah pointed out.
“Oh god, we don’t have to live in it do we?” Dean groaned. Hannah tried not to giggle at the thought.

“Of course not, what I meant was it’s simply a symbol of commitment. Much like a house or buying a bed together. It is not a nest in the literal sense of the word, you will not be collecting twigs and leaves. A nest is simply a place you wish to lie with your partner, usually decorated in the feathers of you and your beloved, to signify your union,” Hannah explained.

“So the nest can be a bed?” Dean asked hopefully and then sighed in relief at Hannah’s nod.
“Honestly, by my knowledge you have unknowingly fulfilled many of the courting requirements already,” she admitted, “You have both proven countless times that you can protect your mate. You proved that your mate’s wellbeing comes before your own, by rescuing Castiel from purgatory at the risk of your own life. You have proved that you can provide for your mate by allowing him to stay at the bunker and sharing your food. The only things you have not done is offer a token of your affection, groom his wings and build your nest.”

“What kind of token? Like flowers or something?” Dean asked curiously.
Hannah shook her head, “No, it cannot be something so trivial. It must be something that truly proves your affection for him. Most angels offer one of their flight feathers, however you do not have wings so I am unsure what you could offer. Perhaps give it some thought.”

Dean grumbled, “Great, I knew being human would make this shit harder.”

He laid his head of the table solemnly, Hannah felt the strange urge to comfort the human.
“Do not fret, I believe you will be a fine mate. Your dedication to courting him traditionally is proof of that. If all angels tried half as hard as you, perhaps I would have accepted a mate long ago,” Hannah reassured him.

Dean perked up, intrigued, “You mean you’ve been courted before?”

“A few, however they were hardly notable. Strangers who proclaimed my wings very beautiful and offered me a feather. None who actually cared for me outside of appearance. I declined, obviously.”
“I’m glad you didn’t settle for any of those dicks, you deserve someone awesome,” Dean told her firmly, “and I’m not just saying that cause I’m drunk. You’re actually really cool.”
Hannah found herself smiling at him fondly, “Thank you, Dean. I find you very “cool” also.”

“Now that all the serious stuff is out of the way, let’s drink each other under the table,” Dean declared.
“But these seat are more comfortable than the floor,” Hannah complained. This caused Dean to erupt into a laughing fit.
“Not literally, man. I just mean let’s get stupid drunk,” Dean clarified.
“How will you drive us home in such a state? I cannot currently fly,” Hannah pointed out.

“I guess I could call Sam or Cas could come get us. Dude can fly again, right?” Dean suddenly sat straight looking worried, “Shit I completely forgot. I wonder if Cas is back!”

Dean pulled out his phone hurriedly and pressed 2 on speed dial. His phone rang four times, each ring making Dean more on edge, until finally someone answered.

“Cas!” Dean sighed, his voice coated in relief.

Hannah watched in alarm as Dean suddenly froze, eyes going wide and his mouth dropping in shock.
“How the hell did you get Cas’s phone!”?
Castiel instantly noticed the sudden surge of magical energy as if electrical currents sparked through the very air. Jumping up from his chair, placing his book facedown on the now empty seat so as not to lose his page, he followed the sensation in search of its source. He knew there were many potent magical items stored within the bunker, but this felt entirely different. This was incredibly powerful magic and most definitely hadn’t been there before, there’s no way he would have missed something this strong.

Something about it was both familiar and troubling, he combed through his memory looking for the reason why. It hit him suddenly that this sensation was familiar because he had felt it before, specifically four years ago when he’d opened the portal to purgatory. There must be a portal to another dimension opening somewhere in the bunker, he was sure of it now.

But where? There were so many doors and the magic almost felt like it was coming from everywhere at once. He may not be able to find it in time before whoever, or whatever, was trying to get through succeeded. This bunker was supposed to be the safest place on the planet, what could possibly be powerful enough to open a portal here?

“Sup bitche- Um bitch?” A female voice announced from the upstairs entrance doorway. Castiel’s head snapped up to view the culprit. She had short red hair and wore modern clothes, so she didn’t appear to be a time traveller at least. He noticed she was holding a large talisman in her right hand, which Castiel soon realised must be the key she’d used to get there.

“By my understanding, ‘bitch’ is typically used as a derogatory term. Are you attempting to insult me?” Castiel asked her, tilting his head to the side and squinting.

“You must be Cas,” she guessed with a smirk.

“Yes and you,” Castiel replied before quickly analysing her soul, “are Celeste Middleton.”

“It’s Charlie Bradbury now, actually. Where’s Sam and Dean?” she asked nervously. Understanding came over Castiel, “I see, so you are Charlie. I have heard much about you. Unfortunately they are not currently here but they should return shortly. You may wait for them if you like.”


Castiel felt his face fall, failing to recompose himself before Charlie noticed the reaction.

“What’s wrong? Did something happen? Are they okay?” she asked worriedly.

Castiel shook his head, “No, nothing is wrong. I am unaware of Sam’s whereabouts but I can promise you he is fine. And Dean… is on a date.”

He tried to appear unaffected but he felt his smile falter slightly at the admission.

“Don’t try to bullshit a bullshitter, Cas. I’ve been a professional liar practically my whole life. Now tell me what’s really going on?” Charlie instructed him.

Castiel didn’t want to explain why the words hurt him so much. Instead he forced himself to repeat them, “I assure you it’s the truth. Dean is on a date with another angel actually, my good friend Hannah.”

He avoided her eyes as she scrutinised him.

“Alright, then talk to me. What’s up? I know something’s wrong, I’m pretty good at reading people and honestly you’re not that great at hiding your emotions,” Charlie accused with a reassuring smile. “I suppose it’s a consequence of living thousands of years without them,” Castiel mused, then he sighed in defeat. He’d been keeping all his feelings to himself, what did it hurt to confide in one human girl? The Winchesters definitely trusted her and he knew she could keep a secret based off the
fact she constantly went by an alias.

“I recently came to the realisation I have romantic feelings for Dean,” Castiel admitted solemnly. Nothing could have prepared him for Charlie’s reaction, as a high pitched squeal suddenly escaped her mouth.

“Oh my god, I fricking knew it! I mean, come on the sexual tension was practically steaming off the page and he used the word “dreamy” in your character entrance for God’s sakes!” Charlie cried excitedly, appearing to almost be talking to herself.

“I’m sorry but I don’t follow,” Castiel admitted, feeling quite confused. She visibly composed herself.

“Oops sorry, I couldn’t help it. My ship just became canon, I needed a moment to fangirl,” she apologised.

That only confused Castiel even more and he stared at her like she was speaking another language. But, of course, he was fluent in every language in the world so he knew that couldn’t be it.

“Right, ‘you don’t understand that reference’. Got it,” Charlie added after catching Cas’s puzzled expression.

“Let’s recap. Why exactly is Dean going on a date with this Hannah chick if his dream guy is head over heels for him?” Charlie probed. Castiel allowed his face to look crestfallen without trying to hide it this time.

“I haven’t told him. He has already begun courting Hannah, it would not be fair to either of them to intrude,” Castiel confessed.

“Screw that, intrude away!” Charlie exclaimed.

“I will not get in the way of their happiness,” Castiel refused firmly.

Charlie groaned in exasperation.

“Ugh why do you have to be such, well, an angel?” she whined, cracking a smile at her own joke, “At least tell Dean, maybe he’ll feel the same way. You can’t know how someone else feels until you ask them.”

“But I do know how he feels, I felt it myself. The bond wouldn’t lie,” Castiel argued.

Charlie looked at him blankly, “Hold up, what’s this about a bond?”

Castiel relayed the previous year’s events including the fall, his stolen grace, the Mark of Cain and, eventually, the bond.

“Holy crap,” Charlie breathed when he was finished, “you guys never have a dull moment, do you?”

“You can’t have had a very uneventful year yourself, last I was told you were in Oz,” Castiel pointed out.

“Yeah well, your one year felt like five to me. Time moves differently in Oz and let me tell you, after spending five years with someone the break-up is rough.” Charlie admitted sadly.

“I am sorry, I hope I am not adding to your heartbreak with my own problems,” Castiel expressed guiltily.

Charlie shook her head, “You’re not, honestly I think I moved on a long time ago. I’ve known I didn’t love her for years, well you know what I mean, it felt like years. The spark just wasn’t there anymore.”

“Anyway, enough about me. This is your therapy session, not mine,” Charlie instantly brightened up, “are you seriously telling me you and Dean bonded souls? That is like the most love trope-iest thing I’ve ever heard. Seriously has Gabriel been reading FanFiction?”

“I don’t have a soul, Charlie, he bonded with my grace and I fear you’re speaking gibberish again,” Castiel corrected her.

“Never you mind, Cas. All you need to know is, I accept,” Charlie announced excitedly.
“Accept what exactly?” Castiel asked warily.
“I’m gonna help you win back your man, of course!” Charlie stated proudly.
“What? No Charlie, please I’m not asking you to do that,” Castiel hurried to decline her offer.

“Don’t be silly, you guys are meant for each other. You pulled him out of Hell. You guys have risked your lives for each other so many times. I mean, for God’s sakes, he kept your dirty trench coat in his car for almost a year even when switching between dozens of stolen cars because he thought you died,” Charlie ranted looking slightly crazed for a moment and then appeared to pull herself back together again, “Sorry, got a little carried away there. But seriously what has Hannah ever done for him? If anyone deserves him it’s you, Cas.”

Castiel felt almost humbled by this strange girl’s enthusiasm for helping his love life. She almost seemed too interested in it, but he found it endearing somehow. Unfortunately he still couldn’t allow her to come between Dean and Hannah, it wasn’t right. They both deserved to find love. He wouldn’t deny Hannah the chance even if Dean might feel the same way.

“Look Charlie, you can’t-”
A sudden singing cut him off.

*I'm an angel with a shotgun,
fighting 'til the war's won,
I don't care if heaven won't take me back.*

“Is that CAB?” Charlie asked with a wide grin. Castiel instantly became flustered, Sam must have changed his ringtone again. Why must the younger Winchester pick these embarrassingly ironic ringtones constantly? Last time he’d chosen ‘Angel’ by Madonna.

He had just enough chance to glance at the caller ID before the phone was snatched out of his hand. “Ooooooh look who’s calling, don't worry I totally got this,” Charlie declared with a wink.
“Wait, Charlie, no-” Castiel hissed frantically but she just ignored him, pressing the green button smugly.
He vaguely heard Dean’s voice shout his name before Charlie spoke.
“Sorry Dean, but you’ve reached the Queen of Moondoor. Did you miss me?”

Chapter End Notes

I’m also going to admit that I channelled my own inner fangirl when writing Charlie.
#SorryNotSorry
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Charlie’s stomach lurched and she grasped at Castiel’s arm to steady herself, her head spinning for a few moments. “Woah, uh yeah I can see why Dean prefers the Impala. Flying is super disorientating,” she whined, gripping her stomach as she decided whether or not she was gonna throw up. Castiel looked at her apologetically as he patted her back soothingly. The gesture was oddly human and Charlie found herself pleasantly surprised at how much he’d changed from the stoic character she’d gotten to know in the books.

Thankfully the nauseated feeling passed and she let out a sigh of relief, looking curiously around at their new surroundings. They were in the parking lot of a bar, alone spare for a few patrons smoking by the door. She wondered how they missed two people appearing out of nowhere. Did Castiel check that kind of stuff? Did he like, wait for the exact moment and place no one was looking before he landed? Or maybe he just wiped the memories of any unexpected witnesses?

The usual tirade of questions that she’d been harbouring since reading the Winchester Gospels ran through her mind. It suddenly occurred to her that she could finally actually ask Castiel that stuff but, as she caught him eying the Impala across the lot warily, she decided now wasn’t the right time. “Well we should probably drag Dean’s ass home before he gets any drunker, he sounded pretty wasted on the phone,” Charlie suggested when they still hadn’t moved.

Castiel was hesitant and she knew why. They were about to crash Dean’s date, albeit invited, and who knows what they’d find in there. Dean was a playboy sober and drunk Dean was likely even worse. They could very well be walking into a heated make-out session or worse. But Dean had asked for their help getting home and, of course, Castiel could never say no to Dean.

Castiel turned to her nervously, “You won’t tell Dean about what I told you tonight, will you?” “Of course not, do I look like a nark to you? I still think you should tell him, but it’s not my place to tell,” Charlie assured him. He visibly relaxed at the confirmation before heading towards the bar entrance determinedly. Charlie followed eagerly, excited to see Dean after so much time. The Winchesters were honestly the closest thing she had to family left and she’d really missed them.

They soon found the couple, thankfully out of each other’s reach, occupying the booth closest to the bar. Figures, Charlie thought fondly. “Cas, you’re here!” Dean cried loudly, jumping from the booth and clumsily pulling Castiel into a hug. Castiel stiffened at the unexpected contact but soon melted into Dean’s touch. However, upon catching sight of Charlie, Dean quickly let go to drag Charlie into a tight bear hug. Charlie noted Castiel’s disappointmeant at the loss of contact but her attention was quickly drawn back to Dean. “I can’t believe you’re back. Why aren’t you in Oz?” Dean demanded giddily. He was clearly “off his face” drunk and Charlie couldn’t help but smirk at his childlike excitement.

“Like I’d bother explaining now, you probably won’t even remember this conversation in the morning,” Charlie teased. Dean scoffed, “Excuse me but I can handle my liquor, unlike some people.” He gestured to Hannah, who’d been unusually quiet during their welcoming. Charlie finally let her gaze drift towards the other women, surprised to find her already staring.

Hannah had startlingly blue eyes, almost as vibrant as Castiel’s, her dark brown hair was also similar.
If Charlie didn’t know better, she’d actually believe they were real siblings. No wonder Dean fell for her, she was practically female Cas. She was obviously the “safe” option for Dean’s internalised homophobia. Although Charlie had to admit, Hannah had a pretty attractive vessel. Unfortunately she couldn’t focus on checking her out with that intense gaze trained on her.

“Uh hi, I’m Charlie,” she said nervously, holding out her hand. Hannah just looked at it curiously, tilting her head to the side. After a moment, Charlie pulled her hand back awkwardly.

“Geez Hannah, your social skills are even worse when you’re drunk. What happened to fun Hannah? Don’t tell me you’re sobering up already!” Dean whined, “I’ll get us another round.”

“Dean,” Castiel interrupted, “you’re extremely intoxicated. I believe you’ve had enough.”

“Says the man who literally drank a liquor store once,” Dean scoffed but complied.

“Alright Hannah, time to go,” Dean cooed, helping pull the swaying angel from her seat. He wrapped her left arm around his neck, securing his right arm around her waist, as she leaned against him heavily. Charlie couldn’t help but notice the flicker of jealousy cross Castiel’s face before he composed himself.

Dean helped Hannah all the way to the impala, obviously the more sober of the two. Hannah seemed shocked by her own body’s instability, looking adorably confused. Adorably? God keep it in your pants, girl, she’s basically on a date with your brother, Charlie chastised herself.

“I call driving!” Charlie dibbed excitedly, she’d always wanted to drive the Impala.

“No way, Cas is driving,” Dean said firmly, tossing Castiel the keys, “and I call shotgun.”

He helped Hannah into the back seat before taking his place in the front passenger seat. Charlie raised an eyebrow at Castiel, who appeared just as surprised by Dean’s choice. He’d chosen Castiel, even though Charlie no doubt had more experience driving and he hadn’t even complained about letting an ‘amateur’ drive Baby.

Charlie joined Hannah in the back, momentarily panicking at the lack of seatbelts. Goddammit Dean, if I die in a car crash just because you wanted your boyfriend to drive I’m gonna be so pissed, Charlie mentally grumbled. Hannah also seemed concerned by the lack of seatbelts, fumbling around the seat looking confused.

“Don’t worry, Angel. I’ll protect you,” Charlie flirted before she could help herself. Hannah titled her head in that endearing angel way.

“Traditionally speaking I should be the one protecting you,” Hannah spoke for the first time. Her voice was low and slightly grumbled, suddenly Charlie completely understood Dean’s infatuation with Cas’s gruff voice.

“Although considering my current state, I don’t think I’d do a very good job,” Hannah admitted. They jerked a little as the car started moving and Hannah instinctively pulled a hand out to steady them.

“I dunno, you seem to be doing a pretty good job,” Charlie smirked. Hannah smiled gently at the praise, lowering her eyes bashfully. You know what, screw Dean, he couldn’t have all the angels, Charlie decided.

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Charlie’s soul was so bright, it was distracting. Hannah had never encountered a soul so beautiful. She had noticed the soul from the moment Charlie had entered the bar, the human in its possession almost as lovely as her soul with bright red hair standing vibrant against creamy pale skin. Hannah was mesmerised. She couldn’t recall ever reacting to a human soul this way before, it was slightly alarming.

It didn’t help that her thoughts were muddled by the alcohol. She couldn’t form a coherent thought,
much less a sentence when the human had introduced herself. And now she found herself sitting in
the back seat of the impala, so close to the human that her wings were passing through the girl. She
suppressed a shudder as her wing brushed against Charlie’s soul.

“No way! Your wings are going right through her body,” Dean called out like an excited little kid,
twisted in his seat to stare at them. He was still extremely intoxicated and Hannah tried not to look as
mortified as she felt. She tried to draw her wings as close to her body as she could, cursing Dean for
saying anything.

“No way, seriously you can’t feel that?” he probed Charlie. The human looked disappointed as she shook her
head, eyeing Hannah curiously. Hannah avoided her eyes guiltily.

“Our wings are on another plane of existence, Dean, they pass through all physical objects
undeterred. Humans rarely notice their presence,” Castiel explained patiently as he drove.

“That’s too bad, wings are awesome. They’re so soft. Seriously Charlie, think of the softest thing
you’ve ever touched and then times it by 100,” Dean explained waving his hands around
enthusiastically.

Hannah noticed Castiel tense slightly in the driver’s seat and she wondered briefly why Dean’s
enthusiasm for wings seemed to bother him. Shouldn’t he be pleased?

“What do your wings look like?” Charlie asked Hannah suddenly.

Hannah became extremely flustered as she searched for the proper words to describe them without
sounding arrogant.

Dean stepped in, much to her relief, “They’re light blue. Think clear blue sky on a sunny day; that
colour. They’re pretty big, but not as big as Cas’s. They’re also daintier but I assume that’s cause
you’re a chick.”

Dean was partly right. Her wings were “daintier”, as he’d put, but it wasn’t because her vessel was
female. Castiel had the wings of a soldier, while Hannah had been created for internal affairs in
Heaven. She was no soldier. In fact, she’d likely have never even left Heaven had it not been for the
fall. But, as she glanced at the brightness of Charlie’s soul beside her, for the first time she found
herself glad that she’d fallen.

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All this talk of wings was making Castiel uneasy. Even though he knew his wings were safely
resting through the back of his seat, careful not to shift too close to the hunter beside him, Castiel was
still worried he’d make Dean uncomfortable again. He felt even worse after hearing Dean’s praise
for how soft Hannah’s wings were. He must have touched them tonight while they were intoxicated.

Castiel held back a growl at the thought of Dean grooming Hannah’s wings. He’d known this was
coming, he’d even been the one to bring up grooming in the first place, but it still stung. A part of
him wished he could go back and never tell Dean about it at all. But he knew that was pointless
thinking, Dean would likely have found out himself eventually. Especially dating an angel.

He deliberately focussed on the road, trying to ignore his brewing emotions. He would have
preferred to focus on Dean’s emotions, but the bond was currently dulled by alcohol. There was a
dull buzz thrumming through the bond but not enough to actually affect him mentally. The sensation
was pleasant but not as comforting as Dean’s emotions would have been. Although it was probably
best he couldn’t feel Dean’s emotions after his date. Considering their level of intoxication it had
either gone very well or very badly. Castiel tried to feel guilty for hoping the latter.

“You like how she feels?” Dean asked suddenly, pulling Castiel out of his thoughts.

“I’m sorry, what?” Castiel asked, unable to interpret his meaning.

“Baby,” Dean clarified, “you like how she feels? How she drives.”
“Oh,” Castiel nodded in understanding, “yes Dean, she is a very pleasing car.”

There was a slight pause before Dean said, “You want her?” Castiel snapped his head to stare at Dean, eyes wide, before common sense forced his gaze back to the road. Dean looked slightly flustered and his flush appeared to be from more than intoxication. He hastily added, “I mean, of course she’ll still be my Baby and yeah she’d be mine. But she can be yours as well, you can drive her whenever you want.”

Castiel was startled by the sudden declaration but he knew Dean couldn’t mean what he was saying, he was drunk and this car meant the world to him. He wouldn’t give it away, not in his right mind anyway.

“You’re drunk, Dean,” Castiel stated as much. But Dean shook his head firmly.

“No- well I mean, yeah I am, but I’m serious. It’s… a token,” Dean insisted, rubbing his neck nervously.

Castiel remained unconvinced but something about the way Dean was acting… this obviously meant a great deal to him at this moment. Castiel gave Dean a tender smile as he nodded, “It would be an honour, Dean.”

This seemed to placate Dean as he glanced back towards Hannah, who oddly enough gave Dean a “thumbs up” sign, before she burst into a fit of hysterical giggles that Castiel blamed on the alcohol.

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Sam was well and truly over watching Dean and Hannah get drunk. He didn’t see why they needed to be there any longer. According to Gabe, Hannah had done her job in convincing Dean about twenty minutes ago. In fact, Dean hadn’t needed any convincing at all. It seemed his brother was finally heading in the right direction for once. Unfortunately, Gabe was stubbornly not done with this prank and had refused to give up their plans just because Dean “got his shit together”.

Not to mention, Gabe had this huge smirk on his face that made Sam extremely uneasy.

“Can we please just go home already? I don’t want to spend the entire night stuck in this bar,” Sam complained but Gabe immediately shushed him.

“Patience Sammy, just a few more minutes. Trust me,” Gabe assured him.

True to his word, no less than five minutes later Sam understood what had the archangel so excited. Castiel had walked into the bar and, to Sam’s surprise, Charlie was with him. What the hell was she doing here? He gaped at the two as they made their way to Dean’s table.

“It appears Cassie got himself a little gal pal to share all his boy troubles with. I’m surprised they didn’t start painting their nails and braiding each other’s hair,” Gabe snorted.

“How would you know, you’ve been stuck with me all night,” Sam accused him skeptically. Gabe rolled his eyes, “I’m an archangel, Dummy. You don’t think I can be two places at once? How else do you think I’ve been stalking both of our brothers at the same time?”

Sam was reminded just how powerful Gabriel actually was, it was both impressive and disturbing. “Great to know, Gabe. Now how do I know you haven’t been spying on me as well?” Sam groaned. “You don’t,” Gabe shrugged and then winked at him. Sam grimaced choosing to ignore the wink. Great now he’d be paranoid every time he showered.

He watched the small group as they exited the bar, wondering if they should follow. Gabe answered that question in the next moment, flying them out to the parking lot. Sam gripped his spinning head, flashing Gabe a bitch face.

“Yeah well I’d prefer a little warning first,” Sam complained with a sigh.

Gabe shushed him again and pointed towards the others across the lot, they’d just arrived at the impala.
“I hope he’s not planning on getting Cas to fly all of them and the impala home. He’s still recovering,” Sam murmured in concern. Instead he watched Dean throw Castiel the keys, feeling slightly betrayed.
“Are you kidding me? He barely even lets me drive the impala!” Sam hissed disbelievingly.
“Lighten up, Sammy. He’s in looooove,” Gabe cooed, clasping his hands and swaying dramatically.

And as he watched the impala drive away, seeing how carefully Castiel steered Dean’s beloved vehicle, Sam couldn’t hold onto his petty annoyance.
“We’re gonna fly home now, if that’s ok with you,” Gabe stated sarcastically. Yet despite his sarcastic tone, Sam noticed that he didn’t actually fly them until Sam consented. It suddenly reminded him of the salad Gabe had conjured earlier that night as well. Huh. Maybe Gabe actually was making an effort. Sam wasn’t sure how to feel about an archangel trying to get on his good side. Why would Gabe even bother?

After finding himself alone in the bunker, he kind of wished Gabe had hung around for a while before the others got back. It was almost an hour drive and Sam only stayed up so he could greet Charlie. It was well past midnight before the bunker door finally groaned open and Sam was startled out of his almost-sleep by the sound. He pulled his head up from the table to watch them descend the stairs.

“Charlie! What are you doing here?” Sam feigned surprise.
“Long story, I’ll explain in the morning. I’m a bit preoccupied right now,” Charlie beamed, gesturing to the giggling brunette beside her. Hannah was almost unrecognisable from the impression he’d had of the uptight angel. In fact, Sam wondered how an angel had gotten drunk so easily in the first place.

Castiel had an arm wrapped around Dean’s waist and Charlie had the same with Hannah as they helped them down the stairs. But the drunk pair seemed completely satisfied with this arrangement, leaning into their respective saviours heavily. Sam was almost surprised at how comfortable Hannah seemed around someone she’d never met before, watching in amusement as Hannah played with Charlie’s hair fascinatedly.

“Your hair is so lovely,” Hannah gasped, lifting a piece close to her face, “how did you get it so red?”

Meanwhile, Dean stumbled at the end of the stairs causing Castiel to wrap both arms around him in an attempt to steady the man. Sam suspected Dean wasn’t nearly as drunk as he appeared, he practically lived on alcohol after all, he was probably overacting to keep Castiel close. Sam rolled his eyes at the pair. Dean was grinning, staring into Castiel’s eyes with so much fondness that Sam wanted to yell “get a room.”
“Guess there really are angels watching over me,” Dean chuckled, his hand sliding casually over Castiel’s shoulder to the empty space behind him.

Castiel froze, eyes going wide. His grip on Dean tightened slightly.
“Dean,” Castiel said tensely, “your hand.”
“What about it?” Dean purred cheekily. Castiel seemed at war with himself as he forced space between them. Dean pouted.
“You’re confused. I believe you need to rest, Dean,” Castiel insisted firmly.
He turned to Sam adding, “Goodnight Sam, I trust you will watch over Hannah,” before disappearing from the room with Dean in tow.
Sam glanced at the two girls, now occupying the couch. Hannah appeared to have passed out on Charlie’s shoulder, which didn’t seem to bother Charlie one bit. She looked down at the angel warmly. Well since she appeared to have the whole “watching over Hannah” thing covered he shouldn’t feel guilty heading to bed, Sam decided. He gave a quick goodnight to Charlie before he left, who whispered her own reply and promised they’d catch up in the morning. Overall it had been a slightly anticlimactic reunion with Charlie, but Sam was glad he’d waited anyway.

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Castiel placed Dean on his bed gently, removing his shoes so that he wouldn’t be uncomfortable. But as he made to leave the room, Dean grabbed his arm in protest.

“I’m not confused, Cas. I know what I want,” he spoke calmly, “I want you to show me. Teach me how to groom your wings.”

Cas stared at him in disbelief, unable to comprehend what he’d just heard.

“Please Cas, I wanna learn. I know I’m at a disadvantage when it comes to this angel courting crap… but I think I can do it if you help me,” Dean admitted, looking at Castiel pleadingly.

It suddenly made sense. Dean wanted to learn how to groom wings so he didn’t disappoint Hannah. Castiel’s heart dropped in disappointment but he tried to maintain a poker-face, he couldn’t let Dean see his pain.

“Dean, grooming an angel’s wings is a very intimate act. I don’t think you understand what you’re asking for,” Castiel spoke softly. His throat felt tight, making it hard to speak.

“Please,” Dean begged, looking determined. Castiel had never felt so conflicted. Dean was offering something he could have only ever dreamed of. But it wouldn’t mean the same thing to both of them. This would be just a favour between friends to Dean, not the loving act Castiel truly wanted. And wouldn’t it be taking advantage of Dean if he agreed? Surely Dean would never suggest this sober.

Not only was he intoxicated, but he didn’t understand what wing grooming really represented. Castiel had only ever had his wings groomed by Balthazar and that had been completely platonic, a comfort between dear friends. After Balthazar’s death, Castiel had never felt as close to any of his other siblings, grooming his own wings despite the difficulty. Despite Dean being Castiel’s closest and dearest friend, his feelings towards Dean meant it wouldn’t be the same as it had been with Balthazar. It would feel much more intimate, even if Dean didn’t reciprocate his feelings.

Yet even knowing this, Castiel still longed to say yes. When would he ever have this chance again? Even to have Dean touch his wings just one more time would be wonderful. His skin still tingled in excitement from the last time. And it had been a while since he’d groomed his wings, they really did need grooming. Perhaps it couldn’t hurt to agree, just this once…

“Okay,” Castiel found himself saying and Dean’s face lit up at the admission.

Tentatively Castiel began removing his trenchcoat and shirt. It wasn’t necessary to remove his shirt but it would make the job easier. When he looked up he found Dean staring at him and for the second time that night he wished he had access to the bond. The buzz was duller now, but it still obscured Dean’s emotions. Castiel couldn’t decipher what his lingering gaze meant. Was he disgusted? Fascinated? Surprised? Having second thoughts?

Castiel tried to ignore his fears and remain professional. This was just a lesson, he told himself firmly. He sat on the end of the bed, in front of Dean, spreading out his wings self-consciously.

“First you search for any loose or damaged feathers. They should come out easily with a brush of your hands. Don’t try to remove any other feathers, as it will be quite painful,” Castiel instructed, avoiding Dean’s eyes. Thankfully the feathers on the back of his wings were a lot less sensitive than
the underside. Castiel held back a shudder as he remembered what Dean’s hand had felt like tracing over his underside feathers. And in front of his brother, no less.

He’d likely feel a lot more embarrassed if he wasn’t so preoccupied with Dean’s hands trailing through his wings. His touches were gentle but curious. They explored the back of his wings eagerly, following from the very top arch to the tips of his flight feathers. The gesture was soothing and Castiel soon found himself laying face down on the bed, relishing the attention.

“Am I doing okay?” Dean asked anxiously. Was he doing okay? Okay was an understatement for the bliss Castiel was experiencing right now. It was like the most wonderful massage, Castiel could almost fall asleep.

“Yes, Dean. That’s very good. Let me know when you’ve found all the loose feathers and I’ll tell you what to do next,” Castiel informed him, trying to appear impassive. He knew the next part would be the hardest, Dean would need to groom his underside feathers. Castiel tried not to tense in anticipation.

After a few moments Dean reported his progress, leaving Castiel’s nerves on full alert.

“Now you do the same for the underside of the wings. These feathers are much more… sensitive so a gentle approach is advised,” Castiel deadpanned, his heart thumping in his chest. He sat up hesitantly, turning to face Dean slowly.

Castiel noted Dean’s own increased heart rate, it seemed his warning had been taken too seriously.

Good, perhaps if Dean was afraid of hurting him then his touches would be delicate. Although Castiel knew it wouldn’t make a difference. His attraction to Dean made him hyperaware of his touch. What had once been slightly ticklish with Balthazar was suddenly extremely erogenous, his wings sensing the presence of potential mate.

He tensed at the first contact of Dean’s hands, trying to look anywhere but at Dean. Why couldn’t he be lying face down again? At least then his face had been covered. Dean’s touches were excruciatingly gentle, for which Castiel was both grateful and frustrated. Castiel chanced a glance at Dean’s face, finding those gorgeous green eyes watching his face intently. There was anxiety in his gaze, as if worried he was hurting the angel. However, Dean’s expression seemed to change as he caught something in Castiel’s gaze.

Without warning his fingers buried deeper, causing Castiel to let out a startled groan. His body jerked and he grabbed Dean’s arm to steady himself. He realised his mistake almost instantly as Dean gasped, releasing a wrecked groan of his own. Dean’s emotions hit him like a freight train and he realised the soft sensation between his fingers was undoubtedly the feel of his own feathers. As Castiel noticed the returned handprint under his palm, his mind quickly connected the dots. This was what had caused the intensified link. He was feeling everything Dean felt and it appeared Dean was experiencing the same.

Suddenly they were one soul, one being. Their feelings, both physical and emotional, were shared so infinitely that it was impossible to locate their origin. Castiel could no longer tell which emotions were his and which were Dean’s, but common sense told him that the lust and desire thrumming through the bond had to be his own. But Dean obviously couldn’t decipher the difference.

“Oh god, Cas,” Dean moaned as his fingers trailed through the sensitive down. The stroking of his feathers became frantic as Dean savoured the pleasure he was causing both of them. Castiel’s grip tightened on the mark even as his brain told him he should let go. Dean was so caught up in the pleasure they were feeling that he couldn’t register the intimacy of what he was doing. Suddenly Dean was trailing kisses down Castiel’s neck, nibbling on the skin desperately. Need and want was all Castiel could process, his desires obviously overpowering the link between them.
“Dean, you have to stop,” Castiel panted, forcing his hand from the mark hoping it would help them think clearly. But Dean acted as if he hadn’t heard him. He was drunk, both from his previous intoxication and on the feelings that had been forced upon him through their connection. He was acting on impulse and Castiel knew if he let this go on Dean would no doubt be furious when his mind finally cleared. But it was when Dean’s hand trailed across his bare stomach, inching it’s way between his thighs, that Castiel knew he had to stop him.

“Dean, stop!” Castiel shouted firmly, pushing the hunter from him until they were no longer touching. Dean looked at him startled, blinking up at Castiel in shock and distress. Then Dean suddenly looked horrified with himself.

“Oh god, Cas, I’m so sorry,” Dean stammered reaching out for the angel apologetically. But Castiel couldn’t handle the way Dean was looking at him. The terrified, regret in his eyes. So he did the only thing he could think to do. He flew away.

Chapter End Notes

*Aggressively writes Charlie a happy storyline because screw the writers*
I hope you enjoyed this chapter. I made it a bit longer than usual because I'm coming up into the last few weeks of University for this term and I'll be swamped with assignments for the next month. So it could be a while before the next update, I'm sorry!
Dean woke surprisingly early the next morning, but he would have happily stayed in bed all day if he could. Although the throbbing hangover pounding through his head was the least of his worries. In fact, he was surprised he’d even managed to fall asleep in the first place, considering the horrible guilt that had overwhelmed him after Cas left. Exhaustion and lingering intoxication must have finally gotten the better of him. But unfortunately, the sweet ignorance sleep had brought him was over now and he was once again faced with what he’d done last night.

_Fuck_. How could he have let himself get carried away like that? Cas obviously hadn’t been ready for anything serious, attempted to warn him before they’d even begun. Cas had tried to say no but Dean just wouldn’t listen. He just _had_ to push him, didn’t he? God, he’d practically sexually assaulted him. No he _had_, there was no sugar coating it.

Dammit, he couldn’t even court Cas for a _single day_ without messing it all up. He’d been right all along, Cas deserved someone better. Even if his soul wasn’t messed up, Dean was still just a mindless screw up. The only thing he’d ever be good for was hunting monsters.

Eventually Dean managed to drag himself out of bed, accepting the fact that he couldn’t stay in bed forever. Sam was likely to haul his sorry ass out of there sooner or later and Dean would rather not have to face the forced conversation about his ‘feelings’ that would no doubt come from it. Besides he knew he couldn’t leave things like that between him and Cas. He needed Cas to know how sorry he was. Dean wasn’t sure how he’d ever forgive _himself_, let alone convince Cas to. But he had to try. Even if Cas’s feelings for him were completely ruined, he needed to salvage their friendship at least.

Despite his apprehension at facing the angel, Dean couldn’t help but feel disappointed when he couldn’t find Cas in the kitchen or the library. In fact, after a thorough search of the bunker he realised he couldn’t find him anywhere. _Great_. Cas would rather risk his own health than be anywhere near Dean right now. If Cas got sick again because of the distance between them it would be all Dean’s fault.

Frustration and guilt ate at Dean, causing him to become restless and tense. The feelings reminded him of how he’d felt with the mark, which just soured his mood even further. He needed something to put the edge off. _He needed a hunt_. It had already been far too long since his last job. Now that the Mark of Cain was gone, there was finally nothing stopping him. And if stabbing a few vamps would help him work through his anger? Well that was just an added bonus, Dean told himself firmly.

With a newfound sense of purpose, he headed back to the War Room where he’d last seen Sam. “Found any jobs nearby? I’ve been couped up here for months, I think it’s time for me to get back out there,” Dean asked, crossing his arms with forced nonchalance.

Sam looked up from his computer, shaking his head with a frustrated frown.
“I’ve been checking all morning, but it’s oddly quiet. In fact, there haven’t been any weird deaths reported the last few days. At least nothing that suggests anything supernatural was involved,” Sam admitted, visibly stumped.

“There can’t be nothing. Come on Sammy, I’m going insane stuck in here. I need to get my hands dirty,” Dean complained, becoming even more restless at the concept of not finding a hunt. “Look I don’t know what to tell you, Dean. There’s seriously nothing out there, it’s like every monster within a ten mile radius has decided to take the week off,” Sam insisted, dragging a frustrated hand through his long hair.

“Monsters don’t just take vacations, Sam,” Dean scoffed, “If you can’t find anything online then I guess I’m just gonna have to search for trouble the old fashioned way.” Before Sam could stop him Dean roughly pulled on his jacket, only pausing for a moment to stare at the impala keys wistfully, before snatching them off the kitchen table. He tried not to think too hard about who’d left them there. He couldn’t let himself get swallowed up in self-pity again. He just had to get out of this damn bunker, like now.

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“Thank Dad! I thought he’d never leave,” Gabriel’s voice caused Sam to startle violently in his seat, eyes snapping up to find the archangel sitting in front of him beside his laptop. “Seriously, you need to start giving me some kind of signal before you pop out of nowhere, otherwise I’m gonna have a heart attack in my thirties,” Sam complained, but the archangel didn’t look the slightest bit concerned. He simply swung his legs back and forth eagerly like an excited child.

“You will not believe the news I have for you, Sammy-boy! It’s positively delicious,” Gabriel purred, emphasising the last word by conjuring a bar of chocolate and taking an enthusiastic bite. Sam sighed but couldn’t help the twitch of a smirk form at the corner of his mouth, “Look I’m kind of busy here, Gabe. Something really bizarre is going on with the hunting levels in the area. I need to figure out what’s causing it.”

“Oh that’s easy, it was me,” Gabriel informed him casually. Sam froze, raising an eyebrow at the smaller man.

“What do you mean, ‘it was you’?” Sam asked warily. “I’ve adios’ed every vamp, ghost and any other ‘creepy crawlies’ roaming the area. Wouldn’t want Dean-o too busy hunting to court our dear little angel, now would we?” “You can’t be serious, that’s gotta be at least a hundred different monsters,” Sam gaped at him. Gabriel grinned, obviously smug, “I really don’t think you’re quite grasping this whole “archangel” thing, Rapunzel.”

Sam rolled his eyes, “You can quit it with the nicknames. I can tell you’re running out.” Gabriel looked dramatically offended, “How dare you! Creative genius like this doesn’t just ‘run out’.”

Sam finally couldn’t hold back his smirk, “Sure, sure. Whatever you say, Short-stuff.” Gabriel waggled his eyebrows, “Ooooh feisty, I like it.”

Smirking, Sam shoved the archangel light-heartedly. “Shut up, just tell me what you came here for,” Sam huffed fondly. “I am soooo glad you asked, because I have been dying to spill the big news all damn morning. Why do humans have to sleep anyways? It’s so inconvenient,” Gabriel whined.

“Gabe,” Sam warned exasperatedly. “Okay, okay. Fine I’ll hurry up and get to the point. Last night your brilliant big bro decided being
drunk off his head would be the perfect time to ask Cassie if he could groom his wings—"
“Groom his wings?” Sam interrupted confused.
“It’s an angel thing. You only perform the act with angels you’re really close to or attempting to
court,” Gabriel explained hurried, “anyway so Dean naturally got a bit carried away. They were
practically dry humping each other. I almost left the room—"
Sam scoffed at that and Gabriel pouted, “Hey give me some credit! I’d give my little bro his privacy
if he needed it, I’m not a total voyeur you know. And stop interrupting, I’m not even at the best part
yet!”
Sam held up his hands in mock surrender so Gabriel continued, “So just when it was getting good
Cassie had to be a little saint and push Dean away. He probably thought he was taking advantage of
Dean because he was drunk or something similarly stupid. I swear I almost showed myself just to
slap some sense into him, but he flew off before I could even really consider it.”
Sam stayed silent for a moment, waiting to see if there was more. When it was clear the archangel
wasn’t going to continue he spoke, “Well that explains why Dean was in such a foul mood this
morning. I swear every step they take towards each other, the other takes two steps back. They’re
literally the only thing standing in the way of their own happiness and they can’t even see it.”
Gabriel nodded sympathetically, “They say love is blind but this is ridiculous. Makes for a pretty
good show though!”
“Well I’m glad someone’s enjoying this. You’re not the one who’ll have to deal with Dean’s sulking
when he comes back empty handed,” Sam sighed.
“Don’t pretend you’re not enjoying this just as much as I am. I’ve seen the two of you in a pranking
war, remember? You love messing with your brother just as much as I do. I’d say you’re a bit of a
trickster yourself, Samsquatch,” Gabriel teased knowingly.
Sam tried to look offended, “I’m not sure whether to take that as a compliment or an insult.”
Gabriel chuckled, “Definitely a compliment.”

They were quiet for a while after that. Gabriel’s update was obviously over but he didn’t make any
moves to disappear. In fact, they sat together in a comfortable silence, Sam click-clacking away on
his laptop while Gabriel munched on a seemingly endless supply of sweets. Hell knowing him it
probably was endless. Sam didn’t mind Gabe sticking around, he even found the archangel’s
presence soothing.

“So you’re a giant nerd, right?” Gabriel spoke suddenly. Sam frowned, taken aback by the
unexpected insult.
“I’m not a nerd,” he defended firmly. But Gabriel just shook his head quickly,
“No I didn’t mean- Look I just meant you like books and all that old fashioned junk right?” he
amended.
Sam shrugged, “Yeah I guess.”
Gabriel hopped off the table fervently, “Yeah I thought so. I got you something.”

Gabriel reached into his pocket quickly and handed Sam a large, golden feather. Not just a feather,
Sam realised, it was a quill.
“In case you want to continue the “family legacy” and start writing a bunch of research journals like
the old farts who used to run this place. I’ll even help you enhance your angel knowledge collection,
I noticed it was a bit lacking in Castiel’s time of need. Plus it couldn’t hurt to spread the angel
wisdom while I’m here and I know you and your brother aren’t a bunch of experimenting dicks like
the last “Masochists of Letters”. Well not as big dicks anyway-” Gabriel cut off his own rambling
abruptly, avoiding Sam’s eyes.
Sam found himself shocked at the random gesture. The quill was stunning, probably the most elegant
looking thing he’d ever seen. It was like something out of a Harry Potter movie, he half expected
Gabriel to tell him it was a Phoenix feather or something equally astonishing. He was moved by
Gabriel’s admission even more so. The archangel rarely did anything generous for nothing in return.
The entire situation had Sam at a complete loss.

“Wow it’s beautiful, thank you Gabe. And yeah, definitely that sounds amazing,” Sam told him
earnestly.
An enormous grin spread across Gabriel’s face at his words but his tone remained light, “Always
happy to help a fellow Trickster. Anyway, I better get going before your little sleepover guests wake
up. I’m not quite ready to meet Red just yet.”
And it was with those words of parting that Gabriel finally disappeared.

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Waking up for the first time was an incredibly disorientating experience for an angel, as Hannah
learned stirring from her apparent unconsciousness. Taking note of her surroundings she found
herself sprawled on the largest of the couches in the Bunker’s library. And to her surprise, she wasn’t
alone.

Charlie was still fast asleep, her brilliant red hair splayed across the cushions wildly. Upon seeing the
red head and, of course, her soul, Hannah was struck by the same fascination she’d experienced the
night before. So it hadn’t been the intoxication that caused her unexplainable pull to the other girl.
Hannah didn’t quite know how to handle that revelation. She was still trying to process the fact that
she’d gotten drunk and slept for the first time. Her connection to Heaven must be far more severed
than she’d realised.

Was she always this affected? Or was her condition merely getting worse with time? Would it
eventually fade so greatly that she’d basically be human? Hannah shuddered at the thought. She’d
heard second hand from Castiel what an awful experience that had been for him. Although he’d had
many positive things to say as well, Hannah doubted they’d outweigh the negatives. Especially
considering he’d practically been fallen already.

Hannah, however, had absolutely no experience with humans. She’d never been to Earth before the
fall, never even wanted to. If it hadn’t been for the support of her other fallen brothers and sisters, she
likely wouldn’t have survived the fall. If she were to be trapped here on Earth, even with the support
of the Winchesters and Castiel, she doubted she’d ever be truly content.

However, glancing at the girl beside her again, Hannah found herself almost curious. What would
the girl say about humanity? Would she tell Hannah it was worth it? Enjoyable? Hannah was
surprised to find she desperately wanted to know this girl’s opinion more than anyone else’s. She had
to remind herself she barely knew Charlie. But her grace flared indignantly inside her at the thought.
As if to say its brief contact with Charlie’s soul had been more than enough to know her. Her grace
was drawn to the girl like a moth to a flame and that fact scared Hannah more than anything ever
had.

“So is watching people while they sleep an angel thing or are you and Cas just a pair of creepers?”
Charlie croaked sleepily, rubbing her eyes as she blinked up at the angel. Hannah quickly broke her
staring, forcing her gaze upon a stack of books across the library.
“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable,” Hannah assured her. Charlie rested her hand
on Hannah’s arm gently above her elbow, drawing Hannah’s gaze back to her.
“Hey I was just kidding, it doesn’t bother me. Besides I did a bit of my own sleep-watching last night
when you fell asleep on me. It was just so bizarre, I didn’t think angels slept.”

Hannah tried to ignore the embarrassment that flared within her at the knowledge that she’d fallen
asleep on the other girl. It was odd to be feeling emotions so clearly even without the alcohol in her
system. Hannah began to wonder if it was still her fallen status to blame. She couldn’t possibly be developing human emotions like Castiel had, could she? He’d been on Earth far longer than she had before that change had occurred.

“We are not supposed to sleep. I fear the fall made my vessel more susceptible to alcoholic influence and thus I became weak enough to require sleep in my intoxicated state,” Hannah explained.

Charlie nodded, “So alcohol is an angel no-no right now. Got it.”

“I should not have allowed Dean Winchester to coerce me into partaking in the first place,” Hannah declared firmly.

Charlie grinned at her, “Oh come on. It was just a little bit of fun. No harm done, right?”

“I believe my head would beg to differ,” Hannah grumbled, clutching at it carefully.

“Oh that’s just a hangover, sweetie. Come on, I’ll go cook us up something greasy,” Charlie promised, pulling the angel with her off the couch.

“Angels don’t eat,” Hannah protested weakly.

“Well they’re also not supposed to get drunk or sleep either, so I’m guessing breaking one more rule couldn’t hurt,” Charlie insisted.

Hannah watched in fascination as Charlie expertly prepared their breakfast. It was surprising how much effort the humans went to just for nourishment. Hannah would have found the entire process tedious if it hadn’t been for Charlie’s enthusiasm. She mixed the eggs and bacon around the pan as if it was an art form. Even Hannah had to admit she was impressed.

“You’re very good at that,” Hannah couldn’t help but inform her.

Charlie grinned at the compliment, “Thanks, I’ve been cooking for myself for almost my whole life. Ordering take-out all the time got old really quickly, so I pretty much taught myself how to cook.”

“It’s very impressive, I often find myself amazed at the things humans can do,” Hannah admitted.

Charlie looked taken aback, “Seriously? I mean, this stuff is so mundane compared to what you’re probably used to seeing every day. I can’t even imagine all the amazing things angels can do. This couldn’t even compare.”

“Yes angels may be powerful and we have many abilities that humans may never even begin to comprehend. But we are also flawed. We have no wills of our own. What’s the point of having power if it’s not truly yours to command?” Hannah stated, startling herself with her own admission.

Hannah determinedly pressed the memories of Naomi’s “treatments” out of her mind. Watching her brothers and sisters being tortured had always been hard for her. But Hannah had tried to maintain a detached perception of her work, lest she be the one in the chair herself.

“You seem pretty free willed to me,” Charlie pointed out with an encouraging smile as she shovelled the food from the pan onto their plates.

“Perhaps I’ve been with Castiel too long,” Hannah acknowledged fondly.

“Heaven’s most rebellious angel taking on a protégée. I guess you should feel honoured,” Charlie teased, ignoring her fork and picking up a strip of bacon with her fingers, “mmm god, I missed bacon.”

Hannah hesitantly mimicked her, the greasy strip surprisingly pleasant against her fingers.

The flavour was very pleasing and Hannah soon found herself consuming the entire plate of food. She had to admit her stomach felt much better afterwards than it had before.

“Good?” Charlie asked anxiously.

“Extremely,” Hannah reassured her, “I have never eaten before, but I must admit it was much more pleasant than I’d imagined.”
“Well in that case, it’s an honour being your first chef ever,” Charlie chuckled.

“If you want I can cook us something a little more complicated for dinner. You can just fly us to the grocery store and I’ll figure out what you like,” Charlie offered eagerly. Hannah felt her face fall and Charlie immediately looked apologetic. “Or not, you don’t have to eat again if you don’t want to,” she hastily added. Hannah shook her head, “It’s not that. It’s my wings, they were damaged in the fall. We angels cannot fly anymore.”

A mixture of concern and confusion flickered across Charlie’s face. “But Cas flew last night…” she murmured.

“Castiel’s wings were healed by the bond with Dean Winchester. Even our healing abilities cannot restore our wings. It takes incredibly powerful healing magic to restore an angel’s wings. They are the representation of our grace. It is why I am so weak, why I can taste food and be influenced by alcohol,” Hannah explained.

“I’m so sorry, Hannah,” Charlie responded solemnly. She then visibly tried to appear light-hearted. “Well Dean’s your boyfriend now, right? Can’t you just ask him nicely for a bit of a soul power up too?”

Hannah stared at Charlie puzzled for a few moments before replying. “Boyfriend? Is that a human term? I wasn’t aware we’d reached a level of friendship,” Hannah confessed. Charlie paused, looking at her strangely before bursting into laughter. “Oh my god! No fricking way, Cas is so oblivious! I can’t believe he actually convinced me you and Dean were dating. I knew something didn’t add up,” Charlie snickered.

“Castiel thought Dean and I were romantically involved? That’s ridiculous! The idea that I would ever steal a mate from him, does he really think so low of me?” Hannah gaped, obviously offended. “You ship them too? We are gonna get along great, I just know it. And don’t take it personally, those boys are so clueless. Honestly they could be shot with cupid’s fricking arrow and they’d still assume it was a mistake,” Charlie reassured her.

“I’m well aware,” Hannah assured her, “Samuel, Gabriel and I have been attempting to court the two for several days.” “Now way! Gabriel!?” Charlie gasped in giddy shock.

“Way to let the cat out of the bag, Chatty Cathy,” a voice appeared behind them, “you just can’t trust good help these days.” “Oh my god,” Charlie squealed as she whipped around to see the archangel leaning against the kitchen table. “Common mistake but not quite, the name’s Gabriel.”

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After four hours of constant driving, Dean finally admitted to himself that he had no goddamn idea where to even start looking. They’d always just found their hunts on the web or in the newspaper. It’s not like he could just go knocking door to door asking if anyone had a ghost problem. But he couldn’t just give up, not after making such a big deal about it to Sam. If he came back now it’d be like admitting that his brother was right and there was no way he was doing that.

Besides he couldn’t go back to the bunker yet, not when he knew Cas wouldn’t be there. Because of him. Dean had chased him out of his own home. And it was Castiel’s home as far as Dean was concerned, because Cas was family and the bunker was where family belonged. If anyone had to leave the bunker it would be him. Believe him he’d do it if that’s what Cas wanted.
Dean forcefully shook the thoughts from his head. He’d left the bunker to clear his mind, not to wallow in regrets. He’d have plenty of time to do that later. Right now Dean just really needed to kill something. The fact that it was so conveniently quiet exactly when he needed a monster to hunt was so unbelievably typical. He could never catch a break. What did they expect him to do, lure them out with virgin sacrifices or something?

The idea struck him out of nowhere. It was crazy and incredibly dangerous, but since when had any of his plans not been? At this point Dean didn’t even care, he just needed to kill something. It wasn’t nearly as intense a need as he’d had with the mark, but he definitely craved the stress relief it would no doubt bring him. In fact, there was no better anger management cure as far as Dean was concerned.

Without a second thought, Dean turned the car around and began heading for the nearest crossroads. It didn’t take long to set up the spell, he’d done it so many times now that he could perform it from memory alone. When the crossroads demon appeared, he flashed Dean that familiar smug grin that all of these black eyed -well technically red eyed in this case- bastards possessed.

“Well, well. If it isn’t Dean Winchester. Last I heard you were one of us, what happened? Couldn’t take the heat?” the crossroads demon mocked.

Dean didn’t even bother answering before shoving Ruby’s knife through the smug bastard’s neck. The look of surprise on his face was priceless, Dean mused. That’s the problem with demons, they’re too chatty. Always wanting to give their little monologue speech before they kill you. Too bad for him, Dean didn’t have the patience for that shit today. Yet even as Dean watched its eyes flash and fizzle out, signifying the demon’s demise, he didn’t feel satisfied. Actually, he felt worse than he had before. Empty.

Goddammit, not even hunting could fix the brewing shitstorm of emotions tearing through Dean. Deep down he knew the only thing that could help would be mending things between him and Cas. But who knows where Cas could be. With his wings fixed he could be anywhere across the world. Dean supposed he’d just have to hope Cas had stayed close enough to his soul that he’d be easier to track down. Once again, determined by a new mission Dean made his way towards the Impala. He was going to find Cas, he’d definitely make things right.

With his mind preoccupied, it wasn’t surprising that Dean didn’t hear the footsteps behind him until it was too late. The first blow to his head caused his vision to go blurry but he fought to stay conscious, throwing blind punches in the hopes of hitting his attacker. But after the second blow everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

So self-loathing Dean is back, I'm so sorry! I swear he'll realise he deserves love eventually! No destiel in this chapter but I hope the copious amount of Sabriel and Channah(Harlie?) made up for it :3
I am so sorry for how long this took. I wrongfully thought I’d have more time to write in the Uni holidays. But it turns out work took advantage of my new availability and upped my hours. But I managed to get this out a few days before the Uni term starts again so at least these holidays weren’t a total waste! Also it seems everyone agrees, Harlie it is! :D

Sam idly spun the quill between his forefingers, marvelling at how it shimmered in the shifting light. It was shockingly beautiful, he wondered if he should even risk damaging it by actually using it for its intended purpose. It just seemed so delicate, yet he had to admit it felt surprisingly sturdy in his hands. It was simultaneously the softest and toughest feather he’d ever touched.

He was startled out of his reverie by his phone’s message tone chiming on the table in front of him. To his surprise instead of a message from Dean letting him know he’d finally given up on finding a hunt, it was from an unknown number.

Brace yourself. – G

Before he could even wonder what the hell that meant, Sam’s stomach lurched and he suddenly found himself sandwiched between a sheepish looking Hannah and beaming Charlie at the kitchen table.

“Nice of you to join us, Sasquatch,” Gabriel’s voice brought his attention to the angel standing in front of them. He was trying his best to look exasperated, with his arms tightly crossed, but he couldn’t hide the smirk that twitched at his lips.

“Like I had a choice,” Sam scoffed, “What gives? I thought you didn’t want to meet Charlie yet?”

Speaking of, Charlie didn’t even appear concerned by his sudden appearance. She was too busy staring at Gabriel starstruck.

Yeah well turns out someone can’t keep their mouth shut around pretty girls,” Gabriel grumbled, throwing a pointed look in Hannah’s direction. Hannah straightened her back indignantly. “My confidence in Charlie has nothing to do with her aesthetic appeal. She has been nothing but generous and kind to me, her soul is pure and I trust her,” she defended firmly.

Charlie’s gaze snapped to Hannah, appearing a mixture of shocked and honoured by her declaration. Hannah returned the gaze eagerly, allowing herself a shy smile.

“Oh god, Sam make it stop. I’ve already suffered enough eye sex between the other two,” Gabriel complained. At his words, Hannah immediately dropped her gaze, her cheeks flaring a soft pink, which caused Charlie to flash Gabriel an annoyed glare.

Sam cleared his throat, deciding he should direct the conversation elsewhere to avoid Hannah anymore embarrassment. He turned to Charlie before asking, “So how much do you know exactly?” Charlie gave him a thankful look before replying, “Just that you and the archangel have been playing cupid for Dean and Cas. But, no offense, you guys totally suck at it because they’re both miserable,” Charlie pointed out critically.
“Charlie also informs me that Castiel is under the false impression that Dean and I have become romantically involved,” Hannah informed them, appearing extremely concerned by the issue. “Congrats Sherlock, but we already figured that one out,” Gabriel admitted casually. Charlie and Hannah both gaped at them disparagingly, Charlie appeared particularly unimpressed with Sam.

“You mean you’ve just been letting Cas feel miserable? For what, your own sick amusement? Jesus Sam, I expect this kind of thing from The Trickster but you. Cas is your friend,” Charlie snapped accusingly.

Sam fidgeted under the force of her glare, guilt coursing through him. “Hey now, leave the moose alone. It was just a little bit of fun and we barely did anything. It’s not our fault those two are naturally self-destructive,” Gabriel challenged defensively. “Not doing anything is just as bad in this situation. You let Cas think his feelings were unrequited and even worse you risked Hannah’s friendship with Cas by not even bothering to tell her either,” Charlie growled.

Sam stayed silent because he couldn’t find any acceptable excuse for their actions. He’d known letting Cas think Dean and Hannah were a couple was wrong but he’d allowed Gabe to convince him otherwise. He knew they were just as much at fault, even if they hadn’t planted the idea in the first place.

“She’s right, Gabe. This needs to stop, we’re not even helping them anymore. This whole scheme has caused more harm than good. This has gone on too long, we should just tell them the truth,” Sam admitted.

“Are you kidding me? I’ve had orgies that’s lasted longer than this!” Gabriel whined, “come on, it’s just getting good. There’s always a bunch of drama before the couple gets their happily ever after, it’ll all work out. Trust me.”

“This isn’t a movie, Gabriel!” Sam snapped, his tone coming out unintentionally harsh as his guilt darkened his temper. But his guilt only worsened as he saw the crushed look that flickered across Gabriel’s face before the archangel’s face turned stony.

“Well then, I can see when I’m not needed,” Gabriel shrugged, “good, this was getting boring anyway.”

“Gabriel, wait-” Sam began but the archangel was already gone before he finished speaking.

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*the next day*

“Ninety percent of the angels who abandoned Heaven returned in the last week and we believe those remaining would return if Gabriel made a public appearance. However a few angels have begun to question the reality of his return. In fact, they’re beginning to question the integrity of your leadership… sir?” Jehoel informed him, his tattered pale green wings twitching anxiously at Castiel’s continued silence.

Once again Castiel wasn’t even listening to the lower ranked angel. He’d returned to Heaven to get his mind off Dean, but he just couldn’t concentrate on anything else. Yet even distracted, Castiel could see the other angels were getting antsy. They craved guidance and he just wasn’t in any state to provide them with the leadership they obviously needed. He sensed a mutiny was dangerously close, yet he still could not tear his thoughts from his personal affairs. They needed a dedicated leader, they needed Hannah.

Hannah had been the first angel Castiel had encountered who selflessly guided Heaven with no personal agenda, she simply wanted what was best for Heaven. Even he himself had lead selfishly in
his brief position as God. His first action, in crucifying that hypocritical preacher against homosexuality, had been fuelled by his own bias. Even before he truly understood his feelings for Dean as romantic, he knew he severely opposed homophobia on a deeply personal level.

But Castiel refused to break up Hannah’s relationship with Dean, even if he could convince himself it would be for the wellbeing of Heaven. He would still know deep down that it was a selfish action on his part. Perhaps he could find another angel within Heaven who could fill her position. Although an angel who wanted to give orders rather than take them was rare in itself. It would be even more difficult to find someone just as worthy of making such important decisions.

“All entries into Heaven have been restored and the souls trapped on Earth have been welcomed into their Heavens safely. However, many of us cannot perform our previous duties properly with our wings inactive. Human travel is slow and ineffective for the collection of souls,” Jehoel informed him tensely, “alarmingly several human souls have complained that, to quote, “you don’t drive to Heaven” and have refused to go with their Reapers because they fear they’re to be taken to Hell instead. The number of restless souls on Earth has tripled in the last month alone. Sir, what are your orders?”

Castiel sighed heavily and drew a hand through his hair agitatedly. He had no idea how he was going to fix that situation. The angels were understandably mournful about the condition of their wings. He couldn’t help but notice the attention his restored wings had caused when he first arrived. The jealousy stewing among his brethren had been undeniable. Castiel supposed he could try collecting the souls himself, but he knew that would be far too much work for one angel to do alone. Besides, his wings were already beginning to deteriorate in Dean’s soul’s absence. It would be no more than a day before he could no longer fly again.

In fact, the ache in his grace had recently become a painful throbbing he could no longer ignore. He knew he would need to return to the bunker soon. He supposed he had postponed the inevitable long enough. Perhaps he’d be able to avoid Dean within the bunker itself, it was certainly big enough. Well he’d be able to avoid him for a few days at least.

“I’ll discuss the situation with Hannah and inform you of our decision as soon as possible,” Castiel told the other angel noncommittally, “just tell the others to continue to do their duties as best as they can in these difficult conditions.”

Castiel rose from his desk reluctantly, straightening out the back of his trench coat even though he knew it was unnecessary. His clothes no longer rumpled or creased anymore, it was just another habit from his time as a human.

“Very well, sir,” Jehoel nodded stoically, although his wings fluffed in obvious annoyance. Castiel and Hannah’s constant absences were likely becoming an irritation for their secretary. Castiel made a mental note to spend more time in Heaven once his grace was fully healed. It’d be an excuse to avoid seeing Dean and Hannah after their courtship was no doubt finalised. It wouldn’t be long knowing Dean’s other conquests, he was surprised it hadn’t happened already, Castiel thought ruefully.

Despite his anxiety at seeing Dean again, Castiel found himself eager to return. Not only had he missed Dean’s soothing presence, but the pain at their separation had been far worse than it had last time. However, as Castiel appeared in the bunker’s war room, he did not get the relief he was expecting. In fact, his grace flared agonizingly and he knew right away something wasn’t right. His entire being screamed with it, something was wrong. Something was wrong.

He should have paid more attention to his grace’s agitation earlier, but the connection had been stifled with distance. Now that he had returned to Earth the feeling was hitting him with full crippling force. His grace was flaring with distress, it was in outright panic. Danger, it screamed, protect Dean.
“Dean?” Castiel called out anxiously, all plans of avoiding Dean instantly gone. Please be here. Castiel shook his head roughly before demanding, “Where is Dean?”
Sam’s face paled and he became instantly worried, cursing under his breath. “He isn’t here, he left yesterday to find a hunt and hasn’t come back yet. I just thought he’d found a case, you know? Shit I should have called him, I was just… preoccupied,” he admitted guiltily.

Castiel could tell Sam was obviously withholding something but he didn’t have time to care. Dean was in danger and he needed to find him. Now.

Castiel insisted, hoping desperately that the other angel was with Dean. At least he knew Hannah would protect Dean if he couldn’t be there. “She’s with Charlie, I think they might be in the library,” Sam told Castiel unsurely, dashing Castiel’s hopes.

The younger Winchester had become distracted by his phone, determinedly scrolling through it. “Has he called?” Castiel asked intently, maybe Dean had left a message with his whereabouts. “No but I have something better,” Sam explained as he opened one of the many apps on his phone, “when Dean still had the Mark of Cain I was constantly worried he’d go MIA one day. So I installed a tracker in the Impala.”

They both stared at the phone impatiently as the loading circle rotated in the middle of the screen. The small circle twirled on for what felt like an eternity, but Castiel knew logically that it could only have been a few minutes. “There!” Sam declared proudly as the screen finally loaded, however his face fell as he took stock of the location, “Oh no.”

“Where’s Hannah?” Castiel asked, his voice already laced with dread. Sam visibly hesitated before admitting, “He’s at a crossroads.”

Anger sparked through Castiel, even though he refused to believe Dean would ever sell his soul again. He wouldn’t dare. Castiel’s grace roared with rage at the mere thought. His grace had laid claim to Dean’s soul, if a demon even dared lay a hand on it… Fuelled by possessive fury, Castiel just barely remembered to grab Sam’s arm before flying swiftly to the location shown on Sam’s phone. The effort it took to carry the large man took an unexpected toll on his already weakened grace, but Castiel shook off the exhaustion. He didn’t have time to worry about himself.

The smell of blood lingered in the air and alarm instantly coursed through him. But he soon realised that, to his immense relief, the blood didn’t belong to a human. The crossroad demon’s corpse was gone but Castiel could still see signs of its death around them. The blood soaked soil may have been covered, but the stain couldn’t be removed completely. He relayed this information to Sam, who had quickly found the familiar shape of the Impala parked across from the crossroads. However to their dismay the Impala was the only sign of Dean anywhere.

He was gone.

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Dean woke to the familiar feeling of being tied to a chair, he didn’t even need to open his eyes to know it was true. How many times had this happened to him now? God, it was becoming a friggin’ pass-time. He tested the ropes around his wrists, they were strong and obviously tied by a professional. There was no way he’d be wriggling out of them. He’d need something sharp. But he could already tell they’d stripped him of all his weapons, even the small blade hidden in his boot.

He blinked the blurriness from his vision as he tried to take stock of his surroundings. He was in
some kind of warehouse or abandoned factory, the smell of rotting wood surrounded him. The building was obviously very old, the lights barely worked and hardly illuminated the two figures sitting in front of him.

“Don’t even bother, even an angel couldn’t get out of that chair. Poor Samandriel learned that the hard way,” a British accent announced jovially from the smaller figure.

“Crowley,” Dean groaned in annoyance, “I thought I made it clear we were done.”

“We’re done when I say we are,” Crowley growled, “besides you started this, not me. I understand that the Mark of Cain’s got you a little antsy, darling, but you can’t just run around killing my employees. It’s bad for bloody business!”

“Guess again, Crowley, the mark’s gone. I just killed your man because business was slow, nothing personal honest,” Dean chuckled darkly.

Dean felt a burst of satisfaction as he saw surprise replace Crowley’s smirk. The demon tore up his sleeve roughly to confirm the news.

“And how the bloody hell did you manage that?” Crowley demanded.

Dean smirked, “What you don’t know everything already? Here I thought you had a personal assistant that kept you informed on all the latest gossip. Your game must really be slipping.”

A heavy fist hit his face, effectively wiping the smirk from his face. He spat blood on the ground in front of him before lifting his eyes to his attacker defiantly. Crowley’s apparent body guard grinned at him as she wiped the blood from her knuckles on Dean’s jeans.

“You want me to hit him again, boss?” she sneered.

“No need, Clarissa. I want him to be fully conscious for our conversation,” Crowley spoke calmly, looking him firmly in the eye, “I’m only going to make this offer once, Dean, so listen well. You can come back and work for me, or you can die here and I send a bunch of my finest after that dear brother of yours. Those are your options.”

Dean snorted, “What the hell makes you think I’d join you again? I don’t even have the mark anymore, that demon lapdog is gone.”

Crowley shrugged, “I admit the circumstances have become more… complicated. But I have faith in our abilities, even if you’re human we could do great things together. There’s darkness in you, Dean. It was there before the mark and we both know it’s still in there.”

The words hit Dean harder than they would have before because he no longer agreed. His soul wasn’t the twisted mess he’d once believed it was. Hell Cas said it was the purest he’d ever seen and he sure as hell trusted Cas’s word over Crowley’s.

With thoughts of the angel, Dean remembered Cas had his wings back. Even with how things were left between them, Cas wouldn’t refuse to help him. At least he hoped Cas wouldn’t. Of course, he wouldn’t blame the angel if he did. Dean deserved this for what he did. Despite his worries, he closed his eyes and prayed firmly. Cas, I understand if you hate me, but I really need your help. Crowley’s kidnapped me in some kind of warehouse. Please, I know you’ll find me.

Crowley snapped his fingers in front of Dean’s face impatiently until he opened his eyes.

“Hey now. None of that praying business, it’s just rude. Besides, you think I haven’t already angel-proofed the entire building? Your prayers aren’t reaching your little angel, so don’t even try.”

Dean’s heart sank, there goes that plan. At least he knew Sam would come looking for him eventually. They’d faced far bleaker situations, he could definitely hold out until then. Especially if Crowley just kept talking.

However Crowley seemed to be growing impatient quickly, fingers tapping against his knee steadily.

“So what’ll it be, Deano? Wanna get the dynamic duo back together? Just think of all the good times we had together, it could be that way again. All you have to do is give up that pesky humanity.”

“Gee thanks for the offer, but I’ll still pass,” Dean declined firmly.
Crowley sighed exasperatedly but didn’t seem surprised.
“That’s a shame. I guess I’ll leave you and Clarissa alone for a few hours, have a nice chat. Maybe you’ll change your mind by the time I come back,” Crowley chimed in false disappointment.

His goon perked up at the news, advancing towards Dean eagerly.
“I want him alive when I get back, Clarissa, but don’t feel like you need to hold back too much. Dean’s a veteran at being tortured, aren’t you Dean? He’s experienced some real pros in his time, so you might have to step up your game,” Crowley told her casually before disappearing from the room.
“Oh that will not be an issue,” Clarissa purred, despite her boss’s absence.

Dean discovered just how true those words were over the next few hours. She took him apart piece by piece, slow and agonising. She took obvious joy in each cut, a sparkle in her eye that he recognised in Alistair. Even worse he’d recognised the same expression in his own eyes reflected in those of his victims from Hell. The physical pain wasn’t even the worst part. No, it were the memories that each cut brought back, from both his own torture experiences and those of torturing his victims.

Her blade travelled from each piece of bare skin to another, before moving on to beneath his clothes. She made quick work of his shirt until it was nothing but a pile of rags beside his chair. There was nothing teasing or sexual about her movements, he was nothing but a piece of flesh to carve and she was the butcher. He might as well have been propped up on a meat hook as far as she was concerned.

Her eyes were instantly drawn to the handprint on his arm.
“What’s this?” she cooed, “You already somebody else’s bitch?”
She tisk-tisked disapprovingly, “We can’t have that, now can we? Your ass belongs to me now.”
She eagerly brought her blade across the scarred flesh and suddenly Dean felt something in his very soul protest the action. For the first time, Dean couldn’t hold back the cries of pain that escaped his lips. Obviously encouraged by his broken silence, she doubled her efforts on the handprint.
“When I’m finished, there won’t even be a piece of palm left,” she snickered hysterically.

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The pain flared through Castiel so suddenly that he was knocked to his knees. Sam rushed to his side instantly, pulling him back to his feet.
“Cas, are you okay?” Sam asked anxiously. They’d been searching the area for clues for over an hour now and he could tell his condition was deteriorating. The distance from Dean’s soul was taking its toll, but the angel refused to rest.

Castiel spoke through gritted teeth, “It’s Dean, they’re torturing him.”
Castiel gripped his left shoulder as another pained groan fell from his lips.
“Can you tell anything else? Is he close-by?” Sam pressed desperately.

Castiel forced himself to concentrate outside of the physical sensations plaguing his vessel. Now that the connection between them was open, the pull from Dean’s soul was even worse than it had been before. It was crying out to him, as if trying to physical drag his grace to its location. He focussed on the feeling, hoping he could follow the trail created by the bond’s grip on his grace. There!

He managed to drag Sam with him on his flight again, however the strain on his grace made it a struggle. When they arrived he collapsed next to the Winchester, breathing heavily. Sam crouched next to the angel worriedly. They were outside a large warehouse, which from the outside appeared abandoned but they both knew better. Castiel could feel the angel warding pulsing through the building like an electric fence.

“Sam there’s angel warding, I cannot enter as long as they remain unbroken. I need you to break the
warding for me,” Castiel rasped, dragging himself to his feet.

“I dunno, Cas. Maybe you should sit this one out, you look awful,” Sam suggested warily. Castiel pinned him with a determined frown, “I’m an angel, Sam. Even with my grace weakened I am better equipped to handle an attacker.” Sam still seemed unconvinced so Castiel added, “Please Sam.” Sam caved under the force of his gaze, nodding resignedly.

The hunter quietly slipped into the building and Castiel was forced to wait anxiously as each ward gradually became inactive. The very second the last of the warding disappeared, Castiel flew the remaining distance despite his wings' protests. He fought through the pain, empowered by his outrage and newfound proximity to Dean’s soul, managing not to collapse as he landed.

The demon twisted around in shock at the sound of his entrance, but Castiel didn’t give her time to process his arrival before he grabbed the bitch by the throat. She gave a choked cry of surprise but Castiel cut her off with the addition of his angel blade to her throat. He dropped her lifeless body to the ground feeling distinctly unsatisfied, she hadn’t suffered nearly enough for his taste.

“Cas?” Dean’s voice croaked weakly and suddenly it didn’t matter anymore. Nothing else in the world mattered in that moment except Dean.

“Dean,” Castiel replied tenderly, cradling Dean’s cheeks in his palms. “I thought you might not come,” Dean admitted softly.

“Of course I came, I’ll always come for you,” Castiel told him firmly. Dean smiled softly at him and Castiel’s heart swelled. But his relief was short lived as Dean’s head became slack in his hands and he realised Dean continued to bleed out. Castiel could see from the soft glow of Dean’s soul that he was barely hanging on. Castiel needed to heal him, but his grace was much too weak. He was fighting just to keep his vessel conscious, healing Dean in this state would be impossible.

Yet he couldn’t just allow Dean to die in front of him. He needed to replenish his grace somehow… that was it! He could tap into Dean’s soul directly and drain just enough power to heal him. But, of course, he ran the risk of extinguishing Dean’s soul completely in the process. His soul was already so dim, the light was fading before Castiel’s eyes. He didn’t have time to second guess himself, he needed to make a decision now.

Sending a quick prayer to his absent father, Castiel plunged his hand through Dean’s chest. His grace latched onto Dean’s soul, drinking in the power eagerly. Dean was startled back into consciousness and began howling in pain. Castiel cringed at the sounds of agony, patting Dean’s hair soothingly as he attempted to comfort the other man.

“Shhh, it’s okay. Just hold on, please. It won’t be much longer, I promise,” Castiel assured him gently.

Dean’s cries turned to whimpers as he leaned into Castiel’s touch and he found himself cradling Dean’s head against his chest. In any other circumstance he would have rejoiced at the tender contact, but in that moment Castiel’s focus lay entirely in his task.

It was an extremely delicate situation, he needed to constantly monitor his grace’s progress. If he drained too much Dean’s life force could be crushed like a bug in his hand. But if he didn’t take enough he wouldn’t be able to heal Dean and this would have been for nothing. He found himself unconsciously whispering reassurances in Dean’s ear. He was sure Dean couldn’t hear him anymore anyway, so he poured his heart out because in the end this could very well be his last moments with Dean.

“Stay with me… Please don’t leave me… I need you too… I love you, Dean.”

Dean’s soul flickered in his hands and it startled him into releasing his hold, panicked that its light
was going out. Thankfully the soul continued to glow softly in Dean's chest, however Castiel was too afraid to try draining any more. He just had to hope he’d taken enough. He raised a gentle hand to Dean’s cheek mirroring his actions from years ago, channelling all his grace into the touch. Even as his grace drained from him, he watched in relief as Dean’s wounds healed and his soul brightened. It all happened in a matter of seconds but Castiel’s eyes caught it as if in slow motion.

Dean’s eyes flickered open, catching his gaze and Castiel found himself marvelling at the beautiful shades of green within Dean’s irises not for the first time. Castiel was glad it was the last thing he saw before his vision faded. If this was to be his last sight, then Castiel could die happy.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Thank you all so much for being patient, I know almost four months is a seriously long time to wait for an update. I have officially finished my university term and should expect my final results by the end of the week for any of you that were curious. I'd like to add that the following chapter was initially supposed to be the last chapter, with the following being an epilogue, but it's turned out so long I had to cut it in two.

I would also like to personally apologise to CopaceticBrainBox, the smut ended up being next chapter. Sorry I got your hopes up D:

“And then after we finish the Lord of the Rings trilogy, we **definitely** have to watch the Harry Potter films. Ooooh and I can’t forget about Star Wars! Oh man there’s just so much I want to show you. You’re like this completely blank slate just waiting for the right nerd to geek you up,” Charlie rambled excitedly. Although Hannah didn’t have the slightest idea what Charlie was babbling on about, she continued to nod in agreement. As she’d quickly realised, each time she approved an idea the human girl became even more excited. Charlie looked especially stunning with that passionate sparkle in her eyes, Hannah noted with satisfaction. Her gaze was drawn to a stray curl that bounced against Charlie’s cheek as she spoke animatedly, the red lock stroking the pale skin in the most delicate of touches. Hannah’s fingers twitched reflexively as she resisted the urge to gently tuck the hair behind Charlie’s ear, itching to touch the soft skin for herself.

The thought startled her, as had the various other intrusive thoughts she’d experienced the longer she spent with the human. It was no denying Hannah was captivated by Charlie, more so than she’d ever been by any other human being or even angel. Charlie was so upbeat and lively, her personality as bright as her soul, and was a clear opposite to the angel’s usually stoic nature. Yet Hannah couldn’t help but feel drawn to her, both emotionally and physically. With every accidental brush of their shoulders, Hannah found her skin tingling from the contact. They were seated much closer than was necessary, the couch clearly large enough to allow both of them ample space, although they still refrained from touching.

Well that wasn’t quite true; even if Hannah tried her best to draw her wings in she wouldn’t have been able to prevent them from touching Charlie, considering their proximity. Her grace hummed in satisfaction knowing that her wings were wrapped securely around them, invisibly shielding Charlie in their feathery embrace, though she knew the human couldn’t feel them. Drawing her left wing even closer around the human, Hannah was suddenly struck by a primal thought. *Mine.* She froze, almost flinching away from Charlie in shock, as she considered what she’d just thought. That was the kind of possessive claim expected from *mates.* She shouldn’t be experiencing these urges, such irrational needs, for a *human.* Let alone one she had only just met. Was it the fall? Was her weakened grace causing her to become vulnerable to human emotions? Or was it Castiel’s situation with the Winchester influencing her to pursue a similar path?

Before she could contemplate the cause too deeply, Hannah noticed that the room had fallen silent. She instantly forgot her concerns, feeling guilty about being caught not paying attention. She may have been having an internal dispute, but that was no excuse for being rude. In fact, she was sure her staring must have become uncomfortable for Charlie. She hastily prepared an apology as she
refocused her gaze back to Charlie’s eyes, only to find the other girl staring just as intensely. However her focus was not for Hannah’s eyes, but for her mouth. At this realisation Hannah couldn’t help the nervous impulse to lick her lips, noticing Charlie’s eyes followed the movement of her tongue intently. Charlie’s cheeks turned a pretty shade of pink as her eyes flicked up to meet Hannah’s. Neither of them spoke, simply opting to stare back at one another.

There was a tension growing between them that she didn’t necessarily disapprove of. Hannah knew the fall wasn’t the most ideal courting situation and she hadn’t initially planned on finding a mate, let alone a human one, for thousands of years. But she supposed it wasn’t such an entirely unappealing concept if her mate was someone as wonderful as Charlie. Would it truly be such a terrible idea to begin courting her? Of course it was strictly against the rules to become romantically involved with a human, but if Castiel disregarded the law then why couldn’t she? Just the thought of Charlie holding one of her finest flight feathers, grooming her wings and building a nest together made Hannah’s wings shudder in anticipation.

While Hannah was caught up in thoughts of courting, Charlie took the chance to move closer before boldly resting a hand on the angel’s thigh. It was this touch that pulled Hannah’s attention back to the situation at hand as her breath hitched at the contact. Charlie carefully watched Hannah’s face for any signs of discomfort; but when Hannah didn’t protest she began gently caressing the angel’s thigh. Her vessel’s heart was racing and she knew her face must be a dark scarlet from the burn she felt in her cheeks. Charlie had a playful smirk on her face, clearly taking pleasure in making an angel nervous. With one last lingering gaze at Hannah’s lips, Charlie deliberately leaned slowly forward. Realising what was about to happen, Hannah determinedly shoved away her indecisions for the time being and eagerly closed her eyes.

It was at that exact moment, however, that the bunker door decided to slam open, echoing loudly through the halls of the bunker. Before their lips could even touch the commotion startled them apart, jumping to the far reaches of their respective sides of the couch like a pair of guilty teenagers. Dean’s voice frantically called Hannah’s name at the same time Charlie grumbled, “Fricking cock-blocking Winchesters, every damn time” under her breath. However, any irritation they might have felt at being interrupted instantly vanished when they caught sight of Castiel’s unconscious body in Dean’s arms. He cradled the angel against his chest as he descended the stairs, as fast as he could manage while supporting another full grown man, with Sam anxiously following behind him.

In a flash Hannah rushed to their aid, meeting Dean at the bottom of the stairs and holding out her arms in a silent offer to take Castiel’s weight. Yet Dean recoiled, refusing to release his grip on Castiel, despite the obvious strain on his arms. Instead he settled for letting her help him move Castiel to the library couch they had been occupying earlier. After a moment of clear hesitation Dean stepped back, allowing Hannah to assess Castiel’s condition, but hovering closely behind to watch her work. She quickly noticed Castiel wasn’t breathing and his heart was no longer beating. Had he been human she would have written him off as deceased, however Hannah knew better. She determinedly probed his vessel in search of the one sign of life that was truly important; his grace. To her immense relief she eventually located the soft humming of grace, just barely burning inside the far reaches of his vessel.

“What the hell happened?” Charlie demanded, glancing between the two brothers frantically. “Crowley happened,” was Dean’s only explanation. He refused to tear his eyes away from Castiel for even a second. Charlie and Sam shared a concerned look behind his back. “Dean… maybe you should prepare yourself for the possibility-” Sam began warily but Dean cut him off. “He’s not dead, Sam!” he growled before anxiously snapping at Hannah, “look, can you tell us what’s wrong with him or not?” The outburst didn’t bother her, she understood his frustration was not truly directed at her but at his own helplessness to save his mate. However Charlie visibly bristled
beside her, clearly wanting to warn Dean about his tone, so Hannah spoke before she had the chance.

“His grace has been extremely drained. Thus the vessel has been shut down in order to sustain his remaining grace,” Hannah informed carefully.

“But you can heal him, right?” Dean insisted desperately.

“Unfortunately there are no physical wounds to heal, his ailment is entirely grace-related. There is nothing I can do for him,” Hannah admitted remorsefully. Dean appeared to break at the news, collapsing to his knees next to the couch and clutching at the side of Castiel’s coat mournfully.

“He doesn’t know… I never even… God, why didn’t I just tell him?” Dean murmured to himself, voice filled with regret. Hannah hated to see the human so broken, especially considering what a dear friend he had become to her this past week.

“He’s not dead yet,” Hannah assured him firmly, “we just need to recharge his grace before the vessel becomes uninhabitable.”

Dean perked up immediately, his face set in determination, “How?”

“The bond is our only chance. Direct contact with your soul would be preferred, but it is impossible while his vessel is inactive. The vessel is nothing more than a meat-coffin at present, while Castiel’s true self lies within the depths of the corpse. Even if we were to attach his vessel to your soul it would likely not reach him. The bond is the only true connection we have left to his grace,” Hannah explained.

“But Dean’s right next to him. He’s even touching him, shouldn’t that be enough?” Sam claimed, but Hannah shook her head remorsefully.

“His grace is much too weak. If we were to wait for it to naturally recharge at this rate, the vessel would be lost to decay. We need to strengthen the bond and speed up his restoration process,” Hannah clarified. She was about to suggest they call Gabriel for assistance when Dean suddenly admitted, “I might actually know a way.” He pulled up his sleeve to reveal a handprint shaped scar on his left shoulder. Avoiding their eyes, as if embarrassed, he quickly added, “Castiel touched it once and, uh, well it definitely felt like it ‘strengthened the bond’ or whatever.” Hannah studied the mark curiously, sensing the unmistakable hum of grace vibrating below the surface.

“Fascinating, the mark appears to harbour a portion of Castiel’s grace,” Hannah marvelled.

“But will it work?” Dean asked doubtfully.

Hannah hesitated. She wasn’t certain but she suspected the presence of his grace may encourage Castiel’s remaining grace to seek it out, even returning function to his vessel in order to do so. But was she willing to bet her superior’s, her friend’s, life on an assumption? The three humans looked to her for guidance, a mix of fear and hope in their expressions. They barely knew her, yet they were trusting her to make this crucial decision. It was this total confidence in her that ultimately influenced her decision.

“There’s only one way to find out.”

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This was all his fault. If he hadn’t forced himself on Cas then the angel would have never fled the bunker and strained his grace in the first place. Now Cas might die and it was all his fault. And to make matters worse, even after everything Dean had done to him, Cas had wasted his last moments making sure Dean knew he still loved him regardless. Admittedly Dean had been barely conscious at the time and it was entirely possible what he heard wasn’t even real, but nevertheless he couldn’t forget the way his heart had skipped a beat when he heard the words. It was one thing knowing Cas had feelings for him, but it was an entirely different matter hearing it said aloud for the first time.
Although waking up to Cas’s dead body had definitely squashed any happiness the moment had brought him, leaving only panic and sorrow in its place.

If this was his only chance at saving Cas, he was damn well going to take it. Heaving a deep, shuddering breath to calm himself, Dean knelt before the couch coming face to face with the corpse of his best friend and love of his life. His body was so clearly lifeless, his lips blue and skin deathly pale, that it physically pained Dean to see him like this. He had to firmly remind himself that Cas wasn’t really dead, that this was just a vessel and the real Cas was still holding on in there somewhere. And it was up to Dean to find him. There was no way Dean was going to let him down. Not this time.

With trembling hands he grasped Cas’s right hand gently, almost flinching as he was met by cold stiffness, dragging it in place over the mark on his arm. To his dismay, there was no instant clash of feelings or the sensation of souls melding as there had been last time. Cas’s vessel remained as motionless as ever on the couch beside him. Dean tried to hold back his disappointment, he knew it had been a long shot, but there were tears already stinging his eyes and a lump forming in his throat. He had failed. Dean was yet again to blame for losing someone he cared about. He really was poison.

A spark of defiance unexpectedly flared inside his chest, as if a part of his soul rejected his claim. No, he realised, it wasn’t his soul; it was Cas. Closing his eyes, Dean desperately searched for any sign of the feeling again. It had only lasted a moment but it had been enough to stir a new wave of hope inside of him. After a moment Dean detected a few distant emotions that he hadn’t been aware of before. Although he couldn’t know for sure, Dean had to believe they belonged to Cas. It was the only presence of another consciousness he could find, just barely noticeable as it was.

“I think I feel him,” Dean informed the others, “it’s really faint but something’s definitely there.” Beside him Hannah released a heavy sigh, her wings relaxing in relief from their tense position. “That is promising news. It means his grace still has some consciousness. Now we must wait to see if his grace has the strength to follow your connection. If it can reach your soul through the bond it should be almost as powerful as touching your soul directly. Although the process may take several hours,” Hannah warned.

Dean squared his shoulders in determination, “Then it’s a good thing I’m willing to sit here as long as it takes, I’ll stay here all night if I have to.”

Several hours passed and Dean stuck by his word, staying by the angel’s side late into the night. Charlie and Sam had gone to bed a few hours earlier, leaving Hannah and Dean to watch over Cas alone. Hannah sat patiently in the armchair beside them, her wings wrapped around herself like a blanket. He was sure the action was for emotional comfort rather than the cold. Dean fought the urge to sleep, almost nodding off a few times with his cheek pressed heavily against the couch cushion. “You truly care about him,” Hannah spoke softly, bringing Dean back from his almost-slumber. She didn’t phrase it like a question but Dean felt the need to assure her nonetheless. “Of course, I do. I… I love him,” Dean said firmly after his initial hesitation. It felt wrong that the first time he said the words aloud Cas couldn’t hear him. He wanted Cas to hear him, needed Cas to know.

Hannah was quiet and pensive as the minutes ticked slowly by, Dean had almost fallen asleep again when she spoke once more. “How do you know?” Hannah whispered softly, as if part of her didn’t really want Dean to hear, “How do you know that what you feel is love?” Dean thought about not answering, maybe pretending to be asleep, but he knew that wouldn’t be
right. Despite his aversion to talking about his feelings, he knew Hannah wouldn’t bring the topic up for no reason. The angel had been oddly quiet, even more so than usual, and was clearly struggling with something personal. He had a feeling it wasn’t due to Cas’s condition, although that was likely not helping.

“It’s hard to explain, you just know. I mean, you think about the other person like all the time, even when they’re not around, especially when they’re not around. And when you are with them, it’s like your world is a little bit brighter and you feel like you could do anything as long as they’re by your side… or whatever,” Dean murmured avoiding her gaze, embarrassed by his sappy admission.

“And… do you believe it is wrong for an angel and a human to become romantically involved?” Hannah pressed, hugging her knees to her chest and wrapping her wings around them making her appear small and childlike. Even though she undoubtedly already knew his answer, Hannah was watching him intently as if his reply would hold all the answers. Dean hesitated, trying to find the right words that would satisfy her apparent high expectations. For some reason, his opinion clearly meant a lot to her.

“It doesn’t matter if they’re an angel or human, when you love someone none of that other stuff matters. All that matters is how you feel about them and you can’t let other people dictate who you can and can’t love. If anyone tries to tell you that loving someone is wrong, they’re clearly the ones who are wrong,” Dean declared. This was at least a topic he was passionate about. He’d suffered enough prejudice growing up with a homophobic father, he wasn’t going to accept any more bigoted bullshit.

Hannah gave him a small smile but it did not reach her eyes, “You are a brave man, Dean Winchester. I envy your courage. I wish the angels could see things so simply.”

Dean noted the dejected drooping of her wings, despite her deadpan expression, and felt the need to comfort her as she’d once comforted him.

“Look Hannah, whether they like it or not the angels have fallen. Which means they’re going to have to deal with being around humans a lot now. It’s time they stopped looking down on us and started looking at us as equals. Or at least allies. I mean, we all gotta put up with each other on this earth, might as well help each other out,” Dean explained firmly.

“Humans helping angels…” she repeated thoughtfully. Something in the concept must have struck a chord because, after a few moments of contemplation, she jumped to her feet determinedly. The sudden movement startled Dean into further alertness, chasing away any lingering drowsiness from his system.

“Thank you, Dean, you may have just helped me solve one of Heaven’s current greatest issues!” Hannah replied, eyes wide and enlightened. Dean had no idea what she was talking about but accepted the thanks with a confused nod anyway.

Now that their conversation had finished, Hannah too caught up in whatever idea his words had sparked within her to continue, Dean found himself staring down at Cas. He was relieved to note he’d started breathing again. The bond had been gradually growing between them until Dean could definitely feel the presence of Cas’s grace. Although it was hard to tell which emotions were his and which were Cas’s, because their souls were so closely intertwined. The only difference between them was a subtle fuzzy aura that surrounded Cas’s emotions, giving off a distinct dreamlike impression.

“How is he?” Hannah asked, all of a sudden standing behind him.

“I’m pretty sure he’s going to be okay,” Dean announced gratefully.

“That is excellent news. Your bond is truly miraculous, it has saved his life multiple times now,” Hannah noted impressed.

“It’s saved both our lives,” Dean admitted, “you know, at first I was terrified at the idea of being married to Cas. But I’m actually glad it happened. If I hadn’t been duped into this, we might never have faced our true feelings for each other.”
“Try to remember that when this is all over,” Hannah murmured under her breath. Before Dean could question the odd statement, Hannah spoke again louder. “So had you progressed much in the way of courting Castiel? Before his near-death experience, of course,” Hannah probed nonchalantly.

“Shit! That reminds me,” Dean proclaimed, “how long do you think it’ll be til he wakes up? And do you think he’ll be okay if I leave his side for a while?” Hannah placed a gentle hand on Cas’s forehead.

“It’s hard to say precisely but my closest guess would be another three hours with your presence or four without,” she informed him. He glanced briefly at his watch, noting it was almost 5am. “That'll have to be enough,” he declared, grabbing his coat and keys, “come on, Hannah, we’re going for a drive.”

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Castiel woke to the uncomfortable support of a couch, his wings aching at the cramped position they’d been haphazardly crushed into under his body weight. As his awareness grew, Castiel quickly recalled the events of the previous day, or so he assumed, it could very well have been longer for all he knew. He never could properly keep track of time after falling unconscious and had unfortunately been making quite a bad habit of it recently. But how much time had passed was of little concern to Castiel at that moment, all he cared about was one thing. “Dean?” he groaned, his eyes flickering open in expectation. He needed to make sure he’d succeeded in keeping Dean alive, needed to see it for himself.

“Sorry to disappoint you, but it’s just little ol’ me,” Charlie beamed at him from an armchair beside the couch. She cradled a book in her lap as she stared down at him pleasantly. “It’s good to see you’re awake,” she continued, placing the book down beside her and walking over to the couch, “You had us really worried.”

Not that Castiel wasn’t happy to see her, but he couldn’t hold back his disappointment at Dean’s absence. He had been sure he’d felt Dean’s presence, begging him to wake up and conveying worried emotions through the bond, while he slept. Clearly it must have been his imagination, his mind providing him the comfort he craved. Of course Dean wasn’t here, Castiel thought grimly, he was likely still avoiding him after what had happened between them the other night.

At the realisation, Castiel wanted nothing more than to flee from the bunker and return to his office in Heaven to sulk. But Charlie wasn’t having any of it, squashing his plans in their tracks. “I’ve decided we’re going to spend the day together!” she announced enthusiastically, “While you were dying I realised we barely had any chance to get to know each other and that simply can’t do. Like I want us to become besties before either of us die again, okay?”

As much as Castiel admired her constant positive attitude, it was definitely not what he needed right now. He felt too heartbroken to humour her either. “Would we be able to reschedule? I still feel pretty weak,” he lied. Actually he hadn’t felt this great in ages, well other than when he’d first woken up after the bonding. Dean’s soul truly was a miraculous source of energy. His grace always buzzed brighter than ever after encountering his soul, although Castiel assumed that probably had something to do with his feelings for Dean. His grace was just delighted to be near him. Which made him all the more depressed as he realised it could be a very long time before he was in Dean’s presence again, maybe never.

“All the more reason we should go!” Charlie insisted, “it’ll be good for you to get some fresh air. You can’t keep yourself couped up in this bunker forever.” “Very well,” Castiel sighed, admitting defeat. This human girl may be smaller and much weaker than him, but somehow he felt that she’d manage to get her way no matter what he said. She was just that
determined.
“Yay! Can you still fly? Let’s go to Disneyland! Oh no wait no even better, let’s go to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Orlando. I’ve always wanted to go there!” Charlie squealed excitedly.
Castiel couldn’t help a smile at the human’s enthusiasm. She was so cheerful, it was actually refreshing. Not that the Winchesters didn’t have their moments, but true unadulterated glee was rare in their line of work. And the angels, of course, were not big supporters of emotions to say the least.

Perhaps it wouldn’t be so bad spending the day with Charlie, it might even lift his spirits a little.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Finally an update! I'm so sorry for how long this took. I actually have legitimate excuses this time but I'll spare you me trying to justify it. This is the longest chapter I've ever written for this fic and there's also smut so I'm hoping this chapter will make up for the wait. This is technically the last real chapter of this fic, but there's an epilogue still to come! Anyway enjoy! :D

Gabriel was lazing, definitely not sulking, on a secluded beach in Cuba while sipping idly at a mojito. He was in the middle of trying his hardest not to think about a certain ungrateful Winchester, when said Winchester decided to pray for him.

Gabriel, I know you can hear me. I need to speak with you now.

Gabriel almost ignored the request altogether, still upset from their previous disagreement, but the serious tone made him reconsider. Besides, this would be a good opportunity for the human to apologise, as he'd clearly overreacted earlier. And after Gabriel had been so nice to him too. He’d practically been bending over backwards trying to make the man happy those past few days. Not that he didn’t have ulterior motives.

All this talk of courting had gotten him thinking, after all. Why shouldn’t he try settling down too? He’d been a playboy for centuries now and he couldn’t deny it had gotten pretty lonely. It was an easy choice setting his sights on the younger Winchester since he’d always felt drawn to the human. At first he’d thought it was simple physical attraction, but he soon realised he’d actually grown to respect the hunter. It was one of the reasons why he’d tried so hard to knock some sense into him all those years ago in the Mystery Spot debacle. Sam needed to realise that they couldn’t just keep sacrificing themselves for one another all the time. It wasn’t just reckless but foolish. Everyone and their uncle knew the Winchesters’ weakness was each other and it was going to get them both killed one day. He couldn’t help but try to teach the young man this important lesson, even if it was admittedly a little harsh. Yet in the end Sam hadn’t listened and continued in his futile attempts at saving Dean, failing just as Gabriel had expected. The interference of Castiel had purely been an unforeseen stroke of luck for the hunters and without him Dean would no doubt still be rotting in Hell.

Pulling himself from his reverie, Gabriel decided he’d made the hunter wait long enough. It’s not like he was going to arrive right away, after all, he wasn’t gonna look desperate. Standing purposefully, Gabriel made his tanning bed and mojito disappear with the snap of his fingers before flying to the bunker. The bunker was surprisingly empty, save for the younger hunter who was perched irritably at a table in the library. Although his eyes were focused on the laptop in front of him, his thoughts were clearly elsewhere. He didn’t seem to notice Gabriel’s arrival so the archangel took the opportunity to school his expression into what he hoped would pass for his usual smirk.

“What did ya miss me already, Sammy?” Gabriel cooed. Sam’s head snapped up at his greeting, his expression darkening even further.

“Gabriel,” Sam growled. Gabriel found himself slightly disappointed at the use of his full name instead of the nickname Sam had preferred lately, but he brushed it off as a trivial concern when he took note of the Winchester’s stern tone. The Winchester was clearly not pleased to see him despite his own request for Gabriel’s presence. Gabriel was surprised at his intensity, he didn’t think their disagreement the other day had been that serious.
“Now is that any way to greet someone? Especially when I went out of my way to come all the way here, just because you asked,” Gabriel chastised with an exaggerated pout. But Sam was clearly not in the mood for his banter as he stood forcefully, his chair scraping loudly behind him, before roughly grabbing the trickster by the collar.

“You son of a bitch! How could you just sit back and let Dean get tortured like that? I know you’re upset, but I honestly didn’t think you were so petty that you’d risk Dean’s life in some sick attempt at punishing me. And you didn’t even step in after Cas almost died trying to save him, your own brother,” Sam accused furiously, Gabriel’s eyes widened in real shock at the human’s unexpected allegations.

“Woah, woah, woah. Now see here, bucko! I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about. I haven’t been anywhere near those two since your little spat the other day,” Gabriel assured him, holding up his hands in a show of surrender despite the hunter holding no real danger towards him. Sam’s eyes narrowed at him in disbelief, refusing to release his steel tight grip on the archangel.

“Yeah right, Dean and Cas were both out of the bunker before that. You really expect me to believe you just decided to stop spying on them mid-surveillance because your feelings got hurt?” Sam hissed. Gabriel’s eyes narrowed in turn, his playful expression finally dropping.

“Believe it or not, I don’t watch them twenty-four seven. In fact, I was already in the middle of taking an extended break before Dean-o decided to leave that morning,” Gabriel told him honestly. What he didn’t admit was the reason he’d been so preoccupied, which revolved around the preparation of a certain unique quill.

Sam’s grip faltered only marginally as he searched Gabriel’s face for signs of deception. Gabriel stared back into his eyes unwaveringly, he could see in the hunter’s own eyes that he wanted to believe him but he just couldn’t trust the archangel. This was the cold hard truth that he’d known all along. It was why he’d been so underhanded in his attempts at courting, knowing that even if he’d been upfront from the beginning Sam would never have accepted. Because the man didn’t trust him, could never truly trust him after all he’d put him through. The knowledge hurt the archangel and his gaze turned steely, his typical carefree nature disappearing.

“I’m done with this little game. It’s not fun anymore. Go ahead and tell your brother the truth if you want, I don’t care anymore,” Gabriel announced coldly. Sam’s grip released at his words and he took satisfaction in the fact that his harsh words seemed to affect the hunter, before he took a deliberate step away.

“I’d say it’s been fun but that’d be a lie,” Gabriel continued coolly. He didn’t wait for the man’s response before he snapped his fingers, fleeing from the scene altogether. He’d had enough playing Winchester. He’d never be one of them; he just wasn’t cut out for it. Gabriel didn’t know why he’d ever fooled himself into thinking otherwise.

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Sam felt hollow after his confrontation with Gabriel, all his anger having dissipated the moment the spark in Gabriel’s eyes had died. Sam had only ever seen him with that expression once before, when he’d first admitted to being an archangel. The icy, detached expression felt completely wrong on the trickster’s face and Sam hated that he was the reason for its return. Sam couldn’t help regretting his actions. But his anger had seemed completely justifiable at the time and the thought that Gabriel might be innocent hadn’t even occurred to him. He still had his doubts about the reliability of the archangel’s words, but he knew he could have handled it better. He’d just been so wound up after almost losing both Dean and Cas in the same night. His overwhelming guilt hadn’t helped either, since he knew Dean wouldn’t have been kidnapped in the first place if it hadn’t been for their stupid prank. This whole mess had just gone way too far.
Sam was determined to tell Dean the truth, but the elder Winchester had disappeared before dawn and had been MIA all morning off doing god only knows what with Hannah. Even Cas and Charlie had vanished with barely any explanation, leaving only a post-it note simply saying “Cas and I are off to Hogwarts, don’t wait up! –Charlie”. Sam would have been more worried if he hadn’t been so wracked with guilt. In fact his guilt was even worse now that he’d clearly hurt Gabriel as well.

Before he could wallow any further in self-loathing, the door to the bunker was shoved noisily open. A load thumping soon followed, as if something extremely heavy was being dragged down the stairs.

“Sammy!” Dean’s voice called, “Get your ass in here, I need you and your freakishly long arms to help carry this to my room!”

The man sounded out of breath and oddly stressed. As Sam warily made his way towards the war room, unsure what he was going to find, he decided now probably wasn’t the best time to come clean to Dean. Later, he promised himself firmly, he would definitely do it later.

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“How much longer am I supposed to keep this up?” Charlie complained into her phone from the pseudo-privacy of a public bathroom stall, “We’ve been here for almost six hours now, I’m not even sure how much more of the park there is to see. Plus turns out he knows more about Harry Potter than even I do, he’s like a walking encyclopaedia. It’s kind of bruising my ego.”

“It shouldn’t be much longer, no more than an hour,” Hannah assured her calmly.

“How the hell is anyone supposed to do this themselves!? It’s like you need a fricking doctorate in IKEA just to figure these instructions out,” Charlie heard Dean cursing loudly in the background.

“Maybe two hours,” Hannah amended dryly. Charlie rolled her eyes fondly.

“You better tell me what the hell this is all about later,” Charlie reminded the angel.

“Of course, I greatly appreciate your assistance Charlie,” Hannah told her sincerely.

“Yeah I know, I’m awesome. It’s not like I mind having an excuse to hang out with Cas all day anyway,” Charlie assured her.

“Speaking of which, I better go before he thinks I’ve fallen in,” Charlie joked, chuckling as she practically heard Hannah’s head tilt in confusion.

“Wait, Charlie,” Hannah said suddenly, just as she was about to press the ‘hang up’ button. She froze, catching the subtle change in Hannah’s tone.

Hannah appeared to hesitate before she continued, “Have you thought about what I asked you this morning?”

Her words were deliberately vague, likely due to Dean’s presence in the room, but Charlie had no doubts as to what she was referring to. Her heart began to pound at the reminder of their earlier conversation and she fought to keep her voice normal.

“I think I need a little more time to think about it,” she admitted carefully.

“Of course. I am sorry if I have made you feel pressured in any way. That was not my intention,” Hannah apologised quickly, her stoic voice almost sounding nervous.

Charlie rushed to reassure the angel, “No, no it’s fine, you haven’t. It’s just… a big decision.”

“Yes,” Hannah agreed then added gently, “Please take as much time as you need.”

The angel hung up and Charlie found herself holding the phone to her ear for a few moments longer, trying to calm her thumping heart. Taking a deep breath she pushed her thoughts aside, she could deal with that later. Right now she had an angel to distract.

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It was dark by the time Charlie finally announced their day together was to come to an end. Castiel couldn’t help but feel relieved, not that he hadn’t enjoyed their day together. In fact he’d actually
found himself almost forgetting about his issues with Dean entirely, the distraction of the amusement park far more effective than he’d ever have imagined. But the day had also been somewhat overwhelming, whether from an overload of new experiences or exhaustion due to separation from Dean’s soul he wasn’t certain. The flight back to the bunker only exhausted him further and he was greatly considering attempting to get some rest in one of the spare bedrooms. Even though his body didn’t technically need sleep anymore, he found he quite enjoyed the experience. Although he supposed it was closer to meditation than sleep, since he couldn’t shut down his vessel’s consciousness completely.

All plans of sleep were forgotten, however, when Castiel found himself approached by Dean almost as soon as they’d appeared in the library.

“Whelp, if you’ll excuse me,” Charlie announced hurrying from the room, throwing Castiel a quick knowing smirk before she disappeared through the door. Castiel didn’t have time to protest as the red head abandoned him, not wanting to be left alone with Dean after such a nice day out. The last thing he needed was to be reminded of his troubles by the confrontation that was no doubt about to occur. Their last encounter together, while both of them were completely conscious at least, had been that night after all; the night his lust for Dean had overpowered the bond. Dean had not been in his right mind and undoubtedly regretted his actions. Worst of all he likely blamed Castiel for it, which he had every right to, the angel thought regretfully. In fact, he deserved all the anger Dean was about to dish out.

Turning away from the empty doorway, Castiel forced himself to meet Dean’s gaze preparing himself for the worst. But as cautious blue eyes found green, Castiel was met by trepidation not anger.

“Hey Cas, how are you feeling? You really saved my ass in that warehouse, seriously without you I’d be a goner,” Dean thanked him. Castiel pushed past his surprise to find a suitable reply.

“Hello Dean,” the familiar words falling from his mouth easily, “I am doing well. I am simply glad that you are okay. My health hardly matters in comparison.”

Dean frowned, “That’s bullshit, Cas. I don’t want you sacrificing yourself for me. I need you to promise me you won’t do reckless stuff just to save me anymore, okay?”

“I can’t promise you that, Dean,” Castiel responded immediately. Dean sighed but gave him a smile.

“Well I knew it was a long shot. Well I guess I’ll just have to make sure you never need to.”

This simple interaction between them was enough to release the tension from Castiel’s chest. This was how it was supposed to be between them, easy and familiar. Castiel had feared they’d never be able to return to what they once were, but perhaps there was hope yet. Maybe Dean didn’t remember the events of the other night, he had been quite intoxicated. Castiel allowed himself to find relief in the thought. They were silent as they simply held each other’s gaze, Castiel temporarily losing his throat as his earlier apprehension seemed to return.

“So I, ah, have something I want to show you,” Dean informed him, avoiding his eyes and nervously rubbing the back of his neck.

His strange behaviour unnerved Castiel. What could Dean possibly want to show him that would have him this nervous? Dean clenched his fists by his sides, suddenly looking determined. He began to leave the room, only looking back expectantly when Castiel had failed to follow him.

“Um, you kinda have to follow me. I can’t exactly show you here,” Dean muttered a quick explanation, before continuing on his path. Castiel followed warily as Dean purposefully led them to his room. He hesitated briefly at the door before he firmly pulled it open. Dean turned to him after entering, noticing Cas hovering in the doorway. He gestured for Cas to come in, watching his face intensely the whole way, as Cas’s eyes easily fell upon the new addition to the room.

Where Dean’s humble bed had once resided, sat a far newer looking King sized one. But it wasn’t
the new, polished oak bedframe that captured his attention; rather how it was decorated. The bedsheet and pillow cases were a beautiful green, while the bedspread covering the thick duvet was a piercing blue. The colours were entirely too familiar and Castiel realised quickly why. It was the breathtaking green of Dean’s eyes and the blue of his own. No. It was the blue of Hannah’s eyes, Castiel corrected himself painfully. Yet the feathers that scattered randomly across the bed were not the pale blue they should be. They were the undeniable black shade of his own feathers, which Dean had likely acquired from grooming him the other night. The sight of his feathers on the bed, no the nest, made him feel all the more heartbroken. Dean likely had no idea the connotation of using Cas’s feathers instead. It was supposed to be his mate’s feathers lining the nest, those feathers should be Hannah’s. Castiel couldn’t keep the devastation from his face as he looked at the symbol of Dean’s love for another. He couldn’t even pretend to be the supportive best friend Dean expected of him.

Dean noticed his expression immediately and his face fell in turn. “You hate it,” Dean stated dejectedly. Castiel could only shake his head, not trusting himself to speak around the lump forming in his throat and the threat of tears that burned his eyes. “Yes you do. Goddammit! I knew this wouldn’t be good enough for you, but Hannah said it was okay so I thought maybe… Fuck I’m such an idiot!” Dean rambled miserably.

Cas froze as he processed Dean’s words, only managing to choke out, “Hannah?”

Dean looked instantly guilty. “Yeah, she kinda helped me put this together. I know I’m probably supposed to do it alone but I had no idea where to even start. I wouldn’t have been able to do this without her,” he confessed sheepishly.

Castiel’s mind was racing with this new information, with the revelation that came from what he’d just heard. He’d been such a fool, how could he have been so blind all this time!? All those years of constant longing, the intense stares between them and Dean’s recent erratic behaviour; suddenly it all made sense. That day Dean hadn’t been jealous of Castiel but of Hannah. Dean had never wanted to court her in the first place. He had wanted to court him. Dean, oblivious to the epiphany that currently plagued the angel in front of him, continued to talk. “Look I know I’ve screwed up a lot lately, but I just needed to find a way to show you how much you mean to me. You said nests were a symbol of commitment, right? Well this was supposed to be my way of showing you that I’m serious about this, about us… I love you, Cas.”

Castiel gaped at him, completely unable to form even a coherent thought after hearing his confession. Dean was clearly disappointed by Cas’s silence, “I’ll try again, okay? I know I can do better n-”

Castiel finally found the ability to move again, cutting off Dean’s excuses with a desperate kiss. Dean froze underneath him in surprise before melting into the kiss willingly. Castiel kissed him like he was starving for it, trying to convey years’ worth of devotion into the action. He tenderly cradled the hunter’s face, appreciating the feeling of Dean’s stubble against his fingers, as Dean’s hands tangled themselves in his hair. Castiel pressed against Dean hungrily, trying to get as close to the other as possible, while simultaneously backing him towards the bed. Their nest. The thought made Castiel’s wings shudder and he almost growled possessively.

But the moment the back of Dean’s knees hit the edge of their nest, their perfect and wonderful nest, the hunter froze as if suddenly realising what they were doing. Dean wrenched himself from Castiel’s lips, staring questioningly into his eyes. “Are you sure? I don’t want to make you uncomfortable again. We don’t have to rush anything,” Dean insisted, despite his obvious desperation for more. His pupils were blown, skin was flushed and lips were kiss-bruised and still slick with spit. He looked entirely too tempting to be suggesting they stop, Castiel decided firmly.

“Dean, I’ve never been surer of anything in my life. Now shut up and kiss me,” Castiel assured him. Dean shuddered at the seductive growl in Castiel’s voice, abandoning any lingering reservations.
He grabbed Castiel’s tie roughly, pulling the angel into another deep kiss. Castiel was so caught up in their movements he barely noticed Dean manoeuvring them around, dragging the angel gently by his tie, until he felt skilled hands easily freeing the piece of fabric from his throat. He heard Dean haphazardly throw the tie across the room, before the hunter attacked the rest of his clothes. Castiel followed his lead, fiddling with his belt blindly. They undressed each other clumsily, so unwilling to separate from their kiss that they unintentionally hindered their own progress. After a few unsuccessful attempts, however, their impatience soon won out and they separated to shed their remaining clothing themselves. They let their underwear remain, choosing to prolong the suspense of finally seeing each other fully exposed.

Dean roughly pushed the angel onto the bed now situated behind him. Castiel’s breath rushed out of him in surprise, but the bed braced the impact of his fall. In fact it was extremely comfortable and he found himself gratefully pressing further into the soft surface.

“Nice, huh? I got another memory foam mattress,” Dean informed him smugly as he gracefully climbed over the angel to settle upon his lap. He felt Dean’s firm cock press against his own through their underwear and he hissed at the subtle hint of friction. Dean leaned in unbearably close, his lips brushing against the sensitive skin of the angel’s earlobe as he purred, “How ’bout we make some memories?”

They soon gravitated back towards each other’s lips, already addicted to the taste of one another. Castiel didn’t think he’d ever tire of feeling Dean’s lips against his own. Castiel exulted in the realisation that this was merely the beginning of many kisses they’d share in the future. Now that he knew Dean wanted to be his mate, his mate, he would have the opportunity to kiss Dean whenever he liked for the rest of their lives. His wings shuddered again involuntarily and the action drew Dean’s attention. He pulled back from their kiss to stare eagerly at the wings bared compliantly against the bed.

“Cas, please let me groom your wings. We never got to finish last time,” Dean begged him. Castiel groaned at the thought of Dean’s hands in his wings again, nodding frantically.

Dean didn’t need any more prompting, burying his hands in the soft underside of the feathers enthusiastically. Castiel couldn’t help the needy whimper that escaped his throat at the flood of sudden sensation, but Dean didn’t show him any mercy. As the hunter’s fingers explored every inch of the feathery expanse offered to him, Castiel squirmed underneath the onslaught of pleasure. He was painfully hard, the touch to his sensitive feathers sparking liquid fire up his spine before setting in his groin causing it to twitch violently, drooling precome that soaked through his boxers. Dean seemed satisfied with his search, only finding a few remaining loose feathers hidden among the soft down, pausing his hands which caused Castiel to whine in disappointment.

“Tell me what’s next Cas. Tell me what you need,” Dean demanded headily. Cas tried to push past the lust filled daze filling his mind in order to advise Dean further.

“My uropygial glands,” Castiel panted, fighting the beginnings of embarrassment flaring up inside him, “they’re small glands that produce a special oil substance that keeps our wings in good condition. You will need to spread this oil along the feathers.”

Before Castiel could even begin describing where Dean would find them, Dean’s hands moved expertly finding one of his uropygial glands hidden within the feathers.

“You mean this?” Dean chuckled, stroking his thumb over the small nub which tore a gasp from Castiel’s lips as oil leaked generously from the abused gland.

“How did you-” Castiel couldn’t even finish his sentence as another moan escaped his throat at Dean’s incessant teasing.

“Let’s just say the Men of Letters’ obsession with angel wings actually turned out to be useful for something,” Dean smirked.

Dean was agonizingly slow and thorough as he spread the oil throughout Castiel’s feathers. His dick
throbbed unbearably, his boxers long ruined with the liquid dribbling from the head. Castiel wasn’t sure how much longer he could take this teasing.

“Please,” he huffed piteously, “please, Dean. I- I need-”

He arched violently, unable to finish as Dean decided to tease both his glands at once just as he began begging. By now the man’s hands were soaked with the warm oil, the substance dripping freely down his wrists as each spasm gushed more of the sweet smelling liquid. His feathers were well and truly covered by now and the hunter knew it.

“Yeah baby, what do you need?” Dean hissed encouragingly. The term of endearment slipped easily from Dean’s lips and it made Castiel’s heart race.

“You,” Castiel said without hesitation, “I need you.”

Dean grinned, “Yeah? But where do you need me? Do you need me inside you? Or would you prefer I ride your dick just like this?”

Dean emphasised his suggestion with a persistent grind of his hips against Castiel’s cock. Castiel’s hips jerked up without his permission in a primal need for more friction. Castiel couldn’t decide which of the two options sounded better and he groaned in indecision.

“But I want both,” he complained pouting and Dean let out a genuine laugh at his dilemma.

“Don’t worry, baby, you don’t have to choose just one. We’ve got plenty of time for both if that’s what you want. But I’ll save you the trouble this time and decide which comes first.”

Dean easily slipped off his underwear and Castiel couldn’t help marvelling at his first glimpse of his flushed red cock. Of course it wasn’t the first time he’d seen the righteous man naked, having put the man back together piece by piece after raising him from Perdition, but it was the first time he’d seen him naked while aroused. It was a very different experience, Castiel decided. His attention was wrenched back as Dean began to tease his left uropygial gland once again. It was still sensitive from the earlier attention and Castiel held back a moan, surprised to find he still had some oil left as it squirted onto Dean’s fingers. Dean inspected the oil coating his fingers before readily bringing them between his thighs. Castiel’s eyes widened as he realised what Dean was about to do, using his wing oil no less. The idea was so dirty, so sexy, that Castiel couldn’t help but stare as Dean began to work himself open.

It clearly wasn’t the first time Dean had done this, as he stretched himself skilfully and efficiently. Castiel was glad for Dean’s experience, as he’d hate the idea of unintentionally hurting the man with his lack of such. Castiel was mesmerised by the process, watching Dean’s fingers disappear and reappear as the man ground himself back against the intrusion. Quicker than Castiel expected, Dean proclaimed himself ready as he removed his slick fingers. Dean eagerly removed Castiel’s boxers, staring at his cock hungrily for a moment before wrapping his hand, newly slick with more of Castiel’s oil, around him and pumping lazily a few times as he liberally spread the oil. Castiel savored the attention, finally getting some relief to his throbbing cock. Dean positioned himself swiftly before lowering himself onto Castiel slowly. Castiel’s hand instantly gripped Dean’s hip tightly, assisting the man’s as he impaled himself on his cock.

When Dean was fully seated on his lap once again, the entirety of Castiel’s length enveloped in that impossibly tight heat, they both paused relishing in the feeling. Castiel embraced Dean closely and the hunter wrapped his legs tightly around his hips, their foreheads pressed together causing their heavy pants to mingle. They stayed like this for a few moments, Castiel completely content to hold his mate in his arms for the rest of the night. But then Dean lifted his hips deliberately before quickly slamming them back down, changing Castiel’s opinion instantly. He needed more friction and Dean was only too happy to oblige, dragging himself over Castiel’s cock determinedly. Castiel’s own hips began to buck up in turn to meet Dean’s downward thrusts, their rhythm clumsy but effective. Castiel could feel his impending release building in his stomach and he hoped Dean was close too.

At that particular thought, an idea struck Castiel and he allowed a mischievous grin to spread across
his face. Pulling Dean in for a passionate kiss, Castiel managed to distract the hunter enough that his next move caught the hunter entirely by surprise. As his right hand closed over the raised red flesh of the scar on Dean’s left shoulder, Castiel felt the man jolt against him in shock as the bond was blown wide open. Castiel could suddenly feel himself being filled by his own cock, while Dean continued to tighten around him. The hunter’s movements became jerky as he adjusted to the conflicting sensations. He didn’t know whether to push his hips forward or back, both options sending sparks of pleasure through him. There was no way either of them were going to last very long like this and they both knew it. There was no longer a clear line between their pleasures, losing track of where each even belonged. They gripped at each other, hips stuttering chaotically as they pursued the other’s orgasm as urgently as their own. When they climaxed they felt it as one, neither one truly knowing whose original orgasm triggered the other to fall over the edge with them, nor did they care.

Castiel removed his hand from the mark, releasing them from the raw bond as they caught their breath. They held each other contently, Castiel’s wings wrapped around them securely like a blanket, as their breathing slowed from desperate pants to deep even breaths. The two men were both covered in sweat and semen, but neither of them seemed to care in that moment as they snuggled closer. Everything was quiet for a long time and Castiel almost found himself surrendering to the tempting pull of sleep, despite his grace being the most energised he’d ever felt it. Before he could muse over the peculiar urge further, Dean broke the silence.

“So do you mind if we keep the nest? I know you said we’re supposed to disassemble it afterwards but this bed was pretty damn expensive and I’m pretty attached to it already,” Dean teased. Castiel snorted, looking fondly at the tangled mess of sheets that surrounded them and noticing that there were still a few of his feathers remaining here and there. “Of course, Dean. I think this nest is definitely worth keeping.”
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

So this was supposed to just be an epilogue but turns out tying up loose ends takes a lot of word count. So much so that this is actually the longest chapter in the fic so far, ironically. But oh well, hopefully a giant chapter is worth the huge wait I put you guys through for this last chapter. My bad. Anyway enjoy guys!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Are you certain this is what you want? I can give you more time to decide if that’s what you need,” Hannah offered the redhead sincerely. She truly hoped that Charlie would still say yes, but she also wanted the human to be entirely sure of her decision. There was no going back after this, she needed to make sure the girl didn’t harbour any doubts.

Charlie grasped the angel’s hands in hers and nodded firmly, “I’m sure.”

“Can we get this show on the road already? I don’t want to be in this stupid bunker any longer than I have to be,” Gabriel growled impatiently behind Hannah. Hannah’s wings ruffled in annoyance at the archangel’s poor attitude. She couldn’t believe she’d once held him in such high esteem. Gabriel was nothing like what she’d expected the archangel to be. He acted more like an infant human, getting satisfaction from playing tricks on others and throwing tantrums.

Charlie’s grip on her hands tightened and the girl practically vibrated with nerves. Hannah gently squeezed back in what she hoped was a comforting gesture, before reluctantly letting her hands go and turning towards the archangel.

“Very well, Gabriel you may begin,” Hannah conceded, focusing on the situation at hand. She could hear Charlie’s heartrate speed up and her own vessel’s heart followed suit. She wondered if this was what nervousness felt like.

Gabriel began to chant the spell, his voice echoing with the influence of his true voice as he prayed in Enochian for their Heavenly Father to unite them. Hannah supposed it wasn’t that different to the humans’ marriage ceremonies, she could understand why Dean had been so easily misled. However, Hannah stopped paying attention to Gabriel’s chanting once her grace began to thrum inside her in response to his prayers. It frantically pulsed throughout her vessel reaching out enthusiastically towards the human in front of her like an excited puppy.

“Woah, that feels really weird,” Charlie announced before hastily amending, “not bad weird! I mean, it feels like my entire body has ‘pins and needles.’”

Hannah thought that concept sounded like the very definition of ‘bad’, but before she could ask if the girl was okay her thoughts became overwhelmed. Her grace was screaming at her to join the girl’s soul, it thrashed violently inside her vessel trying desperately but powerless to free itself.

Overcome by the strong forceful will of her grace, Hannah instinctively reached out for the human. She managed to grasp a firm grip on Charlie’s left hip, before dragging the girl towards her. Charlie let out a startled squeak, grabbing onto the angel’s shoulders for support as she was pulled roughly into an impromptu embrace. As Hannah wrapped her wings around them possessively, she mused that in her right mind this uncharacteristically aggressive behaviour would have definitely caused her embarrassment. However it seemed the human’s soul had been reaching for her grace just as eagerly, because their essences began to merge almost immediately upon contact.
The culmination of their life forces rapidly mingled along their arms and spread throughout their whole bodies, until they were one being. Hannah was suddenly hit by a wave of emotions she had never experienced before; anxiousness, trepidation, excitement, determination and admiration were among the few she was able to put a name to thanks to Charlie’s knowledge. There were no feelings or thoughts hidden between them in this moment. As she stared into the girl’s striking green eyes, Hannah knew without a doubt that they both knew how they felt for one another.

Neither of them were sure if they were ready to call the feeling love, but they knew that in that moment it didn’t matter. They moved towards each other simultaneously, the urge to close the distance between them occurring as a single thought within their shared consciousness. Their lips pressed together gently and they closed their eyes, revelling in their physical and emotional connection. It wasn’t a particularly aggressive or passionate kiss. Rather they simply appreciated the feeling of one another until the connection between them began to fade.

Once Hannah’s grace had fully returned to her vessel, she noticed curiously that Charlie’s emotions were gradually becoming fuzzy. This was her only warning before the human slumped to unconsciousness in her arms. Luckily Hannah’s grip on the girl was steady and she effortlessly scooped the girl into her arms. Charlie’s head lolled onto her shoulder as the angel carried her towards the nearby couch. She settled onto it, wrapping her wings around the sleeping girl protectively. There didn’t seem to be anything physically wrong with the human, so Hannah assumed it was a side effect of the bonding process. She tucked a stray piece of hair behind the girl’s ear and looked down at her fondly.

“Ugh great, more love birds,” Gabriel grumbled. Hannah startled, she had almost forgotten he was there. He watched them with a scowl but Hannah sensed it wasn’t because he condemned their relationship, as many other angels would. Instead he almost seemed jealous of them.

“Brother, may I give you some advice?” Hannah offered calmly.

Gabriel looked at her incredulously, but he didn’t reply so she took that as permission to continue.

“You need to apologise to Samuel Winchester. This petty dispute between the two of you is making you both miserable. I don’t know who’s at fault and frankly I don’t care, but it’s distressing Charlie and I can’t ignore that.”

Gabriel looked affronted, “Why should I apologize? He’s the one who snapped at me. We were just having some harmless fun before you two decided to ruin it!”

Hannah almost rolled her eyes, “Your ‘harmless fun’ almost got both Castiel and Dean Winchester killed.”

“Okay fine, that’s fair. I’ll admit the plan went a bit off the rails there. But that never would have happened if Sam had just trusted me. I would have stepped in and helped them if I had been there. I only left because you two turned him against me!”

“You can’t blame us for your own mistakes. Samuel doesn’t trust you because you’ve never given him any reason to. Trust needs to be earned and from what Charlie has told me you’ve given him more than enough reasons not to trust you.”

Gabriel huffed in frustration, “What do you think I’ve been trying to do? I’ve been on my best behaviour ever since those meatheads summoned me here. But no everyone just wants to dwell on the past. It doesn’t matter what I do, it’ll never be good enough for him! I’ll never be good enough for him!”

Gabriel froze, staring at her wide-eyed, as he realised what he’d just announced. Hannah was startled by the archangel’s admission but she attempted to hide her surprise.

“Brother, may I ask you plainly? Have you tried conveying your feelings to the younger Winchester?”

Gabriel looked guilty and rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly, “Yeah. I mean, kind of. Okay, technically no. He doesn’t exactly know I’ve been courting him but he did accept my feather so...”
Hannah looked at him disapprovingly, “You can’t trick someone into mating with you, Gabriel.”
He sighed, “But I’m a Trickster, it’s what I do. Besides, he’d never agree if he knew what it really meant.”
“If that’s what he decides then you have to respect his decision. But you’ll never know for sure unless you give him the option directly. You preach about how hopeless Dean and Castiel’s romantic development has been, but at least Dean was finally able to honestly convey his feelings tonight. Meanwhile you’re letting your own bruised ego prevent you from doing the same.”

Gabriel looked a mixture of frustrated and defeated before sighing heavily.
“You don’t understand. You’ve never loved someone who you know will never love you back.”
He disappeared from the room with the sound of rustling feathers. The room fell silent, except for the comforting rhythm of Charlie’s steady breaths against Hannah’s neck. Despite her concern for her brother, Hannah couldn’t help but feel content as she cradled the sleeping human closer to her chest. She truly hoped Gabriel would find the happiness she had.

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Dean woke up cradled in Cas’s arms, his wings curled around them. Dean had never felt so comfortable in his life. He was tempted to fall back to sleep, it would be so easy, but promptly decided against it as he felt Cas begin trailing gentle kisses along his neck.
“Good morning to you too, Cas,” Dean purred contently. He blinked the sleep-hazy blur from his eyes, rolling over so that he could kiss the angel properly. They kissed gently and easily, a stark contrast to the desperate and needy kisses they had shared last night. They kissed like they had the rest of their lives to enjoy the feeling and if Dean had his way, they would.

His stomach, however, had other ideas. Dean tried not to look too embarrassed as they were interrupted by its growling. Now that he thought about it, he hadn’t actually eaten much yesterday. He’d been way too distracted building their nest (man that still felt weird to say even in his head) to think about food.
“Are you hungry?” Cas asked in concern.
“Yeah but it can wait,” Dean claimed, leaning back in for another kiss but Cas stopped him.
“You shouldn’t neglect your needs, Dean. We can continue this later,” Cas ordered firmly.
“But what about my other needs?” Dean smirked, dragging a hand through Cas’s feathers. Cas’s wings visibly shuddered at the attention but his face remained remarkably composed.
“Eat first, then we can talk about your other needs,” Cas insisted, emphasizing his statement with another deep kiss before pulling away resolutely. Dean tried not to pout, knowing it was useless to complain further.

“Fine, but I’m holding you to that,” Dean agreed, before reluctantly rolling out of bed. He roughly dragged on a fresh pair of boxers and shirt. When he turned around Cas was still sitting on the bed but he was now fully clothed, trenchcoat and all.
“If you were just gonna mojo yourself dressed, why couldn’t you do the same for me? I had to get dressed the regular way like a sucker,” Dean whined half-heartedly.
“Because the view was better this way,” Cas admitted with a smile. Dean let out a surprised scoff at Cas’s blatant flirting. He decided he liked this new banter between them and could definitely get used to it.

The kitchen was surprisingly empty when they entered, Dean thought for sure Sam would be having breakfast by now. Not that he really minded because it meant they were alone, which was lucky because Cas couldn’t keep his hands to himself. Even as Dean poured pancake batter into the pan, Cas wrapped his arms around Dean’s waist. He watched Dean’s movements curiously with his chin resting on Dean’s shoulder. As if that wasn’t distracting enough, Cas’s wings were also wrapped around him.
“Uh Cas, would you mind moving your wings? I can’t cook with feathers in my face,” Dean complained.
“They don’t have a physical presence, Dean. I don’t think they’ll hinder your progress,” Cas defended and what he said was true. The wings passed right through the cooking utensils and his arms as he worked, so they weren’t actually in the way per se, but it was definitely messing with his concentration. Especially since he could still feel the feathers physically, which made his arms being able to pass through them super disconcerting.
“Yeah but I can still feel them and it’s kinda tripping me out,” Dean admitted sheepishly. Cas let go immediately, taking a step back.
“I’m sorry Dean, I didn’t mean to cause you any discomfort,” Cas apologised, but his wings drooped in disappointment.

Dean immediately stopped cooking, switching off the stove so the batter wouldn’t burn, turning around to cradle Cas’s face in his hands.
“Hey, look at me. Don’t apologise, just tell me what’s wrong. I can’t believe I’m actually the one saying this, but I want us to be open about our feelings from now on. Keeping everything bottled up has only screwed us in the past,” Dean demanded, locking eyes with the angel.
Cas looked embarrassed, “It’s silly.”
“It’s not silly if it’s important to you, just tell me,” Dean assured him. Cas hesitated slightly before he admitted, “Mates usually spend the day after they commit to each other wrapped in each other’s wings. It’s just meaningless tradition, I’m sorry.”

Dean felt like a total dick, he really needed to ask Hannah more about angel traditions so he didn’t accidentally hurt Cas anymore.
“No I’m sorry. I should have known it was some angel thing. As soon as I finish eating we’ll head back to the room and spend the whole day in bed, how does that sound?” Dean offered, stroking Cas’s cheek gently. The angel smiled warmly and nodded, his wings rising in enthusiasm. Dean couldn’t help caving into the urge to kiss the angel again, dipping down to lock lips softly. He would never get tired of being able to kiss Cas whenever he wanted from now on.

“Finally,” came a sigh from behind them. Dean and Cas startled, pulling away from each other slightly but Dean didn’t move far as he realised he was wrapped in Cas’s wings again.

“Uh morning, Sammy,” Dean greeted his younger brother awkwardly, but Sam just smirked at them smugly.
“Morning, looks like you two sorted everything out,” Sam noted casually, attempting to hide his smirk by sipping at his morning coffee.
“Yes Sam, your brother and I are now in a romantic relationship,” Cas confirmed proudly. If the angel felt any embarrassment at being caught kissing he didn’t show it. Dean decided he shouldn’t feel embarrassed either. Sam didn’t react negatively like he’d feared. In fact, he seemed to support them.
Dean grabbed Cas’s hand in his, lacing their fingers together, before announcing, “Yep, it’s official.”

“Good for you guys. It certainly took you long enough,” Sam grinned at the couple. Dean decidedly ignored that, deciding to interrogate his brother later about how long he’d known.
“If you’re not planning on finishing those pancakes, I’ll be happy to take them off your hands,” Sam offered, gesturing to the abandoned pan and bottle of batter.
“Sure but since when do you like pancakes? I thought it would be too many carbs for you or something,” Dean teased. As expected, Sam flashed him a bitchface.
“I’m been craving something sweet lately, is that a crime?” Sam asked defensively. Dean smirked, sensing he’d hit a nerve, but before he could push further Charlie and Hannah entered the room.

“Oh my god, they’re even cooler than I imagined,” Charlie cried, gesturing to the wings still
wrapped around Dean. They both frowned at her in confusion as she turned to Hannah.

“Not that yours aren’t cool, of course. They’re both super badass,” Charlie insisted, trailed a hand through Hannah’s feathers playfully. The angel blushed furiously, visibly trying to appear unaffected.

“Charlie, did you and Hannah perhaps bond?” Cas asked the question they were all thinking.

“Yep!” she announced, proudly pulling down the side of her pants unashamedly to expose the red handprint on her left hip.

Dean was too shocked to say anything, but the others didn’t seem to share his concern.

“That’s excellent news. I should have noticed the condition of your wings earlier, Hannah. It is good to see them fully healed,” Cas congratulated them.

“Seriously?” Sam complained and Dean felt some relief that he wasn’t the only one freaking out until he continued, “This means I’m the only one in the room who can’t see wings now. That’s so unfair.”

Dean almost sighed out loud. Well someone had to be the voice of reason, guess it was up to him to be the bad guy here.

“Isn’t it a bit early to be marrying someone you only met a few days ago? Charlie, did you even know angel marriage is forever?” Dean stated a little anxiously. He knew he was being a buzz kill but he didn’t want this blowing up in his friends’ faces. Both Charlie and Hannah meant too much to him.

“Marriage?” Cas asked. Everyone in the room froze, but Dean didn’t even notice as his head snapped to look at Cas in confusion.

“Yeah, you know, angel marriage,” Dean clarified carefully, but Cas only looked even more confused and he began to feel a sinking feeling in his stomach.

“Gabriel told me the bond is the same as getting married to angels…” Dean began to explain before his own words made him realise the truth, “Oh my god, that son of a bitch!”

He looked around at the other occupants of the room expecting to find similar outrage on their faces, only to find none of them seemed to share his shock. In fact, they were being suspiciously quiet and avoiding his gaze guilty.

“Holy shit, you knew. You all knew!” Dean snapped, looking at each of them in disbelief.

Sam had the audacity to look sheepish, “Yeah okay, fine we knew. We just wanted to get you and Cas together. It worked, didn’t it? Look how happy you guys were just now.”

“Hey, don’t try to lump us in with you! Hannah and I were just dragged into this mess. You and Gabriel were the true creators of this stupid prank,” Charlie protested, “I’m really sorry, Dean.”

“Yes Dean, it was wrong of us to deceive you,” Hannah agreed, looking similarly remorseful with her wings drawn close around her in shame. He decided to forgive those two, at least. Hannah had helped him out a lot these past few days, after all. But Sam, Dean wasn’t going to let him off so easily. He was already starting to brainstorm revenge ideas when Cas suddenly spoke up behind him.

“You all should be ashamed of yourselves,” Cas reprimanded, “you should know better than to play with others’ emotions. Dean, I should make this clear. The bond was merely a union of our souls. It was in no way a romantic ceremony. This does not influence how I feel about you, but I would understand if it does for you. I’m sorry Gabriel made you feel like you were forced to reciprocate my feelings.”

Cas unwrapped his wings from around Dean and lowered them and his eyes in disappointment. Dean had never seen him look this dejected. He couldn’t stand that he’d made Cas feel that way, even if it wasn’t really his fault. He was going to kill Gabriel next time he saw that bastard!

“Hold on, Cas. This doesn’t change anything, okay? I still love you. I’ve loved you way before this bond stuff even happened. It just made me realise what I was too stubborn to admit. Gabriel didn’t force me to do anything,” Dean insisted, reaching to pull the angel into a reassuring kiss. He didn’t care that they weren’t alone, he didn’t even care that his brother was in the room. Cas needed to
know undoubtedly that he loved him. Cas relaxed into the kiss and Dean was relieved to feel his wings wrap around him again.

“See, it all worked out for the best,” Sam claimed, still trying to maintain his innocence. Dean pulled away from the kiss reluctantly, only so that he could flash his brother one of his own bitchfaces.

“Don’t think I’m not still pissed that you lied to me. This is war now and I have a fully powered angel on my side. Cas and I are going to get you back so bad it’ll make all of our previous prank wars look like child’s play. You hear that Gabriel you son of a bitch, that goes for you too!” Dean yelled towards the ceiling. Honestly he didn’t know whether yelling at someone counted as praying or not, but he decided it was worth a try.

“Come on, Cas let’s get out of here. You can just mojo us some breakfast in bed instead. I don’t want to share pancakes with a traitor,” Dean huffed, dragging the angel with him out of the room.

Several hours, a plate of the best breakfast Dean had ever had and another few rounds of mind-blowing sex later, Dean found his irritation couldn’t compete with the feeling of pure bliss filling him. He could be pissed at Sam and Gabriel later. Right now all he could think about was how great it felt in Cas’s embrace. He didn’t even mind that he was the little spoon, actually he kinda liked it.

But Dean would never admit it out loud. Not that he needed to, Cas could probably feel his satisfaction with the situation through the bond anyway.

“Dean,” Cas said softly.

“Yeah?” Dean murmured drowsily.

“Did you really believe we were married?” Cas asked nonchalantly. Dean froze, his calm slipping away as he began to feel flustered and embarrassed. He was glad the angel couldn’t see how red his face was becoming.

“Well… I mean, yeah. In hindsight, it was stupid of me to trust Gabriel. But I don’t know anything about angel traditions. How was I supposed to know it wasn’t true? Plus it made sense at the time because you started suddenly bringing up angel courting stuff right after the bond. What was I supposed to think?” Dean spluttered self-consciously. Dean wondered if Cas could feel his mortification through the bond and then promptly decided he didn’t want to know the answer.

“Well I’ll admit the concept of declaring our love in God’s name sounds very appealing to me. You’ve already made it clear that you accept the idea of a marital union between us and our courtship means we have already committed to each other as mates for eternity. I don’t see why we shouldn’t make it official with a human ceremony as well,” Cas confessed. Dean felt his heart race as his mind made sense of what Cas was suggesting. Dean turned around in Cas’s arms so that he could stare wide-eyed at the angel.

“Are you proposing to me?” Dean gaped. Cas looked nervous as he reached behind him, plucking one of the larger black feathers from his wings. If the action hurt him at all, he did well not to show it.

“I know it’s traditional to offer a ring, but I thought this would suffice since I never got the chance to court you properly,” Cas explained, offering the feather to Dean anxiously.

Dean hardly hesitated before accepting the feather eagerly, marvelling at the softness of it between his fingers. He knew realistically that things were moving really fast between them. But honestly, they’d been on the cusp of this for years and he knew for certain that he would be spending the rest of his life with Cas. Might as well make it ‘official’.

“It’s perfect, Cas. Sure, okay, why not? Let’s do it. Let’s get married,” Dean chuckled.

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Sam couldn’t help but feel a little jealous as he looked at the couples surrounding him. They were all hanging out in the library watching Game of Thrones. As soon as Charlie heard Cas had been reading the books, she demanded they have a marathon the next time they all got together. It had taken a few weeks but finally everything in Heaven had settled down enough for the angels to take a break. Cas and Dean were curled up on one side of the large couch, while Hannah and Charlie were cuddled up on the other. Sam was stuck as the fifth wheel being the only single person in the bunker. Speaking of which…

“Hey Cas, does this mean you’re gonna move into the bunker permanently now that you and Dean are getting hitched?” Sam asked curiously.

“Actually, yes. I’ve decided that I want Hannah to replace me as Head of Heaven so that I can stay on Earth permanently with Dean.”

Dean seemed extremely pleased with this decision, unable to hide the satisfied grin from his face.

“Are you sure you want me to take over your position? I don’t think I’m qualified,” Hannah argued.

“You’re more than qualified,” Cas responded firmly. “After all, it was your idea to recruit Gabriel into bonding all the remaining angels to willing human partners with compatible souls. Your idea not only healed their wings and fully restored their powers, but also introduced them to human emotions. Combined with our guidance, the angels’ cooperation with and respect for humans has never been better. The reapers would not be able to do their jobs efficiently if their wings had not been healed and there would still be countless restless souls on Earth. I couldn’t have fixed any of the problems in Heaven without you.”

Sam tried not to let the slight mention of Gabriel bother him. He still hadn’t seen the archangel since they’d last fought. He wasn’t answering any of Sam’s prayers and Cas said he couldn’t convince him to come back to the bunker. Sam refused to admit just how badly he missed him.

“Don’t forget her brilliant idea to hire me as Heaven’s official secretary,” Charlie piped up, looking at Hannah proudly. “Without me all of Heaven’s files would still be paper. Everything is much more efficient digital and Heaven was way overdue for an upgrade anyway.”

“I still can’t believe you agreed to be Heaven’s IT person,” Dean scoffed.

“Hey I was going to Heaven eventually anyway, at least now it’s by my own choice. Plus I get a sweet gig with a cute boss, it’s win-win,” Charlie winked at Hannah. Hannah didn’t seem to react to the flirting outwardly, but Sam caught Charlie eyeing the space behind the angel where he assumed her wings would be.

“Ooooh that reminds me, looky what I got!” the redhead piped up, pulling at the chain of a necklace from around her neck. She dragged the chain out from under her shirt, revealing a large blue feather hanging upside down from the end of the necklace. The feather was large enough that a hole had been easily drilled into the bottom part of the feather allowing the chain to loop through. The feather seemed awfully familiar but he couldn’t pinpoint why exactly.

“Congrats! I didn’t know you guys were that serious already,” Dean noted, grinning at Charlie encouragingly from the other side of the couch.

“Well we’ve already moved in together and literally had our souls bonded together, so I think the ‘moving too fast ship’ has already sailed,” Charlie smirked.

“Am I missing something? What’s with the feather?” Sam interrupted.

“Oh right, Sam doesn’t know about the angel courting stuff,” Dean pointed out.

“In angel tradition, the offering of one’s feather means an intention to pursue someone as a potential mate. If the feather is accepted, it means the other accepts their advances,” Cas quickly explained.

It was then that it hit Sam why Hannah’s feather had looked so familiar. It looked just like the quill Gabriel had given him, except his quill was much larger and gold. Gabriel himself has three sets of stunning gold wings. Cas’s words from weeks ago suddenly rang through his mind. Holy shit.

“So what would happen if someone accepted a feather without knowing what it meant,” Sam asked, trying to sound casual despite the fact that he was internally freaking out.
Cas frowned. “Such a case wouldn’t occur, angels are versed in the ways of courtship since creation.”

“If such as case was to occur,” Hannah interrupted looking at Sam intently, “then the accepting party would not be obligated to continue the courtship. Acceptance of the feather is not binding, as it is simply the first stage in the courting process.”

Sam let out a sigh of relief but Hannah continued, looking at him meaningfully as she added, “However if they were interested in exploring a relationship with the angel, despite being shall we say tricked into accepting the feather originally, then they would need to be clear about their intentions and let the angel know.”

“You accepted a feather from Gabriel?” Dean hissed incredulously.

“What? How did you-?” Sam stammered.

“Because Hannah’s about as subtle as an elephant and I’m not a complete idiot. Is this why you’ve been pester ing Cas about him? I thought he was avoiding the bunker because he knew I was pissed at him, I didn’t know you two had a fricking lovers spat. Jesus Christ, Sam, he’s an archangel.”

“I didn’t know he was propositioning me when I accepted it, I thought it was just a quill. Besides, it wasn’t a lovers spat, we’re not like that,” Sam insisted, flushing red.

“Oh my god, you actually like that douchebag!” Dean gasped in disbelief.

“What? That’s ridiculous,” Sam denied hastily.

“You can’t lie to me, Sammy, I know what you sound like when you deny a crush,” Dean declared.

“Samuel, if you do harbour any feelings for Gabriel then I greatly encourage you to notify him. He’s under the impression that you could never return his feelings and has been moping around Heaven for weeks. There are very few bonding rituals left for him to complete and I’m afraid once he has fulfilled his duty towards me that he will disappear once again,” Hannah informed him sternly.

Sam didn’t know how he felt about the archangel. He knew he’d undoubtedly enjoyed his company when they’d been together and had missed the archangel’s light-hearted presence ever since he’d stormed out that day. And sure he’d been really worried about Gabe and had been trying to make amends for days. But he considered Gabe a close friend, even if the archangel had been a dick in the past, he wasn’t interested in him romantically. Was he? Now Sam wasn’t so sure. However, he was sure of one thing. He couldn’t let the archangel disappear from his life again. Not until he figured his feelings out.

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“So this is the last one?” Gabriel stated, sounding bored. He was ready to get this over with. His debt to Hannah was almost over. He was sick of being surrounded by love birds all day. Sure the amount of angels falling for their bonded humans was far less than it had been during the age of Nephilim, but there were still enough cases to get under Gabriel’s skin. It didn’t help that Hannah and Castiel, the head honchos of Heaven right now, were both completely head over heels for their humans. Gabriel just wanted to get as far away from this shitty dimension as possible. Maybe he’d come back in a few centuries, who knows.

“Yes, after this all the angels in Heaven will be paired with a human,” Hannah assured him from behind her desk at Heaven’s main office.

“Who else even is there left to bond?” Gabriel asked.

“Us,” Sam’s voice appeared from behind him. Gabriel whipped around to find the tall man standing in the doorway.

“What is he doing here?” Gabriel demanded, looking back at Hannah in betrayal. She knew how he felt about Sam, yet she just let him waltz in here while Gabriel was still grieving. He thought they’d been some semblance of friends. Clearly he’d been wrong.

“Like I said, I’m here to bond with you,” Sam stated firmly. Gabriel flinched, the last thing he needed was to connect his soul to the man he had an unrequited crush on.
“I don’t need to bond with anyone. My wings never suffered damage from the fall and I’m the most powerful angel left on Earth, even without a soul to power me up,” Gabriel argued.

“That may be true, but Sam believes it will be mutually beneficial if you two completed the ritual,” Hannah clarified.

“Why? What could he possibly have to gain?” Gabriel asked incredulously.

“Well for one I won’t be the only person I know who can’t see angel wings anymore,” Sam grumbled. He then reached into his pocket to pull out a familiar quill and Gabriel felt his stomach drop.

“I’m also interested in seeing where this came from. Cas says you have three sets of wings and if all the feathers are as big as this one then they must be huge.”

“How did you?” Gabriel began but Sam interrupted him.

“Did you seriously think tricking me into being courted would work out? I mean, what was the end goal there? How was that supposed to pan out in your favour?” Sam ranted.

“I know, I know. It was a stupid plan,” Gabriel admitted, his heart clenching. He knew Sam would be mad when he found out but he hadn’t prepared himself for the actual confrontation.

“It was. How was I supposed to know giving someone a feather was angel code for ‘please date me’? Couldn’t you just ask me on a fricking date like a normal person? No. Instead you give me no warning and then up and leave. I had to get Hannah to fly me all the way up here because you won’t even answer my prayers.”

“Fine. I’m sorry, okay? I’m sorry for everything. All of it was my fault and I was too arrogant to admit it. Satisfied?” Gabriel snapped, folding his arms and doing his best to look unaffected. “If you’ve come to give the feather back then just do it already. Don’t drag this out any longer than it needs to.”

Sam huffed, marching towards the shorter angel in frustration until he loomed over him.

“See that’s another reason I want us to bond. You keep assuming you know how I feel when you don’t. I wish you’d just talk to me for once, instead of jumping to conclusions. I’m not here to give back the feather, you idiot, I’m here to say I’m willing to give this a try!” Sam fumed, grabbing the archangel’s shoulders and shaking him roughly.

Gabriel stared at him dumbfounded. “You what?”

Sam’s frown softened and he loosened his grip on the archangel.

“Look, I’m not even sure myself how I feel about you. But I do know that I’ve really missed you. I missed your terrible jokes, I missed your arrogant, smart-alec attitude and I even missed your stupid nicknames. I thought about you almost every day that you were gone and it’s driving me crazy. I don’t know if I like you romantically or not, but I think it’s worth a shot,” Sam admitted.

“Dean didn’t put you up to this for revenge, did he?” Gabriel interrogated suspiciously.

Sam chuckled, “No, he didn’t. I swear. But knowing my brother he won’t stop until he pranks us back and he has Cas helping him out now too. It’s probably going to be pretty bad… I could really use the extra back-up. How about after we bond you come back to the bunker with me? You still owe me an angel history lesson. I’ve been reserving my quill for it specifically. What do you say?”

“You’d really trust your soul to be bonded to me, after all the times I’ve screwed you over?” Gabriel gaped.

“You know what’s weird, I honestly do. Guess we’re both pretty stupid, huh?” Sam smirked.

“‘To quote a friend, ‘Can we get this show on the road already?’ I want to go home to my own mate,’” Hannah interrupts, surprising them both by winking at Gabriel. Charlie was becoming a bad influence on her. Or a good one. Gabriel couldn’t decide.

“Alright, alright. You wore me down! Geez, I had no idea you were so needy, Sammy. You know I don’t go for the clingy ones,” Gabriel stated in his old exaggeratedly theatrical tone. Sam rolled his eyes, but Gabriel noticed the corners of his mouth quirk into a small smile. That tiny gesture filled Gabriel with hope. It was all the proof he needed to know that Sam had warmed up to him far more
than he’d realised. Gabriel was determined to use the fondness the human already felt for him and take it one step further. He would definitely prove to the Winchester that he was worth becoming his mate. He wouldn’t even use tricks this time, he promised.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone was wondering, the bond scene was a whole lot more intense for Charlie and Hannah because they were both conscious when it happened. That's why they were able to sense each other's thoughts but Dean and Cas couldn't. Imagine how much time it would have been saved if Cas hadn't been unconscious when Dean and him bonded. This entire fic would have been moot. But where would be the fun in that? xD

I hope everyone enjoyed this fic. I had so much fun writing it. Thanks to everyone for the kudos and comments, they literally make my day :D

Here's the link to my tumblr if anyone's interested:

http://fictionsmyaddiction.tumblr.com/

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!